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BY

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN :

THE importance of Ecclesiastical History, in Theological Education, has ever been obvious and indispensable. Primitive preachers displayed their knowledge of history, more perhaps than any other accomplishment. Eloquent and powerful speeches, transmitted from their times, are often little more than historical narration. Stephen, on the steps of martyrdom itself, full of the Holy Ghost, and of emotion eloquent enough to be spoken with an angel's face, rehearsed a simple epitome of Old Testament history, and his hearers were cut to the heart. Paul, the chief of apostles, rich in learning, powerful in logic, skilled in all the arts of popular eloquence, defended his ministry and his life, before Festus and Agrippa, by a plain and judicious narrative of facts. In his letter to the Hebrews, a master-piece of sacred eloquence, he rises to the height of his great argument in behalf of the new dispensation, by turning to the history of patriarchs and prophets of old, for the longest and brightest illustrations of the faith, for which the last times should ever be distinguished. Well would it be for the literature and dignity of the Christian pulpit now, if its taste were formed on these pure models; and the drivelling of anecdote-retailers, the dreaming of fiction-makers, for men and children, were banished, as debasing to the ministers of a venerable religion. But the pulpit will always be degraded thus, while there is dearth of historical knowledge. We must relieve the heaviness and abstraction of public discourses, with, at least, a show of facts and examples; and, in ignorance of the stores which history has gathered, under the glorious ministration of the Spirit, for eighteen hundred years, we must go back beneath the pulpit and behind the age, for what was anciently used, only to eke the poverty of annals, or sink beneath the parable itself, and exhibit divine truth in a style of comparison and allegory, at which even Jotham would have blushed.

Human nature must be studied on the page of Ecclesiastical history, to attain that knowledge of this important subject, which is necessary for the minister of Christ. Church history is thought to be meagre in its delineation of human nature; less varied, less brilliant and moving, less captivating in the complication of scenes, and actors, and incidents, than Profane history. There is one perpetual round of short revival, and long apostacy; one among a thousand, in every age, protesting against the declension of the times, and all the rest downward, in the same old career of crafty meanness, heartless ambition, and hypocritical corruption, for which churchmen have so often been distinguished. But, what is less in variety, is vastly greater in power and importance. Man is stirred from the bottom of his soul, when agitated by religion. Then we see the depth of what is in us; then we see the ocean upheaved midway upon its bosom, less foaming, noisy and shifting, than where it dashes spray on rocks and sands along the shore; but far deeper and mightier in the wave that tosses. The illiterate prophet of Mecca, without one circumstance or characteristic about him, to kindle enthusiasm in men, contrived to cast religious sentiment on the slumbering might of human passions; and demons were evoked from the very sands of the desert; the scattered bands of Arabia were gathered to his side; and, without a veteran soldier in the van or in the ranks, armies were routed, tribes exterminated, kingdoms overthrown, a quaking continent was bathed in blood, and an empire founded, almost in a day, to rival all that had preceded it, in strong security, ample domain, and polished education. Every thing of powerful interest and peculiar force, upon the page of Pagan history; every thing of uncommon grandeur, or beauty, or pathos, in the strains of epic or dramatic poetry; every thing in painting, and sculpture, and architecture, and philosophy and law, which the world has admired and preserved, as worth an immortality of praise, was wrought by the power of religious sentiment. Genius never attempted a great and lasting deed, without its impulse.

Why then, in turning to the pages where this mighty sentiment is seen and felt to be regenerated—owned and warmed afresh from heaven—should the details of history be unimportant or uninteresting? Why should the picture of man's heart, and the volume of his deeds, drawn beneath the darkness of midnight, be read with an interest that never tires; and the same picture and volume, drawn beneath the brightness of noon-day, be thrown aside, as spiritless and disgusting? It must be, because our nature is too faithfully and fully drawn; be-

cause we see a portraiture to the life, of what we never love to look at; because we see in history, what we are slow to credit in the Bible, that we are desperately depraved, and wretchedly imperfect; that even where grace reigns and renovates the soul, there linger manifold corruptions—the fouler when seen by such a light—revolting exhibitions of the human heart, that seem to ally the best of men to the very fiends. Our need of such a study, then, is in direct proportion to disrelish for it. Duty must be stronger than disgust.

Tender piety, like Milner's, which would hide the pages of atrocity or shame; and cull, for its volumes, only and all the gems; gathering apart the fragments of shining worth, wherever they are found or fancied, is almost too weak to be amiable—certainly too ignorant of the christian economy, to be respectable. Should we look away from any mirror that reflects the Bible, or grow tired of any desolation, even, which echos at every turn, the voice of God in his word? Is there any thing upon the blackest page of our records, that contradicts the letter or spirit of the Scriptures; any thing, in the most deplorable events which have bled the church, and staggered the world, that loyal affection to Christ would now have to be other than it was? Would Infidelity be silenced, and the Religion of Jesus stand up without a blush, or an apology to man, if the pages which infidels reproach, were just as they ought to be, according to infidel views of consistency in our holy religion? Admit such correction, and we are ruined. Lift the blot from our annals, and you drop it on our Bible. This romance of christianity would destroy its existence. The commentary would belie the text. The history of the church would be no longer what the Savior and his Apostles said it would be. For there was never a quarrel that disturbed the church, nor an outbreak of corruption that disgraced her; there was never a delusion, or a folly, or a fierce fanaticism, that wasted her beauty and blasted her fruit, which was not foreseen, foretold and provided for, by the Founder of our faith. We are grieved and disappointed, not because the promise, "Lo, I am with you," is either slack or forgotten; but, because we are too impatient to look for that God, "who hideth his face from the house of Jacob;" too slow of heart to turn with him, when his path is in the mighty waters, and his footsteps are unknown; too dim of sight to see within the clouds and darkness which are round about him, a throne of righteousness and judgment; or on the hand almighty, which seems to break his own heritage in pieces, the glancing of a deadly edge through the ranks of his enemies alone.

It is only in reading Church History, that we learn to interpret aright the wonderful administration of our ascended Lord; to correct our hasty and superficial expectations; and submissively wait for him, when the wheels of promise are slow; and humbly acquiesce, without despondence or abated fervor, when the dawn, for which we longed and prayed, and looked, may be suddenly darkened even to a deeper gloom. Without the lessons that are learned in this great study, the sentinel of Israel's camp can scarcely compare enlightened sentiment with Balaam himself: "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought!"

Our's is a religion of history—the only religion that ever blended with facts—the only religion that ever convinced the world with historical evidence. Other religions are fain to have no records; to separate themselves from any alliance with the world in this way; to have connection indeed with every passion of human nature, every speculation of human wisdom, every arm of human power; but with all authentic human history, they would cut the cords of intimate connection, and cover all that is original, with the darkness of fable; all that is depressed, with the silence of oblivion; and settle no eras but the brief intercalations of their own ascendancy and prevalence on earth. History is a deadly foe. Wherever it falls into their hands, like the Philistines with Samson, they put out both its eyes,—chronology and geography; yet still it bows with strength enough to pull down the pillars, and overwhelm them in ultimate destruction. But the religion of Jesus Christ is the parent and patron, and in all ages, the inseparable companion of faithful history; not turning aside, on certain occasions, to insert a line like an episode on secular annals; but entwining them with minute and particular, embodied and incidental, constant and universal connection. How often has Infidelity herself come to learn, and correct her learning, at the archives of the christian. But for the christian Fathers, and the chroniclers of the church, even in the darkest ages, where would have been either body or spirit in the histories of Gibbon and Hume? With all their unnatural malice, and foul ingratitude to the hand that fed them, these subtle men could never repudiate the charm of the church from their pages, or dissolve the tissue in which christianity is woven with every thread of truth and interest throughout their volumes.

And what young minister of Jesus Christ can go, contented to understand but little, or nothing, of this peculiar glory, and immeasura-

ble superiority of his religion? Who, in the highest ranks of Christianity, will be rash enough to adventure now, with her credentials, in the face of an infidel and heathen world, to carry this living religion in a coffin of dead dogmas, knowing it as a mere abstraction; a system of sound philosophy, full of truths; but truths which have no vivid connection in his understanding, with times, and places, and persons, and things?

Without learning from history what the church has been, we cannot understand from prophecy what she will be. Without knowing what prophecies have been fulfilled, we cannot know what remain to be fulfilled, and much less the manner in which they are to be accomplished. "The testimony of Jesus," is no longer "beforehand," in declaring what he is, in the constitution of his person, the fitness of his offices, the nature of his kingdom, the wisdom of its administration, and the glory of its visible erection in the world. These things have all been witnessed, and actually realized, in measure at least. And it remains for us to divine the future, by collating, with intimate, accurate, and extensive knowledge, the word of prophecy, and the events which have actually fulfilled its predictions already. Thus we have at once the help of faith and reason—the double confidence, absolute promise, and actual earnest, in looking forward through time. The history of the church to this day, stands, like mount Nebo, on the verge of a "waste howling wilderness." On its summit, we see, with clear and extended prospect, the promised glory and beauty of Zion; but beneath it and behind it, we are even more precluded from the sight than our fathers were, who saw it afar off, with the single eye of a more vigorous faith. Conversely, but emphatically, it is with us as it was with "holy men of old," "the testimony of Jesus, is the spirit of prophecy." So far as we know the testimony of facts, which the annals of the church, and events of the world, have given already to the wisdom, and power, and truth, and glory of Jesus Christ, and no farther, may we expect the Spirit of prophecy to unfold, for our faith and comfort, what yet lies before us.

We shall never comprehend aright, even the character of this "perfection of beauty," without knowing her as the occupant of every age extant, without interruption, over all periods of time. The model of our knowledge, is the charter of our faith. Here the mind is not suffered to drop a solitary epoch or era, in the cycles of time. Crowded at once with review, transaction, and glorious consummation, the narrative of the past, and the announcement of the future, are one in

the burden and breath of inspiration. The historian and the prophet are the same man. Scarcely a minister from Moses to John, has written on the sacred pages, without embracing on his record, more or less, all periods of time. And shall the uninspired minister attempt to prophesy, without knowing well the past? Will he presume to do, what holy Apostles and Prophets have not done—enter the church as an expositor of the Bible, and herald of her coming glory, without the stamp of this continuity on his knowledge; attempt to direct her counsels and animate her ranks, with the assurance of coming events, when his own mind is devoid of half the links which draw the consequences that are coming—half the Savior's administration on earth—half, or all the lessons of the past; without which we can never define, or vividly perceive, a promise for the future? Without a knowledge of history, the man who attempts interpreting prophecy fulfilled, or not fulfilled, even for the humble instruction of his flock, mocks the sacred volume. He cannot know the signs of the times which are present, who is ignorant of events and their precursors in the times that are past. Faith itself, must be a dull and languid grace, when we are wilfully ignorant of the sight to which God, in his providence, has already admitted us.

It is the great error of Protestant churches, at the present day, to undervalue the past. With all our mighty movements, and eager tendencies, to carry forward the ark of God, we forget to rehearse sufficiently its renown of old; we forget that we are only descending in a series, and belonging to a mass, which has been pervaded with mightier energies than are now awake in any section of Zion; that our Fathers, with all their faults, were men of whom the world was not worthy; and we seek to animate the rising generation with a sense of its unparalleled importance, as if the day of small things were to be despised, and transmitted examples forgotten; as if human instrumentality had never been employed for any great results before, and the heroic graces of the martyr-church herself, were dim and doubtful, compared with what must now awake in the kingdom of Christ. Thus the sentiment of many a sweet song in the Bible, dies on our lips. "I will remember thy works; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." "We will not hide them from our children; showing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works which he hath done." Thus gratitude is wanting,—that good old ecclesiastical grace,—without which, God never bestows on the church any glorious manifestations of his pre-

sence and power. And can the church be grateful to God, when her ministers are ignorant of what he has done for her in the days of old?

Charity to man, as well as gratitude to God, is a fruit of historical knowledge. Christianity never expired. Vital godliness never deserted the world. Wisdom never died, with the death of the most rigid sect that ever said, "stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." We are, therefore, compelled to accredit genuine piety, in ancient forms, of more hideous deformity than a thousand modern forms, which many would unchurch, and "debar" from the visible hopes of our inheritance. Impartial history will always confound the bigotry of a true christian. Here we learn, that in the power of a steady faith in "things not seen," the intrepidity of a noble courage amidst appalling dangers, the magnanimity of self-denial, indifference to the world, costly munificence to the cause of Christ, and even scrupulous concern for every jot and tittle of canonical Scriptures, the most favored churches of the reformation now, may see themselves surpassed immeasurably, by ancient christians; who are thought, at their dim distance, to have been silly as children, and beclouded with pernicious errors. Here we learn, that their defects and ours, are alike the imperfection of human nature partially sanctified; and theirs are considered enormous, only because we are strangers to the dialect in which their sentiments are told, and the circumstances and associations in which their weakness was tried. Thus we learn to claim no absolute christianity for ourselves; and while embracing her substantial form, at every step, throughout the long territory of religious gloom behind us, hailing for our own communion, some band of pilgrims ever travelling; some lonely witness ever extant, even from Justin Martyr to Wickliffe, we learn to recognize and love the religion of Jesus now, under all its diversified banners of sectary and strife. No man can have adequate apprehension of the broad communion of saints—the extent to which God's hidden ones are sealed on earth, and the congregation which no man can number, are gathered in heaven—who is not familiar with every hue in which christianity has been discolored, and yet distinguished, through the ages that are past.

Ecclesiastical history is no less a safeguard against error. The heresies of our day have no originality. The most glaring lights of the nineteenth century shine with borrowed splendor. New Theology is but the sickly spawn of robust old heresies, which had their day in the first five or six centuries of the christian era; and which

lie confuted in dusty volumes, so ancient, that more learning is requisite to read their pages intelligently, than to invent the absurdities they were written to refute. If the elements of human nature, exhibited in the annals of the church, are fewer, and less entertaining in variety than secular annals, they are not only more useful for the stronger and deeper displays of man's heart they contain, but they are completed in a volume far sooner read—they run their cycles in a shorter period of time—their combinations of temper, and impulse, and circumstance, are much less varied and interminable; so that the pages of church history become incomparably safer as a guide and monitor for subsequent ages. The first four hundred years of the christian era, contain more ample, definite and indubitable precedents, to instruct and warn the church and christian, than all the centuries of time since the creation of the world contain, of suitable precedents to guide and admonish the state, the citizen, the soldier, or the scholar. How important such peculiarity in our annals! How unspeakably helpful to quiet, encourage, and guide the church in perilous times, to have these faithful records of the past, like beacons lighted up behind, to illuminate her onward way; to have upon her retrospect, a perfect panorama of living truths, and deadly dangers, pictured to the gaze of every faithful and enlightened son! A prophet sent from heaven, in the worst emergency, would help us less than such a monitor. Nor is it to the church alone, that it is so useful to perceive, in the wreck of what is past, the forms of error that disturb her now; but to the world, and to the rash disturbers of her peace themselves. Take from error the glory of being novel, and her charm is gone. Match her with a like, from some registry of old inventions, and she will soon be dead as the pattern itself; ugly even to the world, and a blush of shame and disappointment to heresiarchs themselves. “Is there any thing, whereof it may be said, See, this is new?”—is a challenge which does more to disenchant the fantasies that bewitch the world, than all the warnings, and reviews, and judicial condemnation, with which the church, and the world together, might strive to oppose them.

The most valuable qualities of mind, and the most ennobling properties of character, are cultivated by this study. Patience and caution, impartiality and candor, are not more the fruits of extensive observation among living men, than of acquaintance with men and things on the page of history; and these are capital qualifications in the christian ministry. But a crowning advantage, is the increase of

personal piety. "It is universally true, that he will never rightly understand the state of another's mind, who cannot reproduce it in his own." He cannot penetrate the inward character of events, which belong to the kingdom of Christ, unless that kingdom has come with power in his own heart. The body of Christ, when delineated by the man, whose own soul is not fraught with its peculiar life, from the Head in heaven, must be without form or comeliness. Among all the follies of sacrilegious presumption, none is more preposterous than the attempt of an unconverted man to chronicle the church. It is a dead man attempting to dissect a living body. There is nothing awake, congenial, responsive, in his heart, to the burden of his pen. He cannot begin to comprehend the sentiments, and motives, and sympathies, he would lay open to others; or discover where the christian spirit is, where it is wanting, where it is hidden in a veil, where it is exhibited in mask, or recognize it in any forms but such as belong to the accidents and prejudices of the age in which he lives himself. Hence, so many histories are heavy and heartless. Hence, the most brilliant periods of the past—the Reformation itself—the spirit of Luther, and his friends—the living and thrilling events of his illustrious age—seemed to have died with the actors, and to have been almost forgotten as a legend or a dream, till brought forth of late, as if by inspiration itself, from the pen of Merle D'Aubigny. It is with the reader of history, as with the writer. His success will be according to the depth and delicacy of his own religious feelings. And just as sensibility of every kind is perfected by exercise on its appropriate objects, piety is improved, in tenderness and fervor, by the response of its emotions to the faithful exhibitions of religion in history.

Such are some of the leading benefits in that department, to which my time and study are now mainly set apart, in aiding to train up an able and faithful ministry. It affords treasure for the illustration of divine truth; a knowledge of human nature in the strongest development; a right apprehension of the peculiar economy with which the ascended Savior administers his kingdom. It furnishes the mighty external evidence, that demonstrates to all men the superiority of this religion. It expounds the Scriptures already fulfilled, and unveils the destiny of Zion, by helping to interpret prophecy that is yet to be accomplished. It induces gratitude to God, charity to man, contempt of error, the best qualities of mind for every other study, and the increase of personal holiness. The arguments that urge the utility of this study, urge on us *thorough* study and profound research; and

so do many other considerations, some of which only we have time to mention.

Extensive study alone can make it pleasant, and cure the disgust we feel so often with the annals of the church. Like men of the world, in their aversion from christianity, on account of the blemishes and folly, in some particular instances, because they do not comprehend, with enlarged and patient observation, the whole economy of grace in the present life, are we in our aversion from Ecclesiastical history. It is because we are superficial and contracted readers, too narrowly informed to comprehend the scope of providence and grace in the scene before us. Let the view be extended, and deformity in particulars becomes beauty itself upon the broad expanse.

Religion in the symbol, and religion in the living man, are widely different subjects, in the way of affording pleasure to the student; different as the human body when it is living, and when it is dead, in affording pleasure to the anatomical eye. Every separate bone, and muscle, and fibre, in the subject without life, engages an interested, intelligent and protracted gaze; but the completeness and entire symmetry of form, in the living subject, must pass before the eye, or its separate members are seen without interest or pleasure. So it is in the comparative pleasure we feel with Systematic Theology and Ecclesiastical History. The history of the church is an exhibition of divine truth, embodied in living, acting forms; in no one particular person, putting forth the perfect vigor of its life; on no one particular act, putting down the stamp of its indubitable spirit; at no one particular time, bringing forth a perfect model to the generation that is passing; but, over the track of many generations, and over the extension of the universal fold, spreading a full delineation of celestial character, the beauty, and loveliness, and glory of a Spouse, bright and true enough to answer the completeness of her redemption.

It is only by extensive reading, that we obtain the principles, without which the study of history is worse than useless. In this study, beyond all others, it is true, that "a little learning is dangerous." Mighty interests are at stake, awful destinies involved, in the humblest doings of the humblest ecclesiastic; and no man is more influenced by maxims than he, none more hurried in making his maxims, and none more reluctant to open judgment again, and search to the bottom principles already assumed. It is, then, exceedingly important, that, early and vigorous efforts be made to enlarge his knowledge

of facts, the range in which his induction of principles is made, that these may be accurate and sound. At the very time, when the whole effect of a classical education is to stimulate his propensity for classification, his rage for simplifying and generalizing every thing that comes under notice, it must be disastrous to the strength and solidity of judgment, if the mind be not richly stored with the knowledge of facts. He will frame conclusions; he will be averse to lose his labor in subsequent life; and if his materials be scanty then, neither his knowledge, nor character, will ever be robust. Ever discovering, as subsequent observation is widened, the fallacy of past conclusions, he has not only blundered once, but he entertains just conclusions with a doubtfulness which weakens their hold on his mind; and the very want of confidence will make him blunder in the future; so that few men ever become safe and valuable guides to the church and the world, whose primitive judgments have not been formed on an extensive knowledge of particulars.

Here we challenge a maxim of education, current at the present day, that the great object of early education, is merely to discipline the mind for acquiring and communicating knowledge. This, indeed, is a great object, but no greater than twin to the object of imparting actual learning. Life is too short to spend the third of it in preparing to learn. The Macedonian cry is too loud, and the claims of perishing men too urgent, to lavish the early years of buoyant piety, in merely whetting instruments for work. Let us crowd the mind at once, with facts and principles, and summon all its energies to bear up with the load we lay on, leaving it to dispose aright of its stock in the future, rather than teach it to dispose of knowledge, before it is collected. Men are natural logicians, more than natural learners. There is far more certainty that men will reason well, than that they will know extensively; far more readiness to make conclusions, than to dwell upon the premises. Let us early feed the mind with actual information, trust it with the largest capital, replenish it with solid and with throng materials, and the work of discipline itself is done.

To pass a variety of other considerations, we remark once more, the study of church history should be thorough and extensive, because the mighty conflicts of the church with infidelity, and the man of sin, must begin at least on historical questions. We know already, how grievously we have suffered from the infidel, for want of as much acquaintance with the history of the church as Gibbon possessed; and it

is a monument of shame to the priesthood of all Christendom, that no ecclesiastic, since his day, could send his volumes to the world with a perfect antidote, till M. Guizot, the prime minister of France, became his annotator. And shall the minister of Jesus Christ be thus indebted to the mere civilian, for the triumphs of sacred literature? Shall we be circumvented by any learning, and much more, the learning of our own profession in the hands of our enemies? Shall we suffer them to hold, by the dint of diligence alone, what must be a fountain of life or death to a religion of history, the interpretation of her own annals? Yet the enemies of our faith, be it remembered, will never content themselves with the histories we read. If they are learned, they will be learned beyond the tuition of our text-books and translations; if they are not learned, they will be at least sagacious enough to perceive where our learning is lame, or reckless enough to risk the impudent assertion, and run the hazard of a die, between their unblushing ignorance, and our ability to confound them at every point. Learned or unlearned, infidelity has always made up an issue, which throws on us the burden of proof; an issue that must be tried again, though settled a thousand times before; and which demands, in every succeeding generation of ministers, the full and ready possession of testimony, the ample range of historical evidence, which is the only kind the world legitimates in this great controversy.

But we have other enemies now marshalled on the field, that challenge us to battle, for the very elements of the great salvation, on ground which is merely historical. Lying Rome, and learned Tractarians of Oxford, combine, to substitute for the religion of the holy Scriptures, one that is only, and altogether embodied in history; one that carries down the everlasting covenant, from the hands of its exalted administrator; from the record which contains it under seal, by the Spirit of the living God; and stretches it along a single line of historical succession, making the many millions who would look, with broad-cast hope, on blood-sprinkled promises, saved or damned, according to the chance of ecclesiastical pedigree. The arrogance of these pretensions is invading us on every side. It is an enemy that is coming in like a flood. Far as Prelacy has kept the print of her feet within the Protestant pale, there is an highway heaving up for Puseyite popery. The genius of this favored country—the spirit of our free institutions, to which it is essentially hostile, is nothing in opposing it now. Once there was a time, when Prelacy fled and

trembled at the trumpet-voice of freedom along these shores, and every fabric of hierarchy shook, as if it could no more rest on the bosom of these liberties, than its Gothic pinnacles could stand on the rocking of an earthquake; but it is not so now. A tamer spirit of liberty has come over us. The rich, the fashionable, the learned, the great; soldiers and statesmen, and constitutional lawyers, gentle demagogues themselves, who seem to love the sweet voices, and hardy palms of the dear people, are all eager to embrace forms of religion, the very opposite to the forms of our free constitutions. All the machinations of Papal Europe, to whelm our religion and liberties beneath a fearful tide of immigration, are not half so dangerous, as this phrensied zest for prelacy, in some shape, among ourselves. But amidst the manifold dangers that surround us, special dangers in this great valley of the West, hordes of foreign Papists, the defection from Presbytery of great and fashionable men, the amazing apathy of churches, which no demonstration can awake and arouse; the worst of all, is want of adequate learning in the ministry, and the deplorable haste with which men rush into this high responsibility, with less than half its indispensable qualifications. And that very accomplishment, which is most demanded in the great conflict with popery and prelacy, a thorough knowledge of Ecclesiastical History, is most neglected, is invariably slighted, wherever the course of education is not regulated by an established plan, and enforced by the vigilance and determination of Presbyteries.

Well do the confederate and accomplished adversaries understand the wretched imperfection of Protestant ministers in this great study. Here is their strength and manifest superiority. Here we must meet them in the great contest that is coming. We may content ourselves for a time in taking other ground. Our Protestant maxim, "the Bible, and nothing but the Bible," may do well enough for a flourish of trumpets, and the evolutions of a training where no battle is; but it never will bring up the strife to our position. Much must yet be done to clear the postulate. We must yet join issue far beneath it. We must convince the world, that it is no begging of the question. Wherever the hosts of Protestant people may stand, one thing is certain—Protestant ministers must go out to a campaign, in regions we have hitherto avoided, as darkened thickets and pestilential levels, the history of ancient christianity; not merely in the meagre, partial and spiritless compilations of the present day, but the original sources, the same witnesses, and authors, and decretals, that have furnished

Oxford and Rome with the religion they would palm on the world, as fuller and purer than Apostolic christianity itself. On this Ecclesiastical arena, the first battle with Popery must be fought. Here the eyes of all men are turning, with the advance of sacred literature, and the progress of the human mind; and, until the mighty decision is made on this ground, and we succeed in teaching the world the true character of Nicene and Papal christianity, our ample activity in distributing Bibles and disseminating tracts, in planting churches, in controlling fountains of education, and filling the world with the din of alarm at impending dangers, can do no more than drive an unconquered foe into his strong and chosen citadel.

In view of all this great importance of the study, you have appointed me to lead; and in view of present attainments or resources, I would tremble with diffidence, and utterly shrink from the post; but relying on the grace and merciful kindness of our adorable Master; leaning also on your kind confidence and patient indulgence, I pledge determination to give myself wholly to the work, with a hope, that I may be suffered, in my place, to render some substantial benefit to our beloved church, and through her, to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, wherever it extends.