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## THE LOUISVILLE ASSEMBLY.

(Continued.)

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So far this review has treated of only two of the acts of the Louisville Assembly, the inauguration of the new scheme of Systematic Beneficence, and the "North Alabama Case." In connection with the latter it ought to have been noted that a strong "protest" against the Assembly's action is found in the Minutes, signed by the Rev. Dr. W. P. McCorkle and others. This protest covers substantially the ground taken in this review.

Proceeding with the study of the minutes we find:

III. The question of the proper mode of selecting commissioners to the General Assembly, which has been needing the attention of the Church for several years, now getting some consideration. It may be accepted as axiomatic that when Presbyteries select commissioners to the Assembly, their choice should be governed by a consideration of the qualifications of the men to take part in the serious business of the Assembly. The qualifications are such as these: sound judgment, knowledge of Church law and practice, aptitude for deliberative and ecclesiastical work, mature experience, acquaintance with the subjects that will probably come before the body, and, of course, representative Christian character. But what in fact is the practice of the Presbyteries? Are they controlled by such considerations? Has it not come to be the rule (with

# A GLANCE AT THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA<sup>1</sup>

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A prefatory remark or two will be in place. First, then, let it be distinctly understood that this paper does not profess to be more than a glance at the large and important topic with which it deals. If it excites sufficient interest to provoke to some further investigation, its end will have been accomplished. Let me further say that I trust that the reader, especially if he chances to be a theological student, or a young minister recently from the seminary, will not turn from this discussion as one having neither interest nor practical importance for him. Long experience has convinced me that a recent remark of Dr. Francis L. Patton is only too true. He says:

“The practical value of much that is taught in the theological seminary is sometimes challenged, I doubt not, even by very good students; and their skepticism on this head arises principally out of the fact, so at least I believe, that they do not see the relations which the several parts of theological instruction sustain to each other.”<sup>2</sup>

What is known may not be interesting, but what is unknown cannot be. The fact is however that we know things in relation. We know them therefore when we know their relations. True everywhere, this is also true of the several

<sup>1</sup>No apology, I trust, is needed for the use of this somewhat unfamiliar term. If so, perhaps the very best that can be offered lies in the fact that the sooner the term itself and that branch of theological learning for which it stands become thoroughly familiar, the better. For the sake of younger readers, for whose benefit, by the way, this paper is specially written, it may be proper to say that Theological Encyclopaedia has for its function to represent and explain the inner organization of the science of theology, “its divisions, and the relations of these divisions, both to each other reciprocally, and to the system as a whole.” *Schaff-Herzog sub voce*. 1st. 3d by Funk & Wagnalls.

<sup>2</sup>*Princeton Theol. Rev.*, Jan., 1904, p. 111.

parts of an organized course of study. Each of these parts is truly known, or at any rate, best known only when it is known in the relations which it sustains to the others. Hence, in order to a just conception of the importance of any branch of theological study, it will be necessary to get as clear an idea as may be possible of its position and its relations in the science of Theology as a whole. And this, of course, means that we must have before our minds some idea or notion of theology *as a whole*. Even a bare outline of the subject tentatively held will be better than no idea at all of its scope and main divisions. Such an outline is all that is here proposed. My plan will be to set before the reader in tabulated form some of the schemes that have been suggested for the distribution and correlation of the studies that have been or should be embraced in a full exposition of the science of Theology. To these will be added such comments and criticisms as the case may call for, though these from the necessities of space and time alike will have to be of the briefest.

#### DEFINITIONS OF THEOLOGY.

Obviously our starting point must be some definition of Theology itself. For Dr. Patton truly says that "one's fundamental conception of theology itself will inevitably determine his distribution of theological material."<sup>3</sup> Theology, then, has been defined to be "The science of God"; or, more fully, "The whole science of God's being, nature, and relations to his creatures."<sup>4</sup> Over against this we have the definition, presently more current, no doubt, "Theology is the science of religion."<sup>5</sup> Just here, of course, it would be in order to enter somewhat fully upon the merits of these respective definitions. But for

<sup>3</sup>*Prin. Theo. Rev. ut sup.*

<sup>4</sup>*Dabney's Theology*, Vol. I, p. 5. In substantial agreement with this are the definitions of Dr. Chas. Hodge (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 21); Dr. Shedd (*Theology*, Vol. I, p. 17), and Dr. A. H. Strong, of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y. (*Theol.*, p. 1).

<sup>5</sup>So Dr. Thornwell, but with a definition of "religion" that separates him *toto coelo* from the great majority of those who to-day hold to this definition (*Collected Writings*, Vol. I, p. 36); Prin. A. Cave, an English Independent. (*Introd. to Theol. and Its Lit.*, p. 43); *Schaff-Herzog Ency.* (art. Theology); Prof. Robt. Flint, of Scotland (art. *Theology, Ency. Brit.*), and many others.

this I have neither time nor space. For a defense of the definition that makes theology "the science of God" and objections to defining it to be "the science of religion," the reader must be referred to the writings of Drs. Hodge, Shedd and Strong. And for an answer to these objections, and an argument for the competing definition, he may examine the very able article by Prof. Flint already referred to.<sup>6</sup>

Personally, my study of the argument of Prof. Flint and the remarks of Dr. Thornwell, for the latter enters into no argument, has led me to the conclusion that these distinguished thinkers themselves being witnesses, the definition that makes theology "the science of God" is to be preferred. If for no other reason, this, it seems to me, follows from the fact that theology and religion are as distinct as cause and effect: are in fact, under a normal moral conditions of things, related as cause and effect. Further to define theology to be "the science of religion" plunges us at once into the interminable—though, for my part, I am bound to think, needless—strife and confusion that has gathered around the definition of religion. Finally—unless the definition of religion be that given by Dr. Thornwell, which, though true, would to-day find scant recognition—to define theology to be "the science of religion" tends to obscure the paramount importance of the Bible as the great source of theology, and to keep us forever among the evidences, and so, practically, at last to leave us neither time nor place for religion. Of this tendency we get at least an inkling when Principal Cave, after defining theology as "the science of religion," says:

"Thus, according to the intention of the writer or speaker, theology may be the science of God (theology proper), or the science of God and man in their mutual relations, past, present and future (doctrinal theology), or the science of all the facts of the Christian religion without restriction to doctrines (Christian theology), or even the science of any religion (theology in general)."

<sup>6</sup>*Supra*, p. Dr. Thornwell (*l. c.*) also has some very instructive remarks upon the subject in connection with his definition.

<sup>7</sup>Intro. to Theol. and its lit.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THEOLOGICAL DICIPLINES.

Pursuing the plan already indicated, I shall now proceed to present in tabular form some of the principal schemes that have been proposed for the distribution and classification of the matter of theology, using that term in the wide sense, according to which it takes in the whole science of theology, rather than in the narrower, in which it is limited to systematic theology. Here my aim will be to give a sufficient number of representative schemes to insure satisfactory information and to furnish the basis for a fair comparison, and an intelligent judgment. At this point it will be proper to ask, What are the criteria that ought to control our estimate of the worth of any proposed distribution? Without attempting an exhaustive enumeration, the following may be mentioned: (1) The principle upon which the classification proceeds ought to be clear, and ought also to be consistently adhered to. (2) The distribution ought "to represent and explain the inner organization of the science of theology," and to do this not merely must it give the principal divisions of the science, but also show "the relations of these divisions, both to each other reciprocally, and to the system as a whole." (3) It ought to be natural, simple, climatic.

**Principal Cave's Distribution.**

We may begin with the distribution proposed by Principal Cave. It is as follows:

<p>I. Natural Theology or Science of Natural Religion.</p> <p>II. Ethnic Theology or Science of Ethnic Religion.</p> <p>III. Biblical Theology or Science of Biblical Religion.</p> <p>IV. Ecclesiastical Theology or Science of Religion in the Christian Church.</p> <p>II. The Introduction of Comparative Theology; or Comparison of the preceding data constructs a system of Theological Truth.</p> <p>III. Application of Comparative Theology; or Pastoral Theology.</p>	<p>I. Biblical Introduction; or the means for obtaining dates for Biblical Theology.</p> <p>II. Biblical Exegesis; or the data of Biblical Theology.</p> <p>III. Biblical Exegesis applied specifically; or the Introduction of Biblical Theology.</p> <p>I. Fundamental Theology; or Science which deals with the relative value and authority of the sources.</p> <p>II. Doctrinal Theology.</p>	<p>1. Biblical Canonics.</p> <p>2. Biblical Text Criticism.</p> <p>3. Biblical Philology.</p> <p>4. Biblical Archaeology.</p> <p>5. Biblical Literary Criticism. High Criticism.</p> <p>6. Hermeneutics.</p> <p>1. Biblical History.</p> <p>2. Biblical Dogmatics.</p> <p>3. Biblical Ethics.</p>
<p>I. The Data for Comparative Theology.</p>		

[Introduction to Theology and its Literature p. 249.]

Even though we reject this distribution, and it seems to me that we must, the classification will repay careful inspection. For one thing, it is worth noting that according to this distribution, pastoral theology, though last in enumeration, in reality constitutes the climax of the science of theology. And though one must of course protest against the narrowness and infelicity of the term "Pastoral Theology" to designate the climax and crown of our science, we should not fail to recognize the fact that the idea underlying the use of this unfortunate nomenclature is correct. For whether we define theology as "the science of religion" or "the science of God," we cannot too sedulously remember that we do not live either naturally or spiritually in order to theologize, but on the contrary, theology is the means and life the end. Dr. Thornwell implies this when he says: "The doctrine, to use the expressive analogy of St. Paul, is the mould, and religion the image that it leaves on the heart, which the Holy Spirit has softened to receive the impression."<sup>8</sup>

More serious are such defects as the following:

Dr. Cave's nomenclature is novel rather than felicitous. Basing upon a definition which makes theology "the science of religion," and failing to recognize the fact that, while there are cults many, of gods many, and of lords many, there is but one religion that is such in reality, it produces the impression—unwholesome because untrue—that there are as many religions as there are heathen cults. Superficially scientific in the comprehensiveness of its data, Dr. Cave's scheme overlooks the fact that where spurious data are foisted upon it, science suffers both in reality and in reputation. Further, this scheme virtually reduces the major portion of the science of theology to a mere prolegomena to pastoral theology. And, not to multiply objections to too great length, it greatly, if not hopelessly, obscures the relative, to say nothing of the essential importance of what it calls "Biblical Theology," or what is more felicitously named by Dr. George F. Moore "Revealed Theology." But enough carping.

<sup>8</sup>*Coll. Writ.*, Vol. I, p. 36.

**Dr. Patton's Distribution.**

I shall now present to my readers a distribution of theology, so recently proposed by Dr. Francis L. Patton in his inaugural address, when he was inducted into the office of President of Princeton Theological Seminary.<sup>9</sup> In certain important respects it is easily superior to any scheme that has so far come under my observation. Let me preface the presentation of it with the words with which Dr. Patton himself introduces it:

“In organizing the Theological Disciplines, I proceed upon the postulate, that man knows God through his reason, that God has superadded to the light of nature the revelation of himself in the Bible, and that this enlarged and corrected knowledge is embodied in the Church.

“The materials for all our theological knowledge are to be found, therefore, in these three sources: the Reason, the Bible, the Church. We shall accordingly have Rational Theology, Scriptural Theology, and Ecclesiastical Theology. Assuming now that our point of view is that of the Reformed Theology, it is obvious that the body of belief involved in these disciplines just mentioned stands antithetically related to opposing views, and that it will be necessary to carry on a systematic defense of that theology, first, against those who assail our reformed position from within the Church, and, secondly, against those who assail Christianity from without. Accordingly, we shall have Polemic Theology and Apologetic Theology.

“And yet again the need will be felt of gathering into one compact system the results of all these disciplines in a body of divinity which will represent the sum total of theological inquiry. This will be Systematic Theology. I do not claim any minute acquaintance with the Hegelian philosophy, and I do not profess any great regard for it; but it is evident that in the scheme which I propose the dominant words are those which have such a large place in Hegelian literature—Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis.”<sup>10</sup>

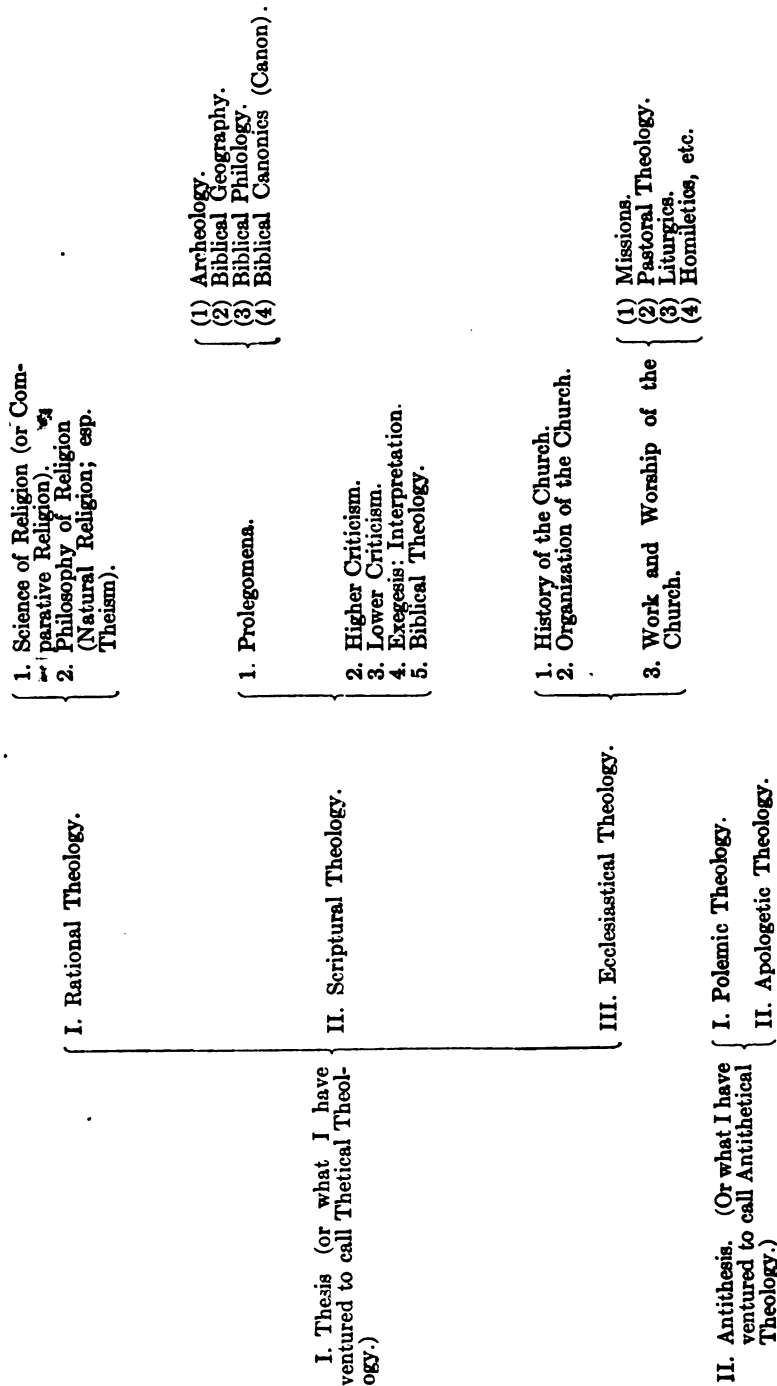
<sup>9</sup>*Princeton Theological Review*, Jan., 1904.

<sup>10</sup>*Prin. Theol. Rev.*, *ut sup.*, p. 114.



It is hard to think of anything surpassing this statement for crystalline clearness and logical coherence. At each step the principle upon which the distribution proceeds is perfectly obvious. Thus the threefold major divisions into what—if Dr. Patton will not sue me for damages—I am disposed to call Thetical Theology, Antithetical Theology, and Synthetical Theology, is grounded in the characteristic features of the several parts of the material of the science itself. And so the distribution into Rational Theology, Scriptural Theology, and Ecclesiastical Theology, grounds itself very naturally in the different nature of the sources from which in each case the material is derived.

As elaborated into its details by Dr. Patton, the scheme is as follows:



III. Synthesis. (Or what

I have ventured to  
call Synthetic Theol-  
ogy.\*)

Systematic Theology.

- 1. Ethics.
- 2. Dogmatics.

\*Dr. Patton's distribution is not very clear here.

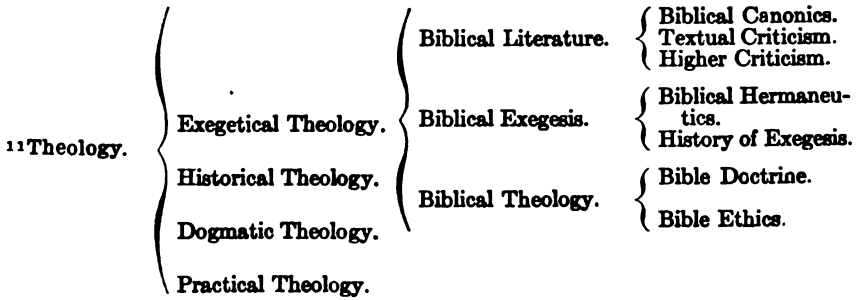
It is due to Dr. Patton to say that, in this outline I have not in every instance employed his exact word or words. I believe, however, that the instances in which I have taken any liberties with his terms will be found to be few and unimportant.

I trust that I shall not be esteemed presumptuous in criticizing a scheme proceeding from such a source, nor captious in criticizing some features of that which appeal to us so promptly and take hold upon us so strongly. I must venture to think, however that while Dr. Patton's distribution is a real advance upon that of Dr. Briggs—to be presented later—it is itself open to very similar objections. For one thing, is not reason the instrument by which, rather than a source from which we obtain our knowledge of God? Of course, considered as a part of the general scheme or system that we call "Nature," reason is also a true source of the knowledge of God. But most certainly Dr. Patton did not intend reason to stand in his distribution as a synonym for "Nature," a part for the whole. Further, I am bound to question both the felicity of the term "Ecclesiastical Theology" as here used, and the justice of the notion that the Church—except, of course, in so far as it is a phenomenon either of God's special or general providence, that is to say, a historical phenomenon—is a source of our knowledge of God. But, obviously, if this last point is well taken, Dr. Patton has simply restored "Historical Theology" to his scheme under a new and questionable name. Finally, and this perhaps is after all the gravest objection from a practical point of view, his distribution, it seems to me, errs in stressing too heavily the speculative aspects of theology. This it does by making systematic rather than practical theology (I would use this term in a broader sense than that frequently given it) the goal and climax of the science. But the knowledge of God reaches its highest and only really complete expression in life—the life of godliness. For not only is it true that we know in order to be, to love, to serve; not only is it true that knowledge here implies spiritual life, and exists for the sustenance of spiritual life; but it is further

true—a point never to be obscured or lost sight of—that the knowledge itself is perfected and augmented by being assimilated by the living soul and expressed in terms of its life.

**Dr. Briggs' Distribution.**

Beside those of Principal Cave and Dr. Patton, we may now place Dr. Briggs' distribution of the matter of theology, viz.:



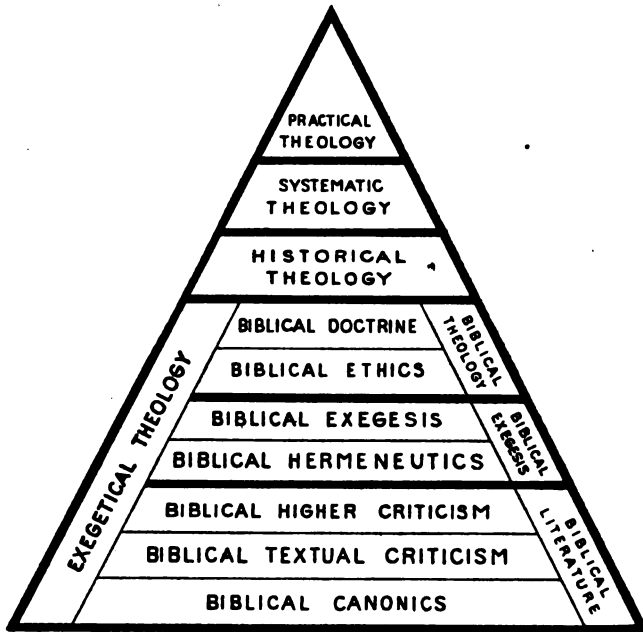
This—at least as to its fourfold main division—besides being, perhaps, the most common distribution of the matter of theology,<sup>12</sup> is one that pleases by its apparent simplicity and its practical utility. Any one possessing even the most superficial acquaintance with the several disciplines usually covered by a theological curriculum will find no difficulty in grouping them under one or another of Dr. Briggs' main heads. Further, it discloses very clearly the intimate interrelation of the several divisions into which theology falls. Further still, it readily admits of being diagrammed,<sup>13</sup> so as to bring out the varying relative importance of the several disciplines of which it is composed. Thus, the scheme is thrown into the form of a

<sup>11</sup>*Biblical Study* Chapters 2 and 11.

<sup>12</sup>Not to mention other names, this fourfold division is adopted by *Schaff-Herzog Ency.*; *Theological Encyclopaedia*; A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 21, and Hagenback (who substitutes for *Practical* the term *Pastoral* Theology).

<sup>13</sup>Some, perhaps, will regard diagramming as a return to questionable grammar school methods, and as a needless indignity to the "Queen of the Sciences," not to say to the intelligence of the reader. If so, I crave pardon.

pyramid, the eye itself reveals the fact that, while from one point of view Practical Theology is the discipline first for importance, being that for which all the rest exist, from another equally legitimate viewpoint, the place of first importance belongs to Exegetical Theology, it being the discipline without which none of the rest could exist.



Widely as this distribution is accepted, and much as can be said in its favor, it is certainly not beyond criticism. For one thing, the *fundamentum divisionis* upon which it proceeds is far from clear. In this respect it stands in marked contrast with a distribution recently proposed by Dr. Francis L. Patton.<sup>14</sup>

Again, whether it be a conclusive objection or not, there is certainly force in Dr. Patton's stricture on the term "Historical Theology," when he says:

<sup>14</sup>*Princeton Theol. Rev.*, Jan., 1904.

“But what is Historical Theology? And if the development of doctrine in the post-biblical period is put down under Historical Theology, why is the development of doctrine within the biblical period cut off from the domain of Historical Theology and erected into a separate department, called Exegetical Theology?”<sup>15</sup>

There is justice also in Prof. Flint’s objection that “so-called Exegetical Theology” “is in all its departments simply” “an instrumental and introductory” discipline. To exalt it, therefore, into a principal division of theology is obviously a mistake. Indeed, when this common distribution of the matter of theology represented in Dr. Briggs’ scheme is looked at carefully, it will be found that Prof. Flint has grounds for saying:

“But this is merely external classification. It may be faultless of its kind, but it cannot of itself yield more than a superficial and mechanical arrangement of the theological sciences. Theology, to be scientifically surveyed and distributed, must be viewed as a unity, and all its parts must be shown to be included in it, and to have a definite place in it from its very nature and definition, as the science or philosophy of religion” (or the science of God). “Their relationship to one another must be determined by their relation to the whole of which they are parts, to that science or rather philosophy which treats of religion” (or God) “as a whole. They can only be unified and co-ordinated in a truly organic manner by a due reference to religion” (or the knowledge of God), “and consequently proper inclusion and location in the philosophy of religion” (or science of God).

In spite, however, of these objections to the distribution proposed by Dr. Briggs—and in my judgment there is much of force and validity in them—I think it safe to affirm that his scheme is likely to continue to hold a place, if not the place of prominence in popular favor. And if it is held tentatively and with due recognition of its somewhat artificial character, it will be found very useful. But here this discussion must for the present arrest.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

*Ency. Brit.*, up sup., Vol. XXIII, p. 272.