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HEBREWS, THE EPISTLE OF THE DIATHEKE

So far we have considered the Epistle's idea of revelation only from the practical point of view.* It has, however, a more theoretical side and this also shows the influence of the covenant-conception. More than any other New Testament document Hebrews develops what might be called a philosophy of the history of revelation. This is partly due to the fact that the writer is theologically inclined in general, and evidently attaches importance to the doctrinal presentation of the Christian faith. It would be a mistake to explain this from speculative tendencies followed for their own sake. Of a purely scholastic interest there is no trace whatever. But the writer entertains a firm belief in the effectiveness of doctrinal enlightenment as a remedial method where the soundness and balance of practical Christianity are endangered. We certainly gain the impression that from the outset he brings to the writing of the Epistle a well-defined doctrinal conception of the structure of the Christian religion. It can cause no wonder that, when a mind of this cast is led to occupy itself with the history of revelation, as is actually the case in our Epistle, a more or less philosophical or theological construction of the history of revelation results. We should, moreover, remember, that from the very earliest times the covenant-idea stood not merely in the service of revealed religion in general, but had also lent itself to the very particular use of marking the historic progress of the movement of redemption and special revelation. The successive stages of God's redemptive and revealing work in the pre-Christian era are measured by successive covenants, each introducing new forces and principles and each imparting to the ensuing

* In this REVIEW, 1915 (xiii), pp. 587-632.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A PREACHER*

It is with sincere pleasure that I undertake to discharge the duty laid upon me by the Board of Directors in connection with your installation into the chair of Homiletics in this Seminary. With more than the usual and polite meaning of the words I offer you my hearty congratulations. I would at this time do more than felicitate you upon your election, and pray the blessing of Almighty God upon you and your labors in this Seminary. You have been greatly honored in the Church of your fathers. You have been chosen to the professorship of an important chair in this great theological school. You will have the inestimable privilege of intimate comradeship and fellowship with the rare men who constitute the faculty.

The Board of Directors in seeking a successor to the great teachers who have filled the chair of Homiletics in Princeton Seminary have chosen you because of the distinguished services you have rendered in eminent pulpits, and because of your qualifications to teach the subject of your department. Having heard you during the past summer deliver a truly great course of lectures on the subject of preaching, I am the more competent, as representing the Board of Directors, to congratulate the Seminary on your coming to be a member of its faculty, and to give expression to their high and confident hopes concerning the work you will be able to do. In consummating the election and carrying out the will of the Board of Directors, this inauguration service is now held.

The discipline of Homiletics has always had an honorable place in the curriculum of the Theological Seminary. There is no need to vindicate its rights here, nor to emphasize its proportionate importance, neither would it be fitting for me to enter into a discussion of the relation of Homiletics to Rhetoric nor to discriminate between the importance of

* The charge to the Reverend J. Ritchie Smith, D.D., on the occasion of inauguration as Professor of Homiletics in Princeton Theological Seminary.

regarding it as a science or as an art. The discipline has its recognized and sufficient place in the curriculum of this Seminary, and its usefulness is not questioned by any.

In a peculiar and unique way the professor of this department comes into an intimate and sympathetic understanding of his students. The revelation that a student makes of his personality, his knowledge, and the method by which his mind works, as he externalizes his inner consciousness in the sermon he produces, is perhaps fuller and more intimate in this department than in any recitations he may make in other class rooms. A man can recite Hebrew or Greek or History or Theology, and give satisfaction to the professor, without revealing much of himself; but, as he brings his own interpretation of the Word of God in a sermon, he inevitably declares what manner of man he is. This gives to the professor of Homiletics great assistance in his dealing with individual students.

I desire in the very brief time that ought to be used by me on this occasion to suggest two or three ideas which, I think, the present conditions in the life and work of the Church make worthy of your consideration.

I would charge you, first, to teach students the supreme dignity and greatness of the office and functions of the ministry. Dr. Loetscher said a very true thing when he wrote "After all, the greatest problem of Homiletics is not the making of the sermon, but the making of the preacher." The distinct preparation of a man for the ministry begins with the call of God to him in his own soul. The minister does not choose preaching as his profession in the same way and from the same motives that other men ordinarily choose their life work. However it comes—whether from an impulse that began at his mother's knee, or from the knowledge of the world's need pressed in upon his soul, or from the gradual crystalization of the vague yearnings of his heart into solemn conviction—ultimately, the man called of God comes to feel "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." In the full, unre-

served surrender he makes of his life and the totality of his powers, he is brought into the goodly fellowship of the prophets and apostles and martyrs, and into a new and closer relation with his Saviour. Like the true soldier, he awaits his orders as to where and when he will do his work. In the glory and privilege of the high calling, when his eyes have once seen the vision of his ministry as an ambassadorship for Christ, he is ready to face discouragement, hardship, or death if need be, or live a sober, righteous and godly life in the midst of an ease-loving and worldly generation.

It is my belief that most students for the ministry come to the Seminary with this high ideal before them. The Professor of Homiletics has a peculiar opportunity and responsibility to keep this ideal undimmed and unfading. It is true that we hear from many quarters the statement that the power of the pulpit is waning and the interest in sermons is dead. God has not only pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save men. He has also made men so that they need and require the preaching of the gospel. As long as the heart has passions, as long as death breaks the sweetest ties of life and love, as long as the hope of immortal life burns in the human soul, so long will the world have need of men who have been set apart to a holy calling, and who are the representatives of God's everlasting righteousness and infinite love.

I charge you, in the second place, that you teach your students the essential elements of a sermon. In the multiplicity of good works and workers, men are losing sight of what a sermon really is. In the feverish activity of the present age, in the appeals and clamors for recognition and appreciation from so many organizations and movements, the Church is being pressed to surrender the sermon from its services—to put in its stead something else, until the very sources of power and benevolence are endangered. An interesting talk on a question of ethics or morals or political righteousness is not a sermon. Neither is an ora-

tion, nor a lecture, nor an essay a sermon. A sermon has been defined by Dr. Patton to be "a rhetorical organism evolved by a genetic process from a text of Scripture, and standing in vital and obvious relation to it." It may have the learning and the force and the beauty of other forms of literature or elocution, but it is distinguished from them in that it is drawn from and depends upon a passage of Scripture. It is a structure which is orderly and complete, having a beginning and a middle and an end. Its relation to the Scriptures is vital and essential. Sages and philosophers, even in pagan and heathen countries, can praise the excellence of truth and point to the shining heights of purity and virtue, but only the preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ can show the way and the power in which sinful men are to walk to attain these things.

There is an unfailing freshness about the sermon that truly sets forth the thought or the doctrine or the duty which the Holy Spirit meant to teach in that particular text. The serious life work of the preacher is preaching. There is a vital relation between the pulpit and the doctrine of justification by faith. In the Protestant Church the preacher has no authority nor sanctity except as he proclaims the Word of the Lord. Life is too short, and death is too near for the minister of the gospel to fail to preach a sermon as the opportunity is given to him.

I charge you, in the third place, that you teach your students how to preach the Word of God to sinful men. In order to preach with power they must believe the Word of God. They must preach as if they believed the Word, and preach so as to lead others to believe and obey. Here every talent and all the strength and time and patience you have, and all the skill that comes from your knowledge of the individual student, will not be too much. It may seem presumptuous for me to make suggestions to you, but I venture to make one that I am assured will meet with your approval. It is, that the students be required to preach as much as possible during their course. The artist must learn technique as well as understand theories.

Finally, I charge you to be true to the New Testament conception of preaching; to be true to your own high ideals of preaching which you have been able to hold and manifest through the years; to be true to the needs of the sinful world; to be true to these young men who have come to this institution for their preparation, whose usefulness on earth, and whose reward in heaven, will depend, in some measure, upon the way you teach them to preach the everlasting gospel.

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