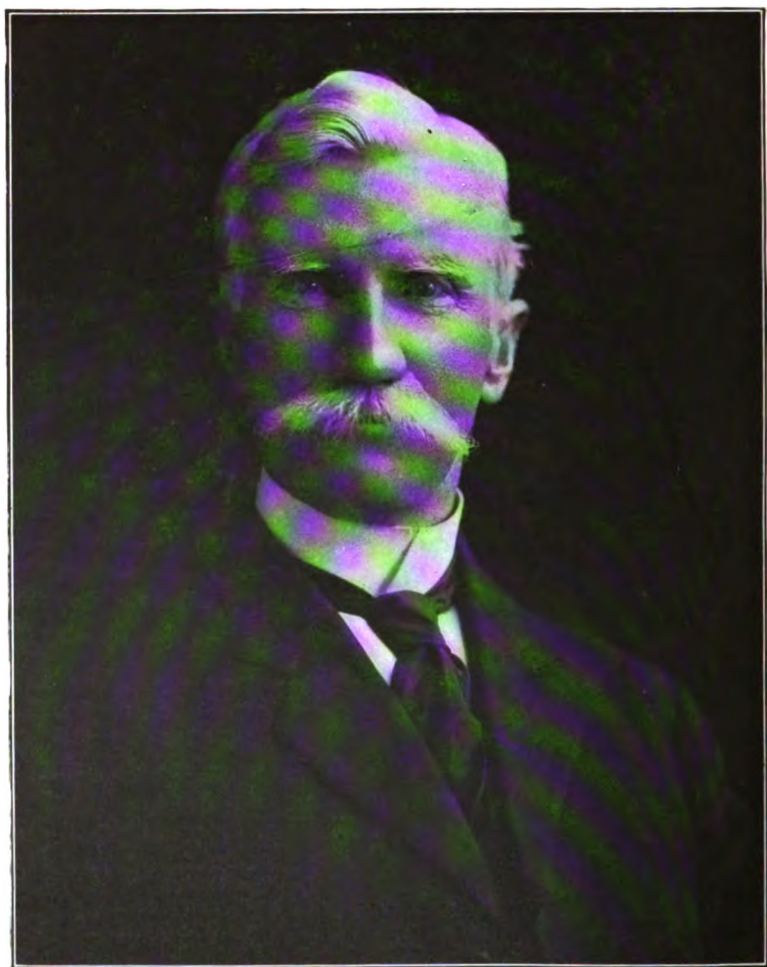




JAMES SPRUNT, LL. D.

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The UNION SEMINARY REVIEW takes pleasure in presenting to its readers a cut of Dr. James Sprunt, whose article on *The Restoration of Jerusalem* appears in this number, and proposes, without his knowledge or permission, to publish herewith a brief sketch of this versatile man of affairs and large hearted Christian gentleman, to whom our institution is so deeply indebted.

ANCESTRY.

In 1812 Laurence Sprunt, a farmer in Perthshire, Scotland, married Christiana McDonald, daughter of a Highland family, whose brother, John McDonald, was a prosperous planter in Jamaica. They had three children, Alexander, James Menzies, and Isabella, all of whom were educated in Edinburgh. After his graduation, Alexander became a partner in the firm of Reed, Irving & Co., of London and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, off the coast of Venezuela. As junior partner he had personal charge of the business at Trinidad, where his sterling qualities were promptly recognized. As early as 1841 he is spoken of as a merchant of high standing, a Queen's commissioner, or magistrate, and a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad. Through reverses following the British emancipation of slaves, his property was swept away, and after some ineffectual efforts in Scotland to re-establish himself, he moved to North Carolina, whither his brother, Rev. James M. Sprunt, D. D., afterwards well known as pastor at Kenansville, principal of

THE JAMES SPRUNT LECTURES AT UNION SEMINARY IN VIRGINIA FOR THE YEAR NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINETEEN.

BY THE REVEREND PROFESSOR THERON H. RICE, LL. D.,
Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

It is well known by this time that one of the munificences of Dr. James Sprunt is a lectureship at Union Seminary, Richmond, Va., of the same general character as the famous Bampton Lectures at Oxford, England.

The lecturer for nineteen hundred and nineteen was Reverend George Campbell Morgan, D. D., until recently of London, but at present making his home in the United States of America.

The lectures were on The Ministry of the Word, and they are published, carrying that title, by the Fleming H. Revell Company.

People are going to be glad that Dr. Morgan, being Dr. Morgan, chose just that subject. Whenever a man who has succeeded in doing a difficult thing eminently well chooses to talk of how the thing is done, all of us are eager to hear what he has to say, especially if we are of the same craft.

Now Dr. Morgan has devoted a lifetime to the ministry of the Word. Not the least interesting paragraphs in the lectures are the ones in which he sketches (very briefly) his personal history as a preacher, that we may have, as he says, "the facts concerning the experiences which must affect my thinking." Having mentioned them to dismiss them, he adds: "I trust they will be as little obvious as possible, and that our consideration may be wholly conditioned within Biblical light."

That last quotation is very significant. It not only indicates the source from which the teaching of these lectures is to be

derived, but it is an echo of Dr. Morgan's whole ministry, which has been in an unusual degree a ministry of exposition, an opening of the Scriptures.

We think we may safely assert that the supreme interest of this man's life has been to discover the meaning of God's Book. In the choice of a theme for these lectures and in the development of that theme he cannot get away from that master passion. From beginning to end he is just expounding the Word of God to us on this topic.

In the actual discharge of his function as Sprunt lecturer, Dr. Morgan adopted a very effective method. It was an afterthought, but everybody welcomed it. He had expected to occupy the ten hours allotted to the lectures with the reading of the discussion which appears in the printed book. His method actually adopted, however, was to compress the delivery of this material into five hours, thus redeeming five hours for an illustration of the method of preaching for which the lectures (and the lecturer) stand. We got, therefore, not only the lectures proper, but five delightful expositions of passages from the Gospel according to John, dealing with our Lord's way of dealing with men. We are sorry that those who will read the printed lectures alone cannot hope to get as much as those who attended in person the delivery of the course.

It is not proposed in this brief article to examine minutely the volume before us; there is no space for an extended review, and we have no heart for it. We love the man. He has blessed us. We are not disposed to dissect his work.

Some things of a general character we do want to say. In the first place, who can fail to rejoice in the devotion of this man to the Word of God? How he values it, searches it, ponders it, toils to understand it and then to make it clear to others! Dr. Jno. A. Broadus, in writing of the sort of preparation which ministers need for successful expository preaching, says we must love, above all things to ponder and talk about the meaning of God's Word. He adds: "We have a great multiplication of commentaries, and an immense amount

of more or less real study of the Scriptures in Sunday schools, we have many more ministers than formerly who know something of the original languages, but there is reason to fear that the close, thoughtful, lovingly patient study of the Bible is less common among the ministry now than it once was. As to conversation about the meaning of this or that passage, such as once abounded when preachers were thrown together, it has gone out of fashion. A man who should raise such a question now among a group of ministers, sojourning together during the session of some association or convention, would be almost stared at." Dr. Morgan is reassuring on that point. One feels that he could introduce the subject of the meaning of a passage of Scripture in a conversation with Dr. Morgan and be sure of the heartiest response. Here is a man who lives in his Bible.

And, in the next place, who can fail to see that it is this "close, thoughtful, loving patient study of the Bible," which gives Dr. Morgan's preaching its charming freshness? The readers of the printed lectures will notice how he insists on a re-examination for himself at first hand of every capital text or word of Scripture which he is using. No matter how common and simple the word is, it is put under the microscope. And then there is an attempt to state the findings in terms which set forth the impression made on the mind by the first-hand examination.

We shall never forget an incident which occurred in Atlanta, when Campbell Morgan was lecturing at the Tabernacle Conference, held in that city for a number of years in the month of March. A minister was on the platform, in the seat next to me. Morgan had delivered a message of great power, we had had the benediction and were about to go out. This minister, my neighbor on the platform, looked into my face, I looked into his. There was a remarkable expression on his countenance. Something deep down in him had been waked up. His reserve was gone, his soul was in his eyes. He was never a man of many words. He said to me then just this:

"A living voice. No echo." And that is so. Campbell Morgan's views are those he has wrought out for himself, not assimilated from other people.

That is not to say that his views are not held by a great number of others. He is remarkably accordant with the voice of the great company of loyal interpreters of the Word of God. But he gets the truth out for himself and it has the living quality of all such derivations.

At times he does provoke dissent. He desires Berean hearers, men and women who examine the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so. In these lectures there are a number of things which we suspend our judgment on, and some on which we feel that Dr. Morgan is mistaken, when tried by the consensus of inspired testimony. But with respect to such points our feeling is that the delightful thing would be to sit down with Dr. Morgan and talk about such questions, sure of his eagerness to know just the truth, and ourselves ready to be led into the truth if astray. If a man likes a book that wakes him up and sets him searching his Bible he will like this book.

It may whet the appetite of some reader of the Review if we reproduce here the table of contents of the volume. We venture to give it, though it has been published in the religious weeklies more than once:

- I. The fundamental conceptions.
 - A. The Ministry.
 - B. The Word.
- II. The primitive ideal.
 - A. The Word as the Truth of the Apostle.
 - B. The Word as the Burden of the Prophet.
 - C. The Word as the Gospel of the Evangelist.
 - D. The Word as the Wisdom of the Pastor and Teacher.
- III. The modern application.
 - A. The Changed Conditions.
 - B. The Unchanged Obligation.
 - C. The Preparation of the Ministry.
 - D. The Exercise of the Vocation.

These three sections are preceded by a prologue in which are considered by way of introduction, the title, "The Ministry of the Word," and the setting of the phrase. They are followed by an epilogue, suggesting the first responsibility, Prayer.

Just one more transcription from these pages, as reflecting the spirit of the man. It is part of his dedication.

Dedicated reverently and gladly to THE WORD OF GOD, MY LORD AND SAVIOUR, whose gift of grace has been my only equipment for the ministry of the Word; and whose tender and long-suffering love and patience have borne with, and overruled, all my derelictions in the exercise thereof. If, in the further exercise of that astonishing, amazing grace, He will use this exposition to help my younger brethren in the sacred office, then will my heart be glad.