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OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1913.

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EDITORIAL

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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXV. OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1913. No. 1.

DR. GIVENS BROWN STRICKLER.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR THOMAS C. JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

Givens Brown Strickler was born April 25, 1840, at Strickler's Springs (now Wilson's Springs), Rockbridge County, Virginia, of a lineage marked for strength and character. He was a son of Joseph Strickler and Mary Jane Brown, his wife.

Joseph Strickler was devoted to politics, and ambitious for his sons to take a leading part in the affairs of state. His grandfather—the first of his line in this country—was a minister of the Lutheran Church, a preacher of considerable power, who had migrated from Holland into this new world.

Mary Jane Brown Strickler was a comely woman, full of energy, firm in the discipline of her family, and pious. She early began the religious training of her children in the best fashion of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. To their great loss she died while her children were still young.

Givens Brown Strickler had two brothers, the younger of whom died early. The older brother, the eldest member of the family, was a youth of great parts. He was handsome and attractive in person and gifted in mind and heart. Dr. George Junkin wrote of this young man, Cyrus Strickler: He "was a very rare sample of superior talent, used in a most zealous and affectionate manner." His life was lost to his country and to the ministry in the first battle of Manassas.

The subject of this sketch had also two sisters, one of whom—Miss Virginia M. Strickler, of the Mary Baldwin Seminary—

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL REFORMS.

BY THE REV. PRESIDENT THORNTON WHALING, D. D., LL. D.

This is the title of a book recently published by Dr. J. R. Howerton, professor of philosophy in Washington and Lee University. It is a timely book. Our day is marked by a deep interest in the Social Aspects of Christianity. The new science of Sociology is even now in process of development. More than one Theological Seminary is advertising courses in this field and more than one author has ventured into print with a so-called Christian Sociology. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ is in evidence with its Social Program, and the leading Presbyterian Assemblies—including our own—are seeking through joint committees to define the relation of the church toward the numerous social reforms with which our times teem, and nothing, therefore, can well be more appropriate than a re-examination of our historic position upon this vexed question by some able and representative minister, who is at once "sound in the faith" and at the same time free from the obscurantism which would make him blind to any true modern progress. Dr. Howerton is such a man and he has produced an able book, well worthy of the study of his brethren, especially of those who by inward call, as well as by the designation of the church, have devolved upon them the duty of shaping the ecclesiastics of the kingdom. They will find in this little volume by the Lexington professor much weighty and well digested matter illuminated by clear and forcible historical exposition and many strong and striking and original statements. The author may not have carried much farther the thinking and experience of the church in this field, but he has reset that thinking in a twentieth century environment, and has given it the demonstration of a fresh and powerful restatement.

The spirituality of the church can never be outgrown and the danger of "entangling alliances" with secular affairs is confirmed

by many a bloody and tragic chapter in the church's history. As a divine institute with a constitution divinely given in the Word of God the courts of the church in their doctrinal formulations and deliverances must content themselves with the role of reproducing the essential contents of the inspired book. They have no right to trespass by the most infinitesimal fraction beyond the territory covered by the teachings of the Scriptures. The Gospel and the Gospel alone furnishes the sole and the only matter which is to be incorporated into symbols of faith or embodied in the doctrinal deliverances of these courts. But it is sometimes forgotten that the Gospel embraces not only a system of Christian doctrine, but also a system of Christian ethics. Doctrines and duties rightly related make up the Gospel. Our Symbols contain the exposition of both, as for example, the Larger Catechism devotes at least half of its contents to the great field of the biblical ethics. For various reasons our theological Seminaries in many cases have failed to give proportionate emphasis to this part of the Gospel, and Church Courts have frequently been more ready to affirm doctrine than to recommend practice. The study of questions 100 to 152 in the Large Catechism would prove a valuable enlightenment to many who think the spirituality of the church forbids the condemnation by ecclesiastical courts of current sins or their recommendation of positive, every day duties. There are few fields of theology calling for more thorough exploration to-day than this department of the inspired ethical system given in the word. The foundation of moral distinctions in the nature of God, the moral end as both individual and social, human rights as means to man's moral ends, the ethical principles of love, justice and truth as universally binding, moral motives as supreme love to God and equal love to our fellow man, service of others as the universal duty both of individuals and of all corporate bodies, the social organism as promotive of either virtue or vice—all of these are parts of the ethical teachings of God's Word, and it is the duty of the courts of the church and of the ministers in the pulpit to press these truths upon the minds and consciences of the members of Christ's Kingdom.

The church may be viewed as a divine institution expressing

its mind through its courts or by the deliverances of its ministers or it may be regarded as an organism expressing its life through the activities of its members. From this latter standpoint the function and mission of the church becomes far wider and not less important. There are two well recognized doctrines of our system which are pertinent here. The first, is the right of private judgment, which delivers the private member from the ecclesiastical tyranny which would force upon him the application of the views of the chance majority of an ecclesiastical court to the decision of questions of duty not expressly decided for him in God's Word. This however is only the negative part of this great doctrine of freedom of conscience; the private member has not only the right to decide questions of duty not divinely settled for him, but it is his imperative duty and inalienable obligation to decide such questions by applying the ethical principles taught in God's Word. And church courts and ministers alike are recreant to their divinely given mission if they do not present the ethics found in the Scriptures with the explicit teaching to the members of Christ's Body that these are the principles which rightly applied under the illumination of God's Spirit will solve all problems of duty, all the perplexing issues of Christian living amidst the complicated phenomena of our social, industrial and political America in the twentieth Century. No Christian ought to be allowed to forget either the ethical teachings which will guide him or his duty to apply them, and church courts and pastors are to teach the ethics and insist upon the Christian's daily, continuous and unceasing application of them.

The second doctrine is the Sufficiency or Completeness of the Scriptures as an infallible rule of conduct. There are no circumstances, however complex, and no environment, however perplexing, that will not find in the biblical ethics a prescription which will make the path of duty plain. Economics may be dumb, and sociology may vaguely mutter, but the Scriptures speak in a round, full voice a direction which must be understood. If this is not true, let us revise our doctrine of the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures. Perhaps one reason why many declare that the path of duty is not plain, is that they have studied other oracles than those which God has given. Our

doctrine can not be other than that the Scriptures are a sufficient rule, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." No man therefore can ever find himself anywhere that the Bible will not tell him what to do, if he will only listen and practice. The capitalist confronting labor, the employee facing his employer, the politician canvassing the child-labor law, the *entrepreneur* conducting his corporation, to make the recital short, every man always and everywhere will find in these Scriptures the ethical principles which will solve the problem of duty for him. As a member of Christ's Church he has no right to do anything other than to take his Christian ethics and make it work in his daily life as capitalist, laborer, statesmen, lawyer or what not. Perhaps the church courts and pastors have not always been as earnest in impressing these great truths upon the members of Christ's Kingdom as they have been in congratulating them that they were free from the ecclesiastical tyranny which would require blind acceptance of another's interpretation as to the exact mode of applying in detail Christian ethics to daily duty in secular life.

There are several features which mark our day which emphasize the timeliness of a book like Dr. Howerton's. The perception of social wrongs is becoming increasingly acute and general. The existence of the saloon as a legalized institution endorsed by the State, in some cases, as in South Carolina, actually united with the State, the legalizing of child-labor so that a boy or girl of ten years may labor at hard, exacting toil for twelve hours per day, does not seem as easy to reconcile with the teachings of Jesus, as it doubtless once must have been. Added to this there has been a growing appreciation of the wealth of meaning in the moral ideal found in the Scripture, there has come to be a large and larger conception of human rights, their value and meaning and breadth, there is seen to be an ever wider relationship of individuals to each other and a closer and more dependent relationship to society, there has come about a growth of moral insight and of intensity of moral motives, as a result of increase in the number of regenerate men; and for all these reasons the relation of Christ's Church to Social Reform presents an issue which will not down, which the repetition of old formulae will

not in all respects satisfy, but which must be met by a more vigorous analysis and scientific study under the light of twentieth century conditions.

The value of Social Reform, it must be remembered, is likely to be greatly exaggerated by all but the most cautious students and thinkers. Social Reform at the very best can do nothing but furnish the church unhindered scope and opportunity to pursue its distinctive and divinely given mission of preaching the Gospel with a view to the regeneration of individuals by the almighty grace of God's Spirit. Nothing short of this will be readily and permanently effective even for social ends, and those so-called reformers are signally and fatuously blind who imagine that by preaching Social Reforms, however good and valuable from the secular point of view they may be, the real work of regenerating society can be accomplished. Society as a entity has no existence apart from individuals and the only way to regenerate society is to regenerate the individuals who compose it, but it ought always to be added to this well known statement that regenerated individuals should be satisfied only with a regenerated society. Doubtless this is the deep meaning of the mighty movement for Social Reform, which is sweeping through the Christian world, viz.: that Christian men possessed with a "passion for righteousness" propose to make their Christianity effective in the whole of modern life; and to do this is one of the best modes of preparing the way, for the evangelism which constitutes the heart of the church's mission.

Dr. Howerton has given us a strong and timely book, which makes us long for more from the same pen, and his proposed volume on the theory and method of ethics will be awaited with keen interest by many friends. Meantime we thank him for the present volume. Without agreeing with him in all respects, he has spoken to the point upon the one most perplexing question of our current ecclesiastics, and "seekers after light" may not find all they desire here, for the last word on this subject will not be spoken for a long time to come, but they will find much to enlighten, interest and inspire, and many fruitful lessons and suggestions for the guidance of the instructed ecclesiastic are to be found in these fertile pages.