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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND LIFE.¹

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LESS than half a century ago it was usual in the pulpits of Congregational churches to treat Christian life as dependent on Christian doctrine. Most sermons began accordingly with an exposition of doctrine, and ended with a practical application. It was deemed necessary first to set forth principles, reasonings; then to appeal to the will and the emotions.

Some twenty-five or more years ago a decided reaction set in, and at the present moment it is almost the fashion to treat Christian doctrine as having very little to do with the Christian life. Hence an ever louder demand for "practical" preaching; hence the denunciation of all "doctrinal" preaching, whether orthodox or heterodox; hence too, in part, the desire, or at all events, readiness, either to shorten or altogether omit the sermon, and to substitute what is called "worship" in its stead—a worship which threatens to become, to a large extent, little more than aestheticism tinged with religiosity. Perhaps the majority of the most widely read sermons now published, if we except those of Spurgeon, are markedly non-doctrinal in character. I do not mean that they lack disciplined thought, but that they eschew or even make light of the incursions into the domain of systematic

¹ An Address delivered at the Annual Meeting of Spring Hill Congregational College, Birmingham, England.

theology which were formerly characteristic of published sermons. In many active and devoted Christian circles the notion prevails that the study of theology is rather a luxury than a necessity for the Christian believer and worker, especially if he be a layman. Sunday-school teachers and lay-preachers allow that a study of the *Scriptures* is necessary, but not of doctrine. Others see no need for systematic study of even the Scriptures; and as to the theology which it used to be the delight of their fathers to spell out in great folios, — they shrug their shoulders in amazement, if some enthusiast suggest to them to pursue a similar course. A cultured ministry is wanted, not a learned, especially not one learned in theology, unless it keep its learning out of its preaching, save perhaps on great occasions. Gentlemen who can read well, conduct the services with propriety, make no blunders, secure good singing, and preach with a freshness and thoughtfulness that require little effort in the hearer — that is too frequently what people demand. “We toilers in the world come to church to hear the simple gospel, to be comforted and stimulated, not to have our minds put on rack of logical, doctrinal discourses,” I hear even deacons of churches saying; as though there were some incompatibility between cheering the heart and enlightening the intellect; as though the simplest things, not excluding the simple gospel, did not need to their due assimilation the profoundest thought. Indeed, it is not difficult to find ministers who say half boastfully, and therefore half sneeringly, “We are no theologians; we have not studied theology; we read little theology.” Natural science, history, literature, they will read, especially newspapers and periodicals; sometimes they will even dabble a little in philosophy, but utterly neglect theology.

If asked to explain this reaction, I should say that its chief cause was the unconscious substitution by the pulpit of the doctrine of Christianity for Christianity itself; and that it signified a demand for the restoration of Christianity, of the great redemptive facts, that is, of Christ, to his true position in the witness and teaching of the church.

The reaction may be regarded as one part of a general movement in the world of human thought that showed itself early in the present century—a movement away from the formal, the abstract, the artificial, to the actual, the real, the natural. In science, in art, in religion alike is it to be traced. The immensely increased importance attached to observation and experiment in natural science, the realistic and naturalistic tendencies of poetry, painting, sculpture, music, indicated stirrings in the life of our nation that could scarcely leave the pulpit untouched, seconded as their influence was by the revival of religion inaugurated by Methodism; for Methodism, too, was in its way a bringing of men face to face with the eternal realities which had been hidden away behind the forms and reasonings that were originally designed to make them more clear and intelligible. Accordingly, the inarticulate admonition sounded through the land, and is sounding still, in even louder tones: “Do n’t repeat to us the traditions of the elders; do n’t come before us with the musty discussions of the theologians about God and Christ and the Spirit; but tell us what you yourself have tasted and felt and handled, what you have found to be true.”

Some of those who cry out against doctrine misunderstand themselves. What they dislike is not doctrine as such, but a form of doctrine which is not the preacher’s own doctrine—doctrine out of rapport with the general thinking of the age, that is, doctrine which for this very reason is unfit to discharge the function of doctrine. They would, perhaps, be the very first to welcome teaching which would put the old truth in a new light, which, although they may not always know it, is in reality to give it a new doctrinal garb or setting. In some cases, however, I fear the objection to a doctrinal treatment of Christianity is rooted in the fear lest the things which have been the source of so much hope and consolation and strength should fade away into nothing under the searching gaze of the scientific intellect; and they prefer blessed delusion to dreary truth. This is a dishonest policy, and in the long run as useless as it is dishonest. The heart

of man can no more be really comforted nor his will invigorated by vanities than the body can be nourished on wind. Besides, a deeper search, such as theology involves, would lead to the conviction that there can be no higher test of the reality of the objects of the faith of the Christian church than the power they show of filling, expanding, and ennobling the hearts of men. It is as illogical to deny this as it would be illogical to question the reality of the food by which our bodies are enabled to live, grow, and work. The outcry against doctrine proceeds in part, also, from such as have broken with historical Christianity as held by the church. But with this aspect of the reaction I do not now propose to deal.

It is not my intention to inquire into the relation of particular so-called doctrines to the Christian life; as, for example, that of the atonement or incarnation or the future destiny of man. It would be a comparatively easy thing to secure your interest for that subject. Questions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy are apt to be only too welcome, especially if there be the least uncertainty which side a man will take. What I now wish rather to do is to point out the relation in which a doctrinal mode of treating Christianity stands to the development and manifestation of the Christian life. Distinguishing between the great facts or verities of Christianity and the doctrine or theory or system which the intellect forms regarding them in its endeavor scientifically to correlate them to the rest of the cosmos, I aim at showing that such doctrine contributes materially, even if it be not absolutely essential, to the full and healthy development of the Christian life. Christian doctrine is an outcome of the effort to give a reason for the hope that is in us. I say that such doctrine is of cardinal importance both to Christian individuals and to Christian churches.

One weighty concession I must make at the outset; namely, that the Christian life is neither generated nor, properly speaking, nourished by doctrine. You cannot reason a man into being a Christian. Theology may help to remove intel

lectual hinderances out of the way ; it may prepare the mind ; but it cannot regenerate. We speak, it is true, of " saving doctrines " ; but this really is an inaccuracy. That which begets the Christian life or saves, is the Christian facts, not our explanation of them ; in other words, our doctrine — the facts, I mean, recorded in the New Testament and preached by the church. The fact that the eternal Son of God took flesh and dwelt among us in the form of a servant, yet full of grace and truth ; the fact that through him God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; the fact that Jesus Christ is the ever living, ever present Saviour, and that the Holy Spirit dwells and works for enlightenment, sanctification, invigoration, and consolation in the hearts of sinful men — these are the forces which initiate and sustain the Christian life.

Doctrines or doctrine may be the vehicle in which we receive these facts, or through which they are brought nigh to us ; but it is the facts, and not the vehicles, that save. For the most part, the inaccuracy of speaking of saving doctrines, instead of saving facts, is perhaps harmless. Sometimes, however, it is not so ; as, for example, when a particular way of explaining, say, the fact of the atonement or of the incarnation, is identified with the fact itself — which is not an uncommon occurrence.

Instead of the doctrine conditioning the existence of Christian life, Christian life is really the condition of the existence of Christian doctrine. No man can produce a true Christian theology who has not true Christian experience. It is possible, of course, even for an unbeliever to collect, classify, and philosophize upon the teachings of the Bible, and thus to construct a system of theology of a kind. The feat has been attempted and accomplished ; but the result has been most unsatisfactory. Scientists tell us that no man is thoroughly competent to teach, still less to pronounce judgment on, science whose acquaintance with the subject is derived solely from books, who has not been a practical,

scientific worker ; that is, who has no direct personal experience. The same thing holds good of the theologian ; his subject matter, too, can be properly handled only by one who has a practical acquaintance with it ; in other words, by one who has experienced the saving power of Christ. In point of fact, any other man lacks the material ; for the material which is worked up into Christian theology is the result of the marriage of the Christian facts with the human soul by means of faith.

But if these things be true, some may be ready to exclaim : "What, then, is the use of our troubling ourselves about doctrine ? If Christian life is possible without it, do not worry us with it. It may be very well for men of great natural power, educational training, and leisure ; but we workers in the world, who have only just strength, courage, and cheerfulness enough to fight the battles of every-day life, what have we to do with such lofty and profound matters ?" Perhaps it may occur to some of you to adduce the analogy of the body, and to say, "Just as we are able to earn, eat, and digest our physical food, and perform our physical functions without having the least idea of the scientific why and how, so spiritually." Up to a certain point, the analogy is unquestionably valid. There is a point, however, beyond which it fails,—yea, must fail,—owing to the difference between the relation of the body to the intellect and that between the intellect and the heart. Let us first consider the relation of Christian doctrine to the Christian life in the case of individuals. Why ought a Christian liver to be a Christian thinker ?

I. As a simple matter of fact, the great Christian verities as received by most of us are so mixed up with philosophy, are so theological in their form, that we cannot get away from doctrine. It is a very rare thing for the redemptive work of God to be set forth either in a purely historical way or simply in the light of personal experience of its power ; it is almost as difficult as it is rare. What is sometimes listened to and lauded as the "simple gospel" is anything but a simple objec

tive setting forth of the way of salvation. In reality it is an amalgam of bits of Christian theology and descriptions of Christian experience learned by the preacher from his early or present teachers, and of his own crude thinkings and vaguely interpreted experiences. This being the case, the questions arise: Is the doctrinal form correct or adequate? Does it clarify or obscure the life-giving kernel? If inadequate, still more if erroneous, it is sure to retard, instead of furthering, our assimilation of the nourishment which Christianity provides. But even if the doctrine considered in itself should be fitted to commend itself to our judgment as both correct and adequate, until we have convinced ourselves that this is its character by personal examination it will hang like a mist between us and the realities to which it refers; and to that extent will interfere with their full action on our life. If, then, you wish to come face to face with the original truths you must learn to discriminate between them and the theoretical form in which they are presented. This you can only do either by independent efforts of your own or by co-operation with some other mind — that is, by hearing doctrinal discourses and reading theological books. Pursuing this course with earnestness you will find old truths standing forth in a new light, and your heart will be correspondingly rejoiced.

2. *Doctrine*, as I defined it, *meets a natural craving of the intellect*. It is the fashion, indeed, in certain circles to speak slightly of the needs of the intellect in relation to religion. Ultra pious and ultra sceptical people agree sometimes in this when they agree in nothing else. It sounds very humble to speak of being content with the "simple gospel." It seems unanswerable to quote passages about the wisdom of the wise and the philosophy of the world. One gets the credit at once of devout resignation and profound insight when one enlarges on the futility and possible impiety of attempting to fathom the unfathomable mysteries of God. But what right have we either to ignore the requirements of the intellect or to prescribe limits beforehand to its

activity? Especially what right have we to starve the intellect? It is quite true that its first and foremost duty is to serve the rest of the human constitution as a light and guide; but it owes also something to itself—and that something is the investigation of truth for its own sake; the inquiry into the how and why of all things earthly and heavenly, human and divine, that come within the range of its experience or observation. As a matter of fact, too, few properly constituted minds can help trying to give themselves some reasonable account or other of the events of their life and the matters of their experience. Some sort of a system of the cosmos is forming itself in the cobwebbed, gloomy intellect of even the most ignorant and inarticulate of our race. I say “is forming itself.” Alas! it forms itself haphazard, and is therefore as lacking in harmony, self-consistency, unity, as some of the old houses one meets with in country places, which may be very picturesque, but are very uncomfortable and troublesome, dwellings. We *must* make doctrine. The only question is, Shall we do our best to make it well, or by letting itself make itself run the risk of inaccuracies, and even errors, which though harmless to-day may prove sources of great peril to-morrow?

3. *Doctrine is a means of heightening our Christian certitude*—our Christian assurance; and it is no exaggeration, I think, to say that certitude, assurance, is one of the highest blessings that a Christian believer can realize. Nothing is so worrying as uncertainty—whatever be its object. Faith, of course, brings a certainty of its own; it must do so, for it is a laying hold of Christ. At the outset—sometimes, indeed, permanently—this certitude is wondrously strong; it is as unbroken, as completely of one piece, as the certainty of a little child that its mother can never deceive it or its father never fail to protect it. Faith, too, is the abiding foundation of certitude, nor can doctrinal certitude ever become its substitute. But if times of questioning come—as they do come in the lives of most Christians—whether due to only practical causes, as cooling of affection or yielding to

temptation, or to theoretical causes, as historical or scientific scepticism, or again to the difficulties felt by other men; then faith needs to lean on something stronger than itself; it has to look around for a justification. Its support must be either authority or reason — the authority of an individual man or of a community, or the insight into the causes and connections of things, supplied by doctrine. It may occur to some of you, indeed, to say, “But should we not fall back on the Bible?” True; only the question then arises, Why may we fall back on the Bible? By what right? And to give an answer to this question is one of the duties of Christian theology or doctrine. We do not set aside faith when we form a theory of its objects — we rather transfigure it; we convert it in a measure into sight by exhibiting the relations which those objects hold to the rest of the cosmos of God.

Protestants justly attach great importance to the right of private judgment, and Congregationalists inscribe on their banner “The Protestantism of the Protestant Religion”; but if we fight shy of doctrine and theology we still to all intents and purposes hold the position of the Roman Catholic; for doctrine is the direct aim and outgrowth of the use of private judgment or of your own intellect to decide whether what you have been taught harmonizes with, or at any rate does not contradict, principles which you otherwise know to be true.

4. *Immediately involved in the formation of a doctrine is a more complete and thorough possession of the objects of faith; that is, of course, other things being equal. This effect is indeed little more than another side of the certitude to which I just now referred. Between the human intellect and the great truths of Christianity there is an essential affinity. Those facts are the embodiments of principles which are woven into the very texture of our minds and regulate their action. When God created us in his own image he intended us to think things as he thinks them; and true science and philosophy — whether of nature, mind, or redemption — is a*

thinking out the thoughts of God after him. But in thinking out the divine thoughts we are really thinking ourselves into things; we are finding ourselves in them; finding ourselves by means of them; getting ourselves revealed to ourselves in and through them. The result clearly must be the incorporation of the things as to their very essence with our minds and of our minds with the things. Until this is accomplished with the objects of faith they remain to some extent outside us. We have laid hold of them, it is true, but we have not assimilated them; or rather, the heart is engaged in assimilating, but as it by itself works in the dark, the full assimilation proper to a free intelligent agent does not take place till the intellect also has performed its task. Theology is a kind of philosophy of divine history; and as philosophy is the effort to be intellectually at home, theology, so far as it is what it aims to be, enables us to think and feel and act like sons in the great house of our Heavenly Father.

5. A further consideration, growing out of the last, is that *doctrine makes a man more self-reliant, more steadfast, more vigorous, especially more free.* That a man whose intellect has justified his faith must be more self-reliant than he otherwise would be scarcely needs urging. Men of this stamp are marked by self-reliance in every domain of life — not merely in religion. They know what they are about; they know why they act, they lead themselves, and are not merely led by a part of themselves; in other words, they are self-contained — they stand, as we familiarly say, “on their own legs.”

It contributes also to their steadfastness. Faith being of the nature of feeling or emotion, a thing of the heart, is liable, as we all know, to change. It is affected by a variety of causes — by bodily conditions, by the conduct of men, by intellectual influences; even of itself it would seem to be liable to ebbs and flows. Persistency, fixity, require conviction, and conviction is another term for the insight afforded by true doctrine.

That it should make a man more vigorous must surely be

self-evident. So important a factor as the intellect cannot but contribute to the power which we wield. Mere faith, especially in its first glow and intensity, may work wonders; but full manly vigor belongs alone to him whose intellect also has confessed the truth of the gospel. The enthusiasm of conviction is by itself to the full as mighty as the enthusiasm of emotion. But there is no power so irresistible as that of the man whose intellect is married to his heart — each adding strength to the other; each being more than it was when alone.

And, lastly, doctrine helps to make us free — free in relation to God, to man, and even to nature. I suppose it scarcely needs saying that, other things being equal, that man moves and acts most freely under any circumstances who is most at home in them, who is most familiar with them, who understands them best. Whence arises the difference between the relation to nature of educated men in Christendom and the heathen? From the acquaintance with its laws supplied by science. Why do we in manhood watch with calmness and even interest the thunder-storm which paralyzed us when we were children? Surely because in the one case we understand its reason, and in the other it was a fearful mystery. So in its measure is it with Christianity. Until we gain some measure of intellectual familiarity with it by means of doctrine, we cannot feel the freedom in it that ought to be ours. We are apt to handle it as the superstitious handle their charms; we are fearful of this and fearful of that. This ignorance is one explanation of the attitude of many of the members of the Greek and Romish churches towards the objects of faith — they are bound by them, in dread of them, not emancipated and rejoiced by them.

What is true of our personal relation to Christianity is true also of our presentation thereof to others. Till we get, as it were, inside it and grasp its principles, we use it as the ignorant use certain medicines. Or I might compare a believer who knows nothing of doctrine to a workman who has

learned the practice, but is ignorant of the theory of his art. As every one is aware, he lacks the skill and freedom of movement which characterize one who has acquired both. In one word, the truth does not make us truly free — free for ourselves, and free for others — until it is the truth not merely to our hearts, but also to our intellects ; to make it which is the aim and work of Christian theology.

6. There is still another reason for the study of doctrine to which I must briefly refer. *Indirectly it aids in securing consistency of character.* We all know how easy it is to get great principles recognized in the abstract, and how difficult to get them carried out in detail. This is as true in the Christian life as elsewhere. To take a simple example ; there is surely no Christian who does not accept the principle that every one of us is a steward of God relatively alike to time talents, and possessions ; yet how rare are the men who thoroughly carry out the principle ? It is not that there is positive unwillingness to do so, but that the intellectual activity and skill necessary to bridge over the gulf between the abstract and the concrete, between the general and the particular, are too little developed. Or, to put the matter perhaps more accurately, the general principle is not fully, properly apprehended as such ; it is taken up rather as an individual injunction, or in connection with some one or other special duty, than as a general principle ; and consequently finds only restricted application. In fact, we are all of us exposed, for obvious personal reasons, to two opposite temptations ; on the one hand, to rid ourselves of the burden of a particular obligation by treating it as general ; and on the other hand, to escape from the yoke of the general obligation by giving it the character of a particular duty ; and unless our minds are trained to discrimination and inquiry we yield too easily, and well nigh unconsciously. Now the habit, fostered by the study of doctrine, of searching for and discovering the principles and laws underlying individual facts, fits us for performing in the moral domain the reverse operation of passing from principles or laws to the facts, or

rather acts, which they require. It would be a gross mistake to maintain that the doctrinal Christian must needs be the most consistent Christian ; but I do say that it is he who, other things being equal, will judge most correctly what consistency demands. And surely, if this be so, I am justified in adducing it as an additional reason for attention to Christian doctrine.

II. Having considered the relation of doctrine to the individual, let us now go on to examine its *relation to the community or church*. The reasons advanced to show the utility and necessity of theology to the individual apply, with modifications, in the case of churches or communities of churches.

1. The church as a whole needs to have what I may call a good conscience with regard to its claims as a church ; and what is true of the church universal is equally true, some might say even more true, of a mere section of a church, like Congregationalism. The church is not a thing that has grown up of itself by a sort of necessity of nature, like most forms of human society. It professes to exist in consequence of special divine acts, to be possessed of special gifts, and to be entrusted with a distinctive mission. It aims to absorb all other societies into itself, or, at all events, to imbue them with its own spirit and impose on them its own laws. The early church was so possessed and carried away by the personal impression it had received from its Founder that it needed on its own account no other warrant ; at all events, not until it encountered open indifference, scepticism, and hostility. But ere long questions were put from without and debates arose in its own midst, and then it had to examine into the causes of its existence and the basis of its claims ; thence sprang theology. Nor, save in periods of degeneracy, has the church ever since been without its doctrinal systems, defending it against heresies from within and errors from without.

Of a similar character has been the experience of the new movements that have arisen from time to time, and which have resulted in the formation of what the dominant parties termed sects ; at all events, of such as grew out of the practi-

cal needs of the heart. At the outset they found their justification partly in the new life of which they were the expression, and partly in what the church universal had done for its own defence, and which they more or less consciously took for granted. But as soon as the first naïve confidence had exhausted itself—as exhaust itself it must—the need for a rational justification made itself felt, and theology sprang into existence. Such sects have had to face not only the questions affecting the church as a whole, but also those touching their own separate existence and specific characteristics; and unless they were able to give adequate reasons to themselves for their separation and peculiarities, church disintegration, and even scepticism as to Christianity, generally were apt to set in.

2. The unity of a church is furthered and deepened by doctrine. It is not an uncommon opinion, indeed, nowadays, that dogma, doctrine, theology are the one great source of divisions among Christians. I am quite ready also to admit that differences in doctrine do, in some cases, divide men who cling to the same Christ and seek to live and promote the same life. It may, however, also be true that these very differences in doctrine are traceable ultimately to subtle, vital differences. But whatever the truth on this particular point, it is surely not open to doubt that doctrine may be a strong bond of union. If you want a truly united community, see to it that on vigor of common life is engrafted definiteness of common conviction. Such a church will be like a man whose heart and head pull the same way. I grant that a union of sentiment by itself may be intenser than a union of doctrine by itself; but a union of both is strong to resist alike changes from within and assaults from without. Men are more easily brought together by a common sentiment of fear or hope or trust or love to a man; but nothing keeps them together like principles which they have reasoned out together or under common guidance. To establish such unity is no doubt difficult, especially in these days; but it is worth all the effort that a church can devote to a task.

3. Doctrine helps to secure continuity in the life of a church. Where feeling or sentiment is the sole bond of connection it is very hard to preserve continuity. There must be something besides. The continuity characteristic of the life of great historical families or civil and political communities is conditioned by various circumstances, such as identity of locality, property, vocation, blood-relationship, and so forth. In the state churches continuity has been favored both by causes similar to those just mentioned and by the identity of liturgical and other usage, even where it has not been more directly aided by that cultivation and teaching of doctrine which it is my aim to urge. As for ourselves and other similarly constituted free churches, I do not see how, in the absence of the sort of conditions to which I have just referred, the continuity of our life is to be preserved without doctrine. If it is not worth preserving, then indifference to this matter is natural and explicable. But at any rate, we ought to make it clear to ourselves whether this be so or not, and if it be not so prepare ourselves either for absorption in other churches which are more careful to hand down the treasure they have received from the fathers, or for being broken up into separate units which may or may not retain any vital hold on Christianity. It is not necessary that we should bind our teachers down by elaborate confessions of faith or systems of theology. What we need is, that our churches, through their thinkers and teachers, shall be constantly engaged in the effort to understand that which they have first tasted, handled, and felt of the word of life; in other words, that a living process of scientific examination should be going on alongside of the living process of faith. There will then be a living, but real continuity in the life of the church — each succeeding generation stimulated and enriched, not hampered, and therefore not impoverished, by the doctrinal work of its predecessors.

4. The power of a church to perform its specific work is increased by doctrine. It follows, of course, from what I said previously, that the church's power to diffuse Christian

life lies in its testimony, by word and deed, to the gospel from which its own life is derived. Its first business, therefore, is to evangelize; that is, to proclaim, in as simple and objective a manner as possible, what God has done, and is doing now, and is ready still to do, for the salvation of men from sin and misery. This duty may, under certain circumstances be discharged with great success by a church which for itself has paid next to no attention to theology,—as has been the case with the Methodist bodies,—but the same message will have greater power if it be backed up by the rational convictions rooted in a sound theology. The most theological of the apostles was the mightiest evangelist. This is especially true at the present day, when there are so many doubts in the air. The most successful evangelization will be that which is shaped so as implicitly to meet objections and convey reasons—a thing impossible to a church that is careless about theology.

Besides, evangelization is not the only work that the church has to do: Heresies, doubts, exaggerations, eccentricities, intellectual, moral, and spiritual whims arising within its own borders, need to be met; and the superstition, false religion, false moral principles, falsities of science, of criticism, and of philosophy without have to be overthrown and refuted. But to do all this implies earnest and systematic care for the thorough cultivation of every branch of theology.

Altogether, a church with a living faith and doctrinally well drilled from the top to the bottom is as much stronger than a church that has life of its own, but no theology of its own, as a man whose activity is characterized both by enthusiasm and by conviction is stronger than one who is solely under the sway of emotion.

Did space permit, I should be glad to append a practical application to this, as some may think it an impractical line of thought. First and foremost, I would urge the grounding of children and young people in doctrine, by means of catechisms or something of the kind; secondly, the reading of good theological essays and works by the adult members

of our churches ; thirdly, the giving of more systematic doctrinal instruction from the pulpit ; and finally, the making of more satisfactory, more adequate arrangements for the philosophical and theological training of the ministers in our colleges.¹

I am certain that the religious and moral life of our churches and their Christian activity are seriously suffering from the neglect of the things just urged during the last twenty-five years ; and I am equally certain that if the present neglect is prolonged, another twenty-five years will find us undergoing a spiritual and doctrinal disintegration which will be a manifest token that we have completed our great historical mission, and must make room for other and more faithful workers.

¹ [The American reader will understand this as having reference to the dissenting theological training schools in England, where the collegiate and professional training are not separated as in the United States. — Eds.].