

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE V.

CHURCH HISTORY AS A SCIENCE, A THEOLOGICAL
DISCIPLINE, AND A MODE OF THE GOSPEL.

BY REV. JOHN DE WITT, D.D., PROFESSOR IN LANE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THE first duty which the occasion calls me to discharge is the duty of expressing gratefully my sense of the high honor which you have conferred upon me in inviting me to the Chair of History in this school of sacred learning.¹ I need not say that my sense of this honor is made livelier by the reflection that I succeed one so highly and so justly esteemed as was the late Dr. Zephaniah Moore Humphrey. My life as a pastor in Philadelphia began not long after Dr. Humphrey had accepted your invitation to become Professor of Church History. His exceptional ability, his large and varied culture, and the charming grace of character and life with which in that city he adorned the office of Christian pastor, enabled him to exert a large and beneficent influence both as a citizen and as a churchman. The universal regret with which his decision to leave that important field of labor was received, prepared those even who did not know him well for the far deeper sorrow of many hearts in many states when your message was received, that God had called him from his earthly labor to his heavenly reward. To the depth of this sorrow you have already testified. To the fact that it was wide-spread no testimony is needed. The event is too recent for us to have forgotten it. "We might know," wrote the honored pastor who succeeds Dr. Humphrey in the pulpit of Calvary Church, "We might know that a prince has fallen by the universal expression of regret and affectionate regard. The tree indicates its magnitude and weight when

¹ The following article was delivered as an Inaugural Address on the occasion of the induction of the writer into the Chair of History in Lane Theological Seminary.

the echoes of its fall fill the forest.”¹ The act of God which removes such a man just at the time when his usefulness is the largest, and “when,” to quote your own words, “the promise seems given of a long period of successful labor on his part,” is deeply afflicting and mysterious. But we are justified in believing — and the belief is our highest consolation — that the powers with which God endowed his servant, and which by his providence and grace he nurtured and disciplined for service so effective and distinguished, are not lost to the eternal kingdom of God. “Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” May God grant to me, his successor — may God grant to us all — the devotion always manifested by Dr. Humphrey to him who is the central figure, and whose glory is the final cause of all history!

You have invited me to teach Church History; to teach it as a branch of theological study; to teach it to those who are to become preachers of the gospel. In these three elements of the call I have accepted I find a not inappropriate theme for an inaugural address. I shall speak of *Church History* — as a science, as a theological discipline, and as a mode of the gospel.

I. CHURCH HISTORY AS A SCIENCE.

In endeavoring briefly to present the idea of Church History, permit me to recall to your attention some obvious distinctions. As all of us know, there is a general sense and there is a special sense in which this great word “History” is employed in our language. Sometimes it is used to designate a narrative of events, to whatever class or classes the events may belong. But in a special sense, it designates a narrative of those events alone of which man is one, at least, of the causes.

The ground of this distinction is the fact that events in whose production man has no active share are in their nature

¹ Rev. Charles A. Dickey, D.D.

wide apart from those to which he sustains the relation of a cause. Below man lie the three great regions of necessity. The second causes of events which occur in inorganic matter, in the vegetable world, and even in the brute creation are absolutely involuntary. The story of the changes even in unorganized matter is, indeed, a profoundly impressive narrative. Although too vast for the senses to apprehend it, yet because the visible universe is reduced to order and unity by means of pervasive *law*, Emanuel Kant found in the starry heavens the highest example of the material sublime.

More impressive than the history of the heavens is the history of the vegetable world; for the latter is the narrative of the energetic movement of *life*. We are brought into the presence of a power — not, indeed, so pervasive as the laws that constitute the inorganic universe a harmonious whole,— but a power immeasurably higher in kind. For life not only employs, but within the limits of its body dominates the laws of matter. It thus effects between itself and the matter which it organizes a relation far higher than that between matter and laws of matter. Its simplest product is a nobler product than sun or system; for the laws of matter are but the properties of matter; but life is an active principle. It is enthroned within the matter which it organizes. It gives to matter not only form, but individual character. Working from within outwardly, it constitutes out of heterogeneous elements a unity — a unity whose identity is no mere sameness of form or material, but in the abiding life itself; a unity of which the parts labor each for the other. Moreover, to the product of life belongs a *quasi* immortality. For it lives in its descendants in generation and generation. Thus the history of the humblest and most evanescent flower is the history of a higher movement than the movement of the ancient stars.

But there is a higher movement than the movement of life. Passing over from the vegetable to the brute creation we find ourselves in a world of organisms, the activities of which are controlled by new powers. I do not stop to dwell on

the more complex organization of the individuals of the brute creation and their positive power of locomotion. These, after all, are not the traits which indicate the impassable gulf between the brute and the vegetable worlds. That gulf is indicated by the presence of *consciousness*, of instinctive impulses, of understanding to which the instinctive impulses give the regulating law, and of a faculty by which the judgments of the understanding are executed. The story of animal life derives from the presence of these new powers a dignity which can never belong to the story of the vegetable world.

The movements in each of these worlds become the subject of history. The idea which in each case should organize the history is obvious. In the history of inorganic matter, the organizing idea is *law*; in the history of the vegetable world it is *life*; in the history of the brute creation it is *conscious life*, obedient to instinctive impulse and the judgments of the understanding. For these designate the causes of the historical events in the several kingdoms.

But while the histories of these kingdoms must differ widely among themselves, they have one feature that binds them in a single class. All have impressed upon them the trait of an absolute *necessity*. In every case, interesting and impressive as the history may be, it is the narrative of involuntary action. And, therefore, while we bow before the mysteries of pervasive law or of dominating life, or the higher mystery still of conscious life, we feel that the loftiest dignity and the consummate charm with which history may be invested are wanting. Our own consciousness of freedom in action reveals to us that there must be another history, — the history of man, — not only immeasurably higher in dignity, but distinct in kind, because the idea that organizes it cannot be brought under the category of necessity. Thus it is that our consciousness of freedom leads us, and leads us wisely, to employ the term history in a specific sense — which, after all, is its proper sense — as the narrative of that free, that self-determined activity which can be affirmed of man alone among the creatures on the planet.

Indeed, so all-compelling is this consciousness of freedom in its demand that voluntary activity shall be the organizing idea of history, that the intellect refuses to contemplate even the histories of the kingdoms below man as narratives of necessary action alone. It is a true psychology that speaks in the line of poetry :

“The undevout astronomer is mad.”

The mind of the race in all ages has failed to find repose in the study of the mere material laws of the stellar world ; and in this failure it has simply been true to its constitution. That constitution forbids the mind in its search after an ultimate cause to stop at force or law. It compels the mind to regard all causes as themselves effects until it finds a cause that is will and adequate intelligence. Such a cause the mind, when true to its constitution, always does find. “For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” Thus it is that the heavens have ever been telling to man the glory, the presence, and the activity of the living and voluntary Deity.

We need recall only the most recent philosophical discussions in order to learn that man instinctively looks for freedom in the ultimate cause of even necessary events. What is it that has given an interest so intense and painful to the long debate on evolution ? The cause of the highest interest felt in that debate is not in the question whether this or that species is separated from every other by a boundary so deep and wide that it cannot be passed ; but in the deeper question, — which, as all of us know, the debate has raised, — whether, as we study the world of nature, we must banish from our minds as without foundation the world’s belief in final cause — in intelligence and will as the fountain and origin of the teeming forms of life about us.

Man, then, is compelled by the constitution of his mind to regard the history even of necessary action as ultimately the narrative of voluntary causation. But this also is true. He recognizes the voluntary cause as *without and distinct from*

the activity which the history narrates. The will of God, if I may so say, goes out from himself in providence, to produce through law and life the changes which as beheld by us are involuntary. The student of natural history does not reach the attributes of freedom and morality until, ceasing to move backward by the long chain of causes which because necessary are also effects, his mind leaps upward out of the kingdom of nature, and rests in the thought of the living, free, and holy Creator and Governor, who by his providence is present and powerful at every point of the history.

Now, it is the distinctive glory of man that the mind is not compelled, in contemplating his history, to move beyond man himself in the search after voluntary causation. As I shall hope at a later point to make clear, I am by no means endeavoring to banish the thought of God from human history. But at this point, and for the purpose of making more clear hereafter the precise relation of God to human history, it is important to insist that it is the distinction of the history of man that it is the narrative of activities whose causes, *within* the race, are "unforced and self-moved will."¹ In studying this history we find ourselves not merely in a world of conscious life, of impulses and of understanding, but in a world of spirit and moral relations. Every leaf of this history, however humble the acts it records, belongs to the awful and sublime drama of good and evil, of right and wrong. Let it be but the history of a single soul; there still attaches to it the dignity of the active life of the image of the living, free, and holy God in the world in which he is not only a cause, but, aside from God, the chief of causes; in which he "has been given dominion"; in which the forms of inorganic matter and the forms both of unconscious and of conscious life are the theatre and the instruments of his free activity, as well as the subjects of his rule. The term history is employed in its special and proper sense only when it is employed to designate the narrative of this free

¹ Will is here used to designate not the mere faculty of volitions, but the whole voluntary nature.

activity of man. It is in this sense that we employ it when we say that "history became possible only when man began to act." As a science, therefore, the distinctive idea which its narrative must unfold and display is not law or life, or even conscious life, but man as a rational and voluntary, and therefore a moral, cause.

Since this is the high theme of history, it is obvious that its narrative must move from cause to effect, and not simply from century to century. Primarily it must be determined by the idea of cause, and subordinately only by the idea of time. Its formula is *propter hoc*, rather than *post hoc*. It must be not only a sequacious, but a consequential narrative. A history, therefore, is a far higher and profounder literary product than a chronicle. There is, indeed, a peculiar fascination that belongs to vivid and picturesque chronicles, like those of Herodotus or Froissart, which we shall look for in vain in histories like that of Thucydides, who, before he proceeds to the narrative, compels his reader to study a labored dissertation on the historical causes of the Peloponnesian war. On the pages of Herodotus or of the parish priest of Lestines actions follow one upon another just as—to use what in this connection is a most expressive phrase—they *happened*, but not just as they were *caused*. Their places are determined, as the name chronicle imports, chiefly by time. They recall the current of one's thoughts in the pleasing, but passive, state called *reverie*; in which we stand, as it were, apart from our minds, and let the stream of suggestion move on as it may chance to move. In this state of reverie one image will rise before the mind, and, having vividly presented itself, will disappear, and be succeeded by another, and this by a third; and so varied will the procession be that often we shall be unable to say by what law of association it was that the second image succeeded the first, or the third succeeded the second. Such is the order, or rather the historical disorder, of the movement of the chronicles. For it seldom happens in the life of the world that effects follow their causes with the immediateness and obviousness with

which the conclusion follows the premises of a syllogism in Barbara. The sun rises when the cock has crowed. So, for the most part, events occur. The statement is true, and may befit the chronicle. But the rising sun and the crowing cock are not effect and cause; and the statement, though true, is not historic. Reverie is a fascinating employment; and the chronicles of the Middle Age have all the fascination of reverie. But the student must cast off the spell of delicious and indolent reverie, and, holding himself severely to a course of thought determined by the laws of thought, must seek developed causes in effects, and the germs of effects in causes; knowing that to such a worshipper alone will Truth vouchsafe the vision of her awful and majestic form. So, also, the historian must determine to be more than a chronicler. His is a harder and nobler labor, and his is a higher reward. Not time, but cause,—and above all man, the voluntary cause,—must organize his profound and lofty narrative.

But the phrase “a narrative of human activity organized by the idea of cause” defines biography as exactly as it defines history. It becomes us, therefore, to ask in what respects, if any, do biography and history differ? Our answer to this question will depend entirely upon the reality which we deny or assign to that which is expressed in the term “humanity,” when set over against the term “personality.” If the former term is a general name only—a name given to the likenesses between individuals after these likenesses have been ascertained by abstraction and generalization; if we regard the likenesses as ultimate facts requiring no explanation; if we hold with the nominalist that the great term humanity is only a *flatus vocis*,—we must, of course, deny that there is any profound and natural distinction between biography and history. But if the term humanity, or human nature, designates a real existence, and if this existence is to be affirmed of each man; if the common nature so binds together the individuals of the species as to constitute—what is more than an aggregation of likenesses—a real and organic

unity; if, to quote the words of another, "side by side in one and the same subject, in every particular human person, exist the common humanity with its universal instincts and tendencies, and the individuality with its particular interests and feelings"; the difference between the idea of biography and the idea of history is a profound and physiological difference. In this profound difference I am compelled to believe, just as I am compelled to believe the anthropology of Augustine, and to dissent from the anthropology of Pelagius. It is true that there is no sharp division between them in actual literature. Every biography must be historical, as every history must be biographical; for the humanity exists in the individual, and each individual shares the common human life. But though the two must be united in the literary product, the difference between the two ideas exists. Biography separates a man from his fellow-men, sets forth his distinctive traits and the special circumstances of his life. History associates man with his fellows, and contemplates the society or the race as one. Biography preserves the record of the brief lives of men. History narrates the abiding and developing career of man. In a word, biography, even when universal, deals with the race as existing in distinct and separate units. History, however special, though dealing with a single man, contemplates him as organically related to all men, as sharing the life and spirit of humanity.

In our search for the idea of human history up to this point, we have found, by the contrast of man with nature, that its organizing idea must be voluntary cause. By the contrast of chronicle with history we have found that we do injustice to this organizing idea when we determine the narrative simply by time; for the order of events in time is by no means necessarily or always the order of cause and effect. And by the contrast of biography and history we have found that history, though it may properly narrate events that are due to the individual and separating spirit, must hold them subordinate to those larger and deeper, those ecumenical

movements which are the products of the human as distinct from the merely personal in man. At this point, therefore, we are entitled to describe history as a narrative of the movements of the human race, so constructed as to exhibit the relations of these movements as causes and effects.

But we have not yet presented the idea of history in its completeness. For the historian may not leave out of view the obvious truth that the human will, "self-moved and unforced" though it be, *is conditioned as a cause by its material environment*. It was an inspired apostle who wrote the sentence, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Who that has thought of it at all does not realize how many and how striking are the limitations which this body, the very instrument of its activity, puts upon the efficiency of the human spirit in space and time? At a point only a few thousand feet above the surface of the earth, or at a point only a few thousand feet below its surface, the limitation becomes absolute; death ensues, and historical activity ceases. The mind and will wait, through how many years of infancy and childhood, until the body is clothed upon with strength; and through how many other years, during the process of the body's decline? I gladly repeat, holding them to embody a sublime truth, the noble lines of Lovelace:

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

But, though expressing the sublime truth that the spirit may be free while the body is imprisoned, they still confess the iron bars and the prison walls. I have spoken of the kingdoms of necessary activity that lie below man. It is not only true that they lie below man; but man is of them, as having a body. In these realms are the conditions of historical activity. These conditions, by force of law and life and

instinctive impulse, react upon the will as it moves forth to efficient action in time and space. They meet man, the voluntary cause, sometimes as instruments ready to his hand, sometimes as enemies confronting him with hostile purpose, often as obstacles too formidable to surmount or too vast to destroy. They meet, they aid, they baffle, they woo, they resist the human will in a thousand forms—as climate and soil, as mountain and plain, as river and ocean, as sunshine and storm, as gold and silver, as coal and iron, as steam and electricity, as the fertile prairie and the desert waste, as the beast of burden and the beast of prey, as instinct and passion, as hunger and thirst. And so formidable to some writers have these conditions appeared, that they have declared it to be their belief, and have written great volumes to defend it, that in these *conditions*—and not, after all, in *man*—is to be found the central theme of history. “For these,” they say, “are the only potent historical causes. Man is their victim, and man’s activity their effect.” Of course, we shall deny their conclusion, if we are true to our spiritual nature, the image of God in which man was created. But while denying their conclusion, we must still confess the power of these uncounted conditions in which the human will engages in activity beyond itself. It is these that give to history its variety and dramatic action; and, what is far more important, it is these that invest the great problem of the philosophy of history with the difficulties that make it well-nigh impossible of solution.

For what is the problem of the philosophy of history, but to find the unity underlying this variety; to discover and formulate the single law which binds together this uncounted multitude of cause and condition? Though the problem be difficult, it stands before us imperatively demanding solution. For if this unifying law cannot be found and stated, if this vast multitude of historical events absolutely refuses to be reduced to a system, upon what possible ground shall history make good its claim to a place among the sciences?

It may appear presumptuous in a discourse limited as this

must be by the occasion that assembles us to pursue the unifying law of history through this complex multitude of conditions. And, indeed, the pursuit would be hopeless, even though no limitations were put upon the discourse, except this only: that the law must be sought in the *conditions* of activity, and not in the “unforced and self-moved” human *will*. For with the postulate that the conditions are the causes of the movements of the race, and that man as he appears in history is the effect, a profound philosophy of history becomes an absolute impossibility. A barren positivism becomes the final statement of truth. The historical narrative becomes a table of statistics. The highest labor of the historian becomes the classification, under the law of resemblance, of essentially external phenomena. And the ultimate revelation of history is a doctrine of averages; more or less thoroughly confirmed by observation.

Doubtless, while I have been speaking, you have recalled the two profoundly interesting volumes of Mr. Buckle’s unfinished *History of Civilization in England*. That great fragment — for fragment as it is, and radically vicious as it is, it is as strong and massive as a torso of Hercules — derives a pathetic interest from the relation of its author to his work. For twenty years Mr. Buckle gave himself, with an enthusiasm that never abated, to the severest study, in order to its composition. He brought to the preparation of the work itself a mind singularly gifted, and an amount and variety of historical knowledge that has rarely been equalled. But he brought also the vicious theory of history, which Mr. Froude¹ has accurately described in the statement, that “human beings act necessarily from the impulse of outward circumstances upon their mental and bodily condition at any given moment”; the theory, in short, that the unifying law of history must be found, if at all, in the external conditions of human activity, and not in man himself. When only forty years of age, soon after his second volume had issued from the press, Mr. Buckle found himself obliged, by broken

¹ *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (first series), p. ii.

health, to discontinue his labors. He travelled in the East in search of a renewed vigor which he was never to find. In a few months he lay on his death-bed in what, perhaps, is the oldest existing city of the world; in the Damascus that has had a continuous life since it gave to Abraham "Eliezer, the steward of his house." The last words uttered by Mr. Buckle, as he lay dying, were: "My book! my book! I shall never finish my book." And regarded as a search for the law of history his book could never have been finished. Had his life been as long as the career of the city which heard his last mournful regret he would, at the term of his prolonged labors, have still been as far from the discovery of the law of history as he was at the close of two-score years. What could he have done but continue, through the centuries to tread his dreary round of averages? The book might have been finished; but the law of history would have been a secret still.

Whoever would find and formulate the law that gives unity to the movements of human society must begin by recognizing man as both the efficient cause of his own activity and the constant factor amid the shifting conditions under which he acts. Then only will his search become fruitful. But then it will be fruitful. Before the mind of such a student of man will emerge the two traits which yield, in general terms, the law, and so far forth solve the problem of the philosophy of history.

Of these traits, the first appears in the statement that the unity of the race is an *organic* unity. The fact of this organic unity would seem to be too obvious for argument. It is almost self-evident that the bond of union between the first human pair and their uncounted descendants must strikingly contrast that which holds together the molecules of a body of inorganic matter. Whatever may be the power of gravitation or of chemical affinity, it constitutes a bond which is weakness itself when compared with continuous and throbbing life; for it is a bond which the feeblest life is competent to sunder. The forces in virtue of which the

particles of matter cohere can organize nothing. But life does organize; and the race of man is *one* in virtue of this powerful, continuous, and organizing life. If this be true, the movement of humanity in history is an organic movement. Nor because the word has been employed in the interests of an anti-Christian theory without historical evidence to support it, should we hesitate at all to apply to human history the one term by which alone organic movement is adequately designated; I mean, of course, the term "evolution." It has more than once been clearly shown that all the elements of development appear in the great movements of the race of which history is the narrative. The evolution of humanity from the first pair is an evolution as really as the evolution of an oak forest from an acorn.

But the historical evolution of humanity — and here we come upon the other trait — is separated from every lower evolution by a quality distinctly its own. This quality is, of course, *freedom* or *self-determination*. The development of the germ out of which is evolved the spreading forest is a movement as necessary as the movement of the sun in his orbit. But the evolution of humanity has been determined in and through man's voluntary nature. We are started upon the right path, therefore, in our search for the unifying law of history when we begin with the truth that it is the law of self-determined human development.

But we are only started upon the path. For though this statement brings into clear view both the beginning and the *nature* of the historic movement, it asserts nothing at all as to either the *moral quality* of the movement or its *conclusion*. And no philosophy of history can be regarded as in any sense complete which does not pronounce upon the moral quality of humanity and, at least intimate the consummation of all things. These are the two subjects which are invested with the profoundest interest for the historical student. The mind, when brought face to face with a large period of history, or even with the life of a single member of the species, asks first of all questions upon these great themes.

But to such questions the statement that the historical movement is a free development, contains no answer. The life of humanity on earth would have been just as free, and just as clearly a development, had our first parents maintained unsullied the holiness in which they were created.

Still, it is only as we hold before us this voluntariness in the development of the race that we see clearly the truth that the historic movement must have moral character as its pre-eminent and distinctive quality. It is in virtue of this distinctly spiritual power of self-determination alone that human history possesses moral character; for the self-determination of man is wide apart from the mere volition of the brute. That the brute creation possesses a power of volition we need not hesitate to admit; if only we are careful to distinguish it from the voluntary nature of man. In the case of the brute, the outer world acts upon its instinctive impulses. These instinctive impulses regulate the judgments of the brute's understanding; and these judgments, in turn, are necessarily executed by a faculty which, because it seizes the most appropriate out of, perhaps, several means at hand, may not improperly be denominated a faculty of volition. But in all this movement there is no proper freedom. In all this there is no choice of *end*. The end of the whole process is fixed, and fixed as necessarily as it is in inorganic matter. The difference between this mere brute volition and the voluntariness of man is as wide as the difference between heaven and earth. For in the case of man the very end and purpose of life is self-determined.

Just here, then, we begin to grasp the awful import and unity of human history. It is the narrative of man's choice of the purpose of his life, and of human development as fixed by this tremendous act of self-determination. The human history must begin with an all-important and morally-determining choice, and must proceed with the exhibition of the development which that choice has determined. This is the unifying law of human history.

And now, to advance from the nature of human history

to the terrible objective narrative which under this law of its unity constitutes the substance of history,—it is first of all to be said that we do not need to read the inspired Book of Origins in order to learn that the choice which must determine the moral quality of the development *has already been made*. It is the distinction of an organic movement that its character reappears at every point of the movement, both in space and time. Take up the history of humanity in any zone and in any century, and the revelation will be clear enough that the race has made a sinful choice—a choice against God and against its own spiritual nature—and is therefore a fallen and guilty race. A study of the race as we find it to-day will not, indeed, reveal to us when or under what conditions the choice that fixed human character was made. But we shall be compelled to believe that at some time, and under some conditions appointed by the race's Governor, man, by the free and unforced exercise of his supremest power, chose evil, and fixed the moral quality of the development of humanity as fallen and guilty before conscience and in the sight of God. To us the sad and terrible story of the race's self-determination to evil has been distinctly revealed.¹ We read the inspired history of the race's creation in the image of God the Creator. We follow the narrative up to the catastrophe, in which all is lost, and

¹ The historical character of the narrative of the Fall in the Book of Genesis has more than once been attacked by writers who profess to study it from a theistic point of view, and it has been proposed to interpret it as allegorical. But the narrative, regarded as history, is certainly not inherently incredible. If the race was to be tested, there must have been a test. What test more congruous with the simple life of the garden can be conceived than the test of the forbidden tree? If the narrative is allegorical, it is an allegory of the fall. But how could our first parents have fallen in the circumstances without a positive command to violate? And what command more appropriate could there have been than the one given them? Those who call the narrative an allegory are bound to fill up the blank which they make by allegorizing with a more credible and congruous narrative, as an hypothesis. But, I take it, one such cannot be found. It is no harder to believe that refraining from eating the fruit of a particular tree was at the beginning of human probation made the sacrament of obedience, than it is to believe that eating and drinking the bread and wine were at the beginning of the Christian dispensation made the sacrament of remembrance and faith.

which occurs by the united self-determination of our first parents, who at this time constitute the *whole human species*. That self-determined fall of the race from God did not put a period to the race's development; but the moral character of the development was revolutionized. It became the development of a fallen and guilty race; and the consummation, which the historical development has intimated at every point in space and time is absolute spiritual disaster.

Whatever may be said of the process by which this conclusion has been reached, the conclusion itself is, in substance, the necessary basis of a Christian philosophy of history. If the movement — apart from the influence of Christianity — which history records is not the development toward deeper evil of a sinful and guilty race; if this is not the profoundest unity of history unmodified by Christianity, upon what possible ground can we assert the absolute need of the gospel of Christ in order to the salvation of mankind? I know, indeed, — and am by no means disposed to ignore the fact — that theologians, when formulating the philosophy of history or systematizing the doctrines of our faith, have not all given the emphasis and importance which in this address have been accorded to the solidarity of the human species. It must, indeed, be confessed that the subject is among the most mysterious of those on which theology is employed, and is beset with great difficulties. Many great theologians, partly in order to escape some of these difficulties, and partly in order to conform their system to what they believe to be the teaching of the word of God, have selected as their point of departure the *representative* relation sustained by the first Adam to his posterity, instead of the substantial oneness of the human race. And others, shrinking from the real or supposed ethical implications of both of these solutions, have started with the sin manifested in the active transgression of individual men; and moving backward to the birth of the individual, and upward through a sinful ancestry to the fall of the first human pair, have maintained that personal guilt succeeds, and yet rests upon the vitiated nature which

has been derived as a *natural inheritance*. The differences between these views are not unimportant. Regarded as theories of original sin, they are the products of three different, but noble and powerful intellectual tendencies. The first theory, that of real oneness, seems to have been conceived in the *historical*, the representative theory, in the *theological*, and the remaining theory in the *ethical* spirit. Dissimilar, however, as they are, their agreements are far more profound than their differences. Uniting in the declaration, that the descendants by ordinary generation of our first parent "sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression," they unite also in teaching, that just as far as the movement of history is a development at all, just so far, apart from Christ, it is the development of a sinful society, whose end is a merited destruction.

In the light of this solemn truth and under the law of this terrible unity, must the Christian historian interpret the narrative of the human race. When, turning to the age of Nero, he reads the awful description of society for which we are indebted to the Stoic Seneca, or gazes in horror upon the still darker picture painted by the Christian Paul, and then searches for the historical cause of this seething mass of evil passion, breeding death, he is compelled to confess that its historical cause finds exact expression in the solemn words of inspiration: "By one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This would be the final and terrible philosophy of history but for the revelation and bestowment of the grace of God.

I say but for the *grace of God*. It is in the grace of God, his sovereign and redeeming grace, that we find the last, but also the regnant element, to be considered in formulating the philosophy of history — in declaring the law that gives unity to its large and majestic narrative. The time at my command does not justify an endeavor to connect in any detailed manner this last element with the preceding elements we have considered. This much, however, let me say. We

have moved through a series of increasingly potential elements of the historic movement; from law to life, from life to conscious life, from conscious life to man, the voluntary cause — mightier than all the conditions that lie below him. We have found the beginning of history to have been the employment by man of his supremest power in a self-determined act, which concluded the race in sin and guilt and fixed the character of the historic movement as a sinful and guilty development. But, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God, let it be told with adoring gratitude, that we have reached, in the grace that redeems man, by far the most potent element of the series. For, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Doubtless, this address would possess a unity more distinctly obvious were I to unfold the radical modification of history effected by the grace of God as the creation and development of a new germ, instead of presenting it in the form which I shall adopt. I prefer, however, at this point, even at some peril to rhetorical unity, to employ another conception. For upon occasions like the present it is fitting, by recalling their services and repeating their words, to honor the illustrious dead. No American student of Church History should forget, in circumstances like those in which I find myself to-night, gratefully to recall the labors and pronounce the name of Henry Boynton Smith. It would remove me too far from the subject before us were I to mention his abundant toils for the church of God, or to refer adequately to his noble contributions to this department of sacred learning. But since I am now upon the high theme of the last and dominant element in the historical movement, I think I shall best honor his memory if I turn from the conception which has prevailed in this address, in order to employ, for the time, the conception which to him seemed most true to the facts, most scriptural, and most majestic — the conception of the gracious *kingdom of God*. “That,” said Dr. Smith, in his

inaugural address as Professor of Church History in Union Seminary, "that which shapes the whole character and determines the final destiny of a people, that which has always done this, and from the nature of the case must do this, is its religious faith; for here are the highest objects acting on the deepest and most permanent wants of the human heart. And in the whole history of man we can trace the course of one shaping, overmastering, and progressive power, before which all others have bowed, and that is *the spiritual kingdom of God*, having for its object the redemption of man from the ruins of apostasy. If we could but realize the majestic simplicity of this kingdom, its spiritual nature and sublime intent; if we could make present to us the full idea of it, which is not an idea alone, but also a reality; if we could see that holiness is the great end of our being, and that sin is its very opposite, and that redemption is for the removal of sin and for the establishment of a *holy kingdom*; then were we in the right position for reading, in their highest meaning, all the records of our race."

Here, then, at the close of our search for the organizing idea and the philosophy of *universal* history, have we found the idea of *Church History*; for Church History is itself the universal history. It is the universal history organized by the profoundest idea, and governed in all its narrative by the ultimate philosophy of history. No events are too secular for its regard; no objects are too unimportant for its serious study; no distance of time or space is too great for its narrative to traverse. And in the consummation of all things, when prophecy shall be read as history, it will be revealed to all that *the universal history is the history of the church of Christ*. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. *And he is the head of the body, the church.*"

II. CHURCH HISTORY AS A DISCIPLINE.

If I have correctly, however inadequately, unfolded the idea of Church History, we shall be at no loss for grounds on which to justify the practice, uniform in our schools for theological study, of assigning to the science of history a place not second to that assigned to any of the other disciplines. These grounds I shall not now attempt directly to state. Permit me, however, briefly to set forth the relations sustained by Church History to the other departments, for the purpose of bringing into view the precise influence which it exerts upon the student's mind.

Setting aside, for the moment, Church History itself, the several departments of the theological course arrange themselves under the two great divisions of science and art. Not only are systematic divinity and apologetics (the latter a department to which both the sceptical tendencies of the age and the increasing evidences of Christianity have during late years given great prominence) entitled to be called theological sciences. The word science best describes the knowledge derived from what have too often been regarded and classified as mere propaedeutic studies—Hebrew and New Testament Greek. For in these departments the study of language is subsidiary to textual and literary criticism, and this, in turn, to exegesis; each of the departments finding its consummation and final cause only in the Old Testament or the New Testament theology. The reasons to be urged for giving the name science to systematic theology are quite as forcible when urged for applying it to biblical theology. On the other hand, the department of homiletics and the pastoral office may not inaccurately be described as the department of theological art. The methods employed in the other departments are investigation and analysis, and the products yielded are classified or scientific knowledge. The method of this department is synthetic, and synthesis is the characteristic of art. Its function is to enable the student to recombine the classified knowledge which he brings from the

study of the theological sciences in the forms in which as a preacher and pastor he can best employ them.

It is the distinction of history that, more thoroughly than any of the other disciplines, it is both scientific and artistic, both analytic and synthetic. In one aspect of it, history is a body of knowledge organized by an idea; in another aspect of it, it is a *belles lettres* product. On this account, it is more largely indebted than any of the others to the departments with which in the theological course it is co-ordinated. On the one hand, more distinctly than does any other theological science, it owes its literary form to the art of discourse. Upon the rhetorical excellence of its form it is even more dependent than is systematic theology. On the other hand, it owes its principles of organization to the theological sciences. The facts of history cannot be known in their highest and profoundest relations by the student who is not prepared for their study by the discipline and culture of the mind to be obtained only by a careful study of the laws of the Christian evidences, of the doctrinal system, and of the meaning of the words of revelation. But if history is thus a debtor, it is also a creditor. In unfolding the benefits by which its obligations to the other studies are discharged, I can speak of the historical discipline only as it affects the student in the two departments of systematic and biblical theology.

The influence exerted by history on the student of systematic theology will be made evident by holding before our minds the difference between a theological judgment and a historical judgment. The former is simple and positive; the latter is complex and comparative. The one is qualitative; the other is quantitative. To make this more clear by means of a well-known and interesting example, let us take the case of Arminianism. Both the teacher of theology and the teacher of history are compelled to pronounce an opinion upon Arminianism. It rises into most prominent view in both departments. The duty of the theologian is absolute. Arminianism is truth, or it is error; and between truth and error there can be no compromise. To the view of the

Calvinistic theologian the truth is upon the side to which Arminianism is opposed. It is his function to pronounce Arminianism an error, and to set forth the grounds of his judgment. Here his work as a theologian terminates. But Arminianism rises into view also in the history of the church. The historian, however, meets it not as a system pure and simple, but as a system in action; not as an idea simply, but as an idea in its realization. He meets it in the lives of the Wesleys; in the rise of that great evangelical communion which during the closing years of the past century and throughout the present century has so abundantly blessed both England and our own country. It is obvious that the judgment of the historian, however strong his Calvinistic prepossessions may be, must be very different from that of the theologian. It is not that he will disagree with the theologian; but associated with the system to be judged will be a congeries of modifying facts; and the whole will constitute the Arminianism of history as contrasted with the Arminianism of theology. The judgment pronounced in the one case will be upon the relation of a system to the truth. The judgment pronounced in the other case will be upon the influence of the system under actual historical conditions. Of course, the judgments will conspicuously differ. And, in point of fact, both of them have been pronounced by the ministry of our own church.¹ Theologically we are compelled, when loyal to our vision of the truth which God has revealed, to assert that Arminianism is not only an error, but an error at the centre of theology, and at the centre of soteriology. But historically, we welcome the Arminian Wesleyan as a brother beloved to our pulpits and to our meetings for prayer. We acknowledge the validity of his ordination and of his administration of the sacraments; and we gladly unite with him as one of the host of the elect in labor for the redemption of the world.

¹ Several passages containing references to the denomination with which Lane Seminary is connected have been retained in the paper, in the form in which they were delivered.

This familiar example will serve to bring vividly before us the exact influence exerted by the study of history upon the student of systematic theology. Its influence is to imbue the student with the catholic spirit. Let the history of the church be studied apart from theology, and its profoundest truth will never be disclosed. So far as this profound meaning is concerned, the facts of history might as well be a loose and insignificant aggregation. Let the influence of theology unmixed with history be exerted upon the student, and the result will be that which it has been in what, let us hope, is the absolutely vanished past — it will be the generation of the *odium theologicum*. That the study of history abates and tends to destroy this baleful passion, which has already done so much to impede the advance of the church of Christ, and induces a catholic temper in the student of theology, were ground enough on which to justify its presence and eminence as a discipline in a school of sacred learning.

It is another merit of history, regarded as a branch of theological learning, that it exerts a distinct and beneficent influence on the student when engaged in those departments the aim of which is the interpretation of the written word. If it were proper to institute comparisons between the several disciplines, I would be compelled to assign the most important place to those which bring the student into most intimate communion with the words of inspiration, and seek to elicit from the Bible its exact historical significance. It is in these studies that Protestant scholarship has achieved its noblest victories. It would be difficult to exaggerate the value of the labors of biblical scholars since John Reuchlin, in the face of the narrow mediæval prejudice, sought instruction in Hebrew from a learned Jew, and Desiderius Erasmus gave to the church his edition of the New Testament. The two-fold department which enters into and continues their labors is the chosen home of the spirit of Protestant Christianity. In this, as in no other department, is the right of private judgment asserted and exercised; for here, in its most exact meaning, is the answer sought to the question of questions, “What does God teach in his written revelation?”

But the emphasis of the right of private judgment is not unattended with danger. It is the danger of too highly estimating individual opinion when it pushes itself against the continuous current of the church's belief. The reality of this danger and the seriousness of the evils that flow from it have not seldom been exemplified in the history of biblical study. It was from the point of view of biblical criticism that Strauss reconstructed the life of Jesus. It was from the same point of view that Baur wrought out the bold hypothesis that Christianity owes its existence to-day to the compromise which ended the wars and contradictions between the Pauline and Petrine sects, in whose bitterness the primitive church had been well-nigh destroyed. It is a significant fact that, as against this destructive criticism, the faith of the church found its ablest defender in a scholar deeply imbued with the historical spirit—in that great man whom we must still mention when we would name the church's greatest historian—I mean, of course, Augustus Neander.

As all of us know, the close of that controversy left the faith of the church in the New Testament unimpaired. But, though that has closed, another controversy, born also of biblical criticism, is upon us. Nor can we indulge the hope that upon its conclusion our peace will not be troubled by a third. For the glory of biblical study—the glory, I mean, that it brings man face to face with the word of God—is the source of the danger that attends it: the danger that undue importance will be attached to individual opinion. It seems, therefore, too plain for argument that there is needed, in close association with the biblical course, another discipline, which by its emphasis of the value of tradition, will moderate the tendency to welcome new hypotheses as though of necessity they are the heralds of new truths. Such a moderating discipline, it is unnecessary to show, is found in history itself. The spirit with which it imbues its earnest and candid student will lead him to meet the brilliant and unhistoric speculations of the individual mind with becoming caution and scepticism. I venture to affirm that the present dis-

cussion touching the religion of Israel is one in which this historic caution and scepticism should be severely exercised.

However that may be in the view of others, it will be agreed by all that this perilous tendency is best diminished by the discipline of historical study. I do not forget that the same tendency is powerfully antagonized by systematic theology, formed on the Confession of our church. I trust that I shall never be found disparaging the influence of systematic theology in forming the mind of our ministry. Our church has reached its high position and achieved its great work most of all by its loyalty to revealed truth as expressed in the forms of systematic theology. Above all else, our ministers have been theologians; and the greatest and most widely influential literary products of our clergy have been theological products. But I am not disparaging systematic theology when I say that at this point it is at a disadvantage. Unworthy as the suspicion is, it is difficult for theology—just because allied with the symbols which we receive and adopt—to escape the suspicion that in antagonizing the conclusions of biblical criticism it is fighting scholarship with the weapons of ecclesiastical authority. That ecclesiastical authority may be properly invoked against conclusions vitally opposed to the standards of the church is a proposition of almost axiomatic force. But whoever has observed human nature—whoever, especially, is aware of the sensitiveness that scholarship has always shown under the restraints of external authority—does not need to be told that the result of invoking authority has often been to fix in the mind the very belief which it was intended to expel from it. Accordingly, wise men have always counselled that ecclesiastical authority be invoked against error only as a last resort and in a desperate crisis.

While theology, in relation to the subject before us, suffers, in our church at least, from its peculiarly intimate connection with authority, history is at no such disadvantage. Its influence is quite as conservative as the influence of theology. But it is influential, rather than authoritative. It breathes a

spirit; it forms a habit of mind; it calls out the powers of the mind to genial labor on the very subjects upon which biblical criticism is engaged; and all the while its distinct influence is to exalt and to preserve the traditional faith of the church.

That the attention of students for the ministry is for many years to come specially to be directed to biblical studies, no one can doubt who regards attentively the signs of the times. The revision of our version of the Scriptures, the attempted reconstruction of the history of Israel, the new interest in the Semitic languages, and the new study of comparative religion all point in this direction. That the influence of these studies, in the atmosphere of modern doubt, must for the time be to unsettle belief will not be denied. We could not, if we would, check the tendency toward these studies in the church. We would not if we could. But the influence which, if unmingled with that of a more conservative discipline, they must exert, it is of the highest importance to prevent. On this ground I plead for a renewed interest in the great conservative discipline of Church History.

Though the subject is by no means exhausted, I must turn away from the relations of history to the individual disciplines in order to consider briefly its relations to the theological course regarded as a unit. And here the word which perhaps best describes its special influence is the word "culture." A marked tendency has within a few years been manifest to contrast the discipline of the intimate and detailed knowledge gained by the student in a single department with the discipline of the broader knowledge that constitutes the substance of a liberal education. Though the word does not describe it with absolute accuracy, we may well adopt, for the purpose of this discourse, the word "scientific" to designate the new training as contrasted with the older or liberal training. This scientific training we must regard as one result of the wide employment of the inductive method. The employment of induction has given to the modern world a strong impulse toward the observation and classification of

the visible universe; and this, in turn, has resulted in the extension and multiplication of the material sciences and the useful arts. It is the growing strength of this great impulse, communicated to modern Europe and America largely by the powerful mind of Francis Bacon, which has finally succeeded in founding, in connection with our American colleges, special schools of the material sciences, in which students are trained for special scientific occupations. As the subjection of the visible world to the use of man becomes more nearly thorough,—as, in other words, the material sciences are multiplied and the range of each is extended,—these schools of science may be expected to multiply, and education to become still more special. The great value of this special training it were as idle to deny as it would be to deny the strength of the modern tendency to promote it.

But valuable and even necessary as it is, the training of the specialist is obviously attended by the danger that its imperious demands will prove an effectual bar to a large and generous culture. The fact of this danger is already forcing itself upon the attention of conspicuous and influential writers; and unless we are mere pessimists we shall easily believe that the demand will at no distant day be general and powerful, that our scientific schools positively borrow a larger liberalizing element from the collegiate course (of which the main design is culture) with which at present they are only crudely affiliated.

The main design of the collegiate course, I say, is *culture*. That this is its design is obvious from the terms “the humanities” and “the liberal arts” which are associated with its honors and degrees. The educated man, whom the college seeks to send forth into the world, is a man disciplined in all his faculties and receptive upon every side; a man of the widest intellectual sympathies; a man of the humanities; a man, in short, glowing not so much with the special enthusiasm of a special though scientific occupation, but glowing with “the enthusiasm of humanity,” imbued with the spirit, and alive to the possibilities of the entire race.

In these days, in view of the strong tendency both to specialize and to secularize education, it is well to recall the noble history in the modern world of this system of liberal training. It is well to reinform ourselves of that continuous movement through the centuries which, under the conduct of the largest minds and loftiest spirits has in our own land, culminated in the colleges which have so largely blessed and honored both the church and state. We owe much indeed to the growth of material science under the nurture of the inductive philosophy. But the debt of the world to the education which survives in our colleges is far larger and far more profound. Let us mention, always with becoming gratitude, the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, which Alcuin taught in the palace-school of Charles the Great, and which Scotus Erikena taught in the court of Charles the Bald in France, and in the new school founded by Alfred, at Oxford, in England. It was the *trivium and quadrivium* that enabled the European mind in the scholastic age to assimilate and to employ on the great problems of theology the Greek philosophy; and in the age of the Renaissance to assimilate and employ the Greek and the Latin literatures. And it was the same culture historically developed that made the revival of letters the chief providential agency in the great Reformation of religion. The churches of the Reformation were not slow in learning the great lesson thus clearly taught by history. Aside from the body of the Christian truth, this training in the liberal arts—snatched by Charles in Italy from the wreck of the Lombard wars then already past, and saved by Alcuin in England from the wreck of the Danish invasions then still in the future—was believed by the reformed churches to be the largest gift of the mediæval clergy to the clergy of modern Christendom. Nor, in their judgment, was its highest value to be sought so much in the positive knowledge which it imparts as in the catholic sympathies and the large and many-sided intellectual life, of which it is the parent.

Thus it was, that when the reformed churches began their conflict—which may God prosper—for the Christian con-

quest of a new continent, the college of the liberal arts was at once, and by unspeakable self-sacrifice, established. It is thus a historical fact of the first importance that the colleges of the land owe their existence, more than to any other single cause, to the absolute need felt by the reformed churches of a ministry broadly educated, catholic in sympathy, and widely receptive in intellectual habit. The need of such a ministry was at no period greater than it is to-day; and in no place has it been more imperative than it is in our own country. For, if the tendency to specialized and scientific education is the strong and general tendency which I have asserted it to be, the life of the nation will rapidly degenerate unless there is also in the state a large and influential class formed by a culture broader and more humane than that of the scientific school. When to this consideration is added the materializing influence exerted by our swift conquest of nature, by the resulting unparalleled acquisition of wealth, and by the growing stream of immigration,—the impulse of which is simply a sense of material want and a hope of material gain,—how clear it is that, if our civilization is to be rescued from the destruction which must follow an unduly materialistic habit of life, the intellectual life of the Christian ministry of the land must be no less wide and catholic than was that of the fathers. I do not say, for I do not believe, that that depth has yet been reached; but I do say that there are powerful tendencies in our America which, if unchecked by the influence of a broad, spiritual, and Christian culture, will carry us downward with frightful speed to the condition of Roman society in its decline,—a condition in the modern world which is well portrayed in the most mournful and most bitter of all the sonnets of Wordsworth:

“ We must run glittering like a brook
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
 The wealthiest man among us is the best.
 No grandeur now in nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense —
 This is idolatry; and these we adore.
 Plain living and high thinking are no more.

The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws."

Great, therefore, is the debt of the nation and of the church to the Christian college for that broad and humane culture, which, just because it awakens the "enthusiasm of humanity," is the choicest intellectual endowment of our ministry.

The spirit of this culture, I need not say, must be manifest not only in the college, but in the professional school, if its fruit is to be revealed in the professional life of the minister. It must not only survive the college course, but as it reappears in the school of divinity must be instinct with a stronger life. If a theological discipline can be found which will reinvigorate this spirit, that discipline must be given no subordinate place in the theological course. Such a discipline is the history whose organizing idea I have tried to unfold, and whose claim to a place among the sciences I have tried to defend. It is the highest merit of history as a discipline that it is the least special of all the departments. As a science, it is *scientia scientiarum*; as an art, it is *ars artium*. "If it were desirable," it has well been said, "to bring the whole encyclopaedia of human knowledge under a single term, certainly history would be chosen as the most comprehensive and elastic." It subjects the student to a training the largest and most humane. The spirit of history is the spirit which breathes from, perhaps, the noblest line of Latin literature: *Humanus sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*, and which finds a far loftier expression in the words of Paul: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It is, above all, as a student of history that the student of theology becomes most profoundly conscious of the unity of the race. More distinctly than any other discipline it brings the student into sympathetic converse with the whole family of man. Its theme is the life of humanity, and its literature is the libraries of the world. The culture

which it legitimates and the sympathy which it breathes are no subordinate elements of the training and the spirit needed by the preacher of the one universal and ultimate gospel. They are a culture and a spirit which, on the one hand, will permit him to "call no man abandoned"; and which, on the other hand, will permit him, with the deepest reverence, and divesting them of all pantheistic significance, to repeat as his own the words :

"I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain."

III. CHURCH HISTORY AS A MODE OF THE GOSPEL.

But history is not only a science, and a science entitled by its peculiar culture of the student to a lofty position among the theological disciplines. Its highest claim upon the candidate for the sacred ministry will come into view, only as we follow him into the distinctive work of his sacred calling. I am compelled to treat this last and, practically, most important of the related subjects of this discourse in a summary manner. I state, however, the exact relation of Church History to the work of the preacher, when I say that church history is a *mode of the gospel*, and add that it is inferior to no other mode as a *homiletical* mode of the gospel.

It is a distinction of Christianity among the religions of the world, that while its substance is one, its largeness and vitality enable it to exist in many literary forms. To assure ourselves that this is true we need go no further than to the written word itself. It is the one gospel of the grace of God that is present in the lyrics of the Psalter, in the recorded visions of the prophets, in the life of Jesus Christ, in the history of the apostolic church, in the familiar and hortatory letters and addresses of the apostles to the several churches, and in the profound theological and ethical treatise addressed by the apostle Paul to the church at Rome. These are con-substantial, in that the truth which all embody and express

is the one truth revealed by God for the salvation of men. But, in each case, the truth reveals itself in a new literary mode. I do not stop to inquire whether it was the recognition of this fact that gave form to the theological seminaries in this country; but content myself with the statement, that the course of study in these seminaries would not have been different had this been made the principle of its organization. For the several departments of the course do not differ in the subjects brought under review, but in the point of view from which the subjects are regarded, and, as a consequence, in the modes in which they are presented. The subject, indeed, is one. It is the truth, as I have said, which has been revealed by God for man's salvation. This truth, it is the function of the chairs of sacred literature, by means of textual and literary criticism and exegesis, to unfold. The truth thus unfolded, systematic theology, after associating it with the *a priori* elements which the revealed truth itself implies, classifies, and re-presents in an articulated body of divinity. I should do injustice to the important department of apologetics were I to say that it deals only with the defence of Christianity as distinct from Christianity itself. Apologetics "arrays the whole contents and substance of the Christian faith for defence and for defensive assault." The department of church polity exhibits this same truth as it organizes into a visible society those whom it calls out from the race. Church History is an exhibition of this same truth, in its predestined activity, determining the life of the church and modifying the life of the world. And the department of sacred rhetoric seizes the truth in all the forms into which it has been wrought by the other disciplines, and reorganizes them in order to form the ultimate literary product of the pulpit — the sacred discourse.

If I have correctly described the theological course, it follows that Church History is *the gospel itself*; the gospel in a historical as distinguished from a theological or apologetic or biblical mode. It is the gospel as it exhibits itself in the

life of the church and the world. If this is true, it is no less a proper subject of pulpit discourse than is Christian doctrine. If the preacher is in the line of his duty when, under the guidance of the art of sacred discourse, he constructs the doctrinal or expository or ecclesiastical sermon, he does not step beyond the line when he constructs and delivers the historical sermon. Indeed, the historical sermon possesses the great merit of presenting the gospel as it is revealed in actual life; and it possesses the further merit of a most striking congruity with revelation itself. For the word of God is predominantly history, even when prophecy is not regarded as history; and prophecy is properly regarded as the divinely inspired history of the future.

I limit my remarks touching the relations of Church History to the work of the preacher to this single subject, because I believe that the pulpit has denied itself the exercise of an important power by its failure to employ largely this mode of gospel discourse. I plead, therefore, not only in behalf of a larger infusion of the historical element in the doctrinal and expository sermon, but in behalf also of the sermon of which the historical is the dominant element — of the sermon in which the gospel is held forth as it appears in the lives of men and women whose biographies are history. Did time permit me to make this plea in detail, I would not content myself with the mere justification of the historical discourse on the ground that it is a preaching of the gospel. For it possesses many special and important elements of homiletical value, some of which I can indicate only in single sentences. Of these perhaps the most obvious is the catholic and irenic character which the element of history gives to the sermon. Moreover, it is a well-recognized law of discourse that the impact of truth concretely stated is far more powerful than the impact of the same truth when stated in abstract terms; and if this is true of every form of discourse, it is true especially of the Christian sermon, of which the end is to arouse the will to vigorous evangelical action. Nor is this all. A study of the sermon as a literary product will

reveal the fact that it is not merely a lecture and not merely an oration. It combines in itself both the didactic and the oratorical elements. The preacher must not only present the truth clearly; he must present it also dynamically. The sermon is a didactic oration; and a moment's reflection will convince us that history, just because it exhibits the living and dramatic movement of the truth, is the mode of the gospel which most naturally yields itself to the construction of such a discourse. It is also true that the doctrines both of biblical and of systematic theology derive from their careers in the life of the church as narrated by Church History their most striking confirmation — confirmation, indeed, of the very kind which the sacred orator can most favorably employ. And finally, an individual doctrine cannot be expounded more forcibly in an oratorical manner than in closest association with the historical personage who illustrated or defended it; so that even when the sermon is substantially theological, it may well be formally historical. The mystery of the Trinity cannot be presented in a form more profoundly interesting than in association with the heroic life of Athanasius the Great. And what is true of the doctrine of the Trinity as associated with Athanasius is true of the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and of justification by faith as associated with the lives and work of John Calvin and of Martin Luther.

The time is not distant, let us hope, when in all Christian pulpits the sermon of history will be given a place side by side with the sermon of theology and the sermon of exposition. It is true that history can never displace or be substituted for school divinity. Whoever has attentively read the history of the development of systematic theology, from John of Damascus onward, through the labors of the noble succession of great minds and lofty spirits of the mediaeval church, the Master of the Sentences, Anselm of Canterbury, the Angel of the Schools, and John Wessel; through the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon and the Institutes of Calvin at the Reformation; and, finally, through the abundant discussions and systems and symbols from the Reformation to

our own day — must have reached the conclusion that, Christianity being what it is, and the human mind being what it is, the system of Christian doctrine organized by the laws of thought is an inevitable product. The confessions of the Christian church are, without exception, theological confessions; and it is safe to predict that, whatever may be the Christian confessions of the future, they will be no less systematic in form than those of the past have been. Whenever Christian faith has been strong, the tendency to systematize Christian truth has been correspondingly powerful. I am not agitated by the fear, therefore, which has of late been expressed, that the discipline of systematic theology will in any degree lose its power to awaken interest or its influence in giving form to the preaching of the ministry. Such a loss would be a calamity, indeed; for it would be the result and token of a diminished faith in Christianity itself. But history is a mode of the gospel as really as is systematic theology. For that reason history should be given a place, as on the ground of its special homiletical value it should be given a prominent place, in Christian preaching. Were this place given to history — were the preaching of the gospel as it reveals itself in the recorded life of the church to become frequent and general — the power which the church derives from the labors of the pulpit would be greatly multiplied. For the history of Christianity is, after all, both its most moving presentation and its most convincing argument. I indulge the hope that the students of this seminary will not regard history as a science and a discipline only, as therefore only distantly related to the great work of preaching the gospel. Remembering the lofty passage in the inspired Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the gospel of faith is proclaimed in the lives of those who in a less favored age lived and died in trust of God, they will need no further justification as they find and preach the gospel of God's redeeming grace in the history of the fathers, and martyrs, and confessors, and reformers of the church of Christ, who through faith "subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness, and of whom the world was not worthy."

I have thus endeavored to unfold the idea of church history, and so to justify its claim to a high place among the theological sciences; to defend it in claiming a chair second to that of no other discipline of the theological school; and finally, by presenting it as a mode of the gospel, to state the intimate relation which it sustains to the work of the sacred ministry. Profoundly convinced of the truth of the views which it has been the design of this address to explain and defend, I regard the work to which you have summoned me as a work of the highest dignity and of the first importance. It is fitting, therefore, that I close, as I began, with a grateful expression of my sense of the high honor you have done me in making the discipline of Church History my special trust. But the work is no less difficult than it is honorable and important. The difficulty of the work never appeared so great to me as it appears to day, at the close of a year of laborious but delightful service. But, having obeyed what I believe to have been the call of God to engage in labor the end of which is to display the power and glory of his *kingdom of grace*, it is my duty and privilege constantly to invoke his sufficient aid. I invoke it in faith of the truth, revealed in his word and confirmed by the history of his church, that when he calls his servants to work too great to be performed in their unaided strength and wisdom he supplements their activity by his own, to the end that no labor in him may be in vain.