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INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

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BY THE

REV. W. B. POPE.

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

WE are assembled to-day to inaugurate, by exercises of devotion and words of mutual encouragement, another session of the studies of this Theological Seminary.

In invoking upon it the blessing of heaven, we have only to ask for the continuance and increase of a benediction that has been signally bestowed from the beginning. This Institution owed its origin, as we believe, to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, prompting His servants to provide for an urgent necessity of our community. The Divine favour removed every obstacle out of the way of its establishment, and has commended it to the approval and increasing good will of His people from year to year; and by its successful results it has itself, during the course of an entire generation, demonstrated its vital importance to the work of Methodism in our own land and throughout the world. We have, therefore, with full confidence, committed this house to the safe keeping of Him who founded it for His own glory and His Church's good.

Our first sacred obligation discharged, it is of no slight moment that we stimulate one another's

zeal in the performance of our joint and individual duties. It devolves on me, as one of the first functions of the office to which God and His Church have called me, to make such general remarks as may tend to the furtherance of that object. In addressing myself to this task, I cannot but remember the Inaugural Discourse pronounced in this place by my ever-honoured Tutor,—whom I am loth to call my predecessor,—Dr. Hannah, to whom, for his long and blessed labours in this service, may “a full reward be given of the Lord God of Israel;” but not yet,—not until many years of tranquil rest in our midst shall have been added to the years of his fruitful labour. Following in the track of that noble discourse, I shall remind you of the threefold design of this Institution: as receiving within its walls candidates for the Christian ministry, whose qualifications are to be here rigidly tested; as providing a comprehensive training for those who sustain the test; and as placing them under such a spiritual discipline in community life as shall, by the grace of God, send them individually forth, strong in religious vigour, to the holy labour of their lives.

I. The students who enter these gates pass into the second of three stages of strict probation.

They have undergone a preliminary ordeal, itself composed of several more or less severe processes of scrutiny by which the Church, jealous for God's honour and its own purity, seeks to verify what seems to be the call of the Holy Spirit.

Having so far satisfied the congregation, without whose satisfaction there can be no assurance of a Divine vocation, they are sent to this place as probationers still, as candidates for probationship, for the sacred function: as yet, no more than this; though this is very much, and generally, that is, in the great majority of cases, decides all that follows.

Not in every case. The test is still applied here, in another form, but, if possible, with yet closer rigour. There is a continual examination of the fitness of the candidates for the office they aspire to,—an examination of moral character, of mental fitness, and of Methodist loyalty,—which may besaid never to intermit from the time of their entering until they honourably pass into active service, and await the final decision of their course. Through the mercy of God, most of the students who are sent to us abide the test. They declare, by their godliness, by their diligence, and by the consistency with which they keep the object of their life in view, that their vocation is genuine. But with some it may be otherwise. Some who may have run before the Spirit sent them, are here effectually arrested. Some may show, by their failing piety, that their call was only a delusion; or, worse still, that it was only the earnest of a grace of which they prove themselves unworthy before they receive its fulness. Some may give evidence by their lack of mind, or by their refusal to cultivate what mind they have, that the Spirit of truth never purposed to employ them in

a service which demands the best and most consecrated mental industry; while some may make it only too manifest by the instability of their convictions that, wherever else the Holy Spirit may appoint them their lot in His wide field, they have not found their right place in the Methodist portion of it. When such instances of a misinterpreted Providence are detected, they are sent back whence they came, to the authority that can see to it that the melancholy mistake be continued no farther.

Those who pass honourably through the close and ever-pressing ordeal of this place,—and, let it be repeated thankfully, they are the great majority,—may with much confidence be sent forward to encounter the final fence around the garden enclosed of the holy ministry. It is true that this Institution *may* fail in its first function; there may have been instances in which the unworthy have left its gates with the seal of worthiness upon them. But such cases must have been, and must still be, exceeding rare. Surely there is every provision, humanly speaking, to reduce the danger to the lowest point, to bring it within the narrowest limits compatible with the essential fallibility of human cognizance. It may be said, generally, that the candidates presented by the Institution to the Conference are men who need only a short trial in the open field to make them worthy of their ordination and final mission.

The value of this close supervision, continued

over so large a portion of a young minister's probationship, cannot fail to assert itself with increasing force to the judgment of the community at large. The Methodist people know that all they have to glory in, all they have to depend upon, under God, for the maintenance of their past tradition, and the continuance of their work in the future, is bound up with the purity of their ministry. Whatever imperils *that* makes their great heart groan; and whatever tends to throw an additional sanction and defence around *that* is and must be regarded by them as a good thing that they cannot value too highly, or too dearly pay for.

Let me, my dear young brethren, address you a few affectionate words on this matter.

You will not think that this strong allusion to test, and examination, and sifting, is excessive or harsh. Your Christian intelligence is too sound to allow of your entertaining such a thought, even if it should have flashed upon your minds. You know something already—you will hereafter know much more—of the sanctity and responsibility of that order which is separated to be the instrument of God's dealings with the world, and with the souls of men,—as much separated in the church as the church is from the world. You know that it cannot have too strict a watch set upon the avenues that approach it. It is pure compassion to affright back all who, in this matter, are mistaking their way. For, of all men they are the most miserable, whether they

feel it or not, who recklessly or without Divine compulsion enter the ministry to the preparations of which this Institution is dedicated.

It may be hoped that these observations will produce a very different effect upon your minds; that they will stimulate you to make your own vocation sure. If you have been sent here by the Spirit of God, your case is in your own hands. No test has been or will be applied that you may not determine to sustain. As your judgment tells you that there ought to be strict discipline to keep the way of the holy ministry, so let your hearts' generous impulse challenge it in the fear of God. Determine to be sterner censors of your own morals, and stricter monitors of your own studies, than any outside yourselves can be. Be your own judges, swift witnesses against yourselves: while we are your examiners, be to yourselves inquisitors. By the Divine blessing, you all may secure your own acceptance now, and throughout your course. Saving those contingencies which are in the hands of God, you may insure your own vocation to this ministry. Having come so far, there is no difficulty in your further career, which grace and industry will not remove out of your way. You may maintain your piety, and so watch over your heart and life that declension in religion shall never impeach or make questionable your call. You may so cultivate your minds, improve your talents, and avail yourselves of the helps afforded you, that want of

ability shall never make your departure matter of painful necessity. And there is no demand of any kind upon your character, ability, and loyalty, that the least endowed may not meet, if he be only determined to meet it. We are anxious to impress upon you that you are probationers in the strictest sense of the word, sent here to be narrowly watched by those who must give an account. But we are equally anxious to impress it upon you that you may, by humbly and earnestly doing your daily duty, challenge the keenest scrutiny, and maintain your integrity through your whole probationship.

II. The proper business, however, of this college is the training of its students in such branches of knowledge as pertain to the due equipment of a minister of the Gospel of Christ. What may be called theological instruction being the main concern, provision is made for the general culture of their minds, for imparting to them the elements of all sound knowledge; and, what is still better, for stimulating them to right habits of thought and of reverent inquiry.

I. The time is gone when it was necessary to argue that mental cultivation is a necessary accomplishment of one who presents himself to the public as a representative of religion. The illusion, that refinement of mind, delicacy of taste, and what may be generally called intellectual habitudes, are inconsistent with simplicity of faith, and tend to blunt the keen edge of zeal,

or unnerve the vigour of the strong man armed for Christ, has almost retired from among us; it is to be found only in corners where things obsolete linger. Such prejudices have been literally vanquished by the force of common sense; and there are not many intelligent members of our congregations, whether in cities or in villages, who do not feel some satisfaction in the thought that provision is made for securing all our young ministers from the imputation of gross illiteracy. And surely, though, alas, too slowly, provision is made to render it an absolutely needless thing for any candidate to bring an uneducated mind to the public exposition of God's word, and to mar his usefulness to our children, if not to ourselves, by intolerable exhibitions of ignorance and bad taste. The arrangements of the studies of this place are such, and intrusted to such competent hands, that this matter may be said to be well cared for. The deficiencies of early education are repaired in the case of those, and they are many, to whom the gifts of grace have been more liberal than the gifts of Providence; while those who have had the advantages of early tuition, and we find their number increasing, are taught how to turn these advantages to the best account. It is needless to enter into further detail. Suffice to say that the highest scholarship we can boast is devoted to this function, and that the routine of intellectual discipline is on the most comprehensive and liberal scale.

2. But theological training holds here, as it ought, the central place, and claims its tribute from each individual branch of study. Every teacher in this school of the prophets is a minister of the word of God, and has the spirit, if not the name, of a theological tutor. The studies of every class have a tacit and indirect, if not direct and avowed, reference to the students' equipment as expositors of the holy oracles. Our intellectual pursuits are manifold,—more manifold than would be easily believed by those who are not familiar with our internal arrangements,—but they find their unity, where all truth and all man's purest aspirations after truth find their unity, in the word of God. The Bible throws its bond of perfectness around the diversified engagements of this college. In other words we, to whom the charge of this Christian seminary is committed, are pledged jointly and severally to do our utmost to train these students to understand, to unfold, and to defend, Holy Scripture, the centre and depository of all revealed truth:—to understand it for themselves, to unfold it to their flocks, and to vindicate it against all assaults of those without.

(1.) It is our high object to aid the candidates in their endeavour to understand that word of God to which, and to which alone, their faith and life are devoted. The human spirit can entertain no higher ambition, can grapple with no higher task. In this world it is, after all, only the hem of the garment of eternal truth that we

can touch; or, in the language of Scripture itself, we can but see it as "in a glass darkly." But to strenuous and prayerful endeavour it is given to acquire sufficient knowledge of the Book of Life to save our own souls, and the souls of those who hear us.

Our study of the Scriptures embraces at the outset that course of investigation which deals with the letter of the sacred text. A boundless range of inquiry is suggested by this term: for it includes the original tongues in which the inspired authors wrote, the entire internal literature of the Bible, and the numberless miscellaneous subjects that belong to the Introduction to its contents. It is obvious that we cannot hope to accomplish much in the course of a few brief sessions; but there are certain salient points and general elements of critical knowledge that are absolutely necessary to the interpreter and preacher of Scripture, and these are imparted, as a rule, to every student. We do not suppose it possible, save in a few instances, to form and send out accomplished masters in biblical criticism; but we do strive to give the key of this sacred learning, to teach the student how to use it, and to inspire him with a lofty idea of the importance of using it throughout his future ministry.

This, however, is only preparatory to the higher object of understanding the spirit in the letter; the sound interpretation of the words themselves, whether spoken by prophets or apostles, or by Him who is the revealer of all truth. We have

to lay down the principles of true exegesis; principles which have been the object of sore assault of late years, and the surrender of which has made sad havoc of much modern exposition. Those principles are taught practically as well as theoretically; for it has always been the laudable custom of this college to pursue a consecutive series of expository reading with the students. A very large amount of the work of the session converges to the reading of the Scriptures, especially, though not solely, of the New Testament, in their original tongues. And, although it is impossible to travel over more than a very limited range of the inspired territory, yet enough may be done to speed the traveller onward, when he shall hereafter sound his dim and perilous way alone.

Interpretation of the sayings of the Holy Ghost finds its issue in an intelligent apprehension of the glorious system which dogmatic or systematic theology has deduced from the word of God; forming, in its integrity and harmony, that vast body of revealed truth which is termed theology proper. This is the standard that guides the processes of our exposition. However true it may be that we best receive our knowledge of Divine things fresh and living from the pens and lips of the inspired writers, it has ever been found essential, in the training of theological students, that they should have in their minds, as early as possible, an outline of the majestic system of divinity that the evangelical

church has, from its beginning, found in the Bible: a system which was completed in all its elements when the last writer of the New Testament laid down his pen; and which, as "our most holy faith," it is the office of the church to defend from addition and corruption. The theological studies of this Institution have long been conducted on the basis of a sound, deeply pondered, and complete system, from which they will not essentially depart. That system is eloquently set forth in the first Inaugural Discourse already referred to; and a full exhibition of it will, it may be expected, soon be in the press from the pen of the first of its Theological Tutors.

(2.) It is the next great object of our attention to train these students to unfold that word which they learn to understand; to unfold it as expositors, and to proclaim it as preachers. These two functions are, in some respects, one; while, in others, they are very distinct: both, however, must be united in the ministry of the servant of God, and to both, therefore, the preparations of this place give attention.

It is, and will always be, our aim to make our candidates expert in the holy art of setting forth clearly, fully, and attractively, the meaning of God's word; and to show them in how many ways the simple exposition of Scripture may be turned to good account, in catechetical instruction, in Bible-classes, or in the course of their more public ministry. No element is of greater

importance, in the education of a young minister, than that he should be inspired, from the very beginning, with an honourable ambition to become a master in unfolding the Scripture itself, and by its own light, to all kinds of capacity,—to children, to young people, to all.

No point is of more importance than this, except, indeed, it be his instruction in the art of preaching. There is a sense in which only the Holy Spirit who calls can qualify the preacher for his work. But, just as no call of the Spirit can be held valid unless certain natural gifts and qualifications are present, so no training of the Spirit will effectually finish the preparation of the preacher, without deep and diligent attention to the human art of preaching. As this is the noblest function of the human intellect, so it should be discharged with the utmost attainable skill by every one. And it is one of our foremost objects to keep evermore before the probationers the idea of the pulpit as their goal; to stimulate, direct, control, and encourage their efforts as preachers; to give them the true idea of preaching, to warn them against bad models, to afford them every opportunity of practising their gift, and to do our part generally to make them what after all is of supreme importance to ministers of the Gospel everywhere,—good preachers.

(3.) And lastly, it is an essential function of our office to ground our students in those branches of inquiry which revolve around the defences of the word of God and the system

of religious truth that it contains. It is one of the dread necessities of the times that we should spend much of our strength on this: first, in directing their endeavours to fortify their minds with the general evidences of the faith that are available against all scepticism in common; and, secondly, in giving them an insight into the character and tendency of those developments of scepticism which haunt our own times, and which, although ephemeral in their relation to the course of ages, are likely, in their spirit, to infect the atmosphere of the present generation, and, in their form, to confront these young ministers during the whole course of their ministry.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this department of our studies; it is impossible to exaggerate the value of this Institution, as set for the defence and confirmation of the faith. Wherever we turn our glance upon Christendom, we perceive the manifold signs of a steady, persistent, ruthless, and thorough determination to bring the Christian faith, and its holy documents, and its equally holy institutions, before the bar of a reason that will know nothing of faith. That faith which is a serene and humble reliance on the testimony of God Himself to truth and fact which God alone can authenticate, is openly and sometimes scornfully denounced as no longer worthy to be "the evidence of things not seen." In spite of our holy Master's voice from heaven upon earth ratifying the ancient archives that testified of Him, men of various creeds are seek-

ing to rob the Old Testament Scriptures of the marks of their divinity as from God, and of their historical worth as from man. The same fleshly licence, "intruding into things not seen,"—not seen indeed by its eyes,—disports itself with the Christian records on the same irreverent principles. And there are manifest tokens that, having rent the mantles of the prophets, they are gathering around the Form most sacred to us all; and are prepared to cast lots upon the seamless vesture of His truth *whose it shall be*. Never was there a more urgent necessity that all possible safeguards should be thrown around the faith of the rising ministry; never was the need greater of such sanctuaries for sound doctrine as this has always been, and will always be.

It is one of our glories as a Christian community that we have never entered into the secret of the men that are given to change; that we have had no fellowship with the works of that darkness which miscalls itself light. By the grace of God we have not swerved, nor permitted any bearing our name to swerve, from the *line of things committed to our hands*, from "the faith once delivered to the saints," and from the only Rule for the interpretation of that faith. Nor, by the Divine blessing, will we ever swerve from it. It is of necessity that the teachers change; but it is of necessity, too, of eternal necessity, that the teaching should not change. And the people who commit their youth to this place may, with absolute confidence, rely on it that

not one jot nor tittle of the Christian law shall ever be surrendered here.

3. And this leads to a third point. It would not be a complete view that we give of the design of this Institution, and the scope of our work, if we failed to direct our attention to its essentially Methodist character. It is indeed a seminary of Christian instruction; and here the Supreme Master alone is heard, as the authority from which there is no appeal. The word of God alone is our eternal standard of truth and text-book of doctrine; and the children of this school of the prophets are trained in no other nurture and admonition than that of the Lord. But the Christian faith is, and will always be, taught according to the formularies of our own communion, as we think they hold all that is true in the doctrine of the fathers of English divinity, whether Anglican or Nonconformist; and all that is true in that older and vaster catholic body of divinity which has come down to us with the impress of the purest ages of the Church. We are not ashamed of the accidents and differences of our own peculiar vestments of doctrine, while we are fully assured that its "body is of Christ."

The religious influences of our house are essentially Methodist. In this respect, also, we have our spiritual traditions, which are not necessarily the traditions of men; peculiarities once more peculiar to ourselves than they now are,—not, however, because we have surrendered them, but because others have come to take knowledge of

them. But, whether they take knowledge of them or not, we endeavour to retain here the light and life combined of old Methodist piety, deriving its glow from conscious acceptance with God, and making its aspiration a finished holiness.

And the young candidates for the Christian ministry are educated avowedly for the work of Methodist preachers, whose great business is to convert souls, whom they are to guide and instruct according to the usages of Methodist pastorship. These young men are trained to reverence and love their own communion: they are taught that they are citizens of no mean city in Emmanuel's land; that they are seeking to enter no mean fraternity; that they have a high tradition to maintain, and noble fathers to emulate. They are exhorted to rest content with their faith; to regard their conversion and vocation as a seal upon their Methodism not lightly to be broken; and to look forward to their part in this ministry as the highest blessing and the final goal of life.

Once more, dear brethren, I turn to you with a word of warm encouragement. Whosoever you are, whether entering on your term of residence, or approaching its close, you are surrounded by advantages which you cannot too highly prize. What the days of the Son of man were to the young apostles,—days which they should afterwards desire to see,—I may, in a certain sense, and without irreverence, say, these your days of youthful instruction are to you. You will value

them hereafter at their full price: anticipate the retrospect of the longing future, looking wistfully back, and value them now. Whatever your past advantages or disadvantages may have been, determine to give diligence, and you may accomplish what shall be matter of wonder and of thankfulness to yourselves. You may throw off the evil effects of past neglect; you may become accurately, if not extensively, learned; you may acquire, if you have it not, an expert familiarity with your mother tongue; you may store your mind with the principles of knowledge, and attain a taste for its pursuit that shall grow by what it feeds on; you may make your own the elements of the holy tongues, and the sciences that are the key of Scripture, to be applied with inestimable gain in after years. All this you may do, if it be in your heart to do it. Alas for the youth who has such a price in his hand, and no heart unto it! Should he escape the test he cannot sustain, and drag on the indolent months of unprofitable probationship,—idle while others are earnest, forgetting soon what he acquires with no alacrity, ever learning, or seeming to learn, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth,—what is he, while here, but a perpetual reproach to himself, a hindrance to others, and a grief to his tutors? and what is he too likely to be when he leaves, but a messenger of doubtful credentials, carrying an empty or half-furnished mind into a ministry of which he is unworthy, and which shall for ever pay the penalty of the sins of his youth?

But we think better things of you, though we thus speak. We have strong faith that you are beginning a term of thorough and honest work, which shall, in the words of Scripture, "make provision for things honourable in the sight of God, and also in the sight of man." Let every one say to his own heart, "That picture of a squandered opportunity lost by an idle mind shall never represent me. By the grace of God, I will work for to-morrow while it is called to-day." Call upon the energies of your youth: no young man is without them. And be resolved to second every effort of your instructors for your good. What St. Paul addressed to Timothy, that holy youth who leads the company of Christian probationers, I may address to you: "Consider what we say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things." A conscientious respect to the eye of God, a mind intent on the business of every hour, and a soul ever mindful of the great future, will enable you to make full proof of the opportunity of these days.

III. It only remains to make a few remarks upon this Institution as a home in which the family discipline is blended with that of the college or community in such a way as to promote, by the blessing of God, the development of the individual character for the preparation of life and the high service of life. The experience of many years confirms more and more strongly the evidence in favour of the aggregation of students in their

education for the ministry. The enlargement of this college, however, brings into clearer light the importance of guarding against the danger to which it is exposed, and of enforcing the necessity of personal religion.

1. Preparation for the ministry of God's word has always been conducted to the best advantage in community life. Our own differs from others in the strictness of the family bond by which we hope to secure the utmost benefit from the association of the students.

The religious communion that combines in itself the family and the church, is of great value as tending to impress upon the probationers' minds and hearts a deep feeling of the sanctity of Christian fellowship. Those who are to be hereafter the pastors of flocks learn here, or may learn, what the true bond of Christian communion is. Their fellowship one with another under the care of one who is at once their father and their pastor—a fellowship that is spiritual in every aspect and in all its daily details—gives them at the threshold of life an illustration of the principle of the Christian church, and a realization of its great ideal, such as no teaching, and no experience elsewhere, can impart. It is impossible to imagine a school in which Christian students could learn better or so well what the nature of that church is, for the ministry of which they are preparing. Where can we find a more faithful exhibition of the ideal that is so glorious in the first bright page

of the Christian annals,—“Continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer?” This is the noble theory and fundamental principle of the Institution: its inmates are in the best sense “brethren of the common lot.” They daily pray together; they daily receive together the apostles' doctrine; they live together amidst all the sanctities of a religious brotherhood; they hold communion together on the mysteries of the religious life; they engage in united aggression upon the world around, and act out, or are supposed to act out, all the functions and ministries of the Christian church, more public and private. Surely there is a blessing in all this that we ought to estimate rightly and be deeply thankful for: an education is in it that ought to tell mightily upon the religious character and future usefulness of the students of this brotherhood.

It is of great advantage, further, though of a different kind, that this life in community tends to the excitement and healthy vigour of a generous emulation in the prosecution of study. Religion sanctifies, it does not extinguish, the sentiment of honourable rivalry. As our confederacy in Christian labour tends to the provoking of one another to love and good works, so confederacy in Christian study tends to provoke to earnestness and ardour in personal cultivation. The traditions of the place have a quickening influence. The continual collision and friction of mind with mind is invigorating. Good examples

among the students—examples of nobleness of character, of conspicuous industry, of perseverance in overcoming impediments and in the attainment of excellence—stamp their influence upon those who constantly witness them. The advantage of all this would be incalculable, if every one would strive to set a good example, and every one would strive to copy every good example that he sees; if every one were emulous to do his best, and every one would strive to equal him. Turning this topic from the statement of a principle to the enforcement of an exhortation, let me beseech you, brethren, to provoke one another to diligence. In this competition for sanctified learning the rule does not hold good that “one obtaineth the prize.” “So run that ye may all obtain.” If any among you is pre-eminent, study to imitate him, and make him your friend and model. If any among you is indolent, shun his influence with all your might, and strive to rouse him by your own example from his indolence. There is a mighty power latent among you in the honest emulation of seventy men: let the Institution feel the full benefit of it. Enter afresh this day upon a sacred arena, and all determine to excel.

Lastly, the fellowship of this place gives every one the benefit of a personal discipline that may tend greatly to the development of the best elements of the Christian character. Those elements may be summed up in two words: the humility that strips the soul of what it should not have,

and the love that clothes it with perfection. And what school can be better adapted to the cultivation of these two sovereign attributes of the religious character?

Humility can have no better sphere for its growth as a principle, and for the practice of its acts, than this common life. Here every one may learn, must learn if he have a heart to learn, what the duty is and what the grace of thinking of himself no more highly than he ought to think. Among the first lessons impressed upon our students is that of their ignorance absolutely and relatively: a lesson that cannot fail to be deepened upon the ingenuous mind to the last. It is a discipline of the purest and most wholesome self-humiliation to be constantly finding out how vast is the disproportion between themselves, their talents and acquirements, and the great work to which they are devoted; while the practice of humility, as it shows itself in the beauty of self-sacrifice for others, and the preferring of others to self in the graceful courtesies of daily life, finds opportunities for its culture everywhere and in all things.

And so with charity, the grace that clothes the spirit which humility unclothes. As in the Christian commonwealth it is the supreme law, so it is supreme in the arrangements of a house like this. Nowhere can it be better learned, nowhere better practised. All are united in devotion to the highest work of charity in the world; and the consciousness of that high common end of life should

bind all hearts in one. Here also practice waits upon theory: opportunities are afforded, as frequent as the intercourse of daily life, for training the heart in the pure affection of love, as it rules the thought, the word, the act.

2. We have lately enlarged the number of the students in this Institution. An enlargement that almost doubles the number of the students, while no addition has been made to the number of those who direct and teach them, must needs give rise to some apprehension of danger, or at least render necessary the strengthening of all our safeguards. It may be doubted whether any other church has made any such experiment—if it may be called an experiment—as this: the gathering together of seventy young men, strong both in the good and evil of youth, under the pastorship of one head, and the tutorship of so few tutors. Happily, one year has already relieved us to a great extent of our anxiety. An experiment it can scarcely be called now. But the change is so recent that we must not pass over this opportunity of giving and receiving the word of exhortation.

As it regards the moral tone of this place, let us determine—let us all determine—to be jealous of it with a godly jealousy, and to make it the object of our common vigilance as the very glory of our life. Through the providence of God one presides here whose eye never sleeps, and whose heart has but one desire. We, his coadjutors, in our sphere sympathize with him, and will second his efforts.

But you, brethren, must do your diligence. The honour of Didsbury is in your hands. We appeal to your generosity, to your pride in the traditions of our house, and to your zeal for the glory of God. By your conduct show that you cannot be too much and too implicitly trusted. Refute by the report of your propriety of manner and godliness of life every fear that your number may have excited. And let another year add its confirmation that the College was never so pure in morals, so high in tone, and so fully responding to all just expectations, as since its enlargement.

As it regards our studies, there is the same need to throw you upon your honour. Your teachers would prefer to expend their efforts upon a selecter number, and to exert a steady, always increasing influence upon them one by one. They feel that they might hope to do their work better, and rejoice in more worthy results, if their pains were not diffused among so many. But our common aim must be to reduce this evil to its smallest amount: ours by well-concerted plans, yours by honourably and conscientiously seconding our efforts. Let your individual preparations be as perfect as if you were to be alone with your tutor, and all will be well. That rule supersedes the necessity of any other. Act upon it from this day forward, and then, as weeks and months roll on, your profiting will surely appear to others, and be matter of happy consciousness to yourself.

3. The community is made up of individuals;

and as all our studies find their issue in individual advancement, so these exhortations must have an individual aim. I feel that this address, whatever sideglances it may have taken at public attention, must fitly close by an appeal, my young brethren, to each of you. In the presence of many witnesses, of those who surround you now with perfect love and confidence, and of these only as the representatives of the people who committed you to our hands, and wait to see what and what manner of men we send back to them, we charge you to maintain your personal religion, we promise you great success in your studies, and congratulate you on your glorious future. If you maintain your fellowship with God, your purity of heart shall give you light in your pursuits, and prepare you for the most blessed prospect that life has for hope to feed upon.

You are seventy; but you are seventy individual souls, each one a worshipper alone with his God, each one a student closeted in his own little sanctuary. Let me urge you to live in the full evangelical liberty of the Christian life. Your privileges and duties as Christians it is not for me to dwell upon: you have a spiritual father here, make him your friend. You have a better Father in heaven: live very near to Him. But I must urge upon you one thing: maintain the settled victory over sin. You are young: therefore your danger is great. You are young: therefore the sympathy of our Lord with you is great. Satan

lurks about us: let him find the house empty, swept, and garnished, and vainly seek with his other spirits to re-enter. Hear those two ancient wrestlers with human passions: St. John, who writes to young men, "Because they have overcome the wicked one, and are strong;" St. Paul, who sends down to you his earnest word, "Keep thyself pure." Get and maintain at all costs the victory. By all your aspirations after usefulness, by your longing for your Master's image, by your hope of heaven, be sure of this!

Then shall your studies be light when your hearts are pure. A Higher than St. John or St. Paul—who had not a rebellious spirit to subdue, yet is not ashamed to call you brethren—gives you the result without the process as His own benediction: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." You shall see light in His light. He will shed its beams upon the page you read; He will irradiate with it your little study; He will bid the Angel of His presence to guard you in all your ways, and awaken you to your daily duty. His grace shall be to you a well of water springing up within, bathing and invigorating your faculties, making clear and luminous your eyes, diffusing refreshment and energy over your whole nature, and enabling you to see God in all your studies,—to see the *light* of His countenance reflected from every human page, and its *glory* from the pages of His own most holy Book.

Finally, brethren, we receive you this day as

candidates for the ministry, and congratulate you on the future that gives you its bright promise. We commend you to the care of Him who has, we trust, bestowed on you the grace of a double election; who has made you His own by conversion, and doubly His own by your vocation to His service in the Gospel. Take up your residence here, or continue your residence here, as in a seminary which is only the outer court of the sanctuary of the Christian ministry. Keep your eye fixed on the gate by which you hope to enter that holy place: and live to pass it holily. Remember every hour the solemn pledge you have already given, and which you will then finally confirm, that so your life may worthily redeem it. This is holy ground. Let reverence awe your hearts, and devotion warm them, and charity expand them. So will you, as we pray and hope, honourably pass the time of your probationary sojourn here, and carry its benediction with you into those ulterior scenes of usefulness of which this Institution is but the threshold. May grace, mercy, and peace be with you! And may this year of sanctified study bear full testimony that God is with us; to Whom, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all glory for ever. Amen.

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