# MINISTERIAL TRAINING.

AN

# INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED

## IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL,

AT DIDSBURY,

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# MINISTERIAL TRAINING.

SCHOOLS designed to assist in a course of preparation for the service of Almighty God, have existed since the days of Samuel; if they do not owe their origin to a yet earlier date. They were approved by holy Prophets; and they have been maintained by Jews and Christians with exemplary zeal. Nay, they may with reverence be said to have received the sanction of the Supreme Teacher Himself, who gathered disciples around Him, and who trained them for three years, under His own eye, as "scribes instructed."

The venerable Wesley was deeply sensible of the advantages which accrue to the Ministry from well-conducted Seminaries of Christian learning. Time after time, he sought to provide one of these for the labourers whom God was marvellously raising up to co-operate with him in his great work.* He founded the School at Kingswood, in which he not unfrequently placed

* From the manuscript copies of the Minutes of 1744 and 1745, Mr. Watson, in a note to his "Life of Wesley," gives the following extracts:—"In the former year it is asked, 'Can we have a Seminary for labourers?' and the answer is, 'If God spare us till another Conference.' The next year the subject was resumed, 'Can we have a Seminary for labourers yet?' Answer. 'Not till God gives us a proper tutor.' So that," adds Mr. Watson, "the Institution was actually resolved upon," even at that early period, "and delayed only by circumstances."—Watson's Works, vol. V., p. 186.

younger Preachers for a season; he penned or edited invaluable works adapted, indeed, to the use of all, but more directly intended to advance the improvement of his fellow-workers in the Gospel; and he also took opportunities to read select pieces to any of them whom he could conveniently assemble together, acting himself as their tutor. So he writes in his Journal, February 23rd, 1749, being then at Kingswood, "My design was to have as many of our Preachers here, during the Lent, as could possibly be spared; and to read lectures to them every day, as I did to my Pupils in Oxford. I had seventeen of them in all. These I divided into two classes; and read to one, Bishop Pearson on the Creed; to the other, Aldrich's Logic; and to both, 'Rules for Action and Utterance.'"

Amidst the manifold toils and cares which engrossed the attention of Mr. Wesley's companions and successors, the arrangement of some plan for regular Ministerial instruction was still kept in view. Its importance became more and yet more apparent; and it was urged in pamphlets, discourses, and conversations, with increased earnestness. At length, in the year 1834, as the fruit of united and most careful deliberation, the Theological Institution was commeneed at Hoxton; and it now flourishes in its two branches,—the Southern one at Richmond, in Surrey, and

the Northern one at Didsbury, not to mention hopeful scions which are springing up, with commendable rapidity, in different parts of the Foreign field. At the present time, and on occasion of the first Inaugural Address delivered in this Chapel, it may be proper more distinctly to contemplate the objects of the Institution. Its real character and use will thus be more clearly seen.

One object, which we ever deem of primary moment, is to nurture and promote the Students' personal Christianity by the helps and facilities which are brought within their reach. I need not say that particular care is taken, by previous inquiries and examinations, to ascertain each Student's scriptural conversion, and the right state of his heart with respect to God. Yet there is need of growth, of maturity, of strength. Three things are especially regarded:—one is the culture of a reverential tone of feeling towards God, and all that concerns His Word, His House, His Worship; a second is progress in spiritual experience,—the experience, for instance, of God's agency by His Holy Spirit in the heart, of the truth, power, and ripeness of grace imparted, and of Satan's devices, or of the holy skill by which they are detected and known; and the third is a continual pursuit of charity, enlightened, sound, calm, and constant, —of charity as it flows from the well-spring of

God's own love apprehended and felt,—as it embraces friends, strangers, foes,—as it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things," and, even in the failure of hope itself, "endureth all things." These are what we strive to prosecute in daily prayers, weekly meetings in class under the vigilant conduct of the Governor and Chaplain, public services, devotions intermingled with all the duties of the lecture-room, private admonitions and counsels, when needful or expedient, and in any other way which may seem, directly or indirectly, tributary to the end proposed, the guardianship and advancement of that which is good. The Institution is meant, indeed, to be a large Christian family, at unity in itself, and intent on Christian proficiency. Grateful memories arise of former Students, some departed to their rest, others surviving, who dated the beginning of a holier and happier state from the time of their residence in the Institution. Past seasons of blessing are yet present to our thoughts; and shall they not return?—return with rich and happy augmentation? I know that if the choice aids provided be neglected or misapplied, loss, not gain, will be the sad result. Every Student cannot but be either better or worse, as a Christian man, in consequence of his sojourn here. Yet, why should any one be worse? Why should not every one be better, as day after day passes

along? Let the means so amply supplied be used in the spirit of diligence, faith, and hope, and let the cheerful persuasion be entertained that, by His visitations who hastens and delights to bless, there shall, in each instance, be "growth in grace."

A second object is to lead the minds of the Students to a fuller apprehension of the grand system of Christianity in its several parts, and in its own entire harmony. I shall be permitted here to dwell for awhile on some of the chief principles which shape and regulate the course of our Theological instructions.

The supreme authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures in all things which relate to man's salvation, is a cardinal principle, from which we can never allow ourselves to depart. They are the Word of God. They register His thoughts, deep, precious, eternal, immutable. They unfold His mind and will. They declare His character. They trace the history of His mighty economies in Creation and Providence, in Redemption and Grace. They point to the mysterious issues of eternity. Give us the Book of God. It is our rule, measure, standard of truth, bearing the stamp and signature of plenary inspiration. It is, if I may so speak, as a sacred Paradise inclosed from all the world around,—a Paradise in which the Tree of Knowledge grows

fast by the Tree of Life. Man's imaginations, man's traditions, man's philosophies, cannot be forced into competition with it. They fluctuate or fade like other things of earth. But "for ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in Heaven." We do not disparage the tuitions of Natural Theology. We do not forget "the everlasting God, the LORD, the CREATOR," who spreads out the heavens, and kindles all their fires, who pours the rivers from their source, heaves the ocean in its bed, and clothes the earth with beauty. O no! "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD," and in them all we would acknowledge Thee. But we plead that Holy Scripture, in its range and compass, collects and combines the lessons which Natural Theology teaches, and incorporates them with itself, while it conducts us to far, far higher revelations of God than nature ever knew. We appeal to its own documents,—we appeal, as a specimen, to that inestimable monument of inspiration, the nineteenth Psalm, which embodies a beautiful scheme of Natural Theology, of Revealed Theology, and of the relation or affinity between the two; and, while we see the former passing into the latter, losing itself in its superior light and grace, and leading us to "judgments" which are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb," we rejoice to find ourselves

at the feet of the LORD, our "STRENGTH," and our "REDEEMER."

The unity of Truth, as contained in the Scriptures, is another principle to which we attach great weight. An excellent interpreter notes the fact that Scripture does not use to say in the plural *truths*. "Truth," he adds, "is one, entire."* It is so. From the commencement of its sacred revelations to the close, you see the same great plan opening itself out in successive manifestations of light until it attains the noon-tide brightness of Christ's own Dispensation, Himself the Light, Himself the Truth. You there see God,—His existence, glory, claims,—Three in One, and One in Three. You see Him carrying on a plan of Grace and Providence for man's recovery, which reaches from eternity to eternity. You are taught the doctrines, closely linked to each other, of man's original and actual transgression; his redemption by the precious blood of Christ; the present justification of his person by grace through faith in the one only atonement for sin, and the re-attainment in this way of his forfeited relation to God; the Holy Spirit's witness to the fact of his adoption; regeneration; entire Christian sanctification; and eternal life. All these present themselves to you in their own unbroken harmony. They are not always dis-

* Bengel on John xvi. 13. "Veritas est una, tota."

closed with the same degree of clearness. The light of Revelation is like the light of the morning, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But in its own nature it is the same through all its course and progress. To my mind it is most significant that the Apostle Paul, that great interpreter of "all the counsel of God," makes so large and frequent use of the earliest parts of Divine Revelation recorded in the Book of Genesis. He found the Gospel there, and he tells us that he found it there. But in all the Scripture you discover the same celestial truth concerning God, concerning man, concerning redemption, concerning our real life. And in its latest and best manifestations, whether it is developed out of preceding economies, and thus placed in its full form before us, as by St. Stephen and St. Paul, or contemplated in its own bright and sublime ideas, as by St. John, it is still the same. Scripture is the one grand repository of truth, and truth itself is one. Nor are interpreters to be followed, whatever name or reputation they may have acquired, who, failing to apprehend the one harmonious System of Revelation, explain particular texts as isolated and separate from the rest, and so, inadvertently, let down important passages, reducing the meaning and force of some of the highest testimonies to the highest truth.

The Truth's living and saving power is a third

principle to which we would direct our best attention, and which we strenuously seek to maintain. "All the praise of virtue," says Cicero, "consists in action." Is not this sentiment eminently applicable to the gift of Scriptural Truth? It is not speculative. It is not dry and cold. It is not ineffective and profitless. No! It is full of life and vigour, clothed with heavenly power, and ever rich in fruit. Light from heaven is the "light of life." The Sun of Righteousness arises with "healing in his wings." The truth makes us "free." Its study expands the mind, revives and cheers the heart, guides man to God, and, by the gracious agency of the Spirit, sways his whole nature, and subdues him to itself. How different is truth, as it gushes, fresh and living, from the fountain of God's own word, and truth as it has sometimes been presented in the schemes of men! Let me yet farther pursue the subject. I see that, at the present time, holy Scripture is searched with more than usual diligence and scrutiny. I rejoice in it. I see that, from year to year, light is drawn from that great receptacle of light, and imparted to mankind; and I anticipate the day when the illuminations of Scripture shall shine far more brightly than ever over the whole hemisphere of man. I should think it one of my life's highest joys if I could contribute, in any way, to its wider diffusion. The Christianity of the New Testament flows

from one source, and it is bound together in one great unity; but it displays its peculiar virtue in its practical agencies,—it directs its full energy to the renovation of man, and the accomplishment of God's great designs in redemption and salvation. Has it not occurred to you that the works of God, which have been patent to men for thousands of years, and which have been explored, in the several ages of our race, with skill, industry, and unweariable perseverance, are now, or within the last half century, disclosing combinations and results which seem never to have been even thought of before? Speed is accelerated. Intelligence is conveyed, in the briefest space, from point to point, and from shore to shore. Scientific men contemplate yet higher things. Nor can I doubt that many new discoveries are yet to be made which will throw recent ones into comparative obscurity. Now, in all this, no new principle is detected,—but only new combinations, new results, new uses. When I turn from the works to the word of God, I do not expect or desire to find new principles, or new elements. All are there, and are plain,—the heritage of the Church from age to age. But here, too, I expect new combinations, new applications, new uses. As Scriptural light goes forth, in a larger and more unconfined liberality, it will also go forth in its mighty practical power. Given, as it was, in connection with man's former history,

it shall mingle and blend itself with the various movements of his life, his circumstances, his character;—it shall press forward in its light and mercy, subduing the heart, transforming the whole nature, giving full effect to the truth of Christ, touching all into life and beauty, until earth shall be radiant with the light of heaven, and God shall dwell with man. The prayer which our Lord Himself has taught us to offer shall be answered;—for the name of our Father in heaven shall be so hallowed that His kingdom shall come; and His kingdom shall so come, with such extent, with such plenitude of blessing, that His will shall be done "in earth, as it is in heaven." The simplicity of Christ shall prove to be man's truest and best philosophy. He shall reign,—"one Lord, and his name one,"—until all shall ascribe praise to Him, and joyfully conspire to raise the anthem which early Christian Churches were wont to sing, when His own words or acts were rehearsed, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!"* These are the triumphs

* "The Liturgy under the name of S. Chrysostom, of which the probable date is the 4th century, (Palmer, Orig. Lit. i. 79,) directs that after the title of the Gospel has been given out, the people should respond, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.'" Note in Keble's Hooker, Eccles. Pol. Book V. xxx. 3. It may be added that the substance of this ascription of glory to Christ is found in a versicle often sung at the naming of the Gospel for the day:—'Glory be to Thee, O Lord.'

Come, and let us sweetly join,
Christ to praise in hymns divine!
*Give we all, with one accord,*
*Glory to our common Lord;*
Hands, and hearts, and voices raise;
Sing *as in the ancient days.*"

which we anticipate for the word of God, and which we would seek to advance. Our fervent desire is that the minds of the Students may be filled with Divine truth, and their hearts with Divine love,—that they may learn and preach the Gospel as a power,—"the power of God." They are not to teach a dry, speculative theology, but one that is fraught with the light and life of heaven.

A third object is to supply aids in literature and science, as far as time and opportunity allow, for the more successful investigation of Scriptural Truth.

Literature is laid under contribution, with a design to advance the mastery of language in its Grammar and its Rhetoric, — the elementary knowledge at least of the Greek and Latin Tongues, opening an introduction to the treasures of classical learning,—and a more particular cultivation of that branch of philology which directly relates to the study of the Scriptures as at first given to mankind. I think myself singularly happy in my esteemed colleagues, as in other things so in this, that we so entirely concur in the best modes of literary and theological study, or in what candidates for the Christian Ministry will find, in the end, to be of most advantage. The Hebrew Tongue, under which may be arranged the small portion of the

Old Testament written in Chaldee, distinguished by its simplicity, its brevity, and its majesty, is the first used as the vehicle of God's Revelation to man; and it stamps its own impress on the whole. It is of worthy of grateful observation that the language in which the earliest and largest portions of Scripture were penned, and the general character of which appears, less or more, in all, is one capable of imparting its records, unimpaired and complete, to every speech or dialect under heaven, that it is impatient of any but a literal translation, and that it has transfused its own idiom far and wide. No one seems more fitted for the conveyance of truth to all ages and nations. Some acquaintance with this we cannot but regard as at the very basis of solid and exact interpretation. The Greek version of the Seventy follows, with its rich and invaluable stores of exposition, finished at least one hundred and thirty years before the time of our Lord's advent,—most commonly quoted by the inspired Writers of the New Testament, who, even in the absence of direct citation, are continually adopting its particular words, phrases, and forms of construction,—and to which the greatest and best divines of every age have attached peculiar importance. There Hebrew moulds of thought are faithfully reproduced, and the way is prepared for the more precious gifts of Revelation which were yet to

come. It is our wish and aim to make the Students sensible of the benefits which that ancient version yields. All this conducts us to the Greek of the New Testament, in its wonderful compass and strength, comprising some of the finest and fullest forms of utterance ever conceived in the human mind, or expressed by human lips, in which the truth bears itself onward and still onward, yet often making even the most select and compact forms of speech which St. Paul himself could use falter and tremble underneath its weight. To explore these sources of exegesis,—to compare them with each other,—and thus to enter more largely into the meaning of passages in the apostolical Writings which combine all the force of Hebrew and Greek, and unfold the most inestimable treasures of heavenly wisdom, is a course which any one may covet to pursue, and in which he will find himself in happy fellowship with eminent expositors of our own community, — the Clarkes, Bensons, and Watsons of other days. Let me admonish the Students to avail themselves to the utmost of the helps which, in these provinces of literature, they now enjoy, and on which I tender them my unaffected congratulations.

Science also ministers its aid, and seeks yet farther to form and fill the mind. Mathematics, Logic, Mental and Moral Philosophy,

History, Antiquities, and other things of a like description, all serve to promote mental discipline, and the formation of a Student's character. They fix attention, strengthen the powers of thought, and enlarge the intellectual capacity. They also supply intelligence of singular price in the several provinces and walks of life. Science is cultivated in the present day with extraordinary zeal and success; and it sheds no small portion of light on the various "works of the LORD," which are proved to be "great" in proportion as they are known, and which may be well and profitably "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Science likewise contributes largely to the illustration of the sacred page, and cannot but, in many instances, render most important helps to its interpretation. Every useful acquisition does homage to Theology, and has its value to the Christian Student. Nothing, indeed, which falls within the limits of man's inquiries and meditations, can fail of yielding him some aid in his higher pursuits, or of engaging a just measure of his esteem. "There is in the world no kind of knowledge," says Hooker, "whereby any part of truth is seen, but we justly account it precious; yea, that principal truth, in comparison whereof all other knowledge is vile, may receive from it some kind of light; whether it be that Egyptian and Chaldean wisdom

mathematical, wherewith Moses and Daniel were furnished; or that natural, moral, and civil wisdom, wherein Solomon excelled all men; or that rational and oratorial wisdom of the Grecians, which the Apostle St. Paul brought from Tarsus; or that Judaical, which he learned in Jerusalem, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel: to detract from the dignity thereof were to injury even God himself, who being that light which none can approach unto, hath sent out these lights whereof we are capable, even as so many sparkles resembling the bright fountain from which they rise."*

A moment's indulgence will be granted me. I honour the living. I revere the departed. Nor can I on this occasion pass over the mention of one who, if it had pleased God to spare him in life, would have taken a most lively interest in all these our proceedings. He was associated for more than six years in the Tutorship of this establishment,—a man of pure Christianity, of mild, gentle, generous temper, of attainments in literature and science which would have graced the highest schools of learning, and won respect from the most competent judges; of extraordinary ability and aptitude to teach, of more than common power to engage and fix the attention

* Eccles. Pol. Book III., ch. viii. 9.

of the Students, and of a kindly affability which secured their truest regard. They who had the benefit of his instructions were strongly attached to him, and they cannot fail, but through their own fault or negligence, to derive advantage from his example and lessons through all their future days. He left us when we hoped that he would yet stay. But his name survives, and claims a grateful record. I pay this tribute to the memory of my dear and honoured friend and former colleague, the Rev. JONATHAN CROWTHER.

The fourth object which we have in view is to encourage and guide the Students' practical services. I need not remind you that they are extensively employed on the Lord's Days in preaching, and in the performance of other Christian duties. They also carry on a regular system of Tract Distribution in this village and the neighbourhood around, and occupy themselves, as far as appears compatible with their pursuits as Students, in yet other offices and acts of love for the spiritual improvement of those, whether in earlier or later life, among whom they dwell. For this part of our plan we may say, in the spirit of humility and submissiveness, that we have a very high precedent. The Lord Jesus Christ did not always keep the Apostles in attendance on Himself, but sometimes sent them forth to preach. He "appointed other seventy also,

and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He himself would come." From the first, our Students have been trained to these things, which form a part, indeed, of the original principles and rules of the Institution; and they have not "laboured in vain." Practical things, even in the most exalted provinces of human ministration, are best learnt by practice, accompanied with dependence on God's own blessing for all proficiency. The Students enter upon practical labours,—and happy reports they often bring. May we not now ask with respect to these agencies of the Institution, ascribing the glory to God alone, "Have they not sped?" Have not the Students thus acquired a more experimental and practical preparation for the Christian Ministry in its manifold demands? And have they not been messengers of good to many? Who can estimate the fruits which have sprung from labours of this kind for the last six-and-twenty years, or since the time when the Institution was first formed at Hoxton? We look around this village, in which our lot is cast, and thankfully own signs and tokens of prosperity. The enlarged and spacious Chapel in which we are now assembled,—members in Society approaching to nearly two hundred,—new Schools projected, Day as well as Sunday, the foundation-stone of which is to be laid this

afternoon,—with other things which might be named or noted, tell that, by the mercy of God, we are not left destitute of success in these our present efforts for Him. Nay, if I may add that fact, we begin to find ourselves straitened in the Institution itself. A whisper is already rising, and it seems likely yet more to rise, "The place is too strait for us: give place to us that we may dwell." I could almost venture to express the hope that my day of life will not go down until I am permitted to see the enlargement of the Institution Buildings, as well as of the Chapel.

Friends and Brethren: Eighteen years have passed away since the Institution at Didsbury was opened,—eighteen years since this Sanctuary was first consecrated to the Worship of God. I remember the services. They were happy and heavenly in their influence,—signs and foretastes of good. But where are many who met with us then? Where is the revered President of the Institution, Dr. Bunting? Where is James Wood, one of its earliest and best supporters? Where is that gifted and active Treasurer, young in years, but ripe in goodness, John Daniel Burton? Where are the venerable forms of George Marsden and Joseph Taylor?—where Thomas Crook, of Liverpool?—where John Dyson Fernley, the able and ready advocate of our efforts? Where are others, whom I may

image to myself now, but who were then with us? Where are they? Among the saints in the presence of the Lord. And where shall we ourselves shortly be? With them I trust, when our day's work is also done. Life subsides into death,—time speeds into eternity,—opportunities of service are wasting away, Yet here would we set up our Ebenezer of gratitude; for "hitherto hath the LORD helped us." Here would we join in affectionate congratulations on our present state and prospects. And here would we repeat the invitation that you renew your engagements with us in this field of Christian enterprise. Give us your countenance, give us your kindly co-operation, give us your prayers. We are striving to do a good work, and to do it in simplicity and sincerity. Fain would we unite with others in spreading far and wide the light of heaven,—and in its progress we would call upon you all to share. Rejoice with us in the conquests already gained, and in anticipations of that day when the LORD shall "send out His light and His truth" to all the nations,—when Christ, "lifted up" on the cross for our redemption, shall "draw all men unto Himself,"—when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." These are glorious issues at which we are aiming in this department of Christian duty. We invite

you to take an interest with us in our plans and purposes; and we pray that, in this and every allotted portion of labour, we may all, as with one mind and heart, combine to build the temple of the LORD.

Students, who are now resident in this peaceful spot, I often address you. I must address you now, and give you words of affectionate exhortation. Prize and use your peculiar advantages. Faithfully care for the prosperity of your own souls. "Take heed to yourselves." Daily aspire to higher and yet higher attainments in truth, in grace, in preparation for your work; and count it your joy to consecrate all that you are and have to God, and to the advancement of His kingdom in the earth. Go to the activities of life,—go to whatever lies before you, in His name. From youth to age, if life be spared,—in health and sickness, ease and pain,—amidst friends and foes, comforts and inquietudes,—in honour and dishonour,—when all things smile, and when all things frown, remember "whose you are, and whom you serve." Trust in Him. He can pour light on all your path,—remove difficulties,—and give you success even far beyond your hopes. At His presence, mountains sink and valleys rise; crooked ways are made straight, and rough places plain. When your spirits droop, look up to your Saviour and Lord, who supplies

sufficiency in want, and perfects strength in weakness,—who appears in the darkness and the storm,—who is the true Giver of light and peace. Hear Him, receive His Spirit, track His footsteps, and do His work. "Ask more understanding. Watch, and suffer not your spirit to sleep. Speak to every man as God shall help you. Bear the infirmities of all." And if opposition and persecution assail you,—if you should be called to maintain truth and rectitude in the presence of strife and fierceness,—"stand firm as an anvil beaten. It is the property of a great combatant to be flayed, — and to conquer! Let none of you be found a deserter."* Go to the course which extends itself before you, girded and prepared,—go to study, toil, suffering, —as suffering may be appointed to you,—in a might not your own, — go, true of heart to Christ, "faithful unto death." And the grace of God be with you!



* Ignatius to Polycarp, I. III. VI.