

## THE THEOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR THE TIMES.

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THE subject does not imply that we, living in detachment from our age, can dictate its training. We are not spectators on the shore, but swimmers in the stream. *In* the times but also *above* them: from the former comes sympathy; from the latter strength. To be adapted to the age one must be ahead of it.

The subject may mean either the theological-seminary training for the times or the training in theology for the times. Looking at the former for a moment, what is the function of a divinity school? (1) To train men to be good ministers of Jesus Christ. To be a good minister he must be a *good man*; a man of virile personality, of self-unconscious simplicity and earnestness, a man in whom there is a conspicuous absence of insincerity and cant, and who combines tenderness and strength, humility and high-mindedness, a true altruism and a true self-regard. He must be characterized by mastery over the flesh, by inner unworldliness, and by spirituality of mind. A divinity school may fairly be expected to make some contribution to this end. (2) Again, a good minister is a messenger who *believes in his message*. Doubt is good. The soul that has never doubted does not know that it has believed. The great fearless ages of doubt have helped much. But doubt has no value in itself, its value is in what it leads to—in Greece to Socrates; in Rome to the preparation for the Christian faith; in the third great age of doubt to the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Revolution in France; and in a fourth, men made the transition from the study of nature to the study of human nature, to the rediscovery of the inner life. What is true in this large way is true for the individual. Along this *via dolorosa* of doubt must he enter into the kingdom of truth. Often during the seminary course the young man makes

the transition from a traditional to a personal faith. He is divided between two feelings: perplexed on the one hand by a suspicion that in clinging to traditional orthodoxy he may be untrue to himself; and checked on the other side by a fear that in discarding it he may be casting aside ideas essential to his moral and spiritual life. At such a time a divinity school should indeed be an *Alma Mater* to him. And if its work be destructive in part, as in part today it must, it is destructive for the sake of construction, the constructiveness of Him who, though he destroyed, came not to destroy but to fulfil.

But as to the training in theology for the times, there are some things which ought to be said with the utmost freedom and frankness. When we speak of the times we often think of an age of steam, electricity, bicycles, and the like. But this is only the outer times, not the inner, the true, the deep times. The true times is the mightiest movement and tendency of human life, thought, feeling. What, then, is the fundamental characteristic of this age, of the whole modern period? *Emancipation*. It is at the bottom today of the labor movement, tariff question, disestablishment, disarmament of nations, secular education. Historically this spirit was uttering itself in the efforts of Bacon and Descartes to free natural science from the authority of the church, Hobbes the state, Grotius the law, the English deists religion. What is the problem of the present hour which paralyzes some with dread and exhilarates others with enthusiasm? The emancipation of religion from religion, morality from morality, theology from theology. The theological task today in all western Christendom is the completion of Luther's Reformation, the disengagement of our Protestantism from the remainders of Roman Catholicism, the complete rejection of the false principle of authority. Go back and see how the present state of things has come about. The divine revelation was accepted in the first instance in such a manner that the Christian faith formed a compromise with ancient culture. Conditioned by that circumstance the kingdom of God assumes a form in history accordingly, and presents itself as the Catholic church. There was an essential connection between the ancient

ideal of the state and the Catholic conception of the church. Also the influence of ancient heathenism can be observed in this church's institutions, especially in the idea of magical operation in the sacraments. But again it is a fact also that paganism passed into ecclesiastical dogma. So grew up the world not of inner, but of outer, necessity which shackled faith. Let no man say that this accommodation of Christianity to heathen civic and philosophic life was not of God because it has got to pass away, any more than you would make such a statement in reference to that not dissimilar period of historical development, Judaism. God was in the poor world of external necessity as he is now in the world of inner freedom, in the propædeutic as well as in the perfect. The Catholic development was under the guidance of the divine Spirit. *Only it was not guided in such a way that the precipitates of that development have a right to claim a definitive authority in consequence, whether those precipitates be the institutions of the church or its dogma.* The reformers thought that they would reject the institutions and retain dogma as authoritative. Both go together. The Catholic principle of infallibility must be eliminated from every region of protestant Christianity. Here as elsewhere man must accept the dangers and the responsibilities of freedom. So only can either he or his faith be its best. Not an infallible church tradition, not an infallible church office, not an infallible canon of Scripture, only religion has sovereign right in the kingdom of religion. Today faith seeks freedom from these false principles of authority and wishes to be permitted to say in lieu thereof three words: *Christ my Lord!* Only upon the reduction of our masters to just this may we fairly hope for the unification of Christendom and an omnipotent impulse to the missionary enterprise.

Who, then, was Christ? Only Christ can tell us. Historico-critical investigation has for its task ultimately the construction of biblical theology, which will be a help to speculative theology in its statement of the norm for faith and for conduct.