White, Henry 1824

1. Sermon on the death of John Nitchie, 1838.
2. Sermon on the Abrahamic Covenant, preached before the Synod of New York and New Jersey, 1846.

no

CLASS OF 1824

HENRY WHITE

D. D. New York University, 1838.

Died August 25, 1850, New York City.

Alumni Catalogue
New York University.

1824 HENRY WHITE.

The Rev. Henty White, afterwards the distinguished professor in the Union Theological Seminary, was pastor of the Allen St. Church,(N. Y. City) at the time of the reorganization of the Presbytery. He resigned his charge on March 9, 1837.
The Presbytery of New York,1783 to 1888.
p-104

S. D. Alexander
New York 1887.

1824.

One of the most distinguished teachers in Union Theological Seminary was Dr. Henry White.* We retain a vivid remembrance of him as he appeared in the classroom. Tall and erect, his figure was rounded by no superfluous tissue. His hair, prematurely gray, was a "crown of glory." His face was thin, and his eyes, remarkable for brilliancy, burned like the lights of a Pharos. And as a Pharos, he stood above the shoals of theological speculation. Whoever sailed by him, avoided wreck. His was a steady warning to keep the open sea, or to anchor in the roadstead. He had little sympathy with that class of minds which love most the dangerous places of theological study. Not that he would leave such places unsounded, unsurveyed; but

* Born in Durham, Greene County N.Y., June 19th, 1800.

Presbyterian Re-Union Memorial Volume: 1837-1871
DeWitt C. Lent & Co.
New York 1871.

that he distrusted the fascinations which such places have for the venturesome and the curious. His system was pre-eminently clear and simple. His aim was to teach what he himself had learned from the Bible as a *revelation.* That which the Scriptures did not reveal, he was not anxious to explain. His terminology was no more obscure than were his thoughts. He never found it necessary to invent a word to express his meaning. He peculiarly disliked the mists of German philosophy, by which the students of his day were often befogged. To him there was little more than despair in the celebrated exclamation of Hegel, "But one man in the world understands me, and he misunderstands me." Perhaps he did not give the thinkers of the trascendental school the credit which was justly their due. He believed that many of their novel and seemingly vast ideas were like the spectres of the Brocken,—images of themselves, projected on a cloud. He encouraged discussion in the lecture-room, drew it out often by ingenious methods. And whenever a subtle doubt or distinction was advanced, he listened with patience. Every "difficulty" was considered with candor. If it was real, it was discussed with discriminating ability. If it was a trap, he was sure to spring it upon him who set it. He possessed great powers of sarcasm, and was master of the *reductio ad absurdum.* If the students ever held their breath while one of their number assumed a position which was ingenious, but untenable, they generally recovered it as the professsor made answer, and saluted the unlucky student, as his argument suddenly disappeared, with a hearty burst of laughter.

With Dr. White theology was an eminently practi-

cal science. He well knew what practical use could be made of it, for he had himself been a successful preacher and pastor. He was graduated at Union College in 1824, with high honor, having especially distinguished himself in the departments of mathematics and philosophy. He then pursued his theological studies at Princeton. His only pastorate was in the Allen Street Church, New York, over which he was installed during the winter of 1827–8, and where he remained until he was elected Professor of Theology in Union Seminary at the time of its founding, — 1836.

His preaching was remarkably lucid and strong. "There was one class of topics," says, President Asa D. Smith, "that relating to the guilty and lost condition of the sinner and his obligation to immediate repentance, in the handling of which he had, in my judgment, few living equals. I have heard strains of discourse from him which seemed to me, in their awful, overwhelming impressiveness, more like that wonderful sermon of President Edwards on 'The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners,' than aught I remember to have heard from the lips of man." Yet he had withal such kindness of nature, such sympathy with the imperilled, such an abiding confidence in Christ as the sinner's refuge, that he won while he alarmed. Like McCheyne, he preached terrible truths "tenderly." And the result was manifest; as during the eight years of his pastorate he received into his church about four hundred persons, nearly half of them on profession of their faith. He was no "legalist," in the opprobrious sense of that term. His own experience had taught him the preciousness of the Saviour. "Oh, the unspeak-

able preciousness of the atonement by the blood of Christ!" cried he, when dying. "I have preached it for years, and taught others to preach it, and now I know its worth." If Sinai thundered from his pulpit, the light of the Cross also beamed there, like that of the seven lamps which burned with steady radiance amid the flashes of the apocalyptic vision of the Throne. Circling about all the symbols of terror was the sign of mercy — the "rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald." The love and the reverence of all who sat at his feet attest the success with which he employed and in structed others to employ, the great truths of the Gospel.

He was still in the vigor of manhood when he died, but ready to be unclothed and clothed upon. During the last year of his earthly life, which closed in 1850, he supplied the pulpit of the Sixteenth Street Presbyterian Church, in New York, and there preached not only with the power but also with the success of his earlier days, using old weapons, repeating old victories.

Dr. Adams was a great favourite with his people, both as a minister and a man; and they used sometimes to complain of the infrequency of his visits among them, and of the frequency with which he introduced other men into his pulpit. Indeed I am inclined to think that these were the two most vulnerable points in his ministerial character. It was, however, doubtless to be accounted for very much from the fact that he was almost always an invalid, and was really unable to perform the full amount of service which would have satisfied his own aspirations, or the wishes of his people. But, notwithstanding this, his general influence was felt in great power, but in a quiet and silent way, not only through his own congregation, but through the entire surrounding community.

He had little taste, and perhaps I may say, as little tact, for mingling in deliberative bodies or Church Courts. His great modesty led him to shrink instinctively from every thing of this kind; while yet he was not wanting in vigour or firmness, when he saw, or thought he saw, any great principles in danger of being sacrificed.

The volume of Dr. Adams' Sermons, published since his death, is highly creditable, not only to his talents as a preacher, but to the American pulpit. They are written with great purity and precision of style, and though not remarkable for any dazzling or startling qualities, cannot fail to be read by intelligent Christians with high interest.

Very faithfully yours,

R. W. CONDIT.

HENRY WHITE, D. D.*

1826—1850.

HENRY WHITE, a son of Jeremiah and Matilda (Howard) White, was born in Durham, Greene County, N. Y., June 19, 1800. His earliest years were spent partly in labouring on his father's farm, and partly in attending a district school; but after he had reached the age of about seventeen, his winters were occupied chiefly in teaching. In the winter of 1818–19, he became deeply concerned in respect to his spiritual interests, and, after a season of intense anxiety, was brought, as he believed, to a cordial acquiescence in the Gospel plan of salvation. Shortly after this, he made a public profession of his faith, and united with the Presbyterian Church in Cairo, a few miles from his native place.

He was fitted for College in the Academy at Greencastle, N. Y., under the instruction of Mr. Andrew Huntington, a graduate of Yale College in 1815, and joined the Junior class in Union College in 1822. While a member of College, he was engaged for some time in teaching a school at Coxsackie. He graduated with high honour in 1824, having been especially distinguished, during his college course, in the departments of Mathematics and Philosophy. He entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton the same year that he graduated, and continued his connection with it two years. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Columbia in 1826; and almost immediately after, entered upon an agency for the American Bible Society,—his field of labour being in the Southern States. He continued

* Dr. Smith's Fun. Serm.—MS. from his son, Rev. T. F. White.

to be thus employed about one year; and then supplied, for some months, a Presbyterian Church in Newark, N. J. In the course of the winter of 1827–28, he accepted a call from the Allen Street Church, New York, and was installed as its Pastor. Here he continued in the laborious and acceptable discharge of his ministerial duties, until the establishment of the Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, in 1836, when he was elected to the Professorship of Theology in that institution. He accepted the office, and continued to hold it till his death.

In the year 1838, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of New York.

Dr. White possessed naturally a vigorous constitution, but it was not a little impaired by the intensity of his early studies, and his neglect of bodily exercise. The consequence of this course was, that he contracted an obstinate dyspepsia, with which he had to contend till the close of his life. Nevertheless, he was abundant in his labours, and was rarely so seriously indisposed as to be obliged to intermit them for any length of time. His last illness was originally a bilious attack,—which, however, ultimately assumed a typhoid character; and, after eight or ten days, during which his case had at no time been considered alarming, he was regarded as decidedly convalescent. These flattering appearances, however, continued but a day or two, when a violent hemorrhage commenced, which terminated his life in a few hours. He died on the 25th of August, 1850, continuing perfectly self-possessed and peaceful to the last moment. Dr. Erskine Mason was appointed to preach his Funeral Sermon; but, on account of his own illness, was unable to fulfil the appointment. Dr. Asa D. Smith, a few weeks after, took suitable notice of the event, in a Sermon addressed to his own people.

Dr. White was married in September, 1829, to Esther, daughter of Ebenezer Brackett,—a native of the same place with himself. They had four children,—two sons and two daughters. Both the sons have been graduated at the University of New York, and one of them, *Theodore Frelinghuysen*, is a minister of the Presbyterian Church.

Dr. White published a Sermon on the death of John Nitchie, 1838; and a Sermon on the Abrahamic Covenant, preached before the Synod of New York and New Jersey, 1846.

FROM THE REV. ASA D. SMITH, D. D.

New York, October 29, 1850.

Rev. and dear Sir: Your note respecting the late Dr. White awakens, as I read it, a multitude of touching recollections. For more than fifteen years I was intimately associated with him. At first, as a co-presbyter, and one of his nearest ministerial neighbours, and much of the time afterwards, as one of the Directors of the Seminary in which he attained such eminence as a Theological Teacher. During most of the last year of his life, my relations to him were still more peculiar,—almost those of a co-pastor. I knew him well, and sorowfully feel that while I had few such friends to lose, there remain to the Church few such men in the list of her public servants. What I say of him may be modified and tinged by strong personal regards, yet I trust it will not be exaggerated.

As to his personal appearance, Dr. White was of medium height, and of rather spare form. He had a very keen eye, a lofty, expansive forehead, and in all respects a contour and cast of countenance indicative of intellect and energy of

character. The furrows of thought and care in his face, and the premature and unusual whiteness of his hair made him appear much older than he really was. Though but fifty at his death, a stranger, judging from the venerable aspect he presented in the pulpit, would have pronounced him at least *sixty*. His personal habits and manners were marked by great plainness and simplicity; yet he was ever affable and courteous. He had naturally a strong, discriminating mind, well balanced and abounding in practical wisdom. He was not of that class, who, however profound in professional matters, as to all common things are mere children, and need to be kept in some sort of leading strings. A rare counsellor he was, as well in regard to life's minor matters as to its weightier concernment. He was a man of great decision—not hasty in laying his plans, but when they were once adopted, steadfast and immovable. I have seldom met with a man who held to deliberately formed purposes with so tenacious a grasp. He had great directness and transparency of character; he was at a great remove from low intrigue, from disingenuous and dishonest management. Sagacious he was indeed, skilled in men as well as books; he knew better than most how to approach most felicitously our many-sided humanity—he knew what a Roman poet has called the "tempora mollia fandi;" but he had nothing of that low cunning which is overwise, and which almost always reacts against itself. He was in all points reliable. You knew not only where to find him, but where he would remain. Whoever else might waver, or prove false in time of trial, he was ever unfaltering. Obvious to all who knew him was his disinterestedness, his real, hearty devotedness to the public good. Alas, but for the excess of that virtue, he might have been spared to us still! "I am a victim," he said on his dying bed, "to overwork." Of every species of *charlatanry*, as well in character as in both secular and sacred science, he had a profound abhorrence. If ever the habitual kindness of his disposition gave place to a severity bordering on harshness, it was when something of that sort crossed his path.

He was an eminently conscientious man—no earthly motive could turn him aside from the path of known duty. Yet he judged himself severely, and loved in brokenness of heart to lie at the foot of the cross.

As a preacher, he was not finical, not studious of the glitter which, though it pleases the fancy, moves not the heart. But he was eminently thoughtful, clear, convincing and pungent. It was scarce possible that a hearer should fail to apprehend his meaning. Never did the Gospel trumpet, as blown by him, give "an uncertain sound." His discourses were eminently spiritual, full of the marrow and fatness of the Gospel. Utterly did he eschew that secularizing of the pulpit, to which there has been of late so strong a tendency. Professor of Theology though he was, deeply versed in metaphysic subtleties, yet all who were accustomed to hear him, can bear witness how plain and scriptural, how suited to minister not to "vain jangling" but "godly edifying," were his topics and his treatment of them. To few men was that language of Cowper more applicable:—

> "I would express him, simple, grave, sincere,
> "In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain,
> "And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
> "And natural in gesture; much impressed
> "Himself as conscious of his awful charge,
> "And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
> "May feel it too."

There was one class of topics,—that relating to the guilty and lost condition of the sinner, and his obligation to immediate repentance, in the handling of which he had, in my judgment, few living equals. I have heard strains of discourse from him, which seemed to me, in their awful, overwhelming impressiveness, more like that wonderful sermon of President Edwards on "the Justice of God

in the Damnation of Sinners," than aught I remember to have heard from the lips of man. As might be expected, his career as a pastor was a very successful one. With the tenderest interest do the members of the Allen Street Presbyterian Church still recur to the scenes of his ministry among them. They dwell with delight on the fidelity as well of his private as his public labours. They call to mind that soundness of judgment, mingled with kindness and condescension, which made him at once so endeared a counsellor to the individuals of his flock, and so safe and influential an overseer of its public affairs. They muse with thanksgiving to God on those years of the right hand of the Most High, so obviously connected with his faithfulness, of the fruit of which, though not a little has been gathered into the garner of God above, much still remains to bless the world. As nearly as I am able to ascertain, not far from four hundred persons were, during the eight years of his pastorship, received into the Church,—about one hundred and ninety of them on profession of their faith.

As a teacher of Theology, Dr. White had peculiar and almost unrivalled excellence. His system was eclectic,—not in the sense of being a mere collection of shreds and patches, a jumble of borrowed and heterogeneous fragments, but in that it was original and independent,—the result of his own careful examination and profound analysis. Above most men, he thought for himself. He was a reader, but he was more a thinker. He found indeed, that it was only by severe and independent thought he could meet the difficulties that must be met, and frame a consistent and satisfactory system. "I find help enough," he said to me, somewhat early in his course as a Theological Professor, "in all the easy places." The hard places—a common experience to all profound inquirers,—he was obliged to explore for himself. Yet, though independent in his investigations and conclusions, never would he have become the head of a new theological party. Both his mind and his system were too well balanced for that. There was nothing in his creed or his philosophy to make a wonder of. There was too little of mist about him for those optical illusions which so enchant men;—too little of transcendentalism to suit those who are tired of walking on *terra firma*. He had no affinity for those dreamy speculations which at once scorn and elude all the forms of logic. He held them in utter abhorrence—he did terrible vengeance on them often in the lecture room. He loved the old paths of God's word—on these he shed a clear and steady light, leaving those who would, to lure the unwary by the *ignis fatuus* of a bold but erring fancy into gloomy fens and perilous wildernesses of error. He had too much of simplicity, and common sense, and scripturalness, and symmetry, to add to the schisms and debates which already too much perplex the Christian world. Though he called no man master, his system was Calvinistic in its great outlines; yet to him it was greater praise to call it Biblical. And eminently skilled was he in unfolding it to his pupils. Remarkable especially was his tact in setting their own minds at work, and then meeting by a single condensed statement, by a simple but clear distinction, by a familiar but luminous illustration, whatever difficulty their awakened intellects might be troubled with. Great and almost irreparable is his loss to our Seminary. He was its first Professor—he began with its beginning—he had personal experience of all its trials; and it is no disparagement of the other learned and excellent Professors to say that the point of prosperity which the institution has in so short a time reached, is in no small degree ascribable to his great ability, his unwearied labours, and ready and ample sacrifices. As children for a father, so mourn the students for him. To the dignity of the learned teacher, he added, in his intercourse with them, all a father's kindness and usefulness.

But my feelings carry me too far. I must hasten to the close of that life, in expatiating on which I scarce know where to end. I have a strong impression, as I review my intercourse with Dr. White for several years preceding his death,

that he was fast ripening for Heaven. I infer it from the interest with which he conversed on the most spiritual topics. I gather it from particular remarks and conversations. Never shall I forget a certain discourse of his in a private ministerial circle, not very long before he left us. The subject of our conference was Christian experience. His turn to speak came, and in connection with other remarks, in the simplest manner, and without the slightest appearance of egotism, he gave us a sketch, in a particular aspect, of his own experience. It was substantially the outline of his progress from a more legal to a more evangelical frame of mind—just that progress of which every growing Christian has more or less knowledge. I can only give you, and that imperfectly, his leading ideas. "Once," he said, "when conscious of sin, I felt that I must undergo a sort of refined penance. I must subject myself, before peace of mind could be recovered, to a species of self-torture. I must lacerate my soul with sorrow. I must laboriously prepare myself to receive pardon. I must, in the agonies of my spirit, make a sort of compensation for the sin I mourned. It would not answer, I felt, to come at once to the Cross of Christ. But I have come to entertain different views. I trust I do not hate sin less than before; yet am I differently affected by it. When a sense of it oppresses me, I wait not to become better,—to make any atonement—I go just as I am to Christ, a poor, guilty, helpless creature. I cast myself at his feet. I commit the whole case to Him. I look to Him to do all for me,—to pardon, cleanse, enlighten me. As to motives," he added, with touching lowliness of mind, "I never feel quite sure that I have a single good one, but I propose to myself something good, and trusting in Christ, press toward it. Thus I live, and thus I expect to die,—having nothing good in myself, but going out of myself to Christ,—resting upon Him alone." A severe and perilous illness of his eldest son, but a few months before his death, was made, I have been led to believe, the occasion of furthering his preparation for a better world. In speaking to me of the crisis of that case, he said, for substance,—"I went into my closet, and if ever I took hold upon God,—if ever I cast my burden upon Him, it was then." I cannot doubt that then and there was a very peculiar exercise of faith,—one that sent forward its influence to his dying bed. Nor can I forbear to recall another emphatic expression of his in one of my last conversations with him. We had been freely conferring about certain matters which had been not a little annoying to him. "I am desirous," he said, "to be free from things of this sort. I like not to have my mind harassed by them. *I want to be getting ready for Heaven.*" He spoke as one who felt that this must be the chief business of his remaining days. For a large part of the last year of his life, he supplied the pulpit of the Sixth Street Presbyterian Church. His old pastoral sympathies seemed to be revived. Not only were souls committed to him, but among them were his own unconverted children. He recurred to the topics of discourse which God had blessed in his former ministry. His preaching was eminently spiritual, direct and awakening. He saw the Spirit of the Lord descend as he ministered. Souls were born again. Yea, the grace of God was revealed in his own family. He rejoiced with great joy; and in the exercises of that season, in the agonies of his solicitude, and in the refreshings of his soul, I see again, what none of us saw then,—that God was preparing his servant for his approaching transition to glory.

The last scene came. After an illness of about a fortnight, in the progress of which no great apprehension had been felt, on the morning of the last Sabbath in August, an internal hemorrhage took place, of a most alarming character. On perceiving this new development, he said at once,—"That tells the story—I shall die. My work is done!" He felt that what of life remained, was measured not by days but hours; and with the most perfect calmness, and with characteristic good judgment and forethought, he proceeded to make his last communications. "It is the Sabbath, is it not?" he said to a friend by his bed. On being answered in

the affirmative, he added,—"I have always reverenced this day. Do you think it would be wrong for me, as this is my last day, to do a little worldly business?" On being assured it would not, as it would be a work of both necessity and mercy, he reflected a moment and said,—"It would not be sin." His will was made, but he had a few directions to add respecting his affairs. These he gave in a concise and collected manner, and then concentrated his thoughts upon spiritual and eternal things. He said his removal was a mysterious providence—he could have desired to be useful here a little longer—but *it was all right*. His physician said to him,—"You have long preached the doctrines of the Cross; do you get any new views?" He answered,—"Brighter and brighter!" Then added, "Oh, the unspeakable preciousness of the atonement by the blood of Christ! I have preached it for years, and taught others to preach it, and now I know its worth." A friend repeated to him the line,

"Thine earthly Sabbaths Lord we love."

He responded,—

"But there's a nobler rest above;'

and, pointing his finger upward, added,—"There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." His second son, who had just arrived from the country, told him for the first time, that he trusted he had recently consecrated himself to Christ. "That is enough," cried the dying father. To a friend who came in, he said,—"This boy has brought me good news. The last of my children is brought in." He sent messages to two of his children who were absent. That to his daughter, who had recently made a profession of religion, I cannot forbear to repeat. "Tell her," he said, "to live near her Saviour—to adorn her profession, and to beware of the temptations of the world." Referring to her parting kiss, when he left her in the country,—"tell her," he said, "I remember that last kiss—it was sweet—but it will be sweeter to embrace her on the other side of Jordan." As his voice was failing, he begged a friend to give his dying message of love to the students of the Seminary. "Tell them," he said, "that I part with them as from my own children. I love them all, and would love to give them the parting hand, but cannot." As the work of death went on, he calmly watched its progress. Moving his hand circularly over the vital organs, he remarked,—"The circle grows less and less;" and he was heard to say repeatedly,—"passing away!" After the power of utterance was gone, he looked a loving and earnest farewell to those who stood around his bed, occasionally giving them a parting grasp of the hand. Life ebbed gradually away, his expressive eye retaining its brightness almost to the last. In less than five hours from the discovery of the fatal hemorrhage, perceiving that his end had come, he slowly folded his hands across his breast, and reclining his head back upon his pillow, sunk away like one falling asleep. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints!"

Yours in the bonds of the Gospel,

ASA D. SMITH.

1824 HENRY WHITE

Henry White, theologian, was born in Durham, N. Y., June 19, 1800. In early life he attended the district school, and later prepared for college in an academy at Greencastle, N. Y. Entering the Junior class at Union College, he was duly graduated in 1824, and having studied theology at Princeton Seminary he was licensed by the Columbia presbytery in 1826. Soon after he became agent for the American Bible Society in the South, but in 1828 became pastor of the Allen Street Chruch, New York. He was active in founding Union Theological Seminary, and was elected its first professor of systematic theology. Declining a call to the same chair in Auburn Theological Seminary he continued incumbent until his death. As a teacher of theology he was eminently original and forcible. His system was eclectic and although thoroughly Calvinistic in its broad outlines, was characterized by simple adherence to Biblical truth. He was deeply versed in the subtleties of metaphysics, but in his teaching was noted for direct and unvarnished statements of doctrine. His preaching partook of the same thought and clearness, eminently well expressing his earnest conviction and purity of character. As was well said of him by a friend and brother minister, "He was on all points reliable; you knew not only where to find him, but where he would remain." Professor White died in New York City, August 25, 1850.

N.C. of A.B., Vol. V II, Page 318.

1824

A sketch of the life of HENRY WHITE appears in the Annals of the American Pulpit,

Vol. 4

X
924

*White, Henry—b. Durham, N. Y., June 19, 1800; U. C., 1824; (2); agt. Am. Bib. Soc., '26–27; ord. Pby. Columbia, Apr. 16, '28; s. s. Newark, N. J.; p. Allen St. ch., N. Y. City, '29–37; prof. Syst. Theol. Un. Sem., N. Y., '36–50; d. N. Y. City, Aug. 25, 1850. D. D., U. N. Y., '38. Cat 1849

class of 1825. Princeton Theol.

1836 **HENRY WHITE** 1850

Born, Durham, N. Y., June 19, 1800; Academy, Greencastle, N. Y.; Union College, 1824; Princeton Theological Seminary, 1824-26; agent, American Bible Society, Southern States, 1826-28; ordained (Presbytery of Columbia), Apl. 16, 1828; stated supply, Newark, N. J., 1828-29; pastor (Allen St.), N. Y. City, 1829-37; professor (Systematic Theology), Union Theological Seminary, 1836-50; died, N. Y. City, Aug. 25, 1850. D.D., University of the City of New York, 1838.

Faculty at U.S.J.
from: Union Theol Sem. cat! 1836-1918.

REV. HENRY WHITE, 1824, of Durham, N.Y., was a member of the Philomathean Society.
(Died: 1850)
Philomathean Catalogue 1830