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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BENJAMIN BRECKINRIDGE WARFIELD

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BENJAMIN BRECKINRIDGE WARFIELD was born at "Grasmere" near Lexington, Kentucky, November 5, 1851.

His father, William Warfield, descended in the paternal line from a body of south of England puritans who were expelled from Virginia by Governor Berkeley when they refused to accept his proclamation of Charles II as king. They were given a refuge by the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland and settled at Annapolis and South River. On the maternal line he was descended from Scotch-Irish families who first settled in the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania.

His mother, Mary Cabell Breckinridge, was the daughter of Revelation Robert Jefferson Breckinridge, D.D., LL.D., distinguished as a preacher, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, president of Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, founder and president of the Theological Seminary at Danville, Kentucky, editor of the *Spirit of the Nineteenth Century and the Danville (Kentucky) Review*, ardent advocate of the emancipation of the slaves and of the maintenance of the Union, temporary chairman of the Republican Convention of 1864 which renominated Abraham Lincoln, and author of a system of theology entitled "The Knowledge of God Objectively and Subjectively Considered." Her mother, Sophonisba Preston, daughter of General Francis Preston of Virginia, belonged to one of the most vital stocks of the great Ulster immigration which settled the up-country of Virginia. To all of these people the political, educational and religious problems of the new country were of tremendous significance and the subject of fervid discussion and at times heated controversy.

Benjamin Warfield attended private schools in Lexington; and received his preparation chiefly from Lewis Barbour, afterwards professor of mathematics in Central University, and James K. Patterson, afterwards president of the State College of Kentucky. He entered the sophomore class of the College of New Jersey at Princeton in the autumn of 1868 and graduated with the highest honors of his class in 1871, when only nineteen years of age. He won the Thompson prize for the highest rank in the junior year, and prizes for essay and debate in the

American Whig Society, and was one of the editors of the *Nassau Literary Magazine*.

His early tastes were strongly scientific. He collected birds' eggs, butterflies and moths, and geological specimens; studied the fauna and flora of his neighborhood; read Darwin's newly published books with enthusiasm; and counted Audubon's works on American birds and mammals his chief treasure. He was so certain that he was to follow a scientific career that he strenuously objected to studying Greek. But youthful objections had little effect in a household where the shorter catechism was ordinarily completed in the sixth year, followed at once by the proofs from the Scriptures, and then by the larger catechism, with an appropriate amount of Scripture memorized in regular course each Sabbath afternoon.

His special interests in college were mathematics and physics, in which he obtained perfect marks. He intended to seek the fellowship in experimental science, but was dissuaded by his father on the plea that he did not need the stipend in order to pursue graduate studies and it would be better for him to spend some time in Europe without being bound to any particular course of study.

His departure was delayed by family illness and he did not sail until February, 1872. After spending some time in Edinburgh he went to Heidelberg, and writing from there in midsummer he announced his decision to enter the Christian ministry. He had early made a profession of faith and united with the Second Presbyterian Church in Lexington, but no serious purpose of studying theology had ever been expressed by him. The atmosphere of his home was one of vital piety, and his mother constantly spoke of her hope that her sons might become preachers of the Gospel, but with the inheritance of the intellectual gifts of his mother's family he combined the reticence with regard to personal matters which was characteristic of his father. His decision was, therefore, a surprise to his family and most intimate friends.

In September, 1873, he entered the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church at Princeton, and was graduated in May,

1876. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Ebenezer (Kentucky) in 1875, was stated supply and received a call to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Dayton, Ohio, in the summer of 1876. But he decided to go abroad for further study. On August 3rd he was married to Miss Annie Pearce Kinkead, and soon after sailed for Europe, studying the following winter at Leipsic.

In the course of the year he was offered an appointment in the Old Testament Department at the Western Theological Seminary, but his mind, despite his early reluctance to the study of Greek, had already turned to the New Testament field. Returning in the late summer, he was for a time assistant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Baltimore. Accepting a call to become instructor in New Testament Language and Literature at the Western Theological Seminary, Allegheny, Pennsylvania, he entered upon his duties in September, 1878. The following year he was appointed professor and was ordained. He had already attracted attention by the first of his scholarly publications and in 1880 the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College of New Jersey.

The nine years he spent at the Western Theological Seminary were busy years of teaching and study and productive scholarship. In them he won a reputation as a teacher and exegete rarely attained by so young a man. When upon the death of Dr. Archibald Alexander Hodge in the autumn of 1886 he was called to succeed him in the historic Chair of Theology at Princeton many of his friends questioned the wisdom of a change. But recalling that Dr. Charles Hodge had been first a New Testament student and always a prince of exegetes, he determined to accept the call. The years spent at Allegheny, useful and fruitful as they were, were years of training and preparation for the more than thirty-three years (1887-February, 1921) spent in the professorship at Princeton. Always deeply attached to the place, loving with an enthusiastic devotion the University and the Seminary, which he counted in very truth his *almae matres*, he venerated as only a pure and unselfish spirit can the great men and the hallowed memories which have made Princeton one of the notable seats of theological scholarship.

His reverence for those who had taught him was equalled by his admiration of his colleagues, and the love which he delighted to express for those who had taught him was constantly reproduced in his affection for his younger colleagues and the successive classes of students who thronged his classrooms.

It may be that a certain intellectual austerity, a loftiness and aloofness from the common weaknesses of the human reason, are inseparable from the system of thought which is associated with the names of Calvin and Augustine and Paul, but it is never really incarnated in a great thinker without its inevitable counterpoise of the tenderest human sympathies. In Benjamin Warfield such sympathies found expression in a love for men, and especially of children, in a heart open to every appeal, and a strong, if undemonstrative, support of such causes as home and foreign missions and especially of the work for the freedmen. Always a diligent student, he also read widely over an unusual range of general literature, including poetry, fiction and drama, and often drew illustrations from the most unexpected sources.

He appreciated in a very high degree the value of an organ for the discussion of the theological questions of his time. In 1889 he became one of the editors of the *Presbyterian Review* in succession to Dr. Francis L. Patton. When that review was discontinued he planned and for twelve years conducted the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, which in 1902 was taken over by the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary and renamed the *Princeton Theological Review*.

In these reviews was published a large part of the material gathered into this and succeeding volumes. Other portions are taken from various encyclopaedias and dictionaries, reviews, magazines and other publications to which he was a frequent contributor. He also published the following volumes: "Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament" (1886); "On the Revision of the Confession of Faith" (1890); "The Gospel of the Incarnation" (1893); "Two Studies in the History of Doctrine" (1893); "The Right of Systematic Theology" (1897); "The Significance of the Westminster Standards" (1898); "Acts and Pastoral Epistles" (1902); "The Power of God Unto Salvation" (1903); "The Lord of Glory"

(1907); “Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today” (1909); “Hymns and Religious Verses” (1910); “The Saviour of the World” (1914);” The Plan of Salvation” (1915); “Faith and Life” (1916);” Counterfeit Miracles “ (1918).

He received from the College of New Jersey the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1880; that of Doctor of Laws in 1892; and that of Doctor of Laws from Davidson College in 1892; that of Doctor of Letters from Lafayette College in 1911 ; and that of Sacrae Theologiae Doctor from the University of Utrecht in 1913.

Hewas stricken with angina pectoris on December 24, 1920, and died on February 16, 1921, at Princeton.

E. D. W.