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Ashbel Green

ART. I.—*Address delivered to the Theological Students of the Princeton Seminary, N. J., at the close of the semi-annual Examination in May, 1835.* By ASHBEL GREEN, D.D.

MY BELOVED YOUNG BRETHREN—*Candidates for the Gospel Ministry:*

For the fourth, and probably the last time, it has become my duty to address you—on your retiring, for a short period, from this Seminary. On a former occasion, when this service was allotted to me, I endeavoured to show, among other things, that it is erroneous and idle to expect that improvements may be made in revealed or Christian Theology, similar to those which have been, and still may be made, in the secular sciences. This opinion has since been controverted in this place; and, as I am persuaded, not only of the justness of the opinion, but of its great importance, I propose at this time to offer something in its vindication, and something to expose what I apprehend to be the dangerous tendency of its opposite.

The whole argument opposed to the sentiments I have heretofore advocated, and am still disposed to maintain, so far as I have seen or heard, is one of analogy. It may be summarily stated thus:—Since it is undeniable that, in modern times, great discoveries and improvements have been

made in some important secular sciences, it is reasonable to suppose that similar discoveries and improvements may be made, and therefore ought to be attempted, in the important science of Christian Theology. Now, it is readily admitted, that analogical reasoning is sometimes lawful, and, when properly applied and fairly conducted, may be exceedingly powerful. Bishop Butler, you are aware, has, in this way, shown demonstratively, the utter irrelevancy and futility of the most formidable objections which infidelity has ever promulged against the great truths of divine revelation. But it is to be observed, and ought constantly to be kept in mind, that all analogical reasoning proceeds on a comparison of two subjects; which, although they may be considerably different in their general nature, still possess certain points or features of strong resemblance, often of exact similarity; so that whatever, in these resembling particulars, is true of the one subject, must also be equally true of the other. Dr. Reed, with his usual acumen, remarks, that "all arguments drawn from analogy are still the weaker the greater disparity there is between the things compared."* Of course, if the disparity be total, there can be no ground whatever for fair analogical argument. I propose, therefore, to make some remarks—

I. On the disparity which exists between the science of revealed or Christian Theology, and all merely secular science.

II. On the legitimate aid which Christian Theology may derive from secular knowledge.

"Christian Theology," says a writer of some note,† "may be divided into two parts, *natural* and *revealed*; the former comprehending what may be known of God from the creation of the world, even his eternal power and Godhead; the latter, which is discovered to man nowhere, but in the sacred volume of the Old and New Testaments." Against what is here called *Natural Theology*, I have nothing to object; believing, as I do, that it is the basis on which Revealed Theology must rest; since we have no formal argument in the Bible to prove the being, providence, and perfections of God. Still, I maintain, with another eminent writer,‡ that "Revealed religion embraces all that is claimed for natural

* Intellectual Essays—Essay I. Chap. IV. See the whole Chapter.

† Encyclopædia Britannica—Article Theology.

‡ New Edinburgh Encyclopædia—Article Theology.

religion, and a great deal more; and whilst we are at no loss to point out doctrines peculiar to revelation, we cannot point out a single doctrine which we can pronounce to be peculiar to natural religion." Revealed or Christian Theology, then, I would say, is that system of truth which God has made known to man in the Holy Scriptures. And I shall now endeavour to show that this system is, in several most important respects, wholly unlike every system and subject of secular science; and consequently that there can be no fair analogy, on which it may be argued and concluded that the same, or similar improvements, may be made in each of these departments of human knowledge.

In support of this allegation, my first remark is, that the AUTHORITY on which we receive instruction, in revealed or Christian Theology, is the authority of God; and that in secular science, it is human authority only—the teachings of our fellow men, and the conclusions of our own minds. Here, you perceive at once, is a disparity literally infinite. In divine revelation, He who is essential and eternal truth utters his sacred oracles; and to know and understand what he says, is all that is left to man. To question the veracity of a divine announcement, admitting it to be such, is blasphemy. Great care certainly ought to be used, to see that what we receive as a revelation from God is truly such, and that we understand its import. But when we are satisfied that we correctly understand a declaration, ascertained to be of divine origin, nothing remains for us but to bow and adore. Our reason may not be able fully to grasp the revealed truth, or accurately to analyze it, or, in some instances, even to reconcile it with certain conclusions previously and confidently entertained. But, surely, it is infinitely more reasonable to give up any of our conclusions, as false or mistaken, than to retain them in opposition to an inspired declaration; because we know that our reason is always fallible and often erroneous, but that infinite wisdom never can mistake, and infinite goodness never can deceive. In every instance, therefore, to set our own reason, or what we call philosophy, in opposition to a plain declaration of God, or to endeavour to give such a declaration a perverted import, is the extreme both of folly and impiety.

On the other hand, as has been stated, the authority on which we receive the instructions, deductions, or doctrines of merely secular science, is human authority solely. To question this, is not unlawful—it is lawful to question it even

in the exact sciences; for mistakes may be made, and sometimes have been made, in what purported to be strict demonstration—mistakes, either in the reasoning process, or in the data on which the pretended demonstration commenced, and an error in which has vitiated the whole proceeding, and rendered the conclusion essentially fallacious. We readily admit, indeed, that in the exact sciences, any error is likely to be soon exposed, and effectually corrected. Still, it is to our purpose, and precisely to the point before us, to remark, that their results may be questioned; and and that herein they differ entirely from decisions and truths, resting on the authority—the admitted authority—of the God who cannot lie.

But in every other science, or source of knowledge, than that to which we have just adverted—in every investigation, except in the exact sciences—as soon as we advance beyond a few plain facts and principles, obvious to common sense, or necessary to the preservation and comfort of human life and human society, we enter on debateable ground; where system has succeeded to system, and hypothesis to hypothesis, and solid, incontrovertible truth, if reached at all, has seldom been overtaken, till after a long and dubious pursuit. And in no science whatever has this been more conspicuously and strikingly apparent, than in that which is denominated *the philosophy of mind*. Here, the number of systems has been unusually great—each successive one decrying its predecessor, and hastening to be decried in its turn, by an opponent, which, for its own brief period, has gained the ascendant. At the present hour, while we are hearing much about the protestant Reformers having mixed their theology too much with the false philosophy of their day, those from whom the clamour comes are mixing their own philosophy with the truths of God's holy word, to an extent and an effect unspeakably more injurious than any thing that was done, in this way, by the venerable men of whom they complain. From the time of the apostle Paul to that in which we live, “the oppositions of science, falsely so called,” have been the great corrupters of the gospel—the chief spoilers of “the simplicity that is in Christ.”

In the philosophy of physics, too, the changes have not been few, nor of small importance. How many speculations and hypotheses were there, for example, about the causes of the tides, before the system which Newton established on this subject? And before the discovery of Frank-

lin, that the lightning and thunder of the heavens are only, on a larger scale, the electric phenomena of the Leyden phial, what a multitude of guesses were there, about the causes of these terrific aerial appearances and noises—the very best of which, at present, seem scarcely less than ludicrous. The system of natural philosophy which was taught in yonder college, when I was a student in it, was published a little before Franklin's discovery. Its author was Benjamin Martin, highly distinguished as a teacher of mathematics and philosophy in the city of London, and a strict and even enthusiastic Newtonian. Martin's theory of thunder and lightning, as laid down in the book that we studied, (omitting this article, of course,) was, as well as I recollect, that the vapours which ascend from the earth often possess qualities similar to those of iron filings and sulphur; and as we know that these substances, when mixed, and moistened, and exposed to an ardent sun, take fire and explode; so the humid vapours, which possess the same qualities, ignite and explode, when acted on by the sun in the region of the air, and then follow the vivid flashes of fire, and the tremendous roarings, which we call lightning and thunder. You smile, my young friends, but this was once very good and very serious philosophy. Now, it certainly was neither unlawful nor useless, for Newton and Franklin both to question and confute all that had been said by the philosophers who preceded them, on the tides and on lightning and thunder. They only questioned what had been said by fallible men like themselves, and which was fairly open to have its pretensions examined, and its inanity fully exposed.

My first remark, then, on the dissimilarity which exists between revealed Theology and all merely secular science, is summarily this—that in revealed Theology God speaks; and that when we understand his declarations, it is to the last degree impious to question what he says: but that in all merely secular science man speaks, and we not only may question what he says, but in many instances ought, after examining his teachings, to reject them altogether.

My second remark on the point before us, is nearly related to that which you have just heard. It is, that the manner, or way, in which we ascertain or arrive at truth, in Christian Theology, is exceedingly dissimilar to that in which it is reached in all merely secular science. How is it that you ascertain the truths of your Bible? Is it in any other way than by carefully and attentively reading the sacred

pages, scanning the language—the original language, I mean—pondering on and praying over what you read, and accurately comparing one part or portion of the inspired volume with another? Can all the interpreters, critics and commentators in the world, do any thing more—more, I mean, that is really useful—than help you to get at the true and genuine meaning of the Holy Spirit, in the words of his own inditing? Certainly not. “How readeſt thou?” and “Underſtandeſt thou what thou readeſt?” are the two great questions, which, answered ſatisfactorily, comprehend the whole reſult of biblical investigations, ſo far as intellectual truth is concerned. In this matter—in aſcertaining the mind of the Spirit in his own word—we ſay, that the inquiry ſimply and ſolely is, about *the true and full import of language*; that farther than this, human reaſon has nothing to do with the ſubject; that it is not to be applied to the ſubject one hair's breadth, farther than it is purely auxiliary, in obtaining the genuine ſenſe of the ſacred record; for then we have arrived at the divine *dictum*, and human reaſon, as already ſhown, is not to queſtion, but to ſubmit and adore.

That men, even learned men, have often diſputed, and do ſtill diſpute, about the real import of ſome of the plainest paſſages of holy ſcripture, muſt, indeed, be admitted—admitted as a lamentable fact. But this fact nevertheless, to ſuppoſe that the true and genuine meaning of ſcripture, on all important points of faith and practice, cannot be aſcertained—yea, clearly and ſatisfactorily aſcertained—by all, who, with the Bible in their hands, honeſtly deſire, diligently inquire after, and prayerfully ſeek to know the truth—to ſuppoſe this, is virtually to deny the uſe of revelation altogether; and is, in fact, only a particular form of the very worſt kind of infidelity. It is to deny that we have any revelation, that is definite in its meaning, and clear in its practical application.

In a word, then, revealed or Chriſtian Theology, is contained in one book, which God has given us; and is to be acquired by *reading that book underſtandingly*.

Now, nothing can be more unlike this, than the way and manner in which we acquire knowledge, and make improvements, in ſecular ſcience.

In the firſt place, we have no book in any of theſe ſciences, which has been given by a revelation from God; and which, if rightly read and fully underſtood, would give

us all the knowledge which could ever be obtained, of the particular science treated of in that book. The divine wisdom and benevolence have doubtless made the difference which we here contemplate, between theological and secular science, because what relates to our eternal well-being is infinitely more important, than any thing that has a bearing only on temporal concerns; and because, moreover, there are certain things essential in the plan of redemption, which we never could discover or know, without a direct revelation from God; and because, in fine, even in things in which uncorrupted human reason might have guided us right, our native depravity puts us wrong, by its influence in shutting out the light, rendering us averse to holy exercises, and perverting reason itself. We have a striking and most melancholy exhibition of this fact, in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans.

But in all that relates to our temporal concerns, as far as they are unconnected with our future destiny—in all science that comprises knowledge which we may either possess or want, and yet our souls be safe—our Creator has left us to the operation, and cultivation, and exertion, of our own natural powers, and the improvement that results from their industrious and persevering exercise and employment. Hence we have no divinely inspired system of astronomy, or botany, or chemistry, or anatomy. We must get our knowledge of each of these sciences, not out of one book which God has given us, but out of many books which men have given us; together with our own observations, experiments, and inferences.

Again. The previous preparation, or attainments, that must be made, in order to become skilful in investigating the meaning of a record, and those which are indispensable, if we are to become adepts in, at least, some of the sciences, are as *unlike* as any two kinds of knowledge can possibly be. The Bible is simply a *record*—a record of God's revealed will; and as already shown, it is only necessary to be able to read and understand what is written, in order to become skilful in the knowledge of this record. How different from this must be the previous knowledge—the auxiliary apparatus—by which a man is to become an eminent astronomer, for example. Before he can proceed a single step—if he aspires to be a man of true science, and not to take on trust the results of the investigations of others—he must prepare, with great labour and pains, a curious and

complicated frame-work, or scaffolding, to bear him up, at every advance in his ascending progress. In other words, he must become a profound scholar in the endless science of Mathematics—he must have skill to apply the most recondite principles of this science, at every gradation of his advance. He must follow Newton through his *Principia*, and La Place through his *Mechanique Celeste*: and it is to be observed, that there are but a few human minds that can follow in the track of these extraordinary men, even after they have delineated it clearly. Now, how different are the previous knowledge, and preparations, and mental powers, necessary to become eminent in this science, from those which are demanded in order to understand *a book*—a book whose essential parts and principles are so plain, if we believe the book itself, that “he may run that readeth,” and that “wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”

In saying this, however, I by no means wish to intimate, that there is no such thing as eminence, and a most desirable eminence, in a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, beyond that which is indispensable to salvation. That there is such an eminence, and that it is earnestly to be sought, your very presence in this institution implies and proclaims; and I hope, before I close this address, to show, briefly, how this eminence is to be attained. But I do deny, most unequivocally, that there is any such similarity between the study of Christian Theology, and the study of astronomy, or between the means and facilities by which men become skilful in these sciences, severally, as that we can fairly argue that because improvements are constantly going on in the one, they ought to be going on in the other, *pari passu*. What similarity, I desire to know, is there between a science, in which we are to learn exclusively from a revelation given us by God, and any science in which he has given us no revelation—between Christian Theology, in which the Holy Ghost is the teacher, and astronomy, in which Newton and La Place are the teachers? Is there, I also ask, any such likeness between fluxions and hermaneutics, that we may justly conclude that because improvements have been made in the one, they may also, and equally, be made in the other? or do calculations of the path and periodical revolution of a comet, bear any resemblance to a critical inquiry whether Jephtha did, or did not, sacrifice his daughter? or in what manner the differing genealogies of Matthew and Luke, relative to the descent of the Messiah, in his human nature, may be fairly reconciled?

It seems to have been supposed, that it was a confounding and conclusive observation, which was made in opposition to what I have heretofore very briefly stated and now maintain, that inasmuch as the works of God in the starry heavens all existed, and were open to human view and observation, for ages before the true nature and laws of the celestial luminaries were discovered and explained; so it may be, that the truths of revelation recorded in the Bible may have existed for ages, and be only waiting for some biblical Newton or La Place to develop them, and set them in a light in which they were never seen before. This, I think, is a fair representation of what is taught in the following quotation, in which the author,* after referring to a number of modern discoveries and improvements in several sciences, and naming their authors, proceeds thus—"Nor is it demonstrated that the limit of advancement is yet reached; or, that the human mind must here pause, and hope to proceed no farther. These men have just opened illimitable fields of thought before the mind. *And just so it may be in Theology.* The system was as perfect in the Scriptures, as astronomy was before Newton lived; yet it is possible that there are truths, and relations of truths, which the mind has not yet contemplated." These sentences seem plainly to intimate, that it may be that "just such" new views will yet be given of Bible truths, as Newton has given of astronomical truths. Now, if this should ever take place in fact, you perceive at once that we should have an essentially new Bible; that is, a Bible as different from the old Bible, as the new astronomy is different from the old astronomy: and this is a difference which every scholar knows is systematic, radical, and essential. Is it necessary to reason against such extravagance as this? Can any man soberly think, that a printed book, which has been profoundly studied and commented on for ages, by men of the most powerful minds, and among others by Sir Isaac Newton himself—a book on which the greatest masters of philology and exegesis have expended all the treasures of their learning, their skill, and their intellectual energies—that of such a book we may yet obtain as new views of its contents, as we have obtained of the starry heavens, since it has been demonstrated that the earth is not the centre of

* Rev. Albert Barnes, in a sermon delivered before the directors and students of the Seminary, in September, 1834, and afterwards published.

the solar and sidereal system, but only a little speck in the boundless universe of God? On this interrogatory, answer for yourselves.

But be assured, my dear young brethren, I would not have consumed so much of your time and of my own, in exposing the gross absurdity of the strange notions, on which I have animadverted, but for their dangerous tendency. For only concede to an innovator that Christian Theology, or a knowledge of the true Biblical system, (which is the same thing,) is as capable of improvement as the sciences of astronomy, and botany, and chemistry, and anatomy, and you have granted, in favour of the theological projector, the postulate of Archimedes for moving the earth—*δος μου ζω*—you have given him a position, on which he can stand and work a lever, that may heave from their deep foundations the very corner-stones of “the faith once delivered to the saints,” and lay in ruins all that the saints have built thereon in past ages. No wonder, that it has become the favourite dogma of all innovators in Theology, that this sacred science ought to be considered as just as much open to improvements, and to a like extent, as are the merely secular sciences; and that they should so earnestly advocate this dogma, whenever they find a favourable opportunity for the purpose: and hence, too, the importance of not admitting their claim for a single moment.

But in refusing this claim, do we virtually say, that nothing more can ever be learned from the Bible than has already been learned from it? We say no such thing. We know that there is a large part, and a most important part, of scriptural prophecy yet to be fulfilled; and that the true and full purport of this prophecy never can be learned, till it shall be developed in its fulfilment. We are also ready to admit, that some new light may be thrown on certain passages or portions of scripture, by a more perfect acquaintance with oriental customs, by geographical improvements and the discoveries of travellers, and, to a small extent, even by more accurate verbal criticism, on the original languages of the Bible. But what bearing will all this have on *the doctrinal truths* of the sacred oracles? Will it materially affect a single fundamental point, or a single important principle? It will not. The fulfilment of prophecy, surely, will alter no doctrine; and a new translation of a few words, or even the omission or insertion of a few words, although affecting the import of a single passage, will not

affect any leading truth of the sacred canon; which will always appear from the plain sense of other passages, and from the scope of many passages when carefully compared. Griesbach, whose authority on several points I by no means consider as commanding, yet on this I think it ought to be considered as weighty; because his learning was unquestionable, and his leanings have always been regarded as being towards a licentiousness of interpretation—Griesbach, in his Prolegomena to his edition, with various readings, of the New Testament, says:* “The word of God is not changed, when a term or two is expunged, or added, or changed for another in the vulgar text. That which is usually called the word of God, agreeably to a Hebrew rather than a Latin appellation, is contained in the SENSE of the sacred scripture; and does not so depend on syllables and letters, as that the real word of God, that is, the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, is destroyed, when (on the best reason and authority, and with a perfect preservation of the sense,) a particular term is changed. THE WORD OF GOD *endureth for ever!* Nor is it rendered *uncertain* by the labours of modest and pious critics, whose sole aim it is, that, by the help of God, they may render the divine word as certain as possible.” Thus Griesbach; and with him we confidently believe, that if all the various readings of the New Testament which exist should be collected and collated; and I will add, that if all the just verbal criticism and just reasoning that the learning and ingenuity of man can ever employ, should be applied to translate and elucidate the sacred text, it would not alter the *sense* of the word of God, on a single point of importance: that is, every important doctrine and principle of the New Testament would stand unshaken, on the same solid ground that it now occupies. We should not have a new Bible, but still the old Bible, cleared of a few *maculæ*, which for the present are just like the spots on the sun, discoverable on a critical inspection, but which have no

* Deinde non ideo *verbum Dei* mutatur, quia in textu vulgari unum alterumve vocabulum deletur aut additur aut cum alio permutatur. Quod, hebraico magis quam latino nomine, *verbum Dei* appellare solent, continentur *sensu* scripturæ sacræ; non autem ita in ipsis syllabis atque literis consistit, ut mutato (ob gravissimas rationes et auctoritates, ac salvo sensu,) vocabulo quodam, impsum *Dei verbum*, hoc est doctrina Christi ac apostolorum, pereat. * * * *Verbum Dei manet in æternum*. Nec incertum sit studiis criticorum modestorum atque piorum, qui unice id agunt, ut, Deo auxiliante, quam possunt maxime *verbum divinum* reddunt certissimum.—*Proleg.* sect. 1.

sensible influence in dimming its essential splendour, or diminishing the useful and glorious light which it sheds on the universe.

I now proceed to speak—and it will be very briefly—

II. On the legitimate aid which Christian Theology may derive from secular knowledge. Here, I avail myself, in the first instance, of the remark of a heathen. Cicero, in his oration for the poet Archias, who, he tells us, had been his early teacher, and to whom he declares he was indebted for all his attainments in the art of eloquence, makes this observation: **“All the arts which pertain to liberal knowledge have a kind of common bond, and are held together, as it were, by a sort of congeniality among themselves.”* This observation is peculiarly applicable to the point before us. Every kind of liberal knowledge may prove auxiliary, and sometimes highly advantageous, to the theologian and the preacher of the gospel. Theology, doubtless, is more directly connected with some departments of secular knowledge than with others; but there is not one that may not come into demand. Martyn found the high attainments he had made in mathematical and philosophical science, as well as his eminence in philology, of the greatest use in his missionary life. And how much more extensively useful were the missionaries Vanderkemp, and Carey, and Marshman, and Morrison, and Milne, not to mention others, than they could have been, if they had been only ordinary scholars? What would that wonderful man Gutzlaff have accomplished, in comparison with what he has already achieved, and is still doing, but for his various erudition, and his medical skill? And it delights me to think, that it is not improbable I may now be addressing some future Brainerd, or Martyn—or some companion of Pinney or Lowry—and if I am, let him know, that the greater measure of secular knowledge of every kind and character he acquires, the better furnished will he be for extensive usefulness in the missionary field.

But although various and profound erudition is peculiarly desirable in foreign missionaries, solid and accurate learning, to a considerable extent, is of vast use to every pastor. It is on this account that, in our church, liberal knowledge is made an indispensable prerequisite in every candi-

* *Omnes artes quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione quâdam inter se continentur.*

date for the gospel ministry; and greatly to the advantage of our church would it be, if the scholarship of ministerial candidates were of a higher order, than in many instances it unhappily and manifestly is. There is reason seriously to fear, that in general learning we are rather retrograde than advancing, in our demands on candidates for licensure. That such is the fact in some parts of our church, is beyond a question; and recently we have had open apologists, and even advocates, for setting aside, *as general requisitions*, the study of Latin and Greek, and some other parts of the usual academical course. Verily, it would seem, that between the asserted omnipotence of science on the one hand, and the pleas for ignorance on the other, our church has a dangerous navigation in prospect. Be cautious, my young brethren, and for yourselves avoid both Scilla and Charibdis, and keep the safe middle course.

Without a figure, permit me earnestly to advise you to make it an object, in the whole of your preparatory course in this Seminary, and for years after you are settled in the ministry, not only to endeavour, as far as possible, to retain in its freshness all the liberal knowledge you have ever acquired, but to be constantly making gradual additions to it. Leave it to sciolists, and the advocates of Vandalism, to ask what good a knowledge of Latin, and Greek, and Hebrew, and French, and German, and mathematics, and natural philosophy, and belles-lettres, will do a preacher of the gospel? Every well taught man knows, that all these may occasionally be of *direct* use, even to a secluded country clergyman; and that their *indirect* use is indescribably great; that all of them contribute to enlarge the mind, and improve its various powers; that some of them cherish the love of conclusive argument, and improve the capacity for it, and create dissatisfaction with every thing that is loose and inconclusive; that belles-lettres lore qualifies its possessor to give spirit and polish to solid matter, that might otherwise appear dry, harsh and repulsive; that the Greek and Latin classics are better adapted than any thing beside, to teach and cultivate a love for that chaste simplicity in writing, which is more important in all religious compositions than in those of any other description, besides being of essential importance as the key to many rich treasures of theological knowledge; and in fine, that the union of all the acquisitions mentioned invigorates and liberalizes the mind, furnishes an inexhaustible source of illustration, both

for writing and oral discourse, and gives a richness, ease and grace to compositions and communications, of whatever kind. Nor is it to be overlooked, that real and acknowledged scholarship gives great weight to character; and in this age of diffusive knowledge, is peculiarly important, to place the divine on equal ground with learned sceptics, Jesuits and heretics.

But having said this, I feel it to be incumbent immediately to remind you, that there is a danger here—a danger against which you ought carefully to guard—the danger of cultivating science and general literature, to the neglect of theology and practical piety. You ought to keep in constant recollection, that all your powers and all your time are solemnly consecrated to God, for the work of the gospel ministry. That the salvation of souls—the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, the promotion of the cause and kingdom of the Redeemer—that these are to form the great and commanding objects, which are to influence the whole of your conduct through life; and of course, that to these objects every other pursuit is to be either directly or indirectly auxiliary, and strictly tributary. The minister of the gospel, therefore, who employs his talents and his time chiefly in the cultivation of mere secular science, is as really criminal, though he may not be as disreputably so, as if he devoted himself to the getting and hoarding of money; and made his ministerial duties a by-business, a mere subordinate concern. And such men there have been in the sacred office, not only in Europe, but in our own country, and in our own church—men who gave all their mental energies to scientific researches and pursuits; and once a week repeated a dull sermon or two, perhaps for the tenth or twentieth time, to a congregation made up of *like people like priest*.

But this is by no means a necessary result of the love and cultivation of literature and science, in ministers of the gospel. Calvin was declared by Scaliger to be, in his day, the first scholar in Europe. The protestant Reformers and their friends were certainly the most erudite men of their age, unless Erasmus, who was half a Reformer, be considered as an exception. And yet, for eminent piety, and the laborious performance of ministerial duties, these men have had no superiors since the time of the apostles. At a much later period, I cannot forbear to mention Dr. Watts, as a shining example of the happy union of eminent piety with distinc-

tion in literature and science. "Whatsoever he took in hand (says Johnson, in his life,) was, by his incessant solicitude for souls, converted to theology. As piety predominated in his mind, it is diffused over his works. Under his direction, it may be truly said *Theologicæ Philosophiæ ancillatur*, philosophy is subservient to evangelical instruction; it is difficult to read a page without learning, or at least wishing to be better. The attention is caught by indirect instruction, and he that sat down only to reason, is on a sudden compelled to pray. Few men have left behind such purity of character, or such monuments of laborious piety. He has provided instruction for all ages, from those who are lisping their first lessons to the enlightened readers of Malbranche and Locke; he has left neither corporeal nor spiritual nature unexamined; he has taught the art of reasoning and the science of the stars." Such are the examples, my young brethren, which you will do well to emulate, and, within the compass of your powers, to imitate. And if you shall imitate them with some good degree of success, you may not only be instrumental in saving souls by preaching the gospel, but, as *authors*, you may teach and profit unborn millions.

But beside the happy influence of general science, in forming an accomplished theologian and preacher of the gospel, there are certain branches, as already intimated, which have a more direct bearing on ministerial qualifications and usefulness. These are sufficiently indicated in the **PLAN** of this Seminary, in the article which relates to *study and attainments*. It would therefore be unnecessary for me to dwell much upon them, even if I had not already too heavily taxed your patience by the length of this Address. There are, however, two subjects—mental philosophy and the study of the original languages of the sacred scriptures—on which it was my original intention to have submitted a few thoughts: to have admitted and inculcated the importance of adopting and understanding a right system of mental philosophy, as necessary to detect and expose every false system, and as a qualification for meeting infidels, and other errorists, on their own ground; and as auxiliary to a defence of genuine Christian Theology, and a just interpretation of Holy Scripture: to have insisted, in reference to this last particular, on the great Baconian principle, namely, that in true philosophy we are to abandon all hypotheses, and simply to take facts as we find them, as the

ground of every inference or induction: to show that this principle ought to be strictly applied in the study of the Bible, so that no passage should be interpreted by any previous philosophical dogma, but simply and solely by a sound exegesis of the language, or the *usus loquendi*, in the passage concerned: to remind you that the meaning of the passage, thus ascertained, ought to be treated as a FACT, resting on the truth and authority of God, and not to be modified a single iota by any philosophical reasoning, but before which all such reasonings are to bow and submit—just as, according to the Baconian system, all philosophical hypotheses and deductions are immediately and implicitly to yield to opposing facts or phenomena; not attempting to controvert or pervert them, but allowing them, forthwith and absolutely, to control every previous hypothesis, or militating principle or doctrine: and to inculcate that any other application of philosophy than this to the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, is fraught with incalculable injury to revealed truth, as the history of the church in past ages demonstrates, and which is not less mournfully manifest at the present time than at any former period.

As to the study of the original languages of the sacred writings, I wanted to urge, as I did on a former occasion, an early, constant, and continued attention to them, and even to the cognate dialects of the Old Testament; and to have recommended earnestly the practice of committing to memory texts, and even considerable portions of scripture, especially of the New Testament, in the *ipsissima verba* of the sacred writers, or rather of the Holy Spirit.

But all this I must pass, and conclude my address, by exhorting you, affectionately and solemnly, to read your Bibles much, not merely as critics but as Christians; seeking to have your souls fed with “the sincere milk of the word.” It is this, after all, that will do more to make you able ministers of the New Testament, than every thing you can possess, if in this—mark the qualification—*if in this you be deficient*. This is essential to your growth in grace and your personal comfort; and your personal comfort and growth in grace are intimately and closely connected with your ministerial fidelity and usefulness. The more experience you have of the sweetness of communion with God, in reading and meditating on his holy word, accompanied, as it always should be, with breathing out the desires and emotions of the soul, in prayer and praise—the more easy and de-

lightful it will be to preach; and the greater, of course, will be your desire to preach, and in every way you can devise, to bring others to partake with you, in the pure, and sublime, and heavenly pleasure, of contemplating the grace and the glory which you see shining in the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ. In a word, these views, and the effect they will produce on your own hearts, will dispose and enable you to make full proof of your ministry; and to do it, not reluctantly, but with holy animation in your Master's service, and gratitude to him for making you his ambassadors—the bearers of his messages of mercy to your perishing fellow sinners.

It is in this way, believe me, that you will get such a knowledge of the Bible as you can obtain by no other means. Your eyes will be opened, to behold wondrous things out of the divine word. John Bunyan, who could read the pages of inspiration in no other than his mother tongue, but who read them much on his knees, and meditated on them by day and by night, made this declaration—“I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible, than I could well tell how to stand under.” Behold! here is the blessed method of making *new discoveries* in divine revelation.—New discoveries indeed!—such discoveries as no unsanctified man ever makes—discoveries of no new doctrines, but new discoveries of the spiritual import and the “riches of glory” of the old doctrines, which apostles, and martyrs, and confessors, and fathers, and reformers of the church, all beheld in their day; beheld and meditated on, till they were filled with “joy in the Holy Ghost,” and could find no language adequately to express the perceptions, which these bright visions of the truths of God's holy word poured upon their minds.

O may you make many discoveries such as these! for these are the discoveries, my dear young brethren, that will, in very deed, make you “not count your life dear unto yourselves, so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry, which you have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” These discoveries will fill many of you with an inextinguishable desire to go on missions to the heathen; and will qualify all of you to preach the gospel, wherever you shall be called, with a holy unction, and with a far better prospect of success in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints, than if, without this unction, you had at command all the learning and

all the eloquence which mortals or angels ever possessed. God grant, therefore, that you may have a large measure of this holy anointing—grant that you may be able “to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.” Thus will you have the sure prospect of success in your ministry, of comfort in life, of joy in death, and of a crown of glory in that day when you shall stand with your spiritual children to receive the reward of those “who turn many to righteousness,” and who shall “shine as the stars for ever and ever.” Amen.

Erskine Alexander

ART. II.—*An Essay on Native Depravity.* By LEONARD WOODS, D. D. Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Seminary of Andover. Boston: published by W. Pierce, 1835.

THE above is the title of a prize essay, to the author of which a premium of three hundred dollars was awarded. This premium was offered by Mr. John Dunlop of Edinburgh, Scotland. The persons appointed to judge of such pieces as might be offered, were, the Reverend Jeremiah Day, D. D. LL. D. president of Yale college; The Reverend Edward Griffin, D. D. president of Williams college; and the Rev. Heman Humphrey, D. D. president of Amherst college.

Whether this method of eliciting the talents and stimulating the exertions of distinguished men, redounds to the honour of learning and religion, may, perhaps, be doubted. The motive addressed by such premiums seems to be of a nature too mercenary and sordid, to be associated with the high and disinterested feelings by which the person should be actuated, who takes up his pen to elucidate, or defend, the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. But if experience teaches, that by this means talents are actually brought into exercise for the public benefit, and the cause of truth is promoted, we ought to rejoice; and it may be admitted, that the prospect of obtaining a premium, does not neutralize necessarily, those more noble motives, which may after all have the governing influence, on leading able men to