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ART. I.—REVIEW OF SPRAGUE'S LECTURES TO
YOUNG PEOPLE.

*Lectures to Young People, by William B. Sprague, D. D.
Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Albany,
with an Introductory Address by Samuel Miller, D. D.,
Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.*
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IT is the highest wisdom of man to endeavour to discover, and to follow the plan of God. This plan is manifested in the nature of his creatures, in the dispensations of his providence, and in his word. It is our business to fall in with this; never, from vain ideas of doing more good, venturing to counteract it. Thus, the different natures which God has given the sexes, renders it necessary, in order that the greatest perfection should be attained, and the greatest good effected, that the difference should be carefully preserved; that the man should not assume the position, or discharge the duties of the woman; and that the woman should not step out of her appropriate sphere into the province of the man. This is, however, a common evil. Unenlightened zeal in religion often leads to a greater or less infringement of the plan of God, in this respect. Women take a stand, and undertake to discharge duties, which

VOL. III. No. III.—2 P

cle, and not an incumbrance of the thought. The typography and general execution are strikingly fair and even beautiful. Again we say, let such books, by such men, take the place of the puling sentimentality and idle fictions which infect our drawing-rooms, and effeminate the public mind.

ART. V.—AN ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AT PRINCETON.

An Address delivered to the Students of the Theological Seminary, at Princeton, at the close of the Semi-Annual Examination, May 16, 1831. By Ashbel Green, D.D. LL. D.

My young friends and brethren—candidates for the Gospel Ministry:

Addresses, on occasions like the present, have been so frequently made in this place, that the topics peculiarly appropriate to them, have all, perhaps, been preoccupied. —The present is the third service of the kind, to which I have myself been called. What, therefore, I have now to offer, will be discursive; not confined to a single topic, but touching on a number; and if I deliver nothing that is new, I still hope, if you yield me a careful and candid attention, to say something which, under the divine blessing, may be useful.

Let me first call your attention to a point or two, relative to your course of study in this Seminary.

There is scarcely an error to which youth of liberal minds and liberal studies are more prone, if left to themselves, than to take the subjects of study in a wrong order; and, if I mistake not, those whose minds are most active and most comprehensive are, unless well directed, more apt to commit this error than any others. The cause is obvious—their literary curiosity is so intense, and their thirst for knowledge so ardent, that they want to seize on every thing at once. They must, at least, have a taste of every subject; they must know something about it. Hence it too often happens, that they acquire a love—a passion even—for miscellaneous reading, which abides with them long, perhaps through the whole of life. The natural, and almost necessary result, is, that they know a little of

every thing, and but a little of any thing—I mean, they never become thorough masters of any one branch of knowledge.

It is, then, of great importance for liberal youth to pursue improvement in a right method, and to use the self-denial necessary to keep to such a method. There are certain things in every branch of science which are fundamental; they lie, and must lie, at the very foundation of all solid, accurate, and systematic knowledge of that branch of science: and if these elementary parts are not acquired at first, they are seldom acquired afterwards. Their acquisition commonly requires the aid of a teacher, and always requires a good deal of close and continued study; and if a young man does not master them in a school, or a college, or a seminary, he probably will never do it. If even disposed to do it afterwards, he will find it so difficult, that it is a thousand to one that he will get along without it, as well as he can; but always feeling the want of it—feeling it most sensibly, to the very end of life.

Now, what is this elementary fundamental knowledge in Christian Theology, considered as a science and a system? I hesitate not to say that the most essential part of it is, a knowledge of the Bible, in the languages in which the Bible was given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and a just, accurate, and familiar view of the truths of the Bible, as they are arranged, defended, and illustrated, in our approved systems of theology, and in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of our church. You may hereafter much more easily make improvement in other things, useful to a theological student, than in the two great departments of study which I have now named. Be assured, my young brethren, if you do not acquire the ability of studying—I mean studying with pleasure and effect—the Holy Scriptures, in the Hebrew and Greek languages, before you leave this house, there is very little probability that you ever will acquire it; and if you do not acquire it, you will feel the loss—or at any rate you ought to feel it—every time you enter the sacred desk, through the whole of your ministerial course. You ought never to prepare a sermon, especially in the earlier periods of your future ministry, without carefully studying the text, and sometimes its connexion too, in the *ipsissima verba* of the Holy Spirit.

In like manner, in regard to systematic theology, if you do not acquire something like a thorough knowledge of it here, the probability strongly is, that you will die without it. Yes, unless you accustom yourselves to go to the bottom of every point

of doctrine and find its basis in the sure word of God—for every other basis is unstable and worthless—and unless you attain to the ability of looking through the whole system, and of seeing the connexion and bearing of every part on every other part—I say, unless you do this before you depart from the seminary, I feel well assured that not one in ten of you will ever do it. Your views, and your exhibitions of divine truth, will forever be disjointed, and frequently discordant. What you say and teach at one time, will be inconsistent with, and even contradictory to, what you say and teach at another. Now, we have quite enough of such teachers in our country already; and I do beseech you, my young brethren, not to add yourselves to the number: and that you may not, see to it that you do not leave the seminary, till you have fixed every important doctrinal truth, as it lies in your mind and is an object of your faith, on the firm foundation of God's word; and till you understand the consistency and harmony of all the parts of a theological system.

Are you ready to ask, whether I do not expect and wish, that you should endeavour to make some *improvements* in theology, in your future life. I must answer, as the logicians say, by distinguishing. If, by improvements in theology, the inquiry means an increase of clear perception and deep feeling, in relation to the beauty, glory, excellence, consistency and sweetness of evangelical truth—an increase, too, in a knowledge of the manner in which revealed truth may best be taught, inculcated and defended—an increase, also, of discernment, as to the errors to which the truth is opposed, and the consequent correction of some minor errors in your own minds—an increase, in a word, of your acquaintance and understanding of the Bible in all its parts, and of the glorious scope and tendency of the whole: if only this, or chiefly this, be intended by an improvement in theology, then, I say, I hope you will make great improvements; for I believe that such improvements will always be made by every minister of the gospel, just in proportion as he grows in grace, and persists in studious habits.

But if, by improvements in theology, I am to understand what some vain talkers seem to intend, the making of some *great and original discoveries* of truths and doctrines, that no searching of the Scriptures has ever yet brought to light; then, I say, I pray God that you may never attempt, or think of making any such improvements; for, if you do, I have not a

doubt you will run into false and delusive speculations and conclusions, injurious, and perhaps ruinous, to your own souls, and the souls of others. The fundamental truths of Holy Scripture have been given for the use and edification of God's people in every age since the canon of Scripture was completed; and I cannot believe that any great practical truth of the Bible has been hidden in such deep darkness, as to have escaped the saints of God, and all the pious and learned interpreters of his holy word, ever since the days of the apostles—escaped their vision, that the clear and satisfactory development of it might be ushered on the world at the present time. For myself, I would not listen for a moment to the man who should tell me that he had found something entirely new, and yet very important, in the doctrinal parts of the sacred Scriptures. If it is very new, I am sure it is not very important; for what is very important now, has certainly been so for many centuries past; and it violates all my maxims in regard to God's revealed will, to admit that it contains fundamental, or very important practical truth, of which not a glimpse has been caught by the holiest and wisest men which the church of Christ has hitherto contained.

On this subject, there is sometimes instituted what seems to me a very senseless analogy. It is asked, shall the most brilliant and important discoveries be frequently made in all the natural sciences, and shall no discoveries and improvements be made in theology, the most interesting and sublime of all sciences? But consider, my young friends, whether there is really any similarity at all between the two cases. On the subject of Christian Theology, God has made a revelation of his will, and all the revelation that he will ever make in this world: and he has made this revelation in a book which, as all Protestants believe, he intended for popular use. But have we received a revelation from God of a system of astronomy? No, certainly, unless we profess to be Hutchinsonians; and even then, we must not admit that the system can be improved. Have we gotten a revealed system of natural philosophy? of mathematics? of mechanics? of gravitation? of attraction and repulsion? of hydraulics? of pneumatics? of chemistry? of electricity and galvanism? of heat? of light and colours? of the theory of the tides? of the fluxionary calculus? and of fifty other things, of a like kind, that might be named? Only show me a divine revelation on any one of these subjects—a finished and popular revelation, of all that the great Author

of nature ever intends to make known in regard to that subject—and I stand prepared to carry out my principle, and to say, that on that subject you are not to expect to make great discoveries and improvements. No, my young brethren, there is no resemblance whatever between theology and natural philosophy, that warrants the running of a parallel between them in the matter of improvement and discovery, by mere human intellect and effort—none whatever—and I must think it is a very stupid thing to institute any such analogy, as that which I have shown to be so palpably absurd.

Thus, at much greater length than I at first intended, I have endeavoured to show the prime importance of your leaving this place at least tolerably versed in the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible, that you may be qualified to get at the genuine meaning, and make a sound *exegesis* of any and every text of Holy Scripture; and also of your going to the bottom of every subject of didactic, and, if you please, of polemic theology, but of the former especially; and of learning the bearing of every truth on every other truth, and of understanding the connexion and consistency of the whole. You will not understand, however, that I have meant to intimate that any one study of your course here may be neglected. Far from this. It seems to me that there is not a single study in this seminary, which is either superfluous in itself, or carried to a greater extent than will be found useful to you in your future ministerial life. Indeed, the time you spend here is so short, that your professors find, and I believe you must all be sensible, that it is not practicable for you to go as far in any one study as would be desirable and useful, if circumstances did not imperiously forbid it. But, I repeat, my aim has been to make you very sensible, that the languages of the Bible, and systematic theology, are the two things which you must now get, with some accuracy, in their elements at least, or you are never likely to get them; that whatever else you neglect, or are obliged to omit, you must not omit or neglect these; because, among other reasons, you will have a demand for them every time you prepare for, or appear in the pulpit; whereas there are other things for which you will not have such immediate and constant use, and which you can more easily acquire by yourselves, without a teacher, and as opportunity may favour.

In the next place, I would fain guard you against an error which, it would seem, is becoming popular—the error of thinking that close study, and much of it employed in gaining

accurate Bible knowledge, and in investigating doctrinal truth, is unfavourable to a highly devout spirit, great sanctity of heart and life, and great zeal in preaching the gospel, and endeavouring to win souls to the Saviour. Now I affirm, and I appeal to facts, and to the experience of the whole Christian church, to support my affirmation, that the apprehension that close study will produce the evil effects specified, is utterly groundless; nay, that it is in direct contrariety to the truth. Yes, I confidently maintain, that the most studious ministers of the gospel, as a general rule—admitting of a few, and but a very few exceptions—have always been, and now are, the most devotedly pious of all their brethren, and the most zealous and the most successful, in their labours for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. If you look into Christian antiquity, whom will you there find, after the apostolic age, to compare with Justin the Martyr, with Irenæus, and Polycarp, and Cyprian, and Ambrose, and Basil, and Chrysostom, and Augustine, and a number of others like them? and when you come down to the Protestant Reformation, whom will you set in competition with Luther, and Melancthon, and Bucer, and Zuinglius, and Calvin, and Beza, and Cranmer, and Jewel, and Ridley, and Knox, and a long list of their coadjutors? And, at a still later period—leaving a glorious evangelical phalanx on the continent of Europe, and keeping to the island of our ancestors, and omitting a long list of worthies in the established church of England—there were Hallyburton, and Scougal, and Leighton, and How, and Owen, and Charnock, and Baxter, and Bates, and nearly the whole of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, who formed our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; and succeeding to these there were Flavel, and Watts, and Doddridge, and Boston, and the Erskines: and coming down to the present time—alas! I cannot say quite to the present time, for the last accounts from Britain have announced the death of Robert Hall, and Andrew Thomson—but still there are yet in life, Chalmers, and Jay, and a multitude of their compeers, too numerous to name. In our own country, there have gone to their rest the Mathers, and Sheppard, and Edwards, and Dickinson, and Burr, and Davies, and Finley, and the Blairs, and Witherspoon, and Rodgers, and Macwhorter, and Dwight, and Mason. Here I stop; for it would be improper to name the eminent Gospel ministers who are still living in the United States. You may, however, go over them, if you choose, in your own minds. But what

I wish you to note and remember is, that although among the men I have mentioned there were very various degrees of natural talent, and of literary improvement, yet every one of them—yes, every one, without an exception,—was a *studious man*, diligently and perseveringly studious; and many of them ranked among the first scholars of the age and country in which they lived. They were deeply read, especially in the Bible, and in Christian Theology; and, at the same time, they were, generally speaking, the most laborious and successful preachers of the gospel, of the day in which they severally appeared. Be certified, my young brethren, it is idle, and worse than idle—it is absolutely false—to think and say that diligent study—I mean the study of theology and all that is directly auxiliary to it—is unfavourable either to a devout spirit, or to successful preaching. The notion that the last age was the age for speculation, and that this is the age for action, is likely, I fear, to do a great deal of serious mischief. Do not misunderstand me—I am no enemy to action, and to a great deal more of it than I have ever yet seen. But were not the men I have mentioned, the Reformers especially, men of action? Verily they were more active than any men now living, that I have heard of—the blessed missionaries alone excepted. But I do avow myself an enemy to a system of all acting and no thinking. Yes, and an enemy to all neglect of sound doctrinal preaching; for I am satisfied that, without this, we shall soon be overrun with declaiming Sciolists, and fanatics, and heretics, who will indeed be active enough, but whose activity will be destructive to the truth as it is in Jesus, and ruinous to precious immortal souls.

I am ready to admit, and do freely admit, that it is very possible a man may be frozen to the core in the ice of Biblical criticism, and even of orthodox doctrine. But I deny that the truths and study of the Bible, and the orthodox faith, ever did, by their direct and proper influence, freeze any man. It was something else, or the want of something else, that froze him, if he was frozen: and if he was ever thawed out into spiritual life and vigour, the truths of the Bible and the orthodox faith, in the hand of the Spirit of God, were the instruments of producing this desirable change. Therefore, I counsel and charge you to be habitually diligent students and doctrinal preachers; and if so, then the more action the better.

There is one thing, closely connected with what I have just stated, to which I must, for a moment, draw your atten-

tion. It is, that you ought to confirm every important position, or point of doctrine, in a sermon, by a plain and pertinent quotation from the sacred oracles. Believe me, every intelligent and considerate hearer will be more convinced, and more permanently influenced, by one apt text of Holy Scripture, than by all the arguments and eloquence that you can ever use without it. Nothing appears to me more objectionable, in the method of preaching which prevails in our country at the present time, than the sparing use which is made of the Scriptures of Truth. Only look into Witherspoon's Sermons, or his Treatise on Regeneration, which I believe was originally written in the form of sermons, and you will not find a single argument, or important assertion, or exhortation, which is not sustained by a pertinent quotation from the holy oracles; and the weight which this adds to all that he says is felt by every attentive reader. It was, I suppose, in reference to this, among other things, that a very intelligent and discerning man once said to me, while Dr. Witherspoon was yet living, that he preached with more *authority*, than any other man he ever heard. It has been with great pleasure that, in the late examination on didactic theology, I have observed that your professor required of, I believe nearly every student, to confirm his statement of doctrinal truth from the word of God. This is a habit of inestimable value, in which you ought to persist as long as you live. Give your hearers, if you please, argument and illustration from reason, and sometimes from history, and science, and philosophy; but back and confirm every thing you utter by a plain "Thus saith the Lord:" for I say most solemnly, accursed be all that argument, and all that philosophy, and all that eloquence, in the sacred desk, which excludes God's most holy word, to make room for "the enticing words of man's wisdom"—the vain words of an arrogant, erring mortal.

Let me now say a few words to you, on the subject of cultivating a missionary spirit. By long and close confinement here on Friday last, I was so much exhausted that I could not attend your missionary meeting, on the evening of that day. But permit me now, not only to exhort you to cherish a missionary spirit, but to say, that I think all of you ought to spend one year, at least, in missionary labours, after you leave the seminary, before you settle as pastors of established churches. Considering the extensive and mournful destitution of all gospel ordinances, which now exists in certain portions of our

country, it seems to me that, unless in some very extraordinary case, a young minister of the gospel, not yet incumbered with a family, nor connected with a stated charge, must be considered as lamentably deficient in the spirit of his office, if he is not willing to go and preach, for one year at least, to the hundreds and thousands in our frontier settlements, who are perishing in ignorance and sin, and some of whom are uttering, in a very affecting manner, the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." The service I would here recommend, besides doing good to others, seems to me admirably calculated to benefit the missionary himself—to fill his heart with that tender compassion for perishing sinners, and to animate him with a holy zeal to instruct and lead them to the Saviour, which will be likely to shed a most benign influence over all his future ministrations.

As to those who are seriously thinking of devoting their whole lives to missionary labours, and of going to the heathen on our own borders, or in foreign lands, we may say of the enterprise to which they are looking forward, what the apostle says of the office of a bishop generally, he that desires it, "desireth a good work." And O that there were more—many more than there are—who did *properly* desire this good work! But it is a work to be undertaken from no sudden impulse; from no flash of feeling; from no hasty, however ardent a desire, to do much good. If ever there was a work which demanded much previous thought, much prayer with fasting, much solemn and deep deliberation, and much self-examination, as to the fitness both of the body and the mind—it is the work of a missionary to the heathen, the Jews, or the Moham-medans. You who are making up your minds to this work, as I rejoice to know that some of you are, will scarcely need to be advised to read the lives of Brainerd, of Martyn, of Swartz, of Genecké, and of other devoted men of a similar character. Try to imbibe and cherish their spirit; and if you can and do imbibe it—then, in the name of the Lord, go forth to a work, the most honourable and heavenly, however laborious and painful, in which mortals ever were, or can be, employed.

I did intend to say something to you on the importance of your forming and fixing correct habits, in regard to study, and to deportment, and to care and exactness in all your money transactions, and to every thing relative to your visible conduct before the world. But I find myself in danger of run-

ning into too much length, and will therefore only remind you, that you are now in that period of life when your habits, in regard to all the points I have mentioned, are fast forming, and will probably be soon unalterably fixed, and that the importance of forming and fixing them in such manner as shall promote, and not hinder your usefulness, is incalculably great. Think on this subject, therefore, very carefully and seriously; for, after all, it is probable you will not estimate it as highly as you ought.

I shall conclude what I have to offer on the present occasion, with a few observations on revivals of religion. We hope and trust there is no student in this seminary, who is not a cordial friend to such a display of divine grace, as is commonly called *a revival of religion*; for he who is a real enemy to this thing, must be hostile to the most glorious work of God in our guilty world, and utterly unfit for that ministerial vocation, that high and holy calling, to which every student of theology professes to aspire: and I think the most of you will do well to spend, at least, a part of your ensuing vacation, in some place or congregation—easily to be found, blessed be God, at the present time—where a revival of religion exists. But, my dear young brethren, it is of inconceivable importance that, in regard to revivals of religion, you do not entertain notions, and adopt practices, which are calculated to mar the blessed work which you seek to promote. On this account, it was with more pleasure than I can easily express, that yesterday I heard, in common with yourselves, the scriptural and sound teaching, on this topic, of the learned and eminently pious professor from the Andover Seminary,* in a sermon which, in all its parts, was one of the most excellent to which I have ever listened. Fix in your minds, I beseech you, the great principle which he laboured to establish, and inculcate—that no human soul is ever converted, but by the special and almighty energy of the Holy Spirit; and that, in the part which men have to act in this great concern, they are to be careful to do that, and only that, which God has assigned to them as a matter of duty; that they are not to attempt to take the work out of

*The Rev. Dr. Woods attended a part of the examination of the Seminary, and preached in the church in Princeton on the day, (the Sabbath) preceding the delivery of this address. The text on which he discoursed was 1 Cor. iii. 6. "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He had left Princeton before this address was delivered.

God's hands, nor to use any means which he has not clearly authorized in his holy word; and that if they do, they commit the sin of preferring their own contrivances before the appointments of his infinite wisdom; on which there is no probability that he will ever confer his blessing. Be exceedingly careful, therefore, to adopt no measures, and to give no advice, but such as are plainly warranted in the scriptures of truth. But, keeping strictly to your inspired guide, and feeling at every step your dependence on God for success, go forward with a holy zeal and an inflexible perseverance, counting it your highest honour—though the world reproach and infidels sneer, as you must expect that they will—if you may be the humble instruments of saving souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. And now, praying that in this holy work, and in all your studies and preparations for the ministry of the gospel of Christ, you may receive a large portion of the grace and blessing of God our Saviour, I affectionately bid you farewell.

The preceding Address, in which it was the object of an aged minister of the gospel to give, in a very plain and familiar manner, some useful information, advice, and exhortation to his young brethren, was originally written in great haste, and without a thought that a word of it would ever appear in print. But he has yielded, perhaps indiscreetly, to the request of one of the conductors of the Biblical Repertory, to permit it to appear in this work, and with but little variation from the identical terms in which it was delivered.

ART. VI.—AN INQUIRY INTO THAT INABILITY UNDER WHICH THE SINNER LABOURS, AND WHETHER IT FURNISHES ANY EXCUSE FOR HIS NEGLECT OF DUTY.

THERE has occurred, within our recollection, a considerable difference in the manner of treating this subject, especially in addresses to the impenitent, from the pulpit. It was customary formerly, for Calvinistic preachers to insist much on the helpless inability of the sinner. He was represented, according to the language of the Scriptures, to be “dead in trespasses and sins,” and utterly unable to put forth one act of spiritual life; and too often this true representation was so given, as to leave the impression, that the person labouring under this total inability was not culpable for the omission of acts, which he had