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I.—LITERARY.

THE SEMINARY COURSE OF STUDY—ITS RANGE, STANDARD, EXAMINATIONS AND TESTS.

In the last issue we endeavored to set forth the *purpose* of the Seminary, to guard against certain developments of seminary discipline; and to maintain that the church should have in every age a set curriculum, suited to the needs of the time, through which the seminaries shall carry their students. In the present issue we offer some further considerations on our general subject.

V.—THE CONTENTS OF THE SEMINARY COURSE AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION AMONG THE DIFFERENT CHAIRS.

According to the church's statement of the purpose of the seminary, in 1811, it was to teach the Hebrew and New Testament Greek, the exegesis of both testaments, sacred geography and antiquities, the overthrow of Deism, Natural, Didactic, Polemic and Casuistic Theology, Church History, Pastoral Theology and Church Government and Discipline. Our Standards also imply that the student must be trained in all these things. That is, a place must be given in the course to Exegetical, Apologetical, Systematic, Historical and Practical Theology. Stating the matter in this general way most of the churches of the Reformed faith would say the same. But, this by the way, the statement by our Assembly of 1811 is a very fine one. We have no time for an exposition of it; but call attention to one or two points.

1. The student is required to study, at the seminary, the Deistic Controversy and thus become qualified to become a

DABNEY'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY.*

No department of life is free from fads. There are social fads, literary fads, political fads, fads of every sort, including fads in the teaching of our colleges and universities, and fads in the construction of their curricula.

One of these fads now prevailing in our colleges is that for a plethoric curriculum—for wide culture. But the result is, too often, superficial culture. The curriculum which has suffered “fatty degeneration,” too often, gives no thorough culture. It gives, too often, no masterful and uplifting knowledge of anything. Another one of these fads prevailing in our colleges is the magnification of the physical sciences. The physical sciences are useful. We make no war against them. Many young men ought to study them, e. g., those who expect to be doctors of medicine, and chemists, and others. And for the sake of general culture, students, generally, should give them some attention. But these are not, never have been, and may never be an important study for the mass of those who will be preachers and lawyers.

The effort to compass too wide a curriculum and the time spent on the physical sciences prevent our students learning masterfully the rudiments of those other sciences of which they stand in so much more need. Hence it has come about that many theological students appear at the Seminary woefully deficient in the knowledge of mental and moral philosophy.

It has sometimes seemed as if our men were going to put aside the study of psychology and metaphysics altogether, as if the historian and antiquarian would alone know of them as a form of mental discipline and a source of most important knowledge—the knowledge of self. About ten years ago an attempt was made to dissuade us from the pursuit of psychological study on the ground that such study was a virtual waste of time. Our self-constituted adviser in this matter is a

* *The Practical Philosophy, being the Philosophy of the Feelings, of the Will, and of the Conscience, with the Ascertainment of Particular Rights and Duties.* By R. L. Dabney, D. D., LL. D., Late Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. 1897. Crescent Book-House, Mexico, Mo.

distinguished and honored minister of the Gospel. To our certain knowledge he voices the sentiments of a school. (But he knows nothing of the matter of which he spoke, never having learned this though a distinguished student in other branches). Again, men who were educated thirty or forty years ago tell us not only that a knowledge of mental and moral philosophy was necessary in order to graduation with the degree of Bachelor of Arts degree in any reputable college ; but tell us, also, that a vast deal more of this study was then required than is covered by the present undergraduate classes in the same study. It would be easy to illustrate these statements by pointing to individual cases, but such illustrations might seem invidious.

We are happy to say that we believe that the tide is turning ; that the recognition of the importance of the study of mental and moral philosophy is once again beginning to prevail. One need have no great sagacity in order to prophesy safely that this recognition will soon come. The enemies of God's truth will drive the church ever anew to search for a sound psychology that it may the more successfully thereby defend the truth.

Nor is a sound philosophy needed solely in order to defend the truth. It is needed in order to its correct and lucid exposition. Some parts of Scripture can hardly be adequately explained without a sound psychology, E. g. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Dr. John A. Broadus did well to quote with approval from another worthy thinker the words, "Study Butler's Analogy and preach to the negroes." It is a preacher's duty to be exercising himself always to think deeply and accurately and yet to express himself so that the simplest intelligence may understand him.

If the preacher needs a knowledge of philosophy in general it is particularly true that he should have an acquaintance with Practical Philosophy. Given two men with the very same practical psychology it is logically impossible for one of them to become a Calvinist and the other an Arminian, while they unitedly hold the same psychology. Arminianism has spread widely. It has made great inroads among Calvinists. This is evidenced not only in the open converts to the Arminian system, but in the changes so often proposed and frequently made in the creeds of hitherto Calvinistic bodies. The key to the correct solution of the problem between Ar-

minianism and Calvinists is the proper conception of the active powers of man. Both parties then should study the feelings of man, active and passive, and the power of volition. They should aim to reach a practical psychology at once, common sense, true and Biblical. Both parties should make this study one; that it may open the door leading to the truth; the other, that it may defend properly and propagate the truth.

Again, false ethical theories have such a currency in almost every age, and especially in our own, that all who are to be educators of the public conscience or of the conscience of the church, ought to be grounded in the correct theory of conduct and life. They ought to know that this is the theory approved at once of God and the soundest human philosophy. It would be preposterous to take any other view. It needs no arguing to make the intelligent reader see that the study of Practical philosophy is of fundamental importance to all who will take considerable part in moulding the common mind. The welfare of church and state demand it.

Every text-book from a competent hand, on this subject, should therefore be hailed with joy. It may be taken as a sign that our teachers are not dead to this important part of their work.

Dr. Dabney, is perhaps, better fitted to make such a book as we need on this subject than any other man within our bounds. Nor do we know of one better fitted anywhere. His original talent for psychologic insight, his keen power of analysis, his constructive genius, his unswerving adherence to the truth as he sees it, his almost absolute fearlessness of man in saying what he thinks, his caution against novelties until he has tried them by all possible criteria, his reverential and thorough devotion to God's psychology of man as given in the Scriptures, his exegetical ability to get at that divine philosophy of man—his long years of active and powerful thinking on these subjects—all these things make us welcome with peculiar pleasure the last great work of the teacher of our church.

On our own part there was another reason why we desired the publication of this book. We had read and studied it in the manuscript. We had done it twice over from beginning to end; and had arisen from the study with the conviction that it was the ablest work on the subject and the justest that we knew of.

In this volume entitled "Practical Psychology," there are *four* books. In the first book we have the "Psychology of the Feelings" discussed. In the second book we have a discussion of the "Will." In the third book we have a discussion of the various "Ethical Theories," the establishment of the true theory, and a discussion as to the extent of moral obligation. In the fourth book we have "Applied Ethics."

It thus appears that this book covers the most important part of Philosophy—the part most important for preachers, teachers, and all others who are to shape the common life.

That it would prove a blessing wherever taught, if adopted as a text-book in all the colleges of the land, we have no shadow of doubt. And I believe a *large* use *should be made* of it in all those colleges in any way supported by our own church.

The author's method is about what those who know Dr. Dabney through his previous works might be led from that knowledge to expect. He will look all around a teaching. He will test it by its consequences. He still believes that the tree may be known by its fruits. Like Sampson, he is somewhat indifferent as to the kinds of weapons he uses in offensive warfare—now the jaw-bone of an ass and now the huge pillars of the temple.

One thing in this new work will make it more welcome to the young reader. It abounds in illustrations and is in all respects more popularly and simply put than most of Dr. Dabney's previous works.

Sincere and hearty thanks are due Rev. S. B. Ervine for effecting this publication.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

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