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THE
S E R M O N,
DELIVERED AT
THE INAUGURATION
OF THE
REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.
AS PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY,
IN THE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED, THE
PROFESSOR'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS,
AND
THE CHARGE
TO
THE PROFESSOR AND STUDENTS.

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1812.

Extract from the minutes of the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, at Princeton, August 12th, 1812.

THE Directors of the Theological Seminary, desirous of making known to the christian public the views and designs with which the Institution under their care has been founded, and is now open for the reception of pupils; and believing that these views and designs cannot be better explained, than by the publication of the Discourses this day delivered, at the Inauguration of the first Professor:

Resolved, that the thanks of this board be given to the Directors and Professor who delivered those Discourses, and that they be requested to furnish copies for the press.

Dr. Romeyn and Mr. Zachariah Lewis were appointed a committee to superintend the printing, distribution, and sale of the impression.

A true extract,

JOHN Mc DOWELL, *Sec'ry.*

THE
DUTY OF THE CHURCH
TO TAKE MEASURES FOR PROVIDING
AN ABLE AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY:
A
SERMON,
DELIVERED AT PRINCETON, AUGUST 12, 1812,
AT THE
INAUGURATION
OF THE
REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D.D.
AS PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY,
IN THE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.
BY
SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN WALL-STREET, NEW-YORK:

THE
DUTY OF THE CHURCH,
&c.

—♦—
2 TIM. ii. 2.

And the things which thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

THE apostle *Paul* received both his knowledge of the Gospel, and his commission to preach it, immediately from the great Head of the church. Yet, notwithstanding the extraordinary circumstances which attended his theological instruction, and his official investiture, that *all things might be done decently and in order*, he submitted to *the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*, before he went forth on his great mission to the gentiles. In like manner, *Timothy*, his *own son in the faith*, to whom the exhortation before us is addressed, was set apart to the work of the holy ministry, by *the Presbytery*, in which body, on that occasion, the Apostle himself seems to have presided*. *Timothy* was now at *Ephesus*; and being the most active

* Compare 1 Tim. iv. 14. with 2 Tim. i. 6.

and influential member of the Presbytery which was constituted in that part of the church, his spiritual father directed to him, as such, and in him to the church in all succeeding times, the rules and instructions contained in the Epistles which bear his name. Among these we find the passage which has just been read: *And the things which thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

It is impossible, within the limits of a single discourse, to do justice to a portion of scripture replete with such various and important matter, as the slightest attention will discover in this text. Of course, much of what properly belongs to its illustration, must be either wholly omitted, or very briefly noticed, on the present occasion. That the Christian Ministry is an institution of Jesus Christ; that this institution is essential, not only to the well-being, but also to the very existence of the church, as an organized body; that Christ has promised that there shall always be a succession of ministers in his church, to the end of the world; and that none have a right to enter on the appropriate functions of this sacred office, without having that right formally and officially "committed" to them, by men who are themselves already in the same office; are great, elementary principles of ecclesiastical order, which are all fair-

ly implied in the passage before us ; but which, I trust, it is not necessary for me to attempt either to establish or to illustrate before this audience. They are so plainly laid down in scripture, and so evidently reasonable in themselves, that I shall, at present, take them for granted.

Neither will it be deemed necessary, at present, to dwell on the numerous and important *benefits* of an able and faithful ministry. It may be said, without exaggeration, that every interest of man is involved in this blessing. The order, comfort, and edification of the church ; the progress in knowledge, the growth in grace, and the consolation of individual believers ; the regularity, peace, polish, and strength of civil society ; the extension of intellectual and moral cultivation ; the glory of God ; and the eternal welfare of men ; are among the great benefits which an able and faithful ministry is, ordinarily, the means of promoting ; and which, without such a ministry, we cannot hope to attain, at least in any considerable degree. If it be acknowledged that the sanctions of religion exert a mighty, and most benign influence on the order and happiness of society ; if the observance of the christian sabbath be as really a blessing to the world as it is to the church ; if the solemnities of public worship, be a source of moral and temporal benefit to millions, who give no evidence of a saving acquaintance with the power of the

Gospel ; if the weekly instructions of the sanctuary have a native tendency to enlighten, refine, and restrain, those whom they are not the means of converting ; and if it please God *by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* ; then, it is evident, that an able and faithful ministry, next to the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, is the greatest benefit that can be conferred upon a people. And if these great institutions of heaven, are likely, other things being equal, to be beneficial, in proportion to the clearness, the force, the wisdom, and the fidelity with which they are exhibited, as both common sense and the word of God evidently dictate ; then it is plain, that the *more* able and the *more* faithful that ministry, with which any people is blessed, the more extensive and important are likely to be the benefits resulting from it, both to the church and the world. The father of a family, as well as the professor of religion, has reason to desire the attainment of such a ministry. The patriot, as well as the christian, ought earnestly to wish, and be ready to contribute his aid, that the church may obey the precept of her head and Lord : *the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

I say, that the CHURCH may obey this divine precept ; for it is, undoubtedly, a mistake, and a very grievous mistake, to imagine, as many seem to imagine, that precepts of the kind before us, are

addressed to ministers alone. It is freely granted, that ministers are the appointed agents for training up those who are to succeed them in this holy vocation; and for imparting to them the official powers, which they have themselves received. Yet it is, unquestionably, in the *name*, and as the constituted *executive* and *organ* of that part of the church which they represent, that they perform this service. If, therefore, as I take for granted all will allow, the design of the precept before us did not cease with *Timothy*: if both its reason and its obligation be permanent; then the church of Christ, at this hour, is to consider it as directed to her. It is the Church that is bound to take order, that *what she has received be committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,*

The doctrine of our text, then, is, **THAT IT IS THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN ALL AGES, TO TAKE MEASURES FOR PROVIDING AN ABLE AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY.**

The great **FACT**, that this **IS** the duty of the Church, I shall consider as sufficiently established by the plain and unequivocal precept before us; and shall employ the time that remains for the present discourse, in inquiring,

What we are to understand by an able and faithful Ministry? And,

What are the means which the Church is bound to employ for providing such a Ministry?

I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY AN ABLE AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY?

It is a ministry, at once *qualified* and *disposed* to perform, with enlightened and unwearied assiduity, all the duties, whether of instruction, of defence, or of discipline, which belong to ambassadors of Christ, to pastors and rulers in his church.

This general character implies **PIETY, TALENTS, LEARNING, and DILIGENCE.**

1. The *first* requisite to form a faithful and able minister, is **PIETY.** By this I mean, that he be a regenerated man; that he have a living faith in that Saviour whom he preaches to others; that the love of Christ habitually constrain him; that he have himself walked in those paths of humility, self-denial, and holy communion with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, in which it is the business of his life to endeavour to lead his fellow-men.

I shall not now speak of the necessity of piety, to a minister's personal salvation; nor of its inestimable importance to his personal comfort. I shall not dwell on the irksomeness, nay, the intolerable

drudgery, of labouring in a vocation in which the heart does not go along ; nor on the painful misgivings which must ever attend preaching an unknown Saviour, and recommending untasted hopes and joys. Neither shall I attempt to describe, tremendous and overwhelming as it is, the aggravated doom of that man, who, from the heights of this sacred office, shall sink into the abyss of the damned ; who, *after having preached to others, shall himself become a cast-away**. But my object is, to show the importance, and the necessity, of this best of all attainments, in order to *qualify* any man for discharging the duties of the ministerial office. It is to show, that, without piety, he cannot be an *able* minister. He cannot be *a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each his portion in due season†*.

How can a man who knows only the theory of religion, undertake to be a practical guide in spiritual things? How can he adapt his instructions to all the varieties of christian experience? How can he direct the awakened, the inquiring, the tempted, and the doubting? How can he feed the sheep and the lambs of Christ? How can he sympathize with mourners in Zion? How can he comfort others with those consolations

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

† 2 Tim. ii. 15.

wherewith he himself has never been comforted of God? He cannot possibly perform, as he ought, any of these duties, and yet they are the most precious and interesting parts of the ministerial work. However gigantic his intellectual powers; however deep, and various, and accurate his learning, he is not *able*, in relation to any of these points, to *teach others*, seeing he is not taught himself. If he make the attempt, it will be *the blind leading the blind*; and of this, unerring wisdom has told us the consequence*. It were rash, indeed, and unwarranted, to say, that a man who knows nothing of the power of godliness, may not be employed, by a sovereign God, as the means of saving benefit to others. God undoubtedly may, and probably sometimes does, “by way of miracle, raise a man to life by the bones of a dead prophet†.” He may, and, there is reason to believe sometimes does, “honour his own word so far as to make it effectual to salvation, even when it falls from unhallowed lips.” The ministry even of *Judas Iscariot* was, probably, not without its benefit to the church of Christ. But such a result is not, in ordinary cases, and certainly not in any considerable degree, to be expected. When unsanctified ministers are introduced into the church, we may generally expect them to prove, not only an offence to God, but also a curse to his people. Piety, orthodoxy, practical

* *Matt.* xi. 15.† *2 Kings* xiii. 21.

holiness, and all the spiritual glories of *the household of faith*, will commonly be found to decline in proportion to the number and influence of these enemies in disguise.

And here I cannot help bearing testimony against what appears to me a dangerous mistake; which, though it may not be common, yet sometimes occurs among parents and guardians of the more serious class. I mean the mistake of *destining* young persons to the Gospel Ministry, from a very early period of life, before they can be supposed, from any enlightened view of the subject, to concur in the choice themselves; and before they give any satisfactory evidence of vital piety.—Brethren, I venerate the parent who desires, and daily prays, that it may please God to prepare and dispose his child, to serve him in *the ministry of reconciliation*. Nay, I think that parent worthy of the thanks of every friend to religion, who solemnly devotes his child, even from the earliest period of life, to the service of the church, and avowedly conducts every part of his education with a view to this great object; provided the original consecration, and every subsequent arrangement, be made on the condition, carefully and frequently *expressed*, as well as *implied*, that God shall be pleased to sanction and accept the offering, by imparting his grace, and giving a heart to love, and desire the sacred work. But there is a wide difference be-

tween this, and resolving that a particular son shall be a minister, in the same manner, and on the same principles, as another is devoted to the medical profession, or to the bar, as a respectable employment in life ; without recognizing vital piety, and the deliberate choice of the ministry, from religious motives, as indispensable qualifications. This kind of destination to the sacred office, is as dangerous as it is unwarranted. Let the christian parent, however solemnly he may have devoted his child to the work of the ministry, and however fondly he may have anticipated his entrance on that blessed work ; if he find, at the proper age for deciding the question, no comfortable evidence of a heart regenerated, and governed by the spirit of grace ; let him deliberately advise ;—though his heart be wrung with anguish by the sacrifice ;—let him deliberately advise the choice of another profession. When young men begin to enter the gospel ministry, because they were early destined to the office ; because it is a respectable profession ; or because they wish to gratify parents and friends ; rather than because they love the office, and its work, and have reason to hope that God has been pleased to *call them by his grace, and reveal his Son in them** ; we may consider the ministry as in a fair way to be made, in fact, a *secular* employment,

* Gal. i. 15, 16.

and the church a prostituted theatre for the schemes and ambition of worldly men.

So deeply and vitally important is piety in forming a faithful and able ministry; and so often has it appeared to be forgotten, or, at least, undervalued, amidst the brilliancy of more splendid accomplishments; that there cannot be too strict a guard placed on this point, both by public sentiment, and by ministerial fidelity. Many very excellent men, indeed, have felt a jealousy of Theological Seminaries, as such, as if they were calculated for training up learned and eloquent, rather than pious ministers. Though I believe that this jealousy has been sometimes indulged unjustly, and often carried to an unwise and mischievous extreme; and though there appears to me no other ground for it, than the melancholy fact, that the best human institutions are liable to perversion and degeneracy; yet I cannot find in my heart to condemn it altogether. Nay, I trust that a portion of it will always be kept alive, as a guard, under God, against the evil which it deprecates. For I persuade myself that every minister of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States, is ready to adopt the language, with a little variation, of that great and excellent man, who, for near thirty years, adorned the American Church, and the presidential chair of this College. "Accursed be all that learning which sets itself in opposition to

“ vital piety ! Accursed be all that learning which
 “ disguises, or is ashamed of vital piety ! Accurs-
 “ ed be all that learning, which attempts to fill the
 “ place, or to supersede the honours, of vital piety !
 “ Nay, accursed be all that learning, which is not
 “ made subservient to the promotion and the glory
 “ of vital piety !*”

But piety, though it hold the first place among essential qualifications here, is not *all* that is necessary. It is not every pious man, nay, not every fervently pious man, that is qualified to be a minister, and far less an *able* minister. † Another essential requisite to form the character of such a minister, is,

2. TALENTS. By which I mean, not that every able minister must, of necessity, be a *man of genius* ; but that he must be a man of *good sense* ; of *native discernment* and *discretion* ; in other words, of a *sound respectable natural understanding*.

When our blessed Lord was about to send forth his first ministers, he said unto them ; *Be ye wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves* †. And, truly, there is no employment under heaven, in which

* See *Witherspoon's Sermon on glorying in the cross of Christ.*

† *Matt. x. 16.*

wisdom, practical wisdom, is so important, or rather, so imperiously and indispensably demanded, as in the *ministry of reconciliation*. A man of a weak and childish mind, though he were pious as *Gabriel*, can never make an able minister, and he ought never to be invested with the office at all: for with respect to a large portion of its duties, he is utterly unqualified to perform them; and he is in constant danger of rendering both himself and his office contemptible.

No reasonable man would require proof to convince him, that good sense is essential to form an able physician, an able advocate at the bar, or an able ambassador at a foreign court. Nor would any prudent man entrust his property, his life, or the interests of his country, to one who did not bear this character. And can it be necessary to employ argument, to show that interests, in comparison with which, worldly property, the health of the body, and even the temporal prosperity of nations, are all little things, ought not to be committed to any other than a man of sound and respectable understanding? Alas! if ecclesiastical judicatories had not frequently acted, as if this were far from being a settled point, it were almost an insult to my audience to speak of it as a subject admitting of a question.

Though a minister concentrated in himself all

the piety, and all the learning, of the christian church; yet if he had not at least a *decent stock* of *good sense*, for directing and applying his other qualifications, he would be worse than useless. Upon good sense depends all that is dignified, prudent, conciliatory, and respectable in private deportment; and all that is judicious, seasonable, and calculated to edify, in public ministration. The methods to be employed for *winning souls*, are so many and various, according to the taste, prejudices, habits, and stations of men: a constant regard to time, place, circumstances, and character, is so essential, if we desire to profit those whom we address: and some tolerable medium of deportment, between moroseness and levity, reserve and tattling, bigotry and latitudinarianism, lukewarmness and enthusiasm, is so indispensable to public usefulness, that the man who lacks a respectable share of discernment and prudence, had better, far better, be in any other profession than that of a minister*. An *able* minister he cannot possibly be. Neither will any thing short of a sound judgment, a native perception of what is fit and proper, or otherwise, preserve any man who is set to teach and to rule in the church, without a miracle, from those

* Though a *christian* would have expressed himself in different language, there is much weight in the maxim, of the heathen satyrist, *Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia.*
Juv.

perversions of scripture; those ludicrous absurdities; and those effusions of drivelling childishness, which are calculated to bring the ministry and the bible into contempt.

3. A third requisite to an able and faithful ministry, is **COMPETENT KNOWLEDGE**. Without this, both piety and talents united are inadequate to the official work. Nay, without cultivation and discipline; without a competent store of facts and principles, to regulate the mind, the stronger the talents, the more likely are they to lead their possessor astray, and to become the instruments of mischief, both to himself and the church.

The first ministers of the gospel were divinely inspired; and, of course, had no need of acquiring knowledge by the ordinary methods. They were put in possession by miracle, and perhaps in a single hour, of that information, which, now, can only be gained by years of laborious study*. It were well if this fact were remembered and weighed by those who plead, that, as the gospel was first preached by *fishermen* and *tax-gatherers*, so it may be as well

* There is no intention here to exclude daily, or frequent *conversations* with our Lord, as one important means of instruction which the apostles enjoyed. This, however, though not, strictly speaking, a *miraculous* mode of acquiring knowledge, was yet wholly *extraordinary*.

preached, at the present day, by persons of fervent piety, and plain sense, who have never enjoyed any greater advantages of scholastic learning, than the apostles did. The supposed fact, which these vain and ignorant pleaders assume, is utterly unfounded. The apostles were *not* an illiterate ministry. They were the soundest, and best informed divines that ever adorned the christian church. So indispensable did it appear to infinite wisdom, that they should be such, that they were thus accomplished by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And we have reason to believe, that men, before unlearned, were chosen to be the subjects of this inspiration, in preference to others, that the miracle might be the more apparent; that it might be the more clearly seen that *the excellency of the power was of God, and not of man**. Let this inspiration, confirmed as it then was by miracle, be now produced, and we will acknowledge it as more than an adequate substitute for the ordinary method of acquiring knowledge, by books and study.

But if, as we all allow, the age of inspiration and of miracle be long since past; and if it be still necessary, notwithstanding, that the preachers of the gospel possess, substantially, the same knowledge that the apostles had; then, undoubtedly, it is to be acquired in a different way from theirs, that

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

is, by the diligent use of ordinary means. If ministers must be *apt to teach*, as the Spirit of God has declared*, they ought to be *capable* of teaching. If the *priest's lips* ought to *keep knowledge*†, he certainly ought to *possess* knowledge. And if *Timothy*, though he lived in the days of inspiration, and was the immediate and favourite disciple of an inspired man, was yet enjoined, by that very inspired man, to *give himself to reading*, as well as to *exhortation*; to *meditate upon these things*, and to *give himself wholly to them*, that his *profiting might appear to all*‡; how much more necessary are similar means of acquiring knowledge, to those who are called to labours of the same nature, and quite as arduous, without possessing the same advantages!

But what *kind*, and what *degree* of intellectual cultivation, and of acquired knowledge, may be considered as necessary to form an able minister of Jesus Christ? That we may give a more enlightened answer to this question, let us inquire, what such a minister is called, and must be qualified, to perform? He is, then, to be ready, on all occasions, to explain the scriptures. This is his first and chief work. That is, not merely to state and support the more simple and elementary doctrine of the gospel;

* 1 *Tim.* iii. 2. and 2 *Tim.* ii. 24.

† *Malachi* ii. 7.

‡ 1 *Tim.* iv. 13. 15.

but also to elucidate with clearness the various parts of the sacred volume, whether doctrinal, historical, typical, prophetic, or practical. He is to be ready to rectify erroneous translations of sacred scripture; to reconcile seeming contradictions; to clear up real obscurities; to illustrate the force and beauty of allusions to ancient customs and manners; and, in general, to explain the word of God, as one who has made it the object of his deep and successful study. He is *set for the defence of the gospel**; and, therefore, must be qualified to answer the objections of infidels; to repel the insinuations and cavils of sceptics; to detect, expose, and refute the ever varying forms of heresy; and to give notice, and *stand in the breach*, when men, ever so covertly or artfully, depart from *the faith once delivered to the saints*†. He is to be ready to solve the doubts, and satisfy the scruples of conscientious believers; to give instruction to the numerous classes of respectful and serious inquirers; to *reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine*‡. He is to preach the gospel with plainness, dignity, clearness, force, and solemnity. And, finally, he is to perform his part in the judicatories of the church, where candidates for the holy ministry are examined and their qualifications ascertained; where a constant inspection is main-

* *Philip. i. 17.*† *Jude 3.*‡ *2 Tim. iv. 2.*

taind over the faith and order of the church ; where the general interests of Zion are discussed and decided ; and in conducting the affairs of which, legislative, judicial, and executive proceedings are all combined.

This is but a very brief and imperfect sketch of what a minister is called to perform. Now, it is evident that, in order to accomplish all this, with even tolerable ability, a man must be furnished with a large amount of knowledge. “ He must,” (and on this subject I am happy in being able to fortify myself with the judgment, and to employ, for the most part, the language, of the General Assembly of our church,) “ he must be well skilled “ in the *original languages* of the holy Scriptures. “ He must be versed in *Jewish and Christian anti-* “ *quities*. He must have a competent acquaint- “ ance with *Ancient Geography, and Oriental Cus-* “ *toms*. He must have read and digested the “ principal arguments and writings, relative to “ what has been called the *Deistical controversy*. “ He must have studied, carefully and correctly, “ *Natural Theology*, together with *Didactic, Po-* “ *lemic, and Casuistic Divinity* ; and be able to “ support the doctrines of the Gospel, by a ready, “ pertinent, and abundant quotation of *Scripture* “ *texts* for that purpose. He must have a consi- “ derable acquaintance with general *History* and “ *Chronology* ; and a particular acquaintance with

“ the *history of the christian Church*. He must
 “ have studied attentively the duties of the *Pasto-*
 “ *ral Office*; the form of *Church government* au-
 “ thorized by the scriptures; and the administra-
 “ tion of it as practised in the protestant churches*.”

He must have become well versed in *Moral Philo-*
sophy, as an important auxiliary in studying man,
 his constitution, the powers and exercises of his
 depraved and sanctified nature, and his duties
 thence arising. To all these, he must add, a re-
 spectable share of knowledge, in *general Grammar*;
 in *Logic*, *Metaphysics*, *Natural Philosophy*, *Ma-*
thematical Science, *Geography*, *Natural History*,
 and *polite Literature*.

Several of these branches of learning are, in-
 deed, only *auxiliary* to the main body, if I may so
 express it, of ministerial erudition. But they are
 important auxiliaries. No man, it is true, can be
 a complete master of them all; and it were crimi-
 nal in a minister to attempt so much. The time
 requisite for this, must be taken from more impor-
 tant employments. Of some of these departments
 of knowledge, general views are sufficient; and of
 others, perhaps, an acquaintance with nomencla-
 tures and first principles ought to satisfy the theo-
 logical pupil. But so much of them ought to be ac-

* *Constitution of the Theological Seminary of the Presby-*
terian Church, Article 4th.

quired, as may enable their possessor the better to understand the scriptures, and the better to defend the gospel. I repeat it, every branch of knowledge is helpful and desirable to the christian minister.— Not to enable him to *shine*, as a *man of learning*: this were infinitely beneath the aim of an ambassador of Christ: but to make him a more accomplished and useful teacher of others. For it is certain that the more he attains of real, solid science, provided it be sanctified science, the more clearly will he be able to explain the sacred volume, and the more wisely and forcibly to preach that *Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**.

4. Once more, it enters into the character of a faithful minister, that he is **ACTIVE, DILIGENT** and **PERSEVERING** in the discharge of his multiplied and arduous duties. However fervent his piety; however vigorous his native talents; and however ample his acquired knowledge; yet, if he be timid, indolent, wavering, easily driven from the path of duty, or speedily discouraged in his evangelical labours, he does not answer the apostle's description of *a faithful man*. The minister who is, in any good measure, entitled to this character, is one who carefully studies to know, and to the best of his knowledge, *declares the whole counsel of God*, with-

* Rom. i. 16.

Without fearing the frowns, or courting the smiles, of men ; who shrinks not from any self-denial, labour, or danger to which the will of his Master, and the interests of religion, evidently call him ; who abhors the thought of sitting down in inglorious ease, while thousands are perishing around him ; who does not allow himself to be diverted by secular or minor objects from his grand work ; who is *instant in season, and out of season*, in all the diversified and momentous labours of his holy vocation ; and the object of whose steady exertion, as well as supreme desire, it is, that the church may be built up ; that souls may be saved ; and that *Christ in all things may be glorified**.

Such is a faithful and able minister. A minister fervently pious ; eminently wise, discerning, and prudent ; extensively learned, especially *mighty in the Scriptures* ; abounding and prevalent in prayer ; a bold, energetic, instructive, experimental preacher ; a zealous, affectionate, condescending, laborious pastor ; a friend to revivals of religion ; a firm and persevering contender for the truth ; one, in short, who devotes all his talents, all his learning, all his influence, and all his exertions, to the one grand object, *fulfilling the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus*.

* 1 Peter iv. 11.

Such a minister, to select an example, was the apostle *Paul*. With a heart warmed with the love of Christ; with an understanding vigorous, sound, and comprehensive; and with a store of various and profound knowledge, he went forth to meet and to conciliate the enemies of his divine Master: and in the course of his ministry, he manifested the importance of every qualification with which that Master had furnished him. Let us follow and observe him a little in the discharge of his ministerial labours. “ Now we see him reasoning with “ Pagans, and then remonstrating with Jews: now “ arguing from the law of nature, and then from “ the Old Testament scriptures: now appealing to “ the writings of heathen poets and philosophers, “ and then referring to *the traditions of the fathers*, “ of which he had been *exceedingly zealous*: now “ stating his arguments with all logical exactness, “ and then exposing the sophistry and false learning of his adversaries*:” now pleading with all the majesty and pathos of unrivalled eloquence, upon *Mars-hill*, and before *Felix* and *Agrippa*, and then instructing, from house to house, the young and the aged, with all the tenderness of a father, and all the simplicity and condescension of a babe.— And what was the consequence? With these qualifications, he laboured not only more *abundantly*, but more *successfully*, than all the apostles; and

* *Stennett's Sermon before the Education Society*, p. 12.

has probably been the means of richer blessings to the church and the world, than any other mere man that ever lived.

But you will, perhaps, ask, “ Ought *all* these “ qualifications to be considered as *indispensable* “ for *every* minister? For example, ought no one “ to have the ministry ‘ committed’ to him, unless “ he have acquired, or be in a fair way to attain, “ the *whole* of those literary and scientific accom- “ plishments which have been recounted as desire- “ able?” It is not *necessary*, perhaps it is not *proper*, at present, to give a particular answer to this question. My object has been to describe an *able* and *faithful* ministry. To my description I am not conscious of having added any thing superfluous or unimportant. Such a ministry it ought to be the *aim* and the *endeavour* of the church to train up. Yet, it is certain that under the best administration of ecclesiastical affairs that ever existed, since the days of the apostles, or that is ever likely to exist, all ministers have not been alike *able* and *faithful*: and it is equally certain that cases have occurred in which individuals with furniture for the sacred office inferior to that which is desirable, have been in a considerable degree, both respectable and useful. But still a character something resembling that which has been drawn, ought to be considered as the *proper standard*, and exertions made to attain as near an *approximation* to it, in all cases, as

possible. And after all that can be done, exceptions to a rigid conformity with this standard, will be found in sufficient number, without undertaking to lower the standard itself, in such a manner as to provide for their multiplication. But,

II. WHAT ARE THE MEANS WHICH THE CHURCH IS BOUND TO EMPLOY, FOR PROVIDING SUCH A MINISTRY? This question was assigned as the second subject of inquiry.

And here, it is perfectly manifest, that the church can neither *impart grace*, nor *create talents*. She can neither *make men pious*, nor give them *intellectual powers*. But is there, therefore, nothing that *can* be done, or that *ought* to be done by her? Yes, brethren, there is much to be done. Though Jehovah the Saviour has *the government upon his shoulder*, his kingdom is a kingdom of means; and He is not to be expected to work miracles to supply our lack of exertion. If, therefore, the church omit to employ the means which her King and Head has put within her power, for the attainment of a given object, both the *sin* and the *disgrace* of failing to attain that object, will lie at her own door.

What, then, are the means which the church is bound to employ for providing an able and faithful ministry? They are such as these: looking for, and carefully **SELECTING** young men of piety and

talents, for the work of the ministry; providing **FUNDS**, for the temporary support of those who may stand in need of such aid; furnishing a **SEMINARY**, in which the most ample means of instruction may be found; and, having done all this, to guard, by her **JUDICATORIES**, the entrance into the sacred office, with incessant vigilance,

1. The Church is bound, with a vigilant eye, to search for, and carefully to select, from among the young men within her bosom, those who are endowed with piety and talents, whenever she can find these qualifications united. Piety is humble and retiring; and talents, especially of the kind best adapted to the great work of the ministry, are modest and unobtrusive. They require, at least in many instances, to be sought out, encouraged, and brought forward. And how, and by whom, is this to be done? The children of the church are, if I may so express it, *the church's property*. She has a right to the services of the best of them. And as it is the part, both of *wisdom* and *affection*, in parents according to the flesh, to attend with vigilance to the different capacities and acquirements of their children, and to select for them, as far as possible, corresponding employments; so it is obviously incumbent on the Church, the moral parent of all the youth within her jurisdiction, to direct especial attention to such of them as may be fitted to serve her in the holy ministry. And it may be

asserted, without fear of contradiction, that whenever young men are found, who unite *fervent piety*, with *talents* adapted to the office, it is the duty of such to seek the gospel ministry; and it is the duty of the church to single them out, to bring them forward, and to endeavour to give them all that preparation, which depends on human means, for the service of the sanctuary.

2. The church is bound to *provide funds for the partial or entire support of those who need this kind of aid, while they are preparing for the work of the ministry.* Some of the most promising candidates for this holy work have not the means of supporting themselves, while they withdraw from the world, and give up its emoluments, for the purpose of becoming qualified to serve God in the Gospel of his Son. These persons must either abandon their sacred enterprise altogether, or receive, from some other source, adequate aid. And from what source can they so properly receive it, as from their moral parent, the Church? Nature, reason, equity, parental affection,—all conspire in pointing to this parent, as the most suitable provider. The aid which flows only from the hand of individual and occasional bounty, may be withdrawn, or grudgingly continued: but the church can never be weary, as long as ability is given her, of providing for her beloved children. The aid which individuals, as such, furnish, may excite, in

delicate minds, a painful sense of dependence : but children *ought* to feel, *can* feel, no pain in receiving from the hand of parental affection.

Nor is it any valid objection to the furnishing of this aid, that the objects of it may not always be found, when their character shall be completely developed, either ornaments to the church, or worthy of so much exertion and expenditure. As well might parents according to the flesh decline to provide for the support and education of their children, in early life, lest peradventure they might afterwards prove neither a comfort nor an honour to them. In this respect every faithful parent considers himself as bound, in duty and affection, to take all possible pains for promoting the welfare of his offspring, and having done so, to leave the event with God.

Neither ought the church to consider this provision as a burden, or imagine that, in making it, she confers a favour. It is as clearly her duty—a duty which she as really owes both to her Master and herself, as the ordinary provision which she makes for the support of the word and ordinances. Or rather, it is to be lamented that she has not been accustomed always to consider it, as an essential part of her ordinary provision for the maintenance of the means of grace.

3. A further, and the last mean which I shall mention, which the church is bound to employ for providing an able and faithful ministry, is, *furnishing a Seminary in which the candidates for this office may receive the most appropriate and complete instruction, which she has it in her power to give.* In vain are young men of fervent piety, and the best talents, sought after and discovered; and in vain are funds provided for their support, while preparing for the ministry, unless pure and ample fountains of knowledge are opened to them, and unless competent guides are assigned, to direct them in drinking at those fountains. This, however, is so plain, so self-evident, that I need not enlarge upon its proof.

But perhaps it may be supposed by some, that there is no good reason why these means of education should be provided by the Church, as such. It may be imagined, that they will be as likely to be provided, and as well provided, by private instructors, as by public Seminaries. But all reason, and all experience, pronounce a different judgment, and assign, as the ground of their decision, such considerations as these.

First, when the Church herself provides a Seminary for the instruction of her own candidates for the ministry, she can at all times inspect and regulate the course of their education; can see that it

be sound, thorough, and faithful; can direct and control the instructors; can correct such errors, and make such improvements in her plans of instruction, as the counsels of the whole body may discover. Whereas, if all be left to individual discretion, the preparation for the service of the church may be in the highest degree defective, or ill-judged, not to say unsound, without the church being able effectually to interpose her correcting hand.

Again; when the Church herself takes the instruction of her candidates into her own hands, she can furnish a more extensive, accurate, and complete course of instruction than can be supposed to be, ordinarily, within the reach of detached individuals. In erecting and endowing a Seminary, she can select the *best instructors* out of her whole body. She can give her pupils the benefit of the *whole time*, and the *undivided exertions*, of these instructors. Instead of having all the branches of knowledge, to which the theological student applies himself, taught by a single master, she can *divide* the task of instruction, among several competent teachers, in such a manner as to admit of each doing full justice both to his pupils and himself. She can form one ample *Library*, by which a given number of students may be much better accommodated, when collected together, and having access to it in common, than if the same amount of

books were divided into a corresponding number of smaller libraries. And she can digest, and gradually improve a system of instruction, which shall be the result of combined wisdom, learning, and experience. Whereas those candidates for the sacred office, who commit themselves to the care of individual ministers, selected according to the convenience or the caprice of each pupil, must, in many cases, at least, be under the guidance of instructors who have neither the talents, the learning, nor the leisure to do them justice; and who have not even a tolerable collection of books, to supply the lack of their own furniture as teachers.

Further; when the Church herself provides the means of instruction for her own ministry, at a public seminary, she will, of course, be furnished with ministers who have enjoyed, in some measure, a *uniform course of education*; who have derived their knowledge from the same masters, and the same approved fountains, and who may, therefore, be expected to agree in their views of evangelical truth and order. There will thus be the most effectual provision made, speaking after the manner of men, for promoting the *unity* and *peace* of the church. Whereas, if every candidate for the holy ministry, be instructed by a different master, each of whom may be supposed to have his peculiarities of expression and opinion, especially about minor points of doctrine and discipline, the harmony of our

ecclesiastical judicatories will gradually be impaired; and strife, and perhaps eventually, schism, may be expected to arise in our growing and happy church.

It is important to add, that when the Church provides for educating a number of candidates for the ministry at the same seminary, these candidates themselves may be expected to be of essential service to each other. Numbers being engaged together in the same studies, will naturally excite the principle of emulation. *As iron sharpeneth iron,* so the amicable competition, and daily intercourse of pious students, can scarcely fail of leading to closer and more persevering application; to deeper research; to richer acquirements; and to a more indelible impression of that which is learned, upon their minds, than can be expected to take place in solitary study.

Nor is it by any means unworthy of notice, that, when the ministers of a church are generally trained up at the same seminary, they are naturally led to form *early friendships*, which bind them together to the end of life, and which are productive of that mutual confidence and assistance, which can scarcely fail of shedding a benign influence on their personal enjoyment, and their official comfort and usefulness. These early friendships may also be expected to add another impulse to a sense of duty,

in annually drawing ministers from a distance to meet each other in the higher judicatories of the church; and, which is scarcely less important, to facilitate and promote that mutual consultation, respecting plans of research, and new and interesting publications, which is, at once, among the safeguards, as well as pleasures, of theological authorship.

These, brethren, are some of the considerations which call upon every church, to erect, and to support with vigour and efficiency, a Theological Seminary for the training of her ministry. If she desires to augment the number of her ministers; if she wishes their preparation for the sacred office to be the best in her power to give, and at the least possible expense; if she desires that they may be a holy phalanx, united in the same great views of doctrine and discipline, and adhering with uniformity and with cordial affection to her public standards; if she deprecates the melancholy spectacle of a heterogeneous, divided, and distracted ministry: and finally, if she wishes her ministers to be educated under circumstances most favourable to their acting in after life, as a band of brethren, united in friendship as well as in sentiment; then let her take measures for training them up under her own eye, and control; under the same teachers; in the same course of study; and under all those advantages of early intercourse, and af-

fectionate competition, which attend a public seminary.

In favour of all this reasoning, the best experience, and the general practice of the church, in different ages, may be confidently urged. “ It has “ been the way of God,” says the pious and learned Dr. *Lightfoot*, “ to instruct his people by a “ studious and learned ministry, ever since he “ gave a written word to instruct them in.” “ Who,” he asks, “ were the standing ministry of *Israel*, all “ the time from the giving of the law, till the captivity in *Babylon*? Not prophets, or inspired “ men; for they were but occasional teachers; but “ the Priests and Levites, who became learned in “ the law by study. *Deuteronomy* xxxiii. 10. “ *Hosea* iv. 6. *Malachi* ii. 7. And for this end, “ they were disposed into forty eight cities, as so “ many universities, where they studied the law together; and from thence were sent out into the “ several synagogues, to teach the people.” They had also, the same writer informs us, “ contributions “ made for the support of these students, while they “ studied in the universities, as well as afterwards “ when they preached in the synagogues.” He tells us further, in another place, “ that there were “ among the Jews, authorized individual teachers, “ of great eminence, who had their *Midrashoth*, or “ *Divinity Schools*, in which they expounded the “ law to their scholars or disciples.” “ Of these

“ Divinity Schools,” he adds, “ there is very frequent mention made among the Jewish writers, more especially of the schools of *Hillel* and *Shammai*. Such a Divinity Professor was *Gama-liel*, at whose feet, the great Apostle of the gentiles received his education*.”

Under the christian dispensation, the same system, in substance, was adopted and continued. At a very early period, there was a seminary of high reputation established in the city of *Alexandria*, in which candidates for the holy ministry were trained up together, and under the ablest instructors, both in divine and human learning; a seminary in which *Pantænus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, and others, taught with high reputation. *Eusebius* and *Jerome* both declare, that this seminary had existed, as a nursery of the church, and had enjoyed a succession of able teachers, from the time of *Mark* the evangelist†. Writers on christian antiquities also assure us that there were seminaries of a similar kind very early established at *Rome*, *Cæsarea*, *Antioch*, and other places‡; and that they were considered as essential to the honour and prosperity of the church.

* *Lightfoot's Works*, vol. I. 357. 574.

† *Euseb* : Lib. v. c. 10. *Hieron.* Oper. i. 105.

‡ See *Bingham's Origines Ecclesiasticæ*. Book III. Chap.

At the period of the reformation, religion and learning revived together. The Reformers were not less eminent for their erudition, than for their piety and zeal. They contended earnestly for an enlightened, as well as a faithful ministry; and, accordingly, almost all the protestant churches, when they found themselves in a situation to admit of the exertion, founded Theological Seminaries, as nurseries for their ministry. This was the case in *Geneva*, in *Scotland*, in *Holland*, in *Germany*, and, with very little exception, throughout reformed christendom. And the *history* of those seminaries, while it certainly demonstrates, that such establishments are capable of being perverted; demonstrates, with equal evidence, that they have been made, and might always, with the divine blessing on a faithful administration, be rendered extensively useful.

And what have the most eminently pious and learned ministers, that ever adorned the American church, thought on this subject? Let yonder venerable walls tell! Yes, brethren, it was because *Tennent* and *Dickinson*, and *Burr*, and *Edwards*, and *Davies*, and *Finley*, and *Blair*, and other champions of the cross, were deeply impressed with the truth, that learning and talents, united with piety, are of the highest importance to the christian ministry, that they laboured and prayed so much for the establishment and support of *Nassau-Hall*.

May their spirit and their opinions revive; and more and more pervade our church, until the dawning of the Millennial Sabbath!

In establishments of this kind, in more recent times, our congregational brethren, in *New-England*, and our brethren of the *Dutch* and *Associate Reformed* churches, have gone before us, and set us noble examples. We have, at length, awoken from our sleep; and with tardy, but, as we hope, with firm, with well-advised, and with heaven-directed steps, have begun to follow them. In the name of Jehovah Jesus, the king of *Zion*, we lift up our banner! May his blessing descend, and rest upon the transaction of this day, as a pledge that he is about to visit our church in his abundant mercy!

4. The last means of providing an able and faithful ministry, on which I shall insist, is *fidelity on the part of the Judicatories of the church in guarding the entrance into the sacred office*. It is our happiness, that, according to the truly apostolic and primitive constitution of our church, the power of licensing candidates, and of setting apart to the work of the holy ministry, is not given to any individual, by whatever name he may be called. Nay, while the church provides a seminary for the instruction of her candidates for the sacred office, she does not give even to the conductors of that seminary, however pious, learned, or venerable, the

right ultimately to judge of the qualifications of those candidates, and to admit or reject them at their pleasure. This is the prerogative of her appropriate judicatories; and the manner in which it is exercised, is all-important. However vigilantly and perseveringly other means for attaining the object proposed, may be employed, if there be a failure here, the most calamitous consequences may be expected. If presbyteries be superficial in their *examinations* of candidates; if they be too ready to lay hands on the *weak*, the *ignorant*, the *erroneous*, or those of *doubtful piety*; or if, for the sake of attaining an occasional purpose, or meeting a temporary difficulty, they at any time suffer the barriers which have been erected for excluding the incompetent or the unworthy, to be removed or trampled down, they are taking the direct course to bring the ministry and religion into contempt.

I know that, on this subject, pleas are often urged which it is extremely difficult to resist. Some good qualities in the candidates; private friendships; an unwillingness to give pain; the scarcity of ministers; and the necessities of the church, are all alternately employed as arguments for the admission of unsuitable characters into the ministry. But it is a most important part of fidelity in the work of the Lord, to oppose and reject every plea of this kind. Private friendships ought not to in-

terfere with a supreme regard to the Redeemer's kingdom. It is better, much better, to inflict pain for a time, on an individual, than to wound the church of Christ. And by introducing into the ministry those who are neither *faithful*, nor *able to teach*, judicatories are so far from supplying the wants of the church, that they rather add to her difficulties, and call her to struggle with new evils. To be *in haste* to multiply and send out unqualified labourers, is to take the most direct method to send a destructive blast on the garden of God, instead of gathering a rich and smiling harvest.

On the other hand, when judicatories, with enlightened vigilance, and fidelity, guard the entrance into the sacred office; when they exert the authority committed to them, to keep out of the ministry, incompetence, heresy, levity, and worldly mindedness; they obey a divine precept; they support the real honour of the gospel ministry; they constrain those who are looking toward that blessed work, to take a higher aim, and to seek for higher attainments; they give the churches *bread instead of a stone, and fish instead of a serpent*; and though they may appear, to those who *make haste*, to be tardy in supplying the public demand for ministers, they are taking one of the most effectual methods, under God, for raising up a *numerous*, as well as an *able and faithful ministry*.

Let us now turn our attention to some practical inferences from the foregoing discussion. And,

1. If the representation which has been given be just, *then our church has been, for a long time, almost entirely, and very criminally, negligent of a great and important duty.* While she has directed much laudable attention to other objects, she has, in a great measure, suffered the most promising means of providing an able and faithful ministry, to take care of themselves. Other churches have also been guilty, in a considerable degree, of similar negligence; a negligence for which, alas! our country mourns; and would mourn much more, if the importance of the subject were understood and appreciated as it ought to be; but **OUR CHURCH HAS BEEN PRE-EMINENTLY GUILTY!** Though among the largest christian denominations in the United States; though possessing, in its individual members, perhaps more wealth than any other; though favoured, in many respects, with ample means for every kind of generous ecclesiastical enterprise; and though often and solemnly warned on the subject; she has yet been among the very last of all the evangelical denominations among us, to commence a course of efficient exertion for raising up a qualified ministry. We have slumbered, and slumbered, until the scarcity of *labourers in our harvest*, has become truly alarming! God grant that we may testify by our future conduct,

that we remember, with unfeigned humiliation, our former negligence; and that we are resolved, as his grace shall enable us, to make amends for it, by redoubled zeal and diligence in time to come!

2. From what has been said, it appears, that *the solemnity to attend on which we are this day assembled, is a matter of cordial and animating congratulation to each other, and to the church of Christ in the United States.* We are convened, under the authority of the General Assembly of our church, to organize a **THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**, and to inaugurate the **FIRST PROFESSOR** in that seminary. Though later, much later, in commencing this establishment than we ought to have been; we trust it is about to commence under the smiles of the great Head of the Church; and that we may confidently regard it as a token for good to the Redeemer's kingdom, Yes, brethren, we have more reason to rejoice, and to felicitate one another, on the establishment of this seminary, than on the achievement of a great national victory, or on making a splendid addition to our national territory. It is the beginning, as we trust, of an extensive and permanent system, from which blessings may flow to millions while we are sleeping in the dust. Let us, then, *rejoice and be exceeding glad*; and in the midst of our joy, let us look up to the Source of blessing, who can cause the walls of our *Zion*

to rise even *in troublous times**. While we congratulate each other, let our petitions ascend, with our praises, to the throne of grace, that the seminary this day established, and, as we verily believe, founded in faith and prayer, may be a fountain, the *streams of which shall make glad the city of our God*; flowing in every direction, and abundantly watering the abodes of *Zion's king*, until all flesh shall taste his love, and see his glory!

3. If what has been said be correct, *then those who are more immediately charged with conducting this seminary, whether as Directors or Professors, ought to consider themselves as honoured with a very solemn and weighty trust.* The design of the supreme Judicatory of our church, in founding this seminary, is nothing less than to train up an **ABLE AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY**; a ministry on whose piety, talents, and learning, the temporal and eternal welfare of thousands, now living, may, speaking after the manner of men, depend; a ministry, whose character may have a commanding influence, in forming the character of others, and they again of those who may successively fill the same office, until the end of time! The design is interesting beyond expression; and the task of those

* War had been declared, by the *United States*, against *Great-Britain*, a few weeks before this discourse was delivered.

who are appointed to carry it into execution, is serious and important to a degree which mortals cannot estimate. When I cast an eye down the ages of eternity, and think how important is the salvation of a single soul; when I recollect how important, of course, the office of a minister of the gospel, who may be the happy instrument of saving many hundreds, or thousands of souls; and when I remember how many and how momentous are the relations, which a Seminary intended solely for training up ministers, bears to all the interests of men, in the life that now is, and especially in that which is to come; I feel as if the task of conducting such a Seminary, had an awfulness of responsibility connected with it, which is enough to make us tremble! O my fathers and brethren! let it never be said of us, on whom this task has fallen, that we take more pains to make polite scholars, eloquent orators, or men of mere learning, than to form *able and faithful ministers of the New Testament*. Let it never be said, that we are more anxious to maintain the literary and scientific honours of the ministry, than we are to promote that honour which consists in being *full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and the instruments of adding much people to the Lord*. The eyes of the church are upon us. The eyes of angels, and, above all, the eyes of the King of Zion, are upon us. May we have grace given us to be faithful!

4. This subject *suggests matter for very serious reflection to the Youth, who are about to enter as students in this seminary, with a view to the gospel ministry.* Behold, my young friends, the high character at which you are called to aim! You have come hither, not that you may prepare to shine; not that you may prepare to amuse men by philosophic discussion, or to astonish them by flights of artificial eloquence: but that, by the blessing of God, upon the use of means, you may become *faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*; that you may become *wise in winning souls to Christ*; that you may prepare to go forth, defending and proclaiming the messages of grace to guilty men, and persuading them *to be reconciled to God.* *Seek to excel.* It is noble to excel. But let it be always *for the edifying of the church.* THIS, my young friends, THIS is the object which is recommended to your sacred emulation. We charge you, in the presence of God, to let all your studies and aims be directed to this grand object. Seek with humble, persevering, prayerful diligence, to be *such ministers as you have heard described*; and you will neither disappoint yourselves, nor the Church of Christ. Seek to be *any thing else*; and you will be a grief and a curse to both. May God the Saviour bless you, and prepare you to be *workmen that need not be ashamed!*

5. From this subject we may derive *powerful*

excitements to young men of piety and talents, to come forward and devote themselves to the Gospel Ministry. We trust no young man will ever think of that holy vocation, until he has first given himself up *a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,* by Jesus Christ. We would not, for any consideration, be accessory to the sin of alluring into the sacred office, those who know nothing of the power of godliness, and who, on the most favourable supposition, can be nothing better than miserable retailers of cold and unproductive speculations. But while we say this, and repeat it, with all the emphasis of which we are capable, we assert, with equal confidence, on the other hand, that wherever fervent piety appears, in any youngman, united with those talents which are adapted to the office of an ambassador of Christ, it is incumbent on their possessor, without delay, to devote himself to the work of the *ministry*. There are only two questions which need be asked concerning any youth on this subject. “ Has he a heart for the work ? “ And has he those native faculties, which are susceptible of the requisite cultivation ? ” If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, I hesitate not to say, that in the present state of the church, it is his duty to seek the ministry. Young men of this College ! have none of you any desire to serve your fellow men, and to serve Christ, in this exalted office ? You have but one short life to live in this world ; and you must, in a very little

time, decide how you will spend that life. “ We confidently pronounce, that it can be spent in no manner so desirable, so noble, so godlike, as in the gospel ministry. If then, you love the Lord Jesus Christ, come—we affectionately invite you to come, and take part with us in the ministry of the grace of God. The example of Christ invites you to come; the tears of bereaved Churches, who can find none to break unto them the bread of life, entreat you to come; the miseries of wandering souls, who find none to lead them to heaven, plead with you to come. Come, then, and take part with us in the labours and rewards of the *ministry of reconciliation!* *”

6. Finally, if the representation which has been given be correct, *then the Church at large ought to consider it as equally their privilege and their duty to support this Seminary.* If one may judge by the language and the conduct of the generality of our church-members, they seem to consider all regard to institutions of this kind, as the province of *ministers* only. They readily grant, that ministers ought to be prompt and willing, to give their time, their labours, and, where they have any, their substance, for this end; but for themselves, they *pray to be excused.* They either contribute nothing to-

* See *Address* of the Presbytery of *New-York*, on educating poor and pious youth for the gospel ministry. 14.

ward the object; or contribute in the most reluctant and sparing manner, as if they were bestowing *a favour*, which they have a perfect right to withhold. My dear brethren, it is difficult to express in adequate terms either the *sin* or the *folly* of such conduct. Seminaries of this kind are to be founded and supported **BY THE CHURCH**, as such. It is **THE CHURCH** that is bound to take order on the subject. It is **THE CHURCH** that is responsible for their establishment and maintenance. And if any of her members, or adherents, when called upon, will not contribute their just portion of aid for this purpose, the Head of the church will require it at their hands. Professing christians! look upon the alarming necessities of the church; upon destitute frontier settlements; upon *several hundred vacant congregations*, earnestly desiring spiritual teachers, but unable to obtain them. Look upon the growing difficulty, with which the most eligible and attractive situations in the church are supplied; and then say whether those who still remain idle can be innocent? Innocent! Their guilt will be greater and more dreadful than can be described. Come, then, brethren, humbled by the past, and animated by the future, rouse from your lethargy, and begin to act in earnest! Your *master* requires it of you! The *aspect of the times* requires it of you! The *cries of the neglected and the perishing* require it of you! Your own privi-

leges and blessings require it of you! Yes, ye who call yourselves Christians! If you love the church to which you profess to belong: if you possess a single spark of the spirit of allegiance to her Divine Head and Lord: nay, if you desire not a *famine of the word of life*; if you desire not the heaviest spiritual judgments to rest upon you, then come forward, and *act*, as well as *speak*, like friends of the Redeemer's kingdom. Come forward, and give your influence, your substance, and your prayers, for *the help of the Lord against the mighty*.*

AMEN!

* *Judges* v. 23.

AN
INAUGURAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE
CHURCH AT PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY,

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE
DIRECTORS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

ON

THE 12th OF AUGUST, 1812.

BY
ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

AN
INAUGURAL DISCOURSE,
&c.



*HIGHLY RESPECTED AND VENERABLE DIRECTORS OF THE
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL; AND OTHER LEARNED AND RES-
PECTABLE AUDITORS, CONVENED ON THE PRESENT SO-
LEMN OCCASION!*

THE institution and commencement of a Theological Seminary, under the patronage and direction of the General Assembly of our church, ought to be a subject of mutual congratulation to all its members. But it cannot be concealed, that the same causes which have operated to render such an institution urgently necessary, have also opposed serious obstacles in the way of carrying it into effect. The deficiency, among us, of that kind and extent of learning requisite to confer dignity and respect, as well as usefulness, on the professor's chair, is too obvious to require remark. But every important institution must have its infancy and growth, before it can arrive at maturity; and however long we might have deferred this undertaking, the same difficulties would probably have met us at its commencement, which we are now obliged to encounter. The sentiments and emotions by which my

own mind is agitated, in consequence of the new and important station in which I find myself placed by the choice of my brethren, and especially, the deep sense which I entertain of my insufficiency for the work, I shall not attempt to express. If the design be of GOD, he will prosper the undertaking, notwithstanding the weakness of the instruments employed in carrying it on ; and will crown our feeble efforts with success. On HIM therefore may our hope and confidence be firmly fixed ; and may ‘ his will be done on earth as in heaven !’

I have selected, as the subject of the discourse now required of me, the words of our LORD, recorded in the 5th Chap. and 39th ver. of the Gospel according to John :

Ἔρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς. *Search the Scriptures.*

The verb here used, signifies, to search with diligence and attention. Its literal meaning appears to be, to pursue any one, by tracing his footsteps. Thus it is employed by *Homer* to express the lion’s* pursuit of the man who had robbed him of his whelps, by his footsteps ; and the dog’s† pursuit of his game, by his track. The precise meaning of the word, therefore, both in its literal and figurative application, is expressed by the English

* *Il.* xviii. line 321.

† *Odys.* xix. l. 436.

word, *investigate*. It may be read, either in the indicative, or in the imperative mood. Doctor *Campbell*, in his new translation of the Gospels, prefers the former, and renders the passage, “*Ye do search the Scriptures ;*” but *Wetstein* and *Parkhurst* consider it to be in the imperative, agreeably to our version : and certainly this rendering gives more point and force to the sentence, “*search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have life, but they are they which testify of me.*”

Although the word, *γραφαῖς*, *scriptures*, is of such general import, as to include writings of any kind ; yet there can be no doubt but what the Scriptures of the Old Testament were here intended. This phrase is used in the New Testament, as we use the word *Bible*, which, though literally signifying any book, yet is now appropriated to designate the volume of inspiration.

The history of the origin of alphabetical writing is involved in considerable obscurity. The first notice which we find of the existence of such an art, is contained in the command given to *Moses*, in the xvii. of *Exodus*, *to write* a certain transaction *in a book** : and soon afterwards, we read that the law was written by the finger of *JEHOVAH*, on the two tables of testimony†. To me, it

* *Exodus* xvii. 14. כתב זאת זכרון בספר † *Exodus* xxxiv.

appears very probable, therefore, that it was about this time a subject of revelation to *Moses*. As a precise pattern of the tabernacle was shown to him in the mount, and as certain persons were inspired with wisdom to fit them for the execution of that work, why may we not suppose that this wonderful art, so necessary for recording the revelations received from God, for the use of posterity, was also made known to *Moses*? One thing is certain; that all the alphabets of the western portion of the globe, and probably those of the eastern also, have had a common origin: and we have no authentic account of the invention of an alphabet by any people; so that whenever this art of writing may have had its origin, I am persuaded it was no invention of man, but a revelation from GOD.

With respect to the antiquity of these writings, I know of none which can bear any competition with the Pentateuch. Some, indeed, have supposed, that some part of the *Vedas* of the Brahmins, was written before the books of *Moses*; but there is no historical evidence on which we can depend in support of this opinion. And we are too well acquainted with the fraudulent pretensions of the *Hindoos* to antiquity, to place any confidence in their assertions. The ultimate opinion of that incomparable scholar, Sir *William Jones*, on this subject, was, that the writings of *Moses* were the

oldest of any in the world*: and a more competent and impartial judge could not easily be found.

As the words of the text are indefinite, they should be considered as imposing an obligation on all sorts of persons, according to their ability and opportunity, to search the scriptures. We cannot help therefore being struck with the impiety, as well as absurdity, of the practice of the Papists, in withholding the scriptures from the people.

Will it be said, that when they misinterpret and pervert them, they should be taken away? But such was the conduct of the persons here addressed by Christ. They were so blinded by prejudice, that they could not perceive in the scriptures, that person; who was the principal subject of them. But does the divine Saviour forbid them the use of the scriptures, on this account? No; he enjoins it on them, *to search them*. To study them with more care, and with minds more free from prejudice.

Though the duty of searching the scriptures is common to all christians, yet there are some on whom it is more peculiarly incumbent. Teachers of religion, and candidates for the sacred office, are bound by an obligation of uncommon force to attend to this duty. In particular relation to such,

* See *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 1 and 2.

I propose to consider the subject, in the sequel of this discourse. But before I proceed further, I would observe, that although the words of our Lord, in the text, refer to the Old Testament, (for at the time of their being spoken there were no other scriptures extant,) yet the reason of the command will apply with full force, to other inspired writings, as soon as they are promulgated. We shall therefore consider the scriptures of the New Testament, as well as the Old, embraced within the scope of our Saviour's command.

It will be important to bear in mind, that there are two distinct things comprehended in the object of this investigation. First, to ascertain that the scriptures contain the truths of GOD : and, secondly, to ascertain what these truths are.

Let us now suppose the two volumes containing the Old and New Testaments, the one in the original Hebrew, the other in the Greek; to be put into the hands of the theological student, accompanied with the command of Christ, *search the scriptures*. Investigate these volumes with diligence. What should be the first step in this investigation? Ought he not to be well satisfied of the identity of these books, with those which formerly existed? Here is a Hebrew volume; but does it contain the same writings to which our Saviour referred? And does this Greek volume comprehend the very

books which were received as inspired in the Apostolic age? In this inquiry, the biblical student may obtain complete satisfaction. With respect to the canon of the Old Testament, one fact will be sufficient to remove all doubt. These books have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, ever since the commencement of the gospel dispensation; and they now agree in acknowledging the same books to be canonical; which, considering the inveterate opposition subsisting between them, is a convincing evidence, that the canon of the Old Testament has undergone no change, since the introduction of Christianity. And that it had undergone none before that period, may be proved from this circumstance, that although, our Lord often upbraids the Jews with having *perverted* the scriptures, he never insinuates that they had *altered* or *corrupted* them.

In confirmation of what has been said respecting the canon of the Old Testament, we might adduce the testimony of *Josephus*, and of the Christian Fathers; who not only agree with one another in their catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, but with the canonical list which we now hold. The books called *Apocrypha*, were never received into the canon by the Jews, nor by the earlier Christian Fathers and councils, and have therefore no just claim to be considered as belonging to the Old Testament.

With regard to the New Testament, the evidence is equally convincing. The Christian Church was, in a short time, so widely extended, and embraced so many different languages and nations, that a universal agreement, in this whole body, through all the successive periods of the church, in acknowledging the same books to be canonical, must satisfy every impartial mind that our New Testament is the very same which was received and held sacred by the primitive church. To strengthen this conclusion, it may be added, that at a very early period, these books were translated into many different languages; several of which early translations, either in whole or in part, have come down to our times; and some of them have been preserved among Christians unknown to their brethren of other countries, for many centuries.

In addition to this, it may be observed, that accurate lists of the books of the New Testament were made by early ecclesiastical writers, and also by general councils, which are still extant, and agree with our catalogue of canonical books. It deserves to be mentioned also, that the churches in every part of the world held copies of these scriptures, which they preserved with the utmost vigilance; and quotations were made from them, by all the fathers; so that a large portion of the New Testament might be collected from the works of the early ecclesiastical writers. Besides

there are still extant manuscript copies of the whole, or a part of the New Testament, from twelve to fifteen hundred years old, which contain the same books that are comprehended in our printed volumes.

What has now been asserted, respecting the universal consent with which the books of the New Testament were received by the ancient church, in all its parts, must be admitted, with the exception of those few books, which have been termed, *Antilegomena*, because their divine authority was denied or disputed by some. Impartiality requires us also to state, that these books are not found in some of the oldest versions, as the Syriac, for instance; and therefore it must be admitted that the evidence for their canonical authority is not so complete, as of the rest, which were ever undisputed. At the same time, it ought to be observed, that the chief reason of doubting, was, because these books, for a while, were not so generally known to the churches: but as soon as they were accurately examined, and their evidence weighed, opposition to them ceased; and at no late period, they obtained an undisturbed place in the sacred canon.

The theological student, having obtained satisfaction respecting the perfection of the canon of scripture, the next step in his investigation should relate to the *integrity* of the sacred text. For it is

possible that the canon might be complete, and yet the text might be so corrupted and mutilated as to leave it uncertain what the original of these books might have been. It is of importance, therefore, to be able to prove, that the scriptures have suffered no material injury, from the fraud of designing men, or from the carelessness of transcribers. In the former part of the last century, this was a subject of warm altercation in the church. For whilst some maintained that the sacred text had not received the slightest injury from the ravages of time, others boldly asserted that it was greatly corrupted. The agitation of this question led to a more extensive and accurate examination and collation of manuscript *codices* than had been before made, and gave rise to that species of Biblical criticism, which has, within the last half century, assumed so conspicuous a place in Theological science. Distant countries were visited, the dark cells of cloisters and monasteries explored, and all important libraries ransacked, in search of copies of the scriptures. Learned men, with unparalleled diligence, employed their whole lives in the collation of manuscripts, and in noting every, even the smallest variation, in their *readings*. Their indefatigable labour and invincible perseverance in prosecuting this work, are truly astonishing. It has indeed, much the appearance of laborious trifling; but upon the whole, though not always so designed, has proved serviceable to the cause of truth. For

though the serious mind is at first astonished and confounded, upon being informed of the multitude of various readings, noted by *Mills*, *Wetstein*, and *Griesbach*, in the *codices* of the New Testament; and by *Kennicot* and *De Rossi*, in those of the Old; yet it is relieved, when on careful examination it appears that not more than one of a hundred of these, makes the slightest variation in the sense, and that the whole of them do not materially affect one important fact or doctrine. It is true, a few important texts, in our received copies, have by this critical process, been rendered suspicious; but this has been more than compensated by the certainty which has been stamped on the great body of scripture, by having been subjected to this severe scrutiny. For the *text* of our Bibles having passed this ordeal, may henceforth bid defiance to suspicion of its *integrity*. And with respect to the disputed texts referred to above, one thing should ever be kept in mind; that, granting that the evidence from the present view of ancient manuscripts, is against their genuineness, yet this may not be decisive. The learned *Cave* lays it down as a rule to direct us, in judging of the comparative excellence of the editions of the Fathers, “ That the older the editions are, by so much the more faithful are they*.” And assigns this reason for the rule, that the first editions were made from the best

* *Historia Literaria Proleg.* See. v. R. 1.

manuscripts, which were commonly lost or destroyed, when the edition was completed. And I see not why the same reason will not equally apply to the early editions of the scriptures. In fact, there is historical evidence, that the manuscripts used by cardinal *Ximenes*, in his Polyglott, have been destroyed, and they appear, from several circumstances, to have been both numerous and ancient : and I am persuaded also, notwithstanding what *Wetsstein* and *Michaelis* have said to the contrary, that some of those used by *Stephanas*, in his editions of the New Testament, have also been lost. We cannot tell, therefore, what the evidence for these texts might have been to these learned editors. Certainly very strong, or they would not have inserted them.

The next step in this investigation, would be, to ascertain, that these books are genuine ; or were written by the persons whose names they bear ; but as this appears to me to be substantially answered, by what has been already said, and by what will be added under the next article, I will not now make it a subject of particular discussion ; but will proceed to inquire into the *authenticity* and *inspiration* of the scriptures. I join these two things together, because, although a book may be authentic without being inspired ; yet if the Bible be authentic, it must have been given by inspiration, for the writers profess that they were inspired.

The truth of this point may be established by several species of evidence, quite distinct from each other.

It may, in the first place, be demonstrated by proving the truth of the facts recorded in the scriptures. These facts, many of them, being obviously of a miraculous nature, if admitted to have existed, will indubitably prove, that those persons by whom they were performed, must have been sent and assisted of God: for, as the Jewish ruler rightly reasoned, “no man could do these things unless God were with him.” Now the truth of these miracles may be established by testimony, like other ancient facts; and also by the history of them being so interwoven with other authentic history, that we cannot separate them: and especially, by that chain of events, depending on them, and reaching down to our own time, which has no other assignable origin but the existence of these miracles. For, to believe in the events which the history of the church presents to us, and yet deny the miracles of the gospel, would be as absurd, as believing that a chain which hung suspended before our eyes, had nothing to support it, because that support was out of sight. As to the witnesses of these facts, they are such, and deliver their testimony under such circumstances, and in such a manner, as to *demand* our assent. The impossibility of successfully impugning this testimony, obliged the most insidious

enemy of Christianity to resort to the principle, 'that no testimony is sufficient to confirm a miracle:' but the absurdity of this position, has been fully demonstrated by *Campbell, Vince*, and others, and it has also been shown by an ingenious writer*, that the gospel was true, even upon this author's own principles, because its falsehood would involve a greater miracle than any recorded in it.

The next species of evidence in support of the proposition under consideration, is derived from prophecy. If the Scriptures contain predictions of events which no human sagacity could have foreseen; if they have foretold events the most improbable, which have occurred in exact conformity with the prediction; and if they have described a person combining in his character and life, traits and events apparently incompatible and inconsistent; and yet a person has appeared answering literally to this description, then certainly the writers of these predictions were inspired. But such is the fact. 'This sure word of prophecy' is, indeed, like 'a light that shineth in a dark place;' but it is also like the light of the dawn which 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Other evidence may lose something of its force by the lapse of time, but this grows brighter and stronger with every revolving year; for the scope of prophecy compre-

* *Vide Brit. Encyclopi.* vol. 14.

hends all ages ; and new events are continually occurring which had been long foretold by the oracles of GOD. The third species of evidence for the authenticity and inspiration of the scriptures, arises out of their contents. The extraordinary, and superlatively excellent nature of the Christian religion, proves that it could not have been the production of impostors, nor of unassisted fishermen ; nor indeed, of any description of uninspired men. Its doctrines exhibit that very information, which is necessary to satisfy the anxious inquiries of man, conscious of his guilt and desirous of salvation. Its precepts are so sublimely excellent, so marked with sanctity and benevolence ; and at the same time so perfectly adapted to human nature and human circumstances, that the brightest wit can detect no flaw, nor suggest any improvement. “ The heavens declare the glory of God ; ” and so does the holy page of Scripture. It bears the stamp of divinity in its face ; and breathes a spirit which could originate no where else but in heaven. Another evidence, but connected with the last, is the blessed tendency and holy efficacy of the gospel to reform the hearts and lives of men, and to produce peace and joy in the mind and conscience ; which effects never could result from any false religion.

The success of the gospel, in its commencement, is also an important consideration. When we contemplate the resistance which was to be overcome,

both external, from religious and civil establishments, and internal, from the inveterate prejudices and vices of men; and then take into view the means by which all these obstacles were surmounted, we cannot refuse to admit that the power of the Almighty accompanied them.

The beneficial effects of Christianity on those nations which have received it, is a striking fact, and furnishes a strong argument in favour of the authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures. Under their benign influence, war has become less sanguinary and ferocious; justice has been more equally distributed; the poor have been more generally instructed, and their wants supplied; asylums have been provided for the unfortunate and distressed; the female character has been appreciated and exalted to its proper standard in society; the matrimonial bond has been held more sacred; and polygamy, the bane of domestic happiness, discountenanced. In short, the whole fabric of society has been meliorated; and real civilization promoted by Christianity, wherever it has been received: and the above mentioned effects have borne an exact proportion to the purity in which this holy religion was preserved, and the degree of conformity to its precepts which has existed among any people.

The next question which should engage the at-

tion of the theological student, is, for what purpose were the Scriptures given? In answer to this, all are ready to agree, that they were intended to be a guide to man in matters of religion; *a rule of faith and practice*. But here several important questions occur. Are the scriptures the *only* rule? Are they a *sufficient* rule? Are they an *authoritative* rule? and were they only designed to guide us in matters of religion?

Our first controversy is with the Romanists, who maintain that *tradition* is also a rule of faith; and that the Scriptures without tradition are neither a sufficient nor intelligible rule. But this opinion takes away all that fixedness and certainty, which a written revelation was intended and calculated to give to religion. Wherein consists the advantage of having a part of the will of GOD committed to writing, if the interpretation of this depends on the uncertain and varying light of oral tradition? We might as well have nothing but tradition, as be under the necessity of resorting to this uncertain guide to lead us to the true meaning of the written word. But had it been intended to make this the channel of communicating the divine will to posterity, some method would have been devised, to preserve the stream of tradition pure. No such method has been made known. On the contrary, the Scriptures predict a general and awful apostacy in the church. It could not be otherwise, but that

during this period, tradition would become a corrupt channel of information. This apostacy has taken place; and the stream of tradition has, in fact, become so muddy, and so swelled with foreign accessions, from every quarter, that christianity, viewed through this medium, exhibits the appearance of a deformed and monstrous mass of superstition. But, if we should admit the principle, that the constant tradition of the church should be our guide, where shall we go to look for it? To the Greek, to the Latin, or to the Syriac church? To the 4th, 9th, or 14th, century? For there is no uniformity; not even in *the infallible Catholic Church*. Every one in the least acquainted with ecclesiastical history, must know, that not only has the practice varied, at different times, in very important matters; but also the Bulls of Popes, and Decrees and Canons of Councils, have often been in perfect collision with one another: and, what is worst of all, have often been in direct hostility with the word of GOD. For the same thing has happened to tradition in the Christian, as formerly in the Jewish church. ‘ *It hath made the word of God of none effect,*’ ‘ *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*’

But whilst we reject tradition as a rule of truth, we do not deny the utility of having recourse to the early practice of the church, for the illustration

of Scripture, where there is any doubt respecting apostolic practice or institution.

There are two other opinions, by which the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures, as a rule of faith and practice, are invalidated. These, though held by persons erring on opposite extremes, agree in derogating from the respect due to the Scriptures.

The first is, the opinion of those who will not believe any thing, though contained in Scripture, which does not correspond with their own reason. If, for instance, a thousand passages of Scripture could be adduced, explicitly teaching the doctrine *of the Trinity, of original sin, of efficacious grace, of vicarious sufferings, or eternal punishments*, they would not admit them, because they have determined all these to be contrary to reason; and therefore the scriptures *must be* so interpreted, as to exclude all such doctrines; and the texts which support them, must be tortured by the critical art, or perverted by the wiles of sophistry, until they are silent, or speak a different language. Now, the only mystery in the religion of these sons of reason, is that they should want a revelation at all. Certainly it would be more consistent to reject Christianity wholly, than whilst professing to receive it in the general, to deny almost all the particular doctrines of which the general system is composed. For

my own part, I cannot consider Socinianism in any other light than Deism masked. At any rate, they are *nearly related*. If *that* has a little stronger faith, *this* has the advantage on the score of consistency.

The other opinion referred to, is that of fanatics in general, who, whilst they confess that the scriptures are divinely inspired, imagine that *they* are possessed of the same inspiration. And some, in our own times, have proceeded so far, as to boast of revelations, by which the Scriptures are entirely superseded as a rule of faith and practice*. Now, the difference between these persons, and the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures, consists in two things. First, the inspired writers could give some external evidence, by miracle or prophecy, to prove their pretensions; but enthusiasts can furnish no such evidence: and secondly, the productions of the prophets and apostles, were worthy of God, and bore his impress; but the discourses of these men, except what they repeat from Scripture, are wholly unworthy their boasted origin, and more resemble the dreams of the sick, or the ravings of the insane, than the 'words of truth and soberness.'

But, on the other hand, there have been some

* Vide '*The testimony of Christ's second appearing.*'
By the people called SHAKERS:

who believed, that the scriptures not only furnish a rule to guide us in our religion, but a complete system of *philosophy*; that the true theory of the universe is revealed in the first chapters of Genesis; and that there is an intimate connexion betwixt the natural and spiritual world. The one containing a sort of emblematical representation of the other; so that even the high mystery of the Trinity is supposed to be exhibited by the material fluid, which pervades the universe, in its different conditions, of fire, light, and air. *John Hutchinson, Esq. of England*, took the lead in propagating this system, and has been followed by some men of great name and great worth. *Jones, Horne, Parkhurst, Spearman, and Bates*, would be no discredit to any cause. But, although, we acknowledge, that there is something in this theory which is calculated to prepossess the pious mind in its favour; yet it is too deeply enveloped in clouds and darkness to admit of its becoming generally prevalent. And if what these learned men suppose, had been the object of revelation, no doubt, some more certain clue would have been given to assist us to ascertain the mind of the Spirit, than the obscure, though learned, criticisms of *Hutchinson*.

The next question which occurs, in the course of this investigation, is very important. How should the Scriptures be interpreted, in order that we may arrive at their *true and full* meaning? The obvi-

ous answer would be, by attending to the grammatical and literal sense of the words employed, to the force and significance of the figures and allusions used, and to the idiom of the languages in which they are written. But here we are met by a very important and embarrassing question. Is the literal meaning of Scripture, always, or generally, the principal and ultimate sense ; or, are we to suppose that under this, there is a recondite, spiritual meaning contained? Most of the Fathers considered the Scriptures to contain a double sense ; the one literal, the other mystical or allegorical ; and they regarded the first very little except in relation to the second. The Romanists maintain an opinion very similar ; but the mystical sense they divide into several parts. And among Protestants, there are many who discover a strong predilection for this mode of interpretation.

But this principle, admitted without limitation or qualification, has a direct tendency to overthrow all certainty in divine revelation. For, as there is no certain key to this mystical or spiritual meaning, every man makes it out according to the liveliness of his own imagination : and weak men by their fanciful expositions greatly degrade the dignity and mar the beauty of revealed truth.

The followers of Baron *Swedenborg*, not contented with two, maintain that the Scriptures con-

tain three senses, the *celestial*, *spiritual*, and *natural*, which are connected by *correspondences*. This doctrine of correspondences, is, according to them, the only key to open the true meaning of Scripture; which was, for many ages, lost, but recently was made known to this extraordinary nobleman. Notwithstanding the extravagance of this system, it has charms for some persons, and these not of the illiterate vulgar. It is a sort of refined mysticism, which corresponds with the peculiar turn of some minds, that are fond of novelty, and disdain to walk in the old beaten track. Reasoning or argument, with those who profess to hold familiar intercourse with angels, would, I presume, be superfluous. We shall leave them therefore to enjoy their visions of a *terrestrial* heaven, without interruption, whilst we proceed to observe,

That among the orthodox themselves, there is no small difference of opinion respecting the *extent* which may be given to the meaning of scripture. The celebrated *Cocceius* laid it down as a rule, *that scripture should be considered as signifying all that it could be made to signify*. The whole of the Old Testament, in his opinion, was either typical or prophetic of Messiah and his kingdom. Here, as in a glass, he supposed the future destinies of the church might be viewed. The learned *Grotius* verged to the very opposite extreme, in his ideas of the interpretation of scripture. This gave

rise to a saying which became proverbial, respecting these two great men; and which is highly creditable to the piety of the former; “ *Grotium nusquam in sacris literis invenire Christum, Cocceium ubique.* ’ ‘ That *Grotius* could find Christ no where in the Bible, *Cocceius* every where.’

This rule of *Cocceius*, however, is liable to great abuse; and as *Limborch* justly observes, ‘ is calculated to make of the Scriptures a mere Lesbian rule, or nose of wax, which may be bent into any shape; and seems to be no other than the old allegorical method of interpretation, introduced under a new name.’

But, on the other hand, it is certain, that many of the *persons, occurrences, and ceremonies*, of the Old Testament, are typical; and some things are thus interpreted in the New Testament, which we never should have conjectured to possess any meaning beyond the literal, unless we had been otherwise taught by inspiration. Besides, all judicious commentators are forced to admit, that many of the prophecies have a primary and secondary reference, even the most important of those which relate to Messiah, are of this description. Those who insist that one meaning and no more belongs to every text, are greatly at a loss how to reconcile with their opinion, the quotations made from the Old Testament in the New, where they are expressly

said to be fulfilled, though certainly, many of them, not in their primary and literal sense. Under the guidance of sound sense and just criticism, we should pursue a middle course between these two extremes. But although we cannot admit the rule of *Cocceius* in all its latitude, nor go the whole way with his followers; yet it is but justice to acknowledge, that some of them deserve to be ranked with the first expositors and theologians who have appeared in the church. As long as truth, piety, and solid learning, shall be held in esteem, the names, of *Witsius*, *Vitringa*, *Burman*, *Van Til*, and *Braunius*, will be dear to the theological student.

Upon the whole, our conclusion respecting this matter, is, that every particular passage of scripture should be interpreted according to the peculiar circumstances of the case: the literal should be considered as the true and only meaning, unless some remoter sense be indicated by some peculiar aptitude, correspondence, or fitness, in the words and ideas of the text; or unless it be referred to something else in the Scriptures themselves. Good sense and the analogy of faith, are the guides which we should follow in interpreting the Bible.

We come now to consider the *helps* which the biblical student needs, to enable him to search the scriptures with success. The volumes which we

have already supposed to be put into his hands, are not written in our vernacular tongue. We have, it is true, an excellent translation of the scriptures; but this was not made by inspiration, and cannot therefore possess the same authority and infallibility, with the originals. We admit the lawfulness and utility of translations for the use of the people; but nothing can be more evident, than that the expounder of scripture should be well acquainted with the very 'words by which the Holy Ghost teacheth' us the will of GOD. The knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages, therefore, is a necessary pre-requisite to the successful study of the scriptures. I think I may venture to assert, that this single acquisition will be of more importance to the theological student, than all the commentaries which have ever been written. By this means, he will be able to see with his own eyes; and will be qualified to judge for himself.

Every person who has had experience, will acknowledge, that even in reading the plainest texts, there is a satisfaction and advantage to be derived from the original, which cannot easily be explained. It becomes therefore a duty incumbent on all who are candidates for the sacred office, or invested with it, to endeavour to become acquainted with the *original Scriptures*.

But in all writings, and especially such as con-

tain historical facts, there are frequent allusions to the existing customs of the country, and to the prevailing opinions of the people, where the book was written. The same is found to be the case with the scriptures. Many passages would be quite unintelligible, without some acquaintance with Jewish antiquities. The customs and manners of that people should, therefore, be studied with particular attention.

And as scriptural history frequently refers to the condition, character, and transactions of contemporaneous nations, it is of importance to be well acquainted with their history, as delivered to us by profane authors. There is, however, a more important reason why the Biblical student should be well versed in history, ancient and modern; and that is, because *there* he must look for the accomplishment of many important prophecies. Even the fulfilment of the remarkable prediction of Christ, respecting the destruction of *Jerusalem*, is not recorded in scripture, but must be sought in the *Jewish* and *Roman* historians.

Chronology and geography are also requisite helps, to enable us to understand many parts of scripture. These have been called the eyes of history; and they are not more so of civil, than sacred history.

Even modern travels have been turned, by some learned men, to a very important account, in explaining the scriptures. For oriental customs and modes of living, have not been subject to the same capricious changes, which have prevailed in the western nations. And therefore, by observing carefully what oriental customs are, at this day, a very probable opinion may be formed, of what they were two thousand years ago. This observation holds good, particularly, in relation to such Eastern nations as have never been conquered, nor incorporated with any other people; as the Arabs, for instance.

Indeed, to speak the truth, there is scarcely any science or branch of knowledge, which may not be made subservient to theology. Natural history, chemistry, and geology, have sometimes been of important service, in assisting the Biblical student to solve difficulties contained in scripture; or in enabling him to repel the assaults of adversaries, which were made under cover of these sciences. A general acquaintance with the whole circle of science is of more consequence to the Theologian, than at first sight appears. Not to mention the intimate connexion which subsists between all the parts of truth, in consequence of which important light may often be collected from the remotest quarters; it may be observed, that the state of learning in the world requires the advocate of the

Bible, to attend to many things which may not in themselves be absolutely necessary. He must maintain his standing as a man of learning. He must be able to converse on the various topics of learning with other literary men ; otherwise the due respect will not be paid to him ; and his sacred office may suffer contempt, in consequence of his appearing to be ignorant of what it is expected all learned men should be acquainted with.

But next to the knowledge of the original languages, an acquaintance with early translations is most important. The Septuagint, the Chaldaic paraphrase, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, deserve to be particularly mentioned.

The Septuagint is an invaluable treasure to the student of sacred literature. Most of the Fathers, and several learned moderns, believed it to have been made by inspiration ; and others, as well as these, have preferred it to the Hebrew original. But this is certainly attributing too much to it. The fabulous account of the miraculous manner in which it was executed, given by *Aristeas*, which misled the fathers, is now generally exploded ; and this was the principal ground on which the opinion of its inspiration rested. It has been pleaded also, that this version was constantly quoted by Christ and his Apostles ; but our Lord himself could not have used it, as he spoke and conversed not in the

Greek, but the Syriac language. And although it is true, that the Apostles and Evangelists commonly quote from it, yet not uniformly. Sometimes they differ from it, and give a better translation of the original. It has also been plausibly stated, that the manuscripts from which this version was made, must have been much more perfect than any now extant, after the lapse of two thousand years. But it ought to be remembered, that the copies of the translation have been as liable to the injuries of time, as those of the original: and indeed much more so; for providence raised up a set of men, who watched over the Hebrew text with unceasing and incomparable vigilance. The *Masorites* devoted their lives to this object; and to prevent all possibility of corruption or alteration, they numbered not only the words, but the letters, of every book in the Bible. No such means were employed for the preservation of the text of the LXX; and accordingly the various readings in the copies of this version, are far more numerous and important than those of the Hebrew original. But whilst we reject the high claims for this version, which go to place it on a level with, or give it the preference to, the original; we willingly acknowledge its importance; and what is remarkable, is, its utility is greater in relation to the New Testament, than the Old; for it is written in that very *dialect* of the Greek language, in which the books of the New Testament are written; that is, the words are

Greek, but the idiom Hebrew. It is therefore of more importance in assisting us to understand the language of the New Testament, than all other Greek authors beside.

This version has, by the consent of all, been considered the oldest extant; but a recent writer in *The Christian Observer**, asserts that the Syriac translation of the Old Testament, contains *internal marks* of an antiquity superior to that of the Septuagint. The evidence of the fact, if it be so, must be *internal*; for I believe it is certain, that there is no external testimony which will support this assertion.

The Chaldaic paraphrase has commonly been referred to the time of Christ's advent, or to a period a little earlier; but the above-mentioned writer asserts that it is nearly as old as the time of *Ezra*. Without stopping to inquire into the validity of this opinion, I would observe, that these paraphrases are of no small importance to the interpreter of scripture, as they serve to show how the Jewish doctors understood certain passages prior to the birth of Christ; and clearly prove, that they referred to the expected Messiah, all or most of those prophecies, which we apply to Christ.

* N^o. for *July*, 1811.

The Syriac version of the New Testament is very valuable, on account of its antiquity; and has some shadow of claim to the authority of an original; for it is written in the same, or very nearly the same language, which our LORD used when he delivered his sermons and instructions to the people; and may therefore be supposed to contain, in many instances, the identical words which he uttered. In the opinion of some, it was made at the close of the Apostolic age, or at furthest some time in the second century: but others refer it to the third, fourth, or even the fifth, century. However these things may be, it cannot be doubted, but that much advantage may be derived from this version in searching the scriptures; and accordingly much use has been made of it by the learned, of late, in solving difficulties and elucidating obscure passages, which occur in the New Testament: and being written in a language possessing a near affinity with the Hebrew, it is easily accessible to the Hebrew scholar.

The Vulgate, is commonly supposed to have been made by *Jerome*, and to have succeeded to older latin versions. It was, for many ages, the only medium through which the revelation contained in holy Scripture, was viewed in the western part of the church. The Romanists, considering that this version could be made to favour their pretensions and corruptions, more than the original, bent all

their force to the support of its authority; whilst at the same time, they let slip no opportunity of disparaging the Hebrew text. At length they proceeded so far as to decree, in the Council of Trent, ‘ that it should be reckoned as *the authentic standard by which all disputations, preachings, and expositions, should be judged; and that no person should dare to reject its authority on any pretext whatever.*’ The more liberal Catholics themselves, are ashamed of the unblushing effrontery of this decree; and what slender foundation there was for so high a claim, may be conjectured from this circumstance, that a learned man* of their own communion declares, that he had himself noted *eighty thousand* errors in this version. But, nevertheless, it may be useful in many ways to the Biblical student, and being written in Latin, is accessible to every scholar. And here I will take occasion to remark, the great importance of a familiar acquaintance with the Latin language, to the Theologian. Although no part of scripture is written in that language, yet it is almost essentially necessary to pass through this vestibule, in order to arrive at the knowledge of any other ancient language; most valuable grammars and dictionaries being written in Latin: and almost all Theological works, not designed for the immediate use of the people, were composed in this language, prior to

* *Isidore Clarius.*

the middle of the last century, a very small portion of which have been translated into English. The course of theological study would indeed be very much circumscribed, if we were destitute of this key to unlock its rich treasures. It would lead me into a discussion too long, to consider, what assistance may be derived from the writings of the Fathers; what from the Schoolmen; what from the Reformers; and what from more modern commentators and critics, in the interpretation of the scriptures. The time allotted for this discourse, would be entirely insufficient to do justice to this subject. I shall therefore leave it untouched, and proceed to mention,

A **HELP**, which, though put in the last place, in this discourse, is of more real importance than all the rest; and that is, *the illumination and assistance of the Holy Spirit*. Illumination differs from inspiration in this respect; that whereas by the latter we are made acquainted with truths before unrevealed, or unknown, by the former we are enabled to discern the beauty and real nature of the truths contained in a revelation already made. It is obvious, that in the study of divine truth, much depends on the temper and condition of the student's mind. A proud and self-sufficient person, however endowed with acuteness of intellect, and furnished with stores of literature, is continually prone to fall into pernicious error; whilst the hum-

ble man occupies a station from which truth may be viewed to advantage. Prejudice, proceeding from education or passion, blinds the mind, and warps the judgment; but the sincere and ardent love of truth disposes us to view the whole evidence, and impartially to weigh the arguments on both sides of any question. As much therefore depends upon preserving our own minds in a proper state, as upon the diligent use of external means of information. The conclusion from these premises is, that the student of sacred literature should be possessed of sincere and ardent piety. He should be a man ‘taught of GOD,’ conscious of his own insufficiency, but confident of the help of the Almighty. Indeed, when we consider the weakness of the human intellect, and the various prejudices and false impressions to which it is constantly liable, we must be convinced, that without divine assistance, there is little hope of arriving at the knowledge of truth, or preserving it when acquired. He, who would understand the Scriptures, therefore, ought not to ‘lean to his own understanding,’ but by continual and earnest prayer, should look unto the ‘Father of lights,’ from whom proceedeth every good and every perfect gift; and who hath promised to give wisdom to those who lack it, and ask for it.

There is no person who needs more to be in the constant exercise of prayer, than the Theological student: not only at stated periods, but continually,

in the midst of his studies, his heart should be raised to heaven for help and direction. A defect here, it is to be feared, is one principal reason why so much time and labour are often employed in theological studies with so little profit to the church. *That* knowledge which puffeth up is acquired; but charity, which edifieth, is neglected.

When the serious mind falls into doubt respecting divine truths, the remedy is not always reasoning and argument, but divine illumination. The mind may be in such a state, that it is rather perplexed, than relieved, by mere human reasoning; but at such times a lively impression made by the Spirit of truth, banishes all doubt and hesitation; and then, the same texts or arguments which were before unavailing to our conviction and satisfaction, exhibit the truth in a light as clear as demonstration. This may appear to some to savour of enthusiasm. Be it so. It is, however, an enthusiasm essential to the very nature of our holy religion, without which it would be a mere dry system of speculation, of ethics and ceremonies. But this *divine illumination* is its *life*, its *soul*, its *essence*. It is true, this influence is not peculiar to the theologian. Every sincere christian, in his measure, partakes of this 'anointing,' by which he is taught to know all things; but the teacher of religion needs a double portion of this spirit. How often does the minister of the gospel labour and toil

with all his might, without producing any thing of importance, for edification! But if he receive the aid of the Spirit, his text is opened and illustrated, without any painful exertion of his own. He is conscious, indeed, that he is a mere recipient. The train of thought which occupies his mind, appears to originate in some occult cause, which he cannot trace. And happy would it be for preachers, happy for their hearers, if there were more dependence on divine assistance, not only in the composition, but in the delivery of sermons! When God shall appear in his glory, to build up Jerusalem, he will raise up, I have no doubt, a race of preachers, who shall partake of this heavenly gift, in a much higher degree than has heretofore been common. He will bring forward to the sacred office, men possessing *boldness*, founded on their reliance upon divine assistance; *clearness*, proceeding from divine illumination; and that *unction* which flows from the sweet and lively experience of the truth delivered, in the heart of the preacher. The solicitous, and often unsuccessful, effort to rise to some artificial standard of oratory, shall then yield to nobler motives; and the preacher, like *Paul*, shall be willing to make a sacrifice of his own reputation for learning, and refinement, at the foot of the cross: and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his LORD. Gospel simplicity and sincerity, shall then be preferred by the Man of God, to all the soaring flights of eloquence,

and to all the splendid trappings and tinsel of human science. May it please the Lord of the vineyard speedily to send forth many such labourers into his harvest; *for the harvest is great, and the labourers are few!*

I will now bring this discourse to a conclusion, by offering some motives to excite the Theological student to diligence in the perusal of the sacred scriptures.

A book has a claim upon our time and study, on account of the authority by which it comes recommended, the excellency of the matter comprehended in it, and the interest which we have involved in the knowledge of its contents. On all these accounts the Bible has the highest possible claim on our attention. It comes to us, as we have proved, authenticated as the word of God; stamped as it were with the signature of heaven; and recommended to our diligent perusal by the Lord Jesus Christ. The matter which it contains, is, like its origin, divine: *truth*, pure, glorious and all important truth, constitutes the subject of this Book. The saying ascribed to Mr. *Locke*, when he took leave of a beloved relation, shortly before his end, was worthy of that profound genius; "Study," said he, "the Sacred Scriptures; they have God for their author, truth without mixture of error for their matter, and eternal life for their end." If we should

take the lowest view of the subject, and form our opinion of the scriptures by the same rules by which we judge of human compositions, they will be found to transcend the highest efforts of human genius, as far as the heavens are above the earth. Hear on this subject, the decision of a scholar, in whom learning and taste in their highest perfection were combined; “I have regularly and attentively read these holy scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more sublimity and beauty, purer morality, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been composed.*” But the excellency of the Scriptures cannot be appreciated by the rules of human criticism. As well might we think of judging of the proportions of the celestial arch, or the location of the stars in the vast expanse, by the rules of architecture. The word of God, like his works, is on a plan too vast, too sublime, too profound, to be measured by the feeble intellect of man.

Fully to explain how worthy the scriptures are of our attention, on account of the matter comprehended in them, would require us to exhibit all the truths which they contain; but as this cannot be

* Found written in his own hand, on a blank leaf of Sir *William Jones's* Bible, after his death.

done in one, or a few discourses, I will now content myself with mentioning a few leading points, on which the scriptures furnish us with information of the most important kind.

In the first place, then, it is here, and here alone, that we can learn the true character of God. The indistinct outline, which may be traced in the works of creation, is here filled up. The knowledge of God, which could be derived from a view of his works, would not be sufficient for man, even in a state of innocence; and much less so when he is fallen into sin. None have ever been able to form just conceptions of the Deity from the light of nature alone. A revelation was absolutely necessary to teach man what God is; and the Bible contains all the information which we need on this subject. Here the divine glory is revealed. The moral attributes of Deity, especially, are represented in the clearest, strongest light. Truths respecting the divine nature, are here revealed, concerning which, reason and philosophy could never have formed a conjecture. The glorious and mysterious doctrine of a Trinity in unity, is taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible; a doctrine offensive to the pride of man, but one which will afford subject for profound contemplation through eternity. From the scriptures we learn, not only that God is holy, just, merciful, and faithful; but we behold these attributes harmonizing in a work which,

according to all the views that finite wisdom could have taken of it, must have placed them in a state of complete variance; that is, in the justification and salvation of a sinner. In the redemption of Christ these divine perfections not only appear harmonious; '*mercy and truth having met together, and righteousness and peace having kissed each other;*' but in the cross, are exhibited with a lustre and glory, which, according to our conceptions, could not have been given to them, in any other circumstances. If we would know *the only true God*, then, we must 'search the Scriptures.'

In the next place, we obtain from the Bible a satisfactory account of the origin of evil, natural and moral. Not, indeed, an explanation of the reason why it was permitted; but such an account of its introduction, as is perfectly consistent with the honour and purity of the divine government. We here learn that God created man 'in a state of innocency, with freedom and power to will and do that which was well pleasing to himself, but yet mutable, so that he might fall from it.' This liberty was abused by man: sin therefore owes its origin to the creature, who is wholly chargeable with its blame; although it did not take place without the knowledge, nor contrary to the purpose, of the infinite God. The first man being the root of all his posterity, and being appointed to act for them as well as for himself, they are involved with him in all the consequences of his fall; for '*they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.*' All

the streams of sin and misery in the world, flow from this original fountain. And so deep and dreadful is this fall of man, that he is utterly unable to recover himself from the guilt and depravity into which he is by nature sunk.

The last mentioned article of information would be only calculated to plunge us into the depths of misery and despair, were it not, that the scriptures teach us the consoling doctrine of *redemption*. Indeed, the whole Bible may be considered as a history of Redemption. Here we can trace the wondrous plan up to its origin, in the eternal counsels of peace. Here we read of the early development of this plan, after the fall, in paradise. The incarnation and victory of the glorious Redeemer was clearly intimated in the promise, ‘*that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.*’ To this object, the faith of the pious was directed, by every new revelation and institution. Prophets, in long succession, with lips touched with hallowed fire, described and predicted *Immanuel*. Although their prophecies are often expressed in dark symbolical language, yet sometimes, from the midst of this darkness, there are vivid coruscations of light, which exhibit the promised Messiah as visibly, as if he had already come. At length the fulness of time arrived, and “*God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.*” “*God was now manifest in the flesh.*” And He “*who being in the form of*

God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." The redemption of the church by the blood of the Son of God, is a subject on which angels look with wonder ; and it is a subject, which, through eternity, will furnish a theme for the songs of the redeemed of the LORD.

But the scriptures give us information, not only of the work of the Redeemer in procuring for us an "everlasting righteousness;" but also of the work of the Spirit, in uniting the redeemed soul to Jesus Christ; in regenerating, sanctifying, supporting, guiding, and comforting it; until it is 'made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'

Another important article of information which we find in the Scriptures of truth, is a clear expression of the will of God, in relation to the duty of man. There are, it is true, traces of the law of God still remaining on the heart of every man; but these are far from being sufficient to show him the full extent, and the spiritual nature, of the duties required of him. And what might be known from honestly inquiring of our own consciences, respecting our duty, is often missed through the influence of false principles, instilled into the mind by a de-

fective education, and by customs become universally prevalent, through the corruption of human nature. But we need be no longer at a loss about the law of God. He condescended to publish it, with his own voice, in the hearing of all *Israel*; and to write it with his own finger, on tables of stone. To explain this law, we have many comments from inspired men; but especially we have the lucid exposition of the Law-giver himself; and, what is more important, we behold it fully illustrated and exemplified, in the obedience which HE, in our nature, and for our sakes, rendered to it; so that, if we now wish to know our duty, we have only to contemplate the character of Jesus Christ. If we wish to do it, we have only to walk in his foot-steps.

Finally, the scriptures contain a distinct and full revelation of futurity, as far as it is necessary for us to know what is to be hereafter. In them, “life and immortality are brought to light.” Full assurance is given, by the testimony of one who cannot lie, that ‘an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory’ is reserved for the people of God in another world. In the New Testament, we are made familiar with heaven, by the frequency with which it is mentioned and described. The existence of a future world is no longer left to be collected by uncertain reasoning, and probable conjecture. It is now a matter of testimony. Faith has a firm ground on which to rest; for this truth is linked with every fact and doctrine of the gospel; is seen in every promise and threatening under the new dis-

pensation. But the scriptures reveal not only a heaven of glory, but a hell of horror; a dark and “bottomless pit,” *where ‘the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched,’ and where “there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.’* They give us the certain assurance, also, of a day being appointed in which God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; and in which they that are in their graves shall rise, some to everlasting life and glory, and others to everlasting shame and contempt.

From this brief survey of what the scriptures teach us, we must be convinced of the great importance of being well acquainted with them. Our own salvation is involved in the right knowledge of this book; and if we are teachers of others, how important is it, that we ‘as good stewards of the mysteries of GOD,’ be ‘able rightly to divide the word of truth, giving to every one his portion in due season.’ We should, therefore, “meditate on these things, and give ourselves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear unto all.” We must “take heed unto ourselves, and to our doctrine, and continue in them; for by so doing we shall both save ourselves and them that hear us.”

But we shall not only find the scriptures to be a source of profitable instruction; a rich mine of truth which has never yet been fully explored; but also a source of pure and permanent delight.

As the natural light is pleasant to the eyes, so is truth to the understanding, unless some moral disease render its approach unacceptable. ‘ They whose deeds are evil, love darkness rather than light ;’ but the regenerate soul ‘ rejoices in the truth.’ Food to the hungry is not more pleasant, nor cold water more refreshing to the thirsty, than evangelical truth to the pious mind. It is, indeed, the bread of life which cometh down from heaven ; the hidden manna, with which the spiritual Israel are fed, whilst they sojourn in this wilderness. The person who has been taught of God, prefers the truths of his word to all earthly treasures, and to all the sweets of nature. ‘ More are they to be desired, than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey and the honey comb.’ ‘ The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.’ ‘ Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage.’ How delightful must it be to sit as a disciple at the feet of Jesus, and with a child-like docility, imbibe precious instruction, from his word and Spirit ! When we fall under the power of some overwhelming temptation, or when dark clouds of adversity thicken around us, in the truths and promises of our GOD, we find our only refuge. In the sanctuary, when the oracles of God are delivered, doubt and unbelief, sorrow and despair, are driven away. Here divine beauty beams with mild effulgence on the soul, and the troubled spirit is charmed to rest. “ *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*” “ *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after,*

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord."

When Jesus joins himself to his disconsolate disciples, how soon is their sorrow turned into joy! And whilst he 'opens their understandings to understand the scriptures,' how do their hearts burn within them! That which above all things makes the scriptures precious, and the study of them delightful, is, that there we can find *Jesus Christ*. We have no need to say, 'who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead?' For, "the word is nigh *us*, even in *our* mouth, and in *our* heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." "Christ and him crucified," is the centre of the Christian's religion, the foundation of his faith and hope, and the perennial spring of all his pleasures and his joys. When, at any time, it pleases God to shine upon his word, whilst the believer reads its sacred contents, what a divine glory illuminates the holy page! What attractive beauty draws forth the best affections of his heart! What wonders do his opened eyes behold in the cross! He seems to be translated into a new world, and is ready to exclaim, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." "All things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new." O! could the pious reader of the scriptures constantly retain these spiritual views, and these ho-

ly impressions, heaven would be begun. 'This wilderness would 'bud and blossom as the rose,' and paradise be renewed on earth. But 'this is not our rest, it is polluted;' that *remaineth for the people of God*; even "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

But whilst we are on our pilgrimage to this promised land, the scriptures will be "a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths." They will answer the same purpose to us, which the pillar of cloud and of fire, did to the Israelites. They will guide us in the right way, through all our journey. Let us, then, be persuaded diligently 'to search the Scriptures.'

I beg leave to conclude this discourse in the words of the pious *Weller*, the friend and disciple of *Luther* :

"I admonish you again and again, that you
 " read the sacred scriptures in a far different man-
 " ner from that in which you read any other book :
 " that you approach them with the highest rever-
 " ence, and most intense application of your mind ;
 " not as the words of a man, nor an angel, but as
 " the words of the Divine Majesty, the least of
 " which should have more weight with us, than
 " the writings of the wisest and most learned men
 " in the world*."

* *Consilium De Studio Theologiae.*

CHARGE,
TO
THE PROFESSOR,
AND
STUDENTS OF DIVINITY.
BY
PHILIP MILLEDOLER. D. D.

CHARGE, &c.



Reverend and dear Brother,

THE engagements you have formed this day, are peculiarly solemn and affecting. The charge devolving on the Pastor of a congregation, in entering upon the duties of his office, is deeply interesting, but not so interesting as yours. You are not called by a particular branch of our church to minister in holy things, but by her highest ecclesiastical judicatory, to superintend the education of her sons. Under the direction, we trust, of the great Head of the Church, you have been invited to train up for her service, bands of intelligent, intrepid, and faithful champions of the cross. The characters you are to form for active service, are the flower of our youth; young men from whose lips, at some future, and not far distant period, multitudes of souls may receive instruction; who may be destined to fill the chairs of *teachers* and professors in our schools, and on whose fidelity, under God, may depend the future peace and prosperity of the church, and the salvation of thousands, perhaps millions, yet unborn.

Suffer me, under these circumstances, to give a brief exhibition of the views of the general assembly in founding this institution, and to point out some duties incumbent on you, in the accomplishment of those views. The assembly, in founding

this school, are desirous of securing and perpetuating to the church, a learned, orthodox, pious, and evangelical Ministry.

We want a learned Ministry.

Whatever mischief has been done to the world by philosophy, falsely so called, we are persuaded that true learning has never injured the church, and never will. Such is the harmony subsisting between the works and word of God, that discoveries in the former will never cease to promote our regard for the latter. It has been said, that ignorance is the mother of devotion; that aphorism we utterly and indignantly reject. To instruct others, and especially in divine things, men must first be instructed themselves. On this principle God himself has acted from the beginning of the world to the present day. In former ages, he himself spake directly to the prophets. The messages they delivered were formed under the immediate influence of his grace, and the inspiration of his Spirit. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*."

At the entrance of our Saviour upon his Ministry, he chose twelve disciples. These were prepared by himself for their work, and that too especially

* 2 Pet. 1. 21.

in the first instance by a regular course of instruction and discipline. It was after that course of instruction, and not before, that they were sent out to evangelize the world. Of completing the designs of God toward our race, in their day, these servants of Christ had no expectation. Their number was small, their lives precarious, the opposition they met with, powerful and constant; and their influence confined to regions which, however extensive in themselves, were yet small when compared to the whole world. They were therefore solicitous to provide for the future wants of the church, and took immediate steps for transmitting their power and authority to others. Hence that charge of *Paul to Timothy**: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Thus early provision was made for the supply of the church with an able and faithful ministry. Beside the instruction they had received from their Lord, the Apostles and their immediate successors were qualified in a miraculous manner for their work.—They were endowed with the gift of tongues. Devils fled at their rebuke; diseases, the most inveterate, were healed by a word or by a touch. They had also the power of discerning spirits †; a power which gave them no small advantage over ordinary teachers. All these gifts, from their extraordi-

* 2 *Tim.* 2. 2.† 1 *Cor.* 12. 10.

nary nature, and the well known disposition of mankind, were calculated to excite curiosity, to attract attention, to draw men within the sphere of the Gospel, and to carry home, by divine grace, irresistible conviction to their understandings and hearts. They enjoyed another advantage; they were under the influence of the Spirit of God, to a degree, of which now, alas! owing to our most awful supineness, we can hardly form a conception. This influence of the Spirit gave dignity to their manners, intrepidity to their zeal, and a general character to their ministry, which commanded the admiration of both friends and foes. With such advantages, it is not to be wondered at, that they towered with eagles' flight above the philosophers of their day, and outstripped in their progress all the wisdom of the sages, and all the eloquence of the schools. But the gift of tongues, with other miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, began gradually to disappear with the extension of the Gospel. This circumstance had a considerable influence in changing the face of the church, and especially in regard to the education of her ministers. That the scriptures might be read in the languages in which they were originally penned, or translated into the tongues of foreign nations; that young Gentile converts might become mighty in the scriptures; and that the sons of the church might be qualified to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, against learned and subtle adversaries

without, as well as against sectaries in her own bosom, it was soon perceived that a learned, as well as pious, ministry, was indispensably necessary. The most distinguished of the primitive fathers were advocates for a learned ministry. They well knew that learning without piety might be abused to the worst of purposes; but they were unwilling to allow that the abuse of what is good in itself, can ever detract from its intrinsic value. In this view of the subject, they were followed by the Reformers; and it is a principle which has been acted upon, and contended for, from that day to the present, by the best and purest churches in Christendom. In the careful instruction, then, of our Youth, dear Sir, for the work of the Gospel Ministry, you will neither stand upon new or untenable ground. And, assured as you may be, that you are doing the will of Christ, you may safely employ in it all the stores of your learning; all the resources of your genius, and all the powers of your soul. But whilst there can be no doubt, either of the lawfulness or expediency of such a work, it is not to be concealed, that it is a task of great labour and difficulty. To say nothing of that diversity of disposition, taste, and intellect, in students themselves, which renders the art of teaching, as well as government, so exceedingly intricate; waving also at present all observations on *methods* of instruction, I will venture to say, that the work itself is one of the most arduous in the world. The scriptures are a mine of inexhaustible wealth, but to be enriched

with their treasures will require close and constant application. To exhibit divine truth in a lucid and systematic manner; to show the unity of Scripture in the connexion and dependence of its parts; to make of our young men sound Biblical critics, and able casuists; to furnish them with gospel armour of proof, offensive and defensive; to give them an extensive acquaintance with Church history and government; but especially so to indoctrinate, and, if I may use the expression, leaven them with heavenly truth, that they may ever after hold, and defend it for themselves, as well as communicate it to others; is a work indeed of no small magnitude. In this work you will soon, we hope, be aided by faithful colleagues; but a large and important part of it will still rest, under God, upon yourself. To cultivate such a field as this, dear sir, will be sufficient to call forth the exertions of the most active and enterprising mind; it will therefore behoove you, notwithstanding *all* your present acquirements, not only to cherish the attainments you have already made, but also further to enrich your mind with the spoils of science, and to extend your inquiries into almost every department of literature, sacred and profane.

Another charge devolving upon you with peculiar weight, dear Brother, is the faithful maintenance of that system of doctrines handed down to us by our fathers, and for which in numerous instances they have sacrificed “ their fortunes, their liberties,

and their lives." Strongly attached to the doctrines of the reformation contained in her standards, jealous of innovation, and anxious to transmit the truth as it is in Jesus inviolate to posterity, the Presbyterian church will expect, and permit me to add, Sir, after the signal mark of her confidence reposed in you, will have a right to expect, that her doctrines, and especially her distinguishing doctrines, will be taught in this school without adding to, or taking aught from them in any wise, or under any pretext whatsoever. It is also expected that these doctrines will be explained in terms used by her best writers from almost time immemorial, and which from long use have become familiar to, and are best understood by, her members. By observing this plan, there will be an agreement of theological terms used in the instruction of our youth, with those used in our standard books, as well as an agreement of terms used by our future licentiates and ministers, with those to which our congregations are accustomed. An object this, of no small importance to the future harmony of our churches. The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and form of government connected with it, will be an important book in this seminary. Containing a form of sound words drawn from the lively oracles of God, and tested by experience, it has long served, and will hereafter serve, as a bond of union to the churches. As every minister in our connexion is required to subscribe this Confession, they should be well acquainted with its

contents. When adopted, it cannot be renounced without renouncing our communion; nor invaded, without a species of sacrilege. If important doctrinal errors are ever introduced into our churches, they will be introduced by a gradual departure from our standards. These should be guarded, therefore, with inviolable care. Is any man dissatisfied with them, he is not bound to receive them; and if he does receive them, he is by that very act sacredly bound to cherish and maintain them. To surrender truths deemed of *minor importance* is only to prepare the way for other demands, and greater sacrifices; and if first attempts are not repelled, they will soon be followed by others, till all is gone that is worth contending for. To give our young men an early acquaintance with these standards, is therefore an object of primary importance; and should they be required, during their theological course, to commit to memory the greater part, if not the whole, of our confession and book of discipline, it would be attended with incalculable advantage. It would not only give them a decided superiority over others in ecclesiastical councils, but would also tend to guard them against error, as well as to secure their attachment to the truth. Peculiarly set for the defence of the Gospel, it will be expected of you, dear brother, that you will stand as a bulwark for truth against the encroachments of error. In this respect also, the assembly have deposited in your hands a most sacred trust; and one we are persuaded, that will never be abused. With

pleasure we anticipate the period when the youth of our seminary will not only exhibit sound principles themselves, but will also be disposed, and prepared to hand them down inviolate to others.

And as it is desirable that we should have a learned and orthodox, so we also need a pious and evangelical, ministry. Whatever may be the talents of ministers, they are like, without personal piety, to be of no lasting advantage to the church; nay, such characters have often inflicted upon it deep, and almost incurable wounds. That they are utterly unfit for the sacred office, is manifest. How shall they feed the flock of Christ purchased with his blood, who have no interest in that purchase? How shall they sympathize in the sufferings of God's people, who have no spiritual feeling? Or how shall they speak a word in season to weary and tempted souls, who themselves never felt, and therefore never mourned, under the awful pressure of their sins? Their godly hearers can be satisfied with them no longer than they shall have address enough to conceal their real characters, and they not unfrequently become the scorn even of the careless and impenitent. We hope the time is far distant, when our churches will be satisfied with mere exhibitions of learning, or eloquence, or with the substitution of dry moral lectures for the preaching of the cross. The apostle Paul was determined to know nothing among his hearers but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

—He was convinced that nothing under heaven could exhibit the divine character in a clearer light, and that nothing had equal influence on the human mind, to control, reform, and change it into the image of God. He had fairly made the experiment, and hath taught us, both by precept and example, that the true ministry of reconciliation must be pious and evangelical. In preparing such a Ministry for the church, it is desirable that such, and such only, should be sent forward to the school as are hopefully pious. What remains to the professors of the institution, is continually to insist upon the necessity of it, to cultivate it where it exists, by precept and example; to honour it with marked respect, and in every instance in which they shall be satisfied of the want of it in any pupil, to take effectual steps to prevent his entrance upon an office, for which in such case he is so evidently disqualified.

Thus, reverend and dear brother, I have endeavoured to mark out your glorious work, and have ventured a few thoughts on the best means of its accomplishment. We want a learned, orthodox, pious, and evangelical ministry. To such, and such only, can we confidently and comfortably commit the affairs of the church; and to leave another ministry in it, if we ourselves are faithful, would plant thorns in our dying pillows. As no greater curse can fall upon a people than to commit its spiritual interests into the hands of weak and unskilful, but-

especially of unprincipled, men ; so, on the other hand, we are persuaded that an able and faithful ministry, is one of the most distinguished blessings to the world. Its influence in the church must be obvious to all ; and its benign influence on our schools, as well as on the general good order and happiness of society, will be denied only by the thoughtless, or the profligate. This seminary then, even in its infant state, is an object of public interest ; an object not only calculated to call forth the good wishes of our own church, but of the church at large, and even of the nation. Though its origin be small, the voice of its sons, we trust, will one day be heard to advantage from one extreme of these United States to the other ; nay, the time may not be far distant, when they will vie with their transatlantic brethren, in carrying the lamp of eternal truth, and planting the standard of the cross, on the remotest shores of heathen lands. The blessings that flow from such a ministry, are not blessings of a day, of a year, or even of an age.—These men will in due time transmit their knowledge and authority to others, and these again to their successors, to the final conflagration of the globe. In this view of the subject, Reverend Sir, you will feel a weight of responsibility upon you sufficient to bow the shoulders of an angel. The infant state of the institution will add to that weight. The General Assembly have stamped it with grand and impressive features, but they have only drawn the great outlines of its character. Much yet remains

to be done. The perfection of their plan will be the result of time and experience, and will greatly depend on the wisdom and diligence of their professors. In all this work, dear brother, you will have the eyes of God, of angels, and of men, upon you; but you enter upon it with great encouragement. You may promise yourself the good wishes and prayers of the whole church of God. You may also promise yourself the cordial co-operation of your brethren in the Lord. In their personal friendship, as well as interest in the work, you will find pledges of future consolation and support. But above all, you may promise yourself, if faithful, the constant blessing of the great Head of the church: there lies your strength, your wisdom, your every qualification for the work. The promise, "Lo, I am with you always," has never been forgotten by him, and never will. I have only to add a wish that when the book shall be opened that records the transactions of this day, that you may have cause to rejoice in them for ever.

Permit me, also, young gentlemen, on this solemn occasion, to address myself to you. You will have the honour of being the first whose names are enrolled in the register of this Seminary. They will stand, we hope, at the head of a host of worthies, whose future labours shall bless the church of God, and do honour to their country. As you are first in order of time, so we pray, that you may be numbered with the first, in devotion to God, and

usefulness to mankind. The studies in which you will be engaged, are not only delightful, to the pious mind, but are also calculated to enlarge your souls; to ennoble and transform them into the very image of God. The privilege you will enjoy, of consecrating your time to the study of the scriptures, and your persons to the service of Christ, is too great for expression. You are now, young gentlemen, to lay the foundation of your future character and usefulness in life; and, in some measure at least, as connected with it, of your future and eternal felicity. Permit me then to urge, with all possible earnestness, a diligent improvement of time and opportunities afforded you in the good providence of God. Your stay in this seminary may seem long in prospect, but it is really short; short in itself, and especially so, when compared with the work you have to do. Observe the plan of education marked out by the Assembly, and you will see at once, that the most diligent application will barely suffice, to give you, not to say a perfect, but even a competent knowledge of the subjects it embraces.

If any suppose that occasional application, or superficial reading, will constitute an eminent divine, they are exceedingly mistaken. In searching after, illustrating, or defending truth, the whole circle of the sciences may be pressed into the service of Christ. The study of the scriptures, especially in their original languages, is a work of time, as well

as of deep research. To obtain an accurate knowledge of scripture types, prophecies, and doctrines; to be acquainted with the sophistry of enemies, and qualified to expose it; to be well informed in church history and government; and to acquire facility in collecting, judgment in arranging, and gracefulness in the delivery of your thoughts, will all require time and labour.

But whilst I thus urge preparation for the altar in the acquirement of useful knowledge, let me also insist, particularly insist, on the cultivation of personal piety. As you are now to lay the foundation of solid learning, and literary eminence, so also of good character. Many eyes will be upon you, and more expected than from other young men of the same age, engaged in other pursuits. To the youth of this venerable seat of learning and the arts, you are especially called, to set examples of piety worthy of imitation. Not to speak of actions grossly derogatory to your Christian character, and the stain of which might follow you to your graves; remember, that you have in great measure passed that period of life, in which folly is extenuated by juvenile indiscretion. A short time will place you, God willing, upon the theatre of the world, under the august character of Ambassadors of Christ. Bear this in constant remembrance; and if you ever hope to fill that station with dignity to yourselves, usefulness to others, and glory to God, learn now to live by faith in the Son of God; govern your pas-

sions, deny yourselves, and consecrate your whole souls to the service of the Redeemer. Whatsoever things are true, just, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Let the world take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus; let it appear evident to all that you have entered upon your work with due reflection, and from proper motives, and you will in no wise lose your reward.

With piety toward God, my young friends, be careful to cultivate respect for your instructors. It is the sign of an ingenuous mind, and a debt of gratitude you owe them. They will deserve well at your hands. The hero of Macedon revered his father much, but he revered his instructor more. He viewed him as a second father; as one who had formed his mind; and acknowledged a debt of gratitude he never could repay. Christian youth, in regard to their christian teachers, must not be outdone by the gratitude of a heathen.

Beloved pupils, who have commenced with me your theological course—I now resign *you* with pleasure into other hands. Divided between parochial duties, and the care I owed you, I have found the task of instruction difficult, and sometimes oppressive; your future teacher, unincumbered by other cares, can, and will cheerfully, devote his whole

time to your improvement. I am happy to bear this public testimony to your former diligence and good conduct, and trust you will secure, by your future deportment, the approbation of your teachers, of the public, of your conscience, and your **GOD**.