

THE
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ART. I.—METAPHYSICS OF WATSON'S INSTITUTES.

IT is worthy of being noted that, while many theologians have condemned philosophy—shutting it, as they supposed, out of the region of theology, and cautioning their hearers to “beware that no man beguile them through philosophy”—their own theological system was built upon a philosophy, and permeated and tinged, in all its details, by philosophic speculation. The moment a man passes in thought from the simple, didactic utterances of Scripture, and attempts a higher generalization—the moment he commences gathering the short and pregnant sentences in which *Truth* is scattered almost at random over the sacred page, like pearls and gems upon a coral strand, and attempts to string them up into a theological creed, or arrange them in the cabinet of a theological system—and especially the moment he carries the profound utterances of Scripture into the system of things around him, and attempts to quadrature them with other truths taught in science or given in human consciousness, *that moment he begins to philosophize*. He may not have made philosophy, as taught in the schools, a subject of formal and systematic study, yet in the writings of other theologians, or floating in the atmosphere of intellectual society and converse, he has come in contact with the axioms and conclusions of philosophy, he has unconsciously inhaled them, they have found a place in his belief, and, even when he has no intention to philosophize, with a religious horror of all

ART. IV.—ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER.

The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D., LL.D., First Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J. By JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D. 12mo., pp. 562. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication.

EVERY good minister of the Gospel is the property of the whole Church of God. His piety, his learning and ability, not only secure for himself the respect and confidence of those around him, but commend the Gospel which he preaches, and all who espouse it, to the minds and hearts of the entire community. Each evangelical Church in the land, each Christian society in a city or a town, stands stronger in the popular estimation, secures a more respectful hearing, has more weight and influence upon the popular mind, because of the presence of the others; and not only every able minister, but every man and woman who lives a holy life is a voucher for all who profess "like precious faith." A review of the life of Archibald Alexander, of Princeton, has an appropriate place in a Methodist publication, because more than curiosity prompts us, as a denomination, to inquire into the success of other Churches and other ministers of the Gospel, and examine the instrumentalities wherewith that success has been achieved.

Archibald Alexander was born near Lexington, Rockbridge County, Va., April 17, 1772, and was the third of a family of nine children. His grandfather emigrated from Ireland in the year 1787, and on both his father's and his mother's side Dr. Alexander was a descendant of the Scotch-Irish, or of ancestors who long ago emigrated from Scotland to Ireland, bearing with them, and transmitting to their children, their characteristic industry, thrift, and Calvinistic faith. A century ago the great valley of Virginia was still comparatively a new country, and amid its wild scenes and adventures young Alexander spent his youth. He learned to hunt, and fish, and swim, and recognize at incredible distances the bells of his father's cattle when they were lost in the mountain forests. His early educational advantages were defective. It was the fashion of England in those days to export her criminals to her western

colonies, and on their arrival put them up at auction as servants for the term of years named in the sentence of the court which convicted them. Virginia received her full share of them, and, judging from the conduct of certain of her citizens in the present rebellion, their descendants not only exist, but are worthy of their lineage. Archibald's father, in a trading expedition to Baltimore, saw several of these convicts for sale, and having some spare funds on hand, bought the lot, and took them home to the valley. On his arrival he examined his "property," to see what his purchase was worth; and finding that one of them, a boy of nineteen years, possessed a smattering of books, concluded to make him the schoolmaster of the settlement. Under the auspices of this hopeful guide, young Alexander entered the flowery paths of knowledge. The Westminster Catechisms, the Shorter and the Larger, formed an important part of his early acquisitions. At the age of ten years he was told by his father that "learning was to be his estate." The Rev. William Graham, a graduate of Princeton College, had opened an academy, which he named Liberty Hall, and which, in after years, became Washington College. Archibald was placed under the tuition of Mr. Graham, and remained in his school nearly seven years, acquiring some Latin and great skill in cards.

In his seventeenth year he left school, and engaged as tutor in the family of General Posey, a resident of what was then called the Wilderness, a few miles west of Fredericksburgh. Thus far he was not religious, nor even awakened to any sense of danger. He received on one occasion deep impressions from the sermon of a "traveling preacher;" but he records that on hearing his parents speak slightly of the sermon his convictions instantly vanished. At the age of seventeen his ideas of religion were exceedingly imperfect, and are thus described by himself: "My only notion of religion was that it consisted in becoming better. I had never heard of any conversion among the Presbyterians."—P. 32. The process by which he was aroused to a sense of his lost condition, and led into the path of peace, is so curiously illustrative of the times, as well as the individual, that we deem it not inappropriate to trace it briefly in these pages, especially in view of the fact that we design to devote most of the space allotted us to the earlier portion of the life of Dr. Alexander.

In the family of General Posey was an aged Christian lady, a member of the Baptist Church, who often spoke to him on the subject of religion, and persuaded him to read to her in religious authors, of which her favorite was John Flavel. On one occasion she related to him her experience in regard to a change of heart, closing with the pithy remark: "Now I know all this must appear utter nonsense to you who have experienced nothing of the kind." His residence in the Wilderness brought him into contact with examples of professed infidelity, as well as of piety, and the evil influence was felt. He began to question, and reason, and, in a degree, doubt; but one day, in searching among some books which had been sent him from home, he found a coarsely printed pamphlet, entitled "Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion. By Soame Jenyns, Esq." He sat down at once to read, and before he laid it down was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Bible that the very room in which he was "seemed to be illuminated."

His inquiries now assumed a new form, and he began to ask himself, What is this *new birth* of which some speak? He thus confesses his perplexity: "It seemed to be in the Bible, but I thought there must be some method of explaining it away; for among the Presbyterians I had never heard of any one who had experienced the new birth, nor could I recollect ever to have heard it mentioned."—P. 101. It is a curious fact that there is no explanation of regeneration, or the new birth, in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, nor in the Westminster Catechisms. He continued to read, and began to pray in secret places. Under the guidance of Flavel he began to get some idea of the nature of regeneration, and a little book called "Jenks on Justification by Faith," showed him, more clearly than it had ever before been in his view, the way of life. He began to hope at times that he had already experienced the spiritual change; but his seasons of peace and joy were transient, and his experience was anything but satisfactory to himself. In regard to this period of doubt and inquiry he says: "To John Flavel I certainly owe more than to any uninspired author."

At the close of the year he returned home to Rockbridge, with the design of pursuing his studies. He found his eldest

sister seeking an interest in Christ, and his religious impressions were deepened. A rumor reached the settlement that an extraordinary revival was in progress on the other side of the Blue Ridge, and the news awakened great interest among the people. His teacher, the Rev. Mr. Graham, was invited to visit the place, and assist in preaching to the crowds who flocked to hear the word. He took with him several of his pupils, among whom was young Alexander. A multitude came together from various quarters, far and near, and the travelers from Rockbridge were much impressed by seeing a large number of young converts from another settlement, fifty or sixty miles distant, coming on horseback through the forests, singing hymns as they rode. Several ministers were present at the meeting, among whom the leading men were Mr. Graham and Dr. John B. Smith, the brother of Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, President of Princeton College. Listening to the pungent sermons, and exhortations, and fervent prayers of the occasion, Alexander became more and more interested and moved. He imagined that a personal conversation with Dr. Smith would scatter his doubts, and finally obtained an interview. But having stated his experience, his occasional hopes and enjoyments, followed by a relapse into sin, he was informed in a very peremptory way that "these exercises were not of the nature of true religion, as that always destroys the dominion and power of sin." Then occurred that strange error of consciousness not unknown in the present day. He was in great distress because he had no feeling of sorrow for his sins; he "rolled on the ground in anguish of spirit, bewailing his insensibility."

The company of ministers passed on from place to place, holding meetings as they went, and sometimes spending several days in a neighborhood when the prospect of good was unusually encouraging. On one occasion, having retired into a wood for prayer, Alexander was "suddenly visited with such a melting of heart as he never had before or since," which gave him a "sweet composure of spirit," but after all "left no permanent change in his condition." A few days afterward he came to the apparently calm and deliberate conclusion that he "should certainly be lost forever," inasmuch as he had found himself, as he fancied, incapable of that degree of conviction for sin

which is necessary to salvation. A minister with whom he had no acquaintance singled him out, and on hearing the result of his reasonings, and upon what they were based, showed him the mistakes into which he had fallen. On being assured that no particular degree of conviction is necessary, beyond the conscious need of a Saviour, he at once began to trust in Christ, and entertain from that instant a "joyful hope." That same day, it would seem, he was called upon to pray in a public meeting, and complied, "being delivered from the fear of man." The next morning after this event they set out for Rockbridge, singing revival hymns as they rode along.

They were accompanied home by several of the ministers who had been engaged in the good work on the other side of the mountain, and the new converts deemed a revival in Lexington a certainty. A great congregation gathered to hear from Mr. Graham and his companions an account of what they had seen and heard in Bedford and Prince Edward, and the assembly was deeply moved by the recital. Many of the young people were soon numbered among the inquirers. Some of the older ones, however, who had never heard of a revival before, doubted; and an uncle of Alexander's came to their house armed with a volume of Locke's *Essays*, with a leaf turned down at the chapter on *enthusiasm*. The word of the Lord prevailed in spite of opposition, and many souls were truly converted. In the midst of these happy scenes young Alexander was suddenly prostrated again by the idea that his repentant sorrows had never been deep enough to render them efficacious. Determining to give himself to incessant prayer till either death or success came, the next morning he took his Bible, and walked several miles into the forest, and under a projecting rock, in a dark ravine, he began the mighty contest. He read and prayed, and prayed and read, till his strength was utterly exhausted, and only sank deeper in darkness and despair. He was sorely tempted at one time to give up the struggle, but concluded to offer a final prayer, to utter one more cry for mercy. He did so, and deliverance came. "The whole plan of grace appeared as clear as day," and he was filled with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory." When the first tumult of his emotions had subsided he opened his Bible again, and read the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of John, and the sacred

page appeared to be illuminated with heavenly light. Drawing writing materials from his pocket, he penned a solemn covenant to be the Lord's forever, and there, alone under the rock, "solemnly signed it, as in the presence of God."—P. 71.

And yet not a week elapsed before the conflict was as fierce, and the cloud as dense as ever. Still, shortly after this, in the autumn of 1789, when he was in the eighteenth year of his age, he made a profession of his faith, and united with the Presbyterian Church. In after life he looked back at this period of spiritual strife, and regarded much of his distress as the result of misapprehension. He says :

"Now, at the age of seventy-seven, I am of opinion that my regeneration took place while I resided at General Posey's, in the year 1788."—P. 72.

As an explanation of this last remark, it is proper for us to say that Dr. Alexander's theory of the order of the several parts of the experience which lies at the beginning of a true religious life, varies widely from the Methodistic view. In the Wesleyan theology the process is this : first comes conviction of sin, in which the soul, aided by the Spirit of God, sees and feels its guilt and danger, and, yielding to the divine influence, anxiously inquires, What must I do to be saved? Then comes faith, an act by which the soul, still graciously assisted, relinquishes every other trust, and relies alone on the mercy of God and the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. In that hour come pardon, and generally, if not invariably, a degree of peace, and in the self-same hour comes regeneration, the new birth, the renewal of the soul in the divine image, the commencement of a recreating process, which, in its completion, fits man for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But in Dr. Alexander's theory regeneration is the very beginning of the process, and precedes not only faith, but even repentance. His mode of reasoning upon the subject may be seen in the following brief extracts :

"The spirit operates on the dead soul, communicating the principle of life. The word holds up to the view of the regenerated soul the evil of sin, which leads to repentance." "How can light shine into a blind mind without some previous operation on that mind?" "It is true that all pious exercises are produced by a view of the truth, but this view of the truth is the effect of regeneration, not the cause."—*Life*, pp. 74, 121.

“It is usually taken for granted that the convictions experienced are prior to regeneration. But it would be very difficult to prove from Scripture, or from the nature of the case, that such a preparatory work is necessary. Suppose an individual to be, in some certain moment, regenerated; such a soul would begin to see with new eyes, and his own sins would be among the things first viewed in a new light.”—*Religious Experience*, p. 29.

Dr. Alexander held, however, that the unregenerate may experience remorse, terror, what the world calls “conviction of sin;” “but,” he adds, “there is nothing in this kind of conviction which has any tendency to change the heart or make it better. Some, indeed, have maintained, with some show of reason, that under mere legal conviction the sinner grows worse and worse.”—*Rel. Exp.*, p. 31.

In reading these passages it is a very natural inference that Dr. Alexander uses the term regeneration in some lower sense than is usual among evangelical Christians; but examination makes it clear that he employs it as designating a sure mark of the true child of God. It must be confessed, that however this doctrine may differ from Wesleyan modes of setting forth the process of salvation, it is a stone which fits very neatly into the Calvinistic edifice.

It is no part of our present design to discuss controverted points, or we might be tempted to ask a question or two. If, as the Confession of Faith declares, “this effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone,” man being “altogether passive therein,” and if they who are “effectually called” shall “certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved,” where is the justice of holding a sinner accountable for the loss of his own soul? To say that the sinner cannot take one step that tends to life till he has undergone, being “altogether passive therein,” a spiritual change which renders his salvation a certainty, is to take the sinner’s destiny wholly out of his own hands and advocate practical fatalism. And how coolly the advocates of this theory assume that God has not the power to make repentance at all possible without making salvation absolutely certain! To prove that regeneration, in which man is “altogether passive,” and which, nevertheless, is an infallible pledge of eternal salvation, must of necessity precede even the beginnings of true conviction, he asks: “How can light shine into a blind mind without some previous operation on that

mind?" But it seems to us that the Mosaic account of the creation suggests a far more difficult problem: How can a soul, created holy, perfect, in the image of God, be at the same time capable of sin? If divine wisdom can make a being perfectly holy, and yet, in the freedom of its own will, capable of sinning, surely divine grace can so aid an unholy being that it shall be capable of hearing the divine call to repentance, and of beginning truly to seek the Lord, and yet retain its true freedom of choice, and be, in the eye of strictest reason and justice, accountable for its action, and able to decide the momentous question of life and death. Moreover, if the theory be true and scriptural, that regeneration precedes repentance and faith, then either pardon precedes faith, or souls are regenerated and become true children of God before they are forgiven. And if regeneration, which, according to the Calvinistic theory, is an infallible pledge of eternal salvation, must in all cases precede the exercise of faith, we confess that we cannot see very clearly how faith is the condition of salvation. In fact, from this one feature we may infer every element of the most rigid, remorseless partialism; just as the skillful naturalist, from the shape of a single tooth, infers the talons, the lithe frame, the prowling habit and bloodthirsty nature of the beast of prey. It makes little difference at what point in the process of salvation you in theory locate the new birth, if the title of the elect to eternal life is just as good before their natural birth as it is after their spiritual regeneration.

Mr. Alexander's attention was now seriously turned to the ministry, and with this in view he resumed his studies, under the tuition of Mr. Graham, in company with five or six other young men, who were converted in the great revival. He began to exercise his gifts, or, in Methodistic phrase, "exhort" at religious meetings, sometimes speaking with ease and fluency, sometimes suffering the torture of a failure. "It was, however, in such exercises as these," remarks his biographer, "that he laid the foundation for that habit of extraordinary extemporaneous discourse which was his grand peculiarity as a preacher and a teacher."

He was licensed in October, 1791, at a meeting of the Presbytery held in Winchester, and immediately began to preach occasional sermons, though at times "overwhelmed with an

awful feeling of responsibility and unfitness for the sacred office." He was now nineteen and a half years of age, his stature small, and "his whole appearance strikingly boyish," so that strangers took him to be three or four years younger. On the second occasion of his preaching after his licensure the wind blew away the "skeleton" of his sermon, and he resolved on the spot to "take no more paper into the pulpit," a resolution which he kept for twenty years, with the single exception of the sermon which he preached at his own ordination. His youthful efforts, thus extemporaneous and free, were flowing, imaginative, and impassioned, and, from the first, attracted great attention. One of his early friends, speaking of Mr. Alexander's preaching at this time, compared him to a "young horse of high blood, led out into a spacious pasture, exercising every muscle, and careering in every direction with extravagant delight." In reference to the manner in which he began his ministry, the biographer quotes with approbation the following significant remarks of the Rev. Dr. Hall:

It deserves to be noted by all ministers and candidates, that one of the chief external means by which Dr. Alexander attained what are often called his inimitable excellences as a preacher, was his spending several years after licensure and ordination in itinerant missionary service, preaching in the humblest and most destitute places, often in the open air, and adapting his language and manner to minds that needed the plainest kind of instruction. It will be a good day for the ministry and the Church when the performance of a term of such itinerant service shall be exacted as part of the trials of every probationer before ordination.—P. 119.

This we take to be an emphatic indorsement of the old Methodist mode of training young ministers for their high vocation. It is a little curious to find that the only course which it was in the power of our Church in the beginning to take is, in these latter days, regarded by others as the highest wisdom. Part of the itinerant missionary service alluded to was performed on horseback, in Eastern Virginia, along the line of North Carolina, and occupied some six months. He then accepted, in conjunction with the Rev. Mr. Lacy, a call to a veritable circuit, on which there were six preaching places scattered over a territory sixty miles long and thirty miles wide. They traveled in true itinerant style, on horseback, with their books and clothes in saddle-bags. This circuit was soon divided,

Mr. Alexander taking for his share of it two Churches bearing the suggestive names of Briery and Cub Creek, when he was ordained in 1794, and installed the next year. Having labored here assiduously for about two years he was elected President of Hampden Sidney College, an institution which had, in the twenty-four years of its existence, attained the position of a respectable academy only, and at this particular date seemed to be in danger of dying for lack of patronage. Here he applied himself with energy and perseverance to the management of the institution, spending his Sabbaths in preaching to two regular congregations, besides irregular ministerial labors in the surrounding country, and devoting all the time that the school and the Churches left him to an omnivorous course of reading and study. He succeeded well in each of his triad of avocations.

In 1801 Mr. Alexander resigned both the presidency of the budding college and the charge of the Churches. He had overtaxed his physical strength and wished to recruit it, and, moreover, was desirous of making a journey through New Jersey, New York, and New England, and becoming acquainted with various ministers of note. The fifty pages which the biographer devotes to this journey are, in some respects, the most interesting portion of the volume, as they set forth a vivid picture of the times, the state of the country, the manners and the men of the day, with the various questions in theology which then formed the staple of polemics. Having been chosen by his presbytery a delegate to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which was to meet in Philadelphia in the month of May, he again brought out his itinerant equipments, packed his saddle-bags for the long journey, and set forth in the style of a true cavalier. On his way to Philadelphia he stopped for a few days in Louisa County, to pay a visit to Dr. James Waddel, one of the most noted Presbyterian ministers in the state. At one period of his life Dr. Waddel lost his eyesight, and did not regain it for several years; and it was of him that Wirt wrote his famous description of the Blind Preacher in the *British Spy*. In the General Assembly Mr. Alexander found some of the most eminent men of the times: Dr. Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Green, Woodhull, M'Knight, and others. Only seventeen presbyteries were represented, and there were but

three delegates from the Southern states. The Synod of Virginia reported that they had employed six missionaries to labor in the newly settled regions west of the Alleghany Mountains, and that good results had followed.

Mr. Alexander was appointed a delegate to the Congregational General Association of Connecticut, and, once more mounting his horse, proceeded in a leisurely manner on his journey northward. The first day's ride brought him to Trenton, N. J., and the next to Princeton, the place where he was destined to spend nearly forty years of his life. Here he renewed his acquaintance with Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, who, as he often remarked many years afterward, "was the most elegant gentleman he ever saw." "The beauty of his countenance, the clear and vivid complexion, the symmetry of his form, and the exquisite finish of his dress, were such as to strike the beholder at first sight." The clerical style of dress at that time was, sooth to say, a little imposing: large wigs and cocked hats were almost usually worn, and those who ministered to city congregations generally wore powder. At Danbury, Conn., he chronicles the fact that he saw there still in use the pillions on which the women rode to church behind their husbands and fathers. They arrived at Litchfield on the day when the General Association met. He remarks thus upon the sights which he saw: "The appearance of the old country clergymen was to me novel and grotesque. They came into town on horseback or in chaises, wearing cocked hats, and sometimes with queues dangling down the back. The opening sermon was preached by Dr. Perkins, of Hartford. The ministers all met at the house of the pastor, Mr. Huntington; and the first thing was a distribution of long pipes and papers of tobacco, so that the room was soon filled with smoke." The Association seemed to have but little business; no set speeches were made, and the session was short. Mr. Alexander again mounted his horse and continued his tour, visiting the noted ministers of the various localities, everywhere admiring the unaffected hospitality of New England, and recording his observations. Just at this time the Churches seem to have been most restless and unsettled; every minister whom he met was ready to throw down the glove for theologic combat; and every layman had a psalm, or a doctrine, or a tongue, or a revelation, or an

interpretation. To differ from others was deemed the laudable mark of an independent thinker; and men set up their private creeds with as much self-gratulation as *parvenus* set up their private carriages. The Independent theory of Church government relieved each pastor and congregation from all disciplinary accountability to their fellows; no official life could be lost in the arena, and the champion of the weakest novelty knew that even in defeat no more serious penalty awaited him than to be brained with a syllogism, or unhorsed with a quotation from the original Greek.

One question which was then mightily exercising New England theologians was: "Is God the efficient author of sin?" Dr. Hopkins, Dr. Emmons, and others were understood to hold the affirmative; while another party, of whom Drs. Nathan Strong and Timothy Dwight were the leaders, denied it. Controversy was also rife on the questions, Whether a supposed willingness to be damned should be deemed a valuable sign of electing grace; and whether the use of means of grace by the unregenerate ought to be recommended or denounced. All along his route he found the Hopkinsian controversy in full operation, and every minister whom he met seemed to consider it perfectly well-bred to ask his views of the points debated, and to state his own with all freedom.

At Franklin, Mass., Mr. Alexander spent some days with Dr. Emmons, one of the ablest of the followers of Dr. Hopkins, and learned to respect the man and the Christian, though he disclaimed all affinity for his peculiar creed. As he approached Boston he found that his horse and equipments began to attract no little attention; the spectacle of a clerical-looking gentleman, with valise, overcoat, and saddle-bags, mounted on a reformed Virginia racehorse, being an unprecedented one in those high latitudes. When he entered the city the loungers at the various hotels greeted him with such a concentrated stare, that he passed one public house after another without the courage to stop till he found that he had gone entirely through the town, and was passing over the bridge to Cambridge. The theological celebrities of the place roused his astonishment full as much as his saddle-bags and Virginia racer did that of the natives. His account of the state of opinion may well excite wonder at the present hour:

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There was as yet no public line of demarkation among the clergy. One might learn with ease what each man believed, or rather did not believe, for few positive opinions were expressed by the liberal party. Dr. Kirkland was said to be a Socinian, as was Mr. Topham, and Dr. Howard an Arian. Dr. Ekley had professed to be an Edwardean; but he came out, after my visit, a high Arian. Mr. Eliot was an Arian, Mr. Emerson a Unitarian of some sort, and Dr. Lathrop a Universalist. Dr. Freeman, one of the first who departed from orthodoxy, was the lowest of all, a mere humanitarian. He still used the book of Common Prayer, altered so as to suit his opinions. Dr. Morse was considered a rigid Trinitarian. Dr. Harris was reckoned a low Arminian, and became a thorough Unitarian.—P. 236.

After spending a week or ten days among the novel scenes and motley theologies of Boston, he once more took saddle. At Ipswich he made the acquaintance of Dr. Dana the elder, who had just been engaged in a controversy in regard to the means of grace, he and Dr. Tappan of Cambridge having been arrayed against Drs. Emmons and Spring. At Rowley he preached, and was followed home from the church by two of his hearers, one of whom was a deacon, that he might decide for them a metaphysical question over which they had been disputing for some time. The question duly propounded was this: "Is there anything in the mind besides exercises?" Having never heard of the "Exercise Scheme," he was at a loss to know what was the precise point of the controversy; but a cautious question or two brought the belligerents into noisy collision, and by causing them to expend their logic upon each other, forgetful of their umpire, saved him the trouble of giving an opinion. At Ipswich he found eight Congregational Churches, with their pastors, no two of whom agreed in doctrine, besides a Society of Freewill Baptists, who differed from the whole theological octave.

In passing from Massachusetts over the mountains of New Hampshire, he had an interview with the father of Daniel Webster. The old gentleman informed him that he had a son in college at Dartmouth, and talked in a way which made it "easy to see that he was proud of him." He afterward met young Daniel at Hanover, and, on commencement-day, heard him pronounce an oration, not on law or politics, but on the recent discoveries made in the science of chemistry. In the Church or on the highway, in the study or the parlor, at bed

and board, Mr. Alexander encountered controversy. On one occasion he overtook two ministers, total strangers to him, who were journeying in an old style gig. The strangers offered theological battle, and the contest became so animated that one of them volunteered to give Mr. Alexander his seat in the chaise and ride the saddle-horse, that the disputants might engage at close quarters. The offer was accepted, and so absorbed did the disputants become in the debate that several times they were nearly upset among the rocks.

At Shelburne he found a revival in progress, and was persuaded by the pastor of the church, the Rev. Mr. Packard, to remain and labor among the people for two weeks. One thing in the conduct of those who were professedly awakened gave him great surprise: "They sat still, and believed it improper to pray, or use any means except hearing, until they received the gift of a new heart." He "preached as usual," exhorting inquirers to read and pray, and labored with great acceptance, so that often the church would not hold the crowds that came to hear him. It may be remarked here that Mr. Alexander preached much throughout the whole tour, and that his sermons were everywhere received with great favor. Dr. Sprague, in the third volume of his *Annals*, published in 1858, remarks that "there are still persons living in New England who will speak in rapture of the wonderful effect which his eloquence produced upon them."

Turning once more in the direction of home, he proceeded at his leisure down the valley of the Connecticut, passed through New York city, Newark, and Elizabethtown, remaining a day or two in each place of interest, and preaching every Sabbath. At Princeton he attended the commencement exercises of the New Jersey College, and saw gathered there many of the leading men of his own denomination, lay and clerical, in the state. The trustees, after a hasty consultation on the stage, conferred on Mr. Alexander the degree of Master of Arts. After preaching a Sabbath or two in Philadelphia and Baltimore he hastened to Hopewell, the residence of Dr. Waddell, to whose daughter, Janetta, he was soon afterward united in marriage.

Thus ended a tour of great interest and profit to Mr. Alexander. Even to his old age he never grew weary of talk-

ing of it, finding in its well-remembered incidents a never-failing fund of amusement and instruction for himself and others.

Mr. Alexander now resumed the charge of the college and his two congregations, and for five years more, or from the thirtieth to the thirty-fifth year of his age, devoted himself assiduously to his multiplied duties as president, teacher, and pastor, besides pushing on, with all zeal and energy, the work of personal improvement. In the opinion of his biographer, he was now at the zenith of his power as a preacher. Certainly his reputation in his own state was very high, and he was steadily winning his way to a place among the leading minds of his denomination. Having received a call to Philadelphia, he resigned his presidency and his pastoral charge, and in April, 1807, was installed pastor of the Pine-street Presbyterian Church of that city. This same year he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly, which event, not of much significance in itself, was honorable to a man of thirty-five years, and had an important bearing upon his whole future life. Because he was Moderator in 1807, custom made it his duty to preach the annual sermon before the General Assembly in 1808. On that occasion he chose for his subject the Church and the Ministry, and treated at considerable length the question of preparation for the ministry, advocating the establishment of some kind of a theological school. At that time the custom was for the candidate for the ministry, after completing his academical course, to pursue the subject of theology under the direction of some settled minister, who directed his studies, criticized his juvenile sermons, and inducted him into the regular modes of pastoral duty. A sentence or two from the sermon will show the position which he took:

The first thing here which deserves our attention is the introduction of suitable men into the ministry. If you would have a well-disciplined army you must begin by appointing good officers. . . . In my opinion we shall not have a regular and sufficient supply of well-qualified ministers of the Gospel until every Presbytery, or at least every Synod, shall have under its direction a seminary established for the single purpose of educating youth for the ministry, in which the course of education from its commencement shall be directed to this object.—Page 297.

Dr. Ashbel Green, then pastor of a church in Philadelphia, and afterward President of Princeton College, held the same views; and the conviction of their correctness was gaining ground. In 1809 the Assembly took action in the case, and in 1812 the plans were matured and the first professor elected by the Assembly. The biographer quotes the following description of the election:

It was unanimously resolved to spend some time in prayer previously to the election, and that not a single remark should be made by any member in reference to any candidate before or after the balloting. Silently and prayerfully these guardians of the Church began to prepare their votes. They felt the solemnity of the occasion, the importance of their trust. Not a word was spoken, not a whisper heard as the teller passed around to collect the result. The votes were counted, the result declared, and the Rev. Dr. Alexander was pronounced elected. A venerable elder of the church in Philadelphia, of which Dr. Alexander was pastor, arose to speak, but his feelings choked utterance. How could he part with his beloved pastor? His tears flowed till he sat down in silence. . . . The Rev. Mr. Flinn [the Moderator] called on the Rev. Dr. Woodhull, of Monmouth, to follow in prayer. He declined. Two others were called on, and they declined, remarking that it was the Moderator's duty. He then addressed the throne of grace in such a manner, in such a strain of elevated devotion that the members of the Assembly all remarked that he seemed almost inspired. Weeping and sobbing were heard throughout the house.—Page 310.

Dr. Alexander was inaugurated into his new office on the 12th of August, 1812.

It was an occasion of great solemnity and feeling. The older ministers, especially those to whom the direction was intrusted, looked with parental yearnings on the infant seminary, and none were more ready to hail with thankfulness and hope the approach of new means for training the ministry than those excellent men, who lamented the scantiness of their own early opportunities.

Thus Dr. Alexander, in the meridian of his strength, was placed in the most responsible position, in the highest post of Christian honor, to which the respect and confidence of his brethren could exalt him. This year, 1812, was the middle year of his life. He was now forty years of age, and thenceforward his life was destined to flow on in a calm and even stream. For forty years, lacking a few months, he was senior professor in the seminary, faithfully and laboriously, with heart

and mind and strength, performing the duties whereunto he deemed himself called. His influence among his brethren grew wider and deeper as his mind gathered its stores of knowledge and experience; and with increasing years, public respect ripened into veneration. That he should be regarded as well-nigh infallible by the youth under his care is but natural; that the community in which he lived should hold him in great respect was also natural. But far outside of these narrow bounds his name had weight; and in the highest councils of his Church he was eminent as an adviser in doubtful junctures, and as a safe guide in difficult enterprises.

In the main business of his after life he prospered. The seminary, which began in 1812 with nine students, numbered fifty in attendance in ten years, and at the time of his death had nearly three times that number. Under his administration large and commodious buildings were erected, a fine library was collected, ample funds were raised and permanently invested, and all the appliances necessary to the accomplishment of a great educational work were gathered.

At rather a later period of his life than is common in the literary world, Dr. Alexander came before the public as an author. His first volume, entitled "A Brief Outline of the Evidences of the Christian Religion," was published in the year 1825, when he had already attained the age of fifty-three years; and was followed by a volume on the "Canon of the Old and New Testaments," (1825,) a hymn book, (1831,) "The History of the Log College," (1845,) "The History of African Colonization," (1846,) "The History of the Israelitish Nation," (1852,) "Outlines of Moral Science," (1852,) a volume of Sermons, and another on Religious Experience, together with a large number of sermons, addresses, and review articles on miscellaneous subjects.

In these labors of the pen, added to those which pertained to his regular official duties, with occasional sermons preached for his ministerial brethren in the neighboring towns and cities, the last forty years of his life glided away with the occurrence of few events such as arrest the attention of general readers. The biographer, therefore, bestows but half as much space upon this period as upon the earlier part of the life which he traces.

Dr. Alexander attained what may be called, in the full sense

of the words, a good old age. He retained his powers of mind and of body well to the very last. At the age of seventy-five he was more fleshy, more cheerful, and "enjoyed the sense of health more than in his years of prime." "His love of children, of family chat, of visits from friends, of psalmody, and of the daily journals was undiminished," and "even in natural things his last days were his best days." His letters show that he was continually meditating on his departure, and yet entering into no mental or moral shadow of death. As evinced in his public ministrations, as well as his family worship, his piety became more deep and fervent, and yet remained as cheerful and buoyant as ever. He still labored on industriously with voice and pen, lecturing before the students in the seminary, preaching for his ministerial brethren, and all the while intent on doing good, being fully persuaded that for an old man to "retire," as it is called, is to court imbecility.

But the inevitable, inexorable event came at last. In the seminary chapel, on the 7th of September, 1851, he preached the last sermon of a ministry of sixty years, and on the following Sabbath, at a sacramental service in the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, delivered his last public address. The same day in which he attended this latter service he became indisposed; nature yielded to a painless and yet rapid process of decay; and, like a piece of machinery from which the motive power has been detached, "the weary wheels of life" slackened in their revolutions, and on the 22d of the next month "stood still." His last moments were serene, and at times full of holy joy. It is said that he remarked to a friend who called to see him during his illness, that "all his theology had narrowed down to this: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

In closing our review of this admirable volume of biography, it does not enter into our plan to set forth any extended critical estimate of the native powers of mind, the literary acquisitions of Dr. Alexander, or the general character and extent of his influence in his own denomination and in the community. Evidence, derived from many sources, testifies to his ability as a preacher, especially during the period immediately preceding his removal from Virginia. As a writer, he was simple, clear, interesting, and instructive, without aiming at elaborate literary

finish. For the office of an instructor of youth, in which he spent more than a half century of his life, his clearness of thought, fullness of information, simplicity of language, and habits of unwearied application, give him peculiar fitness. His keen observation, retentive memory, and solid judgment made him a wise counselor and an invaluable friend. As a thinker, his habits of teaching were calculated to make him clear, full, and accurate, rather than creative and original. Cautious and conservative in a high degree, he sometimes in his public ministrations failed, we think, to act up to the measure of his responsibility. In the temperance discussion, for instance, his name was seldom mentioned, except as a city of refuge for those who, instead of engaging zealously in the unwelcome labor of reformation, contented themselves with finding fault with the measures which were adopted, and the men, who were honest, if not wise, in the good work; and to his influence we attribute much of the apparent coldness and indifference which many of the leading men of his denomination have evinced on the subject. How far his extreme sedentary habits, during the latter part of his life, by keeping him away from the sight of the evils of intemperance, may account for this, we essay not to determine. As a theologian, he was rigid and uncompromising, and, as his theory of regeneration indicates, a thorough Calvinist, holding that none are "redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."

As a minister of the Presbyterian Church, he was strongly attached to her doctrine and order, and abundant in labors to increase her strength and success. This loyalty and zeal we deem Christian virtues worthy of universal emulation. At the same time so prone are men to err that even our highest and most unselfish affections need watching. It is natural to infer, from the laws of mind, that fifty years spent in explaining and enforcing the same peculiar doctrinal propositions must deepen the impression of their truth and importance, and create in the teacher a tendency, of which he may not be fully conscious, to grade the intellect, piety, and learning of other men higher or lower, in proportion to the readiness with which they receive, and the tenacity with which they hold, those peculiar tenets. There is danger that the teacher who has argued both sides of

the same controversy so many times before his admiring pupils, and never once failed to make his own side achieve a triumphant victory, shall come at last to speak of his opponents with a subdued air of conscious superiority, and the humility of the Christian be somewhat alloyed with human vanity and pride. There are traces of this feeling in almost all the religious publications of the Alexander family, sometimes cropping out in an objectionable way, not very well calculated to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is very probable that the assumption of superiority by the adherents of one organization is offensive to others, because it is a direct attack upon their Church pride. Of all labors of love, there are few to which men apply themselves more willingly than to the cultivation of the grace of humility in other people. Making charitable allowance for human weakness, we nevertheless deem it not out of place to make the remark, in regard to the general subject, that it may be doubted whether it is right to cultivate this ideal sense of superiority as an element of denominational strength. The policy of teaching youth always to elevate their heads slightly when they speak of those who differ from them in opinion, may have the effect to make them hold the more strongly to their own circle, and work the harder for it; still the motive and the result, the cause and the effect, are of the flesh rather than of the Spirit.

In regard to the literary execution of the volume before us, the tribute of a gifted son to the memory of a gifted father, we can but say, in emphatic terms, that we deem it one of the very best modern contributions to the biographical department of our literature, and worthy to be studied as a model by all who contemplate writing memoirs either of themselves or of others.