

AN

ACT

FOR ESTABLISHING

A Theological Seminary,

PASSED AT PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 4, 1805,

BY THE

GENERAL SYNOD

OF THE

ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH,

IN

NORTH-AMERICA.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY HOPKINS AND SEYMOUR, NO. 118, PEARL-STREET.

1805.

AN ACT, &c.

WHEREAS the ministry of reconciliation is the great means instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ for perfecting his saints, and edifying his body ; and, *Whereas*, he has required in his word that they who are called to this excellent and important work, be furnished with gifts and graces above those of other believers ; especially, that they be faithful men ; apt to teach ; workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ; wise stewards to give the household their portion of meet in due season ; able to convince gainsayers, to stop the mouths of unruly and vain talkers ; to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine and authority ; and to know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, ruling well, and being ensamples to the flock—And, *Whereas*, the aforesaid qualifications, since the miraculous effusions of the divine Spirit have ceased, cannot be obtained in any other way than by his blessing upon the cultivation of natural talent, sanctified by his grace ; which cultivation consists in a good acquaintance with those various branches of literature, which are necessary for understanding, expounding, defending, and applying all the parts of revealed truth—And, *Whereas*, seminaries erected for the especial purpose of instructing the ris-

ing ministry in things immediately connected with their holy vocation, are the most probable means of attaining the proposed end, have been cherished by the Christian church with much affection from the earliest ages; and have been remarkably owned of God, for the preservation of her purity and glory—And, *Whereas*, the Lord has been graciously pleased to incline the hearts of Christians, both at home and abroad, to assist the Associate Reformed Church in the design of establishing such a seminary: Therefore,

The Ministers and Elders in general Synod convened, do hereby *Direct and Ordain*,

That their seminary be forthwith established in the city of New-York, for the sole purpose of preparing for the work of the ministry such young men as, having passed through a previous course of liberal education, shall resolve to consecrate themselves to the service of God in the gospel of his Son.

And the Synod further direct, That the course of instruction in said seminary be conducted by a professor in theology; to be chosen by their ballot at all times hereafter, and to hold his office and emoluments until removed by a vote of two-thirds of the General Synod: which vote shall not pass till a meeting subsequent to that at which it shall have been proposed; provided, that this shall not be construed to impair the power of the Synod, on any charge of gross error or immorality, to suspend a professor from the exercise of his functions, till judgment be definitively given.

And the Synod further direct, That the outline of instruction in the seminary be as follows: viz.

1. The scriptures themselves shall be the great subject of study.

2. The period of study in the seminary shall be four years ; and the session shall continue for seven months successively ; that is to say, from the first Monday of November till the first Monday of June.

3. These four years shall be divided into two equal parts ; and the course of study shall proceed as follows :—

Every student shall begin and close the day with exercises of secret devotion ; uniting to prayer the reading of a portion of God's word ; and using as a help some book of impressive practical religion. In these exercises he is to read the scriptures, not as a critic, but as a Christian ; as a *saved sinner*, who knows no other way of peace but that which belongs to him in common with the least of God's redeemed ; and who lives by faith, for daily counsel, and strength, and consolation, upon that Saviour whom he is afterwards to preach to others.

Such a portion of every day, (the Lord's day excepted) shall be devoted to the study of the scriptures in the original tongues, and of that literature which facilitates this study, as by a faithful improvement of time, may enable the student, at the expiration of his course, to read the originals with tolerable ease.

The holy scriptures in our common version shall be read in such daily portions, as shall finish the whole during the first period of two years : and to render the reading thereof more profitable, the professor of theology shall direct the student to succinct treatises on

scriptural subjects, *as they occur* ; and shall carefully examine him on these subjects.

Having completed this first reading of the scriptures, the student shall commence a second course of the same nature ; dividing it in such a manner as to finish it at the expiration of his last year. He shall now consult the originals, step by step, as he goes along ; and have his course of biblical reading extended under the direction of the professor.

With his third year the student shall commence the study of systematic theology : and, as a basis for it, he shall commit to memory, during the previous two years, the whole text of the Confession of faith and larger catechism. He shall read, on each topic, such proper books as may be digested within the time allotted, and may give him an acquaintance with the substance of the system.

The professor shall also lecture upon the primary topics of the system, following the general order of the Confession of faith. That his students may enjoy the benefit of his whole course of lectures, he must not fail to complete it within two years. And, on the other hand, that this time may be sufficient, his lectures are to be concise and dense, accommodated to the principle, that his work is not so much to furnish his pupils with thoughts, as to set them upon a proper train of thinking for themselves.

In the fourth year of the course, the professor shall also deliver critical lectures ; which are to embrace, not merely the philology of the context, but also its connexion, scope, and argument. No authority is to be admitted

in these lectures but that of the originals ; the student shall have them before him, and turn to the parallel texts cited by the professor. These texts are to be few, and well selected.

Every student shall prepare in his third year, two of those discourses commonly called lectures, and two popular sermons ; and in his fourth year, three of each ; neither to exceed half an hour when deliberately spoken. All the scriptural proofs, cited by a student in any exercise of his fourth year, must be referrible to the originals.

Hours of study must be so distributed as to leave a suitable portion to miscellaneous reading ; such as history, morality, belles lettres, &c. and to healthful bodily exercise.

And the Synod further direct—1. That every student, on his admission, bind himself in a written obligation, to strict obedience, to diligence, to peace, and not to propagate directly or indirectly any opinion or tenet whatever, contrary to the known faith of the Associate Reformed Church.

2. That students, who do not depend in any measure for their temporal support, upon the provision made or to be made for such as may be in indigent circumstances, shall pay into the hands of the professor, for the benefit of the seminary, the annual sum of 24 dollars.

3. That students of other denominations be admitted into the seminary upon the same terms as are exacted from those of the Associate Reformed Church ; and on condition of their paying into the hands of

the professor of theology, for the use of the seminary, the annual sum of 32 dollars.

4. That no person shall be admitted as a student, without producing satisfactory proof of the following particulars :—

That he has received a liberal education ; or has an adequate acquaintance with those branches of literature which usually enter into such an education :

That he is in full communion with the christian church :

That his habitual deportment is exemplary and prudent :

And, that his natural talents are such as, by an ordinary blessing upon their cultivation, may render him an able minister of the New Testament.

Presbyterial certificates, clear and explicit to the above purport, shall always be satisfactory.

5. That in so far as relates to the enjoyment of sacramental privilege, all students shall be considered as subject to the discipline of that congregation with which they statedly worship.

And the Synod further direct, That the care of the seminary be intrusted to five ministers of the Associate Reformed Church, to be called *superintendents of the seminary* ; who shall be chosen by the ballot, and hold their office during the pleasure, of the General Synod.

The said superintendents, or a major part of them, shall have full power and authority,

To direct the application of the plan of study delineated in this act :

To regulate the library, and order the purchase of such books as may be necessary for it :

To regulate the discipline of the seminary :

To judge of the progress of the students, so as to determine, without appeal, and at any stage of the course, whether a student can proceed with profit to himself and to the church of God ; or whether, and how far, he should be remitted to his former studies ; and for this end to appoint such tests of proficiency as they shall deem proper :

To make, generally, all by-laws for carrying into effect the design for which the seminary is instituted ; provided, that they be not contrary to the constitution of the Associate Reformed Church, nor to any act of the General Synod.

It shall be the duty of the said superintendents to visit the seminary annually, on the Wednesday immediately preceding the last Wednesday of May—to consult with the professor on points not immediately involving his personal responsibility—to keep exact records of their proceedings—and to report to the General Synod, at the meeting next ensuing their said visitation, the state of the seminary, their own transactions, and such other things as they may judge necessary.

The decisions and regulations of the superintendents shall have full force and virtue, unless repealed by themselves, or by the General Synod : provided always, that contumacy on the part of a student toward any of the said decisions or regulations, during a visitation by the superintendents, shall be punished with immediate expulsion from the seminary ; and that the offender shall not be restored but in virtue of exemplary penitence, and by an act of the General Synod.

If a vacancy shall happen by death, resignation, or

otherwise, in the board of superintendents, they shall have power to fill said vacancy till the next meeting of General Synod ; and shall then present to the Synod the names of two persons for each vacancy ; and of these two the Synod shall choose one by ballot, to supply the vacancy for which the nominations shall be presented respectively.

If any of the superintendents shall be absent from two annual visitations successively, without assigning any satisfactory reason therefor, such absence shall be considered as a resignation, and his seat vacated accordingly.

The superintendents shall elect their own officers.

They shall have power to draw upon the treasurer of the Synod for the amount of their expenses contracted by their annual visitation to the seminary, and the duties therewith connected ; and the treasurer shall without delay pay said amount.

And the Synod further direct, That every Presbytery, as they shall have opportunity during the recess of the seminary, take cognizance of the improvement and conduct of their students ; but that no Presbytery shall remove a student from the seminary, without the special leave of the superintendents ; which leave, if his removal be solicited with the view of licensing him to preach, shall not be granted, unless the superintendents shall judge him qualified ; nor shall any Presbytery take a student upon trials for license, without a certificate from the superintendents bearing their judgment that he is suitably qualified.

And the Synod further direct, That no student shall receive a certificate, as aforesaid, from the superinten-

dents, unless, in addition to the essential requisite of a christian walk while at the seminary, he be able, as a part of his literary qualifications, to translate into correct English the Pentateuch and Psalter from the Hebrew, and the New Testament from the Greek, *ad aperturam libri.*

And the Synod further direct, That so much of the expense necessary for the maintenance of students in the communion of the Associate Reformed Church. as shall exceed the sum which they may be able to pay, and shall not be provided for in any other manner, be defrayed out of the revenue appropriated to the seminary.

And the Synod direct and ordain, That no alteration shall be made in the plan of education established by this act, until it shall have been proposed at a stated meeting of the General Synod, and passed by a vote of two-thirds of the members, at a subsequent stated meeting.

By order of the Synod,

JAMES MAIRS, Moderator.

JAMES GRAY, Clerk.

Further extracts from the Minutes of the General Synod—1805.

Resolved, That the professor be, and hereby is, directed to commence the course of instruction prescribed by the “act relative to a Theological Seminary,” on the first Monday in November next.

Resolved, That the superintendents be, and they hereby are, directed to meet on the first Monday in November next, at the city of New-York, for the purpose of organizing the seminary; and fixing the place which the students, who have already spent some time

in the study of theology, shall occupy in the course of instruction prescribed by the act of Synod of this date.

Resolved, That the different Presbyteries be forthwith informed of the establishment of a seminary for the instruction of youth in the knowledge of theology, and enjoined to send their students to the city of New-York, at the time appointed for opening said seminary.

Resolved, That measures be immediately taken to have all our ministers supplied with the scriptures in the original tongues, and with proper helps for prosecuting the study of them.

Resolved, That every minister be enjoined to pursue, in so far as it shall be applicable to his circumstances and consistent with his engagements, a course of biblical reading similar to that which is recommended in the report on the plan for the seminary, to which they are referred.

Resolved, That every Presbytery be, and they hereby are directed, to devote a suitable portion of time, at least once in six months, to the investigation of portions of the original scriptures, previously selected for the purpose : That at least one of their number, taken in rotation, shall, at such meeting, deliver a critical dissertation upon some scriptural subject to be previously assigned him; and that they keep a regular journal of their literary transactions, and preserve the dissertations among their papers.



The superintendents of the seminary are, the Rev. Mess'rs ROBERT ANNAN ; JOHN M^cJIMSEY ; ALEXANDER PROUDFIT ; JAMES GRAY, D. D. ; and JAMES LAURIE.

A
LETTER

TO THE

MEMBERS

OF THE

ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH,

RELATIVE TO

A Theological Seminary.

A LETTER, &c.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE printed minutes of the proceedings of the General Synod at their meeting in May last, will inform you, that, through the good hand of their God upon them, they have at length succeeded in establishing a theological seminary. This institution, the sole end of which is to prepare for the work of the ministry young men whose hearts God hath touched, will recommend itself to public-spirited Christians. A slight acquaintance with the situation of our country will convince them that there is a most lamentable want of men to “labour in word and doctrine;” especially of “workmen who need not to be ashamed.” And it is most certain, that not every pious and zealous man is fit to be a builder in the house of God. They who are to instruct, must be instructed. They who are to “bring out of their treasury things new and old,” must have their treasury stored with old things and new. *The priest’s lips should* KEEP KNOWLEDGE ; *and they should seek the* LAW AT HIS MOUTH ; for he is the *messenger of the Lord of hosts*. It is not seemly that one invested with such a character, and called to such functions, should be “unskilful in the word of righteousness.”

If he be “mighty in the scriptures,” and prudent in his carriage; living under the power of those truths which he preaches to others; he will “commend himself to every man’s conscience;” he will feed his flock “with knowledge and understanding;” and will reflect honour upon the gospel. If, on the other hand, his attainments be slender; if, with the exception of some plain doctrinal passages, the bible be to him a sealed book; if he be not able to remove ordinary scruples, nor to stop the mouths of gain-sayers; if serious and sensible hearers do not obtain more satisfactory views of divine things and the divine word, *with* his aid, than *without* it; he may enjoy a transient popularity; he may even become the leader of an impassioned multitude; but he will not “build up believers in their most holy faith;” he will not be surrounded by steady Christians whose firmness may be counted upon in the hour of trial; nor, in the end, will he fail to bring contempt upon himself, and, what is infinitely worse, a reproach upon the religion of Jesus Christ. None decry talents and learning in the ministry but those who, being destitute of both, “understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” And if they assume to be teachers themselves, it is the interest of their vanity to prevent others from rising above their own level. However such men rail against literature, be assured, brethren, that an ignorant ministry is a dreadful curse. You have only to inspect the nature of the case and the history of past times, to perceive its mischievous tendency. Yet this is the very evil to which the age inclines. You recoil at the thought of its progress; and you ask, How shall it be

arrested? We answer, that while the Lord alone can teach men to speak because they believe ; and while he alone can thrust forth labourers who shall be ultimately successful, there are means within your own reach ; means, the use of which you may lawfully connect with the hope of his blessing ; and of which the *further* neglect will bring guilt upon your consciences, calamity upon your churches, and, it may be, ruin upon your children. The means to which we more particularly refer, is,

Provision for the instruction of your

FUTURE MINISTERS.

The Synod, thus far, have done their part. They have seized the earliest opportunity of founding a seminary where youth may acquire much of that cultivation which is indispensable to a well appointed ministry. Had their encouragement been greater, they would have adopted this measure sooner ; and it is not *their* fault that the churches are not now rejoicing in its happy effects. But though they have encountered many embarrassments ; though they have seen, with anguish, the backwardness of their people in supporting their efforts ; yet they cherish strong hopes from the turn which matters have more recently taken. The liberality of Christians abroad which has furnished them with an excellent library ; the reviving spirit which pervades some parts of their own body at home ; and their harmony in digesting the plan of instruction, they would consider as presages that their “ labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

On perusing their “ *Act relative to a Theological Se-*

minary," you will observe that they aim at a more extensive and solid education for the ministry than has been usual in these states. They are sensible that their plan is at war with those loose and superficial habits which threaten the extirpation of all sound learning : that some will think the period of instruction too long—that others will suppose the extent of the country requires different seminaries—and that many will view the expense as an insuperable obstacle. All these things have been anticipated. The deliberations of the Synod were never more cautious, than when occupied with the affairs of their seminary. Difficulties were carefully surveyed ; and, excepting a small division on a very few of the less important articles, you have, in their act, the expression of their unanimous voice.

1. Aware how criminal it is to trifle with those invaluable interests which are committed to the ministry of reconciliation, they resolved to inquire, not what is customary, but what is right. to make a stand against the inroads of destructive fashion ; and to fix the education of their own youth upon a proper basis. Under such impressions they have appointed a course of studies which they *know* to be of the *first necessity* ; and which, with the Lord's blessing, will repay the diligence of the student, and the patronage of the churches.

2. In the present relaxed state of preparation for the ministry, it is not unnatural that *four years* should appear to many an unreasonable length of time to be consumed in previous study. The answer is plain. Four years run rapidly by. Indolence or conceit may fret at the detention : but the modest youth who hus-

bands his opportunities will not find an hour to linger. Such as can form an estimate of Christian literature, will pronounce the period to be short enough. Such as cannot, and are therefore incompetent judges, should submit to the opinion of those who have made the trial ; and have ascertained by sorrowful experience, how hard, often how impossible it is, *after* entering into the ministry, to complete those studies which ought to have been completed *before*.

“ The wants of the churches,” have no force in this argument ; because it is infinitely better for them to wait a little longer, and be well supplied, than to be condemned to spiritual penury for a series of years, by the settlement of unqualified men : and because the delay will be felt only for a year or two *at first* ; after which, if the seminary be fed, there will be a regular succession of preachers.

3. The immense tract of country over which our congregations are scattered, and the hardship of travelling from the extremes, do certainly render it inconvenient to assemble our students in one place : and it may be asked, why steps were not taken to meet this difficulty in the beginning ? Why several seminaries are not erected in such a manner as to consult our geographical positions ? The questions are natural ; and merit respectful notice. It may be replied, in general, that we cannot control circumstances, but are controlled by them. And a number of them have concurred to hinder, at present, the planting of more seminaries than one.

1st. It has been a work of nine years to plant *one* ;

and common prudence dictates that this one should be watered, and take root, and gather strength, before we think of more. The whole supply will be little enough for its nourishment ; and if it be distributed among a number, none of them will have sufficient, and all will languish.

2d. At the commencement of a new system of education, it is wise to have our attention and affections concentrated : that the experiment may be fair, the plan perfected, and a model framed for future and subordinate institutions. Communities, like individuals, succeed best by doing *one thing at a time*. If different parts of a body which has not yet organized its strength, pursue, at once, different objects of the same kind, more toil and money will be expended, and less done to the purpose, than if the whole act together, and bring their united force to bear upon the several points of a common system, as their need shall direct, and their means permit.

3d. A theological seminary, without a library, is good for nothing. Every one, therefore, must have its own library. To divide that which is already in the Synod's possession, would be to destroy it, and misapply the bounty of their benefactors. The books which would be most indispensable to other seminaries, are precisely those which can least be spared. And to furnish every seminary with a library for itself, would absorb a larger capital than can be raised ; not to mention that a number of the most useful books are very scarce, and are not to be had in this country ; and frequently not from Europe, even were there no want of money.

4th. The advantages of several seminaries would hardly compensate, as yet, for the additional trouble and cost. The distance from each, though certainly less, would still be great to a large portion of the students; and the *real* benefit confined to a few. Perhaps, too, the disadvantages, in other particulars, might overbalance the advantage of local accommodation. After all, both good and evil are magnified in prospect; and it is neither impossible nor improbable that our difficulties will be less formidable in fact than they are in speculation.

Lastly—*One* seminary is now adequate, and will be adequate for some time hereafter, to the whole number of our students. When it shall cease to be so, will be the proper season for projecting more.

4. The inexpediency of more seminaries than one being admitted, many may still suppose that the spot for that one has not been well selected. Cities are generally expensive; and New-York is undeniably so at this moment. Young men, who could support themselves comfortably at home or in some more retired situation, will find their resources too scanty for New-York; and many be deterred by that alone from the prosecution of their studies.

The difficulty is obvious; and is one of the most serious which we have to encounter. It is not, however, insurmountable; and there are considerations, which, when duly weighed, may reconcile the churches to the place as well as to the plan.

An effective seminary must be attended with ex-

pense, wherever it be fixed : and an expense greater than would be suspected by such as are not accustomed to the proper computations. The notion of an institution that shall cost nothing, or but a trifle, and shall yet educate, in a suitable manner, the rising ministry of a church respectable for numbers, and extending every day, is no better than a dream. Her friends, therefore, must either abandon the design altogether, and with it their own most precious interests ; or they must incur expense, and devise methods of meeting it. There is no other alternative ; and it would be folly to conceal or disguise the truth. In deciding on the *place*, their first inquiry is, *Where their object can be best obtained ?*

If there be a choice of situations, they will, of course, compare the advantages and disadvantages of each, with a special reference to their finances. And after they have reviewed all those which would answer their purpose, they may discover, that in a place where much would be saved on some accounts, much would be lost on others ; but that the difference, *upon the whole*, is not so great as to justify the smallest risk of injuring their institution.

Reasons will suggest themselves to a reflecting mind for preferring a spot among the *older* settlements. The state of society is more matured, more stable, and therefore yields not only more convenience, but also a surer rule of calculation : Pecuniary and literary aid can more easily be had ; and is less liable to interruption. Ordinances, ministers, judicatories, are more accessible. The students must be expected to bear some proportion to the population ; and it is prudent

to consult the comfort of the greatest possible number. But, to whatever district your seminary be assigned, you must select for its scite a country-place, or a village, or a large town or city. Without minutely examining their relative pretensions, it may be remarked,

1. That in either of the first two, it might be necessary to erect *buildings*, and to provide the whole support of the teacher, *neither of which are wanted at present*. Now the interest of the capital sunk in the one, with occasional repairs ; and the revenue appropriated to the other, would be more than the excess of other expenses attached to a city-establishment, above those of an establishment in the country, or a village.

2. That, in the nature of things, an extra-share of expense will fall upon that portion of the church which immediately encircles the seminary ; and therefore it ought to be set down in a place which will not be materially affected by such a circumstance. Were it endowed with ample funds, this argumentation would be superseded ; but in its infant state is decisive ; and, in conjunction with other things, will show that the Synod have not been ill-advised in pitching upon New-York.

Such a place has advantages which are worth paying for. Choice of Christian society ; all sorts of literary help ; opportunities of seeing a variety of gifts and excellencies in different stations ; of studying the human character under a multitude of aspects, and with little trouble, &c. all which are without price to an ingenious and observant youth. Our people in New-York have cherished the seminary with peculiar affection. Their contribution, always liberal, amounted for the

last year, to more than double any former sum*. There is no prospect of its diminishing, but rather of its increase. The presence of the students will tend to keep alive this laudable zeal ; and to attract the patronage of individuals whom God has distinguished with this world's good. Nor is it unlikely that a removal of the seminary would be followed with a greater reduction of income than of expenditure.

Much being thus secured on the score of general utility, and nothing surrendered on that of economy, there can be no just ground of complaint against the existing arrangement : and it becomes the common concern to facilitate the operations of our long wished for institution.

Let our friends and brethren correctly understand what is expected. The students must apply to their studies without distraction. Some of them will require no pecuniary assistance : some must be supported in part ; and some altogether. That they may not " lose the things which they have wrought," the Synod must have it in their power to say to their youth, " Be under no anxiety for your maintenance ; produce what you can ; and if it be not enough, we will take care of the balance. Only be sober, be diligent ; and repay in improvement what you receive in money." If this be not accomplished, past efforts and liberality are thrown away ; and, humanly

* The aggregate of contributions to the public fund, for the year ending May 1805, is 1580 dollars ; and of this, 804 dollars are from the city of New-York.

speaking, there is nothing now wanting to carry into effect a better system of preparation for the holy ministry than has been hitherto introduced into the United States, but a little exertion on the part of our churches ; nothing but a decent regard to some of the strongest obligations which can bind the soul of a Christian. We beseech you, brethren, by the tender mercies of our God ; by the value which you set upon his gospel ; by your sympathy with those who languish under a famine of his word ; by your regard for the spiritual welfare of your own children, when you shall have gone to give up your accounts ; that you refuse not to encourage and assist the youth who step forward to consecrate themselves to the service of the Lord your Redeemer. They are your property ; they are your hope. No man can tell what blessings he may be instrumental in bringing down upon himself, his family, his neighbourhood, his country, by fostering an institution from which are to issue future ambassadors of the cross. Such institutions were among the earliest cares of the primitive and reformed churches ; and to their influence, under the sanctification of the good Spirit of your God, do you owe the soundness of your faith ; the purity of your worship ; your religious light ; that very ministry which you profess to revere and to love—nay, that divine scripture which is in your hands. Far from you be the base and ignoble principle which would whisper that “ you have no more to do with “ those who dedicate themselves to the ministry, than “ with apprentices to any other employment, till they of-

“fer themselves, already prepared, for your approba-
 “tion.” He is a singular Christian who can persuade
 himself that the church of God, which has a charge over
 every baptized infant, has no concern in the rearing of
 those who are to dispense to her the word of life.
 And far from you be the principle, equally base and ig-
 noble, which stops the ears and closes the hand, when-
 ever a pittance is asked for the most sacred use. A
little from each of you will nurture a seminary which,
 so far as human means can go, bids fair to adorn your
 pulpits with “burning and shining lights.” Yours
 will be the consolation of compliance, and yours the
 guilt of neglect. You may say, that “we cannot tell
 “whether the young men whom we propose to educate
 “for the ministry, will answer our expectations : that,
 “after they have been trained up at our expense, they
 “may desert our connexion, or betake themselves to
 “other professions ; and, therefore, that it is profusion,
 “and not charity to lay out money upon such an expe-
 “riment.” Be it so ! but, for consistency’s sake, let
 the same doctrine govern you in other things. Never
 put a plough into the ground ; because you cannot tell
 whether your crop may not be blasted, and then you
 will lose your seed. Never send your son to school ;
 because you cannot tell but he may abuse his know-
 ledge to the breaking of your heart ; and then it would
 have been better for him to be as ignorant as the beast
 he rides upon ; and you will lose the expense of his
 tuition into the bargain. There is no one duty which
 such an objection cannot set aside. Means are ours ;
 events are God’s. And we have no more right to ex-

pect that he will provide our churches with ministers, if we omit the appropriate means of obtaining them, than that he will clothe our fields and replenish our garner, if, under pretext of trusting in his providence, we never handle a plough or a sickle ! If any one pretend, that in soliciting your beneficence to their public fund, the Synod have laid schemes for oppressing or incommoding you hereafter, he is either deceived or wicked. They have freely communicated their plans : Let facts interpret their motives. And when, on looking around, you behold every Presbytery under their inspection deriving benefit, directly or indirectly, from the application of their fund ; pronounce for yourselves, whether they have plotted your hurt, or sought your happiness. With boldness, therefore, they appeal to you *again*. Thrice have they, in their judicial capacity, laid before you, on this subject, their ardent wishes founded on your own wants—in their act concerning a Synodical fund, passed May 1796 ; and in their pastoral addresses of 1801 and 1802. Their recommendations have been seconded by the voice of Presbyteries and ministers ; yet it has been their mortification to witness a strange supineness in many of their congregations. Will you not permit them, brethren, to augur better things ? Shall your name, year after year, be stigmatized with the reproach of withholding a trifle of your substance from a generous attempt to build up the church of your God ? How does *such* a reluctance, in a matter involving both your honour and your privilege, consist with spiritual-mindedness, and “ a treasure laid up in heaven ? ” How can you sit down under the shame of being less concerned for yourselves

than are Christians at the distance of 3000 miles, whose munificence has enabled you to begin your seminary with high advantage, and left to your public spirit the light and pleasant task of carrying it on ? How can you reconcile it to your sense of justice, that a small portion of your brethren should lavish their property in bearing your burdens ; while many of you, *more opulent than some who have set you an example*, not only decline bearing their burdens in turn, but even touching *your own* with one of your fingers ? Had all acted thus ; had all been eager to reap the profit of exertions not their own, what now had been our situation ! Some congregations which are settled, would have been still vacant—some vacancies that were languishing, and begin to flourish, would have been dispersed. In other places ministers would have been worn out in extra duties, and their charges deprived of labours which they now stately enjoy. It is as clear as the light, that in so far as our public fund has been the instrument of our prosperity, those congregations and individuals who contribute not their quota, are really, though unintentionally, working for the common ruin. And if this same disposition continue, much more if it spread, the most sanguine will, at length, be discouraged, and the most patient grow weary *. The fabric which we are striving to rear will crumble

* Numbers who have contributed cheerfully from the very first, are so indignant at the indifferent, not to call it the sordid, conduct of many of their brethren who are at least as deeply interested as themselves, that nothing but a sense of duty and the habit of doing praiseworthy deeds, has induced them to persevere.

to pieces ; the hope of a skilful ministry will vanish ; and all the dismal consequences will lie at the door of those who withdrew their shoulders from the yoke.

If we use not flattering words, brethren, it is because we are deeply serious ; and because we are well assured, that if your seminary perish, there is no human expedient to save your churches from desolation. Here, then, is an object which entering into the essence of your social stability, prefers a claim upon your purse, which you cannot innocently resist. In vain do you “ pray that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed, and the kingdom of grace advanced,” if you will *give nothing* toward the means to which the Lord has directed for that end. We repeat it, *a little* from each of you is enough. Who will grudge a few miserable shillings once a twelvemonth, in an affair of such magnitude ? Who will be the poorer at the year’s end ? or venture to insinuate that the Son of God, whose is “ the earth and the fulness thereof,” will remain in his debt for such a donation ? The duty is plain, the promise pointed. “ Honour the Lord with thy substance, and “ with the first fruits of all thine increase ; so shall “ thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall “ burst out with new wine.” Do not act, brethren, as if the word of your God were unworthy of your trust. Let it never be forgotten that he *will have a share of our property* ; and if we defraud him of our free-will offering,—of the “ first fruits of all our increase,” he will wrest from our hands that abused wealth for which we do not make him an acknowledgment *in kind*. Many a delinquency of this sort has been punished with a bad debt, or a bad crop : and no man ever gains

by the commutation. The winds of heaven, the devouring insect, or a famishing drought, often takes away more at a blow, than would be demanded for sacred uses in twenty years. Come, then, brethren, and let us join our tribute to the temple of God. Follow up with your public spirit the token for good which we already see. Gladden the hearts of those noble youth who are very jealous for the Lord God of hosts ; and who look to you as patrons and benefactors. *As the Lord hath prospered you*, is the rule. Let the rich man rise up with his gold ; and let not the widow blush for her mite. The Lord will see, and will graciously reward : for “ he loveth a cheerful giver.” It is, moreover, a statute of his kingdom, that “ he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.” Do you believe his truth ? Let the proof appear in your next, and the succeeding, annual returns. Not one of you will repent as having done *too much*, when he comes to the bed of death, and contrasts things carnal and temporal, with things spiritual and eternal. Refresh our bowels, brethren. And may the Lord himself “ open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing till there be not room to receive it !”

By order of the General Synod,

J. M. MASON,
A. PROUDFIT.

New-York, 1805.