Theological Library
from the
Author

A PLEA

FOR THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AT

PRINCETON, N. J.

BY

PHILIP LINDSLY.

TRENTON,

PRINTED BY GEORGE SHERMAN.

1821

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following discourse was delivered before the Presbytery of New-Brunswick, at their meeting in Trenton, on the sixth day of October, 1818. Neither at that time, nor at any time since, until within a few days past, had the author the most distant thought of publishing it. He was soon apprized, indeed, that he had given offence. This he regretted, because he had not designed it, and because he wished to do *good* and not *evil*, to promote *peace* and not *discord*, whenever it should be his lot to address his fellow sinners from the pulpit. He suffered, however, the harsh remarks which were made, by some *ignorantly*: by others, perhaps, not in the spirit of *genuine charity*, to pass altogether unnoticed: supposing that time would speedily consign the whole matter to oblivion. In this expectation he has been disappointed. He has been recently informed, that many things, *not exactly according to knowledge or truth*, continue to be said to his disadvantage, and that he is still labouring under certain imputations and charges, grounded, as he believes, on a misapprehension or on a misrepresentation of expressions then employed, or opinions then uttered. This, however, would be a matter of but little moment to himself or others, were it not that *truths* and *principles* of real importance and general interest are usually somewhat involved in the sentence pronounced on their advocate and defender. He thinks, therefore, that he had better submit the discourse, with all its imperfections, to the candid scrutiny of the public: or, at least, of the few friends who have manifested some little anxious curiosity about it, than to suffer it any longer to be spoken of from the report of those who have seen fit so entirely to mistake and misstate its character. He wishes that those who choose to censure, may have before their eyes *correct data* on which to rest their statements: and that those who are more kindly disposed, may examine and judge for themselves.

Should any one read the piece with a *critick's* eye, it is but justice to the author to inform him that he ought to regard it merely as an *extemporaneous* harangue. Such it truly was, so far as any thing *written*, can be thus denominated. It was prepared under circumstances in which no man would choose to appear before the public. For the *sentiments* expressed, he holds himself fully responsible.

He now presents the whole performance to the public precisely as he pronounced it: without the alteration, or omission, or addition of a single word, or syllable, or letter. And he does so, that it may not be even pretended, that the discourse as *printed*, is a different thing from the one *delivered*. He pledges his veracity for the correctness of this declaration. And what is more, he is able to prove it.

The author would gladly have availed himself of an author's privilege of correcting much, adding a little, and suppressing a great deal, but for the reason assigned. Or rather, he would have preferred silence altogether.

He hopes that the publication will do no injury, particularly to the noble cause which he has, with some portion of zeal, essayed to espouse.

He is indifferent about personal consequences.

"Magna est veritas, et prævalebit."

Princeton, July 1821.

DISCOURSE.

EXODUS, CHAP. XXXV. VER. 21. 29.

"*And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.*"

"*The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring, for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.*"

Chap. 36; ver. 5, 6, 7.—"*And they spake unto Moses, saying, the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make.*"

"*And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.*"

"*For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.*"

THE Bible warns us to beware of the world:—not to be too much involved in its cares, pursuits, and interests:—not to make it our idol, our trust, our chief good:—but to use it so as not to abuse it:—thankfully to employ such portion of its good things as may fall to our lot in works of charity and mercy; of humanity and religion: and with our condition, whatever it be, to be contented:—to be diligent in business, and yet not to be over anxious about what we shall eat or drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed.

Some preachers of the gospel in their zeal, it is to be apprehended, occasionally transcend the scriptural limits in their denunciations of the world, and in their warnings against it. It would seem as if their remarks frequently implied a censure on the ordinary industry and enterprise of men in worldly business. As if it were vanity, and folly, and sin, to be industrious, prudent,

and economical to such a degree as to accumulate property beyond the supply of present wants. Now, if we take a very slight view of the actual state of society around us, we shall find that temperance, sobriety, justice, liberality, and all the virtues, are more prevalent among the industrious, thrifty, money-making class of our citizens, than among any or all others. And of course, that this description of the community is decidedly the best.

To support one's family; to educate one's children; to make provision for old age, for sickness, for casualities or adverse dispensations of providence; to acquire the means of assisting the necessitous, of supporting the gospel, of promoting all beneficial, charitable, and religious institutions and enterprises, are lawful incentives to strive by honest industry to obtain so much of this world's treasures as will suffice for these important purposes. Thus far I may safely go. But where precisely to stop, is not so easy to decide. That there must ever be great diversity in the conditions of men, as regards external circumstances, none, I presume, will question. With the same motives therefore to exertion in all, there will be various and extremely dissimilar results: arising from the different degrees of intelligence, enterprise, perseverance, skill, management, and (what is commonly styled) good fortune, with which they undertake and prosecute their several schemes for the attainment of wealth. It is impossible then to fix the exact boundaries at which they ought to desist; since it is manifest that they are not to come out equal in the race, whatever may be their desires, and pains, and efforts.

One thing however, in the way of limitation, I think I may be warranted in laying down; and that is, that it is inconsistent with the precepts of religion for a man to seek to accumulate property for selfish purposes merely, or to such an extent as to render his children independent, or, in other words, to leave them so much wealth as to enable them to live luxuriously without any species of employment, or care, or industry on their part. And this limitation in the pursuit of riches is pointed out by sound wisdom and human policy, as good and reasonable. Universal experience demonstrates that it is dangerous to pass it, and likely to defeat the very end which the avaricious and ambitious themselves have in view in amassing wealth; which generally is, to secure ease, and affluence, and honour to their posterity. The heir very frequently squanders foolishly the treasures laid up by industry and frugality. But without dwelling longer on these matters, I remark, that as there are very few persons in this part of our country who are likely to reach this extravagant height of fortune, so it is the less necessary to caution men against it. I leave my hearers therefore, undisturbed in their various pursuits, provided they be honest, and provided they do not make a *god* of the world, and bid them be diligent in business, and to grow moderately rich if they can.

I am now going to tell them what to do with their money when they get it.

They are not to spend it for their own gratification:—not to pamper lust, or pride, or vanity: not to encourage idleness and dissipation among their children, but for a thousand useful and benevolent purposes. A few of which I will briefly mention.

1. Every man, blessed with the means, is under as much obligation to render assistance to a poor suffering neighbour as he is to pay a just debt. The indigent and the wretched have claims on his property, which, if he refuse to satisfy, he is condemned by the law of God, as much as if he were to defraud them of their wages.

2. He is bound, according to his ability, to contribute to the support of the gospel in his own vicinity: to aid in building, and in keeping in good repair, a church, or house for public worship, which will accommodate *all* the people, rich and poor, within a particular district, and to contribute liberally towards the maintenance of a respectable minister of the gospel. And here, in passing, I shall take the liberty to observe, that very few men seem to entertain any just idea at all about this matter of supporting a pastor. There is not one clergyman of twenty in our country who receives an adequate pecuniary support from his congregation. In proof of this assertion, I appeal to the fact, that so many are obliged to keep schools, to labour on farms, to take boarders, or to resort to some other occupation in order to add a trifle to the scanty pittance allowed them by their people.

Correct sentiments are not generally entertained on this subject. Men seem to forget that a clergyman has wants of precisely the same nature with their own. That himself and family must be fed and clothed and his children educated. That it is just as much his duty as it is of any christian to provide for the future.

But besides the ordinary demands for money to which he is subject equally with other men, there are some specialties in his case which render a larger provision necessary for him. Every clergyman, for instance, ought to be enabled to own a valuable library, or else every congregation ought to collect a public library for the use of both pastor and people. And ten thousand dollars would be a sum small enough for any wealthy congregation to expend on this object.*

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* Such a sum, or even one much larger, might be raised by a *rich* congregation in the space of a very few years without burthening an individual. But if it were done within fifty or an hundred years by small annual appropriations, still the object would be ultimately attained. And no congregation is so *poor* but that it might furnish a small sum annually for this purpose;—say twenty, thirty, fifty, or a hundred dollars. Such a sum judiciously expended

A minister of the gospel ought to be freed, as far as practicable, from worldly cares and pursuits. He ought to be distinguished for liberality and hospitality. He ought to have it in his power to set an example to his flock in these respects. To give to all public, charitable, and religious institutions handsomely and munificently. In a word, to be the almoner of his people. This he cannot be without a suitable revenue. And it often happens that a clergyman is charged with meanness, because he is obliged to economize rigidly; to live coarsely, and to make use of every honest means to get along: or, what is the truth, his people are covetous and withhold from him a decent allowance for his services. I might say a great deal on this subject and without the imputation of being an interested party. I wish that it may be honestly canvassed and thoroughly understood by all the good people of our land.

3. There are various other objects which have claims on the purses of the rich, and on all in proportion to the means with which Providence has favoured them. Some of these are nearer at hand, others more remote. Such as schools, especially charity and Sunday schools for the education of the poor: missionary, tract, and bible societies: and in general, all institutions which have for their object the temporal, moral, spiritual, and eternal welfare of our fellow men.

4. But the object to which I design principally to invite your most serious attention at this time, and for which I have selected my text by way of accommodation, is the *Theological Seminary* lately established by the supreme judicatory of our church; and which is yet almost struggling for existence.

The want of such an institution had long been perceived and lamented by the wisest and most enlightened christians in our country. The difficulties which were anticipated, were of so formidable a character, as for years to deter the boldest spirits from venturing to exert themselves, agreeably to their wishes, for its establishment. At length the attempt was made. And its incipient progress and prosperity have been such as to cheer the hearts of all the genuine friends of enlightened piety throughout our land. The corner-stone has been laid amidst many discouraging embarrassments; but consecrated by the prayers and the faith of the few who could look beyond these momentary obstacles to that never failing *source* whence originates every wise and truly benevolent plan, and from which alone adequate and seasonable support can be confidently expected.

would in time procure a very valuable collection of books for the mutual benefit of pastor and flock. The advantages of such a system cannot be detailed in a note like this. And they were thought so obvious by the speaker, that he merely hinted at the subject in a passing incidental remark:—never dreaming that any hearer could have misapprehended his meaning.

Yes, brethren, the great Head of the church was appealed to and most humbly invoked to preside over and to direct the destinies of this school of the prophets. And we firmly believe, whatever may be the apparently adverse trials and occurrences which it may be doomed to sustain, that it will eventually triumph over them all. Whether the present generation shall have the honour of completing the glorious work or not: it will be completed. It will find friends and advocates and supporters somewhere and at some period. We entertain no fears about the event. But we feel for the reputation of the age in which we live: and particularly for the section of the church in which it has been located. We do not wish that posterity should rise up and condemn the lukewarmness and illiberality of their fathers. We do not wish that the christian world, should, as present spectators, be permitted to wonder at and to censure the apathy and indifference of their brethren in the immediate vicinity of this infant seminary so successfully commenced: but which may be left for years to struggle hard before it reaches the maturity and vigour of manhood. It was not so in the time of Moses when commanded to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. The people brought gifts till they were forbidden to bring any more.

Now let us inquire into the nature and object, advantages and disadvantages, of this seminary.

The object, as you know, is to educate and qualify young men for the work of the gospel ministry.

The importance of this object will not be questioned, except by those who either openly or secretly disbelieve or disregard the gospel. Or by those who are weak enough to imagine that ministers need no education: that the gospel is to be propagated by miracle, or what is the same thing, that men are to be called and specially inspired by the Holy Ghost for this office. Or by those who suppose that the old way of studying for a short time with a retired pastor, is the best way.

The experience of eighteen centuries ought to be sufficient to convince the world, or at least the intelligent christian world, that religion cannot be inculcated by ignorance: that knowledge of no kind is intuitive or innate: that it cannot be acquired but by a course of study and application under such teachers and with such helps as are adequate to its attainment. That nothing great or good is ever effected without pains and industry: or, in other words, without resorting to the means naturally adapted to the production of the end. No man is expected to excel in any mechanical employment; in any literary or scientifick pursuit; in any worldly business; in any honourable or lucrative profession, without previously serving an apprenticeship, or submitting to a proper course of discipline and preparatory study.

Who, for instance, would think of asking an ignorant peasant to construct a watch or a telescope: to explain the properties of the circle, of light, or of colours: to calculate an eclipse: to unfold the mysteries of the planetary system: to defend his property, character or life, in a civil court: to prescribe for him in sickness: to amputate a limb, or to perform any one important service out of his ordinary sphere? By what kind of process then can *such* a man be deemed suddenly qualified to officiate in that most awful, momentous, and deeply interesting of all human concerns? To explain the mysteries of religion; to become a spiritual guide to the ignorant, the perverse, and the perishing? To inculcate the sublime doctrines of the gospel: to serve at the altar of Jehovah: to be the ambassador of the King of kings: a minister of reconciliation: a defender of the faith: a physician of souls: an advocate for the truth in opposition to the arts, the cunning, the malice, and the learning of the world?

How was it under the ancient dispensation: under the Jewish theocracy? Did the Deity thus judge and thus ordain? Were the priests and prophets thus suddenly distinguished and elevated? Were they selected for the service of the altar and the temple from the rude, ignorant, inexperienced mass of the people? How was it in our Saviour's time? What does his own example teach us? Did he not himself conform to the established Jewish usage, by abstaining from his public ministry till he had attained the mature age of thirty? Did he not instruct his own disciples patiently and perseveringly for several years before he commissioned them to go forth as teachers of others: and then not without the extraordinary power of working miracles, and the extraordinary illumination and aid of the Holy Spirit, who, in every emergency, supplied the defect of natural talent and of education; so that they could speak any language and enter the lists against every subtle adversary? Could the candidates for the sacred office, at the present day, be favoured by the immediate instructions of *Him* who spake as never man spake: could they for a length of time equal to that enjoyed by the first preachers of the gospel, sit under the heavenly voice and wisdom of the great master of assemblies, and then like them go forth into the harvest with the same extraordinary and miraculous gifts, and under the same divine guidance and assistance, we might safely cease any farther concern about the matter. We might then leave the work of religion, and preaching and salvation, in the hands of God, and wait to see him accomplish his own purposes in the way which seemeth good in his sight.

Now multitudes seem to imagine, or affect to imagine, that as the apostles were generally plain, unlettered men, so would it be better to let such men now assume the sacred office and trust to

the same extraordinary aid. This sort of reasoning often serves as a very convenient plea to withhold all countenance and support from any system which is likely to make a demand on the purse of the selfish and avaricious. The fact is, men generally love their gold so much more than they love their souls, that any shadow of excuse is eagerly seized on to satisfy their consciences and to justify their conduct. And if they can but *conscientiously* refuse a dollar to the cause of religion, they are content; without too nicely scrutinizing the ground on which they presume so conscientiously and comfortably to decide and to act. This is one of those subjects in regard to which a very convenient latitude is, as it were by common consent, conceded to conscience. And men's consciences are often found to be very happily moulded to the accommodation of their ruling passion.

There are some entire sects of christians whose creed and practice seem to have originated from the secret attachment of the heart to the world: and who therefore very cheerfully relinquish to the divine spirit the labour and expense of maintaining and propagating the benevolent principles of the gospel. There are not a few individuals of the same stamp among all denominations of christians; and in our own, it is believed, may be found a goodly number of the same cold-hearted, mammon loving cast, who grudge every farthing they are constrained to give, and who never do give, but as if they were giving alms to a sturdy beggar, rather to get rid of his importunity than from any desire to assist him, or from any conviction that he deserves assistance.

I am aware that some notions are prevalent in our country which perhaps do not obtain to the same extent in any other: and which may account, in a small degree, for this seeming anomaly. It is fashionable to believe that learning is a dangerous thing in any hands. That the people can be better served without it than with it. That public offices can be more safely and advantageously filled by plain honest men than by learned men. And hence it often happens that artful intriguing men, without wisdom or principle, are elevated by a deceived people to stations from which the prudent, modest, intelligent, unambitious, and worthiest citizens are excluded. I shall not comment on this fact. If this abuse be inseparable from our peculiar political institutions, we must submit to it. We must take the evil with the good. For well persuaded am I that we could not make a change in these respects for the better. And certainly no nation on earth has half the reason to be satisfied with its government and laws, and with the general administration of them, that we have. Let it not be supposed then that I reflect on the political establishments of my country.

The general prejudice against learning at which I have just hinted, may account in part for the indifference manifested towards learned clergymen; and to every plan for the education of youth for the ministry. Glad, however, would I be to be convinced that it might be wholly resolved into this general prejudice. But I am persuaded that the evil lies deeper. That it springs from indifference and opposition to the religion of Jesus. This too for many years has been a very popular sentiment throughout christendom. There has long been much avowed, and there is still much secret infidelity in the world. And although open hostility to the gospel has, in a great measure, ceased, yet the spirit of the monster is still lurking amongst us. It is under a degree of prudential restraint. Or it has assumed other forms, and operates in a different mode. Men, by a sort of tacit compact, have agreed to let religion, and religious men, and religious institutions alone. Or else, under the guise of the name, have ventured to efface its peculiar discriminating features and to mould it into a form very little, if at all, differing from the system advocated by its opponents.

But, brethren, allow me to appeal to facts. What says the history of the christian church? Go to its commencement. Examine the qualifications of its original founders. We have already hinted at their peculiar and distinguishing advantages and prerogatives: such as have never since been enjoyed or possessed. Who succeeded them? Men of the greatest learning then in the world. Men of whom the world was unworthy. Men who could put all Grecian and all Roman science to the blush:—who could meet the aged philosopher and the wily sophist on their own ground:—Clemens, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Lactantius, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and a host of martyrs and fathers too numerous to mention.

When learning declined, religion degenerated. When learning had vanished, religion was nearly extinct. When letters revived, religion again flourished and assumed a purer form.

Who were the first to discover, expose, refute, condemn, and demolish the papal errors and the papal tyranny? Who, but the men of the largest minds and the greatest learning? Need I name Wickliffe, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin, Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Knox, and a hundred others, as eminent for literature as religion; for integrity and courage as for zeal and ardour in the cause of truth; who nobly dared to stem the torrent which had nearly deluged the christian world, and nearly buried in ruins the whole christian fabrick?

Shall I trace the progress of religion from that bright epoch when the Sun of the Reformation first rose above the horizon and began to dispel the darkness of a long dismal night which seemed to threaten an endless duration, down to the present time? What is the character of the men who have laboured in the field and on the battle-ground with most efficiency and success? Who have written books, and thundered in the pulpit, with argument and eloquence irresistible and overwhelming? Were they not the most acute, best disciplined, most profoundly erudite of the ages in which they flourished? Shall I come nearer to your own times and to your own doors? Shall I invoke the spirits of a Hammond, an Owen, a Baxter, a Flavel, a Stillingfleet, a Tillotson, an Eliot, a Swartz, a John, an Edwards, a Davies, a Whitefield, a Horsley, a Porteus, a Buchanan, a Witherspoon?—but the catalogue would be endless.

The history of christianity is a triumphant refutation of the heresy and the slander that learning is unnecessary, or that it is unfriendly to genuine religion. It exhibits proof most positive that without learning nothing has been or could have been effected. That zeal without knowledge leads to fanaticism, to error, to superstition, to enthusiasm;—to abuses and heresies the most absurd and abominable.

On this topick I might indulge in a variety of illustration from facts. I could summon your attention to a thousand mournful evidences of the danger of suffering self-sufficient aspiring ignorance to obtrude itself into the direction and government of the church. But the limits of a discourse forbid my enlarging.

Allowing then the necessity of a good education, in conjunction with ardent undissembled piety, as a necessary qualification for the gospel ministry; I ask where, or how, is this education to be acquired? Do you reply, by resorting to some respectable clergyman in private? But is not every parochial minister sufficiently burthened already with the numerous and arduous duties of his station; without superadding the still more difficult and responsible office of preparing and training up young men for the holy ministry? Who has leisure for this task? Who has the qualifications for it;—I mean, in addition to his pastoral duties? Who has the books and all that array of helps with which every active inquisitive youth ought to be abundantly furnished during the period of his novitiate and apprenticeship?

But is it necessary, at the present day, to contrast the benefits of a publick with those of a private education? Is not the former mode universally adopted for every other purpose:—for the classicks, for science, for law, for medicine, for commerce, and politicks?

This question, it is believed, was first agitated and formally discussed by Quinctilian when treating on the most suitable discipline for accomplishing an orator; and by him decided in favour of a publick education. I shall not take up your time in stating the arguments usually advanced in behalf of either or each of these modes. But only observe, that if a publick education be judged the most eligible for all the secular professions and pursuits of life: which seems to be the case from the fact that, in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred, it is preferred: I would like to be informed why the student of theology should be an exception to the general rule;—why he should study in private rather than those who are prosecuting other studies? Is there more danger that his morals or his piety will be corrupted than of theirs? Is he more likely to be seduced by bad company than other youth?

All boys, from infancy to manhood, through the several '*grades*' of schools, academies, and colleges, are educated in publick. Every candidate for the ministry has been thus educated during the earlier part of his course, and is generally required to produce the testimonials of his having been so, previously to his being permitted to enter upon the study of divinity. Shall then young men, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, who have gone safely through the ordeal of our publick institutions at a tenderer age, while surrounded with vitious companions, and beset by a thousand temptations, be thought to be exposed to imminent and extraordinary danger, when, at a maturer and more experienced age, they shall attempt to prosecute a course of theological study in company with none but the serious and the pious, or those reputed to be so? Where is the hazard to morals and religion under such circumstances:—in such a place:—engaged in such pursuits:—where the teachers are pious:—where the pupils are pious:—where every subject of investigation and discussion is connected with piety:—where, in a word, every thing tends to remind them of duty and to inspire them with devotion?

Is religion, let me ask, a selfish, solitary thing? Was it intended for the cell or the cloister: the desert or the forest? Where must it flourish, if it flourish at all? Where must its active energies, its benevolent sympathies, its enlarged views, its purifying principles, be exhibited and exerted, if not in the world:—on the publick stage of life and business; and, I may add, of vanity and ignorance, of crime and wretchedness? How is a young man to be qualified for such a scene? By spending his youth in the vale of retirement; occupied in lonely study; in secret devotion; away from the solicitations of worldly men and worldly objects; and then suddenly to be ushered into the midst of the world destitute of any acquaintance with it?

Is there any knowledge after all of more importance to a clergyman than a knowledge of the world:—of men and manners?

A publick seminary has been justly styled the world in miniature. Here is usually assembled a variety of characters and dispositions: and much may be learned by a constant intercourse with them. One's own asperities are worn off by attrition with his companions. His natural arrogance, pride, vanity, self-sufficiency, are curb d, restrained, eradicated; or, at least, deprived of their most prominent and odious features. Here he finds his proper level. His talents are elicited and expanded by a generous collision and emulation with his fellow students. A spirit of brotherly love, charity, liberality, harmony, is cherished and cultivated. Acquaintances are formed and friendships cemented which will be highly beneficial to the church at large: grateful to the parties: and durable as life. A spirit of unity and fraternal affection will pervade the bosoms, not merely of fellow students towards each other, arising from personal acquaintance and actual association; but the same spirit will be strongly felt by all the pupils of the same institution, at whatever period they may issue from it, or wherever they may be located.

Hence will result a great and permanent good. Hundreds of ministers will, in a few years, be established in various parts of our country who will see eye to eye: who will harmonize in sentiment: who will understand by *orthodoxy* the same system of doctrine: and therefore be free from the jealousy, suspicion, misapprehension, and bigotry which now keep asunder so many brethren of the same family, and prevent their cordial co-operation in the common cause of religion and truth. I therefore hail the establishment of the Theological Seminary as a public nursery for the church. As affording within its hallowed walls the best aids, the greatest facilities, the strongest incentives to industry and piety. As calculated most effectually to bring to the test the piety, prudence, talents, and attainments of the candidate, before he is permitted to appear in publick, to the disgrace, it may be, of the cause which he professes to espouse. For it may be safely presumed that the young man who shall, in the course of his studies in our seminary, appear grossly deficient in any of these requisites, is unfit for the sacred work and ought not to be suffered to engage in it. Here is another advantage of the most important kind to be derived from the seminary which the church could not expect from any private system whatever:—The advantage of judging from a young man's carriage and deportment, from his habits, his social intercourse, his daily conversation, his literary and devotional performances, whether he is likely to prove useful to the church, and also, in what particular sphere he may be most useful. Here his real character will be developed. Those

latent springs of action, those dominant dispositions which, in private, might long be concealed from his intimate friends, and perhaps even from himself, will display themselves in such a manner as to prove to his teachers and fellow students, his fitness or unfitness for the holy ministry. And I repeat, that there is incomparably less danger of the church's being deceived with regard to her candidates while under a course of public discipline than could exist on any other plan.

In confirmation of my argument, were it worth while to argue the matter any farther, I might summon before you the great mass of eminent christian divines who have ever laboured in the church,—in the old world and in the new,—for they are all *the dead* or *the living* witnesses of the beneficial influence of a publick education. In every college and university of Europe there has ever been a faculty, or professorships, of theology. And in those great schools or rather communities, were trained the martyrs and reformers, the pastors and missionaries, whose names will be precious in the churches, till time shall be no longer; and who will shine as bright stars in the firmament forever and ever. The most of those institutions in fact, owe their existence and celebrity exclusively to the clergy: and theology was once the primary object of study in them. Our own college* too was established on the same plan and with the same great end principally in view. It was the church of Christ that its pious founders mainly looked to when they invoked the God of Heaven to second their feeble efforts in its behalf, and to preside over its destinies. It too has had its professors of theology; and the American church will long acknowledge her obligations to their labours and to the labours of their pupils. But now this sacred department is transferred forever to the sister seminary, and the whole Presbyterian Church in our land is solemnly pledged to support it.

I cannot however dismiss this topick without a word or two more in reply to the common-place objection which is so often advanced against the seminary. It is whispered in every corner, and by a hundred tongues, whenever the seminary is pointed at or spoken of, that it is a dangerous innovation;—a piece of extravagance;—that the edifice is quite too large, too expensive, too elegant; better calculated to make mere scholars and fine gentlemen than hardy soldiers of the cross. Then it is usually added, that a more secluded, private, frugal course of instruction and of living, would be much more likely to foster a spirit of humility and industry; of meekness, patience, temperance and devotion; of enlightened views on religious subjects, and of all those peculiar graces and qualifications, without which, the greatest attainments

* The College of New-Jersey.

in literature are useless or detrimental. Or, in plainer terms, that it would be much better for a young man who wishes to become a minister of the gospel, to go to some worthy, retired pastor in the country: assist him in teaching his school or ploughing his fields, and receive from him in return such aid in reading *Hopkins* or *Ridgley*, as the good man may find leisure or inclination to afford him.

In making this homely statement, I wish to be distinctly understood as not intending the slightest disrespect to any class, or any individuals of the clergy.—But merely to give you the plain *english* of the objection; or rather of the substitute which some of our *wise* men propose and laud as preferable to any theological college.

Their whole scheme however, I hesitate not to denounce as unsupported by reason or by fact; as alike illiberal and absurd. I maintain fearlessly, though not obstinately or fiercely, that the legitimate tendency of all private education, and especially of a system so contracted as the one just supposed, is, to cherish pride; to confirm prejudice; to restrain a spirit of liberal inquiry; to contract the mind; to concentrate its views to a few objects; to lead it into a narrow, partial track; to mould it into the shape and tinge it with the complexion of the master. I do not say that these effects will *always* result; for a naturally vigorous, independent spirit will break the strongest fetters and rise superior to any disadvantages; but that such a system is calculated to produce them, and most frequently does produce them. Hence you will generally find a young man thus brought up, thinking on all subjects, on which he thinks at all, just as he has been taught to think. His master's dogmas and peculiarities become his own. He is perfectly satisfied with his attainments, because they are as extensive as those of his venerated instructor, who is at once his model and the standard by which he measures theological wisdom and orthodoxy. He has never been brought into contact with his equals. His strength has never been put to the trial, and hence he flatters himself that none are his superiors. With a little smattering of letters and with abundant self-complacency, he marches forth as a candidate among the vacant churches, speedily procures a charge, settles down among a people not calculated perhaps by their own superior intelligence to give him any hint that he is not a perfect *Solomon:* and thus he continues through life the same opinionated, self-important, dogmatical, bigoted creature, that he was at the beginning. Study is dispensed with, either because he has never learned *how* to study and acquired a taste for it, or because he imagines he knows enough already. Hence as he grows in years, he grows in

dulness: affects to despise learning, and most conscientiously opposes every liberal plan for its advancement. This may be a caricature, but it is a good likeness notwithstanding. And I doubt not that some of my hearers have seen more than one who has sat for the picture.

All such men of course will be hostile to the seminary. And one secret motive of their hostility which I have not yet stated; which they certainly never avow, and which they will not thank me for exposing, is *jealousy!* They are jealous of this new mode of making ministers. They are afraid of being eclipsed by their juniors who shall come forth from this institution well furnished for their master's service. They imagine that themselves must sink in proportion as others rise. And rather than be subject to this mortification, they labour to prevent the growth of an *evil* which they so much dread. There is a great deal of real opposition from this vile source, whether men are conscious of it or not.

But leaving these narrow-minded, jealous preachers of righteousness and charity to the quiet enjoyment of all the delights which the contemplation of their own plans and ideas must necessarily yield them:—I pass, in the second place, to other hostile bands; and to the consideration of other and more specious objections which are openly and boldly advanced against this school of the prophets.

2. One grand objection which a few respectable clergymen, and which the great mass of influential laymen urge, is, that the Theological Seminary is calculated to cherish a spirit of ambition and worldly grandeur. That it will eventually become an engine of political power and ascendency. That it will impart too much weight and influence and consideration to the clergy. That they may in time prove dangerous enemies to the liberties of the state. That they ought therefore to be narrowly watched and strictly guarded.

There is something very plausible in all this. And the argument seems to derive countenance from history. I admit that the clergy, in former ages, have possessed, and, in some countries, at the present day, do possess, powers wholly incompatible with the safety and well-being of their fellow citizens. That they form an *imperium in imperio* extremely dangerous to the natural and political rights of mankind. And this I am as bold in condemning as any other man can be. I am ready also without partiality, or affection, or reserve, to censure and to oppose every project or institution which has a natural tendency to produce such a state of things. A clerical hierarchy or priestly despotism shall never find an advocate or apologist in me. Did I believe that the

Theological Seminary of our church could ever be perverted to the effecting of so unworthy a revolution in our ecclesiastical and political institutions; my voice should this day have been heard in its reprobation with the same honest freedom with which it is now feebly raised in its behalf. I am not swayed by party, or sect, or interest, or profession in this matter. I address you as an American citizen who wishes equal privileges to all descriptions of his fellow citizens, without distinction of sect, or name, or character, or pursuit. I address you as a calm spectator of passing events: an unprejudiced observer of the state and progress of the seminary from its origin to this moment, without the slightest motive to conceal, warp, or disguise any matter respecting it. It is true, I address you as a minister of the everlasting gospel who devoutly prays that the benevolent religion of Jesus may more and more prevail, till every nation, and kindred, and people under heaven shall feel its power and obey its precepts: but without one particle of clannish or professional partiality. Were I a lawyer or a farmer, possessed of the same knowledge of facts, and convinced of the truth and importance of the christian system, I would avow the same opinions which I now utter. With this explicit declaration of my sentiments, it cannot be supposed that any sinister motives have biassed me in this concern.

Let us then candidly examine this mighty bulwark of the opposition:—this grand colossal argument:—this never-failing source of declamation and abuse:—this popular clamour so extensively raised against our school.

The only reason why the clergy once had any political ascendency, was, because religion was established by law.

But the constitution, laws, government and usages of our country give no preference to one system, sect, or creed over another. All religious denominations are equally protected by the law. While the law itself knows no religion. It recognises no citizens in a religious character. It matters not whether they be Jews, or Mohammedans, or Pagans, or Christians.

To what danger, do you think, the establishment of a seminary for the education of Jewish priests or rabbies, would expose the civil liberties of the people? Or what would be the danger if this were done by the baptists, methodists, episcopalians, congregationalists, or any other denomination of christians? Why then are the presbyterians so specially to be dreaded? Have you not found that a bishop,* who, in Europe is a powerful and wealthy lord, becomes in this country, a very quiet, and, except in spirit-

* A diocesan of course.

ual matters, a very unimportant character? In the state, he is as harmless, as powerless, as much a cypher, as the poorest itinerant exhorter in our country. If such be the fact in regard to episcopacy, which, in every country but our own, has been incorporated with the civil government and shared the temporal dominion with nobles and princes; what have we to dread from presbyterianism which is a pure democracy? A system of union and co-operation which has for its basis a perfect parity among the clergy: so that it is not possible for one ever to rise in *rank* above another? It has no tendency to aristocracy, much less to monarchy or despotism. How such men should ever dream of acquiring political power and consequence, I cannot conceive. To succeed in such a plan, it would be necessary to revolutionize the whole nation: to overturn the government: to destroy the constitution. Or, in other words, we must suppose a total change in public sentiment: we must suppose a vast majority of our citizens to have become zealous presbyterians, and blindly devoted to a set of ambitious, unprincipled presbyters: we must suppose the people to have become, not merely the passive subjects, but the active agents, in this work of their own subjugation. We must, in short, suppose a hundred other impossibilities in order to prepare the way for this dreaded monster to show his strength, or to make the slightest impression on our political establishments.

The fears which men profess to entertain on this subject, so far as there is any reality in them, are occasioned by the spectres and ghosts which the records of past enormities have conjured up in the imaginations of those who do not consider that the like enormities could not possibly exist in this country. It would be a thousand to one a more likely event that, within a given period, a Nero should sit quietly on an imperial throne erected on the ruins of the republick, than that any ecclesiastical body whatever should control the councils of the nation, or be incorporated with the popular authorities. I entertain no such apprehension.

So thoroughly guarded on this subject are the constitutions of some of the states, as to render the clergy ineligible to secular offices of any kind.* In such states the clergy might justly complain of being denied the common privileges of the meanest citizens:—of having a mark set upon them as a dangerous body:—

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* The 39th article of the constitution of the state of New-York as established by the convention in 1777, is as follows, viz.

"And whereas the ministers of the gospel are, by their profession, dedicated to the service of God and the cure of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatsoever, shall, at any time hereafter, under any pretence or description whatever, be eligible to, or capable of holding any civil or military office or place, within this state."!!!

of being, in a measure, disfranchised :—of losing by reason of their profession the dearest right of free citizens, and which no others forfeit except by the grossest crimes. This is indeed a hardship; and an unparalleled anomaly in a free government.

In other states, the practice and usage of the people have as effectually excluded from civil office the ministers of the gospel as if they were naturally or legally disqualified. Whether this has arisen from an illiberal jealousy of the clergy, or from the moderation and self-denial of the clergy themselves; I shall not stop to inquire. I do not wish the fact to be otherwise. The clergy ought not in general to have any thing to do with political affairs. It would be incompatible with their sacred functions to suffer themselves to be elected to civil offices.

But while I would condemn the clergy, on the one hand, were they to manifest a disposition unduly to seek after political distinctions: I would as earnestly contend, on the other, for their *rights* in common with every other description of citizens; and condemn as anti-republican the narrow policy which would formally, and by statute or prescription, deprive them of any natural or conventional prerogative.

Let all men be treated alike. Let them stand, or rise and fall according to their deserts. Let the ministers of the gospel hold, in the eye of the law, the same place which is held by lawyers, physicians, merchants, farmers, and mechanics :—and no other, better or worse. Then will there be no ground for jealousy or complaint; and no danger to the community from the ambition or artifice of any.

Apply these principles to the case in question. Has not every class of citizens a right to provide for the welfare and education of its own members, provided they do not interfere with the interest or comfort of any other class? Have we not in fact public schools and colleges of law; of medicine; of the arts; and of literature? And why should there not be schools of divinity? In this land of enlightened freedom and equal rights, who will say that the clergy may not make suitable provision for the reputable instruction of those destined to be attached to their own body and to become their successors in office? May not every sect and denomination do this? Even on the ground that they have their own interest mainly in view, they would be doing no more than all other men do. The pursuit of happiness, the acquisition and enjoyment of property, of honour and science, are guaranteed to all without distinction. And what tribunal has authority here to pronounce that the clergy alone shall be cut off from these pursuits and enjoyments? So much for the *right*, as men and citizens.

Now let us advance a step higher. Are the clergy then useless members of the community? I mean useless in a worldly and political sense. In order to answer this question, I might demand your answer to some other questions. Is morality useless to the community? Are good order, steady habits, temperance, chastity, good faith, honesty, kindness, integrity, benevolence, justice, obedience to parents and rulers, patience, forbearance:—are these useless ingredients in the body politick? Is learning useless? Are science and literature unfriendly to liberty and to happiness: or to the progress and prosperity of agriculture, commerce and manufactures? No; these are all good,—all necessary. Without them, vice, corruption, misery, barbarism, anarchy, confusion, tyranny and usurpation, individual and national debasement and ruin, must speedily ensue.

Well now,—who contribute most to the maintenance and diffusion of virtuous principles, of pure morals, and sound learning in our land and throughout the world? Our enemies and accusers themselves being the judges, are constrained to acknowledge, that for these things mankind are indebted chiefly to the clergy. This is a tribute of respect: a proof of worth and usefulness which nothing but the most stubborn invincible facts could ever have extorted. This is the eulogy of an unconquered and ungenerous foe!

Here then,—on this proud eminence I might rest: and calmly bid envy and malice, calumny and slander do their worst. For vain is their assault. Impotent their efforts to tarnish, or to pluck from the brow of the well-tried veteran, the wreath of honour, which the wise and the good have decreed him; and which even the wicked cannot at all times withhold.

Human governments could do nothing; the sanctions of law would be a dead letter, were there no laborious teachers to inform the ignorant, to check the natural progress of vice, and to train up the young in virtue's ways. Banish the ministers of peace, and this instruction is at an end.

Every true patriot therefore, every enlightened honest citizen, every prudent magistrate, nay, every man who loves his own welfare, must find it the common interest of all to countenance and uphold this necessary appendage to the state: this main pillar of the civil establishments: this depositary of the learning of ages: this source of instruction to the people: this copious fountain which affords such rich supplies to a nation's most essential wants.

But we ascend higher still, and take loftier and more commanding ground. Be it known to you then, that, the *honest* clergy do

not consult their own worldly aggrandizement: nor do they mainly aim at rendering their fellow men more amiable, useful, and happy *in this life merely*. They have a nobler object in view. It is the *eternal* well-being of man. Their office is the appointment of heaven. They are intrusted with the Lord's work and commanded to perform it. And you are commanded to respect their sacred office: to listen to their instructions and counsels: to obey their precepts, so far as they are the precepts of God's word: to afford them all necessary support: and to be liberal of your wealth in whatever ways pure religion may be best promoted.

However numerous and cogent may be their claims on the gratitude of mankind as their temporal benefactors, they prefer infinitely higher and stronger claims to the gratitude, confidence, and love of men as their spiritual guides and benefactors. I need not stay to inform you what is the legitimate province of the preacher. That it is the immortal spirit of guilty, miserable man which he seeks to purify and to prepare for the mansions of the blessed. That while he spares no pains to smooth the rugged path of life: the pilgrim's journey through this vale of wo: he steadily contemplates a peaceful haven beyond this fleeting, joyless, tempestuous scene. He points to the heavenly country, and kindly shows the lost traveller the road that leads thither.

Commissioned by his divine master to proclaim glad tidings of peace to the perishing: he labours to fulfil the object of his embassy with a zeal, a patience, a perseverance, which no earthly considerations could inspire: and which no earthly discouragements or difficulties can damp or destroy.

Is he an enthusiast; is he an impostor? There may be enthusiasts; there may be hypocrites; there may be wolves in sheep's clothing invested with this sacred character. But what then? Does this fact afford any sound argument against the sincerity and good faith of the whole body of christian ministers? What *good* thing is there in the universe which has not been abused and counterfeited? What wise and benevolent institution has ever existed free from contamination and perversion? Strange, indeed would it be, if religion: if the christian religion: and the ministers of this religion, did not occasionally share the corruption, degeneracy, and abuse which are inseparable from all things here below. There is no form of virtue, no disguise of religion which has not been assumed as a convenient mask for the worst of crimes. And this fact operates with no less force to the disadvantage of natural religion; of natural or political virtue; of human learning and wisdom; and of every thing which the world calls great and good; than it does to the disparagement of christianity and its advocates. This species of argument therefore has

no application to the case. Or, if it have, it would equally demolish the systems of the sage and the moralist: of the believer and the infidel. It would leave us nothing but one vast wild of hideous ruin and deformity: of hopeless misery and wickedness. Beware then of this subtle, insinuating, exterminating logick. It is unsound and illiberal. And none but the enemies of truth and piety can employ it.

Christianity is the only system of religion at present known in the world which can lay just claims to a heavenly origin. If it be true, its own infallible oracles declare the appointment, and the necessity of continuing forever, a ministry in the church. And how can this ministry be perpetuated except by the regular education of a competent number of young men to supply the places of those vacated by age, infirmity, and death: and to meet the growing demands of an enlarged and daily increasing church? What mode of education can be devised better adapted to meet these wants, than publick seminaries exclusively devoted to this object under the special superintendence and control of the church itself? I propose this question with perfect confidence that a negative reply *cannot* be made to it; and will not be made to it, by the wise, the judicious, and the pious.

The exigency of the case suggests this as the only natural and efficient method of furnishing an adequate supply of faithful and enlightened pastors and missionaries for the vast evangelized and unevangelized regions of this almost boundless continent: whose population is annually augmenting in a ratio which confounds all computation: whose spiritual wants of course are multiplying with equal rapidity: and to a degree, which almost overwhelms with discouragement the pious philanthropist while contemplating this great moral wilderness which is scarcely illumined by a ray of gospel light. Surely it is time for the friends of religion and humanity to awake from their slumbers, and to put forth all their strength in one grand effort to meliorate the condition of the countless thousands of our own countrymen who are literally perishing for lack of knowledge: yes, at this moment destitute of the ordinary means of grace;—without bibles and without ministers.

I am not in possession of the requisite *data* by which to estimate the exact number of our unfortunate fellow citizens who are thus situated. But I think it may be safely affirmed that at least one third, if not one half of the population of this republick do not enjoy the regular services of stated pastors; and hardly the occasional labours of the passing missionary. This statement will probably not appear exaggerated to those who will take the trouble to examine into the actual condition of our large cities in these older and more highly favoured states: as well as, of many sec-

tions of the country which have been supposed for several generations to enjoy all the benefits of the gospel in the greatest profusion. It will be found that there is much missionary ground within sight of our most splendid churches, and perhaps under the shadow of their spires.—That there is missionary ground in every county and town even of this enlightened and gospelized section of our confederacy. What then may be presumed to be the fact in those states whose very existence is but of yesterday, but whose population already far outstrips many of the larger parent states? We are not however left to mere conjecture on this subject The amplest evidence is before the publick and within every man's reach, of the alarming truth that our brothers, and kinsmen, and friends, as well as the newly arrived European, the Negro, and the Indian, are living and training up children where the sound of the gospel trumpet has never yet been heard. Is not this a pressing call on our benevolence: a call which ought not to be heard for one moment in vain?

What a host of ministers is needed at once to occupy this wide waste? Who can tell the number that would suffice? Greater certainly than we can hope soon to furnish. Could our seminary send forth a hundred heralds of the cross annually, they would be lost in the crowd; or so dispersed over an immense surface as scarcely, in appearance at least, to diminish the want. But instead of a hundred, we cannot reasonably calculate on more than a fifth or even a tenth of that number. And is there a man so blind, so ignorant, so prejudiced, so uncharitable as deliberately to maintain that this number is larger than is necessary? That there is danger that the clergy will speedily become so numerous as to be burthensome to the community:—either as drones and mendicants,—or as wealthy lords and prelates? Alas, how fertile are men in contriving excuses for avarice, and salvos for conscience!

This is an age in which christians are not allowed to be lukewarm or neutral. They must be hot or cold: for God or against him. The enemies of Christ have marshalled all their forces and issued forth in phalanx strong to the battle. Shall we boldly in the name of Immanuel go out to meet them, or tamely sit down in our places, and carelessly leave the event to Providence, as if we had no interest at stake: no part or lot in the matter? What have we done, brethren: what are we now doing? Have we done as much as we could do to promote the cause of religion in the world? Have we contributed as much of our worldly substance as we could have contributed and as we ought to have contributed to this glorious object?

I tell you, the fact, that the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian church has been, for seven years, a beggar before the

publick: a solicitor of alms from one end of the continent to the other: that it is a beggar still, without the means of completing an edifice, which, when completed, will not accommodate a hundred students:* and without the means of permanently supporting a single professor: is melancholy, humbling proof that our countrymen are backward in giving to the Lord's treasury. It is proof that we, in the immediate vicinity of this seminary, are peculiarly negligent and culpable. For I scruple not to affirm that there is wealth enough among the presbyterians of New-Jersey to have defrayed the whole expense of establishing and endowing the institution, without sensibly diminishing the revenues or the comforts of our citizens generally. And I think it was from the begining, and still is, peculiarly incumbent on this state to extend a munificent hand to this great work. Because this state will derive all the pecuniary advantages which such an establishment never fails to yield to any place where it exists. Besides, the reputation which it adds to our little community, the facilities for theological education which it affords our pious youth, and the choice of pastors with which it favours our churches, ought to be taken into the account.

But on the presbytery of New-Brunswick, within whose bounds it is located, and under whose jurisdiction its professors will ever remain, is surely imposed an extraordinary obligation to spare no pains for its welfare. Have we discharged our duty, brethren? Has every clergyman bestowed his own mite, and exerted his influence with his flock and with the publick in this behalf? It is not from a particular knowledge of the part which has been acted in this matter by any individual that I venture on these inquiries. You may have all done your duty faithfully and honestly for aught I know. But there is fault somewhere: or the Directors long ago would have been obliged to announce to the people that their treasury was already full to overflowing and to charge them to bring no more gifts for the sanctuary, as was done by Moses on a similar occasion.

It is possible that a portion of this blame may justly attach to ourselves. Is there then a rich clergyman belonging to this body who has not given according to his abundance? Is there one possessed of thousands, who has not bestowed, at least hundreds, on the school of the prophets? Is there an individual who has kept back altogether, and refused even to speak to his people in its favour: who, so far from taking an active part for it, has taken a decided stand against it? If there be such an individual, let me ask him why he has done so? Has he been influenced by any of the motives already suggested as sometimes operating on the minds

* Not more than a hundred;—the speaker should have said.

of the clergy to the detriment of the seminary? Or, is it the gall of disappointed ambition which rankles in his bosom? Is it because he has not been selected to fill some honourable station in the new institution that he thus coldly overlooks, or insidiously thwarts its interests? Now, since we have examples of men in every period of the christian church, who were actuated by a spirit as base as this; it will not perhaps be thought a breach of charity barely to suggest the possibility of its existence at present; and to ascribe to it a small portion of the opposition with which our church is infected.

For it must be admitted after all, even by the professed apologist for the clergy, that there are some selfish, intriguing, ambitious divines in the church, who care for nothing but their own temporal advancement. Who would fight *for* the seminary if they supposed their own interest would be promoted by it, and who would fight *against* it for the same reason.—Men, who, under the guise of religion, of honour, and friendship, can betray, and slander, and lie; in order to compass a favourite project, or to elevate themselves or their partisans to posts of honour and profit. I tell you, there are such men; such ministers of the gospel! But with these base creatures I have no fellowship. I never expect to meet them in heaven:—unless indeed a Judas may repent, or a Simon Magus be purified:—and I wish to have as little to do with them on earth as possible.*

Let them take their course.—They are obliged to preach correctly; and ostensibly at least to defend, inculcate and practice the religion of Christ. I say they are obliged to do this, through fear of the censure and discipline of the church judicatories under which they minister. And here is our peculiar and strong safeguard. It is not because the clergy are not liable to corruption, and not prone to seek after riches, and honours, and power;—that I assert the establishment of the seminary will not be dangerous in these respects. But because of the singular excellence of both our ecclesiastical and political institutions which render the eventual usurpation or acquisition of political power physically impossible.

Therefore, be not alarmed by the admission which truth has constrained me to make in regard to some of my brethren. But for your comfort, remember that the moment any minister begins to depart from the faith and to teach strange doctrine; that moment he will be called to an account: and if his error be found to be radical, and if he persist in holding it; he will inevitably be suspended or deposed from the sacred office. Again, if his conduct be openly immoral and unchristian, he will be dealt with ac-

* "Qui capit ille facit."

cording to the nature of the offence. So that all the clergy of our denomination must either be honest, pious, consistent men; or they must be consummate hypocrites. No increase of their numbers can alter the nature of these facts. Doubly guarded therefore is our church:—and no better or stronger guarantee can you have that your money will be honestly appropriated to the objects intended, and successfully devoted to the cause of religion, than you have in this instance. And I venture to assure you that there is no way in which you can bestow your superfluous wealth; or contribute a portion of the hard earnings of industry and frugality with half the prospect of doing extensive and permanent good. It is not *one* minister for whose benefit you are urged to give. But consider what immense good a single faithful minister may effect in an ordinary life time. Look among our congregations which have enjoyed the labours of worthy pastors for a number of years. Select one for your examination. Count up the number of those who have been brought into the fold of Christ since their pastor was first installed over them:—the number who have adorned religion by a consistent walk and conversation; and who have died in the faith, blessing God for the labours, warnings, instructions, and prayers of their beloved minister. See the order, morality, and intelligence which every where meet the eye; and form a striking contrast between this and a neighbouring congregation which has, for a length of years, been destitute of a pastor, or cursed with an unfaithful one.

Suppose further, that instead of a settled pastor, he should prove a zealous missionary to the heathen, like Brainerd:—or to the world, like Whitefield.—Would you think your money misapplied which had contributed to his education, and been instrumental in thrusting him into the Lord's vineyard?

But here you are favoured with the high privilege of lending to the Lord your money, not for the support of one candidate for the holy office; but for a whole college. Not for a limited term of years; but for a permanent fountain, whence, we trust, streams will continue to flow to gladden the city of our God; to make the desert and the wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose, until the church militant shall be merged in the church triumphant; and the whole company of the Lord's redeemed be safely landed in the heavenly Canaan.

To be allowed to lend a helping hand to this glorious work, I tell you, is a privilege for which future generations will almost envy, while they bless, the charitable few of the present day, who have honestly given their offering, or who may yet give it to this object.

Shall it be told, an hundred years hence, in the annals of the American Church, that, at this flourishing period of the Republick, forty years after the achievement of our independence :—after having expended millions of money on the publick edifices of our Metropolis :—after having lavished millions on schools, academies, colleges, roads, bridges, canals, forts, ships, armories, arsenals, manufactories, warehouses, and a thousand other objects of a public or of a private character :—that an attempt was made by that very numerous and wealthy denomination of christians, *the Presbyterians ;* under the most solemn sanctions of their most august ecclesiastical judicatory, to establish a seminary for the education of pious youth for the gospel ministry :—that the work was actually begun and carried to a certain extent, under the full belief, that the piety, zeal and wealth of so large and respectable a body as that to which the appeal was made, would never suffer the pecuniary means to be wanting for its completion :—but that nevertheless, after many painful and long continued struggles for some ten or twenty years, it scarcely obtained so firm a footing as to ensure the hope of its permanent stability ?

And shall all the little illiberal reasons which are now assigned :—all the paltry motives which now sway the mind of its adversaries, appear on the faithful page of story to the disgrace of *the church*, whose ministers, in that ever memorable crisis which *tried men's souls*, boldly stood forth the determined champions of independence ? For it ought never to be forgotten by those who asperse their political integrity, that the presbyterian clergy were pre-eminently devoted to the popular principles of *seventy six*. Although they are sometimes pointed at now as the dangerous foes of that very system of equal liberty which themselves or predecessors laboured to establish :—and on this ground the people are cautioned to guard against their arts and intrigues, and especially against their growing numbers and influence.—Yet let the honest historian tell that among the original founders of the seminary, was, not only the advocate, but the soldier of the revolution ; who, after bearing arms in his country's cause, enlisted under the banners of the cross : and after spending the vigour of manhood and much of the wisdom of age in the service of the great captain of salvation ; proposed to his fellow patriots, to his younger brethren, and to his country ; the establishment of an institution whose benefits should be commensurate with the wants and as durable as the existence of the church.—And that this was the enlightened plan which provoked the opposition and the jealousy of so large a portion of the community ? shall such be the representation which candour must convey to future ages ? Forbid it decency :—forbid it the honour of my country :—forbid it the spirit of the presbyterian church :—forbid it, great

King of Zion, who turnest the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of waters are turned; who canst bring light out of darkness, and make the most untoward events work together for the prosperity of the gospel of peace!

In thy hands do we humbly leave our infant school: and to thy smiles, patronage, and benediction, do we devoutly and confidently commend it.*

I feel much on this subject; and lament that I have so recently turned my thoughts to it with any reference to the present occasion, as not to have been able to do justice to my own views and wishes.—For it would not have been, under any advantages, within the scope of my poor ability, to do justice to the importance and grandeur of the subject. I must beg my audience therefore not to impute to the weakness of the cause, the weakness of the arguments by which it has been attempted to maintain it. The cause I am confident is a good one. It has, and I trust will ever have, the ablest advocates.

To you, respected fathers and beloved brothers in the holy ministry, now convened to consult the welfare of the church within our presbyterial bounds, I most earnestly recommend the nurture and tender rearing of this plant of the Lord's planting. Never lose sight of it. Let it be the subject of your most fervent prayers and intercessions. Be its warm, undisguised advocates wherever you go. Throw all your influence into the scale in its favour. Let your people know that you are its decided, zealous friends. Put it into the hearts of the benevolent and the wealthy to give liberally of their substance whenever an occasion offers. And you will yourselves be astonished at the result of a few years patient, prudent, well-timed vigorous efforts in this infinitely momentous concern.

There is now a grand movement in the camp of Israel. Arise, and come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Behold the progress of heresy and infidelity under the disguise of rational christianity. See the artifice of the great destroyer in these latter days. He has commissioned his emissaries to assume the garb and the functions of the ministers of the gospel, that they may the more effectually sap the foundation of the whole christian edifice. He has enlisted talents, and learning, and indefatigable enterprise in this work of desolation. He has taught the deistical scoffer at revelation to step a little aside from his accustomed track; and to come forward in a new shape, but

* Here, from a fear of trespassing too far on the patience of his auditory, the speaker felt himself constrained to conclude. What follows however, formed a part of the original manuscript and was intended to be delivered. It is therefore added without apology.

with the same malignant hostility against the truth. He is now willing to be esteemed a catholick liberal christian. But he rejects the essential divinity of the Saviour; the depravity of human nature; the doctrine of the atonement, and of justification by faith.—Or, he is a christian without holding one principle of the christian religion which can distinguish it from the religion of nature. Modern unitarianism, which is every where insinuating itself into the hearts of men naturally predisposed to its reception, because it is exactly suited to the natural character of men, is more to be dreaded than any species of infidelity ever yet avowed. It is a deadly enemy wearing the mask and the name of a friend.

To be able to meet such an enemy on equal ground, requires much care and preparation. Many of the teachers of this heresy are thoroughly skilled in scholastick theology, logick, and metaphysicks:—in history, antiquities, philology, and modern science:—well versed in the ancient languages:—bold and subtle biblical criticks:—prepared to take advantage of an imprudent or incautious adversary:—and thus to triumph over truth itself in the eyes of superficial observers when their sophistry seems to get the victory over its unskilful defender. Such wily disputants may now be met with in almost every section of our country. We must send into the field men sufficiently learned and disciplined fairly to encounter them. A good, honest, well-meaning, but superficially taught person will not do. Such a man had better not put his strength or rather his weakness to the test on any such occasion. He may be useful in his place. But we must have men who are qualified to maintain the truth against every gainsayer.—Who can defend the faith once delivered to the saints against the most powerful assailants. Now ministers thus qualified are not to be met with every day. They are not the production of chance. They do not grow into existence as a mere matter of course. And it is possible that, at the present time, the number would not be found to be very great of those who could successfully or reputably contend with the leading socinians in our country. This is mortifying.—But the evil admits of a remedy. Although the orthodox churches generally have been negligent, culpably negligent, in regard to the education of young ministers; so much so as to give advantage to our more wary adversaries: yet we may retrace our steps, or rather commence anew, and do our future work better.

Foster then this precious seminary, whence we may speedily hope to see issue multitudes of ardent, vigorous, able, well-furnished youth, who shall have no reason to dread the face of any foe however fierce or crafty.

So much has recently been done for the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad, that men seem to be satisfied, and satiated, if I may so express it, with their own exertions. They seem to imagine that the victory is already gained. That the religion of Jesus is so rapidly extending its influence, as to promise the speedy commencement of the millennial glory and universal reign of the Prince of peace. But while we would not despise the day of small things, nor damp the ardour of those actively engaged in the great work; we are constrained to acknowledge that our own prospect, from a sober examination of facts, is not quite so cheering, nor our hopes so sanguine.

The world is yet, in a great measure, to be christianized. Vastly the larger part of it is still in the hands of the enemy. Almost the whole of Asia and Africa, including the islands of the Indian and Southern oceans, with very large portions of Europe and America, are still Pagan or Mohammedan. And even those countries which are denominated christian, present a picture of ignorance, superstition, and vice, which must cause the real christian's heart to bleed at the view of it. Italy, France, Spain, Portugal; with a full moiety of the rest of Europe:—all *South*, with extensive provinces in *North* America, though styled christian, exhibit probably very few and very feeble evidences of the influence of *genuine* christianity. These are yet to be converted to the faith.

But even in those countries, where the truth (it is supposed) has been better understood and more extensively obeyed; as in Great-Britain, Holland, Switzerland, and the United States of America; how few real christians in any age, or in any district at this moment, could be numbered? How small the company of the *truly pious* could be discovered for instance in London, Edinburgh, Geneva, Philadelphia, or New-York:—small, I mean, compared with the whole population of those cities? How small the number in this state; in this county; in this town; in this congregation?

Verily, this is not a time for lukewarmness and inaction. Never was a louder call addressed to the sympathy and the courage of the christian soldier:—never was a juster and more pressing demand made on the liberality of the rich and the pious.

I hail this as a new era in the progress of the American Presbyterian Church. I hail it as the harbinger of good; in giving birth to an institution which, under God, shall serve as the grand bulwark of evangelical truth and piety to the latest generations. Honoured in the church will be the names of its benefactors when the names of heroes and sages shall be forgotten. In heaven they shall be repaid with interest for every exertion, sacrifice, and

donation which they now have the courage and the faith to make in its behalf. Did men but know the true value of money they would not hoard it up to rust in their coffers, or lie useless on their hands, when it might be made instrumental in diffusing peace and joy throughout the region and shadow of death:—in gilding the path of thousands to the realms of glory who are at this moment wandering upon the dark mountains like sheep without a shepherd:—and in gladdening the hearts of millions yet unborn. In this view pre-eminently, gold has a charm and a worth, which the ordinary worldling cannot discern or comprehend.

Happy the man, who, while he is prospered in business, knows how to bestow to the best account the fruits of his prosperity. Verily, he shall be prospered more abundantly in this life; and in the life to come he shall wear a brighter crown than all the wealth of created worlds could purchase.

Had it been my purpose on this occasion to pronounce the eulogium of our seminary, instead of urging the reasons *a priori* for your support of it:—I might have directed your attention to the good effects which it has already produced as a happy presage of the future. The tree is known by its fruits. The experiment then has been partially but faithfully made. At this moment the sons of the seminary are before the publick and in the service of the church. From Detroit to New-Orleans they have proclaimed the glad news of salvation to thousands, with a zeal and acceptance, which have reflected the highest honour on the place of their education:—and which, until we have melancholy evidence to the contrary, must effectually put to the blush, if not to silence, the illiberal clamours of frigid, calculating, envious opposition.

Has not the blessing of the Almighty already visibly crowned the plans and the labours of the friends of this institution? Can this fact be denied or concealed? Does it not speak volumes to the understanding and the heart of all who are capable of comprehending or feeling? And who is there so hardened, or so warped in his sentiments, or uncharitable in his views, as still to withhold his approbation or his aid? If any, it is to be feared, that the love of the Father is not in them: and that the love of immortal souls has never warmed and animated their bosoms!

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? Feed my lambs.—Feed my sheep."

Yes, blessed Jesus, thy true disciples will obey thy commands. They will cheerfully follow thy example in doing good; and delight in every enterprise and in every sacrifice, by which they can most effectually and successfully promote the glory of thy name, and the happiness of their fellow men!

The general strain of remark and argument pursued in the foregoing discourse, so far as founded in truth and fact, will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to any other theological seminary in our country. The author, though a presbyterian, is not, in his own estimation at least, a bigot or a sectary. He belongs to no party. He heartily wishes success and prosperity to every similar institution in our land and in the world; where *the truths essential to the salvation of immortal souls* are faithfully inculcated.