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Causes of an Unsuccessful Ministry: A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Samuel Johnson, over the Church and Society in Alna, November 25, 1818

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Causes of an unsuccessful ministry.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE ORDINATION

OF

THE REV. SAMUEL JOHNSON,

OVER THE

CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN ALNA,

NOVEMBER 25, 1818.

BY DAVID THURSTON,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN WINTHROP.

HALLOWELL :

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SECTION 6

SERMON.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 22.

If they had stood in my counsel and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings.

THE divine glory in the salvation of men is the most interesting object, which has ever been sought. In all the counsels, purposes and operations of God, this object has been chiefly in view. For this purpose, heaven and earth, angels and men, were created; Noah was preserved; Abraham was called, and his descendants selected as the peculiar people of Jehovah; the law was given, priests and prophets appointed to instruct and warn the people; typical observances instituted and religious worship required. To accomplish the same end, all orders of beings are employed. "Holy angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation." To promote the same design, He who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person," his equal Son, assumed humanity; "magnified the law and made it honorable;" glorified his Father's name

upon the earth ; expired in ignominy and anguish on the cross ; arose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God. Having become “ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, “ He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The text refers to false prophets, who had intruded themselves into office. “ God had not sent them, yet they ran ; he had not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” But saith Jehovah, “ If they had stood in my counsel and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings.” Notwithstanding their unauthorized assumption of the sacred trust, had they obediently hearkened to the voice of God and faithfully proclaimed his truth, they would have been instrumental of the conversion of sinners.

For preachers to stand in the counsel of the Lord and to cause men to hear his word, has in all ages been the grand means of preparing his *chosen* for the services and felicities of his heavenly kingdom. “ After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” “ Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God ; and how shall they hear without a preacher ? ” The immediate object of the christian ministry is the conversion and sanctification of men. Said the Lord Jesus to Saul, “ I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things, which thou hast seen and of those, in the which I will appear unto thee, to open the eyes of the Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power

of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified."

Our text assigns the reason, why the false prophets did not succeed in reforming men. That ministers do not know to what extent they are useful, is sufficiently obvious. Though, during *their lifetime*, few be converted and believers do not make rapid advances; yet their labors may by no means be in vain. Inestimable good may result from them to the kingdom of Christ. It is equally obvious, that the scriptures encourage the expectation of more apparent success, than ministers ordinarily enjoy. The text is directly to this purpose; as are also the following passages. "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." "My word shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The divine promises do not fail. There must then be some defect, or some counteracting influence, which prevents success.

It will not then be deemed unappropriate to the present interesting occasion to offer some remarks concerning

THE CAUSES, WHICH, RENDER THE LABORS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS UNSUCCESSFUL.

They, who preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, cannot be too deeply impressed by the consideration, that their object is not attained "by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." The great apostle of the gentiles could say, "I have planted; Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So

then neither is he, that planteth, anything, nor he, that watereth; but God, that giveth the increase." Of the utter inefficiency of means, they cannot have a conviction too strong, or abiding. In no part of his works, will Jehovah more signally display his sovereign and sole efficiency than in the salvation of the elect. Excepting the production of a new heart, which is a work of creation, their whole salvation, however, is effected by means. He operates by means not less uniformly, and, with the single exception mentioned, *not less invariably* in the moral than in the natural world. Means are equally as indispensable to the attainment of any proposed end, as though they possessed the whole energy.

The exhibition of truth is the principal means of awakening sinners and of sanctifying saints. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "For their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." But truth is only the instrument. It is well styled the *sword of the Spirit*. Of itself it is perfectly inefficacious. It has indeed no scabbard, and as it lies, men may run, or fall upon its point and be wounded. But ordinarily it does not produce the desired effect, unless it is skilfully handled. It must be wielded and thrust. This work belongs officially, to ministers, upon whom God confers the high honor of being his co-workers. "We are laborers together with God."

The wicked are never alarmed and made solicitous to escape destruction, by preaching to them in soothing strains congenial to their inclinations. Taught, that their hearts were not entire-

ly sinful, that the divine Being is too merciful to inflict endless pain upon any of his creatures, they do not become deeply concerned. You do not see them turn from their evil ways. What made Felix tremble? What caused the jailor to ask with such earnestness, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Why did three thousand, under one sermon, anxiously inquire, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Was it falsehood? Was it the representation, that men naturally have some spiritual life, some other ground of hope than what arises from the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus; or the assurance that they will all finally be saved? Far from it. It was truth, the naked point of the *sword of the Spirit*, strongly pressed, which pricked them in the heart. "With lies preachers may make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God has not made sad; and may strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." But with such weapons, the strong holds of satan will never be demolished.

It will here be said, that, under the ministry of such as inculcate contradictory sentiments, men exhibit evidence of being renewed. It is granted. All human proceedings bear the stamp of imperfection. Perhaps, no mere man was ever so pure, as to teach truth without any mixture of falsehood; or so corrupt, as to teach error without any mixture of truth. Truth, uttered with the vilest intentions, may do good. When false teachers inculcate some part of the gospel of Christ, sinners may be converted, and saints be edified; but never when they inculcate error. To suppose the contrary

is perfectly unnatural, and contradicts the analogy of all the divine proceedings.

But it is not sufficient, that all which ministers preach be true; *they must* “*not shun to declare all the counsel of God.*” For the awakening and conviction of the impenitent, they should describe their character and condition just as they are; “dead in trespasses and sins,” having “carnal minds at enmity with God;” “already condemned;” unable to merit the divine favor, and too proud to submit to the humiliating terms of the gospel. They must conduct them to mount Sinai, cause them to *see the lightnings, to hear the thunders, and feel the quaking.* By “the terrors of the Lord” they are to persuade them to hasten to Calvary; and from the foot of the cross, point them to the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.”

The people of God are to be “fed with knowledge and understanding.” “As new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.” The best kind of spiritual sustenance contains a due proportion of the doctrinal, experimental and practical parts of religion. Successfully to promote their edification, strong meat must be administered to men, “and milk to babes.” Doctrinal subjects, when much disconnected with experimental and practical ones, lead to unprofitable speculations.—Experimental subjects alone, produce more of the appearance than the reality of religion.—Practical subjects are not sufficiently energetic. To feed exclusively upon these, induces a dull and languid habit.—“The word must be rightly di-

vided," or some will not "receive their portion in due season." The principal reason, why some ministers are not more successful, is that they dwell, almost exclusively, upon favorite themes.

The labors of christian ministers, are rendered unsuccessful by their *not preaching the truth best suited to the circumstances of their hearers*. All, which they preach, may be true, and yet not be well timed. Every important subject is not *always equally* important, because not *equally* appropriate. For instance, when the providence of God calls people to weep and mourn; it would be wholly unsuitable for ministers to insist upon their rejoicing. Subjects, seasonably discussed, awaken an attention, excite an interest and produce an effect altogether beyond expectation. Ignorant of the state of their flocks, inattentive to passing occurrences, they may preach the whole truth to little purpose. To address the distracted in strains of terror; or the careless in strains of consolation, is alike absurd. The varying seasons of the year, the constant vicissitudes in the conditions of men, and every noticeable event, if judiciously employed, will powerfully preach. To be most effectual, their instructions must contain a rich variety. They should have something suited to the different wants of all, from the aged to the young, from the desponding to the presumptuous, from the well established to the most wavering. "A word fitly spoken, how good is it?"

Another reason, why some christian ministers are not more successful, is, *that their style and method of preaching are not adapted to the capacity of their hearers*. Their charge embraces persons of every

description, from the learned to the ignorant, from the quickest to the slowest of apprehension ; from sincere, patient and candid inquirers after truth to the most unreasonable, artful, and ill-natured cavillers.— To take effect, truth must be understood. “Except ye shall utter by the tongue, words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.” In regard to style and method, the great object should be perspicuity. They may as well be silent, or preach in a foreign language, as to embellish, or arrange their ideas, so as to render them unintelligible. Well educated ministers more frequently fail of success in this way than they suppose. While they seek “to find out acceptable words, they should use great plainness of speech.”

Let us again take the apostle’s metaphor, “the sword of the Spirit.” Its edge and not its side is to be employed. It may be so plainly presented that none can deny that it is the “sword.” But how different is the effect, when in smiting, you turn the side, instead of the edge. “The word of God is—sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” Let all, who handle it, beware how they blunt it. Truth may be preached in such a manner, that men cannot feel indifferent. Thus it was preached by Christ and his apostles. Their hearers, either fell before its force, approved it and were edified, or hated it and were filled with wrath !

Not a little depends upon the way in which the truth is uttered. It has been judiciously remarked, that “the chief characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pul-

pit, are *gravity and warmth*.—The grave, when it is predominant, is apt to run into a dull uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the theatrical and light. The union of the two should be studied, as of the utmost importance, both in the composition of discourses and in the manner of delivery.” They constitute “the affecting, penetrating manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher, the importance of the truths which he delivers and an ardent desire, that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.” Our ministers are most deficient, in respect to manner, in an *affectionate earnestness*, when urging the immediate and indispensable duties of religion. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” “The words of the wise are as goads.”

The want of more self-knowledge, may prevent some men from effecting the good, which they otherwise might. No man can do every thing. But every man can do something. Nor can any man effect the same thing equally well in different ways. That christian ministers have a distinct knowledge of their peculiar talents, is of vast importance. This will enable them to select those subjects and to adopt that mode of discussion, in which they will be most likely to succeed. If they take subjects beyond their reach, or to which their education and genius are not adapted, they render themselves contemptible, without benefitting others. But an ordinary share of talents, moderately cultivated, when employed, with discretion, in treating upon subjects, within the range of the mind, will secure respect; and may be very useful.

In some instances, the want of greater success is evidently occasioned *by placing ministers in a situation, to which their talents are not adapted.* Ministers possess very different qualifications, which fit them for different stations. One, for instance, whose abilities, education and refinement were barely sufficient to render him generally respectable, would be very improperly set over a people of highly cultivated understandings and manners. A conviction of his own inferiority, in these respects would necessarily operate as a restraint. He could never act with freedom or effect.

On the other hand, it would be no less absurd to establish one of eminent endowments over a small uninformed society. He would be tempted to neglect the cultivation of his own mind.—Who would confine, in a closet, light enough to illuminate the whole of a spacious edifice?

But the cause, most humiliating and doubtless the most influential in preventing the success of christian ministers, is *their deficiency in personal piety.* From the manner of conducting their education, it would seem to be thought, that in those, who have so religious and solemn a work in view, piety would be of spontaneous growth. They are surrounded by the worst kind of worldly influence, to pursue their studies wholly according to worldly principles. But good men are not perfect men. Their hearts need systematic cultivation, as much as their understandings.*—Even when they receive the pastoral charge, they are too little aware of their peculiar dangers. Having more numerous avocations, different parts of their duty being more various, and their interruptions more frequent

* See note.

than those of almost any other class of men, they are under strong temptations to grow remiss in personal religion. The perpetual recurrence of religious subjects and duties, tends to beget a familiarity, which is liable to have a chilling and pernicious influence. If the thoughts of God and eternal things are permitted to dwell upon the mind without awakening corresponding emotions, they, at length, occur without exciting scarcely any feeling. Intimacy with scenes, beyond expression; tender and affecting, may induce an indifference towards them. Is not this effect often witnessed in men, who describe such scenes with inimitable *pathos*, yet upon whom they produce no practical result?

No doubt, we are all criminal for not being more learned. For who have, to the utmost, availed themselves of their opportunities to acquire knowledge? But in this our greatest guilt does not consist. It is not so much the *defect of knowledge*, as the *defect of grace*, that no more is effected. There is not a holy ardor adequate to call into exercise all the resources, which are at command. Where is the minister, who can do nothing further to promote the divine glory in the salvation of men? Were his love to immortal souls, hastening to endless misery, more fervent, could no redemption of time from secular concerns, from ceremonious visits, from unprofitable employment, be converted into an additional opportunity to do them good? Is every minister, alas! is any minister so wholly devoted to his work, that he is under no obligation *more zealously* to seek the conversion of sinners, or the edification of saints?

Ministers usually diffuse much of their own spirit through the churches, over which they preside. Continually imparting instruction and guidance, the members naturally take their peculiar cast of character. Set to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; in all things to show themselves a pattern of good works," they need peculiar circumspection in their whole deportment. If their teaching and example do not agree, they will often experience the mortification to observe, that the latter is closely imitated, while the former is almost totally disregarded. If they exhibit an air of levity, if they be unguarded in their remarks, if they appear selfish, covetous, desirous of human applause, slanderous, impatient, or resentful, they will do little good, though they preach and pray like angels.

Their success does, by no means, entirely depend upon the ablest performance of their duty in the study and the pulpit. The discharge of the more private duties is vastly important. Called to be with their people in the diversified seasons of *prosperity* and *adversity*, of sorrow and joy, their appearance will be marked, and their influence felt. Would they be the savor of life to their people, they must be the ministers of Christ *every day, in every place*.

Here it may be expected, that the enumeration of causes of an unsuccessful ministry will close. But this occasion seems to require that it be further remarked, that churches and societies may greatly counteract the most unwearied efforts of their ministers. The relation is perfectly mutual. The duties on the one part exactly harmonize with those on the other. If it be the

duty of ministers to teach, it is the duty of the people to receive instruction. The obligation of ministers to preach the gospel is no greater than that of their flock to hear, believe and obey. One party is no more sacredly bound to devote themselves wholly to their work, than the other, to provide for their maintenance, while performing this work. Without competent support, ministers must leave their appropriate business to supply the deficiency. This cannot fail measurably to withdraw their minds from the great object. As they become engaged in other pursuits, their capacity to perform ministerial services decreases. Their efforts are divided. The result of divided efforts is always inefficient. If the time, which should be spent in study, secret devotion, or in visiting from "house to house," is devoted to procure the means of subsistence, people are more than doubly losers. They deprive themselves of a part of their ministers' time; and, by doing this, disqualify them from employing the residue as well as the whole might be, were it devoted to the proper work. The spirit of ardent piety cannot be assumed upon any emergency. It consists greatly in habits. These habits are acquired, like others, by custom.

"The success of a minister depends greatly, under God, upon the state of his mind and heart—a mind disciplined by study, and a heart warmed by action in his blessed work. This state of mind and heart cannot be preserved amid the distraction of cares and the din of business; and cannot be commanded for immediate use, the moment, he sits down in his study, or steps from the world into the pulpit."

By opposing the truth, people may prevent the desired effect of ministerial labors. "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so." Would they "stand in the ways, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, they would find rest for their souls. But, if they will not, God will bring evil upon them, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto his words, nor to his law, but rejected it." In some places, to which the Saviour himself went, "he did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief." When men opposed and contradicted the apostles, they left them to perish in their sins. Had they received the truth in love, they would have continued to enjoy the means of salvation. It is therefore at their peril, that men say to their spiritual teachers, "speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." In one sense, their whole success depends upon their people. If they repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, and obey the gospel, when these duties are inculcated, ministers obtain the end of their labors.

Much depends upon the cooperation of the churches. They ought to assist their pastors by their friendly suggestions, their fervent prayers, their holy lives and faithful discipline. By proposing measures to be adopted, subjects to be discussed, they may be the means of great good. How frequently did the Apostles repeat the injunction, "Brethren, pray for us." If they had much need of the prayers of their brethren, how much greater is the need of later ministers!

Men of the world judge of the nature and importance of religion by the conduct of its professors. Whether, from the scriptures, or preaching, they hear described the necessity and value of pure and undefiled religion, they will form their sentiments upon these subjects, chiefly, from the conduct of persons professing godliness. If church members are negligent in attending on religious institutions, are worldly minded, are illiberal in their contributions to promote benevolent objects, or are, in any respect, not exemplary, the best ministerial services will have little effect. But where ministers can direct their hearers to the churches, as living witnesses of the efficacy and excellence of the gospel, their hearers cannot be unmoved.

To admonish and warn, both in public and private, is their duty, but not to bring complaints against the unruly before the church. This would be an unauthorized multiplication of their cares and perplexities, and would tend to excite personal prejudices and animosities to the prevention of their usefulness. By tolerating the violation of covenant engagements, churches sink down to the level of the world. Such, as become truly converted to God, cannot unite with those who have only a name to live, while they exhibit every symptom of being dead: The decay of religion and the prevalence of error and sectarian influence are chiefly to be ascribed to the almost total neglect of discipline. But let churches awake, take up the stumbling blocks from the way of the wicked, and faithfully execute the laws of Christ's kingdom, and they will greatly ani-

mate their pastors. Until this is done, we are not to expect the general prevalence of primitive piety.

This subject suggests many important

REFLECTIONS.

Time will not permit the mention of more than two.

1. It is as desirable that christians should grow in grace, as that sinners should be converted. The object of the christian ministry comprises these two connected, yet distinct parts. The relative importance of the former appears not to be duly appreciated either by ministers, or churches. If all are to be "rewarded according to their works," and all believers are to be made perfectly blessed, then their blessedness will differ according to their different capacities. The spiritual knowledge and love of God constitute their capacity for holy enjoyment. If an individual, now capable of ten degrees of happiness, by proper use of appointed means, may become capable of twenty degrees, this increase of capacity is as much to be desired and sought, as is the salvation of a sinner, who would be capable of but ten degrees of enjoyment.—Let it not be said, if all are perfectly, that they are equally happy. Who would not prefer the holiness and bliss of an angel to those of an infant?

2. The ministerial office is transcendently responsible. This truth is strikingly apparent, whether we contemplate its duties, or its consequences. Its duties, though demanding the purity and sagacity of angels, are assigned to men, subject to like infirmities with others. The consequences run parallel with eternity.

The trust involves the glory of God, the interminable happiness, or misery of immortal souls. A treasure is committed to "earthen vessels," compared with which rubies are pebbles, gold is dross and every object of human ambition is insignificance. "Who then is sufficient for these things?"

The patience of this assembly will be relieved, when they shall have indulged the speaker in the customary addresses.

THE PASTOR ELECT,

My dear Sir,

On this highly interesting occasion, many considerations conspire to awaken a variety of emotions the most tender and melting. Born, as we were in the same parish, of parents, all belonging to the same church; your beloved and lamented Father having been chiefly instrumental of my introduction to the place of my present residence, and having, in the church under my pastoral care, "used the office of Deacon well;" and yourself being among the "first fruits" of my ministry there; are circumstances, which, at such a moment as this, excite feelings not to be described. Contemplating the arduous duties, on which you now enter, the vast consequences, which may result to yourself and to *these souls*, joy and solicitude alternately arise and mingle in the breast. The hopeful prospect of harmony and usefulness, arising from the prompt, judicious and united efforts of this people in procuring a successor to a very estimable and respected minister of Christ, and of your

being destined to accelerate the springing up of the precious seed, which he had long and faithfully sown in this field; and to aid in the maturing stages of its growth, till many fully ripened sheaves shall be brought into the garner of God, may well excite joy. But the recollection, that many cloudless dawns have been succeeded by dark and tempestuous days, that mutability is common to man, and that numerous causes may prevent your success, impresses the heart with trembling solicitude.

These obstructing causes will suggest to you the importance of keeping your mind perpetually disciplined and of constantly augmenting its resources. While you rely solely on the divine agency for success, you will labor with the same zeal and perseverance, you would, if the object were to be attained by your own exertions. To have your heart eminently devoted to your work, to possess much of the spirit of faith and prayer, and of the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*, will have more effect in promoting His cause, than all the treasures of learning and the powers of eloquence. You will of course make the former the object of your most assiduous study. For though you "speak with the tongue of an angel and have not charity, you are nothing." In the discharge of every ministerial duty, you will endeavor to blend the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. Listen to a voice from heaven, it is the voice of your Lord and Master, announcing your duty and encouragement, "BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."

Brethren and Friends of this Church and Society,

The weeping, occasioned by the removal of your late beloved and revered Pastor has endured but for a night. This day should excite you to a remembrance of your past privileges ; and to inquire, whether you have suitably availed yourselves of them.

The man of your choice will labor in vain, without your cooperation. He has the heart of a man, and if you refuse to cooperate with him in seeking the salvation of your own souls, his heart will die within him. What must be his feelings, after all his painful labor, to see the house of God forsaken ; or to see it filled with uncandid, or careless hearers ? How deeply will it distress him, to perceive you inattentive to the solemn message, which he brings from God. In passing over the assembly, how will his eye affect his heart, to meet only here and there an individual, who exhibits the christian character ? Aid him by your judicious counsels, your devout and exemplary lives, and by your effectual fervent prayers ; and the union now to be formed will be to him and you, both salutary and happy.

My Hearers,

These religious solemnities will soon close, this numerous assembly be dispersed and the light of this interesting day be withdrawn. In what scenes shall we engage ? Shall we retire to ex-

amine, whether our influence tends to promote, or hinder, the success of the ministers of Christ? Some will probably depart much impressed and spiritually benefitted by what they have here witnessed. Others, we fear, will soon forget the transactions of this occasion, though they will be remembered by saints, by angels and by Jehovah himself forever. Though we never again behold each other's faces in the flesh, we shall once more meet; "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," not to be mere spectators; for "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." If we, who watch for your souls, fail to give suitable warning "to the wicked, they will die in their sins, but their blood will be required at our hands." If we have, with a true regard to the divine glory, been instrumental of the salvation of one precious soul, how blessed will be our reward?—If you believe on the Lord Jesus, with what rapture will you hail his approach, to make you perfect in his likeness, to permit you to be with him, where you will forever behold his glory and celebrate his praise.—But if then found unbelievers, the God, "who made you will not have mercy upon you; he, who formed you will show you no favor." Wretched souls, to whom will you then look? The Judge, in accents most dreadful, will bid you, Depart accursed. Depart from what? from the society of his friends, from the felicities of his kingdom, from the regions of hope, from the utmost bounds of his mercy! O be persuaded now to embrace "the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that trust in him."

NOTE,---[See page 12.]

Does not a radical defect extend through the whole course of education, in which our young men are trained for the christian ministry? The supposed defect consists in the almost total neglect to cultivate their piety. While the most laudable exertions are made to procure and arrange those studies, which are designed to improve the understanding, young men with scarcely any acquaintance with books, are left to select for themselves, and to pursue their own course in improving their hearts. But do they not need instruction as much in reference to the latter as the former? Would not a systematical cultivation of holy affections be as conducive to their rapid increase, as a systematical cultivation of science is conducive to its increase? Does not the spiritual growth of christians as invariably correspond with the means employed, as the natural growth of children? If this be the fact, of what inconceivable moment is it, that all believers, and especially that young men, in a course of preparation for the gospel ministry, should be taught *what these means are, and how to apply them?* But is the importance of an eminent degree of spiritual attainments as often, as strongly, and as perseveringly urged by the Professors in any of our Seminaries, Theological ones not excepted, as is the importance of an eminent degree of intellectual attainments? How frequently has it occurred during their collegial course, that young men's fervor of piety has suffered an abatement, which is never after regained? So constant and long continued an application of an influence so chilling to the warmth of devout affections, as that intimate acquaintance with the corrupt writings of pagan idolaters, or of men, though nominally christian, yet utterly hostile to the peculiar doctrines and spirit of christianity, as is required, can scarcely fail to be extremely injurious. Yet how seldom are they at all apprized of their danger from this quarter? Foster's Essay "On the aversion of men of taste to Evangelical religion" should be attentively perused by every youth previously to his commencing a classical education.

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