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ART. I.—*Remarks on the Studies and Discipline of the Preacher.*

THE habits of a young minister, in respect to mental culture, are very early formed, and hence no one can begin too soon to regulate his closet-practice by maxims derived from the true philosophy of mind, and the experience of successful scholars. Early introduction to active labour, in an extended field, partaking of a missionary and itinerant character, may, amidst much usefulness, spoil a man for life, in all that regards progress of erudition, and productiveness of the reasoning powers. Such a person may accomplish much in the way of direct and proximate good; but his fruit often dies with him, and he does little in stimulating, forming, and enriching the minds of others. On the other hand, a zealous young scholar, captivated with the intellectual or literary side of ministerial work, may addict himself to books in such a manner as to sink the preacher in the man of learning, and spend his days without any real sympathy with the affectionate duties of the working clergy. The due admixture of the contemplative with the active, of learning with labour, of private cultivation with public spirit, is a *juste milieu* which few attain, but which cannot be too earnestly recommended.

We assume it, without the trouble of proof, that every young minister, whose manner of life is in any degree submitted to his own choice, will strive after the highest Christian learning. But here there are diversities in the conduct of studies and the regulation of thought, which demand the most serious discrimination. We are persuaded that grave errors prevail in respect to what should be the aim of the pastor, in his parochial studies and discipline. For this cause, we would venture a few suggestions, not altogether without previous experiment and careful observation.

Let us suppose a settled minister, after the usual career of academic and theological training, to be seated in his quiet parsonage, with a sufficient and increasing apparatus of books around him. His tastes and predilections dispose him to account the hours blessed which he can devote to reading; and many a man, under this early impulse, makes his greatest attainments during the first ten years. Yet hundreds go astray from the outset. It is not enough to turn an inquisitive mind loose among an array of great authors. The error against which we would guard such a one, is that of mistaking a large and various erudition for wise and thorough culture of the faculties.

The knowledge of authors, however great and good, is an instrument, not an end; and an instrument which may be misdirected and abused. There is much to be attained from other sources than books; and all that is gained from these, must, in order to the highest advantage, be made to pass through a process of inward digestion, which may be disturbed or even precluded by indiscriminate reading. The attainment of truth demands more than what is termed erudition. One may have vast knowledge of the repositories of human opinion, of what other men, many men, have thought upon all subjects, what in modern phrase is known as the *literature* of science; one may have a bibliographical accuracy about the authors who have treated this or that topic in every age, about systems, and schools, and controversies; and yet be vacillating and undecided as to the positive truth in question. We meet with men—and they are not the least agreeable of literary companions—who never fail, whatever topic may be started,

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to display familiarity with all the great minds who have treated it, to cite author after author, and to pour out reminiscences the most curious concerning the history of opinion in the Church, but who seldom strike us by the utterance of a single original conclusion, and never evince a rooted firmness of private judgment. Such are they who amass libraries of their own, and flutter among great public collections; who dazzle by quotation after quotation in sermons and treatises; who deck the margin of their publications with a catena of references to volume, page, and edition of works often inaccessible to ordinary scholars; but who discover or settle no great principle. They are felicitous conversers, walking indexes to treasured lore, and sprightly essayists, but not investigators, in the true sense, not producers, not solid thinkers. Indeed it would seem as if in the very proportion of such encyclopædic knowledge, there was an incapacity for the mental forces to work up the enormous mass of superincumbent information. All this we believe to be true, while we scorn the paltry self-conceit of those who would denounce learning as injurious to originality, or would contrast readers and thinkers as incompatible classes. Our position is only that care must be taken that the great reader be also a great thinker.

The clerical student will of course add to his knowledge of books every day; but these accumulations of knowledge must be governed by some law; must be directed, nay, must be limited. There is surely some point beyond which the acquisition of other men's thoughts must not be carried. This we say for the sake of those *helluones librorum*, who read for ever and without stint; browsing as diligently as oxen in the green herbage of rich meads, but, unlike these, never lying down to ruminate. Life is too short, Art is too long, for a human mind to make perpetual accretion of book-learning, without halt. *Suflaminandum est.* There must be some circumscription of the range; for if a hundred volumes, in a given science, may be read, why not a thousand; and why not, supposing so many extant, ten thousand? At this rate, no scholar could ever find his goal. And as uninterrupted research shuts out continuous reflection, it is observed that those who go astray in this road become the prey of never-ending

doubts, even if they do not fall into latitudinarian comprehension and indifference to truth. The faults of some truly great men appear to have had this origin; we might adduce as instances, Grotius, Priestley, and Parr.

The mind must be allowed some periods of calm, uninterrupted reflection, in order to librate freely, and find the resting-point between conflicting views. That time is sometimes expended in learning, examining, and collating arguments of all kinds, on different sides of a given question, which might, by a much more compendious method, have served to discern and embrace positive truth, or to make deduction from acknowledged truth. No wise counsellor would proscribe the perusal of controversiēs. Yet he who reads on different sides, must necessarily read much that is erroneous; and all tampering with falsehood, however necessary, is, like dealing with poisons, full of danger. If we might have our choice, it is better to converse with truth than with error; with the rudest, homeliest truth, than with the most ingenious, decorated error; with the humblest truth, than with the most soaring, original, and striking error. The sedulous perusal of great controversies, is often a duty, and it may tend to acuminate the dialectical faculty; but none can deny that it keeps the thoughts long in contact with divers falsities, and their specious reasons. Now these same hours would be employed far more healthfully in contemplating truths which in their own nature are nourishing and fruitful. To confirm this, let it be remembered, that truth is one, while error is manifold, if not infinite; hence the true economy of the faculties is, wherever it is possible, to commune with truth. Again, while error leads to error, truth leads to truth. Each truth is germinal and pregnant, containing other truths. Only upon this principle can we vindicate the productiveness of solitary meditation. Link follows link in the chain, which we draw from unknown mysterious recesses. A few elementary truths are the bases of the universal system.

If it should be urged, that defenders of sound doctrine must be acquainted with all diversities of opposition, we admit it, with certain limitations. But we must be allowed to add, that he who thoroughly knows a truth, knows also, and knows thereby, the opposite errors. Let any one be deeply imbued

with the Newtonian system of the material universe, and he will be little staggered by denials of particular points, however novel and however shrewdly maintained. But the converse is not true. There may be the widest acquaintanceship with forms of false opinion, while after all the true doctrine may elude the most laborious search. And therefore we believe that the reading of error, known to be such, for whatever cause, just or unjust, never fails, at least for a time, to have bad effects; producing pain and dubiety, collecting rubbish in order that it may be removed, and inflicting wounds which it is necessary to heal. Without rushing, then, to any extremes, we may employ these incontestable principles in the regulation of our studies.

There is a sort of independence and adventure which leads inquiring and sanguine minds to condemn the thought of using any special precautions in the handling of error. They feel strong in their own convictions, and fully exempt from all danger of being seduced. But they neglect the important principle that the very contact of what is false tends to impair the mental health. Hence we are not ashamed to avow it, as a canon of our intellectual hygiene, that we will not, except from necessity, read books which contain known error. We would advise youthful students especially not to be inquisitive about such. As in regard to morals, prurient curiosity leads to concupiscence and corruption, so in regard to the pursuit of truth, eager desire of knowing bad systems undermines the faith. This is the weak place in some truly excellent minds. They spend a whole literary life in acquiring the knowledge of strange, conflicting, heterogeneous systems. There is no infidelity or heresy, from Epicurus and Pelagius, down to Spinoza and Comte, into which they have not groped. The perpetual oscillations of Coleridge's great understanding are due, in some degree, to this morbid penchant; hence his delight in Plotinus, Böhm, and Schelling; and hence his long gestation, resulting in no definite faith, and no completed work. Continual wandering in the mazes of theories which after all are not adopted, ends only in dissatisfaction and pain. It is a trial to converse with mistaken minds, even for the purpose of refutation; but to make such commerce the habit of life, is to court disappointment and weakness, if not to be betrayed

and supplanted. With no common earnestness of entreaty we would therefore exhort the enterprising student to devote his days and nights to the search of verity, rather than the discovery, or as a first object, even the confutation of error. Offences must needs come, and must needs be removed; the Church must still have its controvertists; but in regard to the actor in these scenes, unnecessary polemics do harm.

We have thus prepared the way for a view which we have kept before us from the beginning, and which we trust will elucidate both the object and the method of ministerial study. Granting that positive and unadulterated truth is the sole result to be sought, the question is natural and just, how such truth shall be discovered, amidst the multitude of varying opinions. To the Christian inquirer the problem need cause little hesitancy. If there is a revelation from God, this is to be the capital object of meditation. The truth of the Scripture stands forth at once as the grand topic for life; and this one book is at once the professional guide and the chosen delight of the sacred student. He need no longer ask what shall be the principal aim of his inquiries, or what his line of direction in the research of knowledge. Reason and truth are correlative; and only what is true can afford nutriment and growth. In our mingled state, we receive truth with additions of error; but all the benefit is from the truth, and all falsehood is poison, which overclouds, pains, and weakens the mind. It is not too much to affirm, that even the momentary inhalation of such miasma works some lesion of the inward powers. Who can say how many of our prejudices, distresses, and sins, arise from this single cause?

In the conduct of mental discipline, it will not be difficult to see the applications of this principle, though it may call for constraint and self-denial. There is occasion for circumspect walking in the study of opinion. We desire the knowledge of good and evil; but let us be cautious; let us employ a wise reserve; let us distrust our own strength of judgment; let us be sparing in our familiarity with seducers. It were well, in all cases, to take our stand on the firm ground of divine verity, and thence to make our survey of all that is opposed. Instances may be given of men long trained in the best schools,

who from a sickly taste for strange opinions, have fallen from soundness of faith, and landed in the bigotry and superstition of popery, or the delirious ravings of Swedenborg. Amidst conflicting judgments respecting the doctrinal contents of revelation, there is a just presumption in favour of those which are catholic, those which are prevalent among good men, those which are obvious in the record, those which tend to sobriety and holy living, those which are least allied to enthusiastic or fanatic innovation, those which grow out of first truths, and those which are consistent with themselves.

In the investigation of truth, it is important to bear steadily in mind the great foundation of valid belief. All argumentation runs back into certain propositions which sustain the entire structure of argument, and which commend themselves to the unsophisticated mind, as light to the healthy organ of vision. This is especially important in our study of the Bible. It is less observed than it deserves to be, that while the sacred writers sometimes argue, they oftener assert the truth. This is, above all, true of Him who spake as never man spake; and it became Him, as the authoritative Teacher, the Source of truth, yea, the Truth itself. The same declarations, even now repeated by mortal lips, have, we believe, a penetrative force, greater than is commonly acknowledged. We may accredit reason, without going over to rationalism. The first truth and the first reason are coincident in God. Here subject and object are identical. Even in fallen man, as a reasonable being, truth is fitted to reason. Like light, it makes its own way, is its own revealer, and, to a certain extent, carries its own evidence. However fully we may consent to receive whatever is divinely revealed, there is a previous point to be settled before opening the volume, which is, that God is to be believed; and this is a discovery of natural light. There are truths, the bare statement of which is mighty. The repeated statement of truths propagates them among mankind; most of our knowledge is thus derived. These propositions may be made the conclusions of ratiocinative processes, of processes differing among themselves, and indefinitely multiplied; for men have various ways of proving the same thing. But many a man believes that which he cannot prove to another. It is shallow

to deny or doubt a proposition, simply because he who holds it is unable to bring it within logical mood and figure. Thought is very rapid. Middle terms are often faint in the mind's vision, so as to vanish, while yet the conclusions remain. Nay we are sometimes sure of that, on the mere statement of it, which, so far as consciousness reports, has not come to us as the result of linked reasoning. This seeming intuition may extend to a greater sphere of objects, than those which are usually denominated First Truths.

From these considerations we may be encouraged, both in private inquiry, and in the teaching of others. We are not to be deterred from stating the truth, because we have not time to argue, nor even because it is denied. Assertion propagates falsehood; how much the rather should we use it to propagate truth? The statement of a great truth conveys to the hearer a form of thought, which, although he deny, he may come to believe. Therefore let it be stated. The medium of proof may come afterwards. Truths confirm one another, and become mutual proofs. In this way our studies of Scripture perpetually build up our knowledge and faith. *THERE IS A GOD*: here is the sublimest asseveration which human lips can utter. It is declared to the babe, and he receives it. Shall no man enjoy the great conception, but one who has mastered the arguments? The arguments are multiform, unlike, perhaps sometimes insufficient; yet the truth abides. There are a thousand arguments, and a thousand are yet to be discovered, just as there are a thousand radii, all tending to one point in which to centre. There is no truth which the mind so readily receives; and we adopt it as a palmary instance of the use of declaring a truth, as the Scriptures often do, independently of ratiocination.

But that which settles the mind as to the real warrant for believing Scripture, is that all inspired teaching is authoritative and triumphant. In the baffling search of truth, the weary mind needs such a resting-place, and acquiesces in it. The Word of God, considered as a body of religious truth and morals, is the chief fund of those who receive it, and the treasure-house of the instructed scribe. It has made the wisest philosophers and the happiest men; and the true business of

the Christian philosopher, is to subject the sacred text to a just interpretation. This suddenly defines and lightens the territory of the clerical student. His work in a certain sense is wholly exegetical. His function, in regard to the divers declarations of the Bible, is like that of the natural philosopher, in regard to the complete phenomena of the universe. And here is task enough; for life is too short for even the united powers of Christian interpreters to exhaust all the meaning of the Scriptures. The prophetic word alone seems to lie before us as a great continent, concerning which as great mistakes have been made as by the early Spanish discoverers about the new world they had touched, and of which only one here and there has taken any safe bearings. The same may be said concerning the border-land between revelation and physical science; many lucubrations must ensue, before the obscure equivocal voices of science, antiquities, and seeming discovery, shall be duly corrected by the everlasting sentences of God's word. •

So truly are perverse methods founded in an evil nature, and so prone are we to abuse the best principles, that with the Bible in our hands, as a chosen study, we may slide into the old blunder of undigested and impertinent erudition. The text may be swallowed up of commentary. Indeed, we know not a field in which pedantic erudition careers with more flaunting display, than this of interpretation. Young clergymen there are, whose proudest toils consist in the constant consultation of a shelf of interpreters, chiefly German. We protest against this pretended auxiliary, when it becomes a rival. The commentary, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master. The state of mind produced by sitting in judgment to hear twenty or fifty different expounders give their opinions on a verse, is morbid in a high degree; and cases are occurring every year, of laboriously educated weaklings, rich in books, who are utterly destroyed for all usefulness by what may be called their polymathic repletion. No:—more knowledge of Scripture is generally derived from direct study of the text, in the original, with grammar and lexicon, than from examining and comparing all the opposite opinions in Pool's Synopsis, De Wette, or Bloomfield. Again we say, commentaries must be used, and thankfully, but just as we use ladders, crutches, and spectacles;

the exception, not the rule; the aid in emergency, not the habit of every moment. There are times when what we most of all need, is to open the eye to the direct rays of self-evidencing truth; and at such times every intervening human medium keeps out just so many rays from falling on the retina. Holy Scripture cannot make its true impression, unless it be read in continuity; a whole epistle, a whole gospel, a whole prophecy at once; and with repetition of the process again and again; but this is altogether incompatible with the piecemeal mode of leaving the text every moment to converse with the annotator. The best posture for receiving light is not that of an umpire among contending interpreters. So far as the text is understood by us, our study of it is converse with positive truth. Suppose some errors are picked up, as they will be, in individual cases: these will be gradually corrected by the confluent light of many passages. The sum of truths will be incalculably greater than the sum of errors. The healthful body of truth will gradually extrude the portion of error, and cause it to slough off. The analogy of faith will more and more throw its light into dark places. All these effects will be just in proportion to the daily, diligent, continuous study of the pure text. Generally it will be found, that the more perusal of the text, the more acquisition of truth. And in application to the case of preachers, if we have learnt anything by the painful and mortifying experience of many years, it is, that of all preparatives for preaching, the best is the study of the original Scripture text. None is so suggestive of matter; none is so fruitful of illustration; and none is so certain to furnish natural and attractive methods of partition. If we did not know how many live in a practice diametrically opposed to it, we should almost blush to reiterate, what indeed comprehends all we are urging, that God's truth is infinitely more important than good methods of finding it.

We have sometimes thought that over-explaining is one of the world's plagues. There are those things which, even if left a little in enigma or in twilight, are better without being too much hammered out. Who ever failed to be sick of the prating of the *cicerone* in a foreign gallery? Why should we deluge an author's inkhorn with water? Wherefore should

Æsop and John Bunyan be diluted with endless commentary? And all this applies itself to the young minister's private study of Scripture. Experience shows that for pulpit and pastoral purposes, one is more benefitted by scholia, or sententious, seed-like observations, such as those of Bengel's *Gnomon*, than by the *Critici Sacri*, Doctor Gill, or Kuinœl. Baxter says of himself: "Till at last, being by my sickness cast far from home, where I had no book but my Bible, I set to study the truth from thence, and so, by the blessing of God, discovered more in one week than I had done before in seventeen years' reading, hearing, and wrangling." To which add Bengel's maxims: *Te totum applica ad textum; rem totam applica ad te*. And again: "More extraordinary proof there is not, of the truth and validity of Holy Scripture, and all its contents of narratives, doctrines, promises, and threatenings, than Holy Scripture itself. Truth constrains our acquiescence; I recognize the handwriting of a friend, even though the carrier does not tell me from whom he brings a letter. The sun is made visible, not by any other heavenly bodies, still less by a torch, but by itself; albeit the blind man apprehends it not."

The hive of books on interpretation and religious philosophy, in our day, is the German press. Great readers among the younger clergy seem ashamed not to have an acquaintance with these. The question is frequently asked, whether a knowledge of the German language is a necessary or highly important part of ministerial accomplishment. If the ministry at large be regarded, we hesitate not a moment to reply that it is not. There are other attainments far more valuable. Some men indeed, called to lead in theological instruction, to publish expository works, and to wage controversies, may well apply themselves to this medium of knowledge; and as no one can predict what shall be his future vocation in these respects, violence is not to be done to the impulses of Providence, which draw and urge the young student to this field; as Cárcey was attracted to Eastern philology, while yet a shoemaker. Such exempt cases, however, cannot be made the basis of a general rule. So far as exegesis is concerned, with its preparations and cognate branches, all that is indispensable in German literature is regularly transferred into English. Much even of

this is impure, seductive, and utterly false; and he may regard his lot as happy, who finds no duty summoning him to meddle with such a farrago. In respect to theology, properly so called, and the philosophy of religion, we know of no single German work which the young minister may not do without. Even those which are orthodox are only approximations to a system of truth from which the theologians of that country have been sliding away; gleams of convalescence in a sick-room, which was almost the chamber of death; laboured vindications of what none among us doubt; or refutations of heresies which happily have not invaded our part of Christendom. Why should the parish minister in New Jersey or Wisconsin toil through the thirty volumes which have been educed by Strauss's portentous theory? Why should he mystify himself by labouring among the profound treatises which show that God is personal, or that there is such a thing as sin? And why should he wear himself out in mastering a theosophic, metaphysic hypothesis, which has exploded by the expansion of its own gases, before the volume has been brought to his hands? All that we have written about the infelicity of living in a tainted atmosphere, has its application here. Upon many a brilliant book from abroad, we may write, as did the great Arnauld upon the fly-leaf of his Malebranche, *Pulchra, nova, falsa*. After some observation, we cannot recall a single instance of one who has become a more effective preacher, by addicting himself to the modern authors of Germany.

Keeping in view the great importance of being something more than a warehouse for other men's thoughts, the earnest minister will early seek the art of original meditation. To himself he will sometimes appear to be making little progress; perhaps even to be walking over his own circular track. But thinking over the same trains is not useless, if one so thinks them over as to secure truth. Novelty is the last object which a wise inquirer will seek. We may be sneered at for the suggestion, but we hold it a wise purpose *quieta non movere*, and till cause be shown, to rest on settled positions. As we did not discover the tenets which we profess, but were taught them, so we may hold them, till maintenance be denial of Scripture reasons. In meditation on these truths, we may so conduct the process

as to revise and correct definitions and notions; to secure just connection of arguments; to change the order of the same; to reject useless steps; to supply chasms; to reassure the memory, and thus to have materials for daily thinking, even by the way, in the crowded street, or in the saddle. We may thus be carrying on the entire column of truths into the regions of further discovery.

When in pursuing theological lucubrations, the student finds himself advancing by cautious deduction from known truths, he has this special safeguard, that such deductions correct previous errors and confirm previous truths; the former by starting us with manifest falsehood—the *reductio ad absurdum*—the latter by arriving anew at familiar truths, or truths consistent with former truths, or inconsistent with the denial of former truths. Or the same may be thus expressed: Every advance in true reasoning adds confirmation to the general system. These are good reasons for studying sometimes without books; a great attainment which some eminent scholars never make in a whole lifetime.

It is, we trust, impossible for any so far to mistake our drift as to suppose that we utter a caveat against reading, or even against extensive reading. Books are and must continue to be the great channels of knowledge, and fertilizing stimulants of the mind. But we would have the young preacher not to look on them as the sheaves of harvest. Great importance attaches itself to sound views of the place which human compositions occupy in mental training. Crude, immature learners regard their courses of reading, especially when rare and diversified, as so much ultimate gain; as furnishing propositions to be remembered, and as the material of future systems; and according to their quickness and tenacity of memory, they exercise themselves to reproduce the contents of favourite authors, in their very sequence, if not in their very words. But the same persons, if destined for anything greater than slavish repeaters, soon arrive at the discovery, that a day of multifarious reading needs to be followed by an evening of reflection, in order to conduce to any progress. And let it be observed, as a curious phenomenon of thought, that these subsequent reflections are not the reproduction or re-arrangement

of notions gathered during previous study. This is useful and encouraging in the premeditation of sermons. It is even possible that none of the foregoing propositions reappear in their modified shape; the mind may work on a track entirely new. This part of the process ought to be well marked. What has been gained is not so much information as discipline; the training of the athlete before contention. Yet the previous reading, indeed all previous reading, is felt to have tended somehow towards the favourable result. This is to be accounted for by several reasons. The powers have been stimulated; thus we manure the ground, in order to crops. In addition to this, the generalizing faculty rises to wider statements, and laws, for which the particulars of the discursive reading have furnished the instances. And further, the analogy of things read suggests new resemblances and opens new trains. But for all this there is no room, where the reading is perpetual, so as to become the only mode of study. Even where the mind, after converse with books, is put upon original activity, care must be taken that these later trains of thought are in the direction of what is useful, and above all of what is divine. The best flights of the preacher's meditation are those with which he is indulged after copious perusal of the simple word of God.

While many will assent to the general correctness of these statements, few, we apprehend, will consent to put them into practice, in the earlier years of mental training; and with some, the faulty methods of these years become the habit of life. But where a man belongs to the class of productive minds, he will spontaneously seek retirement and self-recollection, after the laborious reading of some years. Whether he write or speak, he will do so from his own stores. It is true that much of what he so writes and speaks will be the result of long intimacy with other minds, but not in the way of rehearsal or quotation. Wise and happy quotation adds beauty and strength; but the general truth holds, that the highest order of minds is not given to abundant citation, except where the very question is one which craves authorities. Masculine thinkers utter the results of erudition, rather than erudition itself. For why should a man be so careful to

remember what other men have said? Of all that he has read for years, much if not most, as to its original form has irrevocably slipped away; and it is well that it is so, as the mind would else become a garret of unmanageable lumber. The mind is not a store or magazine, but partly a sieve, which lets go the refuse, and partly an alembic, which distils the "fifth essence." The book-learning of any moderate reader, even if not increased, would afford material for this process. The lust of novelty betrays some young preachers into a feverish thirst for new reading, in the course of which they scour the fields for every antithetic pungency, and every brilliant expression. For fear of commonplaces, they forbear to give utterance to those great, plain, simple, everlasting propositions, which after all are the main stones in the wall of truth. The preacher errs grievously, who shuns to announce obvious and familiar things, if only they be true and seasonable and logically knit into the contexture. The most momentous sayings are simple; or rather, as Daniel Webster once said, "All great things are simple."

In hours of discipline, it would not be unprofitable for the student to make it his rule, every day, to bring freshly before his mind some solid truth, and if possible some new one; but rather the solid than the new. Let him fix the truth in his mind, as something founded, and immovable. Let him proceed to deduce other truths, but with caution. Let him abjure haste and dread paradox. Let him humbly strive to ascend to the highest principles. And let him be more concerned about the laws of thought, than the matter of knowledge. In a word, let him think for himself.

This last advice sometimes works noxious results on a certain class of minds. As given from the desk, without explanation, it is just indeed, but often nugatory. Original and independent thinking is one of the last attainments of discipline. The novice does not know how to go about it. He cannot say, "I will now proceed to generate a thought, which neither I nor others ever had before." The ludicrous attempt is most likely to be made by the Icarus or the Phaethon, of least strength and skill. Whole classes of youth, under famous teachers, have sometimes been stimulated into rash speculation and

innovating boldness, by the abuse of this very counsel. It is necessary therefore to qualify and guard it. All the beginnings of knowledge proceed upon a principle of imitation. Not more truly do we learn to speak and to write, by following a copy, than we learn to investigate and to reason, by imitating the processes of others. Something of this must pertain to the whole preliminary stage of development. But by degrees, the native powers fledge themselves for a more adventurous flight. And when such beginnings are made, and the young thinker is animated with the desire of expatiating for himself, it is prudent that he should consider the nature of the procedure, or how the mind orders itself in original thinking. Briefly then, most of our effort concerns the faculty of attention. We must look steadily in the direction of the dawning thought, as we look eastward for the sunrising. We can often do no more than hold the mind fixed. When Sir Isaac Newton was asked how he effected his vast discoveries, he replied, "By thinking continually unto them." Hence the preacher, who earnestly searches for truths to be uttered in God's house, will often feel himself reduced to a posture of soul which seems passive. Thought is not engendered by violent paroxysms of conscious invention; any more than a lost coin or a lost sheep is found by running hither and thither in a fury of pragmatical anxiety. Let the wise thinker seat himself, and eschew vexing, plaguing cogitations. Those are not the best thoughts which are wrung out with knitted brows. Something must be conceded to the spontaneity of thinking. We do not so much create the stream, as watch it, and to a certain degree direct it. This is perhaps the reason why great thinkers do not wear themselves out; but often attain longevity. It is not meditation which weakens and distempers clerical students, so much as long sitting at the desk, and unrestrained indulgence at the table. Placid easy philosophizing is one of the delights of life and is fruitful. It may be carried on in gardens, on horseback, at the seaside, amidst pedestrian excursions. It is the testimony of Malthus, who says: "I think that the better half, and much the most agreeable one, of the pleasures of the mind, is best enjoyed while one is upon one's legs." In thinking, we may discreetly let the thread drop at times; it will

beyond doubt be found again at the right moment. Interruptions thus do good, and secure repose which might not otherwise be taken. Especially converse with other minds, on subjects of present interest, is among the most useful means of suggestion and correction, as it regards our own researches. And what is true of living friends, is no less true of good books; in their proper place, they afford invaluable helps to our original inquiries.

As a single example, but that the most important, of what we mean by the use of good books, as auxiliary to private thinking, we select works on systematic theology, either such as give a conspectus of the whole, or such as more largely discuss particular topics. These profess to give the classified results of biblical investigation. To the production of these systems, either in the head, in the sermon, or in the printed book, all exegetical research is subsidiary. Fondness for these will be very much in proportion to the strength, clearness, and harmonious action of the intellect. No man can be said to know anything truly, which he does not know systematically. Every mind, even the loosest, tends naturally to methodize its acquisitions; much of every man's study consists in referring new truths to the proper class in his mental arrangement; every man has his system, good or bad, and every sermon is, so far as it goes, a body of divinity. But the great minds of theology have made this their favourite department; and none can commune with them constantly without catching a portion of their energy, and learning somewhat of their art. Melancthon, Calvin, Chamier, Turretine, Owen, and Edwards, are companions who will teach a man to think, and strengthen him to preach. When studies are miscellaneous and desultory, there is the more reason for employing frequent perusal of scientific arrangements, in order to give unity to the varied acquisitions. As a good parallel, we may mention that the late Judge Washington was accustomed to read over Blackstone's Commentaries once a year. This, however, was not enough for a genuine blackletter lawyer. "Find time," said Lord Chancellor Eldon, "to read Coke on Littleton, again and again. If it be toil and labour to you, and it will be so, think as I do, when I am climbing up to Swyer or Westhill, that the world

will be before you when the toil is over; for so the Law will be if you make yourself complete master of that book. At present lawyers are made good cheap, by learning law from Blackstone and less elegant compilers; depend upon it, men so bred will never be lawyers, (though they may be barristers,) whatever they may call themselves. I read Coke on Littleton through, the other day, when I was out of office; and when I was a student, I abridged it." Our candid judgment is, that writers such as we intend belong chiefly to a former period of Reformed theology. And we have had a pleasurable surprise, in finding the same judgment expressed by the late Dr. Pye Smith, who has been so often quoted as favourable to German divines, with whose works he had a thorough acquaintance. "Perhaps," says he, "the very best theological writings that ever the world beheld,—next to the sacred fountains themselves,—are the Latin works of foreign divines who have flourished since the period of the Reformation. It is no extravagance to affirm, that all the toil and labour of acquiring a masterly acquaintance with the Latin tongue would be richly recompensed by the attainment of this single object, an ability to read and profit by those admirable authors."*

But the great incitement, as well as the true pabulum of thought is to be derived from the Scriptures. It is happy for a student when he finds that his most animated inquiries are over the word of God. This is a study which secures the right posture of mind, not only for calm judgment, but even for discovery. Here is the touchstone which detects the alloy of error. Here only we find positive conclusions which are indubitable. The sacred writings are a moral discipline, and promote holy states which are favourable to the apprehension and belief of truth. No one can fully estimate how much they prevent frivolous and aimless reasonings, by keeping the mind constantly in the presence of the greatest objects. The attainments here made belong to real knowledge; and thus we have returned to the principal topic, which we discussed in the opening of these remarks.

What has been urged in the foregoing paragraphs, will, as

* "First Series of Christian Theology," p. 7. London, 1854.

we are fully aware, be little inviting to many an ambitious scholar. Genuine love of truth is not universal. Great numbers even of good men labour for knowledge of the vehicle; books, citations, masters, authority, learning as distinct from science. This has its subsidiary value, like the study of words; but as an end, it belongs to inferior minds. The tendency may be detected by its shibboleths; the talk of such scholars is altogether of verbal definitions, *sedes quæstionum*, debates, controversial results, treatises, formularies, the bibliography of subjects. We would not undervalue these things, when kept among instruments. But this sort of research affords only knowledge to tell and to be talked of, to get benefit by; ambitious knowledge, anything but knowledge for itself. The quality of such attainment is inferior; it is shell, husk, integument. It is not fixed and permanent, but resting too much in words, being lost if the words be changed. Men of this school are presently gravelled, if pushed back a step or two, out of their authors and formulas, into the nature of things. Such a one will be found rehearsing formulas, or slightly varying them. The evil is fostered by setting inordinate value on mere reading, and by giving the rein to literary curiosity. Take a weak mind and inflate it with books, and you produce a pitiable theologian. Every one can recall some bookish man who is at the same time shallow. His glory is in citation. Where there is no determinate judgment, great knowledge tends only to vacillation, debility, concession when pressed, and frequent change of opinion. The entire mental furniture of such a scholar is a kind of nominalism. He is a treasury of arbitrary distinctions, classifications, common-places. His questions are, Who has said it? Who has opposed it? Where is it found? How expressed? This is the history of truth, rather than truth itself. Except in the sense of remembering, this person can scarcely be said to think without a book in his hand. We see to what extremes this sort of cortical or formal knowledge may run, in the case of Jewish scholars, Masorites, and second-rate papists. All is textual. The disposition is encouraged by what university-men call *cramming*, and by all undigested learning.

It is possible that in our zeal to brand a prevalent evil, we

have dwelt too much on the negative side. For there is another kind of knowledge, and another ministerial discipline. We sometimes find it in unlearned men; and always in those men in whom ponderous erudition has not smothered the native powers; such were Augustine, Calvin, Bacon, Owen, Horsley, and Foster. The learned man who comes to this, comes to it through and beyond his learning. He attains to the "clear ideas" of Locke. By patient thinking he disentangles the body of truth from its lettered and pictured integuments, of authority, treatise and phrase. Perhaps a long period has been necessary, in order to learn terms, and read the tenets of other men; and here many rest, though genius sometimes shortens this period. But true science is not tied to certain phrases. The theologian, above all men, should possess insight. It should not be said of him, *Hæret in cortice*. The matter is not helped when weak but adventurous minds fly away from received formulas: the received formula may contain truth; the new formula may be as blindly and slavishly repeated as the old. The difference lies deeper than this. There is a discipline of mind which leads to genuine knowledge; which does not exclude erudition, but works through it to something higher. It is utterly remote from the idle musings of sundry, who absurdly boast that they are always thinking, but never read. It trains the mental eye to look through diction to essential truth; by which habit the student's notions become his own, and when afterwards expressed, however simply, bear the stamp of originality. It conduces to sincere thirst for truth, as truth, in disregard of fame, of authority, of men, and of consequences; and is therefore opposed to sectarian fire, bigotry, worship of masters, and pedantry. It ceases to swim with corks, and breaks away from the shallows of mere memory and rhetoric. Strength of judgment and firmness of conviction are its results. The mind thus taught does not allow doubts concerning unsettled things to agitate the foundation of things already proved, but maintains its conquests, and leaves no unprotected fortress in the rear. Such is the rare but attainable discipline, which we would covet for every minister of the word.

There is strong inducement to order one's studies in the way

here recommended, in the further consideration, that it leads directly to every good quality in the great work of preaching. The average of any man's sermons will be as the character of his general thinking. A good discourse is not so much the product of the week's preparation, as of the whole antecedent studies and discipline; it flows not from the pitcher, but the deep well. Hence that celebrated preacher spake a weighty thing, who on being asked how long it took him to make a certain sermon, replied, "About twenty years."

The subject commends itself to a class, who constitute the strength of our American Church; we mean the rural clergy, dispersed through the length and breadth of the land, often in small parishes. The history both of England and of New England will evince, that some of the profoundest thinkers have become such in precisely these circumstances. It is a vulgar error to suppose that city pastors are in the most favourable situation for mental culture. Their labours are great, their public and executive duties are many, their interruptions are vexatious, and hence their time, especially for prolonged reflection, is little at their own disposal. No man can be so happily placed for mental culture as the pastor of a retired country parish. He may pursue the uninterrupted studies, which formed a Bochart, a Philip Henry, an Edwards, and a Dwight. Even worldly observers have looked with envy on such a seclusion.

The entire current of our remark has presupposed that the studies of the young pastor are sacred and biblical. Instances occur of clergymen who have devoted their strength to secular literature and science. Cardinal Wiseman, in his later series of Essays, delivers some severe blows at those Anglican dignitaries whose chief laurels have been won in mathematics, natural history, and the minute criticism of Greek plays. A well-known clergyman of our own country is remembered only as a consummate botanist. Such men are contributors to the stock of general knowledge, but they are scarcely to be accounted faithful to the imperative demands of an age and country like our own. "Our office," says Cecil, "is the most laborious in the world. The mind must be always on the stretch, to acquire wisdom and grace, and to communicate them to all who come

near. It is well, indeed, when a clergyman of genius and learning devotes himself to the publication of classics and works of literature, if he cannot be prevailed to turn his genius and learning to a more important end. Enter into this kind of society—what do you hear? ‘Have you seen the new edition of Sophocles?’—‘No! is a new edition of Sophocles undertaken?’—and this makes up the conversation, and these are the ends of men who by profession should win souls. I received a most useful hint from Dr. Bacon, then Father of the University, when I was at college. I used frequently to visit him at his living, near Oxford. He would say to me, ‘What are you doing? what are your studies?’—‘I am reading so and so.’—‘You are quite wrong. When I was young, I could turn any piece of Hebrew into Greek verse with ease. But when I came into this parish, and had to teach ignorant people, I was wholly at a loss; I had no furniture. Study chiefly what you can turn to good account in your future life.’” To which may be added the remark of a profound observer, Dr. Witherspoon: “It is, in my opinion, not any honour to a minister to be very famous in any branch that is wholly unconnected with theology.”* We cite these eminent authorities, in the full persuasion that they are not opposed to the most thorough acquaintance with worldly learning and philosophy as subsidiary to the defence and exposition of the gospel. But these are not so to usurp the time and heart, as to make the Christian minister distinctively a man of science or letters. And we admit, also, a valid exception in favour of such collateral pursuits as are for recreation, in the intervals of labour.

Valuable authorship has in every period of the Church been found among the parochial ministry. This should be borne in mind by the young pastor, in expectation of the day when he shall act upon Lord Bacon’s oft quoted adage, that every man owes a debt to his own profession. New generations of men demand new books, even upon old subjects. No works of the pen are more honourable than those which disclose a sincere interest in the good of one’s countrymen, and a desire to apply scriptural principles to national emergencies. Questions of

* Works, vol. iv. p. 19.

true philanthropy continue to be safest in the hands of Christ's ministers. At the same time, the ordinary topics of theology and morals invite the attention of all whose hearts God hath touched, even though they dwell remote from city or college.

If we had not already trespassed on the reader's patience, we should take pleasure in examining the question how far the authorship of the Christian Church has resided among the working pastors. Let us say without fear of contradiction, the great and useful works of religious literature have not proceeded exclusively from professional *savans*, scholars or university-men. The inquiry is a curious one, what causes have operated to give the preponderance in literary production sometimes to one and sometimes to the other class. It may be for the encouragement of diffident scholars, in distant and straitened fields, that some of the greatest productions of human genius have issued from retirement and poverty. Wealth has seldom stimulated to aught above the caprices of literature. The conditions of authorship, as shared between professors and private scholars, engaged the acute mind of the father of Political Economy; whose remarks are worthy of all attention. Speaking of Europe, he observes, that where church-benefices are generally moderate, a university-chair will have the preference. In the opposite case, the Church will draw from the universities the most eminent men of letters. It is declared by Voltaire, that Father Porrée, a Jesuit of no great eminence in the republic of letters, was the only professor they had ever had in France whose works were worth the reading. The same remark is applicable to other Roman Catholic countries. After the Church of Rome, the Church of England is by far the best endowed in Christendom. In England, accordingly, says Smith, the Church is continually draining the universities of all their best and ablest members; and an old college tutor, who is known and distinguished in Europe as an eminent man of letters, is as rarely to be found there as in any Roman Catholic country. "In Geneva, on the contrary, in the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, in the Protestant countries of Germany, in Holland, in Scotland, in Sweden, and Denmark, the most eminent men of letters whom those countries have produced, have, not all indeed, but the

far greater part of them, been professors in universities. In those countries, the universities are continually draining the Church of all its most eminent men of letters."* These remarks have an application to the authorship of America, which we are compelled to leave to the reader's own mind.

But this whole subject of authorship is only incidental, and these remarks have trickled from the pen almost beyond our purpose. Even though the Christian pastor should never send a line to the press, he is continually engaged in literary production, and in a most important species of publication. There is no agency in the world which is more operative upon society than the faithful preaching of the gospel; there is none which demands more study, discipline, and wisdom. Hence every man who comprehends the greatness of his vocation will recognize the motives to unwearied exertion in the task of self-control, mental activity, and devoted inquiry after truth.

J. Wilson Anderson.

ART. II.—*The Plan and Purpose of the Patriarchal History.*

ONE of the faults imputed by the modern, and especially the German critics, to the older schools of biblical interpretation, is the habit of neglecting the specific primary design of the several books of Scripture, and the class of readers for whom they were immediately intended, and from whose character and wants their peculiarities of form and structure often flow directly. In avoiding this extreme, the later writers often run into the opposite, by fanciful hypotheses and extravagant refinements; but this does not invalidate the truth of the fact which they allege, or detract from the importance of the general principle which they lay down, to wit, that no book of the Bible can be fully or correctly understood without a due regard to its original and primary design, and to the readers more immediately addressed. The assumption of such primary

* *Wealth of Nations*, book v. chap. i.