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Julio Fürstio

ART. I.—*Concordantiae Librorum Veteris Testamenti Sacrorum Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae, &c. &c.* Auctore Julio Fürstio, Doct. Phil. Lipsiae. 1837-8. Sect. I—VIII.

THE appearance of great literary undertakings, whether deserving of the name from the novelty or importance of their subjects, or from the amount of patient labour or of original thought expended in their execution, may appropriately be compared to that of eminent individuals in the political world. For as these latter exert a powerful influence upon the character and conduct not only of the men among whom they live and move, but also of their posterity to distant times : so important literary achievements, while thousands of ordinary publications are suffered to sink into oblivion, remain as monuments of the intellectual prowess of the age in which they are produced, and serve as guides and helpers to future advances in knowledge, virtue, and happiness. Hence it is highly proper that their appearance and character be recorded in literary history for the benefit of posterity as well as of contemporaries, in like manner as those of celebrated men are preserved in the history of political events. These

“ And I hope, that all the ministers of this colony, according to the recommendation of former synods, and later general associations, will be careful and zealous to maintain and propagate the same in all our churches: that they will clearly and plainly preach all the doctrines contained in the sacred oracles of truth, and especially the more important of them, summed up in our catechism and confession of faith; that they will not endeavour to conceal or disguise any of these doctrines, nor shun to declare the whole counsel of God. That they will be careful not to introduce into the sacred ministry, any but such as appear to be well-fixed in these principles upon which our churches are established. It is a pleasure to me, to observe, that no person who has lately been licensed to preach as a candidate, lies under any suspicion of that nature.”

Samuel Miller

ART. IV.—*Sermons by the late Rev. Edward D. Griffin, D.D. To which is prefaced a Memoir of his life.* By William B. Sprague, D.D. Minister of the second Presbyterian Congregation in Albany. 2 Vols. 8vo. pp. 597, and 596. Albany: Packard & Van Benthuysen & Co. 1838.

THIS publication has been for some time looked for by the religious community with no small interest. It was known, early in the last year, that the Rev. Dr. Sprague had been selected by the family and friends of the late Dr. Griffin to prepare a memoir of his life, and to arrange and publish a portion of those Discourses which, from the lips of their venerable author, had so often made a solemn impression. The choice was a happy one. Dr. Sprague was well acquainted with the subject of his biographical sketch, and well qualified to do justice to his undertaking: and he has accomplished his task in a manner which we think will not disappoint the expectations of the public. The Rev. Edward Dorr Griffin, was a native of the state of Connecticut. He was born at East Haddam, January 6, 1770. His father, George Griffin was a wealthy farmer, of vigorous talents, and of much enterprise. His mother was Eve Dorr of Lyme. He was named after his fraternal uncle, the Rev. Edward Dorr, of Hartford; and in the intention of his parents, was devoted to the minis-

try from his birth. As his health, in early youth, was very delicate, he was kept almost constantly at school up to the time of his entering College. His preparatory studies were chiefly conducted by the Rev. Joseph Vail, of Hadlyme. In September, 1786 he became a member of Yale College. In his course in that Institution he seems to have been very honourably distinguished, and was graduated in 1790.

The religious impressions of the subject of this memoir seem to have begun at an early age. They do not appear, however, to have ripened into genuine piety until more than a year after he left college, and while he was engaged as the principal of an Academy at Derby, a town about ten miles west of New Haven. His plan, anterior to this, had been to study law, with a view to rising at the bar. But after recovering from a severe fit of sickness in 1791, his mind was drawn more forcibly than ever to the great interests of eternity. Soon after this he commenced his theological studies under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards, then Pastor of a church in New Haven, and afterwards President of Union College. On the 31st of October, 1792, he was licensed to preach by the West Association of New Haven county, and on the tenth of the following month his first sermon was preached in the pulpit of his venerated friend, the Rev. Mr. Vail, under whose instruction he had been prepared for College.

In the course of the two following years he laboured in several vacant churches, with much acceptance, and, apparently, to the spiritual benefit of many individuals. On the 4th of June, 1795, he was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed pastor of the Congregational church in New Hartford, Connecticut, after having preached to that church for several preceding months as a candidate for settlement. On the 17th of May, 1796, he was married to Miss Francis Huntington, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Huntington, of Coventry, and niece and adopted daughter of the Hon. Samuel Huntington, Governor of Connecticut, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. With this lady he lived in happy union until within a few weeks of his death.

Mr. Griffin's ministry at New Hartford was eminently successful. Almost immediately after he commenced his labours in this church, there was an increased attention to religion among the people of his charge, and a revival of considerable power succeeded, which resulted in the addition of

about fifty persons to the communion of the church. Again in 1798 another revival commenced, of much greater power and extent, which issued in a still larger addition to the professing people of God.

Mr. Griffin remained in New Hartford about five years. While his ministry continued to be richly blessed, and he was enjoying in a high degree the confidence and affection of his people, the health of Mrs. Griffin became delicate, and she was advised by her physicians to make choice of a milder climate. In consequence of this advice Mr. Griffin presented to his congregation the alternative of either withdrawing from his labours and relinquishing his salary till there should be time to make the necessary experiment on Mrs. Griffin's health; or of immediately resigning his pastoral charge. His congregation preferred the temporary suspension of his labours, rather than the relinquishment of his relation to them. Accordingly, in the month of October, 1800, he left New Hartford, and travelled into East Jersey:—and having received an invitation from a friend and brother in the ministry to spend some time with him, he complied with his friendly request and remained a number of weeks under his hospitable roof. During the autumn and winter which he spent in this part of New Jersey, he preached abundantly in a number of churches and always with a high degree of acceptance. The greater part of this time, however, was employed in preaching to the First Presbyterian Church of Orange, near Newark, which had recently become vacant. Here his ministry was blessed to the hopeful conversion of about fifty souls; and the congregation would probably have given him a unanimous call, had he not discouraged it, on the ground that if the health of Mrs. Griffin would permit him to remain at New Hartford, he could not consent, in present circumstances, to sever his connection with that church. Accordingly in the following June, he returned to his pastoral charge, with his wife, and an infant daughter, born during his sojourn in New Jersey.

In the meanwhile, the congregation of Newark, having had repeated opportunities of having Mr. Griffin preach during his temporary abode in their neighbourhood, gave him an affectionate call to be a colleague with their aged and venerable pastor, Dr. M'Whorter. This call he thought it his duty to accept. His pastoral relation to the church at New Hartford was dissolved in the month of August. He soon afterwards returned with his family to Newark, and

was installed as co-pastor in that church on the 20th of October, 1801.

Here was a field well adapted both for the usefulness and comfort of such a man as the subject of this memoir. He could scarcely have found a population more enlightened, liberal and affectionate than that of Newark; and his popular and commanding talents were eminently adapted, not only to gratify, but to adorn and build up such a people.

Mr. Griffin remained nearly eight years in Newark; and here again his ministry was crowned with rich and repeated blessings. Several remarkable seasons of refreshing were granted to him and his people; but two were of special extent and power. In the first of these seasons one hundred and thirteen persons were added to his church in the course of one year; and in the second, one hundred and seventy-four in six months. In fact the number of his church members was more than doubled during his residence with them.

In the month of August 1808, the last year of his first residence in Newark, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the Trustees of Union College. He was now in the thirty ninth year of his age.

In the course of the year 1808, Dr. Griffin was appointed Bartlett Professor of Pulpit Eloquence in the Theological Seminary at Andover. This appointment, after serious deliberation, he was induced to accept. Several months, however, elapsed before he could obtain the dissolution of his pastoral charge at Newark, from which he found it extremely difficult to tear himself away. His dismissal was not obtained until the month of April, in the following year. On the 28th of May he preached his farewell sermon to the beloved flock, to which he had borne a relation so tender, and so productive of precious results;—and on the next day set out with his family for Andover. His induction into the office of Professor in the Theological Seminary, to which he had been called, took place on the 21st of June following.

About the same time that the Seminary at Andover was established, the friends of Gospel truth in Boston engaged in the enterprize of founding an Orthodox church in that city, which might prove the commencement of a plan for resisting the Unitarianism, and restoring the doctrinal and Christian correctness of that ancient seat of the puritan fathers. Soon after Dr. Griffin was established in his Professorship at Andover, this enterprize was carried into effect and the well known church in Park street was erected. And as his pop-

ularity as a preacher in Boston and its vicinity was very great, the leaders of the undertaking considered it as a matter of great importance to their success to enjoy his countenance and aid. They even thought in the outset, of detaching him from the Seminary, and calling him to be their pastor. This, however, he resisted promptly, and with so much firmness that the idea was for a time abandoned. Feeling that their success depended, humanly speaking, on their being able to obtain a preacher of great popularity and weight of character,—they called two gentlemen in succession of acknowledged eminence. Both these calls, however, were rejected. At length, after having been kept more than a year and a half, from the date of their organization, in a state of alternate suspense and disappointment, they recurred again to the thought of calling Dr. Griffin; and presented the importance and exigency of their cause in so strong a point of light, and with so much importunity, that he was, at length, prevailed upon to resign his Professorship at Andover, and accept the pastoral charge of the Park Street Church. Accordingly he removed to Boston in May, 1811, and the solemnity of his installation took place on the 31st day of the following June.

Dr. Griffin continued to be the Pastor of the Park Street Church between three and four years. During this time, he was diligent, eloquent, and popular, both as a Preacher and Pastor. During this period, too, he delivered and published his "Park Street Lectures," which have generally been considered as the ablest of all his publications. And no one acquainted with the consistency and uniformity of his character can doubt that he preached now with an ardour and a power as great as ever before. And yet, if we mistake not, Dr. Griffin's ministry in Boston was not attended with any thing like the success with which it pleased God to connect it in every preceding and subsequent stage of his pastoral life. We know not whether we are justifiable in attempting to account for this fact—supposing it to be a fact;—but we will venture to make one suggestion which our readers may regard as little or as much as they think proper.

We are constrained, then, seriously to doubt, whether the enterprize of those public-spirited and excellent men who undertook the creation of the "Park Street Church," was not undertaken and conducted in a spirit of a very questionable character. We have no doubt that they were pious and sincere men, who really believed as they professed to believe, who were filled with a laudable zeal, and who honestly aimed

to oppose error, and to promote the reign of truth and righteousness. But what we doubt is, whether they did not calculate too much on carrying their point by means of outward splendor and human eloquence. They felt that there were great learning, and wealth, and taste, and eloquence firmly intrenched in Boston, and to be met and opposed by the friends of truth. And the calculation seems to have been to meet and vanquish the adversary by corresponding weapons. Hence they concluded that it was necessary for them, in order to insure success, to erect a splendid house of worship—in a public, prominent and commanding situation;—and to call a minister whose pulpit talents would enable him to cope with the most admired of their opponents. They acted upon this plan. They erected a church among the most spacious and splendid in Massachusetts, if not in the United States; and they called a pastor among the most eloquent and admired pulpit orators in the country. The question which arises in our minds in contemplating these facts, is, Did the leaders in this undertaking go to work in the best way? Did they not count too much on human instrumentality? Were they not chargeable, in too great a degree, with “making flesh their arm?”

We do not profess to be intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of that enterprize, which was, doubtless, in its general character, noble and worthy of praise. But we make the above suggestion with diffidence, yet with frankness. Would not the undertaking have been more likely to succeed had it been entered upon and pursued with less of a spirit of worldly calculation; had outward splendor been less consulted; had, of course, a less profuse expenditure of funds been indulged, and a heavy and oppressive debt been more carefully avoided;—in a word, had there been less reliance on carnal weapons, and more on those of a purely spiritual kind? We know nothing, we decide nothing concerning this matter. But the longer we live, the more considerations of this kind impress us as deeply important. The more we look above and beyond human instrumentality the better. The King of Zion will not give his glory to another. None, we believe, are so likely to succeed in spiritual enterprises as those who place least reliance on human resources, or “the enticing words of man’s wisdom;” and most on the Spirit of the living God, who can make the humblest and feeblest instruments to triumph over the proudest and most mighty. We think if the apostle Paul had gone to Boston twenty

years ago, to stem the tide of Unitarianism, and to restore "the truth as it is in Jesus," he would hardly have adopted just the course that the excellent men did who planned and executed the establishment in "Park Street." He would have gone to work on a less ambitious plan, and on a smaller scale. He would not have "despised the day of small things;" but would have calculated by the divine blessing on much prayer and patience to form a body of spiritual worshippers, and as their number increased, to increase the means of their outward accommodation.

Dr. Griffin continued to be the pastor of this church about four years, when, as Dr. Sprague remarks, "in consequence of the congregation having become embarrassed by means of the war, and withal somewhat divided among themselves, he accepted an invitation to return to Newark, as pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, then lately rendered vacant by the dismissal of Mr. Cumming. Here he was installed on the 30th day of June 1815. Not long afterwards he had the pleasure of witnessing a general attention to religion among his people, and of gathering, as the result, a precious harvest into his spiritual garner.

In the spring of 1821, Dr. Griffin received an invitation to the presidentship of Centre College, at Danville, Kentucky; and not long afterwards was invited to fill the same office in a college at Cincinnati, Ohio. But, after making a journey to the west, and taking a survey of the situation and prospects of both institutions, he thought it his duty to decline accepting either. Very soon afterwards, however, he was chosen to the presidentship of Williams College, Massachusetts; and "owing chiefly to some unpropitious circumstances which had prevented the growth of his congregation, and rendered them unable to continue to him a competent support, he determined to accept the appointment. He, accordingly, left Newark with his family toward the latter end of October, 1821, and on the 14th of the following November was inaugurated as President of the College.

We cannot enter into details concerning his administration of the College during the fifteen years in which he filled the presidential chair. But it is due to his memory to state, that the College, which had been much reduced by various adverse occurrences, began to revive soon after he became its head; that repeated instances of religious attention took place under his ministry; and that, as long as he retained his health and strength, the institution went on to rise and flourish.

In the course of the year 1831, Dr. Griffin became deeply interested in reference to what has been called the "New Divinity,"—in other words, the theology closely allied to Pelagianism, which, for a few years past, has been taught by the divines of the New Haven school. He was strongly impressed with the belief, that the opinions entertained by the divines of that school were essentially at variance with the word of God, and tended to the subversion of fundamental gospel truth. Under this impression he published, in the course of the year just mentioned, three pamphlets, intended to expose and refute the opinions in question. These have been generally regarded as able and adapted to be useful. The next year (1832) he addressed a letter to the Rev. Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, begging him to explain more fully the peculiarities of the system commonly called by his name; at the same time apprising him that the information was sought for the purpose of making a public use of it, if such use should be called for or desirable.

Dr. Sprague has given us, at large, Dr. Taylor's reply; which, though the publication of it was interdicted at the time of its date, has now been committed to the press by the writer's permission. It is just such a reply as we should expect to find from the pen of a man who was conscious of holding opinions which he was unwilling explicitly to avow, and who was constantly endeavouring to hoodwink or amuse, by suggesting that he was not understood; or that he could not *then* take the time, or enter into sufficient detail, to explain. This was not the manner in which the venerable men who compiled our public standards, or the excellent divines who, since their time, adorned and blessed the church in our own country, treated similar interrogatories. They were always able and ready to make themselves understood. Concealment or equivocation made no part of *their* policy. We have been more and more convinced, by every attempt which the divines of the school in question have made to defend their system, that, in its leading features it is essentially Pelagian; that it is incapable of scriptural defence; and that the more carefully its practical influence is examined and marked, the more clearly it will be seen to subvert the gospel, and to destroy the interests of vital piety. The contest with this system is so far from being a mere verbal one, that we consider it as entering essentially into the fundamental principles of our holy religion; and are persuaded that, so far as it bears sway, the great doctrine of

regeneration, in its genuine Bible character, must be abandoned. For ourselves, we cannot see how men who profess the truth of God's word, as exhibited in Calvinistic formularies;—truth as taught by the venerable Edwards and Brainerd, and the devoted men of their day; and who profess also to believe that men are sanctified by the truth; can consent to hold communion with those who, under the guise of conformity with great and good men who have long enjoyed the confidence of the pious, are insinuating errors adapted to corrupt the church of God, and to destroy the hopes of the soul. But to return to the subject of this memoir.

Dr. Griffin continued to preside over Williams College until the month of August, 1836, when, his declining health, and extreme feebleness induced him to tender his resignation to the board of Trustees. It was, with much regret, accepted; and he soon afterwards, removed to Newark, in New Jersey, where his eldest daughter resided, and where he spent the short remainder of his days, in the society of his pious and amiable children, and of the people of his former charge; and in the happy enjoyment of Christian consolation and hope.

In a few months after Dr. Griffin's return to Newark for the last time, his pious and excellent wife was removed by death. Her departure was peaceful and happy. This event took place in July, 1837. The doctor himself was now gradually, but very sensibly declining, in bodily strength, but evidently growing in faith and hope, and meetness for heaven. His last sermon was delivered at New Brunswick, in the pulpit of the Rev. Mr. Joseph H. Jones, September 10th, and his last appearance in public was three days afterwards, toward the close of the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, when he made a short speech and prayer, exceedingly appropriate and touching in their character. He was now overtaken by strongly marked symptoms of dropsy, which rapidly increased, and hastened his decline. From this time he was never able to lie down. But though the "outward man was perishing," the "inward man was renewed day by day." All who approached his sick bed were deeply impressed with the cheerfulness of his submission, the elevation of his hope, and the triumph of his joy in Christ. Indeed a joy unspeakable and full of glory seemed almost constantly, and with increasing strength to fill his soul. In this heavenly frame

of mind, he left the world on the 8th day of November, 1837, in the 68th year of his age.

We wish we had room to insert at length the account of the last days of this eminent minister of Christ, as given by his eldest daughter, Mrs. Frances Louisa Smith, wife of Doctor Lyndon A. Smith, of Newark, under whose roof he closed his earthly course. It is drawn with so much intelligence united with simplicity, piety and tenderness, that it cannot be perused by a mind of sensibility without deep feeling.

We feel indebted to Dr. Sprague for this Memoir. He has executed, in our opinion, the task committed to him with much judgment and taste. We do not, indeed, in all cases, entirely agree with him in the estimate which he has expressed either of the peculiar talents of Doctor Griffin himself, or of the relative merit of his several publications. Still the subject of this memorial was no doubt, a highly gifted, and fervently pious man; who filled, and deserved to fill, a large space in his day; whose labours were eminently blessed of God; and whose memory thousands have reason to cherish with gratitude and love.

Dr. Griffin made a number of publications during his life, all of which did him honour, as a man of vigorous intellect, and of genuine eloquence. On the whole we concur with Dr. Sprague in the opinion that his "Park Street Lectures" stand at the head of all his publications, as a monument of his various talents. We do not, indeed, agree with every sentiment found in that volume; but no one, we think, can read it without profound respect for the intellectual compass and vigour, the deep feeling, and the fervent zeal for truth, and for the salvation of souls, which appear in every page.

His work on the Atonement, though it undoubtedly cost him much more time and thought than the "Lectures" just mentioned, was not an effort of equal success in regard to its popular impression. It was intended to meet and settle a controversy then going on respecting the *extent* of the atonement. And it cannot be denied that this work manifests much profound thinking, and evinces a large share of intellectual vigour. Few men are capable of the close thought, the accurate discrimination, and the pursuit of a train of reasoning through its intricate and extensive relations, which appear in this treatise. But it has been thought by some of the soundest judges that there is, at the same time, a boldness of speculation; a positiveness in laying down

questionable principles; a subtlety in making distinctions; and a metaphysical refinement in discussing scriptural truth, which have not the happiest tendency to elucidate "the simplicity that is in Christ." He has made a subject comparatively simple in itself, complex and unduly philosophical. His distinction between the "*lower* and *higher* ransom," is adapted to "darken counsel;" and while it is *intended* by the author to obviate the popular objections to a limited atonement, it concedes to the advocates of that doctrine every thing which they contend for, without removing a single difficulty. What he calls "the higher ransom," and which he acknowledges to be limited in its extent, the orthodox call "the atonement—Christ's death, including all its merit." So far as we recollect, Dr. Griffin must be considered as the inventor of this distinction between the higher and lower ransom: and as it had its origin with him, so we are inclined to think, it will find no advocates after him. In this work, too, he denies that the sufferings of Christ were penal; or that any act of substitution could make these sufferings the execution of divine justice. On these accounts the work in question may, long hence and often, be read as an exhibition of metaphysical ingenuity; but can never, we think, be a popular and edifying book with plain, simple-minded Christians, who are seeking to "know more of Christ, of the power of his resurrection, and of the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be conformed unto his death." And, accordingly, if we mistake not, its circulation has been smaller, and its acceptance with the religious public less than that of any other published production of the author's pen.

After the Memoir, in the first of the volumes before us, there are twenty, and in the second, forty of Dr. Griffin hitherto unpublished Sermons. The Doctor appears in these volumes, as he was in the pulpit, a very unequal preacher. This, indeed, could hardly fail to be the case with a mind so impulsive, and marked with such strong feeling as his was. Hence that equal and uniform excellence which appears in the pulpit discourses of some preachers, can by no means be considered as characterizing the discourses before us, in a mass. Many of them possess very high excellence. Rich in matter, and happy in manner, they are adapted entirely to sustain the reputation of the venerable author. Others occupy a lower grade of merit. But it may truly be said that they all manifest vigour and originality of mind, as well as a spirit of fervent piety.

In the midst of much admirable matter in these Sermons, we now and then meet with suggestions and speculations at which the cautions and well trained theologian will be constrained to hesitate. Of the examples which justify this remark we cannot enter into particulars. A single instance shall suffice. Of this character are some of the statements in the third Sermon, on the "federal headship of Adam." The author seems to speak of the celebrated *Stapfer* as if he were the accredited representative of strict Calvinism. This, however, is known to be by no means the case. In expressing, therefore, his concurrence with *Stapfer* in his views of the imputation of Adam's sin, real Calvinists will not fail to object. But, if we mistake not, Dr. Griffin does not really agree with *Stapfer* in his doctrine of "mediate imputation." We are constrained to think that a part of what he has taught on this subject is peculiar to himself. If our recollection does not fail us, we have not met with a theory in all respects like his before.

If we could have had access to Dr. Sprague we should have suggested to him the propriety of introducing into these volumes several, at least, of the sermons which Dr. Griffin preached on public occasions, and which were committed to the press many years ago. Some of these were uncommonly excellent, and well worthy of being preserved; and as a collection of them may not be soon, if at all attempted, we should have been glad to see a portion of the number preserved in this permanent form. We would especially single out in this remark, "The kingdom of Christ," a Missionary Sermon, preached before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, in 1805; the "Plea for Africa;" delivered before the Synod of New York and New Jersey, in 1817; "the Art of Preaching," delivered before the Pastoral Association of Massachusetts, in 1811; and the Sermon preached at the dedication of the Park Street Church, in Boston, 1810. These we should be glad to see preserved; and probably two or three others ought to be added to the list, if we could recollect at the moment all that he has published. We do not, however, speak of the exclusion of these sermons from the volumes before us, in the way of complaint. We have so much reason to thank Dr. Sprague for the able and satisfactory manner in which he has discharged the trust reposed in him, that we are only sorry that it did not fall in with his plan to give us a little more of the venerable man, whose memory he has so happily embalmed.