

if any of you ever imagine that a clergyman, without the extensive acquisition of general knowledge, can sufficiently discharge his duty to the church. Religion is a practical system, and as closely connected with the present life, as with a future existence. The clergyman, then, who neglects that knowledge which is profitable to direct in the mean time, sadly abridges the sphere of his usefulness. It has been, I know, too frequently supposed that persons unacquainted with science and with those arrangements which unite society, may still be sufficiently qualified to occupy the ministerial office. But when you consider that ministerial duty requires, not merely a statement of the general principles of religion, but the application of these to a life which prepares for a future existence you will perceive that he who is without the knowledge of immediate utility, stumbles at the very threshold of religious improvement.

Upon a teacher of religion, what is termed secular learning confers many advantages. As subservient to theological improvement, you will find it an important acquisition; and, in your relations to civil society, it will promote alike your reputation and usefulness. You may be called to a sphere of activity in the church, where general intelligence will produce a more cordial reception to religious instruction; or, in this or a similar institution, you may be employed to conduct the education of youth. Let me, therefore, advise you to review occasionally your former studies; and, to your previous knowledge, to add such acquirements, as may render you esteemed and useful, in the various stations which are within the sphere of your professional choice.

At the same time, it ought to be observed, that the acquisition of religious knowledge should be your principal aim. No classical nor scientific acquirements can qualify you to be entrusted with the charge of souls. A mere man of science in the pulpit is a blind leader of the blind. His instructions cannot confer that knowledge which renovates the mind, produces rectitude of conduct, and communicates the hope of eternal life. As public teachers in the church, you must know religion both in its theoretic principles and practical applications; and it is now requisite, that you consider it with an accuracy and extent of view to which you have, as yet, been little habituated. Sustaining the character of students, you must attend to religion as a scientific pursuit; and be assured, that, till you know it in its systematic arrangements, you can neither be well qualified to instruct the ignorant nor to edify the intelligent.

I have made this remark, with a view to guard you against the affected liberality of those who decry system in religion,