A PLEA FOR SPECIAL BIBICAL STUDY.

THE BACCALAUREATE SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE GRADUATING CLASS OF ACADIA UNIVERSITY, SUNDAY JUNE 2ND, 1895, BY REV. G. O. GATES.

JOSHUA 1:8.—"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success."

After some introductory remarks as to the circumstances under which the words of the text were uttered and their special application to Joshua, the speaker proceeded:

The Book is more than a single book. It is a library of books bound in one. It was written by different men—as they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit—nearly or quite 40 in number. These men were removed from each other in the order of time of their writing. There were a mis 1500 years between the days of Moses and those of the beloved John. These men were from different countries, employed different languages, represented different callings of life, for while some of them were kings, prophets, scribes, others were soldiers, shepherds and fishermen. And yet it is but one book with a marked unity of design from cover to cover—from Genesis to Revelation—plainly showing one great, guiding mind, directing and inspiring its every page. It is the word of God.

It is called by various names, each with a meaning of its own; such as oracles from the mode of revealing the truths contained; scriptures from the mode of recording; bible from the materials on which ancient writings were recorded; the bible, from its character; or Holy Bible because it is a sacred book; and other names such as are appropriate to its contents, for example "the word," "the law," "the law and the prophets," "testaments or covenants."

That it is a remarkable book—wondrously so—no man of any intelligence doubts. It may be that men are to be found who have doubts in regard to its being a specially inspired book, and others who sincerely think that they can find errors within its pages; but no man of any standing in the intellectual world can be found who does not acknowledge it the most remarkable volume in all the world's literature.

I am not unaware that many young people are sorely tempted at times to drift away from the teachings of this book and who seek to excuse themselves for so doing by some such fallacies—cheaply retailed—as that it is an old book that has out-lived its usefulness, is being run off the track by scientific investigations, is being torn to shreds by the priests of the higher criticism or will be either very much modified in its teachings by the apostles of the "new theology or superceded by a book more in keeping with the advanced thought of the day. These young people think it all right for those who know no better but that it is not a book demanding the earnest, painstaking study, and heart belief of the students of today.

I shall be pardoned, I am sure, if I place before you a few testimonies of a few of the men whose opinions you will all admit are worthy of the attention of each and all now present. In this I shall cull from the sayings of men of different ages and walks in life; some of whom may stand as the representatives of the devout spirit of Christendom, and others who only actuated by worldly motives have given the Bible their thought. For most of these quotations I am indebted to Prof. Townsend of Boston University.

Milton, perhaps among the writers using the English language, whose works are a standard classic, one of the three great poets of the world, gives a testimony in regard to the Bible that should itself awaken our interest in its study when he says, "there are no songs to be compared to the songs of Zion no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach."

Coleridge, himself a poet and scholar declares that "for more than one thousand years the Bible collectively taken has gone hand in hand with civilization, science and law; in short with moral and intellectual cultivation: always supporting and often leading the way."

Tolleck thus expressed his opinion of the book, "Most wondrous Book, Bright candle of the Lord: Star of eternity, the only star by which the bark of man could navigate the sea of life, and gain the coasts of bliss securely."

Lord Bacon, eminent as judge and philosopher, said: "there never was found in any age of the world either religion or law that did so highly exalt the public good as the Bible;" and Locke, one of the most profound thinkers the world has ever had, speaking of morals said: "In morality there are books enough written, both by ancient and modern philosophers, but the morality of the Gospels doth so exceed them all, that to give a man a full knowledge of true morality I shall send him to no other book than the New Testament."

That profound mathematician, Isaac Newton, said, "We account the scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy."

The students of history will agree with me in the statement that Pierre Guizot of France, to whom were given by various Academies the highest honors at their command, was a man well worthy of these. He said, "I bow before the mysteries of the Bible and the gospel. I hold myself aloof from scientific discussions and solutions by which men have attempted to explain them."

The brilliant DeTocqueville said, "Bible christianity is the companion of liberty in all its conflicts."

Doniel Webster in one of his orations uttered this as his opinion, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity. Webster was a student of the Bible and acknowledged his indebtedness thereto. Said he, "I have read it through many times. I now make it a practice of going through it once a year. It is a book of all others for lawyers as well as divines and I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and rule for conduct."

In the department of Science among the ablest, the most profound of scientific thinkers we have their impressive convictions of the worth, beauty and truth of the "one book."

Prof. Dana, speaking of the Mosaic account of creation, says, "the first thought that strikes the scientific reader is the evidence of Divinity. Lieutenant Maury said, "I have always found in my scientific studies that when I could get the Bible to say anything upon the subject it afforded me a platform to stand upon; and a round in the ladder by which I could safely ascend."

Listen to what our illustrious Dawson said; "And finally I may state as the conclusion of the whole matter that the bible contains within itself all that, under God, is required to account for and dispose of all forms of infidelity, and to turn to the best and highest uses all that man can learn from nature."

The advice of Benjamin Franklin to a young man was that he cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures. Thomas Jefferson said that "the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands." John Adams after examining books all his life said "The Bible is the best book in the world" and Channing exclaimed "No books astonish me like the gospels, of all books they deserve most the study of youth and age."

It would not be well to stop in these extracts without adding a few more that may seem to some a little startling when you think of the men from whom they come, and yet will be none the less interesting and I hope not less profitable in our present discussion.

Samuel Johnson—with world wide reputation in the department of letters after all his literary triumphs advised his dearest friends by no means to neglect the daily reading of the Scriptures. Gibbian, literary critic, popular in the esteem of English literary men speaks of the Bible as "mirror of the Divinity, the rightful regent of the world." Dr. James Freeman Clark, of Unitarian fame, said "kingdoms fall, institutions perish, civilizations change, human doctrines disappear; but the imperishable truths which pervade and sanctify the Bible shall bear it up above the flood of years, it will forever remain." Rousseau declared that "the majesty of the scriptures strike me with admiration." Napoleon Bonaparte said that "everything in the Bible was worthy of God." In the writings of Goethe we read "It is belief in the Bible, the fruit of deep meditation which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life." It was Mathew Arnold who said that to the Bible, men will return because they cannot do without it. The eminent Huxley was heard to say "Some of the pleasantest recollections of my childhood are connected with the voluntary study of an ancient Bible which belonged to my grandmother."

It would be easy and pleasant to add to these testimonies from other men of learning and world wide reputation, but enough has been said for our present purpose in this connection. I admit that you can find to place over and against these expressions of trust and admiration of the Book, the sayings of other learned men who have not had an equal reverence and as high an appreciation of its truths and who in some instances have been objectors to it as a book of more than human composition. But the student will find that in most cases the objector has been in woeful ignorance of the contents of the book. Hume for example admitted that he had never read the New Testament with attention, and Gibbon contrary to his usual custom of making a careful and painstaking study of subjects that he wrote upon, allowed himself to speak in great disrespect of the Scriptures, saying that he made up his mind respecting the truthfulness of the Bible after readiffg only the gospel of John and one chapter in the gospel of Luke. Newton once pointedly rebuked the astronomer Halley, for his skepticism by saying "Sir you have never studied these subjects as I have. Do not disgrace yourself as a philosopher by presuming to judge on questions you have never examined."

Preceding the preacher said that the testimony of the eminent men whom he quoted ought to have an influence upon all who are now being asked to make the Word of God their study. Many quotations were made from the Book itself to show why it should be carefully studied. Its great age made it a most valuable historic work. Then it was the history of a people in which we may see God immanent, and to go out into the world in ignorance of this history, of that people, of the import of divine dealings with them, is to go forth exhibiting a narrowness and ignorance unpardonable and humiliating. Then the special worth of the Bible as an intellectual study was considered, and its influence pointed out upon the work of the foremost literary men of the world, upon the classical writers of our language, and the preacher specially cited Macaulay as one whose style was greatly influenced by the sacred volume. For these reasons the Book should be in the college curriculum for the purpose of regular and painstaking study, as furnishing the best history, the highest ideals, the purest literature, the subtlest morals which may be studied. Not only should the Book have an appropriate place among the studies, but instructors, specialists, should be chosen to exhibit its beauties and illustrate its truths. Of all ancient books emphatically the living Book of our age, translated into hundreds of languages and dialects of men, and in far greater demand than ever before, not only is it here to stay, but it will mould the lives of generations yet to be. Therefore its wholesome lessons, its important teachings, its character-building truths should be taught where they can exercise a most powerful and beneficial influence—in the Christian universities of the world. The preacher did not by this mean merely the theological seminaries, but in all the institutions of learning founded and supported by benevolent Christian men. Why, he asked, should so much time be given to classics not so ancient, and to heathen moralities, while the most ancient of classics, and the grandest of all moral productions, should be put aside altogether, or at best merely hold a place so subordinate as to be almost degrading. We are, said he, loudly asserting in our annual meetings that there is no book so powerful for good in the formation of the character of the nation and the individual. We go on from year to year, our college grows older, class after class graduates, and yet we have no place in our curriculum for the English Bible, nor do we seem to be in a hurry to make arrangements to place it there. We are not censuring our college faculty, for we are assured that to place the Bible in the curriculum would meet their approval, providing the man are found to impart the needed instruction. Aspiring colleges watch for the specialists in science, literature, mathematics. Has not the time come when the specialists in Biblical instruction—Greek if you will, but here I especially emphasize the English—should be found in the same colleges? Here are to be trained the men and women who will have the greatest influence in making the nation, and the Book of all others to aid in this work has, to say the most possible, but a very subordinate place. There is a book, the truths of which appeal to the holiest, the noblest in man's nature, affecting as no other truths the whole man, and not alone for time but eternity, and yet in our training and fitting young men and women for their great responsibilities, there is no special prominence attached to the Word of God. Think, Baptists—fathers and mothers—of your sons and daughters graduating from our institutions of learning knowing more of the writings of the heathen than of the men God inspired to tell us His will; more of the ethics and philosophies of men than of the teachings of the Son of God. Is it any wonder that men sneer at the teachings from the pulpits, when the colleges—the great educational centres—keep the writings of the heathen to the front and either ignore the Bible entirely or make it a sort of Sunday school appendage? Does this account in any way for the too often apparent uncomfortableness in their environments when the graduates have come back from college and are expected to take a first place in church life? Our colleges ought to be giving back to our churches every year men who can, in a scientific manner, teach the Bible and make it an interesting book to educated or uneducated. Our young people ought to come home, after graduating, enthusiastic Biblical students; ought to have had in their college course training under Biblical specialists, who have fired their very souls with a love for this most wonderful book, until they have caught the enthusiasm of prophetic seer and have been charmed by the wondrous things in the law of God and with the Psalmist have exclaimed, "O, how I love my law." Someone says to me that in our colleges are many young men who are not church members, and that some of them are not even believers in the Bible as a divinely inspired production; that they do not accept the teachings of this Book without discussing the reasons for their disbelief. Let us ask: Do all students accept the systems of early Greek and Roman religions, or the ethics and philosophies of all the men studied? Believing the Bible, inspired or not; believing there are certain facts that must be universally admitted, this one Book has influenced the world more than Grecian and Roman thought combined. Is there not, then, an obligation resting on every educated man to have a good knowledge of the Bible, whether he believes it or no? Would not the removal of ignorance of the Book remove as well doubts as to its real character? Is it fair for a man to say, in the light of the influence on the world that the Bible has exerted, "I do not accept its teachings," if he has not first made a careful and critical study of the contents of the book? No man has a right to avow his scepticism in regard to the Bible as the Word of God until he has carefully made its principles a study and knows, not by hearsay, but knows whereof he affirms. The fact is evidently our way of ignoring the Bible either because of a superstitious feeling that we ought not to make the book as common as a text book, or from a fear that in our attempts to teach we should fail, has had a tendency to make men sceptical. Our treatment of it has been of the tendency to make men think it unworthy of the attention of literary men. Ignorance of its truths, its bearings on the destiny of the world is the parent of doubt. Only can this be remedied by a comprehensive and intelligent study. Let this book be studied, studied carefully, critically, in the light of its history, and things before perplexing will become clear and forceful. Nor need we think that Bible study is to no purpose if it does not lead men to the renewal of their natures. It has a literary value apart from its message and there are facts of history so real and necessary that they may be easily understood. Eminent jurists say that the Mosaic legislation is the most valuable writing from the law standpoint that we possess and should be thoroughly mastered by every law student. The learned President of Yale not long since said: "It seems to me possible to make the study of the English Bible profitable and interesting to the young men of our colleges." I think the time has fully come when in our universities our friends of higher education—governing board, senate, professors—should unite in putting the Bible into our university curriculum side by side with the other great classics and for the study of this Book see that men are provided specially fitted to teach it, now as the greatest of all classics, bringing up from its depths its literary and historic riches, and now with soul calmed and ennobled by a strong faith in its Divine Author impress its deep spiritual lessons upon the student. And I pray God that this subject may not cease to be agitated until we shall have attained this end and at our anniversaries shall have seated upon the platform beside the learned and respected president and professors of to-day one or more special Biblical professors. There are colleges where the study of the English Bible is an essential part of the college course and from these we learn that the intellectual results are good and only good and the moral benefits such as cannot be stated in words. After some quotations from critical writers as to the value of the Bible as a classic Mr Gates went on to speak of the ignorance which yet prevailed of the facts mentioned in it and he deplored this evil concerning the Word of God—concerning a work which was the mirror of the Almighty and which so faithfully depicted the condition of man and so completely interpreted his needs. What a revealer it is! It lights the pathway of our most hidden life and secret thought now running itself together in a few brief passages until it would seem as if the feeblest intellect could grasp its purpose, and then launching out into mysteries so profound that the wisest dare not attempt to sound the depths; then it soars far into the heavens. Now it dazzles with a glory like unto that witnessed on the mount of transfiguration; then in its tender simplicity it comes to us, patiently it waits while we study and with its sweet replies gladden the questioning mind. The preacher laid special stress on the assertion that this was the Book revealing God. In the grand but dangerous times in which we live we seem to be in danger of drifting away from the thoughts of God in His work and in our lives. There was a time when it was not difficult for men to realize the presence of God. "Thunder was His voice—the lightning His fiery dart—at His bidding the earth quaked and pestilence was spread broadcast over the land." To-day all phenomena in nature is said to be attributable to law. Many are seeing all law and no God, and one truly said, "God seems to be receding further and further, and who knows that whether some time, and that very soon, he will not practically disappear." If this was the trend of modern thought there was the greater need for the recognition of the Bible in our studies. He did not wish to be understood as saying that true science teaches a realm of law and no God. "The mistakes of Moses" are now only retailed by those who have been left behind in the marches of scientific investigation. Sir John Herschel said "that all previous discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the sacred Scriptures." In closing his sermon, Mr. Gates said the Book demands earnest and devout study, such a study as was intimated to Joshua, when Jehovah said to him in the language of the text "that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein." Only by such study would we comprehend the wealth, worth and majesty of the Book. It was not merely the study of isolated verses, beautiful as they might be, nor the committing to memory of words of great promise, useful as they might be, but to study, with definite purpose along well-defined plans, epocus, characters, doctrines; but above all the aim, the purpose, the life and teachings of Jesus—then "shalt thou make thy way prosperous and then shalt thou have good success." Rev. Mr. Gates closed with a few earnest words to the graduates who were going forth in strength and in a measure equipped for ever-increasing duties and responsibilities, urging them to give heed to the Word of God, for, His teachings obeyed, they would be truly wise. In the study of the Bible, their inspiration will be touched as with the breath of Heaven; the hunger of the mind and aspirations of the soul will be met and satisfied; and they will intellectually and morally learn of that wondrous being we call God, the Creator the Upholder, the Benefactor, so that they would be led to Him and made like Him, for, spiritually understood, the Book is the embodiment of God.

A Notice of the Death and a Brief Sketch of the Life of Catherine, Widow of the Late Rev. Abram Speers Hunt, M. A.

BY REV. E. M. SAUNDERS, D. D.

Peacefully, and breathing out texts of Scripture and verses of hymns such as,

"In my hands no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

Mrs. Hunt passed away from her home on earth on Saturday, the 25th, to her home in the heavens, aged 84 years. She died at the house of her son in Dartmouth. Mrs. Hunt was the daughter of the late Lewis Johnstone, M. D., of Wolfville. She received her education at Edinburgh where she resided thirteen years. At the expiration of this time she returned to Halifax in company with her uncle, the late Judge Johnstone. Her father lived in Halifax at the time.

For a few years before her marriage to Mr. Hunt she lived in Liverpool, N. S. While there an extensive revival of religion occurred in the Baptist churches of Liverpool and Milton, which were then under the pastoral care of the late Robert Dickie. The episcopal family in which Miss Johnstone was living had no sympathy with the revival movement. From a Mrs. DeWolfe, however, who was a devout Baptist, Miss Johnstone received the sympathy and counsel she so much needed. Sixteen years previous to this time, her father, and his brother, J. W. Johnstone, the Crawleys, Binneys, Pryors, Nutting and others had seceded from St. Pauls, Halifax, and had formed the Granville Street Baptist church. Through these means Miss Johnstone had become acquainted with the beliefs and practices of the Baptist body. So soon therefore as she became convinced of her possession of a personal Saviour, she resolved to obey Christ according to the inmost convictions of her heart. In carrying out these resolutions she had the moral support of the motherly Mrs. DeWolfe and others. For a long time her spirit was oppressed and burdened with a sense of her own sinfulness. The joyful assurance of her acceptance by her Saviour came to her through the text, "O Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me." It expressed the deep desires of her heart, and through it, as a channel, her soul went up to Christ in faith and love. Light came and her soul overflowed with the joy and peace of pardon. She was baptised by the Rev. Robert Dickie, in 1843, and united with the church at Liverpool.

Mr. Hunt at the time of their marriage was pastor of the Dartmouth church. After remaining there two years, he resumed his studies at Acadia College, and at the same time assisted Rev. Edward Manning in ministerial work at Cornwallis.

Mr. Hunt was a member of the second class that graduated at Acadia. After graduating he became associate pastor with Mr. Manning, and continued to be pastor of that church till 1868 when he accepted a call to the church at Dartmouth. This relation was continued to the close of Mr. Hunt's life. He died Oct. 23, 1877. For the more than thirty years in which Mr. Hunt discharged the difficult and heavy duties of the pastorate, he had the counsels, the sympathy and all the manifold forms of help of a discreet and devoted wife. To her inherited type of character noble and refined, there had been added the advantages of travel and education in the old world. These were not her only qualifications for the duties of a pastor's wife. In the revival at Liverpool, she not only realised the full dignity of life and the provision for all the wants of the human soul, but it was to her a necessary lesson to qualify her for the duties which awaited her.

Mrs. Hunt possessed a clear, active intellect, was instinctively amiable, humble and retiring. With her many qualifications, natural and acquired, she gave her full sympathy and hearty support to her husband in his his manifold labors. At Dartmouth and Cornwallis she attracted to herself the women of the church. She appreciated their stirling qualities and they profited by their intimacy with her regarding her, and rightly so, as a model from which they could safely copy.

Mrs. Hunt, although the last to admit it, did much to make her husband's pastorate in Cornwallis a long and successful one.

This case is not unique. Much of pastoral success comes of the prayers, sympathy and cooperative labors of their wives. They get but scant credit for it. Even the husband themselves, do not know the extent of their indebtedness to their wives.

Of her own worth and the measure of her influence Mrs. Hunt seemed quite unconscious. It was all veiled with charming modesty. In her humble, prayerful life she made herself one of the people.

Added to these heavy duties came the training of her four sons and two daughters—Eliza Theresa—wife of Judge Savary, Lewis Gibson—now practicing medicine in Sheffield, England. James Johnstone, attorney-at-law, Halifax. Aubrey Spurr, secretary Mount Hope Asylum. Ella Maude wife of Rev. A. C. Chute and Ralph Melbourne, pastor of the Baptist church, Jamaica Plains, Mass.

From the infancy of these children till the day of her death, Mrs. Hunt held them bound to her heart with the power and wealth of pure disinterested motherly love. That is a fire that no waters can quench. It is an affection that spurns all the agencies of destruction. It lives and abounds in all circumstances; and it is the mightiest power known to the world for the distinct of men and nations, for uplifting, ennobling, purifying, and making strong human hearts. With such a love, intelligently exercised, and directed, Mrs. Hunt reared her children named above, and bound them to her in bonds so strong, subtle and delicate, that language is beggered in any attempts made to describe it. Nor was this a one sided love. Like begets like. Christian children who after reaching manhood and womanhood, look back, and, in the review, see what their mothers have done for them and what they still are to them, wake up to the consciousness of the mild power that is over them, and of the depth and strength of their own love for their mothers. Then the word, mother, becomes to them the holiest word in all human speech.

With hearts full of the consciousness of their indebtedness to their mother, and deeply feeling the pangs of separation, the children of the late A. S. Hunt laid their mother away in an honored grave beside their much loved father on the high grounds overlooking the town of Dartmouth. All were present except Dr. Hunt of Sheffield.

The services at the house were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Kempton, the pastor whose ministry Mrs. Hunt highly enjoyed. The casket was taken across the street to the church. Then, after appropriate singing by the choir, the writer read John 14; and led in prayer. Dr. Kempton then gave an appropriate address to a large audience made up of all denominations. Rev. W. E. Hall read Lyte's hymn, "Abide with me, etc." Then was begun the solemn march to the grave, under the shadow of the granite shaft raised by the Dartmouth church as a monument to the Rev. A. S. Hunt. The solemn burial service was conducted by the pastor; then the little mound crowned with a profusion of flowers wrought into symbolic forms, and then the departure to homes and the labors, pains and pleasures still in store for the actors.

The decease of Mrs. Hunt has broken another link that binds this generation to the generation of the Fathers of the Baptist body. She knew the Mannings, Hardings, Dimocks, and a host of noble laymen and good women, unknown, except by report to this generation. Acadia College was the strong bond between the class to which she belonged and the great body of the denomination. Three of her sons are among its graduates. She loved that school. Although it would have been less expensive and more convenient for her youngest son to have graduated at Dalhousie, yet as he was looking to the Ministry his mother at any cost must secure to him the advantages of the Baptist family life of Acadia. This was done. The donation of $1 000 brought to the college by the Rev. Ralph Hunt a few days ago from a member of his church, shows that his father's and mother's love for Acadia still warms his heart.

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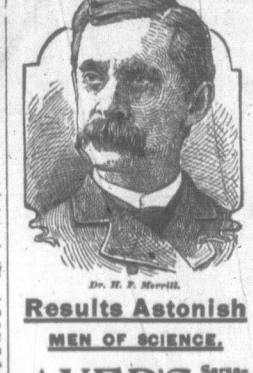

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