

deed, it may be said, the resurrection, under God's providence, of this Seminary of sacred learning, which was wisely instituted by the Fathers of our denomination in this province, and so efficiently and successfully conducted, while life remained, by the distinguished person who preceded me in this Chair, and who has now, we trust, as a good and faithful servant, entered into the joy of his Lord. And with special pleasure and cordially, do I welcome to our Divinity Hall, as my fellow-students of Theology, those ingenuous youths who, in singleness of heart, as we are bound to believe, and from ardent, grateful zeal for the glory of their God and Redeemer, and the salvation of the souls of their fellow-men, are desirous to dedicate themselves to the work of the ministry, each saying, with devout humility, "Lord, here am I, send me." The Angel which redeemed Jacob from all evil, bless the labors impart unto them plentifully his richest gifts and graces—direct and aid, and prosper abundantly their preparatory studies, make them in due time able ministers of the New Testament; assign them portions for cultivation in his vineyard; render them instrumental in turning many unto righteousness, and, after lives of honour and happiness here, exalt them to shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever. "Them that honour me I will honour." "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters, and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life."

The studies on which we are about to enter, or rather which we are about to prosecute, (for, alas! if to any of us they be new,) are of a kind which, surely above all others, both demand and deserve our closest and most assiduous attention and application; and that not only during the few short weeks we hope to commune with one another in this place; nor even during the years, perhaps still fewer, we may be destined to spend in the earthly house of this tabernacle below, and during which our highest privilege is to behold only as in a glass darkly, many of those sublime subjects to which our investigations are directed; but also, through the whole of that glorious immortality brought to light by the Gospel, and, to use the beautiful words of Melancthon, in "that eternal academy" of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, to which we hope, through grace, to be admitted, and there to be associated with the highest, yet humblest and most diligent order of students, who unceasingly desire to look into the things which have a height and a depth, and a length and a breadth, which must forever pass the knowledge of all finite and created minds.

It is too obvious to require remark, that if the pursuit of knowledge be deemed employment peculiarly worthy of intelligent beings, and if the higher and purer the objects to which that knowledge relates, the worthier the employment be reckoned, then surely our inquiries touching the being and perfections of the infinite and eternal God, and the works he has performed, and is continually performing—above all, the most marvellous and glorious of his works, that of redemption; and the relations subsisting between himself and his creatures, especially those of a moral and spiritual nature, subsisting between himself and his new creatures, by virtue of that supernatural and gracious economy, of which they have been made the subjects, and in which, at once, his glory and their duty and happiness, are essentially involved—such topics must, without controversy, and beyond comparison, be the most dignified and ennobling about which it is possible for mortals, or indeed for beings of any sort, to be engaged. Again, if it be admitted that the exercise of our faculties, especially on subjects of an elevated description, is fitted to train and invigorate these faculties, and give a healthful tone to our whole intellectual nature, and is thus, apart from all consideration of the knowledge acquired, a most salutary and beneficial mental discipline; surely this highly important object never can be so advantageously secured as by a humble, earnest, persevering, and withal reverential application to those glorious themes to which reference has just been made. But the chief recommendation of the study of divine truth, remains still to be mentioned. That truth is the great instrument by which, in the hand of the Spirit of Truth, the moral renovation of our nature is effected—by which men are turned, not only from darkness unto light, but from sin unto holiness, restored to the image of God, and made progressively

meet for serving and enjoying him both here and hereafter. That truth is thus evidently, at the same time, the great source from which, by the aid of Divine grace, all our spiritual comfort must be drawn. True, it may be said, but for the attainment of these high and holy ends, that exact, and, as it were, scientific study of Divine truth, to which Theologians addict themselves, is not requisite; on the contrary, these blessed objects may be realized by the humblest believers, by mere babes in Christ, whose knowledge of the Gospel-scheme, is of the simplest and most elementary kind. We gladly admit the justness of this representation, and bless God that such is the case. But, if even a limited, indistinct, and confused acquaintance with Divine truth be in the experience of the weakest Christians, attended with such blessed consequences, it is surely quite reasonable to suppose, that where the same truth is more fully, and accurately and connectedly embraced, the same practical consequences, but in a still higher degree, should result. Perhaps, however, we may be reminded, that those consequences result not from the truth alone, however it may be studied and understood, but from that truth accompanied by the influence of the Holy Ghost. This we desire at all times humbly and devoutly to remember. But neither is there here a valid objection to our position. For those influences may reasonably be expected to be vouchsafed to the diligent, accomplished, and successful student of Divine truth, quite as readily and abundantly as to those whose attainments in knowledge are more slender. Nay, who could refuse us, were we to go further and say that, supposing other circumstances to be equal, especially supposing like fervent prayers to be presented, it might be hoped that the communications of Divine grace would bear some proportion to the diligence and assiduity with which one devoted himself to the study of the Divine word; and that thus we should see, practically illustrated, the connection between growing in grace, and growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? The analogies of the natural world would countenance such views of the spiritual. The produce of the field results not from the labour of the husbandman, without the blessing of Him who giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, yet he who sows bountifully reaps also bountifully, and the hand of the diligent agriculturist maketh rich.

The preceding considerations are general, and admit of application in the case of all. But there is manifestly a special importance attaching to the study of Theology, in the case of those who are to engage in the office of the ministry. It is, in fact, their professional training. It is that which is to prepare them for the calling of their lives. And here, while we trust each of us is eager to repudiate such low and selfish ideas as that of learning an art for procuring a livelihood, and gaining a status in society—all which may, in general, be more easily and certainly acquired by some secular avocation—yet as it is incumbent on every man to strive after excellence in whatever he undertakes, and especially, as a minister of Jesus Christ, charged with the highest and holiest commission, and under responsibilities the most solemn and awful, ought, beyond all men, to be solicitous that he be prepared, becomingly to acquit himself, lest, through his inaptitude and inefficiency, the honour of the Redeemer's cause should be tarnished, and detriment done to the eternal interests of men's souls; so it is obviously the dictate, at once, of reason and religion, that every one contemplating the sacred office, should, before essaying the teaching of others, assiduously labour to be himself thoroughly versed in the glorious system of truth exhibited in Divine revelation. How otherwise can he hope to become a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, qualified rightly to divide the word of truth? Here a lesson may be learned from the children of this world, who are wise in their generation, and wisely discountenance embarking in professions without due preparatory education. It may again, however, be alleged, that without disputing the correctness of anything that has been advanced, but on the contrary, readily admitting the transcendent and incomparable dignity and importance of the study of Divine truth, and the special appropriateness of such study in the case of those who are to be professional teachers of religion, still it seems unaccountable that such close, assiduous, and continuous application should be required for becoming duly acquainted with such a subject. It is sometimes asked, Is not that subject one in which all men, even the weakest and most illiterate, have the deepest personal interest? And can it be supposed that, when God vouchsafed a revelation to mankind, he would not do so with a dignified simplicity resembling that with