

GOD, CREATION, AND
HUMAN REBELLION

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*Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander
from the Hand of Charles Hodge*

Edited by
Travis Fentiman

Introduction by
James M. Garretson



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God, Creation, and Human Rebellion

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Dedicated to
The American presbytery of the
Free Church of Scotland (Continuing),
Beloved of Christ and the heirs of the
fervent, experiential, Reformed, and Scottish theology
that so profoundly influenced
Archibald Alexander

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PREFACE

*And he was a ready scribe... which the
LORD God of Israel had given.*

—EZRA 7:6

The work before you came about in a unique way. I quite unexpectedly happened upon the manuscript of this volume in an online library. Realizing the value of this hidden treasure, I was quite dismayed that Charles Hodge's cursive notes of Archibald Alexander's lectures on systematic theology were nearly unreadable. But with a bit of time, effort, and scrunching of the face, individual words were picked out, then sentences. I sat back and realized that the only thing preventing this gem from seeing the light of day was a significant amount of human labor that regular people could do.

The amount of labor involved to transcribe and check the 260 manuscript pages would be too much for a solitary, busy individual. However, with a bit of recruiting of friends through the internet, who kindly and readily volunteered their time and work, our ten-person team was able to knock out the task in two months. Great thanks is due to these selfless "scribes" whom the Lord gave for this endeavor: Sheila West, Alex Sarrouf, Tucker Fleming, Justin and Genesis Spratt, Bence Gyula Fazeakas, Logan West, Mark Wallace, and Psyche Joy Ives. To our surprise, by the end of the project we were able to read Hodge's old handwriting quite well!

Hodge's notes are sometimes abbreviated and terse. Updated English, punctuation, formatting, and minimal stylistic changes have been made in order to make these notes easier to read, all the while trying to preserve something of their original character. Text and footnotes in brackets are the editor's. Foreign languages were translated by the editor. Alexander's Scripture quotations are almost always from the King James Version or close to it (possibly due to them being given from memory, from the original languages, or as a paraphrase, or it may be due to Hodge's shorthand). The numbering system is not completely consistent. Rather than correct skipped or duplicated question numbers, the numbers have been kept the same so that readers wishing to confer with the original manuscript can easily find their place. The original manuscript is available at Internet Archive under the "creator," "Hodge, Charles," and is titled, "Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander on Theology" (<https://archive.org/details/lecturenotesofar00hodg>). For any questions regarding the original reading, see the manuscript.

This volume is a gift to you out of love for Christ, who gave everything for His beloved people. The editors and transcribers have received no financial compensation for their work in order that the final cost of this volume might be lower and that the work would receive a wider distribution. We hope that, by the story of this preface, many "regular" persons will be inspired to accomplish similar and greater feats that will bless the kingdom of Christ throughout the world. May the Lord make spiritual "silver and gold" become "as plenteous as stones" (2 Chron. 1:15) so that the earth may become "full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9)!

—Travis Fentiman, MDiv
Probationer, Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

FOREWORD

Nothing is more to be desired in our day than a return to the theologically rich teaching of the best days of Princeton Seminary. In those blessed years following Archibald Alexander's appointment as the first professor for Princeton Seminary,¹ the study of theology was to the students far more than an academic exercise. Under the deeply spiritual influence of Alexander, students were given a profound love for Christ, for the sacred Scriptures, and for the souls of those who heard them preach.

Princeton Seminary was set up by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America under the leadership of Dr. Alexander in 1812. It is the second oldest of the Presbyterian seminaries in the United States. From the start the theology taught there was influenced by Jonathan Edwards and was referred to as belonging to the "Scottish School."

Another representative theologian who taught there included Charles Hodge, who, along with Dr. Alexander, promoted the doctrines of the excellent Westminster Confession and catechisms. The extent to which Princeton Seminary was used by God in those days to advance His church is apparent from the fact that Hodge taught nearly three thousand students in the fifty years of his ministry in the seminary.

1. Alexander held three separate titles over his career at Princeton: professor of didactic and polemic theology (1812–1840), professor of pastoral and polemic theology (1840–1851), and professor of pastoral and polemic theology and church government (1851).

The term *Princeton theology*, used to describe the outstanding Bible-based theology of the seminary, began to be used about the year 1831. The exposition of good doctrine was now appearing in the journal known as the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, which was concerned to enter into controversy with the followers of the well-known, and then popular, evangelist Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875). Finney, regrettably, belonged to a very different theology that held to such wrong ideas as “perfectionism”—that a Christian can become sinlessly perfect in this life. He also taught that, of himself apart from God’s effectual grace, man has the ability to repent.

Sadly, Westminster Confession Calvinism was declining in America at this date. Evolutionary ideas would begin to influence the popular mind in the late 1850s with the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. Against all such errors the faithful theologians at Princeton Seminary were firmly opposed. Dr. Alexander’s students, contrary to the backsliding spirit of their day, were being taught to love the theology of Francis Turretin of Geneva and of John Owen, the eminent Calvinist theologian of England.

During these early days at Princeton, Professor Alexander gathered the students together on Sabbath afternoons for prayer and discussion relating to issues of practical theology. His aim was to build up students’ souls in godliness in addition to academic excellence. The goal in view was the saving of souls and the building up of young men to be spiritual leaders whose lives reflected genuine godliness.

According to A. A. Hodge,² one of the outstanding traits of Alexander was his gift of originality, which showed itself in his genius for spontaneous ways of expressing deep, spiritual truths. As we discover from his biographies, Dr. Alexander had a wonderful memory enriched by his wide reading. He had an amazing capability for giving wise counsel to those who sought his advice and opinion.

A. A. Hodge also informs us that Dr. Alexander possessed the remarkable gift of being able to talk wisely. Alexander himself was aware

2. Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823–1886) was the son of Charles Hodge, named after the latter’s beloved professor.

of this, and he could speak of himself in this way: "If I have any talent, it is to talk sitting in my chair." He had a mind schooled in the best Reformed doctrine.

In the classroom students were taught divine truths so clearly that they sometimes felt their eyes could see things invisible and eternal. Students sat spellbound as they listened to Alexander expound divine doctrines, the power of which shaped mind and character and prepared them for their future life's work in the pulpit. Reverence for God, the Bible, and truth are all-important if a man is to be an influential preacher.

Among the eminent theologians who studied at Princeton was Charles Hodge (1797–1878), who graduated in 1819 and became an eminent instructor himself at the seminary in 1820. The book now before you consists of notes on theology taught by Dr. Alexander in the seminary and written down by Hodge in his own cursive handwriting. Little did young Hodge imagine that his carefully written records of Alexander's lectures would be published and made available to the Christian world some two hundred years later! But such is the wonderful providence of God.

Alexander later became the professor of pastoral and polemic theology and church government. In his declining years, he supported many worthy and good causes such as the American Sunday School Union, the American Bible Society, and the American Tract Society. "Old age," Alexander wrote in later life, "is not an unpleasant part of life, where health and piety are possessed." He fell ill on September 18, 1851, and felt sure he was soon going to die. His condition worsened on October 17 to the point where he became unable to walk any more. His mind, though, was as clear as ever. He offered a lovely prayer in preparation for eternity and went to be with the Lord a few days later on October 22, 1851.

—Rev. Maurice Roberts, *Verbi Dei Minister*,
Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

INTRODUCTION

What value can be found in a seminary student's lecture notes from the early nineteenth century? Much in every way when one learns that the scribblings are the classroom records of two of the greatest theologians and seminary educators in the history of American Christianity.

It is given to only a few men each century to have an impact on future generations of church leaders and educators. In this respect, the lives and literary legacies of Archibald Alexander (1772–1851) and his prize student and successor, Charles Hodge (1797–1878), are without peer in the record of American theological education. Readers familiar with the history of American Christianity recognize the strategic role Princeton Theological Seminary served in its development and expansion. Founded in 1812 by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the seminary was intended to be a bastion of orthodoxy in preparation of a pious and learned Presbyterian ministry.¹ Rooted in the theological heritage of colonial Presbyterianism, Princeton was envisioned as a

1. For recent overviews of American Presbyterianism, see Lefferts A. Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983); James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1996); D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking A Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007); Bradley J. Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013); and S. Donald Fortson III, *The Presbyterian Story: Origins and Progress of a Reformed Tradition* (n.p.: Presbyterian Lay Committee, 2013). Hart and Muether are particularly useful in examining the theological currents that affected the development of Presbyterianism in the United States.

ministerial training institution devoted to the cultivation of practical, or experimental, piety as much as to the formation of a Christian mind.²

The founding of seminaries during the nineteenth century signaled a new and more advanced model of ministerial training intended to offset population growth and the shortage of available clergy for existing pulpits and an expanding frontier. Denominational seminaries also provided opportunity for preservation of their ecclesiastical heritage for future generations.

Various factors gave impetus to the new educational model. As American colleges adjusted their curriculum at the end of the eighteenth century to accommodate advances related to the scientific Enlightenment, church leaders became increasingly distressed at the diminishing number of graduates interested in pursuing ministerial office. Many schools also noted a decline in student piety. Campus life was often marred by decadence and student rebellion. The combined impact of these circumstances helped undermine the Christian educational interests for which the majority of American colleges had been founded during and after the colonial period.³ Institutions originally founded to train and supply future ministers to American congregations were now redirecting their energies to other educational objectives.⁴

In addition to a period of massive political upheaval, American culture in the late eighteenth century also saw the rise of the Radical Enlightenment and its corresponding impact on church and society.

2. For a primary source collection of sermons, lectures, articles, and essays on the theology of pastoral ministry that was taught at Princeton Seminary during its first century, see James M. Garretson, *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012).

3. For analysis of these changes and the concerns they created for the founders of Princeton Theological Seminary, see Mark A. Noll, "The Founding of Princeton Seminary," *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (Fall 1979): 72–110. For a more detailed examination of the institutional and educational changes taking place at the college since its founding in 1746, see Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

4. For an informative introduction to the period, see William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 41.

Deism and infidelity were rampant, immorality was widespread, and church attendance was in decline. Philosophical skepticism and a virulent hostility to Christianity threatened the moral foundations of society, even as churches struggled to defend and explain Christian doctrine in relation to the emerging scientific and philosophical paradigms.⁵

American colonial colleges had placed strong emphasis on training in grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Study of Greco-Roman literature and mastery of the Greek and Latin languages were mandatory. The curriculum included study of theology and Christian evidences, but the number of required courses was minimal in relation to the overall program. Upon graduation, ministerial aspirants would often attach themselves to resident clergy in preparation for ordination. While useful for the practical experience it provided, the model was uneven and very much dependent on the personality and availability of the overseeing minister.

The older model with its classical curriculum necessarily gave way to study in the hard sciences. Declining interest in the ministerial office paralleled student enthusiasm for the new courses being adopted. The classics curriculum would undergo revision in the face of new advances in science. While theological courses had been part of traditional curriculum among America's colleges, study of the liberal arts had always overshadowed time spent on theology, to the detriment of the ministerial preparation envisioned. Increasing hostility to historic Christianity likewise impacted curriculum consideration. Confronted with the apologetic challenges of Enlightenment thought and deterioration in campus piety, it became apparent a new model for ministerial training was needed.

Not everyone was as equally committed to the educational preparation valued by the Presbyterian Church. Cultural factors at home and academic changes abroad would have an equally profound impact on how ministerial preparation was conceived and implemented in

5. For important studies documenting the broader development of theology in America during this period and its impact on American church life, see Paul C. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

American church life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Populism would prove a powerful factor in American culture, as would the increasing allure of the German university model to American educational philosophy. The former would devalue formal education, while the latter would methodologically and principally corrupt the subject matter from within the academy.

It is arguable that with the passing years, the educational level of clergy declined in relation to the democratizing tendencies inherent to the rise of American populism during the early nineteenth century.⁶ Formal training was disparaged by some and minimized by others. Clericalism was rejected in favor of a democratic populism, leveling hierarchical distinctions in both society and the church. Whether in empowering the common man in society or the laity within the churches, the effect devalued structured leadership. Presbyterianism was affected by the movement, but not to the extent of other church traditions.

Simultaneous to these developments in America was the rise of German universities with their accompanying specializations in ancient Near Eastern literature, languages, and culture. The German university model would subsequently redefine the nature of biblical research, the writing of theology, and the framing of the Christian message as it found popular outlet in the pulpit. Interest in a supposedly detached scientific objectivity in studying the natural sciences and now sacred truth had replaced historic recognition of and dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit in illumining a biblical text for its meaning and application. Sacred learning had given way to secular methodology in studying the Bible and writing theological texts, which was reflected in both academic and popular publications.

However well-intentioned the fresh discovery of the Bible's meaning and message may have been, the effect of the new educational model would prove disastrous to the church's spiritual vitality and witness, both in Europe and in North America. Rather than reinforcing Christian belief, this new focus maligned the Bible's message and denied the

6. For the standard study, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

integrity of its transmission and translation. Once the Bible's inspiration was denied, its authority was rejected and religious skepticism became the order of the day in the very institutions earmarked for training clergy.

But the problem with the German model was bigger than the methodological issues being embraced. A detached and scientific objectivity to the learning process is no more attainable in the study of theology than in any other field of study. Learning is interactional between subject and object, even more so when the interest of study is the person-to-person, divine-human relationship of Creator and creature. In this interaction, learning is always relational and never impersonal. Consequently, a person's character and faith, or lack thereof, will have an inevitable impact on one's approach to studying the Bible and embracing its message of salvation and judgment.

What is true for the student is equally true for the teacher. Knowledge of spiritual truth requires a spiritually teachable disposition (John 7:17). Although the German university model became normative in American college education, an awareness of the Holy Spirit's role in ministerial education had not been forgotten by Princeton Seminary's founders. They believed that spiritual truth could be properly understood, embraced, and taught only by spiritually minded men. The doctrines we believe must be accompanied by a believing faith in the revealed deposit of divine truth embodied and preserved in the Old and New Testaments. Apart from the new birth, or divine regeneration of the human soul, theology can never be taught properly nor understood "experimentally" in all the ways Christ intends His Word to be believed and obeyed.

Accordingly, Princeton Seminary's founding documents drew attention to the spiritual character of the professors as well as the subject matter.⁷ Aiming for an able and faithful ministry, the school's founders and early faculty were as equally committed to the cultivation of personal piety in their individual and community life as they were to

7. For a comprehensive account of the ministerial and spiritual priorities that characterized the seminary from its founding in 1812 through its reorganization in 1929, see David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, vol. 1, *Faith and Learning, 1812–1868* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994); and David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, vol. 2, *The Majestic Testimony, 1869–1929* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996).

serious academic study in preparation for the grave and holy calling of the Christian ministry.⁸

In contrast to the limited instruction in theology, biblical studies, church history, and practical theology provided by colonial colleges, the new model of ministerial education would provide several years of advanced study in these respective fields. The classical curriculum was still considered the best foundation for a learned ministry, but now it would be accompanied by the intensive and detailed coursework that marked early nineteenth-century ministerial curriculum. Some departments in the new seminary curriculum were based on training introduced at college or pre-college academies and tutorials. Instruction in homiletics, or preaching, built on existing principles relevant to the history, purpose, and practice of rhetoric. Courses in exegesis, biblical studies, and doctrine were covered in greater depth. Likewise, instruction in church history, historical theology, and church government took on new importance in relation to the developing identity and mission of American Presbyterianism.

While it was not uncommon for students to have mastered Greek and Latin *before* entering college, study of the Hebrew language was only in its infancy in American educational institutions at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The inclusion of Hebrew studies in the seminary curriculum was a new development in ministerial academic formation. Few today realize that upon completion of his two-year study in European universities, thirty-year-old Charles Hodge was one of the most competent linguists of ancient and modern languages living in America during the 1830s.

Although changing nineteenth-century educational currents would eventually place greater emphasis on the ministerial office as a *profession* rather than a *calling*, initial interest in a specialized ministerial curriculum paralleled developing specialization within the university curriculum. Seminaries sought to provide the kind of specialized training that would

8. For an institutional history of the school, see James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). For a study of Alexander's role in founding the seminary, see James M. Garretson, "Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8 (2012): 3–19.

enable ministers to defend and present biblical truth with a commensurate level of education equivalent to the best universities of the time.

A school's reputation is only as good as the faculty it employs.⁹ While the broad contours of the curriculum and educational objectives were determined in advance of faculty appointments, it was not until the opening year of the school in 1812 that Archibald Alexander was elected as its first professor of didactic and polemic theology. Alexander would be joined the following year by Samuel Miller (1769–1850), and a few years after that Charles Hodge would join his former professors as instructor in biblical languages. Together, the three men would establish the spiritual and intellectual trajectory of Princeton Theological Seminary for generations to come.¹⁰

Archibald Alexander was middle aged when he was appointed as Princeton Theological Seminary's first professor.¹¹ His background served him well in his new position. As a young man, he worked as an itinerant missionary along the Virginia/North Carolina border, afterward serving as pastor of several rural charges and as president of Hampden-Sidney College, a small school in Virginia. He subsequently received a call to

9. For a collection of funeral sermons, eulogies, and related biographical observations on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century faculty, see James M. Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton: Memorial Addresses for the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1812–1921* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012). For a related study, see Gary Steward, *Princeton Seminary (1812–1929): Its Leaders' Lives and Works* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2014).

10. For analysis of the theological emphases that emerged during the school's first century, see Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

11. For a biography of Alexander's life, see James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D.* (1854; repr., New York: Sprinkle Publications, 1991). For a twentieth-century intellectual biography, see Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1983). For a brief introduction and overview of Alexander's life, see John Oliver Nelson, "Archibald Alexander, Winsome Conservative (1772–1851)," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 35 (March 1957): 15–33. For an older overview and evaluation, see *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, "Archibald Alexander," index volume, no. 1 (January 1870): 42–67.

pastor the Pine Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, where he served prior to his appointment at the seminary.¹²

A natural scholar, Alexander was also a popular preacher and caring pastor.¹³ Converted during his teenage years, Alexander witnessed firsthand the transformation of Virginian culture as it was impacted by revival during the 1790s. A profound spiritual sensitivity marked his pastoral ministry and labors as a professor. Alexander was often sought out by congregants and students for spiritual guidance on matters of faith and practice.¹⁴

Alexander wrote apologetic works, theological treatises, academic articles, and popular publications, but he is probably most remembered for his important work *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, first published in 1841.¹⁵ The nineteenth-century equivalent to Jonathan Edwards's eighteenth-century classic, *The Religious Affections*, Alexander's treatment is a penetrating series of essays on the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to a life of piety.¹⁶

As the seminary's founding faculty member, Alexander was responsible for designing the curriculum and providing classroom instruction.

12. Alexander's preparation for his faculty appointment at the seminary is recounted in John DeWitt, "Archibald Alexander's Preparation for His Professorship," *Princeton Theological Review* 3 (October 1905): 573–94.

13. For a study on Alexander's theology of preaching and pastoral ministry, see James M. Garretson, *Princeton and Preaching: Archibald Alexander and the Christian Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2005). For observations on Alexander's published sermons, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, *The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 228–43.

14. For a representative selection of Alexander's writings on piety, see James M. Garretson, *A Scribe Well-Trained: Archibald Alexander and the Life of Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

15. For a recent bibliography of Alexander's material, see Wayne Sparkman, "The Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander (1772–1851): An Annotated Bibliography," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8 (2012): 120–52.

16. See Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (1841; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978). For a critical review of Alexander's work, see Gordon E. Jackson, "Archibald Alexander's *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, a Critical Revisiting," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (Summer 1973): 141–54. For an overview and summary of its contents, see Steward, *Princeton Seminary (1812–1929)*, 73–96.

By the end of the first academic year, student enrollment had increased, and the General Assembly appointed Samuel Miller to serve alongside Alexander as professor of church history and ecclesiastical government. Apart from shared instruction in pastoral theology and homiletics, the two men were free to specialize in their respective departments.¹⁷

Alexander, like several of his sons who would later teach at the seminary, was a polymath. Having received his education as a young man through tutors and regional academies, he was particularly influenced by Rev. William Graham while a student at Liberty Hall Academy.¹⁸ Graham was a graduate of the College of New Jersey, where he studied under Dr. John Witherspoon. Instruction in moral philosophy and rhetoric marked Witherspoon's curricular interests, as did incorporation of elements of the Scottish philosophical school known as Common Sense Realism. Graham's academy was modeled in large measure on Witherspoon's educational emphases.

Scottish philosophy—a mixture of Baconian inductive thought and observations on how the human mind or senses can know not just perceptions but objective reality—was extremely influential in shaping American intellectual culture. Authors such as Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, and Dugald Stewart found inroads into American society through the academy and pulpit alike. The approach proved a popular apologetic deterrent to the philosophical skepticism and resulting moral relativism associated with thinkers such as David Hume. Baconian methodology and Scottish Realist philosophy would become the reigning intellectual paradigm undergirding theological instruction in America throughout the nineteenth century, although with waning influence outside more conservative theological institutions in the decades following.

17. For Miller's instruction on preaching and the work of the pastoral ministry, see James M. Garretson, *An Able and Faithful Ministry: Samuel Miller and the Pastoral Office* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

18. Modeled on the curriculum John Witherspoon established under his educational reform as president of the College of New Jersey, Liberty Hall Academy placed strong emphasis on classical studies, moral philosophy, criticism, "practical mathematics, mensuration, and navigation." Graham's academy eventually became Washington and Lee University.

Alexander first began studying theology during his teenage years. Puritan authors such as Bates, Boston, Flavel, and Owen, alongside the writings of Jonathan Edwards, helped shape Alexander's theological convictions, as did the works of Hugh Blair on belles lettres and rhetoric. Francis Turretin's three-volume *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* was instrumental in fine-tuning Alexander's maturing theological framework, as were the secondary standards of the Presbyterian Church, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms.¹⁹ Turretin's work served as the main theological text for the study of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary for most of the nineteenth century until replaced by Hodge's three-volume systematic theology in the early 1870s.²⁰

For the majority of his tenure at Princeton, Alexander served as professor of didactic and polemic theology. With increasing age, he relinquished the chair to Charles Hodge in 1840, at which time Hodge was elected by the General Assembly to the renamed chair of exegetical and didactic theology. During his final decade at the seminary, as professor of pastoral and polemic theology,²¹ Alexander was able to devote more of his attention to the field of practical theology—a subject for which he was eminently suited and one which, with the passing of the centuries, remains the most celebrated among his many literary contributions.²²

19. For a recent critical edition of Turretin's classic work, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., trans George M. Giger, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1992–1996). For a study on Turretin's life and writings, see James W. Alexander, "Institutio Theologiae Elencticae," *BRPR* 20, no. 3 (July 1848): 452–63.

20. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1871–1872; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

21. In the last year of his professorship (1851), Alexander's title was expanded to include church government.

22. "Christians, and especially clergymen, of strong intellect, of studious habits, of scholastic attainments, often find their professional pursuits so absorbing to their taste, as to become their great temptation. They bury themselves in books—exhaust their minds in researches, which though they may be theological in their relations, are purely intellectual in their process. But, I think no one who intimately knew Dr. Alexander can think otherwise, than that profoundly as he studied the range of the theological and philosophical science, his heart was in the Bible, and in experimental religion; that *his* musings were

Like Alexander, Hodge's family was of Scots-Irish descent. But unlike Alexander's rural upbringing and stable family life, Hodge's personal history prior to his college years was marked by repeated tragedy, financial stress, and relocation.²³ Presbyterian in affiliation, the Hodges would be numbered among influential civic and commercial leaders in the city of Philadelphia at the end of the eighteenth century. Hodge's father had served as a surgeon with the Continental Army during the American Revolution, later becoming a prosperous dockside merchant in Philadelphia. Six months after Charles was born, his father died, leaving his widowed mother responsible for raising two of the five children who had not succumbed to measles or the yellow fever epidemics that ravaged Eastern Seaboard cities such as Philadelphia during the 1790s.

Unfortunately, the Hodges never recovered from the death of their father; the family's commercial interests suffered loss through absence of his entrepreneurial skill, regional epidemics that decimated their business ventures and home life, and later embargoes arising out of war with England. An industrious caretaker of her children's needs and future professional security, Mary Hodge, Charles's mother, took in boarders and rented out portions of the houses in which they lived in order to make ends meet. The family would move as needed to accommodate their modest income; at one point, Mary Hodge sent Charles to Somerville, New Jersey, to attend a college preparatory academy in anticipation of a future career in medicine.

Mary Hodge's industriousness provided important educational opportunities for her children, first in Philadelphia and later at the College

not on the speculative theories of his own, or other men's minds; but in the revelations of the divine Spirit, and the actual workings of the human heart, in its relations to God and inspired truth." From John Hall, "A Sermon on the Death of Dr. Alexander," cited in Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton*, 13.

23. For an older biography of Hodge, see Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge, D.D., LL.D., Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.* (1880; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010). For recent treatments of Hodge's life, see Paul Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Andrew A. Hoeffecker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2011); and S. Donald Fortson III, *Charles Hodge* (Darlington, UK: EP Books, 2013).

of New Jersey. Hodge's older brother, Hugh, would become a renowned Philadelphia gynecologist whose groundbreaking expertise in this field furthered advancement of female medical care from which today's practitioners still benefit. Charles Hodge would find early entrance to the College of New Jersey, graduating in 1815 at the age of eighteen. The seminary began a year prior to Hodge's matriculation at the college; as a young boy, Hodge was present in the gallery, listening to Alexander's inaugural lecture and related presentations by Samuel Miller and others delivered at the opening convocation in August of 1812.

While growing up in Philadelphia, Hodge was influenced by his family pastor and prominent churchman and educator, Dr. Ashbel Green.²⁴ By the time of Hodge's arrival at the College of New Jersey, Green was serving as president of the college and in a similar capacity on the seminary board. Like Hodge's future seminary mentors, Alexander and Miller, Green was also committed to confessional churchmanship and experimental piety. Beloved as a pastor and respected as a preacher, Green placed strong emphasis on catechetical training in the spiritual nurture of his congregation and care for covenant children.²⁵ Green's pastoral influence in Hodge's life predated Alexander's; while often overlooked, it played a seminal role in shaping Hodge's life and theology.

Revival swept through the college during the winter months of 1814–1815. Green and Alexander spoke often to the students and provided spiritual counsel. Seventeen-year-old Charles Hodge, along with a large

24. Green played an important role in rebuilding the College of New Jersey, founding Princeton Theological Seminary, and shaping nineteenth-century American Presbyterianism. For an informative introduction to Green's life, see Joseph H. Jones, ed., *The Life of Ashbel Green, V.D.M.* (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1849). A review of Green's biography by J. W. Alexander appeared in the same year. See James W. Alexander, "The Life of Ashbel Green, V.D.M., Begun to Be Written by Himself in His Eighty-Second Year, and Continued till His Eighty-Fourth; Prepared for the Press, at the Author's Request, by Joseph H. Jones, Pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia," *BRPR* 21, no. 4 (October 1849): 563–82.

25. Hodge sat under Green's catechetical instruction, the substance of which was subsequently published in two volumes (vol. 1, 1829; vol. 2, 1841). For a review of the first volume of Green's lectures, see Archibald Alexander, "Review: *Lectures on the Shorter Catechism*, by Ashbel Green," *BRTR* 2, no. 2 (1830): 297–309. Alexander's remarks can also be found in Garretson, *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, 1:315–16.

number of the student body, experienced the effects of the Spirit's work in conversion and commitment to a life of piety. In January 1815, Hodge made public profession of faith and joined the Presbyterian Church at Princeton. The experiences of these months would prove instrumental in Hodge's spiritual development and future leadership in the church.

Upon graduation from the college in 1815, Hodge returned to Philadelphia to live with his mother and recuperate his health. As the months passed, Hodge felt called to the Christian ministry and planned on attending seminary. During these months, he also had opportunity to accompany Alexander on an itinerant missionary tour, further deepening his friendship with the older man. By the time Hodge completed his seminary studies in 1819, Alexander had become more of a spiritual father than a professor to the fatherless young man.²⁶

While a student at seminary and during the year following his graduation, Hodge's vision for Christian service became more focused as he tested his gifts in preaching and pastoral care in combination with Alexander's mentoring and spiritual friendship. He pursued licensure while serving various temporary ministry positions. Hodge soon received an invitation from Alexander to serve at the seminary as instructor of biblical languages. Hodge's scholarly aptitude seemed to lay claim on service as a professor over that of a pastor-preacher, although he continued to preach as opportunity afforded. Following additional study of the Hebrew language while in Philadelphia, in May 1820 Hodge received a one-year appointment to teach biblical languages at his alma mater. Hodge's scholarship and classroom competence would be rewarded by the General Assembly when he was elected on May 24, 1822, as professor of oriental and biblical literature, a position he would hold for almost two decades until his reassignment to the department of exegetical and didactic theology.

Samuel Miller's impact on Hodge's student life at the college and seminary was also substantial. A son of the manse and longtime pastor in the city of New York, Miller was an intellectual historian who became

26. For a touching review of Alexander's biography, see Charles Hodge, "Memoir of Dr. Alexander," *BRPR* 27, no. 1 (January 1855): 148. Hodge's review can also be found in Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton*, 27–52.

a renowned professor of church history and church government. His publications in these fields became standard treatments of their topics. Dignified and stately in deportment, Miller, like his colleague Archibald Alexander, was passionately invested in the lives of his students. An advantage of the smaller student enrollment during the seminary's first decade was the close personal contact it provided between faculty and students. The formality of the classroom was more than offset by the familial atmosphere of the campus, with its common ministerial vision and fostering of lifelong friendships. Miller and Alexander were in many respects de facto spiritual father figures for the young men under their tutelage. Their piety, meekness, and humility bore powerful testimony in the example of Christlike love and service that marked their public ministry and campus presence.

Besides the formal classroom instruction, one of the means used to foster experimental piety among the students as Christian men and in their future service as pastors was the Sabbath afternoon conference. Here Alexander and Miller, and later Hodge, would discuss the practical implications of applied theology to the students' lives and public calling. An inspiring record of these weekly gatherings is provided by A. A. Hodge in a collection of his father's sermon outlines, *Princeton Sermons*.²⁷

A related but separate observation on the spiritual impact of the two senior professors can be found in an address Charles Hodge delivered at the reopening of the seminary chapel on September 27, 1874. Hodge's remarks capture the pervasive spiritual atmosphere present at the campus during its opening decades, due in no small measure to Alexander and Miller:

They were in the first place, eminently holy men. They exerted that indescribable but powerful influence which always emanates from those who live near to God. Their piety was uniform and serene; without any taint of enthusiasm or fanaticism. It was also Biblical.

27. See Charles Hodge, *Conference Papers: Or Analyses of Discourses, Doctrinal and Practical, Delivered on Sabbath Afternoon to the Students of the Seminary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879); reprinted as *Princeton Sermons: Outlines of Discourses, Doctrinal and Practical, at Princeton Theological Seminary* (1958; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2011), vii–xviii.

Christ was as prominent in their religious experience, in their preaching, and in their writings, as he is in the Bible. Christ's person, his glory, his righteousness, his love, his presence, his power, filled the whole sphere of their religious life. When men enter a Roman Catholic Church, they see before them a wooden image of Christ extended upon a cross. To this lifeless image they bow. When students entered this Seminary, when its first professors were alive, they had held up before them the image of Christ, not graven by art or man's device, but as portrayed by the Spirit on the pages of God's word; and it is by beholding that image that men are transformed into its likeness from glory to glory. It is, in large measure, this constant holding up of Christ, in the glory of his person and the all-sufficiency of his work, that the hallowed influence of the fathers of this Seminary is to be attributed.²⁸

Any assessment of Alexander's instruction in theology must keep these considerations in mind in order to understand the personal and intensely spiritual backdrop to Hodge's academic experience. The pervasive spiritual atmosphere present during weekly meetings in the "Old Oratory," was equally present in the formal classroom instruction. Study of theology always took place within this devotional context. Even the most metaphysical considerations were examined within this atmosphere; while speculation was eschewed, students were taught that theology, properly conceived, is doxological in nature and must be approached with a spiritual disposition in order to live all of life *coram Deo*.²⁹ The combination of spiritual fervor; experience of revival; power of Spirit-anointed, Christ-centered preaching; missionary interest; faculty involvement; and sense of the holy calling of the pastoral office

28. See Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 586–87.

29. Nicholas Murray would later write, "His was the most simple-hearted piety. He read the Bible like a child, and he exercised a simple faith in all it taught and promised. There was no effort to explain away its doctrines, or to modify its principles by the teaching of philosophy falsely so called. He was a metaphysician; and yet all the metaphysics and German mysticism upon earth weighed not a feather with him against one simple text of Scripture fairly interpreted. His mind and heart were imbued with Divine truth, and his experience of its power was rich and ripe." See Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 654.

would have done much to shape the aspirations and convictions of the young men who attended the school at this time.

Faculty commitment to spiritual life was accompanied by diligent study of Scripture and related texts. In his work as a professor, Alexander read widely in biblical, systematic, and historical theology. Criticism, hermeneutics, and typology were areas of concentrated research.³⁰ Alexander was conversant with the works of Herman Witsius, Johannes Cocceius, and other seventeenth-century divines whose writings had yet to be translated from their Latin originals. Among the subjects included in the theology curriculum was the study of mental philosophy (epistemology), an area of special interest for Alexander.

Alexander's approach to the study of mental philosophy is summarized in the correspondence of Joseph Henry, LLD, a former student at the College of New Jersey and later secretary of the Smithsonian Institute:

He had studied in early life the subject of mental philosophy, and had adopted the principles of the inductive method. All ideas he considered as derived from sensation or consciousness, and without attempting to explain the essence of mind or of matter, he contented himself with a knowledge of the laws of their phenomena, and with referring these to the will of the Creator of the universe. All knowledge superior to this was derived from revelation, the truths of which, however mysterious and beyond reason, he adopted with implicit confidence. He was much interested in all questions of physical science, and particularly in the researches in which I was engaged. All his conceptions of truth were simple and clear. His was not a mere speculative faith, or a theoretical system of Christian duty, but one which was eminently reduced to practice. He taught by his example as well as by his precepts, and his influence will long live after him, not only in his published works, but in the memory

30. For related publications, see Archibald Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained; or the Bible Complete without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (New York: D. A. Borrenstein for G. & C. Carvill, 1826); and Archibald Alexander, *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1826).

of his pupils, and in its effect on the character and conduct of all who enjoyed the pleasure and profit of his acquaintance.³¹

Like his mentor, William Graham, Alexander formulated his own system of mental philosophy. While Alexander embraced aspects of the Scottish school, he adapted it where appropriate in relation to studying Scripture and the theology of the Westminster standards.³² Alexander viewed its observations as preparatory to, but not determinative of, the content and character of revealed truth. Alexander's religious epistemology defended a unitary operation of the soul (mind, will, and emotions) while recognizing rational and moral dimensions to human cognition. Alexander's biographer summarizes his approach:

Deeply persuaded that many theological errors have their origin in a bias derived from false metaphysics, he set about the methodizing of his thought upon mental philosophy, always keeping in hand the clew which he had received from his venerated preceptor, William Graham. The German philosophy was as yet unknown among us, and he was never led to travel the transcendental or "high priori road," but treated mental phenomena on the inductive method, as the objects of a cautious generalization. While he uniformly recommended the perusal of Locke, it was as he often

31. See Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 685–86.

32. For observations on Alexander's instruction on the relationship between that of the intellect and affections, see Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*, 168. For a perceptive article examining the relationship between piety and reason among the early Princetonians, see Paul Kjoss Helseth, "Right Reason and the Princeton Mind: The Moral Context," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 77 (1999): 13–28. For a related treatment examining the interrelationship between piety, Scottish Common Sense Realism, and the Reformed epistemological convictions that informed Alexander's approach to the teaching of theology and apologetics, see Paul Helseth, *"Right Reason" and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2010), 3–39. For a seminal article on the relationship between Scottish Enlightenment philosophy and its impact on American theologizing, see Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American theology," *Church History* 24 (1955): 257–72. For an extended study on the related impact of the Scottish Enlightenment on science, ethics, faith, and reason, see George M. Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals*, ed. D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 221–66.

declared, not so much for the value of his particular conclusions, as for the spirit of his investigation, the calmness, patience, and transparent honesty of that truly great man. He likewise expressed great favour for Reid, Beattie, Buffier, Campbell and Stewart, with whose general methods, as well as their views of intuitive truths and constitutional principles of reason, he was in agreement, while he dissented from many of their definitions, distinctions, and tenets. These were subjects which fell in with his tastes, habits of thought and course of reading; and as preliminary to the development of the revealed system, he regarded them as forming a necessary part of every complete theological course.³³

According to J. W. Alexander, Archibald's skill in metaphysical reasoning was especially notable in "his lectures on the Will, and his elaborate refutation of Dr. Thomas Brown's work on Causation." "No portion of his course," we are told, "more awakened the interest of his auditors and such was the ingenuity with which he made these lessons bear on theological questions still in reserve, that in the days of church-controversy it used to be a common remark, that students who had been imbued with Dr. Alexander's metaphysics were sure to swallow his entire system."³⁴

The seminary curriculum also included study of natural religion and moral philosophy (ethics), the latter a subject of posthumous publication.³⁵ Alexander incorporated insights from both general and special revelation into his approach. "While he was far from being a rationalist, he was never satisfied with the tactics of those reasoners who under the pretext of exalting revelation, dismiss with contempt all arguments derived from the light of nature." For Alexander, general revelation serves the purposes of special revelation. "Here he freely declared his judgment that many sound, able and pious men had greatly erred. He rendered due homage, therefore, to the labours of such writers as Nieuwentyt, the younger Turretine, and Paley, and spent much time in considering and unfolding with nice discrimination the various schemes of argument

33. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 366.

34. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 367.

35. See Archibald Alexander, *Outlines of Moral Science* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852).

for the Being and Perfections of God, and the necessity and antecedent probability of a revelation."³⁶

As an educator, Alexander was a popular communicator.³⁷ Fidelity to revealed truth lay at the heart of his instruction, the responsibilities of which rested heavily on his conscience.³⁸ As his biographer is careful to note, "The anxieties belonging to an attempt to lay down the great lines of a method for teaching the whole system of revealed truth, to those who were to be the ministers of the Church, were just and burdensome."³⁹

In the early years of his professorship, Alexander had an approach that was "more extemporaneous and colloquial; there was more use of existing manuals, and less adventure of original expedients." For study of theology proper, Alexander believed it "best taught by a wise union of the text-book with the free lecture." While selections from various seveneenth- and eighteenth-century authors were translated and distributed, Alexander assigned Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* as his primary theological text. He felt Turretin's treatment the best textbook for training the mind and learning the doctrines of the Christian faith in a concise and orderly fashion.⁴⁰

36. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 367.

37. William M. Paxton, a student and later professor at the seminary, left record of Alexander's instruction: "As a teacher, the impression made upon the students was his power to penetrate a subject. The class to which I belonged heard his lectures upon Didactic Theology as well as those of Dr. Hodge. Dr. Hodge gave us a subject with massive learning, in its logical development, in its beautiful balance and connection with the whole system. Dr. Alexander would take the same subject, and strike it with a javelin, and let the light through it. His aim was to make one point, and nail it fast. I always came from his lecture with these words running through my mind, 'A nail driven in a sure place.'" See William M. Paxton, "Archibald Alexander, D.D. Address," in Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton*, 24–25.

38. A former student writes of Alexander's orthodoxy and paternal regard for his students: "As a professor of Theology he was able, discriminating, sound in the faith, and most ardently attached to the great doctrines of grace; and as a teacher he was as a father to his pupils." See Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 655.

39. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 368.

40. "It was ponderous, scholastic and in a dead language, but he believed in the process of grappling with difficulties; he had felt the influence of this athletic sinewy reasoner on his own mind, and had observed that those who mastered his arguments were apt to be strong and logical divines." Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 368.

Turretin made special effort to organize his subject matter in a question/answer format. By such arrangement, propositional statements made topics of inquiry clear, thereby inviting statements of defense or rebuttal. Preservation of truth and promotion of piety were both of concern. Truth and error were real, and Turretin wanted his readers to be able to understand, explain, and defend the Christian faith in a clear and logical manner. Turretin's goals match nicely with Alexander's interests. Both valued biblical truth in its exposition and defense. Each expressed concern about the danger of doctrinal decline and spiritual declension.⁴¹

Alexander augmented assigned readings with personal observations.⁴² He also worked hard to provide students with resources that facilitate the learning process. Alexander's pedagogy is recounted in brief summary by his biographer:

Dr. Alexander often dissented from the learned Genevan, and always endeavoured to cultivate in his students the spirit and habit of original investigation. It is likely that his labours at this period derived a peculiar vivacity from his time of life, from the freshness of the employment, and from the necessity of adapting himself to a limited circle. He very laboriously engaged in making such brief aids in the way of syllabus and compendium as might furnish to the student a manageable key to the whole classification. He prepared extensive and minute questions, going into all the ramifications of theology; lists of which still remain in the hands of some alumni. He assigned subjects for original dissertations, which were publicly read, and commented on by both professors and students; a near approach to the acts held in the old university schools, under the scholastic moderator. To this were added, at a date which we find

41. Practical considerations were likewise impetus to publication of a popular theology for laypeople. See Archibald Alexander, *A Brief Compendium of Bible Truth* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), 136–38. This was reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books in 2005.

42. "As a Professor in the theological seminary, he discharged every duty, not only with signal ability, but with great punctuality and fidelity. His lectures were generally written; and they were always luminous, and, to every thoughtful student, in a high degree attractive." See William B. Sprague, in *Presbyterian Reunion: A Memorial Volume, 1837–1871* (New York: De Witt C. Lent & Company, 1871), 114.

ourselves unable to fix with precision, the debates of a theological society, meeting weekly, always on some important topic, and always closed by the full and highly animated remarks of the professor.⁴³

For instruction in theology, Alexander, like Turretin, preferred a topical arrangement of subjects. While respectful of the redemptive-historical character of Scripture and theologians who made it the organizing principle of their theological instruction, Alexander preferred the advantages of the former for focused study and retention in understanding.

The natural and simple light, in which it was a characteristic of the professor to view all subjects, and the predominance of logical nexus as the element of association in his mind, concurred to cause a preference for the ancient and more obvious scheme of classifying Scripture truth. Hence he did not adopt the Federal method of arrangement, as it has been called, of Witsius; great as was his sympathy with the evangelical warmth and unction of that school. For the same reasons his judgment disapproved the order suggested by Chalmers, in the preface to what remains of his original and striking but fragmentary theological course. For, while he agreed with this great author in considering the plan of redemption as the ultimate scope and crowning glory of all theology, he nevertheless preferred as a medium of scientific communication, that disposition of topics which takes its departure from the Being, Attributes, and Works of God; that is, from Theology in its strictest acceptance.⁴⁴

Classroom assignments reflected Turretin's approach. Students were expected to read assigned material, provide a written or oral summary of the subject matter, and make defense of the content reviewed. By such means, students became familiar with the material and the organizing principles underlying its presentation. Students learned sound doctrine as well as how to think and reason.

On each head or title he was accustomed to assign a considerable portion of the text-book, to be carefully perused by the class, and to be made the subject of a sifting examination; also naming

43. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 369.

44. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 370.

the chief authors who had treated of the points respectively, and sometimes, when these works were numerous, allotting them to different students, with a requisition that they should give some account of each, either orally, or what was more common, in writing. This examination and these essays gave rise to brief but animated remarks from the chair, and he was never more felicitous or more convincing than in such impromptus; in which his eye would kindle and flash, and his expressive face become radiant, as he poured forth the gatherings of an extraordinary erudition, or pursued the thread of nice and delicate analysis, with a clearness and closeness of argument which his partial hearers thought unrivalled. To this was added, however, and with greater fullness as years advanced, the delivery of formal and elaborate lectures on the grand articles of the faith.⁴⁵

The design of the curriculum was both to instruct in sound doctrine and to provide training that would enable ministers to defend the Christian faith and refute “gainsayers.” A graduate of the seminary would be able to explain orthodox doctrine and refute heresy and detractors to the Christian faith. Study of polemical theology, therefore, formed an important part of the theological curriculum.⁴⁶ The approach Alexander adopted was twofold. With respect to heresies and theological distortions within the professing church, Alexander utilized historical analysis in elucidating doctrinal compromise, its effects on individuals and corporate church life, and the remedies required for restoration of biblical orthodoxy. J. W. Alexander explains his father’s manner of handling heresy:

The division of this department into Didactic and Polemic Theology, which the Plan of the institution made imperative, gave the

45. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 370–71.

46. Polemic theology addressed a wide cross-section of religious outlook. Representative lecture topics include Arminianism, heresies of the primitive church, Arianism, deism, indifferentism or latitudinarianism, Socinianism, Epicurianism, French infidelity, atheism, unitarianism, modern Socinianism, Judaism, Jewish Talmud, semi-Pelagianism from Jansenians, ancient Greeks, Anabaptists, Moravians, Arian-Quaker controversies, points of controversy with the papists, Spinoza, pantheism, ethnicism or paganism, theology and Hindus, religion of the Grand Lama, Mohamedism, quietism, Buddhism and Djanas, history of polemic theology, and the evils of theological controversy.

professor an opportunity to go over all the leading doctrines in the way of defence against the objections of errorists, heretics, and infidels. In doing this he brought to bear his remarkable stores of recondite reading. He gave the biography of eminent opponents, clear analyses of their systems, and refutation of their reasons. Of necessity he was thus carried into the field of *Dogmengeschichte*, the progress of controversies, the debates and conclusions of councils, the construction of creeds, and the whole round of symbolical theology. What might be considered by some an inordinate length of time was devoted to the cardinal differences, such as the controversy with Deists, Arians, Socinians, Pelagians, Arminians, papists and Universalists; all being made to revolve around the Calvinistic system, which, upon sincere conviction, he had adopted.⁴⁷

Training in polemical theology also included introduction to religions that students would encounter on foreign mission fields as well as aberrations of Christianity taking root in American culture during the early nineteenth century.⁴⁸

He was so earnestly in favour of having the young clergyman armed at all points against adversaries, that he greatly extended his lectures, so as to embrace the varieties of heathenism and Mohammedanism with which missionaries must be brought into conflict; and also the forms of error which prevail in our Western country. Accordingly he has left copious reviews of Campbellism, Shakerism, and even Mormonism, with details which show how largely and attentively he must have examined all the available authorities of these heretics. In conducting these studies, he alighted on a method which gave him great pleasure, and was always interesting to his pupils. Early in the session each member of the class had allotted to him some erroneous system of controversy, to be made the subject of a dissertation. The whole term was sometimes allowed for preparing

47. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 371.

48. American religion underwent vast changes in the nineteenth century. For an informative and richly illustrated study of its development, see Grant Wacker, *Religion in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For an important treatment of one of the most influential new religious movements, see Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

these, and some of the essays became almost volumes. All this was over and above his extensive course of lectures. He was far from having a stereotyped plan; but besides undertaking new subjects of instruction in the close of his life, as we shall occasion to say, he made frequent changes in his *modus operandi* to the last.⁴⁹

Alexander's biographer is careful to note that while his formal duties required study of polemical discourse, "he was in no sense an active controvertist." Rather, he sought to convince through careful reasoning and winsome testimony to the truth of the gospel message. "When falsehood was read or heard by him, it was the tendency of his mind, from its strong logical interest, rather to yield himself to the consideration of adverse arguments, and to weigh them with a judgeliike calmness, than to seek on the spot for weapons of refutation." A principled and peace-loving man, "his practical maxim was the *audi alteram partem*; and those who were privy to his daily studies were astonished at the time which he bestowed on the most dangerous writers. And yet his own opinions were held with a firmness which in his mature years seemed to suffer not even a momentary shaking. The habits to which allusion has been made, tended beyond doubt to produce in him a peculiar reserve and impartiality in stating the opinions of adversaries, and in refuting them."⁵⁰

While a variety of student lecture notes exist from Alexander's classes, an obvious benefit of the present collection is their author. Hodge was just as meticulous in his note taking as a student as in his later labors as a professor. The same precision of expression found in his personal writings can be found in the compact nature of his notes. But of what importance are Hodge's notes for today's student of theology?

It is often the case that profundity and prolixity go hand in hand. But good educators know the value of simplicity in style and delivery. The best teachers have so mastered their material that their presentation is marked by clarity and order. The result is material that is both informative and comprehensible.⁵¹ While some, perhaps most, material

49. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 371–72.

50. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 372–73.

51. Charles Hodge spoke of Alexander's impact on his students: "The three great sources of influence, ascendancy over the intellect, power over the religious feelings, and

offered in theology courses is worthy of expanded treatment, there is also important pedagogical value in material that is both manageable in amount and easy to recount.

Because Hodge attended the seminary during its first decade, his notes provide record of the emphases Alexander wished to impress on his students in relation to the great issues facing the church, theological education, and pastoral training at the outset of the nineteenth century. While in his early years as a professor Alexander would have been glancing backward in history at the threat of infidelity and deism, he also lived at a time of pronounced change in theological study—whether from German “neologists” and philosophers or from the changing trajectory of American theology soon to be awash in disputes about transcendentalism, romanticism, “new measures,” resurgent Pelagianism, debate surrounding strict or system subscription, true and false religious experience, and reasons for division within the Presbyterian Church in the eighteenth and again in the nineteenth century.

Similar in style to catechetical instruction, the compact format allows a quick summary of key matters brief enough to be easily digested but substantive enough to provoke additional thought and inquiry. Although further study and comparison would be necessary to learn of the ways in which Alexander added, deleted, or rearranged material throughout the years of his instruction, today’s reader is able once again to join Hodge and other young men in the lecture hall as their revered professor explains the manner in which the “deposit of truth” finds expression in systematic doctrinal formulation.

It is likely that fellow students would have checked with Hodge to make sure their notes were accurate. Hodge’s diligence provides contemporary students of theology opportunity to sit once again at the feet of one of Christ’s choice gifts to His church.

—Dr. James M. Garretson

ability to win the affections of his pupils, united in Dr. Alexander, each in an eminent degree. His talents and learning rendered all his lectures instructive. They communicated knowledge, removed difficulties, illustrated important principles, and produced conviction.” Charles Hodge, “Memoir of Dr. Alexander,” 157. See also Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton*, 47–48.

Systematic Theology

Princeton, Jan. 1818

The Chain of Salvation

God has ordained
Christ has merited
The Word promises
The sacraments seal
Faith receives
The mouth confesses
Works testify

Salutis Catena

*Deus ordinavit
Christus meruit
Verbum promittit
Sacramenta obsignant
Fides recipit
Os fatetur
Opera testantur*

Philosophy. Of the Mind.

Q. What is Truth.

A. Truth which is ^{the} object of all science, scarce by admits of a strict definition. Beattie says, that is, Truth which the constitution of our nature determines us to believe, and that is Falsehood which the constitution of our nature determines us to disbelieve.

Q. Is the mind of man capable of attaining any certain knowledge?

A. Yes. The supposition that it can be proved that all human knowledge can be is uncertain, destroys itself, by taking it for granted, that the uncertainty of our knowledge, can be certainly known. No man can be a consistent universal sceptic for he would have to doubt of the reality

Chapter 1

PHILOSOPHY OF THE MIND

1. *What is truth?*

Truth, which is the object of all science, scarcely admits of a strict definition. Beattie¹ says, that is truth which the constitution of our nature determines us to believe, and that is falsehood which the constitution of our nature determines us to disbelieve.

2. *Is the mind of man capable of attaining any certain knowledge?*

Yes. The supposition that it can be proved that all human knowledge is uncertain destroys itself by taking it for granted that the uncertainty of our knowledge can be certainly known. No man can be a consistent universal skeptic, for he would have to doubt of the reality of his doubting everything.

3. *Are there innate ideas in the mind of man?*

No, if we understand this phrase as used by Mr. Locke,² who considered it as meaning certain impressions or notions existing in the mind previous to and independent of reflection and sensation. It is one thing herein to say that men have an innate knowledge of such and such things, and another to say that they have an aptitude to receive them. The mind is not a *tabula rasa* [blank slate].

1. [Possibly James Beattie (1735–1803), *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (1786).]

2. [John Locke (1632–1704) was an English philosopher and influential Enlightenment thinker.]

4. *Are there any self-evident or intuitive truths?*

Yes. Those propositions which, from the constitution of my nature, I am under the necessity of believing as soon as they are presented to my mind are called self-evident truths. Or, that is an ultimate principle which forces our belief by its own intrinsic evidence and which cannot by any reasoning be rendered more evident.

5. *On what evidence does the belief of our existence rest?*

We have no other direct evidence of our existence than that of consciousness, though strictly speaking existence is not the object of consciousness, but we are conscious of our thoughts. That which does not exist cannot think. In this view Descartes's³ *cogito ergo sum* [I think, therefore I am] is correct.

6. *On what evidence do we believe that the world exists?*

On the testimony of our external senses we cannot help believing it.

7. *Why do we believe what we distinctly remember?*

We can give no other reason than that such is the constitution of our nature that we are under the necessity of believing what we distinctly remember, as well as what we perceive or are conscious of.

8. *Why do we believe in testimony?*

Our belief is not the result of experience but arises from the constitution of our nature.

9. *Into how many kinds may first truths be divided?*

1. The existence of the objects of sense and consciousness
2. Necessary truths, as mathematical axioms
3. Philosophical principles, as that every effect must have a cause
4. Moral truths
5. Truths reported to us by a competent number of witnesses, past or present

3. [René Descartes (1596–1650) was a French mathematician, scientist, and the father of modern Western philosophy.]