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A REPORT

TO THE

Trustees of the College of New Jersey;

RELATIVE TO

A REVIVAL OF RELIGION

Among the Students of said College, in the winter and
spring of the year 1815.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY ASHBEL GREEN, D.D. L.L.D.
PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT has for some time been the practice of the president of the college of New Jersey to make a written report to the board of trustees, at each of their semi-annual meetings, on the state of the college. The following statement made a part of such a report, without any expectation, when it was drawn up, that it would ever be made public. If it had been originally intended for publication, the form and manner of it would certainly have been somewhat different; though perhaps not more satisfactory to those who are desirous to be acquainted with a plain account of facts. A few short notes have been added, explanatory of circumstances known to the board, but of which it appeared necessary to give some information to the public.

The convenience, and even the necessity, of using single terms, or short phrases, for preventing circumlocution and prolixity, in expressing complex ideas, is felt by every writer and speaker. In this country, when a considerable number of persons in a particular place or region are awakened, at the same time, to a serious attention to their spiritual and eternal concerns, and when many of them eventually give evidence that they have entered on a life of real piety, and of course that they have been made the subjects of the renewing grace of God—this occurrence is very generally denominated *a revival of religion*; probably with a reference to Psalm lxxxv. 6. Hab. iii. 2. and other passages of scripture of similar import. Whether this is, in all cases, the most proper appellation that might be chosen, to denote such an occurrence, the writer is not now to inquire. It is certainly the appellation most familiar to the greater part of those who are likely to read the follow-

ing statement; and with the explanation now given it will be fully intelligible to all.

In preparing the "questions and counsel" which form the appendix of this pamphlet, the writer prescribed it to himself as indispensable, to keep within the limits of a single written sheet, that he might not lose his object—the furnishing of his young charge with a little system, which might be easily transcribed and used by every individual disposed to profit by it. The inquiry, therefore, was not after what *might* be said, and said with great propriety in a general discussion, but after those select truths and principles which might best claim to be inserted, in a piece thus limited and thus intended.

The report from which the following article is extracted was read to the board on the 4th day of April, A. D. 1815.

A REPORT, &c.

REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN THE COLLEGE.

ON this subject I have thought it my duty to make a correct, though it must be a very summary, statement to the board; both because the subject is important and interesting in itself, and because imperfect and erroneous accounts respecting it have been circulated.

For nearly a year past—that is, since the commencement of the last summer session—a very large proportion of the students have attended on all the religious exercises and instructions of the college with more than ordinary seriousness; and the minds of some of them, as now appears, were ripening, through this whole period, for what has since taken place. There was nothing more apparent, however, for six weeks after the commencement of the present

session,* than an increase of this serious attention to the religious duties of college; an increase both of the degree of seriousness, and of the number of those in whom it was visible. Every religious service, both on secular days and on the sabbath, was attended with a solemnity which was sensible and impressive. In this manner the revival commenced, or rather became apparent, in the second week of January, without any unusual occurrence in providence;—without any alarming event, without any extraordinary preaching, without any special instruction, or other means that might be supposed peculiarly adapted to interest the mind. The divine influence seemed to descend like the silent dew of heaven; and in about four weeks there were very few individuals in the college edifice who were not deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of spiritual and eternal things. There was scarcely a room—perhaps not one—which was not a place of earnest secret devotion. For

* The winter session of the college commences six weeks after the last Wednesday of September, and continues till the first Thursday after the second Tuesday of April. The summer session commences four weeks after the last mentioned period, and continues till the last Wednesday of September, which is the day of the annual commencement.

a time it appeared as if the whole of our charge was pressing into the kingdom of God; so that at length the inquiry, in regard to them, was not who was engaged about religion? but who was not?—After this state of things had continued, without much variation, for about two months; it became manifest that a change was taking place. Some were becoming confirmed in the hopes and habits of evangelical piety; some were yet serious, thoughtful and prayerful, though perhaps not in so great a degree, or at least not so apparently, as once they had been; while some were plainly losing the impressigns which they had lately felt. And such has continued to be the state of this interesting concern to the time of making this report. The result is, that there are somewhat more than forty students, in regard to whom, so far as the time elapsed will permit us to judge, favourable hopes may be entertained that they have been made the subjects of renewing grace. Perhaps there are twelve or fifteen more, who still retain such promising impressions of religion as to authorise a hope that the issue, in regard to most of them, may be favourable. And nearly the whole of the remainder show a great readiness to attend on all the social exercises of religion; not

only on those which are stated and customary, but those which are occasional, and the attendance on which is entirely voluntary. Thus, of the students who are now in the college, a majority* may be viewed as hopefully pious; and a large proportion of the residue appear to possess much tenderness of conscience, and show a very desirable regard to religious duties and obligations.

It has already been intimated that this revival of religion commenced without noise, and without any other means than those which had been a considerable time in use. But having thought it my duty to converse with my pupils, as often as they requested it, at the time when their minds were filled with anxious fears and inquiries; and also to examine them individually and carefully, since hope has, in some measure, succeeded to fear; I have had a favourable opportunity to inquire, and have attentively inquired, after the instrumental causes of this revival, as indicated by the views and feelings of the parties concerned. Four such causes appear to have had a manifest agency—

1. And chiefly, the study of the Holy Scrip-

* The whole number of students in the classes of the college is one hundred and five; of whom twelve were professors of religion when the revival began.

tures;* accompanied with comments on the portion read, and a practical application of the leading truths contained in it. God has remarkably honoured and blessed his own word. Strange as it may seem, this study of the Bible has always been a favourite one among the youth of the college, not excepting the most gay and dissipated. Pains have, indeed, been taken to render it interesting; but the degree in which it has been so, has been truly surprising. And, under the divine blessing, it has served to enlighten and instruct the youth in their duty; it has rendered their minds solemn and tender, beyond what they were themselves aware of at the time; it has given them a deep reverence for the truths of divine revelation;† it has quali-

* For more than two years, the Holy Scriptures had been made the subject of as regular study and examination as the classics, the mathematics, or philosophy. The afternoon of the Lord's day was appropriated uniformly to the recitation of a certain number of the students, taken promiscuously (for all were required to be prepared) on five chapters of the Bible, assigned to them the preceding week. The recitation was always accompanied with expositions, critical remarks, and a practical application. The exercise was concluded with prayer and singing, and was considered as the afternoon religious service of the college. In the morning, public worship, in the usual form, was celebrated.

† In the month of February 1813, a Bible Society was instituted in the college, composed of the literary and theological students

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fied them to hear preaching with advantage; and at length revealed truth has, we trust, been powerfully and effectually applied to their consciences, by the Spirit by whom it was endited.

2. The circumstances in which the students have lately attended on public worship have been peculiarly favourable to their religious improvement. They have worshipped, in consequence of the burning of the church in this place, in the prayer hall of the college, for more than two years past. For about eighteen months they have worshipped separately from the people of the town; and have, with the theological students, who joined them partially at first and generally of late, formed an audience or congregation by themselves. This has given an opportunity, which has been carefully improved, to choose such subjects and adapt such a manner, in preaching to them, as appeared best calculated to arrest their attention. Appropriate addresses have frequently been made, and the service has, in all respects, been conducted with a special view to their advantage and religious edification. In these circumstances, they have felt an unusual

indiscriminately. It has been very active in distributing Bibles gratuitously, especially to the soldiers and sailors of our country.

interest in the solemnities of the sanctuary— they have felt that they were the parties directly and particularly concerned in these solemnities; and the good effects of this sentiment have been incalculably great, and were very apparent before the revival was visible. In a word, this mode of conducting public worship must be considered as having been a powerful instrumental cause, both in producing an awakened attention to religion at first, and in cherishing it through the whole of its progress.

3. The effect of moral discipline has been manifestly favourable to this revival. This discipline, vigorously and vigilantly maintained, has preserved the youth, generally, from those practices, habits and vicious indulgences, which counteract, dissipate, and destroy all serious and religious impressions. It has had an influence in preventing that hardness of heart and insensibility of conscience, which are the natural and usual effects of unrestrained vice. It has formed a practical testimony against the moral vileness of several things which youth are apt to consider, if not as entirely innocent yet, as evidences of manliness and spirit. After many efforts to resist these effects of discipline, by the least virtuous part of the college, the attempt was

seen to be vain; and it was clearly perceived that the effects mentioned were sensibly felt, by the great mass of the students, before the revival. It was also very noticeable that the revival made its appearance with an act of discipline. A student (one of three dismissed at the same time) was almost immediately seized with a remorse of conscience and anguish of mind that were very affecting—He has since become hopefully pious. But before any thing of this was known in the college, the remarks which were made when the dismissal of the three students was announced, seemed to produce a powerful effect on a number; and during that week feelings and exercises which had, in a certain degree, long existed in secret, could no longer be concealed.—Nearly at the same time, an admonition, given in private, was remarkably blessed to the individual concerned.

4. The few pious youth who were members of college before the revival, were happily instrumental in promoting it. They had, for more than a year, been earnestly engaged in prayer for this event. When they perceived the general and increasing seriousness which has been noticed, several of them made an agreement to speak, privately and tenderly, to their particular

friends and acquaintance, on the subject of religion. And what they said was, in almost every instance, not only well received, but those with whom they conversed became immediately and earnestly engaged in those exercises which, it is hoped, have issued in genuine piety. A public profession of religion, made by two of the students who had been a good while thoughtful, had also, at this time, much influence, apparently, both in producing and deepening impressions in many others.

The special means made use of to promote and cherish this revival, besides the circumstances already mentioned, were the following— A short address on the subject of religion was made, after prayers, on every Saturday evening. In, preaching on the Lord's day morning, subjects were selected suited to the existing state of the college—in this particular we are deeply indebted to the Theological professors, who have generally conducted the morning service. A particular reference was often made to the religious attention which had been excited among the students, in the remarks which accompanied their bible recitations. A weekly lecture, intended for the students exclusively,

was given by myself, on every Tuesday evening. A social prayer meeting was held, on every Friday evening, at which one of the Theological professors commonly made an address. A family prayer meeting (as the students called it) was, every evening, held among themselves, at which a large proportion of the whole college attended. Smaller and more select associations for prayer were also formed. The individuals whose minds were anxious and labouring, were, as often as they requested it, carefully conversed and prayed with in private—in this service I am to acknowledge the assistance received from the professors of the seminary, from their pupils, and from the pious students of the college. Finally, writings of approved character, on doctrinal and practical religion, were pointed out and recommended to the perusal of the students; and a short system* of questions and counsel, which I herewith submit, was drawn up by myself, for the use of those who began to cherish the hope that they had entered on a life of practical piety.

Having thus mentioned the chief instrumental causes of this revival, and the means used to

* See the Appendix.

cherish it, to guard it, and to direct it, I shall conclude my report on this subject with a few short remarks, offered with a view to give a correct apprehension of its nature and character.

1. It has been, so far as I am able to judge, remarkably free from extravagance and enthusiasm. I know of nothing, in regard to this revival, that I think would be called extravagant or enthusiastic, by any one who really believes in the great doctrines of the protestant reformation. Particular pains were early taken to guard against the evil here contemplated; and, by the divine blessing, they have been made so successful that I am not acquainted with a single incident or occurrence, indicative of intemperate feeling or conduct, that we are called to regret.

2. There has been no sectarian spirit accompanying or mingling with this revival. There are students in the college belonging to four or five different denominations of christians. At first, there appeared to be some apprehension in the minds of those who were not presbyterians, lest they should be drawn into a union with this denomination, if they yielded to the sentiments and feelings which began to be prevalent. But I told

them, in the first address that I made to them on a Tuesday evening, that it was my fixed purpose to inculcate no doctrine or tenet that was not found in all the public orthodox creeds of protestant Christendom—that I was indeed earnestly desirous that they should all become real practical christians, but that I had no wish to make a single proselyte. This, I believe, removed every apprehension—and the intimation then given has been sacredly regarded. Not a single thing has been said by myself, nor, I am persuaded, by the Theological professors who have preached to them, that has had any intentional tendency toward proselytism. On the contrary, every thing has been general. The great catholic doctrines of the gospel have been exclusively inculcated. It is believed that there is not an individual of the college who would, if questioned, complain that he has, in any instance, felt himself pressed with opinions which interfered with his educational creed.

3. There has been no neglect of study. A report was circulated that study was laid aside in the college to attend to religion. Nothing could be more false. Study has probably never been pursued with more diligence and success.

Our pupils were informed that if, at any particular recitation, an individual should find that his mind had been so exercised as not to permit him to get his lesson, he should, on application to his teacher, be specially excused; and this indulgence has been frequently asked and granted. But not a single recitation of a class has been omitted; and every individual lesson or recitation, incidentally omitted, has been strictly required to be made up for the quarterly and semi-annual examinations. It was early and earnestly inculcated on the youth of the college, that not only did christian duty require as regular an attention as possible to all the lawful concerns of life, but that their minds would act more vigorously and more correctly on religious subjects, and in religious duties, if a suitable portion of their time should be diligently employed in their proper studies.

4. There have been no compulsory exercises. Every thing, beyond the stated religious instructions and duties of the college in ordinary times, has been perfectly voluntary; unless the short address, on Saturday evening after prayers, may be considered as a slight exception. No one has suffered either censure or reproach, who chose to be absent from any religious exercise

or engagement which had its origin in this revival.

Such, gentlemen, is the statement which I have judged it proper to make to you, in regard to a work which, in its salutary efficiency, has been all of God; and the whole praise of which is to be ascribed, most unfeignedly, to Him alone.

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a continuation of the speech or a related text.]

APPENDIX.



QUESTIONS AND COUNSEL,

FOR THE

STUDENTS OF NASSAU HALL,

**Who hope that a Work of Saving Grace has been wrought
upon their hearts.**

QUESTIONS AND COUNSEL.

QUESTIONS.

1. Have you seen yourself to be, by nature and by practice, a lost and helpless sinner? Have you not only seen the sinfulness of particular acts of transgression, but also that your heart is the seat and fountain of sin?—That in you, naturally, there is no good thing? Has a view of this led you to despair of help from yourself? To see that you must be altogether indebted to Christ for salvation, and to the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit for strength and ability rightly to perform any duty?

2. On what has your hope of acceptance with God been founded?—On your reformation? on your sorrow for your sins? on your prayers? on your tears? on your good works and religious observances?—or has it been on Christ alone, as your all in all? Has Christ ever appeared very precious to you? Do you mourn that he does not appear more so? Have you sometimes felt great

freedom to commit your soul to him? In doing this (if you have done it) has it been, not only to be delivered from the punishment due to your sins, but also from the power, pollution, dominion and existence of sin in your soul?

As far as you know yourself, do you hate, and desire to be delivered from, all sin—without any exception of a favourite lust? Do you pray much to be delivered from sin? Do you watch against it, and against temptation to it? Do you strive against it, and in some good degree get the victory over it? Have you so repented of it as to have your soul really set against it?

4. Have you counted the cost of following Christ, or of being truly religious? That it will cut you off from vain amusements, from the indulgence of your lusts, and from a sinful conformity to the world? That it may expose you to ridicule and contempt?—possibly to more serious persecution? In the view of all these things, are you willing to take up the cross, and to follow Christ, whithersoever he shall lead you? Is it your solemn purpose, in reliance on his grace and aid, to cleave to him, and to his cause and people, to the end of life?

5. Do you love holiness? Do you love a Holy God, and because he is holy? Do you earnestly

desire to be more and more conformed to God, and to his holy law? To bear more and more the likeness of your Redeemer? Do you seek, and sometimes find, communion with your God and Saviour?

6. Are you resolved, in God's strength, to endeavour conscientiously to perform your whole duty—to God, to your neighbour, and to yourself? Do you perform common and relative duties conscientiously, as part of the duty which you owe to God?

7. Do you make conscience of secret prayer daily? Do you not sometimes feel a backwardness to this duty? Do you at other times feel a great delight in it? Have you a set time, and place, and order of exercises, for performing this duty?

8. Do you daily read a portion of the Holy Scriptures, in a devout manner? Do you love to read the Bible? Do you ever perceive a sweetness in the truths of Holy Scripture? Do you find them adapted to your necessities, and see, at times, a wonderful beauty, excellence and glory in God's word? Do you make it the man of your counsel, and endeavour to have both your heart and life conformed to its doctrines and requisitions?

9. Have you ever attempted to covenant with God? To give yourself away to him, solemnly and

irrevocably, hoping for acceptance through Christ alone; and taking God, in Christ, as the covenant God, and satisfying portion, of your soul?

10. Does the glory of God ever appear to you as the first, greatest and best, of all objects? Do you desire to promote the glory of God, as the chief object of life?

11. Do you feel a love to mankind—such as you did not feel before you became religious? Have you a great desire that the souls of men should be saved, by being brought to a genuine faith and trust in the Redeemer? Do you love God's people with a peculiar attachment—because they bear their Saviour's image? and because they love and pursue the objects, and delight in the exercises, which are most pleasing and delightful to yourself? Do you, from your heart, forgive all your personal enemies, and refuse to cherish or entertain any sentiments of hatred or revenge? If you have injured any person, have you made reparation; or, are you ready and willing to make it?

12. Do you feel it to be very important to adorn religion, by a holy, exemplary, amiable and blameless walk and conversation? Do you fear to bring a reproach on the cause of Christ?

Does this appear to you extremely dreadful? Are you afraid of backsliding, and of being left to return to a state of carelessness and indifference in religion?

13. Do you desire and endeavour to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ your Saviour, more and more? Are you willing to sit at his feet as a little child, and to submit your reason and understanding, implicitly, to his teaching; imploring his Spirit to guide you into all necessary truth, to save you from all fatal errors, to enable you to receive the truth in the love of it, and to transform you, more and more, into a likeness to himself?

COUNSEL.

1. Remember that these questions are intended to point your attention to subjects of inquiry the most important. Do not, therefore, content yourself with a careless, or cursory reading of them. Read and deliberate, and examine yourself, closely, on the questions under each head: and let your heart be lifted up to God, while you are considering each particular question, in earnest desires that he may show you the very truth. You cannot ordinarily go over all these questions at one time. Divide

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them therefore, and take one part at one time, and another at another. But try to go over the whole in the course of a week; and do this every week, for some months. When you find yourself doubtful or deficient, in any point, let it not discourage you: but note down that point in writing, and bend the attention of your mind to it, and labour and pray till you shall have made the attainment which will enable you to answer clearly. It is believed that you cannot fail to see how each question ought to be answered.

2. Remember that secret prayer, reading the word of God, watchfulness, and self examination, are the great means of preserving comfort in religion, and of growing in grace. In proportion as you are exact and faithful in these, such, usually, will be your inward peace, and the safety of your state. Unite them all together, and never cease to practice them while you live. Think often of the character of Enoch, and try to walk with God—Read Mason's little book on self knowledge, I recommend it as excellent.

3. Besides the Bible, have constantly in reading, at your leisure hours, some author of known piety and excellence. Read Owen's works, Baxter's Saints' Rest, Doddridge's works, Watts' works, Witherspoon's works, Newton's works,

Scott's works, Venn's Whole Duty of Man, The Christian Observer, &c. &c.

4. Do not suppose that any evidence which, at present, you may think you possess, of a gracious state, will release you from the necessity of maintaining a constant vigilance in time to come; nor from repeated examinations and trials of yourself even to the end of life. Many marks and evidences of a gracious state are set down by pious writers. But they must all come to this—to ascertain what is your *prevalent* temper and character—Whether, on the whole, you are increasing in sanctification, or not? If you are, you may be comforted; if not, you have cause to be alarmed. It is only he that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

5. I think it of very great importance to warn you not to imagine that true religion is confined to the closet or to the church; even though you apprehend that you have great comfort and freedom there. Freedom and comfort there are, indeed, most desirable; but true religion reaches to every thing. It alters and sweetens the temper. It improves the manners. It goes into every duty, relation, station and situation of life. If you have true religion, you will have a better spirit, you will be better sons, better scholars, better friends, better members of society, and

more exemplary in the discharge of every duty; as the sure consequence of this invaluable possession: And if your religion does not produce these effects, although you may talk of inward comforts, and even of raptures, you have great reason to fear that the whole is a delusion, and that the root of the matter is not in you. "Herein (said the Saviour) is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples."

6. Be careful to avoid a gloomy, and to cherish a cheerful temper. Be habitually cheerful; but avoid levity. Mirth and laughter are not always sinful; but let your indulgence in them be clearly innocent, not very frequent, and never of long continuance. Be very humble. Be not talkative. Before experienced christians be a hearer; rather than a talker. Try, in every way, however, to promote religion among your relatives and friends. Win them to it, by your amiable temper and exemplary deportment. "Flee youthful lusts." Shun every excitement of them. Guard against dissipation; it extinguishes piety. Be not disconcerted by ridicule and reproach. Your Saviour bore much of these for you. Think of this, and be ashamed of nothing, so much as of being ashamed of him. Trust in his protection, live to his praise, and you will spend an eternity in his blissful presence.