

RELATION OF RELIGION TO SCIENCE:

A N A D D R E S S,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

A L U M N I A S S O C I A T I O N

O F

M A R S H A L L C O L L E G E,

September 27th, 1842.

By THE REV. E. V. GERHART, A. M.

*Published by Request.*

CHAMBERSBURG, PA.

PRINTED AT THE PUBLICATION OFFICE OF THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH.

1842.

## A D D R E S S .

---

### FELLOW ALUMNI :

We this day celebrate the First Anniversary of the Alumni Association of Marshall College. The celebration betokens a period in the history of this Institution to which its friends and patrons have looked forward with the most heartfelt solicitude. Six years have rolled around, since the organization of Marshall College ; obstacles have been encountered and overcome ; plans have been devised and carried into execution ; and now our celebration proves the desires and expectations that were cherished to have been realized, and the time and labor spent to have been crowned with success. The Alumni are the sons of the Institution. Here our intellectual powers have been developed and disciplined—our tastes have been formed—our manner of thinking determined—and our minds moulded. Our hearts are bound to it with cords that cannot be broken. Who can ever forget his Alma Mater ?

Our meeting together on to-day to celebrate the first Anniversary of the Association is a proof of our common attachment. The time awakens in your bosoms and mine, feelings, to which words can give no utterance. We think of the days when we were impelled by the same motives, dispirited by the same fears, or animated by the same hopes—when members of the same body, we lived in those classic halls, and listened to the instructions of our much-honored teachers ; we think of the days when we sported together on the green field, walked through the shaded grove, or sat, fanned by balmy zephyrs, by the cooling fountain ; and as we think we feel that all is past and gone. Now we meet. We have come from the busy world, where pleasure revels at the midnight hour, wealth feeds the poor with the crumbs that fall from her table, and ambition sacrifices faithfulness and confidence to the love of more extended power ; where avarice hoards her silver and gold ; where envy poisons the secret fountains of life, and malice invades the sacred rights of communities and families : we have come from the homes of our parents and the scenes of our boyhood, or from places where we have lived and been known as

strangers; we have come, the one, from the sacred rostrum where salvation is proclaimed to perishing thousands; the other, from the bed of sickness, where disease racks with pain the sinking frame; and another from the bar of justice, where guilt is exposed and innocence defended; we have come, affected by the innumerable modes of thinking that prevail among the various ranks and classes of Society, influenced and agitated by new views, new emotions and new hopes;—yet, although we thus meet, we still feel, while hand is grasping hand, and eye is speaking to eye, that our hearts are joined by the bonds of love. We are still members of the same body. The events of by-gone days have not been like the shadow of a passing cloud upon a green mountain's side; but like a living stream, gushing from the rock, that courses its peaceful way through a beautiful vale; they have left impressions upon our souls that shall not wear away whilst the warm pulsations of life shall continue to beat. Points of resemblance there are in our characters, which will always unite us into one brotherhood, although our conditions in society be the most various and dissimilar. Dewdrops, whether they sparkle upon the lilly, the blade of grass, or upon the thornbush, whenever they are caused to touch each other flow into one globule.

Now let soul respond to soul. Let the recollections of the past strengthen the ties of true friendship. Let the celebration of our Anniversary be the means of binding us closer to Marshall College; and of deepening the determination to devote all our energies to the cause of Science and Religion. To this end it will be both appropriate and profitable to contemplate *THE RELATION OF RELIGION TO SCIENCE*. As the subject is very extensive, the limits of our Address will permit me to take only a very general view; and for the same reason, several things will be taken for granted, in the course of the discussion, which would otherwise be fully considered and proved.

Religion and Science have, at different periods of the world's history, been considered as antagonistic in their nature and tendencies. Philosophy, adorned in her most beautiful and imposing dress, has declared herself independent of the Christian system; and Religion, neglecting to distinguish between the true and the false, has looked upon Philosophy with an eye of suspicion, pronouncing her prejudicial in her influence upon purity and simplicity of doctrine. But no idea could be more decidedly erroneous. They are two streams flowing parallel with each other from the same pure fountain through the world. If mankind would experience a symmetrical growth in intel-

lectual and moral greatness, they must be willing to drink from both. Science and Religion, in their nature perfectly harmonious, blend their influence, like two stars their radiance.

All truth must be contemplated as it exists in itself or objectively, and as it exists in the sphere of mind or subjectively ; as it exists in itself, it is the object upon which the powers of the intellect are exercised, and as it exists in the sphere of mind, it constitutes a part of the general life of the individual. There is a world without us, and a world within us ; the one is the exact counterpart of the other. Mind must approach and reproduce the object in itself ; thus the object may obtain an existence in the subject ; in the one case truth exists in reality according to its own nature, in the other it exists in idea, modified by individuality. Truth in itself is absolutely independent of mind ; for it is what it is because it has proceeded directly from God as its original ground ; hence its nature, its laws and its end are the same whether it is apprehended and imbibed by the mind of man or not. But the laws of mind are in perfect harmony with the nature of truth. Since, therefore, it is endowed with powers precisely adapted in their nature to the perception and reproduction of objective truth, an idea can be formed of a single one or of any number of truths as they are in themselves ; and when this idea, formed by logical thinking, corresponds in every respect with the object of thought, the mind possesses that kind of knowledge which is called Science.

Science has consequently a principle and life of its own which must develop itself organically. The spirit and laws of Science cannot be any thing different from the nature of truth, objectively considered. For a thing must come to exist in the sphere of mind by inductive reasoning as it exist in itself, before the mind can be said to possess a true idea of it. The principle and laws of Science are therefore independent of the arbitrary determination of man. These can only be determined by truth, considered as the object of thought. Hence mind must be regarded not as the arbiter but as the servant of Science. The objective world, independent in its origin, spirit and end of the will of man, possesses a life and laws of its own, which it is obligatory upon mind to enter and reproduce. What then is the simple collection of facts according to the succession of time ? What the nice arrangement of known truths in accordance with a plan, called a system, that has been sketched by human understanding, without regarding the necessity lying in the subject of investigation, which alone can determine the proper form of a science ? Destitute of the

principle which a science is required to have—destitute of the common life which must pervade all the parts constituting the whole, and destitute of the proper relation which all the parts must sustain to each other and to the common principle; such systems, although they may tell with powerful effect upon the character and destinies of men, can nevertheless lay no claim to possessing the true spirit of science.

From what has been said concerning the nature of Science we are compelled to infer, that a system is true only in proportion as the mind has succeeded in reproducing a correct idea of the object of thought. If the object of thought, truth as such, differs in its nature from the principle of a system, that system is of necessity false. And in as far as the system wants the peculiar spirit and form, which the truth as such demands, in so far the system is defective.

To have a correct idea of truth as such, it is absolutely necessary to know its origin, nature, and end. So long as these things are not known, Science in all its various ramifications will be destitute of its true principle and proper form; for, according to what has previously been shown, it is only through the medium of such a kind of knowledge that the principle and form of science can be ascertained. Scientific knowledge is the existence of a thing in idea as it is reality; but how is this possible, when the origin and end of all things is unknown? Now since mankind, as it is without hesitation conceded by all, are in a fallen state, reason is incapable of acquiring the certain knowledge of the origin, nature, and end of truth as such, without enjoying the light of the Christian Religion. If the views advanced be correct, the perfection or even the partial growth of sound Science, on account of man's fallen state, presupposes a Revelation of God. To illustrate and confirm this position, we shall proceed to consider Revelation; and at the same time, attempt to show the difference between it and Science.

The Christian Religion is a Revelation of God. This admission implies two things: the one, that man left to himself could never by any exercise of his own powers, have acquired a knowledge of the system which it contains; the other, that this system is one of eternal truth—not limited to any particular place or time, and beyond the possibility of being mingled with error. If Reason had been able to originate the system of the Christian Religion, just as by logical thinking it can form a system of Mental Philosophy or Logic, then, man being capable of instructing himself, a Revelation would have been unnecessary and as a consequence impossible: and if it were.

supposable that this revealed system could contain an error, then it would not be a Revelation, but merely a pretence—a cunningly devised fable ; for since God, being himself the absolute truth, is the foundation of all truth, nothing that is false can proceed from Him.

This system is therefore complete and perfect in itself. Its whole character is determined by its relation to God. Hence the truth of Science, objectively considered, is like that of Revelation ; they are both as they exist in themselves, eternally & unchangeably the same ; for the nature of neither one depends in any way whatever upon the will of man. In other respects Science and Religion differ. The mind may acquire an accurate knowledge of the truth of Science, as it is in itself, by its own powers, when properly enlightened by Revelation ; but the truth of the Christian Religion, as it is in itself, is such as lies beyond the limit of reason ; and consequently in order to be accessible it must be revealed. Further : Science cannot be said to exist until it has been wrought out by the activity of the intellect ; since truth as such is the object, the mind is required to penetrate and reproduce it by a process of inductive ratiocination. There is no Science as long as an idea of truth is not thus acquired. But the Christian Religion is a revealed religion ; in other words, it is a system of truth made known to man by means of language. Language is the external form of thought, and exists only in necessary connection with the development of reason. It is therefore a part of the general life of man. But if Religion is made known by language, it follows, that both as it is in itself and as it is in the possession of man, it depends solely upon God. It demands for its existence no exertion of reasoning power, but is given to man. True, it must be studied in order to be known ; so too, must the discoveries of a philosopher be studied in order to be known ; in the one case, the philosopher investigates and reproduces, in the other, the Spirit of God inspires and dictates. Now, because the mind is required by the activity of its own powers to produce a correct idea of truth, in order that it may come into the possession of a true system of Science, man may err in his abstruse speculations, and hold a false system for a true one ; but because the Christian Religion is a Revelation of God, and therefore altogether independent of intellectual effort, the very possibility of error is excluded ; hence the system contained in Revelation must be regarded as absolutely true ; and any system that does not accord with the Christian Religion is of necessity radically false. Revelation, consequently, affects the very life of Science. It is the sun

that stands in the firmament of mind and enlightens the whole intellectual world.

To understand more fully the relation of Religion to Science, we shall pass on to notice briefly a few of the fundamental doctrines of Revelation.—

The idea of God is the fundamental truth of Revelation. Although some dark notion of the existence of a Supreme Being has prevailed among all the nations of the earth, yet correct views respecting His nature and attributes have been held by none except those whom Providence has blessed with the Bible. Philosophers of all ages have attempted the knowledge of the Eternal, but no one has ever had such conceptions as correspond with what he has revealed himself to be. In Revelation all the knowledge that could be desired is communicated. The relations of God to man, and of man to God—His absolute sovereignty, and the duties of man to Him, are set forth with clearness and precision. Apart from supernatural aid, the acquisition of such knowledge is infinitely beyond the reach of the powers of reason.

A similar ignorance has at all times prevailed respecting the origin and destiny of man, and the proper idea of life. When and how did the human race originate? What is its destination? Why does it continue to exist? These are inquiries that have been answered only by Revelation. In it is contained the clearest, fullest and most satisfactory solution of every question that reason is prompted to ask.

If mankind were not in possession of this system of truth, reason, although its energies were fully unfolded and refined in the highest degree, would nevertheless remain ignorant of the being and attributes of the Great First Cause of all things; and, which is an unavoidable inference, ignorant also of man's origin and destiny, and of the true idea of human life. The kind of knowledge which Revelation conveys is therefore absolutely essential to the perfection of Science.

From the train of argument that has been pursued, the following is deducible: Religion determines the origin or principle, the spirit and the end of Science.

All truth has its source in God. But if men have no correct views of his nature, and of the relation which he sustains to mankind and things in general, it is impossible continually to refer, truth objectively considered, to God as the person from whom it proceeded; and reason is of necessity involved in complete ignorance of the fundamental principle of Science in every department. It is therefore in-

duced to substitute fanciful hypotheses for well-known principles, and commencing with these, to enter upon a regular course of reasoning, which may lead to conclusions the most false and absurd. Aristotle made several attempts, it is said, to compose a system of Ethics, but always met with a failure, because he was unable to discover the true principle of Moral Philosophy. And Plato, that noble-minded man, after he had finished his indefatigable researches upon the field of metaphysics, confessed that he could not succeed in the discovery of truth, and expressed his belief in a time to come when mankind would be favored with a knowledge of it. That time has come. The truth is known. The will of God has been revealed as the original ground of all things. Since every thing has proceeded from Him, we know that the laws of physical, intellectual and moral Science, are nothing more nor less than an expression of his will. His will has determined the principle of every particular branch of Science, the mutual relation of all the parts to each other, and the proper form of the whole. His will is expressed in every law. Hence, in one sense, it may be said, that the universe is a unit. But a full knowledge of the will of God is impossible, apart from Revelation ; and hence when Science is not connected with Religion, it is always based more or less upon false principles. Religion alone can enable reason to discover the true principle of Science.

As truth is from its nature consistent with itself, it follows, that the spirit or character of Science harmonizes perfectly with the teachings of Revelation. Revelation therefore determines its moral character. Every part of Moral Science must be held as truth if it harmonizes with the tenor of Revelation ; and whatever in any department contradicts the contents of Revelation is on that account necessarily false. The system contained in the Bible must therefore be considered as the standard of truth. We distinguish between a truth and a fact. A truth is accessible only to mind, a fact, to sense. A truth is in its nature eternal and unchangeable, a fact exists only in time. A truth is every where the same, a fact is connected with a particular place. Religion is the standard, not of facts, but of truths. Two opposite theories in natural philosophy, may both be equally indifferent to the doctrines of Religion. One only can be correct. Which is it ? Religion cannot tell. But here the spirit and tendency of neither one is in opposition to Religion. As soon as a theory can be shown to be of such a nature it must be discarded. There is then no possibility of fatal error so long as the philosopher or metaphysician stands

on this ground. He is guided by an ever-burning light in his most difficult investigations.

It is consequently the duty of a scholar to reason from Religion to the truth or falsity of a theory of Science, and not from Science upon the truth or falsity of Religion. Reason must acknowledge her ignorance and sit like a child at the feet of Revelation. From the nature of Science, from the nature of Religion, and from the relation of the latter to the former, we are forced to infer that a different mode of proceeding in the pursuit of thorough knowledge cannot be right. Geology is never at liberty to say that because some results of her investigations seem to contradict certain portions of the Bible, the whole system can with justness be doubted and rejected ; but, rather should it be said, that reason may have erred in the interpretation of Scripture, or in the manner in which inferences, in reference to the teachings of Revelation, have been deduced from known facts. Reason is fallible, not Revelation. Men should not exclude themselves from the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and then because objects appear in a distorted form in the mere light of reason, conclude that the manner in which the Sun presents them to their view is false. But Geology must keep its proper place, and walk in the illumined pathway of Revelation. Religion is the moral safety lamp with which the Geologist can explore the bowels of the earth. He can thus keep himself free from fatal error.

Such was the invariable method of him whom we all honored and loved. When pursuing his most profound speculations in the sphere of metaphysics, he never lost sight of the infallible standard of truth. To know that any conclusion or inference contradicted the Word of God, was always a sufficient cause for him to consider it groundless ; and even too when he was unable to perceive the reason involved in its nature for pronouncing it false. Revelation was his touch-stone of moral truth. By it he examined the claims of every theory to belief. He set no value upon any disquisition that could not in one way or another be made subservient to Religion. Let us tread in his footsteps. His voice is now silent. We can no more listen to his lectures. His instructions have ended. As his memory is enshrined in our hearts, so let his spirit be exemplified in our lives.

To return. The inquiry may be made, if the truth of Science must be tested by Revelation, how is it possible for Revelation to derive any proof of its being divine from Science. The inquiry is based upon a wrong supposition. Revelation is independent of such testimony.

How can the earthly prove the heavenly, or the finite, the infinite. Had religion no other support than that which can be derived from the united testimony of all the sciences, it would rest upon a very precarious foundation. Like the sun in the universe, it proves its truth by the constant flood of light that is pouring forth upon the world. Who that has a natural eye need be told that there is a sun? and who that has a spiritual eye need be told that Revelation is divine?

Every department of science must, then, be in perfect harmony with the system of truth revealed in the Word of God. In this case only does it possess its proper spirit.

If Science and Religion are pervaded by the same spirit, the general tendencies of both are towards the same end. From the Scriptures we learn that all things have been created and continue to exist for God himself; and hence Science in all its variety of forms, is connected with, and promotive of the same end as the whole system of things is of which it constitutes a part. If Philosophy acknowledges its true origin, understands its various relations, and is pervaded by the life-giving spirit that breathes in the Word of God, the influence that flows forth unceasingly from it upon the world of mind, will not fail to promote the highest interests of man. Nor can any different effects be produced. Truth, whether scientific or religious, is never inconsistent with itself. If the supposition were made it would conflict with the very idea of God.

Although every Science does not stand in an equally close connection with the ultimate end of creation; yet in reference to it the place which each one does hold among things in general, is important, if not directly it is indirectly. Each one may not stand in an immediate relation to the end of life, but by virtue of its intimate connection with various others, it is decided in its influence. There is a particular place belonging to every department, and only when each one occupies its own place can the ultimate end of the whole—Science as such—be accomplished. Of the relative importance of the different branches of Science, mind has been made capable of judging by Revelation.

In vain did the heathen try to discover the end of Science. The oft repeated question *cui bono?* was left unanswered, although the strongest minds revolved its import and endeavored to find a satisfactory solution. The tiny taper of reason burning with its brightest flame could only serve to disclose to full view the impenetrable darkness that forbade successful research on every side. Why investigate

the laws of the physical world? Why study the motions of the heavenly bodies? Why endeavor to become acquainted with the mental constitution? Why determine the duties of men to themselves, to their fellows and to the gods? The answer might have been given to gratify the desire of knowing. But why acquire such knowledge? Why gratify the desire? Cui bono? Hypothesis after hypothesis was assumed and awakened the hope of a speedy solution, but no efforts were able to satisfy enquiring minds; a cheerless uncertainty or gross delusion was the most that was ever gained. Like the mirage on the burning deserts of Africa, which enlivens the fainting traveller with the image of a clear, still lake, environed by hills and mountains—they only mocked the wearying pursuits of the anxious philosopher. How else could it be? How could philosophy, proceeding with the purest intentions ascertain its end, when the end of life with which it is essentially connected, was shrouded in the darkness of midnight? But the question is answered. Revelation has solved for man what man could not solve for himself. The mists of ignorance and superstition have been dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness, and men have been taught to cast their beautiful hypotheses upon the funeral pile of Paganism. We know the end of Science, because we know the end of life. But for this are we indebted to Revelation. Look into a clear lake, and you can see the wide spreading oak, the projecting rock, or the soaring lark; look into Revelation and you can understand the true idea of human life.

The various branches of Science are not all however dependent upon Religion in the same degree. Some can advance to considerable perfection without the aid of Revelation, whilst others under these circumstances are not susceptible of any progress. Mathematics is that Science whose connection with Religion is most remote; and moral Philosophy the one that is more dependent upon it than any other. Mathematics is not produced by reflecting upon something external to mind, which would be viewed as the object of thought. It does not presuppose any thing for its existence but the power of thinking. Mind does not even think of itself as the object in the production of this Science. Prior to the activity of thinking the subject of Mathematics is not; for by the activity of thinking the subject originates. The Science is therefore the pure product of mind. Its development and progress demand only the requisite power to think. Although the truths of Mathematics proceed simply from the activity of thinking, they are nevertheless in accordance with the spirit and

end of Religion ; because the author of mind and the author of religion are the same being. For this reason a Christian may study the mathematical works of a pagan or an infidel, and make all his knowledge subserve the cause of God. The results of Mathematics are applicable to Mechanics, Optics, Astronomy, et cetera ; for since mind and nature have but one Author, the laws of the one must agree entirely with the laws of the other. Here we see the relation of Religion to Mathematics. Revelation teaches that all the powers and capabilities with which mind is endowed, were designed by the Creator to promote his own glory, which is the ultimate end of all things. The same design, Mathematics, which is the product of mind, must be calculated to accomplish. Since Revelation teaches the true idea and ultimate end of life, it also teaches the end of Mathematics ; and thus Mathematics, adapted to the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, to the natural Sciences, and the pursuits of practical life, stands in as intimate a connection, under this aspect, with Religion, as the natural Sciences themselves. Thus, Religion renders it possible for this Science, by its influence upon the mind, and its connection with others, to assist in accomplishing the ultimate end for which all things were created.

Moral Philosophy is the reverse of Mathematics. It can make no advances without the assistance of Revelation. The will of God is the moral law. This law determines all duties. Law and duty are the subject of Moral Philosophy. Thus the will of God becomes the principle of it. But the will of God is only known through the medium of Revelation. As the true principle of Moral Philosophy cannot be ascertained without knowing the truths of Revelation, this science must be regarded as depending upon Religion for its very existence. The relation of Revelation to Moral Philosophy is therefore the closest and most intimate.

The other sciences depend upon Revelation more or less, in one way or another, according to the peculiar nature of each respectively. But none are as remotely, or as intimately connected with it as the two that have been considered. [Theology is not included in this remark.] All of them however agree in respect to one thing ; Revelation alone renders it possible for every science to accomplish its ultimate end.

I might now proceed to particulars. I might show how the branches of science differ from each other, and how variously they are affected by Revelation. I might then illustrate the whole subject by references to history. But my time will not allow me to do it.

How great are the obligations of the scientific world to the Christian Religion. We extol the names of those who have devoted the freshness of youth and vigor of manhood to the prosecution of the arts and sciences, and who have by these means sent forth a reviving influence upon the intellectual nature of man. Let not an iota be detracted from their merit. But we sometimes forget the source whence proceeded the possibility of advancing scientific knowledge to such a high degree of perfection. Had the unseen world shed no ray upon human reason, a moral death would still be upon every portion of the globe. Had the splendors of Heaven never shone upon earth, the torch of reason would never have discovered the way to the skies. The Christian Religion has sent its influence through all the departments of knowledge and modified the whole manner of thinking. The wants of science have been supplied ; an infallible guide and certain safeguard is always in attendance when men are prosecuting their most-perplexing inquiries ; the windings of error can be followed with safety and exposed to view ; the model of excellence—the standard of truth, is always before the eye ;—thus furnished with all that it needs, Science has been able to pour its rich blessings in lavish profusion upon the nations of the earth.

If the relation of Religion to Science be so intimate, and the obligations of the latter to the former so great, what must be thought of those who philosophize without cherishing any regard for the Christian system ? They pretend to be in search of truth whilst all the while they neglect or reject the only method of success. Destitute of a spiritual eye with which they would be enabled to see the beauty and excellence of Revelation, the connection of things unseen with things seen, of the eternal with the temporal, they are incapable of comprehending the dependence of Science upon Revelation ; and although there is a void in their bosoms which recondite learning and metaphysical speculation cannot satisfy, they throw away the only key with which they would be able to unlock the treasury of truth. The atheistical or skeptical philosopher is of all men the greatest fool.

The Alumni of Marshall College have been taught the obligations of Science to Religion, and the folly of attempting a thorough knowledge of the former without cherishing a proper regard for the latter. They have been taught the intimate connection that subsists between the two mutually ; for neither one can become what it is designed to be, unless it is united with the other. Science disconnected from Religion, tends to scepticism and infidelity ; and

Religion disconnected from Science tends to superstition and fanaticism. As you value sound philosophy and sound Religion—as you value the renovating influence that flows from their union ; let your combined energies be directed upon the interests of Marshall College. Who will form a proper estimate of her character, if we do not whose whole intellectual structure has been formed by her hand ? Who can be expected to devote themselves to her prosperity if our attachment is suffered to cool ? Who should be more willing to make sacrifices than the sons of the Institution ? Whether we move in the more humble walks of life, or devote our powers to law, medicine or divinity ; whether we occupy posts of political honor and influence, or are engaged in the ordinary avocations of private citizens ; whether we live within sight of her walls, or remove to the most distant part of our country ; let us always look with a feeling of heartfelt interest to the College, which secured to us the advantages of sound knowledge pervaded by the spirit that breathes in Revelation. That Marshall College may become more than she has been and now is, may we labor with inflexible determination and untiring perseverance in reliance upon an overruling providence. As long as we love the memory of one, who has gone to his rest, can we forget the Institution in which he lived and toiled and died !