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Mr. Willard's
DIRECTIONS
For the
Study of Divinity.



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D I R E C T I O N S

T O A
Y o u n g S c h o l a r
D e s i g n i n g t h e M I N I S T R Y,
F O R T H E
Study of Divinity.

By the Reverend and Learned
Samuel Willard, M. A.

Late Pastor of the South-Church in Boston, and Vice-
President of Harvard-College in Cambridge in New-
England.

John 5. 39. Search the Scriptures----.
2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. All Scripture is given by inspiration
of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the
Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto
all good works.

B O S T O N :

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THE P R E F A C E.

WHEN we have declar'd that Care hath been taken by comparing several Copies, to offer nothing to the Reader, which was not the genuine Product of the great Skill and Experience of that Judicious Divine the Rev. Mr. Willaid; we can't suppose that this Tract, in which you have much in a little, will need Recommendation; much less may we presume to imagine that any Thing written by us, should add weight unto it. However, being desired by the charitable Gentleman, who is at the Charge of the Impression, with a generous Regard to the Candidates of the Ministry, to introduce it to the Publick; We embrace this Opportunity of expressing our Thankfulness and Joy, that these excellent Rules for the Study of Divinity, are made more extensively useful by the Press, than while dispersed in a few private Manuscripts.

THE Knowledge of GOD in CHRIST, and of the only Way of living to Him here, so as to prepare for the full Enjoyment of Him in Heaven, must be the One Thing needful; and in some due Proportion, it ought to be the Care of every One to Search the Scriptures. But, whereas our Lord hath appointed an Order of Men to teach this divine Knowledge, how great should be their Concern and Care to be well Instructed to the Kingdom of GOD themselves, that they may be able to teach others? Now in order to this, it is a matter of the highest Importance

tance that the Sons of the Prophets enter upon this sacred Study, under an humbling Sense of the great Darkness and deep Corruption of human Nature by the Fall, and so with earnest Prayer to G O D, to enlighten and purify their Minds, that they may receive the Truth in the Love of it. Great is the Mystery of Godliness. We know but little of Bodies and created Spirits. The most sagacious Philosophers have not been able to search out the Almighty to Perfection, in the least of his Works. Certainly then, the Minister of the Gospel must need the especial Guidance and Influence of the Divine S P I R I T when looking into the Revelation which the infinite and eternal G O D hath made of Himself, and of the Way of our Redemption by C H R I S T : for the Carnal Mind is not only weak, but is Enmity against G O D. However, Constant fervent Prayer is to accompany, not supersede our diligent Endeavours in the Study of the Scriptures ; that the Man of G O D may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good Works. And here, tho' it is a distinguishing Favour we enjoy of having the Bible in our Mother-Tongue, yet doubtless it must be a great help to be able to read these sacred Writings in the Languages in which holy Men wrote them as inspir'd by the H O L Y G H O S T : And therefore we heartily wish that this Part of Academical Learning may be more and more encouraged in our Colleges ; for if the Candidates have not a good Foundation of this Knowledge laid there, it will be difficult to obtain it when they come to full Employment. And further, We concur with the Rev. Author, that to be well-grounded in Systematical Divinity, is of excellent use in order to a safe and profitable proceeding in this Study. And as we are highly favour'd in the Confession of Faith, the Assemblies larger and shorter Catechisms, printed with the Scriptures under each Head ; we recommend the diligent Reading of them, comparing the

Doctrines

Doctrines delivered with the Scriptures brought to prove them. And we would here particularly recommend the Author's Expository Lectures on the Assemblies Shorter Catechism, as an excellent Illustration of it.

THE Fathers of this Country were exemplary for their faithful and diligent Care in their Families, Schools and Churches, to propagate pure and undefiled Religion: And therefore the Children of New-England, and in a particular manner the Sons of the Prophets, are strongly obliged to remember how they have received and heard, and to hold fast those Forms of sound Words which they have been taught, when upon serious Examination, they find them consonant to the infallible Oracles of GOD. It's granted that our Father in Heaven alloweth of that Appeal: Nevertheless, What saith the Scripture? However, for any to reject parental Instruction, or those Doctrines which they have been taught in the more publick Preaching of GOD's Word, before they have, upon due Inquiry, found them disapproved by this perfect Rule, is profanely to contemn the Authority of GOD in the Fifth Command, (requiring Parents to bring up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord) and also the divine Institution of the Gospel Ministry; neither of which Teaching can be duly attended to Edification, without Forms of Words, and a methodical Expression & Explanation of Gospel Doctrines not verbatim contain'd in the Bible: tho' the Sense and Meaning of the Scriptures ought always to be kept to with the most religious Regard. Accordingly, here is a weighty Trust committed to Them who have the Instruction and Government of our Youth in the Schools of the Prophets; that they be safe Guides in leading their Pupils to the Study of such Books as explain and confirm the pure Doctrines of the Gospel, and in warning against the Errors of such as have a tendency, by subtle Reasoning and plausible Arguments, to corrupt their

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tender Minds from the Simplicity that is in CHRIST; For it must be of dangerous Consequence for young Students to begin with heretical and erroneous Writers, while as yet there's just Cause to fear, lest as Children they be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of Men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. And doth not the present Day call aloud for the most circumspect and watchful Care in this matter? This Foundation being well laid, (and surely it must be of the greatest Importance that such as teach others, be themselves well grounded in the Faith) the Students may with more safety proceed to the Reading of Casuistical and Polemical Authors. In the whole, Let him keep his Eye fix'd on this as his chief End, the glorifying GOD in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the Salvation of his own, and the Souls of others. Let him therefore when call'd to Preach the Gospel, determine with the Apostle Paul, not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

A N D now, May the GOD of all Grace pour out his SPIRIT upon our Schools, Colleges and Churches! May our Zion, always have of her Sons, to take her by the Hand, and lead her in the Paths of Truth and Righteousness! And may these Directions which are now commended to the diligent Perusal of the Candidates of the Evangelical Ministry, be accompanied with the Divine Blessing! O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the Years; in the midst of the Years make known; in Wrath remember Mercy. With these humble Requests to GOD, and with Desires of the Prayers of our Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry, We subscribe,

Joseph Sewall
Thomas Prince.

Boston, May 23.
1735.



Brief DIRECTIONS

TO A

Young Scholar

Designing the MINISTRY,

I. **L**ET him bear in Mind that of the Apostle, James 1. 17. *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* And accordingly be much in Prayer to God for his Help.

Bene orasse, est bene studuisse.

II. Let him put off high Opinions of himself, and be sensible of his own Infirmary. This will both put him upon more ardent Supplications: James 1. 5. *If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him: And excite him to greater Industry, 1 Cor. 3. 18. Let no Man deceive himself: If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise.*

III. SINCE all Theological Truths are commended to us in the WORD OF GOD, let him be much in Reading the SCRIPTURES with diligent
Observance

Observance: This is their Commendation, 2 Tim. 3. 15. *From a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Acts 17. 11. *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of Mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so.* Acts 18. 24. *A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures.*

IV. In reading the Scriptures, he is firstly concerned to understand the true Sense and Meaning of them: Acts 8. 30. *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the Prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?* And there are Three Things he is here to acquaint himself withal, viz. The Grammatical, the Logical and the Theological Meaning; i. e. The knowing of the Import of the Words, the Sense of the Axiom, and the theological Truth contained in it. For which purpose, respecting the two former, it is requisite that he be skilled in Grammar; especially the original Languages, in which the Scriptures were dictated by the Spirit of God, and the Idioms and Criticisms of them: In Rhetorick; since God hath spoken to us after our manner, and hath therefore made use of the vulgar Tropes and Figures, in expressing his Mind unto us: And Logick, for the analysing of the Text, and finding out the Method of it, and the Arguments contained in it. Let him therefore keep up the Study of these in convenient Seasons. And I would commend to him, the reading Daily of a Chapter in the Original, and consulting Criticks on the Words that are obscure, and a careful eying of the general Scope of the Text, and what Head of Arguments each particular does belong unto. In respect of the last, He must compare
Scripture

Scripture with Scripture; reduce those which are more hard to those which are more plain, and Allegorical Scriptures to such as are more intelligible; and in all Allegories make Allowances, so as not to strein every Circumstance in the Similitude; but to bring all to the *Analogy of Faith*, Rom. 12. 6. For which end,

V. Let him reduce the several Scriptures in his more *set Reading* (for it cannot be well done in a more cursory Reading, which yet is not without it's Profit) to their proper Head in Divinity. For tho' all Theological Truths be contained in the Word of God, yet they are not there digested into a *Methodical System*, but it is to be gathered from thence: And there is a *Form of wholesome Words* to be well understood and laid in the Foundation, unto which all the Word of God is accordingly to be referred; either as the Principle it self, or a Deduction from it, or an Explication of it, or an Evidence given to demonstrate it, or an Exemplification of it.

VI. Hence let his first Care be, to be well grounded in *Systematical* or *Common Place Divinity*. By this a Foundation is laid, for a safe and more profitable Proceeding to other Theological Studies: hereby he will have a Rule before him, to measure all other Things by: And for that end, let him read *the most approved Systems* and *Common-Places*, and get them well digested; for till he is soundly principled in the Fundamentals of Theology, he is readily expos'd to be led about by every Wind of Doctrine, and baffled with the cunning Sophisms of Impostors, against which this will be a Defence.

VII. Let him then proceed to *Casistical Divinity*; which is for the Application of the Doctrines unto
practical

Heads, since the End of Knowledge is *Exprasy*, John 13. 27. And a good Skill in this, is necessary to make an able Minister of the New-Testament; who must expect to have to do with Men's Consciences, and have many a difficult and hazardous Case bro't to him for Resolution: but by this Means he will be advantaged, to practise according to his Knowledge, and preach in his Life; and be in a readiness to help others in their way, and thro' their Difficulties.

VIII. Now let him proceed to *Polemical Divinity*, or *Controversial*; that he may understand what are those Doctrines, that stand in Opposition to the Truth, and how to refute them; else he is not furnished for his Work: Tit. 1. 9. *Holding fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers.* And this must be, by reducing all to the proper Heads in Divinity, to which they do refer; and discovering the Opposition and Fallacy: For,

Quibus Argumentis Veritas astruitur, iisdem Falsitas destruitur.

IX. In all this, it is requisite, that he read *Authors*, whom God hath raised up in their Times, and enabled them, by those Writings, which they have commended to the World, to be helpful to those that come after them. And for his greater Safety & better Success in Reading, let me offer him *these few Rules*,

1. Let him read and study the most approved Authors in each kind, where there is least Danger of being seduced, and greatest Advantage of being seasoned with the Truth: for which let him take Advice of those that be experienced, lest he spend his Time unprofitably.

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2. Let him not pin his Faith upon the Credit or Authority of any Author; but account all, besides the Writers of the Holy Scriptures, fallible. The Judgment of an able Divine, may put him upon Inquiry, but must not set him down: he must see the Ground of all, and not *jurare in verba magistri*: else he will not be fit to convince others; for such Authorities are no Demonstrations.

3. Let him collect an Account of the most noted Errors and Heresies, both Ancient and Modern, that have pestered the Church of Christ. Thus will he be better able to discover them in his reading, and escape being infected with them at unawares, and made more curious and cautious in reading those Authors where he finds them.

4. In Reading of his own Books, let him with Pen or Pencil, put significant Notes of observable Passages in the Margin, viz.

(1.) Notable Theorems. (2.) Weighty Arguments or Reasons for the Proof of them. (3.) Particular Cases that are handled. (4.) Erroneous Doctrines or Assertions. (5.) Remarkable Instances or Examples in Providences referring to the Truths of God's Word. And it will be profitable to have a *several Mark*, whereby each of these may be distinguished.

5. Let him after some considerable Reading, take Time to digest it in his Meditation. Not that he must think to carry all his Reading in his Memory; but to endeavour, that he may not lose the Substance of what he has read, till he has well informed his Understanding about it: else it will be Time spent in reading unprofitably.

X. Let him allow some Time, for the Study of *Natural Philosophy* and *History*, especially Ecclesiastical. These have no little Utility in them for a Divine; and among other Advantages, they will be very serviceable to help him in the understanding of many Scriptures, which else he will be at a loss about.

XI. Let him provide himself, with a large *Common-Place Book*. And that he may improve it to the best Advantage, take *these Rules*,

1. Let him write on the Head of the Page methodically, the several Subjects of Divinity, to which he may refer his reading.

2. Let him briefly note the Book and Page, where he may find that Subject particularly handled, either Doctrinally, Casuistically or Polemically, in any Book which he hath in his Library.

3. Let him write at large any remarkable Passages, with the Book and Page.

4. Let him give a short Glance at any Errors, and where he may have them confuted.

XII. Let him sometimes exercise himself in some particular *Common-Place* in Divinity; chusing an Head that may be most profitable.

And here,

1. To pitch upon some *Text* of Scripture, which most clearly contains it.

2. To clear up that Scripture, and the Sense of it, and accordingly to Ground his *Theorem* upon it.

3. To

3. To open the *Terms* in it, and elucidate the meaning of the *Axiom*, and give what needful *Distinctions* may serve to determine the clear meaning of it.

4. To confirm it, by *Scripture-Arguments* and *Testimonies*.

5. To answer the *Objections*, and refute the *Errors* that have militated against it.

6. To draw the genuine *Inferences* from it, whereby He may be confirmed in other Truths which are confirmed by it.

XIII. Let him take *Opportunities* to confer with *Others*, especially orthodox and able Ministers, about those *Points* that are dark and difficult, for his farther Information; remembering what is said, *Hof. 6. 3.* *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the Rain; as the latter and former Rain unto the Earth.*

F I N I S.

