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Archibald Alexander and the Use of Books: Theological Education and Print Culture in the Early Republic

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Archibald Alexander and the Use of Books

Theological Education and Print Culture
in the Early Republic

MICHAEL J. PAULUS, JR.

But although, in theory, we acknowledge the all-pervading power of the press; yet the importance of the subject is not practically felt, in all its momentous consequences. The man who is enabled to write a truly evangelical and useful book, or even a single tract of first-rate excellence, may convey the saving truth of the gospel to a thousand times more persons, than the living preacher can ever instruct by his voice. And hundreds of years after the death of the writer, the production of his pen may be but just commencing its career of usefulness, only to be terminated with the end of the world.

Archibald Alexander¹

“When a traveler goes into a bookseller’s shop in the United States,” reported Alexis de Tocqueville after his American sojourn, “[h]e will first find a multitude of elementary treatises, destined to teach the rudiments of human knowledge. Most of these books were written in Europe.” “Next,” continued de Tocqueville, “comes an enormous quan-

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1. Archibald Alexander, “[Review] *The Attraction of the Cross, Designed to Illustrate the Leading Truths, Hopes, and Obligations of Christianity*, by Gardiner Spring,” *Biblical Repository and Princeton Review* 18 (1846), 161.

tity of religious works, Bibles, sermons, edifying anecdotes, controversial divinity, and reports of charitable societies.” The dynamic religious character of the United States that made an immediate impression on de Tocqueville, when he arrived in 1831, was at the center of what Daniel Walker Howe calls a “communications revolution,” which was “a driving force in the history of the era.” While the nature of print culture in the early republic can be described as diverse and polycentric, religion—particularly evangelical Christianity—formed an important center within it. Behind evangelical publishing activities, and operative within “the Evangelical United Front” or “the Benevolent Empire,” were various voluntary organizations that mobilized around a belief in the power of the press to proclaim the Word as well as function as a means of grace. Out of this conviction, drawing from a legacy of reformation, revival, and mission, these institutions inspired, published, and distributed an extensive amount and range of theological works with the goal of establishing a Christian society.²

2. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Part the Second: The Social Influence of Democracy*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York, 1840), 55. Religious publishing was heavily dependent on Europe as well until the 1830s, when American books began to surpass European reprints. See Robert A. Gross, “Introduction: An Extensive Republic,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2: An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790–1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), 14, 35; James N. Green, “The Rise of Book Publishing,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 124–26. For the communications revolution and the diversity of print culture in the early republic, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007), 5–6; Richard D. Brown, “The Revolution’s Legacy for the History of the Book,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 60. The term *evangelical* is used to refer to a variety of Protestant groups characterized by four major emphases: an emphasis on Christ, the incarnate Word of God (John 1:14); an emphasis on the Bible, the written Word of God (a legacy of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation); an emphasis on conversion (a legacy of the North Atlantic revivals of the eighteenth century); and an emphasis on evangelism, both at home and abroad. See Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, UK, 2002), 5, 197. For the significance and function of evangelical print culture, see Charles L. Cohen and Paul S. Boyer, eds., *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, (Madison, WI, 2008), ix–x; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 186–95; S. J. P. Anderson, *The Power of a Christian Literature: A Sermon on Behalf of the Assembly’s Board of Publication* (Philadelphia, 1858), 18; Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in*

One of the earliest and most innovative of these evangelical institutions, and one that has not received much attention, was the Protestant theological seminary, which was a development particular to the United States. Rather than teaching theology within the context of an undergraduate college curriculum, these postbaccalaureate schools educated college graduates for the ministry and often more. Situated at the top of the early American educational system, theological seminaries provided the only substantive graduate education in the early American republic. And while most institutions of higher education “played a modest part in the expansion of print culture,” leaders of the theological seminary movement expected their graduates to be influential in print as well as in the pulpit. Most of these theological seminaries developed a curriculum that stressed the primacy of the Bible and sought to relate all other studies and texts properly to it. In addition to cultivating authors and producing institutional publications, these schools developed a structure of knowledge that shaped the content and form of a Bibliocentric print culture. This Bibliocentric print culture, comprised of a group of publishers, publications, and print-related practices, aimed to teach Christianity comprehensively and effectively.³

In his *Prose Writers of America*, which first appeared in 1847, Rufus Griswold highlighted the religious spirit and motivations of those who came to America “from Great Britain or the continent.” Their literature, “a religious literature,” exerted a formative and enduring influence. Griswold boasted,

Colonial America (New Haven, CT, 2007), 21–23; Matthew P. Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2007), 29–31, 84–86, 179–207. Situated within Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker’s book cycle, a modification of Robert Darnton’s communications circuit, religious institutions can exert influence before the event of publication, which Adams and Barker define as “the initial decision to multiply a text or image for distribution.” Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, “A New Model for the Study of the Book,” in *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London, 1993), 10–15.

3. Dean Grodzins and Leon Jackson, “Colleges and Print Culture,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 319; R. Albert Mohler, Jr., and D. G. Hart, eds., *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), 15; Noll, *America’s God*, 254–55; George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, 1994), 79.

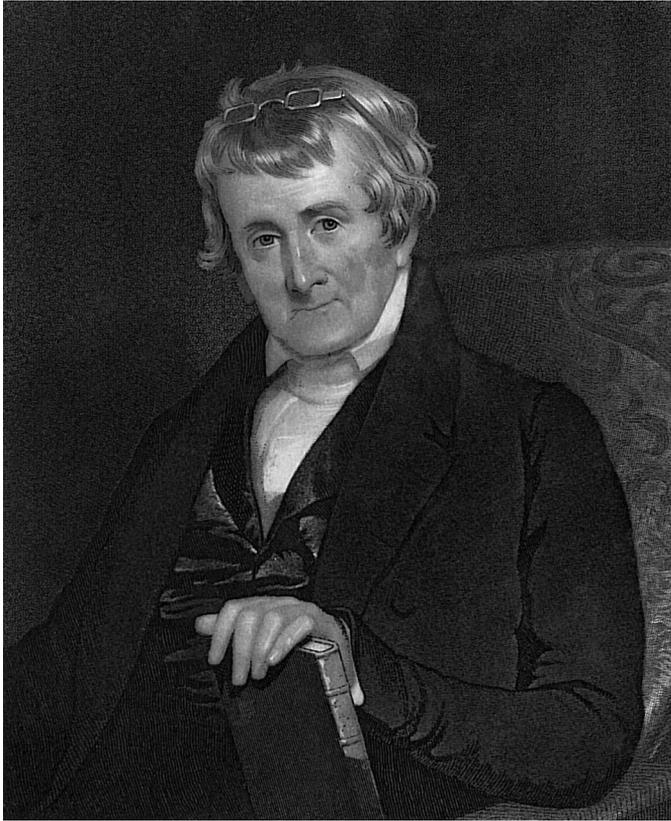
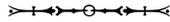


Figure 1: Engraving of Archibald Alexander, circa 1840. From the author's collection.

In the present day no country can boast of a list of theological writers more justly distinguished for learning, logical skill, or literary abilities, than that which includes the names of the Alexanders, Albert Barnes, George Bush, Charles Hodge, John Henry Hopkins, Samuel Fanner Jarvis, Charles P. McIlvaine, Andrews Norton, Edward Robinson, Moses Stuart, Henry Tappan, William R. Williams, James Walker, Leonard Woods, and others whose talents and acquisitions have secured to them a general influence and good reputation.

Archibald Alexander, the first Alexander to whom Griswold refers, was the founding professor of Princeton Theological Seminary and a prolific and prominent theological author during the first half of the nineteenth century (see Figure 1). He was the father of the other Alexander to whom

Griswold refers, Joseph Addison; and Albert Barnes, George Bush, Charles Hodge, and Charles McIlvaine had all studied under the elder Alexander at Princeton. For Griswold, the considerable religious dimension of the nation's emerging print culture, which de Tocqueville had accurately perceived, was a source of pride. While other ambitious men and women of letters worked "to build a new Athens in America," theological authors effectively exploited innovations in the production and dissemination of printed material and looked for the establishment of a new Jerusalem. As theological seminaries were designed and developed in the early nineteenth century, they became a principal place where theological authors were enabled to write what Alexander called "truly evangelical and useful" publications. This article focuses on the life and literary work of Archibald Alexander, a central figure at the intersection of theological education and religious publishing, to highlight the formative connections between theological seminaries and print culture in the early American republic.⁴



Archibald Alexander was born near present-day Lexington, Virginia, in 1772. In 1854, three years after Alexander's death, his son and biographer claimed, "There was no such provision of literary apparatus [then] as in our day. Single volumes passed from house to house, as great treasures, and the youth was happy who could own any one of those works which now greet us with profusion." Alexander attended five different schools before the age of ten, at which age he entered Liberty Hall, an academy that was the precursor of Washington and Lee University. Illness had prevented him from attending the College of New Jersey

4. Rufus Wilmot Griswold, *The Prose Writers of America: With a Survey of the History, Condition, and Prospects of American Literature* (Philadelphia, 1847), 16–18; Gross, "Introduction: An Extensive Republic," 14, 34–35; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 230–31. Griswold singled out the theological seminaries at Andover and Princeton for advancing the field of biblical criticism: "We are indebted mainly for our advancement in this great field of learning to the theological seminaries of Andover and Princeton. From both these institutions works have issued within a few years which have attained the highest reputation not only in our own country but in Europe: which embrace more that is valuable and profound than in the same period has been produced elsewhere in the world." *Prose Writers*, 382.

(the precursor of Princeton University), but at Liberty Hall Alexander was taught by a graduate of the Princeton college, William Graham, who used the curriculum, reading lists, and manuscript lectures of its president John Witherspoon. Witherspoon was one of the leading transmitters of Scottish commonsense philosophy, which held that certain natural and moral truths could be grasped reliably through a sense that was common to all—a conviction that had implications for authors addressing so-called common readers. After he decided to study for the ministry, Alexander continued his education by reading divinity with Graham.⁵

In spite of a scarcity of books, Alexander, who claimed that he had learned to read the Bible by the age of five (although he could not recall how), was “seldom without a book in his hand” and read “at random every good book [he] could lay hold of.” He would “devour rather than peruse” books and managed to read broadly in the classics, history, philosophy, and theology. Alexander credited the first evangelical books he encountered with his intellectual and spiritual awakening. He came to value books for their contents, their functions, and even their forms; his son wrote that it was one of Alexander’s “peculiarities that he treated books with a religious tenderness, never making in any one of them so much as a marginal note.”⁶

Alexander began his ministry as an itinerant Presbyterian missionary in the so-called “wild regions” of central and western Virginia. Here, Alexander wrote, “I had no books with me but my small pocket Bible and found very little to read in the houses where I stopped.” This scarcity of books, particularly of “sound practical books and evangelical writings,” made a lasting impression on Alexander and motivated many of his later literary labors.⁷

5. James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D.: First Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey* (New York, 1854), 23, 76, 108; Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT, 1983), 6–14; James McCosh, “The Scottish Philosophy as Contrasted with the German,” *Princeton Review* 3 (July–Dec. 1882), 327–29; Noll, *America’s God*, 233–38; Charles L. Cohen, “Religion, Print Culture, and the Bible before 1876,” in *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, 8.

6. Alexander, *Life*, 12–13, 35–36, 42–46, 72, 83, 108–109, 176, 356.

7. John Hall, “A Sermon on the Death of Dr. Alexander,” *Home, the School, and the Church* 3 (1853), 95; Alexander, *Life*, 118; *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report*

Alexander's second call was to the presidency of Hampden-Sydney College. There he had access to "some well selected works" in the college's small library, gained experience as an educator, became involved in the local government of his denomination, and began to experiment with writing. Alexander's first publication—a cover letter for a letter about a religious revival in Kentucky—appeared at this time, in 1802, in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, one of the earliest monthly religious periodicals in the United States. Launched by the Connecticut Missionary Society, this missionary magazine provided a model for stabilizing and strengthening evangelical culture in the early republic. Alexander and a few of his ministerial colleagues were inspired by it, and from 1804 until 1807, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia, they published in Lexington three volumes of Virginia's first religious periodical, the *Virginia Religious Magazine*. Alexander contributed a number of pieces, including an article titled "An Enquiry into the Nature of Conscience" and a series of imaginative dialogues on current theological topics. A couple years after this periodical was launched, Alexander became the chair of a committee charged with planning for a theological school at Hampden-Sydney.⁸

Another interesting project that Alexander worked on in Virginia was a religious novel titled *Eudocia*. The project is interesting because American novels were rare—only twenty-five appeared during the first decade of the nineteenth century—and American Calvinists were often suspicious of the genre. Alexander's son described his father's novel as

[T]he history of a young lady of wealth and beauty, who is led through various changes and degrees, from giddy ignorance to piety and peace. The plot was engaging; there was a thread of romantic but pure love, running through the whole; it abounded in graphic description and lively dialogue. Some of the scenes were eminently pathetic; and [one person] was known to burst into tears, when it was read aloud. The whole was made subservient to the inculcation of evangelical truth.

of the American Tract Society: Presented at New York, May 12, 1852 (New York, 1852), 15.

8. Alexander, *Life*, 196; Alexander, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 2, no. 9 (1802), 354–60; James R. Rohrer, "The Connecticut Missionary Society and Book Distribution in the Early Republic," *Libraries & Culture* 34 (Winter 1999), 17–26; Mary Kupiec Cayton, "Harriet Newell's Story: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement," in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 409–410; Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*, 80, 83–88.

But, his son added, “The author finally determined to suppress it.”⁹

Perhaps not coincidentally, Alexander abandoned his novel after he took a pastorate in Philadelphia, the nation’s largest city and a major center of publishing. There Alexander was “brought nearer to libraries, learned men and the means of acquiring books,” and the shelves of his library began to fill with “folios and quartos, bound in vellum, of Latin theology, which always continued to be characteristic of his library.” Alexander also became involved with a number of voluntary organizations and publishing projects. He was a founding manager of the Philadelphia Bible Society (PBS), which organized in 1808 to distribute Bibles to those who were unable—or unlikely—to buy them. The PBS was the first American Bible society “to get under way” and it became a “substantial publisher and high-tech printer.” Alexander worked to establish a tract society, but he was only able to get a few tracts printed by William Bradford. For one of these, Bradford asked for and Alexander provided “the prayer of a pious seaman before, and another after a storm.” Alexander also took steps to launch a religious weekly newspaper, which his son claimed was “a thing at that time unknown in the world.”¹⁰

In spite of “an indisposition to commit his thoughts to paper” and a reluctance “to give any thing willingly to the public,” Alexander published two sermons while he was in Philadelphia. He delivered the first of these in 1808, as outgoing moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which was one of the most culturally prominent denominations in the country. Before the national governing body of his denomination, Alexander, who by then had had diverse experiences as a pastor, writer, and organizer of voluntary societies, argued that in an age witnessing the extremes of Enlighten-

9. Alexander, *Life*, 290; Elizabeth Barnes, “Novels,” in *A History of the Book in America*, Volume 2, 442; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 630.

10. Alexander, *Life*, 296, 305; David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York, 2004), 44–50; George Charles Smith and John Griffin, *The Boatswain’s Mate: An Interesting Dialogue; To Which Are Added Conversations after a Storm and the Life of Jack Covey* (Philadelphia, 1820). The printer Alexander enlisted proceeded with the plan and published *The Religious Remembrancer* from 1813 through 1823. See Alexander, *Life*, 305–306.

ment rationalism and religious exuberance the greatest issue confronting the church was ministerial education. American colleges, he observed, were increasing in number and curricular sophistication, but they were not graduating enough ministerial candidates or providing them with the training they needed. The church would not have “a regular and sufficient supply of well qualified ministers,” Alexander said, until it established schools “for the single purpose of education of youth for the ministry.”¹¹

This address made Alexander a prominent figure in the theological seminary movement, which that year led to the opening of the first post-graduate “Theological Seminary” at Andover, Massachusetts—“an Institution unmade in the annals of this country and of Europe,” its founders boasted. The establishment of Andover Theological Seminary was the response of conservative Congregationalists to a Unitarian takeover at Harvard, represented by the appointments of Henry Ware to the Hollis Chair of Divinity and Samuel Webber to the presidency. But rather than establish a competing college, Andover’s founders established a school that would supplement—rather than supplant—a classical college education. The nation, these and others argued, was facing a cultural crisis; and ministers, of which there were not enough anyway, needed to receive the best education possible to respond to “books of many kinds” being written by “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” “In proportion as these enemies of God and man increase in number, learning, and activity,” wrote one theological seminary advocate, “will be the necessity of an able and learned clergy, to expose their wiles, refute their sophistry, and counteract the misapplication of their science, literature, and talents.” Books must be answered with books, and such publications depended on advanced theological education. The Presbyterians agreed and established the second major school of this type at Princeton, in 1812, after assembly delegates and trustees of the college at Princeton worked out a

11. Alexander, *Life*, 296; Alexander, *A Sermon Delivered at the Opening of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, May 1808* (Philadelphia, 1808), 11, 24–25, 30–31; Alexander, *A Discourse Occasioned by the Burning of the Theatre in the City of Richmond, Virginia, on the Twenty-Sixth of December, 1811, by Which Awful Calamity a Large Number of Lives Were Lost* (Philadelphia, 1812). For the cultural position of the Presbyterian Church, see Noll, *America’s God*, 5, 175–76, 413–15.

complementary rather than competitive relationship. And the General Assembly selected Alexander to lead its new school.¹²



In his 1808 address to the Presbyterian General Assembly, Alexander had stated that the Bible should be at the center of theological education: “I hope that the time is approaching when all other studies will, among theological students, yield the precedence . . . to the study of the Bible; and that other branches of learning will be prized only as they afford assistance in the elucidation of the inspired volume.” Alexander acknowledged the difficulties of pursuing the advanced biblical studies that he was proposing, particularly in America: in such a “remote age,” the biblical languages, customs, transactions, and people were difficult to understand; and in such a “distant county,” there was a “scarcity of suitable books and teachers of competent skill.”¹³

In his 1812 inaugural address at Princeton, which was published promptly with the accompanying sermon and charge, Alexander focused again on the centrality of the Bible. He declared, “A book has a claim upon our time and study, on account of the authority by which it comes recommended [i.e., from Christ], the excellency of the matter comprehended in it, and the interest which we have involved in the knowledge of its contents.” Theological education, he concluded, should be about the defense, exposition, and experience of the truth of the Bible.¹⁴

In addition to being the best book, Alexander speculated that the

12. *The Constitution and Associate Statutes of the Theological Seminary in Andover; With a Sketch of Its Rise and Progress* (Boston, 1808), 6; “Thoughts on the Importance of a Theological Institution,” *The Panoplist* 3, no. 7 (1807), 312; Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA, 1990), 67–80; Samuel Miller, Jr., *The Life of Samuel Miller*, Vol. 1 (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1869), 243; Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*, 127–35; Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001), 21, 24.

13. Alexander, *A Sermon Delivered at the Opening of the General Assembly*, 31–32.

14. Alexander, “An Inaugural Discourse,” in *The Sermon Delivered at the Inauguration of the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D.D., as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York, 1812), 94.

Bible was the first book. “The history of the origin of alphabetical writing is involved in considerable obscurity,” he observed. But, he pointed out, the first known record of this art is found in the book of Exodus, in which Moses is commanded “to write a certain transaction in a book: and soon afterwards . . . the law was written by the finger of JEHOVAH, on the two tables of testimony.” Alexander concluded that “this wonderful art, so necessary for recording the revelations received from God, for the use of posterity” was “no invention of man, but a revelation from God.”¹⁵

To approach the study of this foundational book, Alexander said that theological students required knowledge of biblical and other ancient languages, ancient and modern history, historical theology, and “chronology and geography . . . modern travels . . . natural history, chemistry, and geology . . . a general acquaintance with the whole circle of sciences.” “Indeed,” Alexander concluded, “there is scarcely any science or branch of knowledge, which may not be made subservient to theology.” One of Alexander’s students from Virginia, who also founded a theological seminary as well as the *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, similarly claimed that “learning and philosophy are hand-maids to religion.”¹⁶

Princeton Theological Seminary’s founding document reflected these ideas about the centrality of the Bible and it outlined the supporting studies that would be covered by the school’s three-year curriculum. First were biblical studies, including the original languages, historical contexts, and content of the Bible. Next came the study of theology, with particular reference to reading and “digesting” the arguments related to contemporary controversies. Then there was church history, followed by the study of practical theology. This last subject included reading “a considerable number of the best practical writers on the subject of religion”; learning how to compose and deliver popular lectures and sermons; performing the duties of pastoral care; and participating in church government. In addition, daily devotional reading of the Bible was expected and Sabbath reading was to be limited to books concerned with

15. *Ibid.*, 59–60.

16. *Ibid.*, 82–84; Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789–1880* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 154.

practical religion. All of these studies aimed to prepare theological students to explain, defend, and experience the Bible. As the first—and, for a year, the only—professor, Alexander became the principal architect and author of the curriculum that would shape and support these studies.¹⁷

To support theological education and research at the seminary, Princeton's original plan called for "a complete theological library." The library part of the plan was never formally adopted, but this objective was taken up by the administrators, faculty, and friends of the seminary. In one of his many pleas for the library, the seminary's second professor, Samuel Miller, asked for support for a library of "one hundred thousand volumes . . . a great library, to which students and writers on all subjects might resort; and where might be found every important work needed, either for perusal or reference, in all departments of literature and science." According to a report published in 1831, between fifty-nine colleges, seventeen medical schools, nine law schools, and twenty-seven theological schools, there were about forty-nine thousand volumes in American academic libraries. The Library of Congress held about thirty thousand volumes. Proposing that the nation's largest library be located at a theological seminary would only make sense if theology was—as it was in the Middle Ages—viewed as the queen of the sciences.¹⁸

At Alexander's inauguration, Miller reviewed the aims of Princeton Theological Seminary: to provide the "best instructors," an "ample Library," and a "uniform course of instruction" in order "to train up an able and faithful ministry . . . on whose piety, talents, and learning, the temporal and eternal welfare of thousands . . . depend." Miller also imagined theological students forming lifelong friendships, which would "fa-

17. *Report of a Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church: Exhibiting the Plan of a Theological Seminary to Be Submitted to the Next General Assembly* (New York, 1810), 13–14, 16; Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*, 150–60.

18. Samuel Miller, *A Brief History of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, at Princeton, New Jersey* (Princeton, NJ, 1838), 42; Michael J. Paulus, Jr., "Beyond 'Pabulum for the Undergraduates': The Development of the Princeton Theological Seminary Library in the Nineteenth Century," *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 42, no. 3 (2007), 231–67; "Miscellanies," *New England Magazine* 1 (Dec. 1831), 543–44; Carl Ostrowski, *Books, Maps, and Politics: A Cultural History of the Library of Congress, 1783–1861* (Amherst, MA, 2004), 129.

cilitate and promote that mutual consultation, respecting plans of research, and new and interesting publications, which is, at once, among the safeguards, as well as pleasures of, theological authorship.” On more than one occasion Miller asked his students to consider “the mighty influence which the press is destined to exert . . . and how deadly that influence must be, if it be not guided and sanctified by the Religion of Jesus Christ.” “No intelligent observer of the passing age,” he said, “can possibly fail of marking the power of the press, in reaching, informing, and controlling the whole mass of our citizens. . . . Never was there a country in which there were, at once, so many opportunities and inducements to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind by good writing as in the United States.” To be prepared for the “maximum of usefulness,” Miller wrote, students should endeavor to become “ready and able” writers. Both Miller and Alexander expected evangelical publications to be an outcome of theological education.¹⁹

Alexander’s own emergence as an author occurred during the seminary’s early years. His son wrote,

The employments of the study and the lecture-room were incessant and wearing, but they were enthusiastic. The compilation, collection, translation, revision and refutation, incident to the life of a young and ardent professor, went on with a diligence of which the fruits were extant for many years in piles of manuscripts, some of which became lectures, others parts of published works.

By the early 1820s, after he had turned fifty, with sufficient education, experience, and expertise—and piles of material with which to work—Alexander was ready for “the commencement of his authorship.”²⁰

In the late 1820s, Alexander gave a talk to entering seminary students titled “The Use and Abuse of Books,” which included an abundance of

19. Samuel Miller, “The Duty of the Church to Take Measures for Providing an Able and Faithful Ministry,” in *The Sermon Delivered at the Inauguration of the Rev. Archibald Alexander*, 36–37, 39, 48; Miller, *The Importance of Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry* (Andover, MA, 1830), 21; Miller, “The Importance of a Thorough and Adequate Course of Preparatory Study for the Holy Ministry,” in *The Annual of the Board of Education of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, ed. John Breckinridge (Philadelphia, 1832), 75–76, 78.

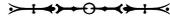
20. Alexander, *Life*, 378–79, 428.

advice on how to use books and what to use them for. Books, he said, were the divinely appointed means for transmitting both divine and human knowledge; they should function as tools for “information and edification.” The Bible, “the first and best of books,” “was not given to teach us everything,” Alexander said; “other knowledge is useful.” But Alexander stressed that other books were useful “just in proportion as they aid us in understanding the Bible.” While encouraging his students “not unnecessarily to increase the number of books,” Alexander said that the books most needed were those that “impressed” into readers the divine truth revealed in the Bible. “The relation of sound doctrine to pious feeling and moral character,” Alexander wrote elsewhere, “may be compared to that between the types used in printing, and the impression on the paper. If there be any defect or disorder in the types, it will appear on the corresponding page.” Alexander and his seminary colleagues expected that a sound theological education would produce biblical exegeses who, through both the spoken and written word, would enlighten and transform the world.²¹

By its tenth anniversary, Princeton Theological Seminary had three professors and a building that exhibited “an air of comfort and permanency.” Some two hundred and fifty-four students had attended the school, including fifteen college presidents, twenty-five professors, and nine tutors and teachers. By its semicentennial, over two thousand and four hundred students had studied at the seminary, including one hundred and twenty-seven foreign missionaries, ninety-four college professors, thirty-six college presidents, and twenty-eight theological seminary professors. The publication record of these graduates is substantial. In an address given in celebration of the latter anniversary, alumnus William B. Sprague, himself a prolific author, praised the literary production of the seminary and claimed, “If all the books, which have been written on this ground, were gathered, they would not only go far towards forming a library, but among them would be found some of the best productions, in their respective departments, that any language can furnish.” Because of Princeton, Andover, and other seminaries, Howe says, “[l]earned

21. Archibald Alexander, “The Use and Abuse of Books,” ed. Michael J. Paulus, Jr., *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 26, no. 3 (2005), 333–34, 338–40; Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews* (Princeton, NJ, 1833), v.

theological reflection flourished in the antebellum United States” and exerted an influence on the broader culture.” And much of this influence came through print.²²



During the first half of the nineteenth century, national Bible and tract societies and interdenominational, denominational, and trade publishers provided theological material. Religious publishers were among the earliest adopters of advances in papermaking, stereotyping, power presses, and centralized mass production, and the amount of printed material produced by them was so substantial that one “was hard pressed to escape” it. The theological literature they published took various forms, such as Bibles, tracts, periodicals, books, and pamphlets; it covered diverse subjects, including biblical studies, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology; and it was targeted at a diverse range of readers, from common readers to those interested in specialized theological discourse. Most of this publishing activity was subsidized and sustained through direct links with national benevolent organizations, and many of these publications were authored by individuals connected with the American system of theological education. Consequently, the theological literature produced by religious publishers and the reading practices they encouraged reflected the literary culture of theological seminaries—that is, with an emphasis on the Bible as the most important book, to which all other books should be related.²³

22. Alexander, *Life*, 417; William B. Sprague, *A Discourse Addressed to the Alumni of the Princeton Theological Seminary, April 30, 1862, on Occasion of the Completion of Its First Half Century* (Albany, NY, 1862), 42; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 447; George Norcross, “The Influence of Princeton Theological Seminary on the Growth and Character of the American Church,” in *Addresses before the Alumni Association of Princeton Theological Seminary, at Its Annual Meeting in Princeton, April 25th, 1876* (Philadelphia, 1876), 24; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 19; David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary* (2 vols.; Edinburgh, 1994–1996), 1: 404; Daniel S. Gregory, “The Influence of Princeton Theological Seminary on the Religious Literature of the World,” in *Addresses before the Alumni Association* (Philadelphia, 1876), 39–65.

23. Mary Kelley, “[Spreading the Word in Print] Introduction,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 176; David Paul Nord, “The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815–1835,” in *The Media and Religion in American*

At the center of this theological print culture was the Bible, and one of the largest, most significant, and most sophisticated publishers in the early republic was the American Bible Society (ABS). Established in 1816 by a prominent group of Protestants, including a number of individuals associated with Andover and other theological seminaries, the ABS followed many of the methods of the PBS. Alexander had served as a manager for the PBS and in 1818, through donations from his students he became a “member for life” of the ABS. By 1831, the ABS had printed more than one million Bibles for a nation with about three million households. With a mass printing facility that housed eight steam-powered presses and twenty hand presses and employed some two hundred persons, the ABS claimed it was “able to send out three hundred thousand volumes a year.” The average press run for a work of fiction at that time was perhaps a thousand volumes.²⁴

If the Bible was the center of theological education and theological print culture, tracts may be said to have been operative at the periphery of both. After consultation with ABS leaders, and following ABS organizational and technological methods, the American Tract Society (ATS) was organized in 1825 in New York, which was becoming a center for interrelated benevolent organizations. “Next to the Bible and the living Ministry,” read a statement from the society’s executive committee, one of the “means of light and salvation will be found to be, short, plain,

History, ed. William David Sloan (Northport, AL, 2000), 68–93; Paul C. Gutjahr, “Diversification in American Religious Publishing,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3: The Industrial Book, 1840–1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper et al. (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), 195; Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York, 2007), 306; Cayton, “Harriet Newell’s Story,” 410–11.

24. *Christian Herald* (New York), Apr. 4, 1818, 5; Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 63, 84; Cohen, “Religion, Print Culture, and the Bible,” 4–5; Henry Otis Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society* (New York, 1916), 10–30, 84; Sarah Wadsworth, *In the Company of Books: Literature and Its “Classes” in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst, MA, 2006), 6. According to Wadsworth, by mid century “sales of top-selling novels could exceed one hundred thousand volumes. . . . By the 1870s, fiction appeared to dominate the market.” The first president of the ABS, Elias Boudinot, made his publishing debut with *The Age of Revelation*, which Nord describes as “a Bible-based denunciation of Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason*.” Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 45–50.

striking, entertaining, and instructive Tracts, exhibiting in writing some of the great and glorious truths of the Gospel.” The ATS traced the success of tracts back to the Reformation and highlighted their importance in places “not accustomed to books.” If an ATS tract should find “its way where a Bible was never seen, nor the Gospel ever heard,” it should present “enough of Divine truth to guide the ignorant and the inquiring sinner into the path of eternal life.” Millions of ATS tracts were printed in New York City and distributed throughout the country’s cities and settlements.²⁵

As David Paul Nord has observed, Alexander was especially fond of tracts: “He viewed them as ‘pioneers’ in mission work, teaching divine truths along with religious reading skills to people who had never seen a preacher or a Bible.” Indeed, Alexander wrote that “a single tract of first-rate excellence” could be more effective (“a thousand times”) and enduring (for “hundreds of years”) than the preached word. His own first tract, *Future Punishment*, was the fourth tract published by the Nassau Hall Tract Society, an early tract society established by Princeton college students in 1817. This tract was reprinted by the ATS, for which Alexander wrote additional tracts. In addition to writing tracts for the society, Alexander began offering his counsel in the early 1830s, was elected a vice president of the ATS in 1841, and became a member of its Publishing Committee the next year. He suggested the publication of a series of tracts “in a very simple style, in large type, and in the form of a little book,” “to gain the attention of common readers,” and he wrote six imaginative dialogues for this series. In 1838, Alexander wrote,

I reflect on no part of my life with more satisfaction than any little agency I have had in encouraging and promoting the [ATS’s] volume circulation. I do consider the success of this enterprise as intimately connected with the prosperity of vital scriptural piety in our land; not in any one church, but in all evangelical churches,

25. *The Address of the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society to the Christian Public; Together with a Brief Account of the Formation of the Society, Its Constitution, and Officers* (New York, 1825), 3–9; Loughran, *The Republic in Print*, 331–32, 494n7; Paul S. Boyer, “From Tracts to Mass-Market Paperbacks: Spreading the Word via the Printed Page in America from the Early National Era to the Present,” in *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, 21.

and beyond them all by conveying a sound and practical knowledge of the gospel to multitudes who enjoy no public means of grace, or have not attended on them.²⁶

Reflecting and at some points connecting with regional fragmentation within the United States, for both theological and political reasons Protestant denominations began diverting energies away from interdenominational publishing societies and toward their own presses. After his denomination's regional governing body, the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia, established its own publication society, "to publish and circulate tracts and books inculcating the distinctive doctrines of [Presbyterian] Standards," Alexander provided it with a few tracts. In 1838, the General Assembly of the denomination established the Presbyterian Board of Publication (PBP); Alexander served as the board's president for the rest of his life and wrote four additional tracts for it. Alexander and others believed that tracts could function as surrogates for churches and seminary-trained ministers ("public means of grace"). But in order to do so, their theological quality had to meet high standards.²⁷

26. Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 125; Alexander, "[Review] *The Attraction of the Cross*," 161; *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Tract Society*, 15–16; Alexander, *Future Punishment* (Princeton, NJ, 1824?). Additional tracts Alexander wrote for the ATS include *Day of Judgment*, ATS tract no. 32, n.d., *Misery of the Lost*, no. 51, n.d., *An Amiable Youth Falling Short of Heaven*, no. 65, n.d., *The Importance of Salvation*, no. 215, n.d., *Justification by Faith*, no. 393, n.d., and *Sinners Welcome to Jesus Christ*, no. 462, n.d. See *Sketch of the Origin and Character of the Principle Series of Tracts of the American Tract Society* (New York, 1849). The titles of Alexander's longer tracts are *The Poor Man's Guide and Friend*, n.d.; *The New Settlement: A Dialogue*, n.d.; *The Colporteur and Cottager: A Dialogue*, n.d.; *The Colporteur and Farmer: A Dialogue*, n.d.; *The Colporteur and Aged Man: A Dialogue*, n.d.; and *The Colporteur and Roman Catholic: In Dialogue*, n.d. See Alexander, *Practical Truths: Consisting of His Various Writings for the American Tract Society and Correspondence from the Society's Formation in 1825 to His Death in 1851* (New York, 1857), 3–6.

27. Willard M. Rice, *History of the Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work* (Philadelphia, 1888), 9; Paul C. Gutjahr, "Diversification in American Religious Publishing," in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3*, 309–10. Alexander's tracts for his synod's society include *The Duty of Catechetical Instruction* (tract no. 4) (Philadelphia, 1835), reissued by the Presbyterian Board of Publication (hereafter PBP) in 1840; *A Treatise on Justification by Faith* (no. 12) (Philadelphia, 1837); *Christ's Gracious Invitation to the Labouring and Heavy Laden* (no. 17) (Philadelphia, 1838), later reissued by the PBP "in a new and convenient [i.e., smaller] form." Alexander's tracts for the PBP include *A Dialogue*

Tracts, the ATS reported, were not the appropriate means for disseminating “Learned criticism, discussions in polemic theology, [or] even articles of religious intelligence.” Such topics, when they connected with current interests or issues, were taken up in religious periodicals—and the ATS wanted to make it clear that it was not in competition with these. Religious periodicals, which may have accounted for some 39 percent of the periodicals published between 1820 and 1852 and drew the largest periodical readership before the appearance of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1837) and *Graham’s Magazine* (1840), ranged from popular newspapers or magazines, such as Alexander’s *Virginia Religious Magazine*, to sophisticated theological quarterlies published by theological seminaries. In periodical publications theological discourse moved out of the theological seminaries and sought connection with a broader public audience.²⁸

Alexander published letters, sermons, and articles in a variety of periodicals. His sermons appeared in denominational periodicals, such as *The Presbyterian Preacher*, and in the nondenominational *The National Preacher*, which was one of the most broadly distributed periodicals in the world. When he became aware of the large circulation of ATS’s *American Messenger*, begun in 1843, Alexander “availed himself of the opportunity offered to speak to multitudes for Christ” and wrote some forty articles for it. He also published theological essays for more specialized audiences, the first and “most vigorous” of which were a serial response to an address of Andover Theological Seminary Professor James Murdock published by his students. But Alexander’s most substantial contributions to periodical literature involved one of the earliest and most enduring theological quarterlies, the *Princeton Review*, which offered theological reviews and analyses of the literary productions and intellectual currents of the day. Established in 1825 and led and edited

Between a Presbyterian and a “Friend,” PBP tract no. 31, n.d., *Immediate Choice*, no. 38, n.d., *Refuge of Lies*, no. 40, n.d., *Ruth the Moabitess, Or, The Nature of True Religion*, no. 91, n.d., and *Love to an Unseen Saviour*, no. 92, n.d. See *Descriptive Catalogue of the Publications of the Presbyterian Board of Publication* (Philadelphia, 1888).

28. *Proceedings of the First Ten Years of the American Tract Society: Instituted at Boston, 1814* (Andover, MA, 1824), 9; Candy Gunther Brown, “Religious Periodicals and Their Textual Communities,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3*, 271; Mary Kelley, “[Genres of Print] Introduction,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2*, 388.

by his protégé Charles Hodge, this broadly distributed and influential journal was supported by Alexander, who was a regular contributor to it. When later editors created an index of the *Review*, in which many of the earlier articles had not been signed, they listed seventy-seven that had been attributed to Alexander (one of which they disputed) over a period of twenty years.²⁹

If periodicals emphasized currency, ephemerality, and connections between readers and the external world—and theological periodicals, in particular, connections between theological education and the public—books emphasized timelessness, permanence, and “the cultivation of the reader’s interiority.” Alexander advised the managers of the ATS that even they should move beyond tracts, which were “milk for babes,” and publish books, particularly those “adapted to every stage and period of Christian life.” A Christian should grow up theologically with books. Alexander provided the ATS with recommendations about which books

29. *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Tract Society*, 15; Alexander, *Life*, 430; Alexander, *Practical Truths*, 3; Brown, *Word in the World*, 155. In 1844, the circulation figure for the *ATS Messenger* was 30,000; in 1848, it was 100,000. See Brown, *Word in the World*, 157. Alexander’s published sermons include “Sermons L. & LI.: The Nature and Means of Growth in Grace,” *The National Preacher* 3, no. 8 (1829), 113–23; “Sermon LXVIII: Preached at Albany, N.Y., October 7, 1829, before the American Board of Foreign Missions: Objections Obviated and God Glorified by the Success of the Gospel among the Heathen,” *The National Preacher* 4, no. 5 (1829), 253–68. Alexander’s first and “most vigorous” essays were “Nature of Atonement,” *Christian Advocate* (Feb. 1824), 76–84; *ibid.*, (Mar. 1824), 119–29; *ibid.*, (Apr. 1824), 163–71. The forum for the dissemination of the views of Princetonians and their network of friends was published under and associated with various titles: *Biblical Repertory* (1825–29); *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* (1829–36); *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (1837–71); *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* (1872–77); *The Princeton Review* (1878–84); *The Presbyterian Review* (1880–89); *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* (1890–1902); and *The Princeton Theological Review* (1903–29). Alexander’s contributions are discussed in Peter Waller, *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review Index Volume: From 1825 to 1868* (Philadelphia, 1871), 66–67; and in Alexander, *Life*, 472–73, 495–97, 571–72. A number of his contributions were reprinted in *The Princeton Review: Theological Essays Reprinted from the Princeton Review* (New York, 1846) and *Essays Theological and Miscellaneous Reprinted from the Princeton Review: Second Series, Including the Contributions of the late Rev. Albert B. Dod* (New York, 1847). For more on the *Princeton Review*, see Mark A. Noll, “The Princeton Review,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 50 (1988), 283–304.

to publish, including steady sellers, such as Jonathan Edwards's *Religious Affections*, and new books, such as one that Alexander had previously edited and published, *Advice to a Young Christian*.³⁰

The books that Alexander authored were in large part a by-product of his work at Princeton, and they reflect nearly the whole range of biblical, theological, historical, and practical topics with which he was concerned as a theological educator. But these books all referred back to and were offered in service to *the Book*, the Bible, a relationship that was graphically represented by the emblem of the PBP (see Figure 2). When they were prepared for publication, Alexander's books were written for and made available to a rather broad audience; they represent an attempt to make theology broadly accessible and relevant. His first book, published in 1825, was an apologetic work. After a group of undergraduate skeptics at Princeton had caused some excitement on campus, Alexander delivered in the college chapel a sermon, "much longer than was his wont," on the evidences of Christianity. According to his son, the discourse had "a happy effect, and awakened so much attention that it was requested for the press," and Alexander developed it into a two-hundred-and-ninety-nine-page book: *A Brief Outline of the Evidences of the Christian Religion*. A second edition was issued that same year; a third in 1826; and a fourth in 1828. This book was revised and reissued a number of times, including editions for the American Sunday School Union (ASSU), religious trade publishers, and an Edinburgh reprint.³¹

Alexander's next book, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments*,

30. John Nerone, "Newspapers and the Public Sphere," in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3*, 230–31; Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 125. *Advice* is a book of letters from a pastor to "a young lady of highly respectable connexions, upon the occasion of her making a public profession of religion." Jared Bell Waterbury, *Advice to a Young Christian on the Importance of Aiming at an Elevated Standard of Piety; With an Introductory Essay by the Rev. Dr. Alexander* (New York, 1829), 28; *Advice to a Young Christian on the Importance of Aiming at an Elevated Standard of Piety; With an Introductory Essay by the Rev. Dr. A. Alexander* (New York, 1843). *Advice* was reprinted a number of times by a number of presses, including the London Religious Tract Society (1838) and the Philadelphia Baptist Publication Society (1851).

31. Alexander, *Life*, 378–79, 429; Archibald Alexander, *A Brief Outline of the Evidences of the Christian Religion* (Princeton, NJ, 1825, 1828, 1829); Alexander, *The Evidences of the Christian Religion* (New York, 1832); Alexander, *A Brief Outline of the Evidences of the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh, 1830).

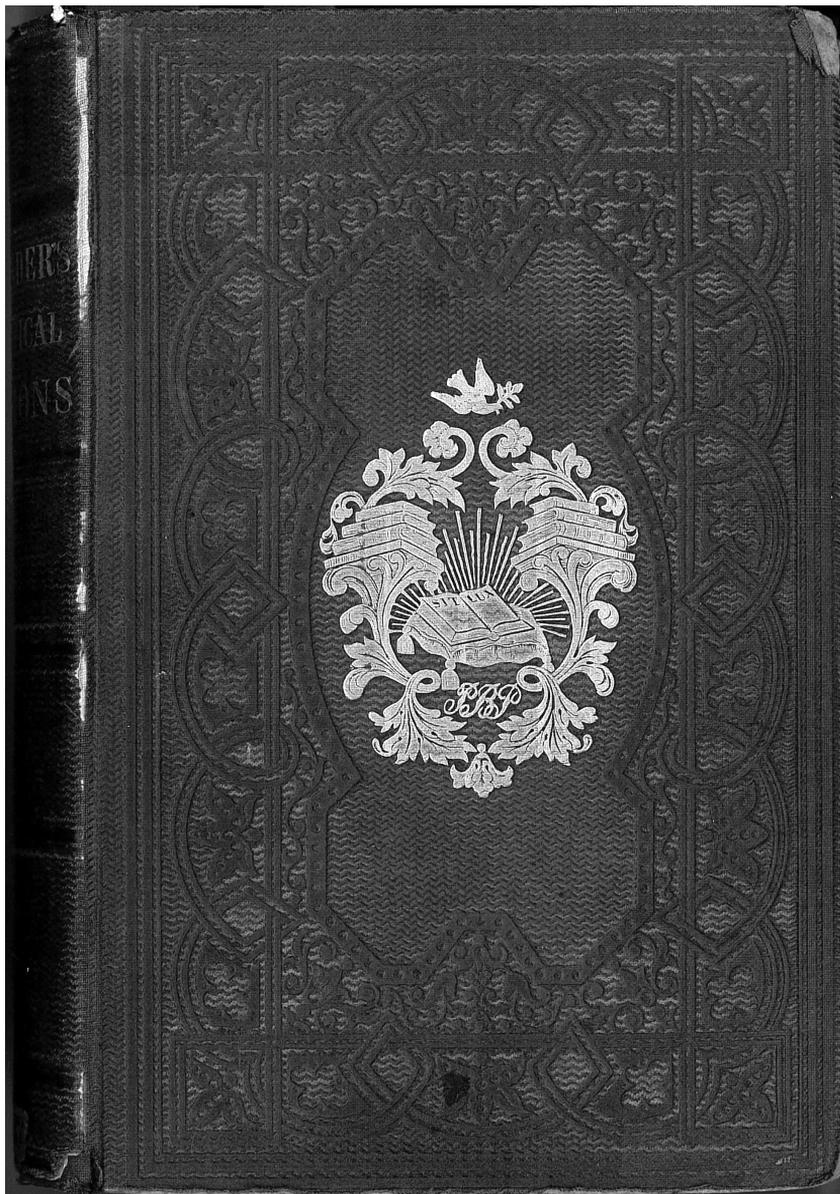


Figure 2: Cover of Archibald Alexander's *Practical Sermons*, published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication in 1850, featuring an emblem of the board. From the author's collection.

was published in 1826 as a supplement to *Evidences*. Based on his lectures on the formation of the biblical canon, the book was presented in a form that Alexander hoped would be accessible “to the capacities of all descriptions of readers.” According to his son, Alexander wrote this book because there was no “accessible treatise” on the subject. This book was also revised and reissued a number of times and appeared in London and Edinburgh. In 1836, it was combined with Alexander’s first book to form *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures*. This larger book was reissued a number of times and reportedly became a textbook in many institutions of higher education in both America and England throughout the nineteenth century.³²

The interdenominational ASSU, for which Alexander expanded his first book, was organized in Philadelphia in 1824 to establish Sunday schools with free libraries. To supply these libraries, the ASSU became one of the largest publishers and distributors of books in the country—especially of books in the “most attractive garb of blended instruction and amusement” since, the managers of the union noted, “there is no such thing as a *natural taste* for religious reading.” Alexander, who sup-

32. Alexander, *Life*, 430; Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained, or, The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (Princeton, NJ, 1826), iii; Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures Ascertained, or, The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Tradition* (London, 1831); Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained, or, The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (Trenton, NJ, 1833); Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained, or, The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (Philadelphia, 1851); Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained, or, The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (Edinburgh, 1855). The combined work was published during Alexander’s life as *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1836); *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1838); and *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1844). See Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*, 227; Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature: Embracing Personal and Critical Notices of Authors, and Selections from Their Writings, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1856), 614; Clarence Edward McCartney, “Archibald Alexander: Part IV,” *The Presbyterian* (Philadelphia), Jan. 28, 1943, 5.

ported and defended the mission and methods of these primary theological schools, created a thick “pocket” dictionary of the Bible and wrote a book on biblical history for the ASSU. The latter book was part of a larger series “to aid the Biblical studies of young persons, and common readers”; Alexander’s two subsequent volumes were published by trade publishers.³³

Alexander wrote the first book published by the PBP in 1839, *The Way of Salvation Familiarly Explained*. The PBP printed three thousand copies of this small, forty-nine-page work and sold copies for \$.15. Alexander’s second book for the PBP, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, which had first been published serially in the *Watchman of the South*, appeared in 1841. Expanded editions were published in 1844 and again in 1852, and the book was kept in print and read widely throughout the nineteenth century. The PBP published a number of other theological books by Alexander, including an expanded sermon called *Divine Guidance*; a “brief system of theology . . . not intended for the learned, but for plain, common readers” (“which, though it treated on the most vital subjects of theology, might be read from beginning to end in two or three hours”); a book called *Practical Sermons*, prepared “especially for the benefit of families who were deprived of the opportunity of attending on the preaching of the gospel”; and the last book that Alexander completed before his death, *Universalism False and Unscriptural*. In an obituary that appeared in its annual report of 1852, the PBP reported that it had published 16,020,500 pages of Alexander’s writings.³⁴

33. *Address of Managers of the American Sunday School Union*, quoted in Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 81–82; Alexander, *Suggestions in Vindication of Sunday-Schools: But More Especially for the Improvement of Sunday-School Books and the Enlargement of the Plan of Instruction* (Philadelphia, 1829), revised and expanded as *Suggestions in Vindication of Sunday-Schools: But More Especially for the Improvement of Sunday-School Books and the Enlargement of the Plan of Instruction* (Philadelphia, 1845); Alexander, *A Pocket Dictionary of the Holy Bible: Containing a Historical and Geographical Account of the Persons and Places Mentioned in the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia, 1829); Alexander, *History of the Patriarchs* (Philadelphia, 1833); Alexander, *Annals of the Jewish Nation During the Period of the Second Temple* (New York, 1832), v; Alexander, *History of the Israelites: From the Death of Joseph to the Death of Moses* (Philadelphia, 1834), 7.

34. Alexander, *The Way of Salvation Familiarly Explained: In a Conversation Between a Father and His Children* (Philadelphia, 1839); Anna Jane Moyer, “The Making of Many Books,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 41, no. 3 (1963), 125; Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Philadelphia, 1841), “Advertise-

In addition to theological books, Alexander also wrote books that documented the recent history of the church, thereby connecting the present with the past. He compiled two books of sources about a Pennsylvania preparatory school for ministers that was connected with the history of Presbyterianism in the region and the establishment of the college at Princeton. He also published *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa*, a history in which he had a part as an early member of the American Colonization Society, which, as part of the network of reform movements, was organized in 1816 to resettle free black Americans in West Africa.³⁵

When he died, Alexander left behind a number of manuscripts in various stages of progress. Titles of unfinished books included “Composition and Delivery of Sermons,” “Duties and Consolations of the Christian,” “Patristical Theology,” “Memoir of the Rev. William Graham,” “History of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia,” and “Church Polity

ment”; Alexander, *Life*, 497, 553; Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Philadelphia, 1844); Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience: To Which Is Added an Appendix containing “Letters to the Aged,” Etc., Etc.* (Philadelphia, n.d.); Alexander, *Divine Guidance, or, The People of God Led in Unknown Ways* (Philadelphia, 1846); Alexander, *A Brief Compend of Bible Truth* (Philadelphia, 1846), iii–iv; Alexander, *Practical Sermons: To Be Read in Families and Social Meetings* (Philadelphia, 1850); *Universalism False and Unscriptural: An Essay on the Duration and Intensity of Future Punishment* (Philadelphia, 1851); Alexander, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Publication of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1852), 36. *A Brief Compend* was published initially in a smaller, unsigned edition that accompanied prayers and hymns in a volume meant to be used for the instruction of the blind. It was also republished as part of *A Manual of Devotions for Soldiers and Sailors* (Philadelphia, 1847). Parts of Alexander’s *Thoughts* were published by the PBP as small 18mo books and tracts: *Counsels of the Aged to the Young* (Philadelphia, 1852) and *Letters to the Aged* (Philadelphia, 1852 [book no. 330 and tract no. 112]).

35. Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College; Together With an Account of the Revivals of Religion under Their Ministry* (Princeton, NJ, 1845); Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College; Together With an Account of the Revivals of Religion under Their Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1851); Alexander, ed., *Sermons and Essays of the Tennents and Their Contemporaries* (Philadelphia, 1855); Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (Philadelphia, 1846); Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (Philadelphia, 1849), [1]; Alexander, *Life*, 450; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 265–66.

and Discipline.” Two of his completed manuscripts were published posthumously: *A History of the Israelitish Nation: From Their Origin to Their Dispersion at the Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans* and *Outlines of Moral Science*, which, based on Alexander’s lectures on moral philosophy, was kept in print throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. These works, like the ones that preceded them, span all the major fields of theological inquiry taught in American seminaries, including biblical studies, theology, church history, and practical theology.³⁶

In addition to writing books on diverse topics for a broad audience, Alexander also edited and provided paratextual support for books: He edited three hymnals, abridged three biographies, and wrote introductory matter for a broad range of theological works, spanning the theological curriculum, which he thought were worthy of broad dissemination. And then there were Alexander’s pamphlets—cheap, unbound booklets that were issued quickly to disseminate ideas, commemorate occasions, or engage controversies—which were a constant in his publishing life. Alexander’s published sermons and addresses included his 1808 General Assembly address, a sermon preached after a disastrous fire, his inaugural address, a missionary sermon, a sermon preached in the chapel at the college in Princeton, addresses delivered at annual meetings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), a sermon preached before seminary alumni, a memorial sermon, an address before the alumni association of his alma mater, and an address delivered at a church dedication. Other pamphlets of Alexander’s included a defense of Sunday schools, a missionary paper for the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, a paper on scholarships for the Presbyterian Board of Education, and a rebuttal of a historical account.³⁷

36. Alexander, *Life*, 573–75, 604; Alexander, *A History of the Israelitish Nation: From Their Origin to Their Dispersion at the Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans* (Philadelphia, 1853); *Outlines of Moral Science* (New York, 1852).

37. Alexander’s editorial works included *Psalms Adapted to the Public Worship of the Christian Church* (Princeton, NJ, 1828); *Hymns Adapted to the Public Worship of the Christian Church* (Princeton, NJ, 1829); *A Selection of Hymns Adapted to the Devotions of the Closet, the Family, and the Social Circle; And Containing Subjects Appropriate to the Monthly Concerts of Prayer for the Success of Missions and Sunday Schools and Other Special Occasions* (New York, 1831). Alexander’s abridgements include *Life of John Knox, the Scottish Reformer: Abridged from McCrie’s Life of Knox* (Philadelphia, 1839); *The Life of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Abridged from Orme’s Life of Baxter* (Philadelphia, 1840); *The Life of Andrew Melville, the Scottish Reformer: Abridged for the Board from McCrie’s Life of Melville* (Philadelphia, 1840).

But theological print culture consisted of more than a massive amount of biblical and biblically oriented printed material—readers had to be both trained and reached. “Bibles and tracts cannot be useful,” Alexander noted, “to those who cannot read.” One of the most innovative and

Alexander’s paratextual contributions appear in Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments: Wherein Each Chapter is Summed up in Its Contents* (6 vols.; Philadelphia, 1828); Isaac Watts, *A Rational Defense of the Gospel* (New York, 1831); Halyburton, *Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton*; E. P. Swift, *A Memoir of the Rev. Joseph W. Barr, Late Missionary* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1833); Shepard K. Kollock, *Pastoral Reminiscences* (New-York, 1849); William Buell Sprague, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Albany, NY, 1832), Appendix. Alexander’s pamphlets include *A Sermon Delivered at the Opening of the General Assembly* (Philadelphia, 1814); *A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of Nassau Hall, August 13, 1826* (Princeton, NJ, 1826), also printed in the *New-York Observer* and the *Western Luminary* that same year; *Missionary Paper No. 10* (Boston, 1831); *Objections Obviated, and God Glorified, by the Success of the Gospel among the Heathen: A Sermon Preached at Albany, N.Y., Oct. 7, 1829* (Boston, 1830), printed previously in *The National Preacher* (see note 29 above); *The Pastoral Office: A Sermon Preached at Philadelphia before the Association of the Alumni of the Theological Seminary at Princeton on Wednesday Morning, May 21, 1834* (Philadelphia, 1834); *A Memorial of Mrs. Margaret Breckinridge* (Philadelphia, 1839); *Address Delivered before the Alumni Association of Washington College, Virginia, on Commencement Day, June 29th, 1843* (Lexington, VA, 1843); James McDowell and Archibald Alexander, *A Lecture and an Address* (Philadelphia, 1851); Alexander, *Suggestions in Vindication of Sunday-Schools* (1829; repr. 1845); *The Duty of Christians in Relation to the Conversion of the World* (New York, 1845); *Thoughts on the Education of Pious and Indigent Candidates for the Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1846); *Remarks on a Paragraph in the Rev. Doctor Davidson’s History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky: In Reference to the Character of the Late Mr. John Lyle, Ruling Elder in the Timber-ridge Church, Virginia* (Princeton, NJ, 1848). Another address of Alexander’s, “An Address to Candidates for the Ministry: On the Importance of Aiming at Eminent Piety in Making Their Preparation for the Sacred Office,” was published in *The Annual of the Board of Education of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, ed. John Breckinridge (Philadelphia, 1832), 173–94. The ABCFM, the first major missionary enterprise in the U.S., was established in 1810 by Congregationalists associated with Williams College and Andover Theological Seminary. Alexander became a member of the ABCFM in 1826. See *The Religious Intelligencer* (New Haven, CT), Oct. 14, 1826, 11; Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1861), 191; Mark Y. Hanley, “Revolution at Home and Abroad: Radical Implications of the Protestant Call to Missions, 1825–1870,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2003), 44–47.

important movements for general literacy in the early American republic was the Sunday school movement. Sunday schools first appeared in the United States in Philadelphia in the 1790s, to teach reading and writing skills to indigent children. After public primary education became more accessible, they evolved into schools for teaching children from various economic backgrounds how to read and interpret the Bible. When the ASSU organized in Philadelphia in 1824, seven hundred and twenty-three established schools affiliated with it. Alexander, who worked with Sunday schools in Philadelphia, thought this method of instruction “deserved to be ranked second to no discovery” of his age. He claimed that the diffusion of knowledge was “one of the strongest barriers against infamous vice” and promoted “true religion.” In Sunday schools, he wrote, the ignorant were taught to read and through elementary education were prepared “to profit by the public teaching of the church.” In addition, Alexander claimed that ASSU libraries, with their “small books, written in a lively style, and rendered interesting by pleasant narratives,” found their way into students’ homes where they were “read with avidity by persons of all ages.”³⁸

Physical access as well as intellectual access was an issue for publishers. The PBP, like other religious publishers, existed both to create and disseminate theological literature. “Notwithstanding the very large number of books with which the press is constantly teeming,” the board reported, “comparatively a very small proportion of them teach anything like evangelical religion.” But publication had to be coupled with distribution: A large portion of the country’s population, the board wrote, “perhaps by far the largest . . . lies beyond the reach of bookstores and the regular channels upon which the trade depend for their circulation.” So the PBP had its books carried “from house to house, to the farms, the cabins, the secluded neighbourhoods and new settlements . . . by the instrumentality of numerous colporteurs.” Once printed and distributed, the PBP hoped to counteract the influence of “the licentious literature unhappily so prevalent” by “trusting in Almighty grace to give efficacy to what the Spirit” revealed through the board’s publications. The year

38. Alexander, *Suggestions in Vindication of Sunday-Schools* (1829), 3–5, 18; Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790–1880* (New Haven, CT, 1988), 7–14; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 449–50.

after Alexander's death, the PBP reported that it had published 818,250 books and tracts.³⁹

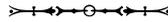
With new printing technologies and processes, theological publishers could make more printed material accessible and even attractive. In a preface to the first American edition of the popular Matthew Henry biblical commentary, Alexander boasted that this title, which previously had been scarce and expensive in the United States, was now available in a "cheap, handsome American edition . . . in a very clear type, but also in a portable and convenient form"—i.e., not in folio volumes, which Alexander admitted "to every one their use is inconvenient." Alexander also noted in his preface that good books such as this one, which have a "borrowed" luster or shine a "reflected light" from the Bible, would be read around the world. American theological print culture, connected with the ABCFM and denominational mission boards, operated with a global perspective: To make theological literature available at home and abroad, Bibles, tracts, and other books were translated into various languages. Alexander's own works were translated into German, Spanish, Arabic, and Benga.⁴⁰

Tracts, periodicals, books, and pamphlets could not replace the Bible, but theological authors and publishers, influenced by the structure of knowledge prevalent in early theological seminaries, believed that if their publications could be accessed by the reading public this extra-biblical literature would function to lead readers to it, help readers understand it, and help readers connect its contents with their understanding of the world and their lived experiences in it. The Bible was the principal guide to life, but other books, Alexander wrote, could inform and promote the "edification of a reader."⁴¹

39. *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Publication of the Presbyterian Church*, 8–12, 16.

40. Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, x–xii; *Descriptive Catalogue of the Publications of the Presbyterian Board of Publication*; Archibald Alexander, *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Beirut, Lebanon, 1851); Alexander, *Gedankenüber Religiös e Erfahrung* (Philadelphia, 1853); Alexander, *A Brief Compend of Bible Truth: Translated into the Benga Language*, trans. C. DeHeer (New York, n.d.).

41. In this quote, Alexander was specifically referring to "the memoirs of men of distinguished judgment and eminent piety." Halyburton, *Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton*, v, viii. See Brown, *The Word in the World*, 88–95.



Alexander was an important agent within the early nineteenth-century network of evangelical voluntary organizations, but he was most active as a theological educator and author. By examining his role developing and delivering the theological curriculum at Princeton and his substantial literary output, the influence of the former sphere on the latter becomes evident—not just for Alexander, but for his peers, his students, and others. Alexander thought that “at an early period in the history of the world . . . the making of books originated in divine appointment and was performed by divine assistance.” For both theological education and print culture, the Bible was the first and best book; but other books were needed to understand it and to transmit knowledge that was not contained in it. Alexander said, “The reasoning of Omar the successor of Mohammed respecting the celebrated library of Alexandria was not sound, who, being consulted respecting the disposal of the books, directed them to be burned, saying, If they contain anything different from the Koran they are false and pernicious—if the same, they are useless.” But while Alexander valued the common grace found in other books, which contained such useful knowledge as that of “agriculture, of architecture, of the arts, by which clothing is prepared, of geometry, geography, navigation, et cetera,” he valued most those books that led to *the* Book and became means of saving grace. The same Holy Spirit “who inspired the prophets and apostles to write the Scriptures,” Alexander wrote, “still bestows grace and spiritual endowments on his chosen servants, by which they are qualified, to preach and write, in such a manner, as to promote the edification of his church.”⁴²

Howe argues that, “In the long run,” it was institutional structures that advanced religious gains in the early republic: “seminaries, schools, colleges, missions, benevolent associations, and, of course, churches themselves.” With a Bibliocentric understanding of the relationship between and the uses of the Book and other books, evangelical Christians

42. Alexander, “The Use and Abuse of Books,” 333–34; Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, xi. Rather than suffering a single catastrophe at the hands of Romans, Christians, or Muslims, the great library at Alexandria suffered a series of misfortunes over the centuries until it was thoroughly destroyed or disbursed. Matthew Battles, *Library: An Unquiet History* (New York, 2003), 22–32.

in the early American republic established theological schools that advanced a Bibliocentric structure of knowledge. These schools provided the first opportunity for “anything resembling graduate education” in the United States. Their faculties, graduates, publications, and affiliated institutions supplied and formatively shaped a Bibliocentric print culture that aimed to be comprehensive in scope, offering a range of reading material from simple tracts to sophisticated treatises, as well as comprehensive and effective in reach. And by the mid nineteenth century, this Bibliocentric print culture had helped make religious publishing “one of the largest and most influential components in the nineteenth-century American marketplace for print.”⁴³

43. Daniel Walker Howe, “Protestantism, Voluntarism, and Personal Identity in Antebellum America,” in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York, 1997), 212; Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 79; Paul C. Gutjahr, “Diversification in American Religious Publishing,” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3*, 194.

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