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Re-Imagining 'the Witherspoon Tradition'

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Abstract

This essay explores Samuel Miller's understanding of the epistemological capacity of the mind regenerated by God's Spirit and sanctified by God's Word. In response to those who would argue that Miller—as a theologian standing in the mainstream of 'the Witherspoon tradition', a founder of Princeton Seminary, and an architect of the Princeton theology—accommodated an epistemological paradigm that was compromised by the naïve realism of the Scottish Enlightenment, this essay establishes that despite what the historiographical consensus contends, he was in fact a consistently Reformed scholar who recognised that the work of God's Spirit is essential to right knowledge not just of God's Word, but of his world as well. In so doing this essay offers a fresh perspective not just on Miller's understanding of the relationship between piety and learning, but also on the understanding of higher education that animated the founding of Princeton Seminary in 1812 and that was paradigmatic for those standing in 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' throughout the long nineteenth century.

Keywords: *Samuel Miller*; *life of the mind*; *piety and learning*; *work of the Spirit*

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I. Introduction: After the Demise of 'the Witherspoon Problem'[1]

In the religious historiography of the early decades of the American Republic, John Witherspoon's contribution to the intellectual life of the emerging nation is typically viewed through the prism of what Ned Landsman has called 'the Witherspoon problem'.[2] According to 'the Witherspoon problem', when Witherspoon was a Presbyterian minister in Scotland, prior to his emigration to America in 1768 to become the president of the College of New Jersey, he was opposed to the moral philosophies that were then in vogue among the moderate literati of the Scottish Enlightenment. Orthodox believers needed to reject the philosophies of thinkers like Francis Hutcheson, he maintained, not just because the moral, religious, and epistemological entailments of those philosophies were antithetical to an orthodox reading of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but also because they could not provide an adequate foundation for either personal virtue or public morality, despite what the moderate literati would have their followers believe.[3] While Witherspoon's opposition to the philosophies of the Scottish Moderates remained constant throughout his ministry in Scotland, his assessment of those philosophies changed dramatically when he arrived on the American side of the Atlantic and became an educator who was simultaneously involved in the political struggles of the Revolutionary Era, or at least that is what those who have embraced 'the Witherspoon problem' contend.[4] Rather than continuing to oppose the philosophies of the Scottish Moderates Witherspoon instead accommodated them, these scholars argue, in part so that he could inculcate an understanding of public virtue that he had come to believe was essential to the civic needs of the emerging Republic. For those who endorse this understanding of Witherspoon's relationship to the Scottish Enlightenment, then, his contribution to the intellectual life of the developing nation is not associated with

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1 Note that the substance of this essay is adapted from the author's contributions to Kevin DeYoung, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and David P. Smith (eds.), *New Perspectives on Old Princeton, 1812–1929*, in Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (eds.), Routledge Studies in Evangelicalism (New York, 2025). While this essay adapts material from the author's contribution to the introduction to this volume, the bulk of this essay is adapted from Paul Kjoss Helseth, 'Samuel Miller on the Life of the Mind: Re-imagining the Princeton Paradigm', in *New Perspectives on Old Princeton, 1812-1929*, 17–32. Adapted material is used with permission.

2 See Ned C. Landsman, 'Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity in Scottish Evangelical Culture' in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten (eds), *Scotland and America in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1990), 29–45.

3 For example, see John Witherspoon, *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, in *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon*, second edition (8 vols, Philadelphia, 1802), III, 199–263; idem, *A Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics by the Real Author of that Performance*, in *Works*, III, 265–310.

4 For example, see Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York, 1971); and Jack Scott (ed.), *An Annotated Edition of Lectures on Moral Philosophy by John Witherspoon* (Newark, 1982).

an enduring commitment to the moral, religious and epistemological orthodoxy that was essential both to his calling as a minister in the Scottish Kirk and to the religious culture of Princeton College prior to the commencement of his tenure as president. Rather, it is associated with what Mark Noll at one time insisted was a 'reorientation of intellectual activity around the principles of the Scottish Enlightenment, a shift that [at the college] necessitated the displacement of intellectual patterns associated with Jonathan Edwards and New Side Presbyterian revivalism'.[5]

But how should we conceive of Witherspoon's contribution to the intellectual life of the burgeoning Republic if he did not in fact abandon, but sustained his orthodox convictions when he assumed the presidency of the college and immersed himself in the political events of his day? In recent years, the 'received assumptions' about the 'centrality' of the Scottish Enlightenment to Witherspoon's work 'on the western side of the Atlantic' have been called into question by a growing body of revisionist analysis that is challenging the accepted wisdom regarding the resiliency of his moral, religious and epistemological commitments.[6] A growing cohort of scholars is now contending—I believe correctly—that after his arrival in the American Commonwealth, Witherspoon did not in fact accommodate the convictions of the moderate literati of the Scottish Enlightenment. Instead, the members of this cohort maintain, he remained an orthodox believer whose civic and educational endeavors were grounded in a steadfast commitment to the same convictions that animated his efforts as a minister in Scotland, and for this reason interpreters 'should be wary of any claim that Witherspoon substantially moderated his views while at Princeton'.[7]

For the purposes of this essay, the most compelling contribution to this growing body of revisionist analysis is *John Witherspoon's American Revolution*, Gideon Mailer's paradigm-shifting rejoinder to 'the scholarly narrative of Witherspoon's volte-face in moral theology'.[8] Through the painstaking analysis of the primary and secondary literature, Mailer demonstrates that Witherspoon was not simply a 'conduit' in the developing nation for the moral, religious and epistemological optimism of the Scottish Moderates, but a convinced Presbyterian whose emphasis upon virtue and the importance of 'learning, erudition, and literary studies *did not require* him to abandon the most salient evangelical principles, most notably the need

5 Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton, 1989), 36. Note that the way 'the Witherspoon problem' is summarised in the paragraph above reflects only one dimension of the problem as Landsman described it in his important essay. See Landsman, 'Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial identity', 29.

6 Gideon Mailer, *John Witherspoon's American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2017), 29.

7 Peter J. Diamond, 'Witherspoon, William Smith and the Scottish Philosophy in Revolutionary America', in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten (eds.), *Scotland and America in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1990), 115–32. See also Kevin DeYoung, *The Religious Formation of John Witherspoon: Calvinism, Evangelicalism, and the Scottish Enlightenment*, in Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (eds.), Routledge Studies in Evangelicalism (New York, 2020).

8 Mailer, *John Witherspoon's American Revolution*, 9.

for external divine assistance and regeneration before achieving a working moral compass'.[9] In particular, Mailer establishes that, far from abandoning the orthodoxy that was essential both to his calling as a minister in the Scottish Kirk and to the religious culture of Princeton College prior to the commencement of his tenure as president, Witherspoon continued the 'synthesis of evangelical moral theory and formal instruction' that was advanced by his predecessors at the college, including, not least, Jonathan Edwards.[10]

If this emerging historiography has merit and 'the Witherspoon problem' in fact is more imagined than real, as a number of interpreters are coming to acknowledge,[11] then what bearing might this scholarship have not just on the analysis of Witherspoon's contribution to the intellectual life of the emerging nation, but also on the examination of his relationship to the development of the Reformed tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the context of North American evangelicalism? More specifically, if this emerging historiography is as compelling as it appears and interpreters may therefore conclude that the central assertion of 'the Witherspoon problem' is being eclipsed by revisionist assessments of Witherspoon's contribution to the intellectual life of the early American Republic, then what impact might this scholarship have on our understanding of his relationship to the theologians who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary from the time of its founding in 1812 to its reorganization in 1929, a relationship that continues to be contested in the religious historiography of the American evangelical experience in the long nineteenth century, or that period which corresponds roughly to the lifespan of what is now known as 'the Princeton Theology'?

Paradigm-shifting answers to these questions become apparent when the central thrust of this emerging historiography is compared to the thesis of Sydney Ahlstrom's celebrated analysis of the impact that the Scottish Enlightenment had on American theology from the middle of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. In a 'ground-breaking'[12] article that set forth what has come to be known as 'the Ahlstrom thesis', Ahlstrom argued that Witherspoon was 'the first real ambassador' of the 'Scottish Philosophy' in the developing Republic even though his 'Evangelical bias blinded him to the real genius' of the Scottish intellectual tradition.[13] According to Ahlstrom, Witherspoon appropriated the most mature

9 Ibid., 7, 34. Emphasis added.

10 Ibid., 146.

11 For example, in his endorsement on the back cover of Mailer's *John Witherspoon's American Revolution*, Mark Noll writes: 'With careful probing of Witherspoon's Scottish career and painstaking examination of his central role in the colonial break from Britain, Mailer corrects what other historians, including myself, have written about this influential minister, educator, and public servant. A special contribution is Mailer's demonstration that Witherspoon, although with some ambiguity, sustained foundational evangelical convictions in his career on both sides of the Atlantic'.

12 James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids, 2012), 201.

13 Sydney Ahlstrom, 'The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology', *Church History*, 24 (1955), 261.

articulations of the Scottish Philosophy in order 'to defend orthodox theology' against the rising tide of religious skepticism, and in so doing he introduced 'the anthropocentrism' of the Scottish Enlightenment not just into the mainstream of American culture more generally, but 'into the nerve-center of American Presbyterianism'—the College of New Jersey—more specifically.[14] When Witherspoon's accommodation of the Scottish Philosophy 'was [eventually] planted in the new seminary by Archibald Alexander and [then] carried into the vast, polemical system of Charles Hodge', Ahlstrom contended that the formative center of what he called 'the Witherspoon tradition' was established.[15] Rather than reclaiming 'the fervent theocentricity' that was essential to the enduring essence of the Reformed tradition, those who taught at the seminary instead followed Witherspoon and embraced 'the [moral, religious and epistemological] optimism of the Scottish Renaissance', and as a consequence 'their theology lost its Reformation bearings, "the Augustinian strain of [their] piety" suffered', their belief 'that Christianity had a proclamation to declare lost its vitality', and for them 'doctrine became less a living language of piety than a complex burden to be borne'.[16] 'As a result of Witherspoon's powerful influence', Ahlstrom concluded, '[Thomas] Reid *did* supplant … [the influence of more consistently orthodox thinkers] at Princeton, and due to the powerful advocacy of Archibald Alexander, the first and for a year the only professor in the Princeton Theological Seminary, and Charles Hodge, his great colleague and successor, the Scottish Philosophy was carried by Princeton graduates to academies, colleges, seminaries, and churches all over the country'.[17]

So what becomes of Ahlstrom's analysis of 'the Witherspoon tradition' and the host of historical narratives that are indebted to it if—as revisionist historians like Mailer are now contending—Witherspoon did not in fact abandon, but sustained the orthodox convictions that were essential to his efforts as a minister in Scotland and to the religious culture of Princeton College prior to his inauguration in 1768? And if Witherspoon did not in fact accommodate the anthropocentric convictions of the Scottish Moderates of the eighteenth century, as those who follow Ahlstrom and embrace the reigning interpretation of 'the Witherspoon tradition' contend, then what might the fact of his enduring orthodoxy suggest not just about the reigning interpretation of that tradition, but also about the assumptions that ought to inform the analysis of that tradition and its larger paradigmatic significance in the years to come? In short, what it likely suggests is that those with an interest in the scholarly analysis of all things related to 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' must look at the reigning interpretation of that tradition with fresh, even skeptical eyes, and they must do so because the assumptions that have sustained that interpretation are being called into question by historical analysis that is presenting a formidable challenge to the prevailing interpretive paradigm. Just as thoughtful interpreters are no longer persuaded that Witherspoon uncritically accommodated the moral, religious and epistemological optimism of the Scottish Moderates when he landed on the shores of the burgeoning American Republic, so too thoughtful interpreters should no longer presume that Ahlstrom's interpretation of the

14 Ibid., 262, 266, 267.
15 Ibid., 267, 266.
16 Ibid., 268, 266, 268.
17 Ibid., 262.

relationship between Witherspoon and his theological descendants in 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' is entirely accurate and therefore a settled matter.

If this is the case and it is therefore true that a fresh assessment of 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' is in order, then how should interpreters think about the theological and philosophical commitments of those who stood in the mainstream of that tradition throughout the long nineteenth century? The discussion that follows will argue that in the main and despite what those who have embraced 'the Ahlstrom thesis' contend, Witherspoon's descendants—from the very beginning of the tradition—were not naive but 'chastened' realists because they—like Witherspoon—were opposed not just to the 'hubris of Enlightenment rationality',[18] but also to all of the moral, religious and epistemological stances that hubris entailed. The forthcoming discussion will substantiate this claim by examining a number of the published and unpublished writings of Samuel Miller (1769–1850). Miller was a 'counter-Enlightenment'[19] thinker who, though he was an enthusiastic and accomplished member of the American intellectual class in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,[20] nevertheless helped to found Princeton Seminary in 1812

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18 Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, 2011), 84.

19 This is the phrase that Charles Bradford Bow uses throughout his work to describe those thinkers in the orbit of Princeton College at the end of the long eighteenth century who were opposed to Samuel Stanhope Smith's more progressive approach to uniting piety and learning. For example, see Charles Bradford Bow, 'The End of the Scottish Enlightenment in Its Transatlantic Context: Moral Education in the Thought of Dugald Stewart and Samuel Stanhope Smith, 1790-1812' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012), 6, where he defines 'counter-Enlightenment' as 'reflecting inverse views of a particular version of Enlightenment thought and ideology'. For an examination of the relationship between Witherspoon and the founders of the seminary that interacts extensively with Bow's important work, see Paul Kjoss Helseth, 'The Legacy of John Witherspoon and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary: Samuel Stanhope Smith, Ashbel Green, and the Contested Meaning of Enlightened Education', in Mark Jones and Michael A. G. Haykin (eds.), *A New Divinity: Transatlantic Reformed Evangelical Debates during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Göttingen, 2018), 233–59.

20 Andrew Hook contends that Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (3 vols, London, 1805) is 'a highly illuminating work' that demonstrates Miller's indebtedness to 'intellectual traditions' that are 'rooted in the Scottish Enlightenment' of the eighteenth century (Andrew Hook, '"The First American Intellectual History": Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century and Its Scottish Context*', in Ned C. Landsman [ed], *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americans, 1600–1800* [London; Cranbury, NJ, 2001], 267). Miller's *Brief Retrospect* makes it clear, Hook contends, that while he had 'absorbed that aspect of the Scottish Enlightenment that had always been concerned to link progressive knowledge and enlightenment with improvement in taste and manners', nevertheless his 'approval of the Age of Enlightenment' was not unqualified (ibid., 269–70, 274). Indeed, his *Brief Retrospect* reveals that he was concerned about 'the diffusion of heresy and infidelity' that followed from the Enlightenment's emphasis upon 'the *supremacy of reason*

because he was persuaded that Witherspoon's more God-centered approach to uniting piety and learning—which he believed had been compromised by Witherspoon's successor as president of the college, Samuel Stanhope Smith—could be preserved only by founding a seminary that was, as he put it, 'uncontaminated by the college'.[21] The first part of the forthcoming discussion will consider an essay entitled 'Remarks on the Extent and Province

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and the *perfectibility of man*', and it was this concern, Hook maintains, that accounts for the 'crucial role' that he eventually played in helping to found Princeton Seminary in 1812 (ibid., 271, 273, 271). In my estimation, while Hook's analysis is certainly insightful, nevertheless it begs important questions about the relationship between Scottish Realism and the source of the moral and epistemological optimism that drove Miller to take part in the founding of the Seminary. If, as Hook contends, Scottish Realism 'offered America … an intellectual context that was modern, progressive, [and] liberal, yet in no way revolutionary or subversive' (ibid., 274), then where did the optimism that Miller thought was subversive and that compelled him to take part in the founding of the Seminary come from? Might it be possible that Miller helped to found the Seminary precisely because he was persuaded that Samuel Stanhope Smith's accommodation of Scottish Realism did not 'reinforce', but 'undermined orthodox religion and morality' (ibid.), and it did so precisely because it was grounded not in faithfulness to the anthropological and epistemological assumptions of the Reformed tradition, but in the moral and epistemological optimism of the Scottish Enlightenment? A good argument can be made that in fact, this was the case. In this regard, see note 19 above and note 21 below.

[21] Samuel Miller to Ashbel Green, May 10, 1808, in Samuel Miller, Jr., *The Life of Samuel Miller* (2 vols, 1869; reprinted Stoke-on-Trent, 2002), I, 242. Evidence that Miller was a 'counter-Enlightenment' thinker who was eager to preserve Witherspoon's more God-centered approach to uniting piety and learning can be found in the address that he delivered in 1812 at the inauguration of Archibald Alexander as the first professor at Princeton Seminary. In his address, Miller commended a modified version of a quotation from Witherspoon that captured the essence of Witherspoon's understanding of authentically enlightened education: 'Accursed be all that learning which sets itself in opposition to vital piety! Accursed be all that learning which disguises, or is ashamed of vital piety! Accursed be all that learning, which attempts to fill the place, or to supersede the honours, of vital piety! Nay, accursed be all that learning, which is not made subservient to the promotion and the glory of vital piety' (Samuel Miller, '*The Duty of the Church to Take Measures for Providing an Able and Faithful Ministry*: A *Sermon*' in *The Sermon, Delivered at the Inauguration of the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D.D., as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology* (New York, 1812), 17–18. Note that the Witherspoon quotation Miller was modifying reads as follows: 'Accursed be all that learning which sets itself in opposition to the cross of Christ! Accursed be all that learning which disguises or is ashamed of the cross of Christ! Accursed be all that learning which fills the room that is due to the cross of Christ! And once more, Accursed be all that learning which is not made subservient to the honour and glory of the cross of Christ!' (John Witherspoon, 'Glorying in the Cross' [Gal 6:14], in *Works*, I, 393).

of Human Reason in Matters of Religion', which Miller published approximately a decade before he joined the effort to found Princeton Seminary and seventeen years before he was called to serve alongside Archibald Alexander as Princeton's second professor. In that essay, Miller responded critically to 'fashionable' thinkers in his day who were 'exalt[ing]' human reason 'to the rank of an infallible guide, and mak[ing] her the only proper standard of right and wrong' not just in science, but in morality and religion as well.[22] The second part will then consider Miller's understanding of the relationship between the work of God's Spirit and the life of the mind. In short, this part of the discussion will demonstrate that for Miller, the capacity to see revealed truth for what it rightly or objectively *is* was associated not with nature but with grace, as it is with all thinkers standing in the mainstream of the Reformed tradition. Together, and as the conclusion will make clear, the two parts of the discussion that follows will establish that in fact, Miller's understanding of the life of the mind was grounded in convictions that are difficult to reconcile with the prevailing consensus not just on how the founders of the seminary were related to the Scottish Philosophy that, on Ahlstrom's telling, subverted Old Princeton's 'Reformation bearings', but also on how those standing in the mainstream of 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' conceived of their calling to unite piety and learning throughout the long nineteenth century.[23]

II. Miller on the Role of Reason in Morality and Religion

In the first part of his 'Remarks on the Extent and Province of Human Reason in Matters of Religion', Miller began his response to the mistakes 'into which those fall, who contend that human reason should be our supreme standard in matters of [morality and] religion' by clarifying what he regarded as 'the real grounds of the dispute … between believers in revelation and others, concerning reason'.[24] The real dispute, he contended, 'is not whether men are to use their own reason, any more than whether they are to see with their own eyes, or hear with their own ears; but the question is, whether every man's reason is to be his *sole* guide,

[22] Samuel Miller, 'Remarks on the Extent and Province of Human Reason in Matters of Religion, No. I', *The United States Christian Magazine*, 1:1 (1796), 45, 46. While Miller's name does not appear on either part of the published version of this essay, evidence that he was the author can be found in a letter in the seminary archives in which he addressed the 'insufficiency of natural Religion'. In this letter, Miller encouraged readers to 'see my own remarks on the nature and Province of human reason in matters of religion, in the U.S. Christian Magazine, etc.' (Samuel Miller, 'Six Letters Concerning Contemporary Issues', circa 1812, Box 19, File 37:21, *The Samuel Miller Manuscript Collection*, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library [hereafter SMMC]).

[23] Ahlstrom, 'The Scottish Philosophy, 268.

[24] Miller, 'Remarks I', 46–47.

upon which he is in *all cases* and *implicitly* to depend?'[25] While 'modern unbelievers' would have Christians believe 'that receiving Christianity, or taking the light of the gospel for our guide, is equivalent to an entire renunciation of the rational character; and that the man who looks up to the Great Source of knowledge for instruction, *ipso facto* gives up the right of thinking and judging for himself in any sense or degree', in fact, Miller argued, 'Christians do not oppose unbelievers because they *reason*, but because, in their apprehension, they reason *ill*'.[26] In short, Miller began his 'Remarks' by insisting that despite what unbelievers who champion 'the dignity and power of *human reason*' contend, Christians 'do not embrace revelation in order to suppress or destroy the light of their own minds, but to improve and assist it—not to take away their right of judging for themselves, but to secure them from erroneous judgments'.[27]

Having established that Christians do not reject but endorse the use of reason in moral and religious matters, Miller then went on to challenge the 'supposition' that he believed had been embraced by those who contended 'for the sufficiency of human reason as our supreme standard' in moral and religious considerations.[28] According to Miller, 'the advocates and votaries of reason' overestimated the dispositive authority of the human mind because they had forgotten 'that man is a *fallen creature*'.[29] Man, they contended, 'is now as he was originally created by God [to be]', and for this reason the human mind is not just 'sufficient'[30] but perfectly disposed to judging rightly in all matters, including those that have to do with morality and religion. In response to this supposition, Miller challenged 'the presumptive claims of reason' by insisting that 'the crown is fallen from our head'.[31] We are 'not what God originally made us [to be]' and 'none of our faculties can be considered as perfect', he maintained, because the fall has 'in some degree' affected the entirety of our nature, including 'our rational powers'.[32] Since this is 'the case' and there is justification for concluding that 'human reason' is 'now *defective*' as a consequence of the fall, Miller argued that not only are there good reasons for supposing that our rational powers 'are not such trusty guides as it is desirable to have',[33] but there are also sufficient grounds for abandoning the modern fantasy that epistemological neutrality is possible. 'When … we hear men talk of *unbiased* and *unprejudiced* reason; a reason not in the least degree tinctured with partiality in favour of falsehood and error; a reason disposed with perfect candour to apprehend and receive truth wherever it may be had; they talk of what never did nor will exist in any mere man after Adam, in the garden of innocence'.[34]

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25 Ibid, 47.
26 Ibid., 47.
27 Ibid., 45, 47.
28 Ibid., 47.
29 Ibid., 47.
30 Ibid., 48.
31 Ibid., 49, 48. Miller is here quoting from the Old Testament book of Lamentations: "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!" (Lam 5:16, KJV).
32 Miller, 'Remarks I', 48.
33 Ibid., 48.
34 Ibid., 48.

Finally, after noting that 'the most strenuous contenders for the supremacy of reason have always been the most bitter opposers of the humbling doctrine of human depravity',[35] Miller concluded the first part of his essay by offering a critique of Enlightenment rationality that continues to be advanced by the critics of more naive formulations of philosophical realism in our day.[36] According to Miller:

> those who contend for the sufficiency of reason to guide us in all cases whatsoever, seem to make another mistake, in talking of something as an *universal* and *uniform* standard, which really is not so, but is almost infinitely variable in its nature, being found in a different measure in different persons, and delivering opposite precepts with regard to the same things.[37]

Assuming that dispositive guidance in morality and religion can be discovered by appealing to the light of nature alone is naive, Miller argued, because 'the dictates of reason' are, in fact, 'as variable as the fashion of the country in which we live'.[38] Since, then, it was the case that 'the advocates for the sufficiency and perfection of human reason' overestimated the capacity of reason to serve as a standard that is adequate for the 'guidance and regulation of [all men]', Miller ended the first part of his essay by insisting that the light of nature can never be 'a perfect guide' 'without the assistance of divine revelation'.[39] 'When … I contemplate a guide of this kind, a guide thus variable, accommodating, and having no regular mode of operation … I am constrained to suspect her of insufficiency, and to say of her, as our Lord once said of teachers not wholly unlike her, "when the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch"'.[40]

In the second part of his 'Remarks', Miller addressed three more of the mistakes into which he believed 'the advocates for the supreme and unlimited guidance of human reason are apt to fall'.[41] The first had to do with the rationalist's failure to distinguish properly 'between the *light of nature*, or *the powers of reason*, strictly so called, and *the light of revelation*'.[42] According to Miller, modern 'infidels' were convinced 'that all those principles which we now arrange as parts of the system of natural religion, are the dictates of *unassisted* reason. But do they not here assume', he asked, 'more than can be justly granted? Do they not ascribe to the light of nature much of that information concerning God and his will, which revelation only has given?'[43] He insisted they do and maintained instead that 'the best ideas which pagan nations have of religion, are derived not from the unaided efforts of their own minds,

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35 Ibid., 49.

36 For example, see Michael Plato, 'Archibald Alexander and the Philosophy of Common Sense', in *New Perspectives on Old Princeton, 1812–1929*, 51–68.

37 Miller, 'Remarks I', 49.

38 Ibid., 50.

39 Ibid., 50.

40 Ibid., 51.

41 Samuel Miller, 'Remarks on the Extent and Province of Human Reason in Matters of Religion, No. II', *The United States Christian Magazine*, 2:1 (1796), 122.

42 Ibid., 123.

43 Ibid., 123.

but from *tradition*'.[44] 'The knowledge first communicated to Adam, in his original state of innocence, concerning divine things', he argued, 'has probably been transmitted through him to all his descendants, and preserved, by tradition, in a greater or smaller degree, until this day'.[45] If there is merit to this line of reasoning—which, if nothing else, points to Miller's unambiguous commitment to the priority of revelation over reason when assessing the natural order—then it follows that for Miller, 'much, if not the whole of that feeble light and knowledge which many in the heathen world possess of God and his will, is not to be considered the offspring of reason, but may fairly be traced to the first of all God's revelations to man'.[46]

Miller then turned to what many interpreters will contend is a more consequential mistake into which the votaries of reason 'continually fall', namely their failure to remember that improvements in 'reason and *religion*—[in] *scientific knowledge*, and *holiness*', are secured through different means.[47] According to Miller, 'Were we to admit the entire sufficiency of reason [to serve] as our guide to perfection and happiness, it would necessarily follow, that he whose reason is [the] most cultivated, would also be the most holy, or the best man', for it would follow that 'the greatest advances in intellectual improvement, and in speculative knowledge [would always be] … accompanied with a proportionable eminence in moral worth'.[48] But the facts of history and of our everyday experience make it plain, he argued, that such a state of affairs is not now, nor has it ever been, 'the case'.[49] For this reason, Miller encouraged his 'opponents' to remember that 'improvement[s] in reason, and in religion' belong 'to entirely different spheres; that, *for the most part*, … employ different powers of the human mind; and that … rest upon … essentially different foundation[s]'.[50] While all moral agents have the ability to improve themselves intellectually even though many of them are, 'with regard to all moral considerations, … mere devils in human form', still 'there must be something besides [mere intellectual discernment] to cleanse the polluted recesses of a vitiated heart; to curb an irregular appetite; and to restrain the impetuosity of passion' if improvements in morality and religion are to be attained.[51] What, then, did Miller believe this 'something besides' must be? Miller ended his discussion of the fifth mistake by claiming that

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44 Ibid., 124.

45 Ibid., 123.

46 Ibid., 124.

47 Ibid., 124.

48 Ibid., 124.

49 Ibid., 124.

50 Ibid., 124, 125, emphasis added. Note that in this context, I am italicizing the phrase 'for the most part' to call attention to the fact that when Miller refers to 'different spheres' that 'employ different powers of the human mind', he is in no way compromising his commitment to the fundamental unity of the soul or mind, nor is he endorsing the modern pretension that the epistemological realms of religion and science are entirely distinct. In this regard, see the forthcoming discussion of his 'philosophy of mind' and its implications for the epistemological capacities of moral agents in their created, fallen and renewed states.

51 Ibid., 125.

since reason alone is not sufficient to serve as 'our guide to perfection and happiness', 'some such provision must be made as we find in the Christian system for the energy of divine operations, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, to purify the soul, and, through this medium, to regulate the outward conduct'.[52]

Finally, Miller brought the second part of his 'Remarks' to a conclusion by addressing the baseless conceit that he believed was at the heart of all of the previous mistakes that he had challenged, namely the conceit that leads 'infidels' to imagine that they are justified 'in considering and treating as *contrary* to reason, every thing that [in fact] is [just] *above* it'.[53] While Miller acknowledged that it is 'extremely difficult to draw a distinct and definite line' between those things which are contrary to reason and those things which are just above or beyond its present reach, nevertheless he insisted that 'it is unphilosophical … to pronounce, that every thing which *we* cannot comprehend is absurd; or that every thing [which is] beyond *our* circle of vision, is deformed and unworthy of regard'.[54] This is especially the case, he maintained, 'with moral truth, and the various grand subjects of which revelation treats'.[55] 'We may hastily pronounce certain doctrines incompatible with the divine character, and opposite to the reason and nature of things; when a more enlarged acquaintance with the divine character, and with the different relations of things, would satisfy us of their reasonableness and reality'.[56] If, then, it is the case that some things are not in fact contrary to reason but simply '[surpass] the limits of [our present] understanding, and [baffle our] most painful research',[57] then how should we proceed in our efforts to use our minds in the pursuit of truth, especially in moral and religious matters? Miller concluded his 'Remarks' by making explicit what had been implicit throughout the entirety of his analysis, namely that we reason best not only when our reasoning is formed and shaped by the teaching of the Christian Scriptures, but also when we avoid making judgements 'precipitately'.[58] It is the case, he reminded his readers, that we all 'may entertain prejudices against particular truths, when, did we know all, it would be found, that these prejudices spring from the most narrow and illiberal views; that their apparent opposition to reason arises only from our not knowing what true reason is; and that our whole mistake is founded on *ignorance*'.[59]

III. The Work of the Spirit and the Life of the Mind

The foregoing summary of Miller's 'Remarks' on the extent and province of reason in morality and religion has established that he was not a naïve but a chastened realist, for while he

52 Ibid., 125.
53 Ibid., 125.
54 Ibid., 125, emphasis added.
55 Ibid., 126.
56 Ibid., 126.
57 Ibid., 125–26.
58 Ibid., 126.
59 Ibid., 126.

affirmed that there is an objective moral and religious order that can be known by moral agents with more or less competence and certainty, nevertheless he was opposed to a number of the assumptions that were essential to what he regarded as the epistemological 'cant' of his day.[60] Since this was the case, then how might Miller's insistence upon the 'intrinsic insufficiency'[61] of reason to judge rightly in matters of morality and religion without the forming and shaping guidance of divine revelation be related to his understanding of what is commonly referred to as the life of the mind? Was there a relationship between his understanding of the life of the mind and his insistence upon the 'intrinsic insufficiency' of reason to judge rightly in moral and religious matters, and if there was then what was the nature of that relationship and how are we to account for it? In the remainder of this essay, I will argue that such a relationship did in fact obtain in Miller's thought. Just as he was persuaded that reason alone is not sufficient 'to guide [men] in safety' to what he called 'the realms of eternal blessedness',[62] so too he was convinced that learning which is not 'consecrated by real religion' will never lead an individual to a right understanding of the world as it objectively is,[63] for he was persuaded—for reasons that proved to be paradigmatic for those standing in 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' throughout the long nineteenth century—that there is an essential relationship between the disposition or inclination of the heart and all of the organic operations of the whole soul or mind, including those that have to do with the life of the mind.

The justification for this contention—which establishes that Miller, like Witherspoon, was not a naive but a chastened realist—can be found throughout Miller's published and unpublished writings, particularly in those writings that expounded the doctrinal convictions that gave form and substance to the 'philosophy of mind'[64] that was at the foundation of his insistence that though 'intellect' and 'knowledge' are 'power', the learning that is the essential means to both will never enable moral agents to see the world for what it rightly or objectively is until it has been brought 'under the sanctified guidance of genuine piety'.[65] As these writings make clear and as the discussion that follows will establish, Miller was persuaded that while the mind has a range of faculties or powers that can act with more or less competence or rightness, nevertheless those faculties or powers are not discrete, but they are the functional

60 Miller, 'Remarks I', 46.

61 Ibid., 50.

62 Ibid., 49.

63 Samuel Miller, 'The Work of Evangelists and Missionaries' (Isa 61:4), September 12, 1822, in *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, James M. Garretson (ed.) (2 vols, Edinburgh, 2012), I, 435.

64 Samuel Miller, 'Man Is an Active Being' (Matt 6:24), undated, Box 18, File 22:10, in SMMC. Please note that this phrase is underlined Miller's handwritten manuscript. Miller's manuscripts are filled with underlined words and phrases, as well as with peculiar punctuation marks that were intended to aid his presentation when preaching and teaching. To avoid distraction and to facilitate ease of reading, I am dropping the underlining as well as the peculiar punctuation marks from the quotations I am using in this essay.

65 Samuel Miller, 'The Importance of Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry', July 3, 1829, in *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, I, 530.

manifestations of an organic or unitary whole that is governed—in all of its exercises—by the underlying character or disposition or inclination of the heart. Indeed, with respect to the ability of moral agents to lay hold of the truth that God has revealed not just in his Word but in his world as well, Miller was persuaded that while those who are created in the image of God can lay hold of that truth with more or less competence or rightness, nevertheless he insisted that the competence or rightness with which particular moral agents are able to lay hold of that truth is finally determined not by the power of their intellects alone, but by what Brad Walton—in a different but related context—refers to as 'the fundamental amative orientation' of their hearts.[66]

So what, according to Miller, is the heart, and why does the disposition of the heart have a dispositive bearing upon the ability of a particular moral agent to see the truth that God has revealed more or less for what it rightly or objectively is? Throughout his writings on those doctrines that were related to his understanding of the life of the mind, Miller toggled between two ways of referring to the heart that are intimately related to one another and to the ability of particular moral agents to see and know the truth that God has revealed. On the one hand, he referred to the heart in a narrower sense, i.e., as the locus of those feelings or passions that actuate the soul and that must be brought into subjection to the teaching of God's Word through the cultivation of virtuous habits and the prayerful pursuit of godliness.[67] On the other hand, and more significantly, he also referred to the heart in a broader and more foundational sense, or as that more subjective dimension of the person which has to do with 'the moral temper of man—or, that system of principles and dispositions, which form the moral character and which excite to action'.[68] In this more foundational and significant sense, Miller contended that the heart is not only 'the seat of all the love and hatred—the choice and aversion—the joys and sorrows which enter so largely into the char[acter] and exercises of the mind, and which urge to moral activity',[69] but it is also the formative center of the moral agent that has a dispositive bearing upon the quality of everything that moral agent does, including that moral agent's attempts to lay hold of the truth that God has revealed both in his Word and in the world that we inhabit.[70]

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66 Brad Walton, *Jonathan Edwards, 'Religious Affections' and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation and Heart Religion* (Studies in American Religion 74) (Lewiston, NY, 2002), 160.

67 See, for example, Miller, 'Man Is an Active Being'; Samuel Miller, 'Prayer for the Increase of Faith' (Luke 27:5), July 1792, Box 9, File 17, in SMMC; Samuel Miller, 'The Government of the Heart' (Prov 4:25), August 1795, Box 9, File 21, in SMMC; and Samuel Miller, 'Coming Out and Separating Ourselves from the World' (2 Cor 6:17–18), November 1810, Box 14, File 20, in SMMC.

68 Samuel Miller, 'Hardness of Heart' [Prov 28:4], April 1808, Box 13, File 3:1, in SMMC.

69 Ibid., 1–2.

70 According to Walton—who makes clear that Edwards's understanding of the heart was very much like that of Miller—the 'heart' in this broader and more foundational sense is that principle which integrates and determines the 'psychic totality' of the 'whole soul', and for this reason it has to do not with the emotions alone, but with 'the simultaneous and interdependent operations of the cognitive and volitional-affective aspects of the

A compelling example of the impact that the disposition or inclination of the heart can have on the ability of particular moral agents to lay hold of the truth that God has revealed is found, Miller contended, in the differing ways that the knowledge of the gospel informs the faith of devils and of Christians. According to Miller:

> The faith of Devils is a speculative conviction of the understanding and conscience, which, tho' it fills them with anxiety and terror, is accompanied with no salutary impression on their temper or practice! While the faith of Christians, is an enlightened, cordial embracing of the Gospel, as a practical system! It is receiving the record which God has given of his Son, in the love of it. It is a reception in which the heart and affections accompany the exercise of the understanding leading to humble trust; affectionate reliance; and habitual, childlike obedience! In short, [while] the language of the faith of Devils is—We know thee who thou art, … The language of Christian faith, is My Lord and my God![71]

In short and as the forthcoming discussion will establish, Miller was persuaded that just as it is possible for devils to have a true—even if only a speculative—understanding of the truth that is grounded in and associated with God's revelation of himself in his Word, so too it is possible for unbelievers to have a measure of speculative competence with respect to the truth that is grounded in and associated with God's revelation of himself in the things that he has made even if they do not have the moral capacity to see that truth for what it rightly or objectively is, namely—as those standing in the mainstream of the Reformed tradition have eagerly maintained—truth that testifies in some sense to the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the God of the Bible.

That this is the case, and that it is the disposition or inclination of the heart that finally determines the quality of a particular moral agent's ability to lay hold of the truth that God has revealed both in his Word and world is seen most clearly in those sermons that expounded the doctrinal convictions that were at the foundation of Miller's understanding of the epistemological capacities of moral agents in their created, fallen, and regenerated states. In these sermons, Miller argued that when Adam was created, 'the primitive state of man, with respect to his intellectual, moral, and social character, was the highest that he has ever enjoyed, or ever will enjoy, on this side of heaven'.[72] Adam, he maintained, was created in the moral image of God, and for that reason all of the faculties or powers of his soul were governed by 'knowledge, righteousness[,] and true holiness'.[73] Indeed, 'His understanding was enlightened by divine and immediate inspiration; His will was perfectly conformed to the

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personality, [aspects that are] unified, even fused, by its [inclination or disposition or] fundamental amative orientation' (Walton, *Jonathan Edwards, 'Religious Affections' and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation and Heart Religion*, 177, 220, 160).

71 Samuel Miller, 'Christian Faith Distinguished from the Faith of Devils' [Jas 2:19], December 1810, Box 15, File 1:19, in SMMC.

72 Miller, 'Work of Evangelists and Missionaries', 1:424.

73 Samuel Miller, 'The Excellent and Precious Nature of the Soul' (Matt 16:26), April 1792, Box 9, File 16:6, in SMMC.

divine law; his affections [were] placed [up]on their proper objects; and every desire of his heart [was] pure and holy'.[74]

However, Miller contended that when Adam sinned in 'the garden of innocence',[75] he lost that moral image 'which was the most invaluable treasure, and [the] true ornament of his nature', and as a consequence his heart—or 'the fountain head, from which every part of the human conduct and character takes its rise'[76]—became 'entirely depraved'[77] and all of 'the faculties of [his] soul' were subjected to 'the power and dominion of sin'.[78] While Miller acknowledged that the children of Adam retain the intellectual ability to 'unfold and improve' upon 'the various departments of science … and the numerous arts of life',[79] nevertheless he insisted that they—like Adam—are by nature neither 'impartial inquirer[s] after truth',[80] nor do they have the intellectual ability to discern 'the [true] character of those things which are presented to [their] view',[81] for they are—because of their covenantal union with Adam—'entirely destitute of all spiritual discernment' and 'all cordial taste and relish' for 'the real excellence and glory of Divine things',[82] no matter where that excellence and glory are being revealed. In short, Miller contended that the children of Adam are born 'dead in trespasses'[83] and have 'carnal' minds that by nature are 'enmity against God'[84] because they are under 'the dominion' of that

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74 Ibid., 6.

75 Miller, 'Remarks I', 48.

76 Miller, 'Government of the Heart', 3.

77 Samuel Miller, 'The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things' (Jer 17:9), December 7, 1823, Box 17, File 9:4, in SMMC.

78 Miller, 'Government of the Heart', 4.

79 Miller, 'Excellent and Precious Nature of the Soul', 7. Note that in the Preface to his survey of the life of the mind in the eighteenth century, Miller argued that, 'A man who is a bad Christian may be a very excellent mathematician, astronomer, or chemist; and one who denies or blasphemes the Saviour may write profoundly and instructively on some branches of science highly interesting to mankind. It is proper to commiserate the mistakes of such persons, to abhor their blasphemy, and to warn men against their fatal delusions; but it is surely difficult to see either the justice or utility of withholding from them that praise of genius or of learning to which they are fairly entitled' (Miller, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, 1, viii). Informing this statement was a philosophy of mind that made it possible for Miller to insist that truth claims that are truly true—whether those truth claims are related to God's revelation of himself in his Word or in the world that we inhabit—can be received or known in different senses, or with more or less competence or rightness.

80 Samuel Miller, 'The Good Old Way' (Jer 6:16), February 1813, Box 16, File 6:6, in SMMC.

81 Miller, 'Excellent and Precious Nature of the Soul', 2.

82 Samuel Miller, 'Wonderful Things in the Bible' (Ps 119:18), January 18, 1824, Box 17, File 9:10, 9, in SMMC. See also Samuel Miller, 'The Hearts of All Men Alike' (Prov 27:19), May 1809, Box 13, File 18:11, in SMMC.

83 Samuel Miller, 'It is the Spirit that Quickeneth' (John 6:63), January 4, 1836, Box 18, File 2:8, in SMMC.

84 Samuel Miller, 'The Carnal Mind Is Enmity against God' (Rom 8:7), August 1818, Box 16, File 20:5, 6, in SMMC.

unsanctified disposition 'which [they] bring with them into the world'[85] as a consequence of Adam's sin. For this reason, their minds are not just 'clouded' by sin,[86] but they are 'as blind as midnight' to the 'real beauty and excellence' of God's revelation of himself not just in his Word, but in his world as well.[87]

If this is the case and it is therefore true that moral agents who are in bondage to 'the degrading thraldom of nature's depravity'[88] are 'as insensible to spiritual beauty and glory, as the blind man is to the beauty of colours; as a deaf man is to the charm of music; or as the sick man is to the relish of the most savory (sic) food',[89] then where did Miller believe that a remedy for the sinner's natural aversion to the moral excellence and beauty of 'every thing which brings [God's] real character and glory distinctly before [his] mind'[90] could be found? Miller argued that because the bondage of the depraved sinner is always moral and never structural or constitutional, those who are 'sold under the government of sin'[91] and 'destitute of all taste for God and his service'[92] can be liberated from their 'spiritual slavery'[93] only through a work of God's Spirit that restores the susceptibility of their souls to the excellence and beauty of spiritual things. According to Miller, it is the Spirit who grants the sinner the 'capacity to enjoy [God's] holy kingdom forever'[94] not by 'impart[ing] to him any new faculty, or [by] creat[ing] in his soul any new substance',[95] but by restoring his soul to 'the [moral] image of God',[96] thereby giving 'a new impulse and direction'[97]—i.e., 'a new bias'[98]—to his faculties and 'attuning' his soul 'to the perception and relish of the Divine excellence', wherever it is being revealed.[99] For Miller, then, the Spirit renders the sinner susceptible to impression from spiritual truth not by working on his soul in a structural or constitutional, but in a moral or spiritual fashion, that is, by:

> enlighten[ing], elevat[ing], purify[ing], and turn[ing] to new objects those intellectual and moral faculties which the sinner already possesses! That

85 Samuel Miller, 'Christian Weapons Not Carnal but Spiritual' (2 Cor 10:4), October 13, 1826, in *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, I, 467.

86 Samuel Miller, 'The Evil of Sin Considered and Improved' (Jer 2:10), June 1808, Box 13, File 6:12, in SMMC.

87 Miller, 'Wonderful Things in the Bible', 10, 9.

88 Samuel Miller, 'The Servitude of Sin' (John 8:34), December 1798, Box 10, File 1:19, in SMMC.

89 Miller, 'It is the Spirit that Quickeneth', 8.

90 Miller, 'Carnal Mind Is Enmity against God', 5–6.

91 Miller, 'Servitude of Sin', 3.

92 Miller, 'Carnal Mind Is Enmity against God', 5.

93 Miller, 'Servitude of Sin', 3.

94 Samuel Miller, 'Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light' (Col 1:12), September 21, 1817, Box 16, File 12, in SMMC.

95 Miller, 'It is the Spirit that Quickeneth', 18.

96 Miller, 'Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light', Box 16, File 12.

97 Miller, 'It is the Spirit that Quickeneth', 18.

98 Miller, 'Carnal Mind Is Enmity against God', 6.

99 Samuel Miller, 'The Secret of the Lord with Them that Fear Him' (Ps 25:14), September 1807, Box 12, File 11:6, in SMMC.

> understanding which was before alienated from the life of God, is now so wrought upon as to be turned to Him with intelligence and with pleasure! That will which was lately opposed to the will and service of God, is now brought into cordial subjection to Him! And those affections which were once supremely fixed [up]on earthly things, are now raised, and supremely placed [up]on things divine and heavenly! In a word, the quickening [that is the 'workmanship' of the Spirit] … consists not merely in presenting truth to the mind, but in restoring all the powers of the soul to their right use and action, in rescuing them from the torpor, the disease[,] and the perversion under which they had before laboured, and preparing them for those holy and elevated exercises which constitute their true happiness and glory![100]

But what, more precisely, does the work of God's Spirit entail, and how does it provide a remedy for the blindness of the depraved sinner, particularly if it is true that God's kingdom is 'a kingdom of means', as Miller claimed it is?[101] According to Miller, in addition to creating immediately a 'holy taste for holy objects'[102] in the heart of the sinner, the Spirit also cultivates true religion—the 'essence' of which is found, he insisted, 'in our having right apprehensions of spiritual objects, right affections toward them, and right practice flowing from those views and affections'[103]—by 'enlarg[ing] and elevat[ing] the mind' through the means and according to the truth of God's Word.[104] When the Word of God is applied to the mind by the sanctifying power of God's Spirit, Miller argued, it gives 'a just and pure direction to the various faculties of the mind',[105] for 'It enlightens the understanding, it awakens the conscience, it softens the heart, it inspires hope, … It furnishes the strongest motives for the attainment of holiness,' and it elicits all of these enlargements and elevations by setting 'the most excellent and glorious objects' clearly before the regenerated mind.[106] What this

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100 Miller, 'It is the Spirit that Quickeneth', 18–20. Note that this quotation makes clear what Miller says explicitly elsewhere: The new bias or 'the gracious principle' that 'is implanted in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost' in regeneration 'is not of a partial nature. It does not affect one faculty alone, without extending to any of the rest. It does not enlighten the understanding without renewing and transforming the will, but it pervades and rectifies every faculty, regulates their operations, and directs them to those pursuits and exercises which are agreeable to the divine will. It is a principle, in short, which reaches to all the moral powers of the soul, and maintains an influence over them that is permanent and universal' (Samuel Miller, 'Faith Shown by Works' [Jas 2:18], October 1792, Box 9, File 18:7, 6, 7, in SMMC).

101 Miller, 'Importance of Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry', 530.

102 Samuel Miller, 'The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ' (Phil 3:8), May 1807, Box 12, File 8:11, in SMMC.

103 Samuel Miller, 'Sanctification by the Truth' (John 17:17), September 18, 1825, Box 17, File 17:21, in SMMC.

104 Miller, 'Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ', 19.

105 Miller, 'Excellent and Precious Nature of the Soul', 9.

106 Miller, 'Sanctification by the Truth', 18.

suggests, then, is that for Miller, the Spirit enables sinners 'to see spiritual objects as they really are'[107] neither by creating new faculties in their minds, nor by giving new strength to the faculties they already possess, but by working on their minds in both mediate and immediate senses. Indeed, the Spirit does not just endow their minds with the moral capacity to discern the excellence and beauty of spiritual objects, but the Spirit also enables sinners to actually see the excellence and beauty of the objects they are perceiving by enlarging and elevating their vision through the means and according to 'the Word of truth and grace contained in the Holy Scriptures', which he contended are the believer's 'grand weapon … for extending' not just the perception, but the reception of God's kingdom 'into all the world'.[108]

If this is an accurate summary of what Miller contended the work of God's Spirit entails, then to what kinds of objects did he believe the 'sanctified judgment'[109] of the enlarged and elevated mind extends? What kinds of objects did he regard, in other words, as 'spiritual objects'? Throughout the second half of this essay, I have intimated that for Miller the 'sanctified judgment' of the enlarged and elevated mind in fact extends to the *whole* of God's kingdom, and it does so because God has invested even the more mundane aspects of the world that we inhabit with sacramental significance. That such an intimation is warranted, and that interpreters are right to conclude that for Miller right knowledge of this world is possible *only* when our knowledge is grounded in the mediate and immediate operations of God's Spirit, is established by his endorsement of two ideas that have an intimate relationship to one another. The first has to do with Miller's contention that God's kingdom—or the realm of his dominion that is declaring his glory in some sense—encompasses not just some, but 'all the works of creation' and 'of … providence'.[110] When the phrase 'the kingdom of God' is taken 'in its most extensive sense', Miller argued, it denotes 'that universal dominion of God, which embraces all ranks of beings, and pervades all space. It is that unlimited government of Jehovah which takes in his enemies as well as his friends—which extends to all the works of nature and of Providence, and which comprehends heaven, earth[,] and hell'.[111]

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107 Miller, 'Wonderful Things in the Bible', 15.

108 Miller, 'Christian Weapons Not Carnal but Spiritual', I, 474–75.

109 Miller, 'Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light', 1.

110 Samuel Miller, *The Earth Filled with the Glory of the Lord* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1835), 5–6.

111 Samuel Miller, 'Thy Kingdom Come' (Matt 6:10), March 1807, Box 12, File 6:3, in SMMC. In a sermon on John 13 that he preached in 1811, Miller argued that not only is God's kingdom all-encompassing, but God reigns over his all-encompassing kingdom in a 'particular' sense. According to Miller, 'there is no point concerning which the Word of God is more perfectly explicit; declaring that all events—even the smallest—[…] are all under the direction of that almighty Providence which never slumbers nor sleeps! If there be a general providence it is plain there must be a particular one, for the greatest events are often connected with the smallest—nay are often dependent upon them! … Happy is that believer, then, who makes it his habitual study to walk with God, day by day, in the dealings of his Providence, as well as in the work of his Holy Spirit. Who sees God in every

The second idea follows closely on the first and has to do with Miller's understanding of the role that redemption plays in a sinner's ability to discern the God-centred significance of the truth that is being revealed throughout the whole of God's kingdom, which he again insisted 'embraces the whole creation of God' and all his works of providence.[112] In a sermon on Psalm 8 that he preached in 1804, Miller contended that God's people 'are taught in Scripture to believe, that, in consequence of the work of redemption, the friends of holiness, in every part of the creation, see and understand more of God … than they could otherwise have done'.[113] When we consider the idea that is addressed in the paragraph above in light of the idea that is being addressed in this paragraph—in other words, when Miller's emphasis upon the all-encompassing nature of God's kingdom is understood in light of his clear insistence upon the epistemological advantages that are associated with redemption—we see that for Miller, the mediate and immediate operations of God's Spirit have an enlarging and elevating impact upon every aspect of the life of the mind because they attune the minds of the redeemed to the sacramental significance of the truth that is being revealed throughout the whole of God's kingdom. Indeed, these operations enable those who have been redeemed to see the vast expanse of the created order in a more accurate and therefore more objectively truthful fashion than they could otherwise have done, for they endow the minds of the redeemed with the moral capacity to look at reality through the spectacles of Scripture, and in so doing to see the world that we inhabit for what it rightly or objectively is, namely a theatre in which the 'excellence'[114] of God is being displayed for all to see. What this suggests, then, is that for Miller, since everything in the world 'is God's'[115] and everything that he has made and is providentially sustaining is declaring his glory in some sense, it follows that everything in the created order is seen and assessed in a right and therefore more objectively truthful fashion when it is received by a mind that has been regenerated by God's Spirit and sanctified by God's Word. In short, Miller was persuaded that it is such a mind—and such a mind *alone*—that has 'a moral as well as an intellectual power of discerning between good and bad, and judging and acting accordingly',[116] for such a mind stands no longer in a hostile, but in a cordial relationship to the sacramental nature of the truth that God is revealing not just in his Word, but throughout the entirety of his all-encompassing dominion as well.

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thing, acknowledges him in every thing, and enjoys Him in every thing! O, if there be any thing adapted to make a believer cheerful—to make him rejoice even in tribulation, it is the believing apprehension [that] God reigns …!' (Samuel Miller, 'The Mystery of God's Providence' [John 13:7], July 1811, Box 15, File 10:17–19, in SMMC).

112 Miller, 'Thy Kingdom Come', 3.

113 Samuel Miller, 'The Wonderful Condescension of God in Regarding and Visiting Man' (Ps 8:3–4), May 1804, Box 11, File 3:26–27, in SMMC.

114 Miller, *The Earth Filled with the Glory of the Lord*, 5.

115 Samuel Miller, 'The Christian's Relation to God' (Ps 140:6), May 1810, Box 14, File 9:22, in SMMC.

116 Samuel Miller, 'The Choice and Prayer of Solomon' (1 Kgs 3:5–14), March 1, 1829, Box 17, File 24:14, in SMMC.

IV. Conclusion: Piety and Learning at Old Princeton Seminary

If this reading of Miller's understanding of the relationship between the work of God's Spirit and the life of the mind is accurate, and if it is therefore true that for Miller, the wisdom of the enlarged and elevated mind in fact 'embraces moral and spiritual, as well as intellectual rectitude',[117] then two concluding observations about his conception of the relationship between piety and learning are in order, particularly if his conception was paradigmatic for the theologians who stood in the mainstream of 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' throughout the long nineteenth century, as I am suggesting it was. The first has to do with Miller's insistence that since we live in a universe that is imbued with sacramental significance, the 'vital, practical piety' that is the workmanship of the Spirit is essential to education that is authentically enlightened because it is 'the ONE THING [that is] NEEDFUL' for establishing 'seminaries of learning' as 'salubrious Fountains' of 'sound learning'.[118] Wherever the piety that is the workmanship of the Spirit 'exists in its purity and power', Miller contended:

> the mind of its possessor is more enlarged, more vigorous, and better disciplined, than it could possibly have been, without this precious gift of God. And, if there be any truth in this assertion, then it is plain, that he who should propose to conduct a band of Youth through a course of liberal education, without the aid of religion, would neglect one of the most potent and precious auxiliaries to which he could resort, even putting entirely out of view its power as a principle of sanctification, and its essential connexion with everlasting happiness.[119]

The second observation is related closely to the first and has to do with Miller's characterisation of the objective that should animate the learning of those who are genuinely pious. According to Miller, the Christian religion not only 'has a tendency to produce an astonishing greatness of soul', but it also 'creates and cherishes a divine ambition'[120] for the advancement of God's kingdom through various means, including those that are related to the life of the mind. Just as he contended that 'unsanctified' learning 'has been the means of turning millions away from the kingdom of Christ, rather than bringing them into it', so too he insisted that 'Genuine … and even profound learning', when united with the piety that is generated by the work of God's Spirit, 'is an instrument in the propagation of religion, of inestimable value'.[121] For this reason, Miller exhorted believing scholars not just to stand against the 'presumptuous criticism[s]' of those who are 'found perverting, torturing[,] and reasoning away' those

[117] Ibid., 15.
[118] Samuel Miller, *The Literary Fountains Healed* (Trenton, 1823), 37, 29, 24, 30.
[119] Ibid., 29.
[120] Miller, 'Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light', 1.
[121] Miller, 'Christian Weapons Not Carnal but Spiritual', I, 471.

'most precious truths' which are 'the life and the hope of the Christian',[122] but also to conquer those criticisms by engaging in an 'offensive'—and not merely a defensive—apologetic.[123] While Miller acknowledged that the 'spiritual' weapons of the Christian's warfare should be used 'for the protection and defence' of the faith, he insisted that they should also be used to advance the truth claims of the Christian religion by 'attacking and vanquishing the enemies of [the Christian's] Master'.[124] Indeed, believing scholars should endeavour not just to pull down the 'unhallowed fortification[s]'[125] of 'corrupted reason',[126] but they should also devote themselves to 'constraining … [the children of this world] to surrender themselves [as] willing captives to the blessed Redeemer' by 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ', and they should devote themselves to doing so, he contended, because—'by' God's grace and 'through' his 'power'—they can.[127] This, I maintain, was the objective that animated the efforts of those standing in 'the Witherspoon [or Old Princeton] tradition' throughout the long nineteenth century to unite piety and learning, and it was grounded in an unwavering commitment to the central assumptions of the Reformed tradition, not in an accommodation of Enlightenment thought as those who recite the conventional wisdom contend.

122 Samuel Miller, 'Departing from the Simplicity That Is in Christ' (2 Cor 11:3), November 1804, Box 11, File 7:15, in SMMC.

123 Miller, 'Christian Weapons Not Carnal but Spiritual', I, 474.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., I, 478.

126 Miller, 'Departing from the Simplicity That Is in Christ', 15.

127 Miller, 'Christian Weapons Not Carnal but Spiritual', I, 478, 482. Cf. 2 Cor 10:5.