

THE
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I.

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

THERE are some special reasons which urge this subject upon our attention.

First. There is an attempt in some directions to lower the choice of the Ministry to the same level with that of any other profession or avocation in life. It is claimed that men are called to the Ministry in the same way in which they are called to be Farmers, Merchants, Lawyers, or Physicians. The question would then be one simply of expediency and aptitude. The conditions of the choice would be the tastes and preferences of each individual, together with his talents and qualifications and such outward indications of Providence as seemed more favorable to the Ministry than to any other occupation.

This theory overlooks the *Divine character* of the Ministerial office. The Minister is no longer a *Mediatorial gift* to the Church.

It ignores also the immediate Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church. He no longer can say to Ministers, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

It sets aside also the *Divine Call* of the Spirit. It is no longer "the Holy Ghost who" makes them overseers of the flock.

A *second* reason which urges this subject upon our attention is the fact that while some go to the extreme which I have just mentioned and deny the necessity of the Spirit's call, there are others who fly to the opposite extreme, and so emphasize the internal call of the Spirit as to render appointment to office or ordination or any authentication by the Church entirely unnecessary. Upon this theory any man who can persuade himself that he is called by the

VIII.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

ONE of the greatest difficulties that the American Presbyterian Church has to contend with is an inadequate supply of ministers. This difficulty has always existed in this country, it still continues, and is likely to remain with us for a long time to come. This difficulty is due to the rapid growth of the population of the United States, which retains all of its own enormous increase by birth, and also receives an additional population from other countries at the rate of half a million a year. The supply of ministers might be sufficient to take care of the native population if it were stationary and if the natural increase remained in the old centres ; but a very large portion of the population is constantly on the move, and is establishing new settlements which rapidly grow into towns, cities, and States. It is evident that there must be an extraordinary provision for these new settlements, and that the ordinary average of ministerial supply such as would suffice for the Old World is altogether insufficient for the New World. Moreover, the freedom of worship and varieties of religious opinion that have been imported for the most part from the Old World make increased demands upon the population to supply all these little flocks with pastors. Where one church and one minister would be sufficient for a town in accordance with the proportions of the Old World, three, four, or half a dozen are required by this splitting up of Protestant Christianity into such a great number of denominations. If the foreigners who come to our shores brought their ministers with them, they would not increase our burdens in this respect. But, in fact, very few ministers come to the United States from the Old World, so that the result of this migration from Europe to America is to relieve the churches of Europe of the necessity of providing these people with churches and ministers, and to impose this additional burden upon the churches of America. Owing to these three reasons extraordinary measures must be taken in America to supply the people with a sufficient number of ministers.

The Presbyterian, Reformed, and Congregational churches have insisted upon an educated ministry, and accordingly they have never been able to supply the people who belonged to them by inheritance with a sufficient number of pastors ; consequently the history of these denominations is a history of loss of relative position and importance in the religious life of America, which has been counterbalanced by the gain of the Methodist, Baptist, Cumberland

Presbyterians, and other minor denominations who have not insisted upon a full ministerial education for their pastors. The churches that have insisted upon an educated ministry have declined relatively in the number of their ministers and people when compared with the churches that have had a large uneducated and partially educated ministry. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the churches with educated ministers have accomplished the most for the establishment of institutions of learning, in providing America with a theological literature, and in the great cities they have ordinarily the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful churches, and the ablest and most influential preachers and teachers.

The discussion as to the need of a partially educated ministry has again broken out in the Presbyterian Church. This question has already been the chief occasion of two separations from the Presbyterian Church, and one division, and it had not a little to do with the second division. The same differences prevail now in the Church that have been in it from the beginning. The experience of the Church in the past teaches us that we should handle the question with firmness and caution. The question has gained some new features in recent years, owing to the great enlargement of the curriculum of the colleges and the theological seminaries on the one side, and the increased demand for Christian workers in our cities on the other. It seems timely, therefore, to reconsider the question in its new bearings.

At the outset it is important to distinguish between the ideal and the real in the ministry. Theological education ought ever to aim at the ideal, but it is not possible to attain the ideal under present conditions, and we are obliged to content ourselves with a maximum that falls far short of it. But even this maximum can be attained only by a portion of the ministers. The majority will not go very far beyond the minimum. And, in fact, the minimum required by the laws of the Church must be lowered in numbers of exceptional cases in our Presbyteries. And there are not a few of our experienced pastors and practical workers who think that this minimum is exacting more than it is wise to exact in the present condition of the Church and in view of the needs of the unevangelized masses.

I think that there are considerable reasons for complaint with the present customs of ministerial education and the way in which these are used in the Presbyteries of the Church. The doctrine of the parity of the ministry does not require that all ministers should have the same kind and degree of education. There are diversities of gifts in the ministry, and these diversities ought to have their freedom to unfold toward the realization of their ideals. There are differences of ability, and all cannot accomplish the same tasks. There ought to be more freedom and flexibility in education for the ministry.

If we consider the ideal of ministerial education, there is no theological school in America or in Europe that realizes it. The ideal is nearer realization in the university system of Germany, and consequently those who desire the highest theological culture are required to spend several years of special study in Germany after doing the best work they can do in the theological schools of

America. The American theological school will never be able to do this higher theological work until provision is made for several years' work by the best students as fellows after graduation in the theological seminary. This will require the endowment of more professorships, the enlargement of libraries, and the establishment of a considerable number of fellowships. Such a higher theological education can be attained only by a very small proportion of the ministers. But the Church needs such ministers, and it can never accomplish its highest intellectual and moral problems without considerable numbers of theological scholars who tread firmly in the heights of theology. The great majority of the ministry will abide in the middle ranks. For such the present theological course of study is well adapted. It is not altogether perfect, even for them. It would not be difficult to suggest a number of improvements even here. But we have no space for it at present. This course of study requires as the minimum of time ten years of special preparation ; but taking into account delays owing to ill-health, and hindrances arising from lack of means and various other causes, there are few who will not need more time, so that probably the average time will be twelve years. This time would be lengthened to fifteen or eighteen years in most cases if the student were required to earn his way into the ministry by spending considerable portions of his time at work for self-support. I shall not deny that this might be wholesome discipline in many cases. But in most cases this work would consume valuable time that is needed for ministerial education, and at the same time deprive the Church of several years of ministerial service. In the old countries, where the supply of ministers is much greater, the Church can get on without these years of service. And yet in all the churches it has been found necessary to give financial aid to students for the ministry, and so save their precious time and strength for ministerial service. All the more is this necessary in the American Presbyterian Church, where the need of ministers is so great, and where every lost year counts against the success of the Church and the Gospel. It has therefore been the established policy of the American Presbyterian Church from the earliest times to furnish such financial aid to theological students as may be necessary to enable them to pursue their studies without interruption. No one who knows the history of our Church and understands its present situation can doubt the wisdom of this policy.

We have thus far considered the highest grade of ministers and those of the middle grade. What shall be done with those in the lower grades who cannot accomplish so much as our customs and rules of theological education require ? There are some who say at once we do not care to have such ministers. The Church is better off without them. There are too many weak and inefficient men in the ranks at the present time. I have great sympathy with these views, and if all these candidates for the ministry were weak and inefficient, lacking native ability and powers of usefulness, I would say without hesitation, Let no such men intrude into the high calling of the ministry ; let no such men be thrust upon the Church of God. But the class of men I am now to consider are not such men. There are too many weak and inefficient men who intrude

into the ministry at the present time. Such men are able to fulfil all the requirements of our colleges, seminaries, and Presbyteries. They manage to keep at the foot of their classes and to drag themselves along through their courses of study. Not a few of them are dead weights for their fellow-students and professors to carry. They have no haste to enter the ministry. They will go on as long as the Church will sustain them. They would have no objection to several additional years of study. Not a few of them are obliged to undergo several additional years in order to overcome the conditions that have been imposed upon them for their laziness and inefficiency. Such dullards will be sure to make dull and inefficient ministers. They ought never to be allowed to enter the ministry. They ought never to receive a dollar from the funds of the Church. They ought to receive no pity in their examinations or conditions. There is a great lack of moral courage and practical sagacity in the Church in dealing with such cases of student inefficiency which will ere long become ministerial inefficiency.

But there are excellent men who are at the present time restrained from entering upon the ministry because they cannot fulfil the conditions of ministerial education for lack of time. Students called to the ministry while in the academy or the college may go on without difficulty and complete their studies in the theological school. But if a young man is called to the ministry from trade or mercantile life, it is a serious matter for him to begin at the academy and look forward to ten or twelve years of study in preparation for the ministry. There are not a few young men who are called to the ministry from the professions of law and medicine, and even as teachers in the common schools, who have had no collegiate education. These have at a mature age to contemplate four years in college and three years of the theological seminary after that. There are not a few young men who enter the ministry notwithstanding all these discouragements, who fulfil the requirements of the Church so far as possible, receiving such consideration and relief as the laws of the Church and the institutions of learning are able to give.

But it is clear that there are discouragements and hindrances in the way of young men who may be called to the ministry from mercantile life that do not exist in the case of young men who are in the lines of advancement toward a classical education. Is it right for the Church to presume in this way that its ministers are to be called from the boys in classical academies and in colleges? Is it true that God no longer calls his ministers from the ranks of fishermen, tent-makers, carpenters, masons, bankers' clerks, bookkeepers, and school-teachers, and those other numerous avocations in which the great mass of mankind work? And is it necessary to put such persons as may be called, after they have entered into these avocations and are no longer boys, through the treadmill of the ten years of classical education? I think not. It is well known that there are indirect ways at present of getting over this difficulty. But the young men outside of the lines of classical study do not see them or know them, and these indirect ways must come to them as favors which they hesitate to ask and which, when accepted, do not at all times put them in the

best position for the maintenance of their manhood and the cultivation of their best instincts and nobler moral powers.

In the discussion of the lowering of the requirements for ministerial education, it is common to begin at the wrong end. The best men of the class I am now speaking of do not ask to be relieved of the studies of the theological school. They are not afraid of their Hebrew Bible or their Greek Testament. It is the dull and lazy, the inefficient and the unprofitable graduate of the college who shows his dislike for Bible study. He has been tortured by Greek and Latin in college. He has laid them aside for two years in the junior and senior years, and he hopes that it will be *forever*. He is the one who has made up his mind that he has no talent for language, and that the English Bible is good enough for him. It will not be difficult for young men from trades and mercantile pursuits, who are eager for study, with a reasonable amount of special preparation for the theological school, to outstrip such graduates of colleges as these. I have seen such eager students do it so many times that I have no hesitation in saying that I prefer such men who have never enjoyed the privilege of college to those dull and slippery fellows who have gained from college little else than their diplomas.

There are certain qualifications that every minister ought to have—such as (1) the call of God, (2) personal consecration, (3) religious experience resulting from the call and the consecration that will distinguish him from others, (4) intellectual powers that will enable him to understand the truth of God, and gifts of expression that may be trained to teach and preach with the voice and pen, (5) moral powers, a good conscience, quick instinct of right, and correct habits.

Without such qualities there is no ground for a theological education. Ministers are not made, they are called and endowed by God. The only thing that we can do is to train these men so that they may fulfil their calling and use their endowments to the best advantage in the service of God.

“ The mind alike

Vigorous or weak, is capable of culture,
But still bears fruit according to its nature,
’Tis not the teacher’s skill that rears the scholar :
The sparkling gem gives back the glorious radiance
It drinks from other light, but the dull earth
Absorbs the blaze and yields no gleam again.”

Those who have not the natural gifts can never be trained if they spend their entire lifetime in the training. Theological education bases itself on these natural qualifications and spiritual endowments, and it has (1) to cultivate the piety of the preacher, (2) to train his ability to teach and preach, both by voice and pen ; (3) it has also as its chief work to train him in a knowledge of the Gospel. He must know his message. He must have something to preach. The several theological professors give him this material and show him how to use it.

We have to inquire what is the *minimum* of training that may be necessary,

for there is evidently no *maximum* here. The minimum should be as high as possible, and we should err rather on the side of the maximum. Of the ten years usually spent in the course of study in preparation for the ministry, seven are devoted to the training in the arts and sciences to make the scholar. Special theological education in our seminaries is built on such scholarship. If there is to be a shortening of the course of study, it is clear that it should be in those studies that make the scholar rather than the preacher, not therefore of the theological course, unless there be in it some studies that are more technical than necessary; but of the school course and of the college course, where the unessential things really are. The colleges have filled their curriculum full with studies that are no essential part of a ministerial preparation. The entire college course in Latin, Greek, and mathematics is not essential to a theological education. The Latin, Greek, and mathematics of the preparatory school are about all that are necessary. The studies of the theological seminary require that a young man should read Latin and Greek prose at sight, with a correct knowledge of the grammars. This he ought to be able to do in the preparatory school. He should be able, after a little practice, to read at sight the Greek Testament and the Latin of ecclesiastical authors. But, in fact, few of the graduates of our colleges can do as much as this. The most of them have two years or more after the sophomore year, in which they forget their Latin and Greek. Large numbers of the graduates of American colleges cannot read the Gospel of Mark and Calvin's Institutes in the original languages without grammar and lexicon. There is very little reading of Latin in our theological seminaries at the present time; and it is necessary to give theological students special training in Greek grammar in order that they may understand their Greek Testament. As things now are in the American colleges, I would prefer, looking only at the study of the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, to receive students at the end of their sophomore year; for a large proportion of them lay aside their classics for the most part in the upper college classes, lose their habits of linguistic study, forget the technical matters of Greek and Latin grammar, and lose their facility in reading and in translation.

Of course the other departments of the theological seminary need the preparation in logic, psychology, ethics, history, literature, and other branches that are taught in the junior and senior years in college. There is no danger that the theological student will gain too much preparation in the lines of study opened up to him in college. It would be an advantage for the higher grade of students if they could take graduate courses in our colleges before entering the theological seminary. The students of the middle grades have not too much in the college curriculum. They might have still more with advantage. The difficulty is that with the present options they choose those studies that are not always the best for preparation for a theological seminary. And the lower grade of students give too much attention to non-essentials at the expense of the essentials for theological preparation.

It is in the minds of not a few professors of our theological seminaries that

we shall be obliged to require an entrance examination for the theological school, and that we cannot depend upon the diplomas of the colleges as sufficient evidence of a suitable preparation for a theological seminary. I do not hesitate to state that I am in favor of such an entrance examination. I would not ask the question in such an examination whether the candidate were a graduate of college or not, but whether he could sustain an examination in such studies as we regard essential for the foundation of theological training.

The present college course requires, or at least encourages, too much study in the lines embraced in the philosophical faculty of a German university. The American college has developed too much in that direction, and all its tendencies are toward that line of study. The philosophical faculty in Germany embraces all studies that are not included in the faculties of law, medicine, and theology, and does not limit itself to philosophy. The American colleges do not teach too much philosophy, but too little to give a suitable preparation for the study of systematic theology; more attention should be given to psychology, ethics, social science, and the history of philosophy. They do not give too much English literature and rhetoric, but too little to give a suitable preparation for a course of homiletics; not too much history, but too little to give a preparation for Church history. But the colleges teach more mathematics, physical science, and more of the difficult and higher Greek and Latin classics than a theological student needs. If he have the time and the ability to master all these studies, he should be encouraged to take them; for a Christian minister is able to use all knowledge. But these are not essential studies, and the student for the ministry ought to keep the Christian ministry chiefly in mind, and not allow himself to be overwhelmed and distracted by studies that are aside from his task.

The American college in its origin used to teach Hebrew, dogmatic theology, Biblical history, and the English Bible. It used to make preparation for the ministry its chief aim; but there are few colleges that have retained this aim. They threw overboard one after another the studies preparatory to the ministry, even the study of the Hebrew language. It has been necessary in recent years to make great efforts to induce the colleges to restore Hebrew and the study of the English Bible to their original places in the course, but this movement is only in part successful. I have never seen any answer to the question what has become of the endowments that have been given in olden times for the teaching of Hebrew and other portions of Biblical and theological work. We do not claim that the college at the present time should make the theological school its final aim, but we urge that the college should fulfil its original design and give its attention to the preparation of its students for work in the four faculties in the university course, and that it should not neglect this work in order to become a so-called university, which, after all, can only be a partial copy of the philosophical faculty of a German university.

If there is to be a shortening of the course of preparation for the ministry, it should be in the college and not in the special course of the theological seminary.

It has been found necessary to organize special institutions for the training of ministers for the Germans and the Freedman that combine the academy, college, and seminary in one shortened course of study. This is the method of the English Dissenting colleges and of the Diocesan seminaries of the Church of England. The question arises whether the Church might not establish two or more such colleges for the class of students of which I have been speaking. I can conceive of such institutions, say one in Philadelphia and another in St. Louis, where the course of study, including academy, college, and seminary, could be reduced to five years of ten months, and where all the essentials of theological training might be given and all the requirements of our Presbyterian law might be fulfilled.

Another way would be for the colleges to make their entire course optional, and then the seminaries might agree as to the studies that they would require as indispensable for an entrance examination, so that students for the ministry who have not the time to try for a diploma of the college might take these essential studies in two years. But if our colleges are unwilling to do this, I can see no other way than that the Church shall establish such special colleges, or else annex preparatory departments to our theological seminaries for the training of special students of the kind that I have pointed out.

There are many reasons in favor of this latter course. What is needed is not a readjustment of the course of study in the theological seminary, but a reconstruction of the course of preparation for it. This special preparation could be made by the seminary itself if it cannot be gained in the colleges. It might use its Fellows as instructors in this preparatory department, and thus train them while it is training the preparatory classes. The professors in the seminaries might give a portion of their time to this preparatory work.

The course of preparation ought to embrace the following studies: (1) The Greek language, with a thorough study of the grammar and exercises in reading the best specimens of Greek prose, with the aim to cultivate the powers of the student to read at sight in preparation for the study of the New Testament.

(2) The elements of Hebrew grammar and the ability to read easy Hebrew prose in preparation for the study of the Hebrew Bible.

(3) Latin grammar and Latin prose writers, with the aim to gain an ease in reading at sight in preparation for the reading of ecclesiastical Latin.

(4) Logic, psychology, ethics, sociology, and the history of philosophy, in preparation for dogmatic theology and Christian ethics.

(5) English rhetoric and English literature, in preparation for a course in homiletics.

(6) General history in preparation for the study of Church history.

(7) A study of the English Bible.

(8) A cultivation of the voice both for speaking and singing.

These are the studies that are needed in a course of preparation for work in a theological seminary. In my judgment these might be given to young men such as I have described in a preparatory school under the direction of the faculty of a theological seminary.

Such an institution should be carefully guarded and used only for the purposes indicated. No encouragement should be given to any one to shorten his course of study in college. It is designed for those only who have excellent reasons why they cannot go to college and undertake the full college course. No student should be admitted to this preparatory school under twenty-one years of age, and who cannot satisfy the faculty as to his ability and piety. It should be made clear that such a preparatory school is no rival of the college, and that it aims to do a work that the colleges cannot or will not do.

The course of study ought to be so severe that it would stay the progress of those who lack the proper qualifications. Such an institution is designed for the rapid progress of able and eager men, and no dull and lazy students should be tolerated within its walls. Such students should be so aided that they may give their entire time to the work, because they have a large amount of work to accomplish in a short time. Such a preparatory school might be so hedged in that all evils might be warded off, and a new source of supply opened up for the Christian ministry that would yield us a class of men that are greatly needed, especially for the hard missionary work of the Church.

C. A. BRIGGS.

New York.

THE NEW CREED OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THERE are few, probably, who doubt that it is beyond human powers to frame a creed as extended as the Westminster Confession of Faith, which can be adopted in all its propositions as the personal belief of each of a large body of ministers. Wherever, therefore, the formula of subscription is such as really or apparently asserts the adoption of every proposition of the Confession as the personal faith of the subscriber, consciences are wounded and a real necessity exists for relief. The most natural, and, as it seems to us, altogether the best way of seeking this relief is so to modify the formula of subscription as to allow all the liberty that is consistent with the Church's witness to the truth. This is the way that has been adopted by the American Presbyterians, who require candidates for ordination "sincerely to receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing *the system of doctrine* taught in the Holy Scriptures," or, as the original Synod expressed it in 1729, to "declare their agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being *in all the essential and necessary articles*, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine." The framing of a "Declaratory Statement," setting forth the sense in which the Church understands her standards—as has been done, for example, by the United Presbyterians of Scotland—seems to us a much more clumsy device. Its effect is simply to amend the Confession by indirection in certain specified points (and if amendment is to be made, why not do