

DISCUSSIONS

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MEMORIAL ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.¹

THE undersigned would respectfully state to the Assembly's Committee on Theological Seminaries that he was called at an early age by the voice of the church to her service in theological instruction, and has devoted the prime of his life to it with all the attention and zeal of which he was capable; that he humbly conceives it is both the duty and privilege of the public servants of the church to communicate the results of their experience; that he has been thoroughly convinced by his observation that our system of theological training permits important improvements, by which it might be made more effective for the glory of the Head of the Church and the salvation of souls. He therefore begs the Assembly, inasmuch as the church now enjoys an interval of peace, and no other fundamental subject arises to engross its time and thought, to take in hand at this time this important interest, and perfect the agencies of the church for its execution according to their wisdom. With a view to this result he humbly begs leave, through the Committee on Seminaries, to submit some practical views for their consideration.

Theological seminaries are about forty-five years old in our denomination. This, although more than the lifetime of a generation, is but a short space in the lifetime of a system, so that we may regard this plan of theological training as still a novelty in our church. In many respects it certainly shows the unsettled relations of a new thing, and this justifies continued discussion even of its fundamental traits and principles.

I. The first question is the *form of control* under which such schools shall be formed and governed, assuming for the time that all are convinced of their necessity. The Presbyterian Church has never deliberately decided whether they had best be under the direct control of the supreme judicatory, or of the Synods. In 1809 the General Assembly referred the following questions to the Presbyteries: 1, Shall we have *one* seminary? 2, Shall

¹ To the Assembly's Committee on Seminaries, Mobile, 1869.

we have two equal ones? 3, Shall there be one for each Synod? Twenty-seven Presbyteries responded in 1810, six voting against any seminary, one for two equal ones, ten for one sole seminary, and ten for one for each Synod. It was understood, on all hands, that if either of the first plans was adopted, the direct control should be in the Assembly; if the last, in the Synod. Although there was but a minority for the first plan, the Assembly saw fit to adopt it, and founded one seminary at Princeton. They argued that it would secure a fuller faculty, better course of instruction, more liberal endowment, larger libraries, and a general acquaintanceship of young ministers, and a common *esprit du corps*. These arguments are sufficiently neutralized by the church's growth. It then contained four hundred and thirty-four ministers, seven hundred and seventy-two churches, and twenty-nine thousand communicants. Reasonings which were true for a body of that size soon ceased to be of force by reason of its rapid increase. The church in the South hopes for a similar increase, and should look forward to an increase of the number of seminaries; for the experience of the denomination in the United States has shown that their multiplication is a necessary and proper result of its growth. The pleas for a larger faculty, library and endowment in favor of a single school are exploded by the church's progress in wealth and liberality of giving. The idea that this plan would secure fraternity among the young ministry was illusory, for the *alumnus* of three years before was as much a stranger to the later *alumni* as though educated elsewhere; and the effect, if produced was to be deprecated as tending to that centralization of power and influence so greatly to be dreaded. On the other hand, everything supports the policy of having several seminaries; it is most imprudent to give supreme control over our orthodoxy to any one human institution, when we take into account the fallibility of all things human, the danger of awakening arrogance in the teachers and pupils of an institution so great and overshadowing, the known tendency of scholastic corporations to corruption, and the power which able teachers have over the minds of scholars, either for good or evil. The single thought of the deplorable situation in which the church in the Southern States would now be had Princeton continued our sole seminary, enforces these views beyond a dispute. Un-

less we are peculiarly shortsighted, and blind to the maxim of Solomon, that what has been is that which shall be hereafter, we shall consider it as our settled policy, after so striking a warning, to guard the safety and independence of our church by having several seminaries as checks on each other. There are now two; and every lover of our Zion will desire that neither of these may ever be shorn of a particle of its usefulness, and that they may, in due time, have other worthy sisters.

Now, the General Assemblies of 1809 and 1810 evidently assumed that the efficiency of a direct government by the Assembly required that there should be but one central school, or at most two, and that a multiplication of them would, of course, imply their direct control by more local bodies. This is correct. We shall see that the moment these schools are multiplied, the Assembly becomes an unsuitable and incompetent body for their immediate management. Indeed, it seems to us that from that moment all honest advantages of such control are at an end, and the only practical motive why one among several co-ordinate seminaries should seek or desire it is an unfair purpose to employ the partiality of the common parent, the Assembly, for its factitious advantage over nominal equals.

The General Assembly is "the bond of union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence among all our churches." It is the body which expresses the *unity of the church*. The training of its ministry in orthodoxy is a matter of such radical and general importance that here, if anywhere, this unity ought to be expressed by the oversight of the supreme judicatory. But the word *oversight* suggests the kind of control which this common bond of union should attempt over it. It should supervise and exercise a general and careful government over the performance of this function by the bodies beneath it, without attempting to become the direct doer of it. For illustration, surely nothing can be of more universal and radical concernment in the spiritual commonwealth than the admission of members to full citizenship in it. The supreme court does not, therefore, undertake to examine every applicant itself; there are reasons which render this properly the immediate function of a more local body, the church session. But the Assembly lays down for all church sessions the essential terms of admission, and supervises the administration of these terms by her general powers of

“review and control.” Such, we hold, is the general truth as to the direction of theological education. Hence, on the one hand, when the old Assembly, North, attempts directly to govern three or four co-ordinate seminaries, she attempts a task for which she is incompetent; and the attempt leads only to inefficiency, confusion and corruption. On the other hand, for a seminary to make no report to the Assembly, and no acknowledgment of its general power of review and veto, is violative of the church’s unity.

The proper course for the Assembly appears, therefore, to be, to exercise her powers of review and control, by assuming an efficient general control over all the seminaries, and attempting the immediate administration of none. All those fundamental principles and rules which in their nature must be common to every good theological education the Assembly should devise of its own wisdom, and enforce them impartially on all the seminaries. For, obviously, no section of the church should be left without the best attainable education of its pastors; and by what argument can the Assembly excuse itself from the duty and responsibility of giving to all parts of the church that which she deems proper, in this concern, for one part? Such things as these, then, the Assembly should impartially and authoritatively ordain for all the seminaries. What constitutes a liberal course of theological study, after the intent of the constitution? What portion of time, in the main, should be given to study and what to vacation? What should be the general organization of a corps of teachers? What should be the *mode* and what the *extent* of pecuniary aid to those who require it? Under what responsibilities of government candidates should be during their course of study? Whether the attempt to combine scholastic and parochial training at the same time shall be made? etc., etc.

The exertion of its rightful authority by the Assembly over all principles, such as these, which are of equal and common concernment throughout the bounds of our church, would be every way wholesome, removing occasion of unseemly rivalries between seminaries, encouraging the timidity of these institutions against the fear of alienating patronage, by spirited reforms in which they stood alone, and spreading in all parts of the church a grade of attainment and devotion to labor level with that prevalent in the most favored.

But the Assembly should not undertake to fix for any seminary special details, lest by endeavoring to produce uniformity they should work a practical inequality and injustice. Thus, the Assembly should say imperatively what ought to be the course of study for every candidate throughout its jurisdiction. But if there should be a particular seminary to which, by reason of proximity or such reason, the Committee of Foreign Missions should desire to send some young man to be trained for the Choctaw mission, it would be very unwise for the Assembly to ordain, either that that seminary should not have a teacher of the Choctaw language because the other seminaries had none, or that all the rest should have one because this seminary properly had one. The Assembly should say that her candidates everywhere shall as a *general rule* work so many months and rest so many out of the twelve, so as to prevent one seminary from over-working, in ill-judged zeal, or some other from making an unseemly *bid* for the favor of self-indulgent men by underworking. But it would be very unequal for the Assembly to say that given seminaries, seated at places which in the later summer are malarious, shall have session during August and September because other seminaries, in salubrious or mountainous regions, find it well to have session during those months. So of other details, such as the nomination of teachers, etc., etc. The Assembly seems, on its present plan, to be somewhat in this anomalous position: it demits in part the constitutional and all-important functions to which it is competent, and attempts to execute some of those which should be left to its agents.

My conception, then, is, that the Assembly, having ordained a code of general rules for all seminaries alike, fixing every *common principle* in the most enlightened, energetic and constitutional way, should commit the execution of details to boards of directors or curators selected by itself. These boards should be the *first men* of the church; and their travelling expenses and maintenance while engaged in their duties should be invariably paid out of the treasury of the institutions. These boards should be small, not containing more than nine members at the largest. But they should be held under strict responsibility to the Assembly. Their selection should be mainly from the section of the church directly interested in the particular institution; and the preferences of the church courts around the institution as

to their selection should usually receive a certain regard; for as soon as we have more than one seminary, each becomes necessarily, in a certain good sense, sectional; and justice requires that those who have its chief burden to bear shall be considered in its management. But on each board should be about two members not from the section of the seminary. These should be men of national reputation and attainments, and in each case they should be brought by the Assembly from distant and diverse sections of the church, in order to infuse a liberal and broad policy in each board, and to prevent a spirit of nepotism and narrow locality.

To this board, thus constituted, a given seminary should be committed, with sufficiently ample discretion and strict responsibility. The board should manage all details, *including the election of professors*. But the last act, and all *changes* of established rule or usage, should be made subject to the veto of the Assembly; and no professor should be installed until the Assembly had confirmed his election.

Such is, in outline, my conception of the proper plan for carrying out the spirit of the constitution on an enlightened scale. I will now support my views by a series of remarks, the application of which will be plain.

1. When the church determines to have more than one seminary, it has determined that the support of each one, for funds, teachers and students, shall be, in the main, sectional. The eminent reputation of individuals will only educe exceptional cases under this rule. Hence, the supposed *prestige* which would result from a direct national management, must either be illusory or else unfair to equal institutions. The impartiality of the Assembly, if it be impartial, will compel it to make each seminary as truly a local and sectional one, in a good sense, as though under sectional control; hence, a grievous temptation to unseemly rivalries and squabbles. The special friends of each will find that the advantages they hoped to derive from the Assembly in the race of competitions are deceitful, unless they are partial, and so dishonest.

2. The Assembly, while wisely constituted for a body of general review and control, is ill-adapted to the direct government of a school of learning. It is a temporary and changing body; the school is permanent. It is general; the school is local in

its immediate interest. The members come together strangers, and scarcely become acquainted before they part, so that they are unfitted to handle in common a multiplicity of local details. They cannot have time for faithful examination of them all, and if burdened with them will huddle over a part with indecent haste. Thus the pretended government of the schools by it will be no evidence whatever that the collective wisdom of the church has been evoked thereon; but the ordinances made will be, in fact, the dictates of some adroit clique of parliamentary managers. The *Princeton Review* charged that the Assembly at Buffalo actually adopted the plan of instruction reported to them by the directors of Danville nominally, in reality dictated by Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, *without hearing it read!* Thus a plan of instruction, entirely new and anomalous, was propounded as the preference of the Assembly, when in fact not one man in ten of Presbyterians regarded it as anything else than ridiculous. Nor will Assemblies have greater financial skill and care to watch over the funds of an institution. The sectional constituency directly gave the money, values the institution, receives its immediate benefits. The General Assembly only represents it indirectly. Lastly, an Assembly of the kind of ours is the last body to be expected to make a judicious selection of professors; they are without that intimate knowledge of the peculiar qualities of mind, temper, and scholarship necessary to fit one for this arduous post, and they are ever liable to be led astray by the false glitter of some merely popular talent, not to say by other less excusable motives of ecclesiastical demagogism. Who believes that the professors in the late universities of Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia would have been as wisely chosen by the legislatures of those States as by the boards to whom these legislatures entrusted them?

3. Justice requires that the effective management of every seminary shall be shared by those who bear the main burden of its support, in proportion to their interests in it. When the section of our denomination appropriate to the support of Union Seminary, for instance, finds that, after all, it has the burden to bear, the money to pay, the students to furnish, they feel that they ought to have the voice in the management of the institution. Why should strangers to Union, from distant sections, strangers pledged to the support of other and rival institutions,

have equal control with themselves over their money and labors? In the old Assembly this was felt on all hands. How often have not members of the late Assemblies candidly acknowledged that in legislating, and especially in electing professors for the seminaries, they consulted chiefly the wishes of the special friends of each institution? "We voted," say they, "to place a certain brother in this seminary, not because we knew him, but because its friends desired him." Nor could they have properly done otherwise. They could not else have answered the just complaints of its friends. "It is we who have the money to pay, the loss to suffer, and if there is failure, the failure to repair. Why, then, have you, coming from Georgia, coming from Louisiana, refused us the man of our own section, whom *we knew* to be the right one, because he was not personally known to you, when it was not to be expected that you, in your distant section, should know him so well?" Upon that plan the recommendation of the friends of each seminary should and must have a potential influence.

But now, how shall that recommendation be made? Who shall be recognized as the authorized exponent to the Assembly of the wishes of that part of the church? There is no safe answer, and the truth is just this, that an influence must be introduced into the management of these seminaries which common justice demands shall be weighty, and which yet has no declared and constitutional mode to express itself. The old method of election is liable to the vilest abuses of the *caucus system*. When we consider of what poor human nature is capable, and what plots, ambitions and rivalries have been seen in the church, he who needs to have the deplorable results of such a system pointed out must be short-sighted indeed. In the Assembly of 1836, at New York, a professor of church history was to be elected for Allegheny. A professor of the seminary was present as a lobby member, and we were given to understand that Dr. Dickinson, of New York city, was the choice of Allegheny. The most of us had never heard of him; but we necessarily reasoned as above, and elected him. Scarcely had we gotten home when we were told that his election had given great dissatisfaction at Allegheny; that a professor was not the seminary; that he had misrepresented their desires. Dr. Dickinson, it seems, was a man of some delicacy of feeling, and he promptly declined to have

anything to do with the chair, so the seminary was rid of the mistake, at the cost of a year's vacancy, a result continually occurring, by the way, from this cumbrous plan of government.

These considerations are so practical and forcible that the Princeton Seminary adopted the more candid method of having a formal and open nomination from the board of directors of the man they desired. But here, again, if the directory is the proper body to make this nomination, which is a virtual election, why may we not better call it in name what it is in fact, and fairly and squarely give to the directory a *right of election*, with a veto power in the Assembly?

4. The unity, purity and comfort of the Assembly itself, and through it of the whole church, are marred by this direct control. The Assemblies will be perpetually agitated with election and other details. Witness the Assembly of the United States at Indianapolis, Rochester, Buffalo. The questions thus raised are unfit to be introduced into the general court of the church. They involve personal emoluments and dignities; they evoke too many selfish and partizan feelings. The seminaries, if under the immediate care of the Assembly, meet on its floor as competitors for its favor and fostering care. Prominent men will be allured from one to another. Complaints of partiality will be made.

But worse still, those corrupt combinations will be made, known in the slang of the day as "log rollings." The condition will be intimated from one side of the house to the other, "Promote my measure, and I will promote yours." The threat will be hinted, "Dare to oppose mine, and I will thwart yours." It is well known that the Assembly of 1853 placed its seminary at Danville, contrary to the opinion of the western church, and the decision was really obtained by getting the votes of the Princeton clique in favor of Danville. And their motive was *the threat*, ingeniously intimated by Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, that unless they voted for his place he would thrust Dr. Humphreys down their unwilling throats at Princeton. They wanted Boardman, and to escape the former gratified Breckinridge by voting for their location. When members of church courts are so lost to public virtue and purity of principle as to permit motives of partizan or personal concernment thus to dictate their decision on measures of general interest, the days of simony and clerical bribery

are not distant. Why should these heats, intrigues, plots and complications be thrust upon the whole church, to embroil, corrupt and alienate it? Let these sectional and personal matters be kept where they belong. Let each seminary be directly governed by its own section, with a veto power in the Assembly.

The Presbyterian Church in the Southern States had never expressed a formal opinion on the above question. Informally it may be considered as committed to my views. The two seminaries now in existence among them had never sought the direct government of the Assembly. Dr. Thornwell, the great exponent of Columbia, had argued ably against it. In this state of things the three Synods of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama directed their board to transfer the seminary at Columbia, and make it the seminary of the Assembly immediately. This action, if sanctioned by the Assembly, was a virtual decision of the whole principle for the whole church, and in a direction opposite to the previous policy of the church; for it necessitated the other seminaries to "follow suit," whatever their intrinsic objections to a vicious relation, or else submit to see an equal or junior elevate itself into a pretended superior by seizing an artificial distinction, and thrusting itself more prominently before the whole church as *par excellence* its own national institution. And not only was the action adopting Columbia virtually a revolution of the principles of the whole church on this question, but the friends of the opposite views felt that they had reason to complain because it was effected without mature and general discussion, and at a time of confusion and distress. The three Synods which made the application came very near being the judges in their own suit, for their commissioners were nearly half of the whole number in attendance. Nor can they wholly justify this impropriety by saying that this was the fault of the absentees; the whole public mind was imperatively engrossed by the war; it was physically impossible for Texas, Arkansas, and parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Northern Virginia to attend. The ground of complaint against this haste is strengthened by this, that remonstrance was addressed to the leading movers of this radical change against pressing it at such a time, but it was unavailing. It would seem but fair, then, that the opponents of the change shall hold it subject to reconsideration.

II. The second point is as to the plan and constitution of the seminary itself. All our seminaries have hitherto, in thoughtless imitation of New England colleges, organized their course of studies into a *curriculum* measured by a certain term of years, in which all matriculates pursue the same studies for the same time and in the same order. On this plan the professors not only rule, but also teach, jointly, not as independent persons, but as a faculty, each one only occupying in connection with his colleagues his allotted share of the students' allotted time. So the examinations are the examinations of the faculty: This plan, although possessing some advantages to recommend it in *gymnasia* intended for the drilling of youths in science and languages in the case of a professional school, has nothing whatever to recommend it. It has been generally discarded by the continental universities of Europe, partly by the English, and wholly by the best schools in our country. We should discard it here. Our seminaries should be organized into three schools, one of theology, one of ecclesiology, and one of Biblical literature, having two professors, (if you please, a Greek and a Hebrew, dividing between them matters of introduction and exegesis). While the professors should move in concert as to hours of teaching, discipline, and police, and in these things, and the general exercises in public speaking, constitute a faculty, yet in teaching his course, each one should be an independent teacher, responsible only to his employers. Each department should be an independent school. Each professor should judge for himself the extent of his course. He should examine his own pupils himself, for, notoriously, no one else can do it thoroughly at once and justly to his students. The idea that the examination is the exercise of the faculty, or worse yet, of the board of directors, is impractical and absurd. The standard of proficiency which he should exact should be fixed, and *fixed high*, by his employers; otherwise the examining should be as completely his own personal work as the teaching. Students should then be allowed to take such schools as they find convenient, under judicious advice, and consume as much or as little time in completing their studies as they need. The idea of a *curriculum* measured by years should be utterly ignored. The course, indeed, should be made so rich that no mortal, whatever his preparation or talent, could complete it in less than two

years, the constitutional *minimum* of study. But as for the rest, let the student's own capacity alone decide for him whether he shall expend two, or four, or five years in the course.

And here is the first advantage which I mention of this organization, that it abolishes the irrational measure of time for different men's capacities. It no longer attempts to stretch the quick and the dull together on the Procrustean bed of three years. Second, it communicates intense energy to the efforts of the instructors, by opening the way for an honorable emulation among themselves. The efficient no longer feels that he has to carry an inefficient colleague along on his shoulders. *The different schools no longer have of necessity the same number of students.* A young man may take the school of church history and government in this seminary, and go to some other for the school of theology, where it is more efficiently taught. And this leads us to remark that thus active young men are enabled to get the very best education in the least time, by taking in each seminary only those schools which are most approved. Third, this organization will soon lead to a vastly-improved standard of examinations and tests. When the instruction is conducted, and literary honors are awarded by the faculty acting as a body, the standard is practically that of the lowest, least efficient man in the faculty. No one professor feels personally responsible for the misdirection of honors and awards, or the degradation of the standard of acquirement. That standard has to be kept down for all the faculty to the grade of the slowest and most perfunctory man in it. But by separating the schools, the energetic and spirited men are untrammelled; they feel a personal responsibility for the honor of the literary awards in their departments; they practice a wholesome thoroughness in teaching and testing. Nor is the advantage of thoroughness in a part of the course all that is gained. The thorough men stimulate their more indolent and relaxed colleagues, and set a fashion of literary zeal which they dare not wholly disregard. Once more, the present injudicious plan of our seminaries forbids a liberal-minded professor much to enrich or enlarge his own course. He has to teach it in a certain fixed fragment of the three years' time. He cannot enlarge it, except by robbing his colleagues of the time they are entitled to occupy the common pupils. Let the professor of theology, for instance, endeavor to give a larger knowledge on

some point of his course by referring to abler or newer authorities, or any otherwise, and in a day or two he will hear a complaint from some other professor, that he is egotistically *monopolizing* the students; that young Mr. A. or B. went to that other professor unprepared, and boldly justified himself by saying that the professor of theology absorbed all his time. Thus this system actually creates obstacles, where none need exist to progress and improvement of the course. But let the idea that the student is bound to take a given number of studies in any given time be exploded; let him be told from the first that he must judge for himself how much or how little he should undertake; that if he finds he has not time for theology and those other studies also he has only himself to blame for it, he has undertaken too much, and nobody hinders him from rectifying that mistake. Then this unfortunate limitation will be thrown down. Each professor will be entitled to exact as thorough work of his school as his own judgment points out without a seeming infringement of his colleagues' rights. I will venture the assertion that, while such a *curriculum* might possibly make a tolerably just distribution of a youth's time between the drill-tasks of geometry and syntax, no professional school can ever be taught on that plan in a truly liberal and expanded spirit. If the directors would have a truly fine school of divinity, they should talk thus to each of their professors: "You are sole judge of the amount of labor needed for proficiency in your department. Exact as much as you judge necessary. Should you occupy the whole year of a student in your sole course, we shall not complain. The harder you make it to acquire the honors of your department, the better for our young ministers."

III. This leads us to the third point of remark: the propriety of educating young ministers under literary responsibilities and collegiate rules like other men. There is on all hands a lack of fidelity in applying the tests of character and scholarship for licensure. Presbyteries, because the seminaries profess to give a certificate on examination of a mature course of study, are far too much inclined to take for granted the candidate's scholarship. As a matter of course he who has his seminary testimonial gets his license. Where, in practice, is the instance to the contrary? But the faculties of the seminaries on their part excuse their laxity by saying, "We are not a Presbytery. Our

award has no constitutional authority. It is not worth our while to reject a dunce, for he will go before some easy, good natured Presbytery and get our decision reversed, and come back triumphant, to twit us with his license. Besides, if we are not very strict in examining, it does not much matter, because another trial is still to come after ours." Thus the duty is bandied from one to another, and faithfully performed by neither.

When instances of glaring deficiency in scholarship occur, a part of the Presbyteries are usually conscientious, and would do their duty by postponing or refusing license. But to take the lead in such acts is painful, invidious, and there are always some brethren, in whom goodness of heart has swallowed up good sense, who come to the rescue of indolence and ignorance. "Well, Moderator, I doubt whether many of us would not be unable to answer some of these questions any better than this young brother. We all know that it is not the most learned man who makes the most useful minister. With zeal and industry, I don't doubt this young brother will do a great deal of good; it would be a sin to disappoint that good by refusing him license, now that the church stands so greatly in need of ministers. Gifts are better than book learning. Our Daniel Bakers, with an imperfect education, have done ten times as much for Zion as we common men with all our education. I was pleased with this young brother's popular sermon, and don't doubt he will be very useful."

Such are the arguments which we are accustomed to hear on these occasions. It is wholly forgotten that we are a religious commonwealth, governed by a written constitution, which every presbyter is sworn to enforce; that a certain scholarship is there required in the ministry; and if this requisition is found unnecessary, the only proper or honest course is first to seek an amendment of this constitution. It is forgotten that the very proof which the Presbytery should have, the only sufficient proof of that zeal and industry in the candidate which would make him a useful minister in spite of ignorance, is diligence in improving the means of education which the church has provided for him; and that his failure to improve them properly is the very evidence which the Presbytery is bound to take, that he has not zeal and industry, and will be as lazy in the ministry as he has been in the seminary. It is forgotten that God requires

each man to serve him with all his mind and strength; so that when a Daniel Baker, with his neglected talents still, in virtue of natural gifts, effects five times as much as one of us common mortals, it is no justification to him. For the thing God exacted of him was *all the service* those talents, cultivated, could yield; and if it is true that, with diligent training, he might have done yet more for his God, he is truly a delinquent. The servant that could have brought ten talents increase, would not have been justified by bringing five, like his humbler neighbor, who was applauded for his five.

But the Presbyteries are not the chief delinquents. The seminaries are managed upon a preposterous plan, which any man's common sense may see would disorganize any other school. They have virtually no government over students, no roll call at prayers or recitation, no police, no grade of scholarship enforced, no marks at recitations, no responsibility of students to teachers. Each pupil does that which is right in his own eyes; he fears no demerit; if he chooses to learn next to nothing, the professor has no penalty; and at the end of three years every student who has in form attended all the examinations receives his certificate of proficiency. Now is it not the plainest thing in the world, that where a given number of young men apply for graduation, and *all receive it*, the testimonial so conferred ceases altogether to be any evidence of proficiency? And since in every group of human beings some will be found inefficient wherever there are no rejections, the testimonials of scholarship must be worthless.

The tendency of such a no-system is to impair diligence and scholarship. If this result has not followed, it is due to the unusually high character of our Southern candidates, which performs its duties in most cases without impulsion. But it has not always been so in seminaries. It may at sometime be otherwise among us; nor is our neglect of system now entirely harmless. The scholarship of our young ministry loses in depth what it has gained in extent of surface; in many, the habits of research and knowledge of the learned languages is soon lost after they enter upon their active duties. The average grade of diligence is not what it should be in the seminaries, nor even equal to that of the better students in secular institutions. I shall not, of course, be understood as saying that it is as low as the

average which we should find in the colleges, by taking all the idle and dissolute who are found there along with the diligent. It is believed that the standard, both of literary attainments and of industry in study, is as high in Union Seminary as in any Presbyterian seminary. But very often has the writer asked the better students here, "Are you studying now as you did when competing for an honor in the senior class at college?" And the answer has usually been, with a smile at the absurdity of the question, "Why, no, of course not; not by any means." But surely, as the young Christian draws nearer to his sacred and responsible work as a minister, and enters upon the more essential preparations for it, this is no time to relax any of the effort of which he has shown himself safely capable. The church should be satisfied with no diligence in her ministry beneath that which is exhibited by the foremost in secular professions. While she has employment and reward for every grade of *capacity*, even the humblest, she has no use for any grade of indolence, or for any but the highest *energy*. The times demand that she should realize in the zeal of her ministry the promise by Zechariah, "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David as the angel of the Lord before them."

This ill-judged facility, in both Presbyteries and seminaries, operates only to repel the minds which we should most desire to win. A Presbytery sits under a solemn oath to execute faithfully the constitution of the church. It may repeat to itself, with no little propriety, the words of the eighty-second Psalm: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the rulers." The body proceeds under these sacred sanctions to perform one of its most solemn acts, the trying of those who are to be examples and guides of Christ's flock. But the tests actually applied are often so different from those prescribed in the constitution, that the whole proceeding is a mere mockery of fidelity. The candidate is professedly tried to see whether he can write Latin, whether he knows well Greek and Hebrew, science and history, theology and interpretation, and when the trials are carried far enough to make it pretty manifest that he does not know these things in a proper sense, it is voted that he does know them, and he is licensed. How can it be made more certain that this candidate thus admitted shall be himself an inefficient, unfaithful presbyter all his minis-

terial life than by thus signalizing his clerical birthday with a general example of presbyterial unfaithfulness? And what can be the impression concerning the moral grade and dignity of the ministry among those who propose to pursue their secular professions with an honorable energy and fidelity? Much has been said concerning the unwillingness of our young men of promise to seek the ministry, and many explanations have been suggested. We verily believe that one of the most important is this, that admission has been too easily obtained. The spirited and ingenuous young man feels no disposition to enter the lists for a prize which he sees bestowed with indiscriminate looseness on the unworthy and worthy alike. He was proposing to win the honor by industry and strenuous exertion; he is disgusted to see it bestowed on mediocrity. Only the ignoble value a prize which may be won without exertion or merit. The spectacle exhibited in the seminaries thus concurs with the mismanagement of the Presbyteries to repress the zeal and aspirations of every young man of mettle. In proof, we point to the well known fact that in those colleges and universities where a high grade of scholarship is faithfully applied, this strictness and consequent difficulty of attaining the honors is a prime element of their popularity with all spirited young men, such as are worth having in the seminary. And this element of popularity is ever strongest among the young men themselves. The writer speaks that which he *knows* of his own observation, that when himself a student, the thing which above all others fired the hearts of young students with admiration for the University of Virginia, and longing to study there, was the conviction that its examinations actually meant all that it professed, and that its honors were hard to win. This, above all other influences, filled its halls with the first young men of the land.

On this subject we would commend to all the wise remarks of Archbishop Whately on the University of Oxford, that its history has always shown literary honors *cease to be sought* whenever they become so attainable that nobody fails of them. In like manner, our unfaithfulness in applying a professed test repels young men of high and ingenuous impulses.

The faculties of our seminaries should therefore assume a posture accurately conformed to the principles of our constitution. The Presbytery is the master, the judge, the guardian of all the

candidates for the ministry, whether licensed or unlicensed. The theological faculty is but the teaching agent of the Presbytery to train its candidates. It is not a Presbytery. Let not the agent, then, assume the functions of the guardian and judge. But, at the same time, let not the guardian and judge be ignorant of the result of his agent's labors. In a word, the agent should *report all these results to his employer*; there his power ends. The appropriate policy for our theological faculties would be, then, to discard for ever the notion of giving a general certificate of having finished the *curriculum*, a sort of paper diploma, which is often a *quasi* license. But they should keep accurate records of each student's diligence in study, punctuality in recitations, and attention to the ordinances of religion, of his daily and yearly scholarship, as compared with a fixed grade, of his energy of character and conscientiousness as displayed in his academic demeanor. Each professor should examine faithfully the student's proficiency at the end of each session and graduate his scholarship accurately. A grade of proficiency should be fixed, and he who fell below this should be held not to have a competent acquaintance with the subject. Then let the professors faithfully report the whole to the Presbytery to which each student belongs. Let the latter body, when it comes to decide whether the candidate is worthy of licensure, have all the facts before it, so that it may know, not only by a brief and imperfect examination in Presbytery, but also by the recorded testimony of its teaching agents, the exact degree of his diligence, knowledge and Christian walk. Then the responsibility of deciding would be wholly placed, in fact as well as in form, where the constitution places it. Presbyteries might still be indiscreetly easy, but they would have no pretext in their relations to the seminary to be so. The young man might believe that a facile Presbytery would license him in spite of the unfavorable report of his professors, but every one who had any honorable self-respect would yet be stimulated by the knowledge of the report to be made. It may be said that all this college apparatus of roll-calls, of marks of grade, of demerit marks, of reports, would treat divinity students too much like school-boys; that such a scholastic regimen is a reproach cast upon their principles; that if it has any effect, it can only be by substituting a carnal fear and rivalry and appetite for applause for conscien-

tiousness, thus degrading the nature of the young minister's motives; and in fine, that unless a young man has conscience enough to be diligent without such *stimuli*, he is certainly not fit for a preacher.

True; and the very thing we wish to find out, by holding him in the position of a candidate, is whether he is fit for a preacher. How can that question be settled except by keeping and laying before the appointed judges a record of his conscientiousness? Surely it is a senseless arrangement to hold a man for a number of years under *a trial* as to this very point among others, and yet take no notice of the manner in which he stands it; and that such a surveillance is a reproach upon the honor of the good student, is certainly not the doctrine of the apostle, who teaches us that the same law which is a terror to evil-doers "is a praise to them that do well." The short and complete answer to all such shallow reasonings as those of the objection is that, by the same rule, all repressive and punitive measures in church and state ought to be abolished, lest they should seem to cast a slur on good people. Let the student show himself by his conduct a good one, as is his plain duty, and then the regimen and report will be naught but a testimonial to his honor. We should like to be convinced by what title these wards of the Presbyteries are to claim an irresponsibility the like of which no other class in Christian society enjoy. Children are placed by God's ordinance under the rule of parents, and citizens under that of magistrates. The ordained ministers of the church are governed, are required at church courts to answer to a roll-call, are forced up to their duties by penalties; but it seems candidates for the ministry are to be held as greater and better than they: too great to submit to, and too pure to need any government.

Nor is it easy to see how a conscientious student can be made less conscientious by knowing that if he were to fail in his duty, he would incur certain unpleasant personal consequences. All desire of the 'approval of the good is not wicked. A value for the approbation of God's dear children, seconding a desire for the approval of God himself, is not evil, but good. All emulation is not sinful. Paul commands us to provoke one another to good works. A fairly-earned literary honor is a legitimate cause of pleasure to a Christian heart, where the attainments are

all consecrated to God. The good sense, modesty, and piety of all our candidates at this time does, indeed, shame these sophisms, and leave almost nothing for collegiate discipline to effect. But suppose there should be many cases in which students show none of this high ethereal conscientiousness, to which it is presumed even the fear of just blame, and desire of the applause of the good, would be a taint, but in its place exhibit a sheer laziness and indifference? Is not a little eye-serving industry even better than absolute idleness? Practically we think it is; though he would be a very sorry sort of minister who was governed mainly by either. But common sense and the laws of the mind concur in teaching, that if we would strengthen any virtue which was before deficient in the soul, we must procure the outward exercise of it by any innocent means we can apply. It is by acting it grows. By evoking the outward acting of the quality the potent law of habit is brought into play, and thus the good quality is confirmed. We train our children to kindness by compelling them, through fear, to forego acts of violence and cruelty. We do not argue that, because an enforced mercy is of no worth in the eyes of the Searcher of hearts, therefore it is well to permit every indulgence of angry tempers until conscience checks them. Every sensible parent knows that, under such a preposterous plan, conscience never would be enough developed to restrain the soul of itself.

There is good reason to suspect that a more practical objection to this scheme of education arises out of the sensitiveness of the seminaries to their rivalry about numbers. Now, if there is sense and reason in placing all the seminaries under the control of the Assembly, it is precisely for this, that the Assembly, exercising its supreme authority, may deliver all the seminaries effectually from the *incubus* of these timidities and rivalries, by rigidly compelling them to move abreast in wholesome, but stringent, reforms. Unless the Assembly will do this, it is hard for me to see what Assemblies are for.

IV. The next point to be discussed is the attempt to combine a practical training in parochial duties with the literary and religious cultivation of the divinity student. In 1853, the Synod of Virginia committed itself definitely to that attempt, and partly for that object lengthened the vacation to four months, in order that students might engage in colportage, and similar duties.

In my opinion, the attempt has been a failure and should be relinquished. No one can dispute that a practical knowledge of pastoral duties, and skill in preaching the gospel from house to house, are essential to the scribe who is thoroughly instructed to the kingdom of God. But it by no means follows that therefore the two kinds of preparation must, or can be, pursued together. A sword needs to be not only forged and tempered, but ground. Until the latter is done, it will not cut. Yet the smith does not attempt therefore to grind it while he is tempering it. The one process would spoil the other. So, the attempt to give thorough scholarship, and that to cultivate pastoral tact at the same time, have been found incompatible. A great deal has been said of the uselessness of green, awkward, impractical book-worms. Much of this is true; but I see no evidence that the awkwardness is produced or increased by the scholarship. The former defects are usually the consequences of natural traits of taste and temper, which thorough mental culture would rather correct than exaggerate. The rest of the cure must be effected, if at all, by the young minister's own experience under the pressure of pastoral responsibilities.

But, as a general rule, our students cannot be made to employ the summer vacation in colportage. Some excuse for this may be found in the fact, that the heat of the season is noxious to the constitution of a person whose life is suddenly changed at the beginning of summer from sedentary to active. Cases have been known at Princeton in which zealous men have contracted diseases from exposure to these unaccustomed heats and fatigues, brought them back to the seminary, lost the session by them, and even died with them. Be this as it may, the fact is, that the bulk of our students spend the time in visiting, or recreation only.

Now, four months are obviously too long a time to idle. Yet, eight months are too long to study continuously and industriously. Towards the conclusion, the animal spirits will flag, the cheek pale, and the digestion become deranged. The old method of two terms yearly, with two short vacations, is the true one. Ten months should be devoted to study, and two to recreation. During the years which are intended for mental culture, this culture should be the main thing, and all should bend to the securing of the best results in the main point. In the average run of

constitutions (and a general plan should be adjusted for the average, and not for the exceptional, cases), the benefit of rest and change of scene is all reaped in the first few weeks; the elasticity of the system reacts, appetite returns, and all is done to recruit the body that rest can do. The student then returns to the seminary without so grievous a chasm in his studies and habits. He resumes his books before he has become "*rusty*" in last session's acquisitions. He sets in with life and studies for five months without injury, and about the time his energies begin to flag, another moderate season of rest recurs. But upon the plan of one session annually, eight months are a period too long to study well, and four months are certainly too much to play. The customs of our fathers of the English public schools, and of the universities, bear me out. We departed from them chiefly for this plea, that in our extensive country too much time and expense are required to take the remoter students home and back again twice a year. Railroads have exploded this argument. The fact is, that few of our students are now content with one journey a year; the most get tired of the monotony of a long session and spend money and time in going, not home perhaps, but to some city. The difference is, that this second trip is stolen time.

But the one session and the long vacations are now the fashion; and a return to old usages would be unpopular with students. Here, again, the general legislation of the Assembly should be invoked.

V. Another important point in which our training for the ministry needs adjustment, is the form in which aid should be extended to meritorious young men of scanty means. The present plan of making them beneficiaries of a Board of Education has been advocated by venerable names, and has produced some good fruit. But "one swallow does not make a summer." The propriety of the plan is not proved by some exceptional results, which may be accounted for by other causes, but by a fair general view of its working upon the whole. The writer freely confesses that his dissatisfaction with the plan has been radical; it has usually succumbed partially to the mere *authority* of such names as the elder Alexander, without ever being rationally removed. I once made just this statement to Dr. Addison Alexander (a very wise and practical man, despite his recluse habits),

and he replied that I had expressed precisely his state of mind; and he concurred, in the main, in all the views which I am about to state.

Notwithstanding the plausible justification which is made of the attitude of the beneficiaries, the instincts of a good many of our ministers have obstinately dissented, and they have refused to accept such aid. Now it is of some weight to remark, that this class of our ministers is certainly not behind others in evangelical spirit and character. It was the emphatic testimony of Dr. Addison Alexander that these beneficiaries seemed to him to be worse strung, and toned to a lower key of effort, than the young men who supported themselves; that there was a sort of indifferent and cowed spirit about all they did. It is now manifest that the character of the Presbyterian ministry in the Northern States has deteriorated for some cause; and many judicious men account for it by the introduction of so many persons of lower breeding and mercenary views. Jeroboam corrupted the religion of Israel partly by making priests of the lowest of the people. Now the ministry, especially in the South, must be gentlemen in bearing and principle. Mere conversion, while it may make a peasant a Christian, confessedly does not make him a gentleman. Hence, any plan which contemplates rearing the bulk of the ministry out of the lower classes, must produce a deteriorated class. When we say this, we by no means claim a monopoly of all the honor and principle for the upper classes; nature has her noblemen of all classes. But these men of innate nobility born in the lower classes will raise themselves by an invincible energy to the grade they deserve, and the effort of doing so will be the needful test and discipline of their character. Where a wholesale provision is made for elevating men of that class promiscuously, without subjecting them to that test and discipline, the inevitable result will be the introduction of a majority of scurvy characters, who should have remained in the rank they were born in. The plan of the old Board of Education in connection with other church machinery prepared a way by which *any man* could be *floated* into the ministry and a living without any special effort. Hence, the temptation to mercenary men to seek this aid was too strong. It is looked to as a mere living. The safeguards of Presbyterial examination will never be sufficient. The church must have a *practical test* of the man-

ifest mettle, capacity, and disinterestedness. As was remarked to me by Dr. Alexander, in the case of young men of wealth and worldly prospects, of your C. C. Jones, Van Rensselaers and Sampsons, this test is given in their sacrificing a brilliant worldly future, and adopting a profession whose worldly emoluments are to them unimportant, and rather a loss than a gain. But the young mechanic has no such worldly prospects; a minister's worldly compensation is to him an important gain as compared with day labor. And if the test of devotion presented by strenuous exertion to overcome his difficulties and educate himself be wholly removed by the church's alms, there is no practical guarantee left that he is not mercenary, and that he is not a feeble, inefficient person. Hence, it is a fatal mistake for the church, in its generosity, to lift all the difficulties out of such a man's way.

It has been often argued in defence of our education alms, that they were not alms at all, but a fair debt; that in expending money to educate a poor and pious youth for usefulness, the church was not giving to him, but to herself; that when he had given *himself* to the work, it was nothing but right the church should give the filthy lucre. We believe that this statement is exaggerated. The man who feels aright the privilege of preaching Christ will recognize the aid which places the work in his reach as a very precious personal benefit. It may be reasonable and right that the rich Christians who bestow it should feel bound to do so; but it is none the less a gift to the recipient. Moreover, to the class of men who receive this aid the ministry *is* a social promotion, and help to reach it is as truly a personal gift, yea, a gift of secular value, as a tract of land would be. Now the current doctrine of our Boards of Education leaves the moral sentiments of the beneficiary in an unwholesome posture. Is he taught to deny that the gift is a gift? Here is an odious schooling in ingratitude. Does he recognize it as a gift? The personal giver is unknown, and gratitude has no object, except an abstraction. Thus all that cultivation of the heart, which is a chief part of God's object in alms-giving, is lost.

It is also to be remarked that, after all the specious justifications of the plan, there is usually a lurking feeling of degradation about the recipients of this aid; they cannot but feel that, for a strong, able-bodied man to receive public alms in such a

country as ours, under the name of getting an education, makes him a sort of pauper. This humiliation is obviously increased by the odious system of reports, distinguishing them from their richer comrades (yet, though odious, a necessary corollary of the scheme), by which their receiving their appropriations is made to depend on the private report of a sort of professorial inquisition. But this difficulty would be removed by adopting for all students a system of strict responsibilities, as above recommended.

Now, there *should* be means provided for aiding, and thus abridging, the preparation of meritorious young men, and where they are already of mature years, saving their time to the church. But this aid should be the exception, not the general rule. It should come from two sources: 1, The gifts of personal benefactors, personally interested in the recipient, so that the whole transaction would be one of *private Christian friendship* between man and man; 2, Scholarships in our literary institutions. And these scholarships should be what their name denotes, *awards of merit*, bestowed as prizes on actual examination upon such as had won them over their fellows by superior diligence, integrity and capacity. And let not the *indigence* of the applicant be named as a qualification for receiving. If the *best student* is as rich as a Van Rensselaer, let him take the prize, if he demands it. If the poor student *needs* it, let him show his mettle and *win* it. Then, instead of feeling humiliation in the help obtained, he will feel elevated and invigorated. The colleges should have a few such prize scholarships, to be bestowed for merit in the academy, and enjoyed while passing through college. The seminaries should have more, to be bestowed on those who won them by excellence in their college course, or in the first and second year's work of the seminary.

For reasons above indicated, it is believed that the church should never adopt it as her established rule to bear the whole charge of any candidate's education in any form. It is all-important that a part of this burden be left resting upon himself as a test of his disinterested devotion and a training of his hardihood. Woe to the purity of the ministry if the church ever departs permanently from this principle. What the indigent candidate needs is help to make his progress possible; not such

help as supersedes the necessity of using his own limbs to walk in that progress. But we freely admit that our discharged soldiers constitute an exception to this rule. They have expended four years in the service of their country, and have left the army utterly impoverished. They are too old to be longer delayed; the church needs them now. They should be borne through their preparation without a day's delay. But when this meritorious class is exhausted, the Assembly should imperatively require all the seminaries and its Committee of Education to return to the old rule, which extended only *help*, and not a maintenance.

VI. In conclusion, the relations of those sciences (as geology) which affect the credit of inspiration should be studied by divinity students on the right footing. It is desirable that at least a part of our clergy be well informed upon these subjects. But to make the study of them, therefore, a part of a divinity course in a school strictly ecclesiastical appears to me extremely objectionable for several reasons.

First, when thrust thus into a divinity course, the instruction upon these extensive and intricate sciences must needs be flimsy and shallow, a mere sketch or outline. The result will be that our young ministers will not be made natural historians, but conceited smatterers in these branches of knowledge. There is no matter in which Pope's caution should be uttered with more emphasis:

“Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”

The great lights of these sciences, armed with the results of life-long study, are not to be silenced, if perchance infidel, by a class of men who make it a by-play to turn aside from their own vocation, and pick up a scanty outline of this foreign learning. These clerical smatterers will only make matters worse by displaying their own ignorance; and their so-called defences of inspiration will provoke the contempt and sneers of their assailants. If Christianity needs to be defended against the assaults of natural science with the weapons of natural science, it must be done by competent Christian laymen, or by the few ministers who, like Dr. Bachman, are enabled to make natural science a profound study. Let our Cabells defend the “unity of the race” while our pastors preach the simple gospel.

Second, The tendencies of such a course will be mischievous as to both the professor and his pupils. The latter will be found more inclined to mere human learning and to the conceit which usually attends it, and which always attends a small degree of it, babbling the language of geology and ethnology with a great deal more zest than they recite their catechisms. The undoubted soundness of all our present teachers and clergy, and their unfeigned reverence for inspiration, now blinds us to the ulterior tendency of such attempts. It may be two or three generations before the evil comes to a climax, but I would solemnly declare that it will be found that the most mischievous skepticism and the most subtle doctrines of anti-Christian science will be just those propagated from these church schools of natural science; and after a time the church will have more trouble with her defenders than with her assailants; for the spirit of these sciences is essentially infidel and rationalistic; they are arrayed, in all their phases, on the side of skepticism. The professor placed in the seminaries, remembering that he is the exponent of the *natural* sciences to the theologues, will feel bound to expound them as held by some naturalists. Hence, his expedient will be, to adopt that phase of them propounded by these non-Christian authors least glaringly obnoxious to the authenticity of inspiration. But this phase will also be found covertly anti-Christian, and the attempt to make it tally with Scripture will only betray the church professor into a rationalistic mode of dealing with Scripture. This is the rationale of the fact that it is precisely from the professed Christian geologists the most insidious books have come, because nominally friendly. Thus no book of geology is more thoroughly impregnated with the secret *virus* of rationalistic infidelity than the *Testimony of the Rocks* written by a Hugh Miller for the professed purpose of defending the Bible.

Third, and chiefly, The scheme of science adopted to reconcile the authority of Scripture with itself is ever a matter of difference among orthodox Presbyterians themselves, and is not, and cannot be made a part of the body of our creed. But a man is set up by ecclesiastical authority, paid with the church's money, to teach the church's wards some such scheme. Hence endless contentions. For instance, does the professor of natural science

say of geology that because the fact which it attempts to settle by empirical deduction is the fact of a creation, the work of an omnipotent agent, therefore, in the very approach to this question the validity of such deductions fails, and all such speculations are superseded, because this fact of a supernatural creation, if it has occurred, has transcended all natural law? Does he hence briefly infer, as I do, that such speculations about the mode and date of creation must, by a logical necessity, always be incompetent to natural science, no matter how extended? Then Drs. Hitchcock, Hodge, and a great multitude will cry out: "You old fogey, the church did not put you there to discredit her in the eyes of the scientific world by such antiquated stuff. You misrepresent her; you abuse your trust."

Does he, on the other hand, attempt to reconcile Moses and geology, by adopting Hugh Miller's theory that the six days were six vast ages? Then I shall cry out against him: "Sir, you are giving a mortal stab to Christian faith, by countenancing a licentious, rationalistic canon of interpretation, and you are involving God's sacred truth in a still pending squabble between the worldly advocates of science touching the disputed agreement of the order of events in Genesis, first chapter, and the chronological order of the fossils. You shall not be permitted to commit the Presbyterian Church to this pernicious scheme, however you may choose to commit yourself."

In a word, is it not obvious to common sense that the church must not attempt, in her authoritative schools, to expound anything which the church is not agreed upon? The only way to avoid this just objection is to include in the seminary's course no *doctrines* except those which the church herself holds as "of the faith," as a part of her established orthodoxy, and no branches of secular knowledge but such as are established and are directly subsidiary to the doctrines. For example, in teaching original sin, as established in the church's code of orthodoxy, the professor of necessity introduces a certain doctrine of *mental science* touching motive and the will. But first, all scholars of all schools have been agreed for ages that this doctrine of theology and this doctrine of psychology, true or false, go together; and second, all Presbyterians are as much agreed in the truth of the latter as they are on the former. Every point of

science merely secular of which this cannot be said must be kept out of the divinity course proper, and we must forbear to *commit the church to it* by teaching it officially in her ecclesiastical schools. Those branches which interest theology, and are still unsettled, should be taught in secular schools, under friendly, though not official, denominational auspices, where at least the *premium minds* of our young ministry may inform themselves profoundly.

All of which is respectfully submitted.