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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—SYMPOSIUM ON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

ARE THE PRESENT METHODS FOR THE EDUCATION OF MINISTERS SATISFACTORY? IF NOT, HOW MAY THEY BE IMPROVED?

NO. VI.

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THE prosperity of the Church and the progress of Christianity are, to some degree, directly dependent on a right training of the ministry. The process which prepares the leaders of Christian thought and work becomes thus a matter of unspeakable importance. It marks the point at which, peculiarly, the true power and efficiency of the Church are insured or lost, and the practical success or failure of Christian work is determined. It is, therefore, a question of vital moment, whether we have adopted the best possible of ministerial training, or are operating the plan with its full efficiency.

This high office has always been felt to require some special education. It must not be given into incompetent hands. It stands for a service that affects the spiritual life of every man, woman and child in the Church, and the best welfare of general society. All the holiest and dearest interests of the Redeemer's kingdom and of human life, call for a competent, strong, and efficient ministry.

The discussion of this question thus far shows agreement on one point: that, taken altogether, the prevalent general method by which the training of ministers is accomplished through theological seminaries is the right method for our times and the present exigencies of Christian work. Whatever good results were secured through the earlier plans of training—through self-education, or tuition given by pastors—such methods belong to the past. They would be absurdly inadequate to the task of supplying either the amount or the quality of education demanded in our day. With the present advance in

SERMONIC SECTION.

THE STONING OF STEPHEN.

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And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

—Acts vii: 59.

It is somewhat remarkable, that under each dispensation, the first believer's death which is recorded, was that of a martyr; in the Old Testament it was that of Abel; in the New, that of Stephen. Let us endeavor to conceive the awe and dreadful curiosity, with which the first human beings witnessed the first execution upon one of their fellows of the threatened doom, death for sin. The visage of death had never been seen; man only knew that it was something irresistible and terrible, which terminated the existence of the body and restored it to the dust from which it was taken. But now they beheld it; they saw the glazed eye, the sunken cheek, the pallid countenance, the marble rigidity and, above all, the ghastly aspect of the corpse. And how much was the terror of the spectacle enhanced by the fact, that the death of their brother was by violence; that his blood was poured out in murder, and the image of humanity in him foully marred before he became food for worms?

There is also a peculiar interest in the death of the first Christian of the new dispensation; for the grave and the world of spirits had now received a new illustration. The saints of the Old Testament had, indeed, good hope that "their souls should not be left in *Hades*." But the instructions and the resurrection of Christ had now illuminated the tomb, with a flood of light and hope.

There the dear flesh of Jesus lay
And left a long perfume."

[Many of the full sermons and condensations published in this REVIEW are printed from the authors' manuscripts; others are specially reported for this publication. Great care is taken to make these reports correct. The condensations are carefully made under our editorial supervision.—Ed.]

His death had now conquered the king of terrors, disarmed him of his sting, and "led captivity captive." Believers with such an example, must surely learn a new lesson of submission and courage. Accordingly, the death of the proto-martyr, although accompanied with every outward circumstance of cruelty and horror, was full of consolation and peace. Persecuted upon the unjust charge of perverting the religion of Moses, he had defended himself and rebuked his accusers' sins with a faithful boldness, by which they were cut to the heart; insomuch that they gnashed upon him with their teeth. This justification of himself, and his charges against them, were unanswerable; but the tyrant's argument remained to them; and they resolved at once to silence his voice, and to gratify their malignity, by his death. He was condemned to that ghastly mode of execution, stoning to death with stones. Surrounded with a raging multitude, who were rather wild beasts than men, he was dragged out of the city, and while a young Pharisee named Saul, afterwards the great apostle of the Gentiles, kept the clothes of the executioners, "they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But his Redeemer, who had so recently passed to His throne through a similar ordeal, did not forsake him. By the power of the Holy Ghost, He vouchsafed to His dying servant a vision of the glory of God, and of Christ standing on His right hand, which was sufficient to repay for the agonies of a violent death. How amazing, my brethren, was the contrast between that scene, which was obvious to the eye of sense, and that different one, which disclosed itself to the eye of faith at the same time? The one presents us

with a solitary, helpless sufferer, the centre of a group of murderous assailants, prostrate, crushed with blows, his dying countenance begrimed with dust and blood, his palpitating form mangled almost beyond the semblance of humanity. But Oh! behold the other! Look up! There opens before us that heavenly court, which violence, sin and death can never enter, radiant with light ineffable, displaying the throne of Almighty justice, now newly occupied by the God-man; who rises up at the martyr's cry, and with a countenance combining human love and pity with the glories of Deity, stretches forth His hand, lately bleeding for us on the cross, now armed with the sceptre of the universe. At His beck, the liberated soul leaps from its tenement of clay, leaving it all insensible to its wrongs, and mounts beaming with love and triumph to the inviting arms. Blessed compensation! What are the pains of dying compared with such a reward?

Could we see invisible things, we should often witness similar contrasts at the bedside of the departing people of God. That which our senses make known to us, is a gloomy, shaded room, a couch, a circle of tearful, solemn watchers, and a gasping pallid mortal, in what men call the agonies of death. But could we see in the light of the upper sanctuary, we should more correctly, call them the agonies of birth. One moment the sufferer is hovering in insensibility upon the faint line which separates life and death, or wrestling with the strong throes of his last struggle; the next, the body lies a corpse, and the suppressed wail of bereavement from the survivors fills the chamber of death. But could we follow the ransomed spirit as it soars to its home, how different would be the world of glory, which bursts upon its sight, and the shout of joy with which it enters in!

But I have proposed to consider especially the proto-martyr's dying prayer, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." First, this seems to teach us, that Stephen regarded Jesus Christ as very God.

There are sundry places in the Scriptures, where this prime doctrine is not so much dogmatically asserted as unintentionally, though clearly implied. These evidences of our Saviour's divinity, are, in one aspect, even more satisfactory to the mind than the set and formal assertions; because so obviously sincere expressions of the sacred writer's inmost heart, and because they show how this cardinal truth is interwoven with the believer's whole experience. We are told by Scripture that Stephen was an eminent saint, and an inspired man. The heavens had just been opened to him and the celestial realities had been disclosed, with the position of Jesus at the right hand of the Father. And now, immediately after this vision, and amidst the solemn emotions of the last hour, he prays to Jesus Christ, addressing to Him the most momentous petition which creature can raise to Deity. Our English Bibles read "They stoned Stephen, calling upon *God* [r. v. the Lord], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." *God* is printed in italics, as there is nothing in the original answering to it. It would have been more correct to leave it as it stands in the Greek. "They stoned Stephen, invoking, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus the intention of the evangelist, which was to state that Christ was the object of his prayer, is made clear. But even though his meaning be lost in this point, the petition which is raised to Jesus Christ in the last clause is one which no scriptural believer could address to any other than God; He alone is the proper object of religious worship, and the man is blind indeed, who could entrust his everlasting all, in the article of death, to any other than the Omnipotent arm.

In every office of the Redeemer, the enlightened Christian feels that he could not properly rely on Him for salvation, unless He were very God. "It is because he is God, and there is none else" that Isaiah invites "all the ends of the earth to look unto him and be saved." But in the hour of death,

especially, the Christian needs a Saviour who is no less than God. An angel could not sympathize with our trial, for he cannot feel the pangs of dissolution. A human friend cannot travel with us the path through the dark valley, for the creature who yields to the stroke of death is overwhelmed and returns no more to guide his fellow. The God-man alone can sustain us; He has survived it and returns triumphing to succor us, for He is God. Unless this Divine Guide be with us, we must fight the battle with the last enemy alone and unaided. Just when the struggle becomes most fearful to the soul, the veil of approaching dissolution descends between it and all this world, shuts it off in the outer darkness, and then, in solitary night, must the king of terrors be met, with no human arm to succor, and no ear to hear the cry of despair that is lost in the infinite silence. *So must you die, my friend, and I; though wife, and children, and comrades be crowding around your bed, and loved ones be stooping to receive your last sigh to their hearts, and your dying head be pillowed upon the bosom which was the dearest resting-place of your sorrows while living, the last approach of death will separate you from them all, and you will meet Him alone. The icy shadow of His dart, as it comes near your heart, will obstruct all the avenues of sense, by which their sympathy can reach you. Even then practically you will die alone; as truly alone as the lost wanderer in some vast wilderness, who falls exhausted on the plain, and sees nothing above but the burning sky, or around, save the boundless waste; as truly alone as the mariner, who when the ship is rushing before a gale through the midnight sea, drops from the masthead, and buffets vainly with the billows, amidst the pitch darkness, while his shriek is drowned by the tumult of the deep. But then it is, that Jesus Christ draws near, as an omnipotent Saviour. He alone, of all the universe, has fathomed the deepest abysses of death, has explored all its caverns of despair, and has returned*

from them conqueror. He is not only sympathising man, but omnipotent God, who can go with us into the *penetralia* of the court of death, when our last hour comes, then let us say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." When I pass "through the valley and shadow of death, be thou with me; let thy rod and thy staff comfort me." I am taught by this prayer of the martyr, to expect an immediate entrance into the presence of Jesus Christ. I see here, that Stephen believed that "the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory." He evidently did not expect that the grave would absorb his spirit into a state of unconscious sleep, to last until the final consummation; or that any *limbus*, or purgatory, was to swallow him for a time in its fiery bosom. His faith aspired directly to the arms of Christ, and to that blessed world where His glorified humanity now dwells. Some would persuade us that death is an unconscious sleep, that the soul is not a distinct substance, possessed of its own being and powers of thought independent of the body, but a mere phenomenon, the result of the body's organic action, as sound is, of the vibration of musical chord, and that so there is an absolute suspension of the soul's conscious existence, until such time as the body is raised in the resurrection. So thought not the inspired martyr. He manifestly regarded his spirit as separate from the body, and therefore, as true, independent substance. The latter he relinquishes to the insults of his enemies, the former he commits to Jesus Christ. So taught not that Saviour, and His two favored disciples, when they showed us Moses and Elijah in glory. So promised not the dying Redeemer to the penitent thief, when He said, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." His body was left upon the tree, a prey to the brutality of his executioners, and probably to ravenous birds, yet his soul, the true being, passed with his Redeemer's into glory. Paul did not believe this when he said that "to

him, to live was Christ and to die was gain," and that "to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord." And would he ever have been in a strait betwixt the two desires, to live and labor for his converts, and to die, had the latter been a sleep of dreary ages in the dust? Surely this zealous laborer for Christ could not have hesitated between the choice of such a useless, unconscious blank, on the one hand, and a life of praise and happy activity on earth, on the other hand, though chequered with toil and persecution. How much more dreary would the tomb be, if the sentient, thinking soul were engulfed in it along with the body?"

Nor is there an answer in the saying, that its loss would be no loss, because the soul would be unconscious of it at the time. But it *would not* be unconscious of it, before and after. Man is a being of forecast, and of retrospection; and it is impossible that he should not recoil with dread from the absorption of his own active, thinking being, by this realm of annihilation, and the dedication of so many ages, which might have been filled with usefulness and enjoyment, to fruitless non-existence; such is not our creed. If only we are in Christ by true faith, the grave will have naught to do with that which is the true, conscious being. Is the tomb dark, and doleful, and chill and loathsome, with the worms and dust? What is that to me? I shall never lie there. I shall never feel the gnawing worm.—(Luke ix: 30, 31; xxiii: 43; Phil. i: 21; 2 Cor. v: 8; Phil. i: 23.) The coffin lid will never confine me. The spirit, the conscious, thinking, knowing, feeling thing, which is the true man, *the I*, which alone can hope, or fear, or suffer pain, this will have soared away to a brighter realm, before these abhorred scenes overtake it. Only the poor, disused tenement, the clay, will be their victim.

It is with equal comfort that the believer's mind is emancipated from the fears of a purgatory beyond death. The efficacy of Christ's vicarious righteousness is asserted in terms which

forbid the thought, that any retribution will ever be exacted of one who by a true faith has become interested in Him. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. . . . "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." The passages cited teach that no other penal retribution exists, or is required, for the guilt of believers' sins, than that of Christ's sacrifice. No purgatorial fires after death can be inflicted upon believers; for the reason that *when they die*, they are at once made perfectly holy. How can that be purged, which is already clean? But, that justified sinners are at death immediately made perfect in holiness, is taught beyond dispute, where we are told they go directly from death to heaven, and that heaven is a place of perfect purity. "Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom." To the thief it was said, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Stephen, looking from the bloody ground, about to be his death-bed, said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "If our earthly house be dissolved, we have a building of God in the heavens." "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." But "corruption does not inherit incorruption." That upper sanctuary is the assembly of the spirits of *just men made perfect*. "And there shall in no wise enter in to it any thing that defileth."

On these impregnable foundations rests the blessed assurance of our immediate glory after death. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth*: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." Dreary would be the Christian's death bed indeed, if the best prospect which could be offered him

amidst the decay of nature were but this, that he must pass from the toils of life and the pangs of dying, to fiercer pains beyond the grave, of uncertain duration, which could only be abridged by the piety and doubtful care of survivors. Blessed be God, such is not our hope; when once life's pilgrimage is ended, if we live in faith and love towards God, the eternal peace begins. The pains of our last struggle are the last experiences of evil to which the ransomed spirit is called *forever*.

III. We learn from *the text*, to what guidance the Christian may commit his soul, during the journey into the world of spirits. Let us endeavor to attain a practical and palpable conception of that world. I believe that heaven is as truly a place as was that Paradise, of the primeval world, where the holy Adam dwelt. When we first arrive there, we shall be disembodied spirits. But first, spirits have their locality. The clearer evidence, however, that heaven is a literal place is that it contains the glorified material bodies of Enoch, of Elijah, of Christ, and of the saints who rose with their Redeemer. But where is this place? In what quarter of this vast universe? In what sphere do the man Jesus and His ransomed ones dwell? When death batters down the walls of the earthly tabernacle, whither shall the dispossessed soul set out? To what direction shall it turn, in beginning its mysterious journey? It knows not; it needs a skillful, powerful guide. But more: it is a journey into a spiritual world; and this thought makes it awful to the apprehension of man. The presence of one disembodied spirit in the solitude of night, would shake us with a thrill of dread. How then could we endure to be launched out into the untried ocean of space, peopled by we know not what mysterious beings? How would we shrink with fear at the meeting of some heavenly or infernal principality, rushing with lightning speed through the void, upon some mighty errand of mercy or malice, clothed with unimagined splendors of angelic attributes,

and attended by the hosts of his spiritual comrades? How could we be assured that we should not fall a prey to the superior powers of some of these evil angels? How be certain that we might not lose our way in the pathless vacancy, and wander up and down forever, a bewildered, solitary rover amidst the wilderness of worlds? This journey into the unknown must issue in our introduction to a scene whose awful novelties will overpower our faculties, for even the very thought of them when we dwell upon it, fills us with dreadful suspense. Truly will the trembling soul need someone on whom to lean, some mighty, tender and strong guardian, who will point the way to the prepared mansions, and cheer and sustain its fainting courage. *That guide is Christ*, therefore, let us say in dying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

It is a delightful belief to which the gospel gives most solid support, that our Redeemer is accustomed to employ in this mission, His holy angels. What Christian has failed to derive satisfaction, as he has read the allegorical description in the Pilgrim's Progress, of Christian and Hopeful, crossing the river of death, and ascending with a rejoicing company of angels, to the gate of the celestial city? It is indeed, but an allegory, which likens death to a river. But it is no allegory; it is a literal, a blessed truth, that angels receive and assist the departing souls which Christ redeems. "Are they not ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" When Lazarus died, he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. They are our destined companions in the upper world to which we go. With what tender sympathy will not these pure spirits assist the dying moments of their ransomed brethren of earth; and welcome them to their home? When we were brought by repentance out of our guilt and enmity, there was joy among them. During all the long and wearying contest of the saint on this earth, these ministering angels are

his watchful assistants. And now that the victory is won, the culture of the soul for heaven completed, and the fruit which first budded on his repentance is matured for glory, with what glad songs will not the angels shout the harvest home? We cannot distinguish, by our gross senses, the presence and agency of the incorporeal assistants. Even while they minister to us they are unknown to us, by name, as in nature. But none the less present.

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy." And when the walls of the flesh are battered away by death, the vision of the spiritual world will flow in upon us unobstructed. Not seldom does the death-bed of Christ's people present instances, which seem as though some gleams of that celestial light and glimpses of the beings who inhabit it, begin to reach the dying saint before he quite leaves the clay, through the rents which are made in his frail body by the last enemy. What is it that sometimes makes the sunken countenance light up in the article of death with a sudden glory, and the eye, but now devoid of speculation, beam with one more expiring flash of heaven's light? Has the soul seen through the torn veil already?—the angel-faces bending over its agony, and heard their tender call, unheard by ears of flesh, wooing it out of the crumbling body?

"Hark! they whisper: angels say,
Sister spirit, come away!"

But perhaps these questions are not authorized by any revelation God has vouchsafed to give us of the secrets of the other world. Yet, there is one more truth which is revealed more glorious than this: that ransomed souls are the actual companions, not only of angels, but of the "God manifest in the flesh." When the martyr uttered the prayer of the text he looked to the arms of Christ as his final home. We are authorized by his example to say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," not only that thou mayest sustain it in the pangs of dying, and guide it to its heavenly home, and clothe it in thine own robe of righteous-

ness, and answer for it in the great day of accounts; but that it may dwell with thee in a world without end. Thou didst pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and *Thee*, the Father, heareth always. Thou didst show the holy Apostle that after Thou camest with the voice of the archangel, and the harp of God, "we shall ever be with the Lord." Thou has taught us that "when thou shalt appear, we shall be like thee, for we shall see thee as thou art."

Oh, blessed resting place! In thy presence is fullness of joy: at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Let us live and die like believing Stephen, and our spirits will be received where the God-man holds His regal court, to go out thence no more forever. We shall see Him on His throne, so gloriously earned. We shall see the same face which beamed love upon the sisters of Bethany and upon the beloved disciple, and which wept at the grave of His friend; with a burden of our sorrows, but shining as the sun. Yet that splendor will not seal our vision: it will be the light of love. We shall see the very hands which were pierced for us, not then bleeding, but reaching forth to us the sceptre of universal dominion to guide and protect us. We shall hear the very voice which once said "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," and as we gaze and adore and praise, we shall be changed by His spirit into the same image of holiness. "This honor have all his servants."

But, alas! all whom I address have not the faith and holiness of Stephen. They live in wilful impenitence, and call not on the name of Christ, yet they, too, must pass through the iron gate of death! On whom will you call? you who have neglected your Saviour, when you pass down into this valley of great darkness; when the inexorable veil begins to descend, shutting out human help from you; when death thrusts out your wretched soul from its tenement; when you launch forth into the im-

mense void—a naked, shivering ghost; when you stand before the great white throne. Can you face these horrors alone? How will you endure an undone eternity? It may be, you will seek (in vain) this terrible, helpless solitude, rather than the place which the justice of God may assign you. The devils who tempt you may then become your captors, beset your dying bed, and seize your wretched soul, as it is cast out from the body, to bind it in everlasting chains under darkness against the last day.

Call on Christ, then, to-day, in repentance and faith, in order that you may be entitled to call upon Him in the hour of your extremity. Own Him now as your Lord, that He may confess you then as His people.

THE EARTH HOLY GROUND.

FROM THE GERMAN OF DR. F. THEREMIN,
BY J. E. RANKIN, D.D.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.—Ex. iii: 5.

[Dr. Ludwig Friedrich Franz Theremin, Theological Professor and Court Preacher at Berlin, and one of the first of Germany's great thinkers, was born in 1783. He is best known in the United States by his work on Rhetoric, translated by Prof. W. G. T. Shedd in 1849, entitled, "Eloquence a Virtue," and published by W. F. Draper, Andover, Mass., in 1854. This short treatise is founded upon the theory that true eloquence is always ethical; has a moral aim, moral methods, and a moral end. It will be profitable for the reader of this discourse to keep this theory in view, and to mark how magnificently the great speaker holds himself subservient to it.—J. E. R.]

HOLY to Moses must have been that spot where God miraculously appeared to him in the flame of the burning bush and called him to his high office. Whenever he subsequently recalled it, or trod again the pathway of his past life, it must have awakened in him the deepest feeling of reverence. Holy to Jacob must have been that spot where in a vision he saw a ladder stretched from earth to heaven, on which angels were ascending and descending, and from whose top came

down to him the word of the Lord, speaking in benediction. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." This was his utterance. To every one of us, also, there must be some spot, which by its very name, or by the memories connected with it, is holy; on which we cannot think, which we cannot tread, without feeling nearer to God.

Now, could this glory of holiness, which especially belongs to some particular spot, be diffused over the whole earth; then every place where we found ourselves, or on which we gazed, would be to us holy ground, and as the gate of Heaven; then every object would remind us of the Lord, and would bring us into His presence. What an inexpressible increase of inward happiness; what a mighty impulse toward holiness! And ought we not to look upon the earth in this light? Ought it not to appear thus to every pious mind? Yes, the whole

EARTH IS HOLY GROUND.

1. Because the perfections of God shine conspicuous here; 2, because here God is worshiped; 3, because it is linked so closely to the world of spirits.

1. The whole earth is holy ground because here God's perfections are everywhere so conspicuously displayed. God not only created the earth out of nothing, and drove back the darkness which covered its surface; He not only separated the dry land from the water, and decked the earth with herbs and trees; He not only filled the air and sea with living creatures, but at last He made man in his own image. And He not only displayed His power, His wisdom and His goodness in the production of all these things, but, through these attributes, He continues to uphold the earth and its inhabitants, imparting to them the breath of life, without which they would sink back into nothingness again; thus, every moment unfolding and glorifying His perfections, and demanding that we see them in everything, and that every place, since we feel the sense of