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I. REGENERATION, REAL, NOT FIGURATIVE.

THERE are doubtless those who think that in a discussion of regeneration nothing new can be said that is true, and nothing true that is new. However this may be, it is certain that opinions differ widely, and that much confusion prevails. It is not our purpose to review the variant and widely diverse opinions which are held on this subject. That were a profitless task. We propose to study the subject anew from the standpoint of the Scriptures, and to compare the conclusion reached with the view generally accepted as orthodox. What is that view?

A very few years ago a report was made to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., by a committee appointed to revise *The Confession*. In that report the following words were found: "The act of regeneration wherein being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit he is enabled to answer God's call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." Had this been approved, new matter would have been added to *The Confession*. This report teaches that the act of regeneration enables the subject to believe on Christ. That this is the commonly accepted view a few citations from Doctors R. L. Dabney and A. A. Hodge may be allowed to show. Dr. Dabney in his *Syllabus and Notes* (Student's Edition, Part II., p. 85) says under the caption "Regeneration properly defined," "we prove that regeneration is not a mere change of human purpose, occurring in view of motive; but a supernatural renovation of the dispositions which determine the moral purpose and of the understanding, in the apprehension of moral and spiritual truth." Says Dr. A. A. Hodge in his *Outlines*: "In the new creation God

V. THE PRESBYTERIES' PRACTICAL TREATMENT OF THE STANDARD OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

At his ordination, every minister solemnly affirms that he approves "of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States."¹ Every ruling elder makes a similar solemn asseveration on occasion of his ordination.² Every elder, of each class, promises, in the same formal and solemn manner, to be diligent and faithful in the exercise of all the duties of his office.³

The *Form of Government*, thus approved, and whose requirements upon him the elder has pledged himself diligently and faithfully to observe, lays down with great clearness the conditions precedent to admission to the ministerial office. Ordinarily, the candidate is to have had so much preliminary training of a given sort prior to his theological training; then so much theological discipline, also, of a given sort. (See paragraphs 129-135, and 116-121, of the *Book of Church Order*.) There is, also, provision made for ordination occasionally upon other conditions. The book says: "No candidate, except in extraordinary cases, shall be licensed unless he shall have completed the usual course of academical studies, and shall also have studied divinity at least two years under some approved teacher of theology; and whenever any presbytery shall see reason to depart from this rule, it shall always make a record of the fact upon its minutes, with the reasons therefor."⁴

It is due to some of our presbyteries to say that they do not perjure themselves. They are careful to secure the conditions in the candidate required in the constitution as precedent to admission to the ministerial office. Their conduct shows that they are not guilty of falsehood when they gravely approve the govern-

¹ *Book of Church Order*, p. 119.

² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 119.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

ment and discipline of the church. It makes good these presbyters' promise in the ordination vows to be faithful in the discharge of the duties of their office; at least thus far.

But on the other hand, it is a well-known fact that many of our presbyteries are very remiss in this matter. They do not demand in the ministerial candidate what the constitution requires at all. They make the clause of the constitution referring to "extraordinary cases" cover a multitude of cases for which it was never intended; and they treat a great many cases as *ordinary cases* whose conditions put them clear out of the pale referred to by the phrase "ordinary cases" in the standards.

Let us describe some of the extraordinary cases of these presbyteries.

Brother A has never had a good elementary English education. Most of his life has been spent as an employee on railroad trains. While dull in acquisition, he likes to talk and is rather good looking. He is conceited. He does not like to take the position of a pupil. But he has been heard in the Y. M. C. A., in the Sunday school and in prayer-meetings. He is twenty-five years old. His presbytery picks him up and puts him into the seminary for what he can get of the English part of the course during parts of two sessions. It licenses him as an "extraordinary case," and at length ordains him. Now, there is nothing extraordinary about this man. He has not the consecration to duty which most of the ordinary cases of his class in the seminary have. This is evinced by his careless attention to the preparation for class exercises, by frequent absences from the seminary, and by less concern generally for the interests of the kingdom of God. His Christian character is in no respect extraordinarily high. He is inferior distinctly, from this point of view, to many "ordinary cases" in his class. He has, also, less of talent as a thinker, writer, or speaker, and less of industry. In short, he is a very ordinary man and Christian as compared with many of his fellows who must enter the ministry as ordinary cases. And there is no provision for the ordination of such a man, or licensure either, to be found between the lids of our *Book of Church Order*. The presbytery that gives license or ordination in such cases is guilty of breaking the ordi-

nation vows of its own members. It is guilty of covenant breaking with other presbyteries.

Brother B is another extraordinary case in the same class. He is thirty-six years old; has a very imperfect elementary education, can hardly write a legible hand, spells miserably, reads learned works only in a very slow and painful way, having to make frequent use of a dictionary, as he has no acquaintance with polite literature. He has spent his years chiefly among logging camps of West Virginia. He has a wife and children. He is an earnest Christian man. His presbytery sends him to the seminary for a part of two sessions. Soon he is licensed and ordained as an "extraordinary case."

This brother displayed no sense of the importance of acquired knowledge. He lost much time from the institution. He was, perhaps, the most indifferent man in his class to the obligation which he had subscribed when matriculated, which bound him to a faithful performance of his duties as a seminary student. He seemed very full of enthusiasm to be about his work; but he did not have the knowledge which the book requires of the "extraordinary case" as well as the ordinary. And it was a violation of the constitution as well as an infraction of the ordination promises on the part of the presbyters.

Brother C is another extraordinary case. At twenty-five years of age he had tried a great number of occupations. He had been a farmer, a clerk, a transmitter of messages, a retail merchant. His success had not been marked in any of these occupations. He, perhaps, felt, as another "extraordinary case" we have known, that he never would succeed in any other calling than the ministry. He learned that it was possible for him to be educated for the ministry without pecuniary cost to himself. He was taken under care of a presbytery; availed himself of the stipendiary system of ministerial education. He went to college for certain sessions, or rather *parts of sessions*; for he had the extraordinary bent of "*extraordinary cases*" for parts of sessions. Meanwhile he had met a handsome woman. To this "extraordinary" fellow she appeared the most charming woman in the world. They married. They came to the seminary. He got, during the next

pieces of sessions, a rather meagre share of theological knowledge even for an "extraordinary case." For the incidents of matrimony that once excused a man from battle for a year took a good deal of this "extraordinary" fellow's time. His presbytery in due time licensed and ordained him. It had no right to do it. It trampled upon promises in doing it. It trampled the constitution in the dust to do it.¹

From our own personal experience we could multiply many times the instances of the unworthy stretching of the provision in our standards for licensing and ordaining "extraordinary cases." And our experience seems to be in no wise peculiar. In *The Christian Observer*, May, 1891, Dr. Dabney, having asked how we see this provision for extraordinary cases applied said:

"To such cases as these: To some zealous middle-aged man who has no culture, and never will have any in either direction, neither in classical English literature, nor in the ancient classics, nor in the languages of inspiration, nor in sciences, medicine, nor law. Here is a younger man who is said to be a good fellow, but without income, who thinks he cannot get his own consent to go through the long course of studies required by our book, so he claims to be made an 'extraordinary case,' when the only thing 'extraordinary' about him is, that he lacks the pluck and conscientious industry which alone give assurance of permanent usefulness in the ministry, for a person deprived of early education. Here is another young man who, without any thorough culture, has some natural gift of fluent, plausible speech, in whose favor some congregation sends up to presbytery the assurance that he preaches abundantly well enough for them. The soft-hearted presbytery makes him an 'extraordinary case,' when they ought to have foreseen that the most certain and ordinary result would be that this fluency, unchastened by thorough mental discipline, is going to be his snare and his ruin. And here is another uneducated man, a very good fellow, who has a sweetheart, and who thinks he must marry at once, and that he never could stand the postponement required by a thorough course of study. So some kind presbytery makes him an 'extraordinary case,' with the most

¹The cases given have been disguised ; but they are historical instances.

regular and ordinary result of forever spoiling the career of him and a very amiable young woman.”¹

There is no essential unfairness in this picture. The provision for “extraordinary cases,” wisely made, in the constitution of the church, is grossly misapplied. The provision was intended to meet only the cases of those who had, previous to the ordinary discipline, the necessary qualifications for ruling and formal teaching in the church of God. If Brother H has, in addition to an excellent Christian character, experience, wisdom, prudence, and the aptness to teach and rule which Paul required of Timothy, and such culture and intelligence as may be acquired in the profession of law, medicine, or in a professor’s chair, it is not necessary to put him through a long course of training. The constitution provides for his case under the title of the “extraordinary case.” The standard of the ministry is not lowered by his reception into its ranks. He has been prepared. His preparation, however, has not been made in the ordinary way.

But not alone by the misapplication of the provision for “extraordinary cases” do our presbyteries become guilty of duplicity. Their examinations of ordinary cases are so perfunctory that many men of most imperfect preparation get through. Indeed, the application of the term “extraordinary case” to a rather ordinary set of entrants into the ministry has made the term so distasteful that not a few men take roundabout ways of avoiding the application of the phrase to themselves. But these ways do not result often in more knowledge.

The requirements of our Book cannot be met by a residence of so many years at a college, and so many more at a theological seminary. Some college diplomas are worth nothing as signs of scholarship. Some institutions are great only in pretence. They are not competent to the work of good preparatory schools. They are unable to give the student the secular preparation required in our Book. On the other hand, many of our better colleges have suffered a “fatty degeneration” of their curricula. Once they did teach some things well, and the things which our Book expects in the student prior to his beginning his theological studies.

¹ *Discussions*, by R. L. Dabney, Volume III, p. 553.

Now they try to teach many things. They turn out men without any training in mental and moral philosophy, with imperfect linguistic training, and with only a most superficial knowledge of the natural sciences to compensate for the defects. Their diplomas ought, therefore, not to be taken as a sufficient sign of the requisite scholarship.

Some seminary diplomas, too, are of no account. How can they be? They are given to all students who are characterized by outward good behavior. The discipline of these institutions is so imperfect that thoroughgoing work cannot be exacted.

The church should not relax its examinations because a man has been in attendance on schools for the required time, therefore. Yet, laxity of examinations is so great, that at times an empty-headed fellow can pass creditably. Again, when the questions are more testing, and when they show that the candidate has no scholarship, secular or biblical; when they show that the candidate is either lazy or unspeakably dull, and hence not fit to be a minister, the presbyteries often, nevertheless, license him. The elder who opposes his license commonly finds himself in a small minority, and that he is regarded as himself carnal and "orthodox" in a bad sense. Kind-hearted brethren, forgetting their promises and vows, and their covenant with the church at large, trample upon constitutional requirements. They point to instances of men who have been poorly prepared, and yet turned out to be useful men. They point to the lazy or stupid candidate as a possible Daniel Baker, oblivious of the fact that "Daniel Baker, with his great powers," might have done vastly more with proper preparation. They point to Dwight L. Moody, as if Mr. Moody was not a man of extraordinary natural endowments, as well as of painstaking preparation, albeit the preparation has not been of the ordinary sort.¹

Our church does not maintain that standard of ministerial education which it is popularly supposed to do. Her constitutional requirements are high, but she lives in daily disregard of that constitution.

It is popularly supposed that most Presbyterian preachers are

¹ See *Central Presbyterian*, July 1, 1896, p. 2.

graduates of reputable colleges. This is a mistake. We have been at some pains to look into the matter. The true state of the case may be illustrated fairly by setting forth the truth about the alumni of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. It is highly probable that that institution has had among its students its full share of college graduates. Its educational environment—location in a commonwealth which has long given much encouragement to higher education—makes for that view. And its customarily able faculty, throughout most of its past, would attract the higher class of students to its walls. The ratio of college graduates to non-graduates among its past students is probably higher, therefore, than any of the older seminaries. Further, the age of this institution, and the number of its alumni, give a special value to any generalization that may be made concerning its alumni, in application to the whole church.

We have made our study of these alumni by decades, with the following results: During the first eleven years, 1823–1834, there were one hundred and seventeen students, and fifty-eight of them were not college graduates; during the next decade, 1834–1844, there were ninety-four students, and twenty-six were not college graduates; during the next, 1844–1854, there were sixty-three students, and eighteen were not college graduates; during the next, 1854–1864, there were ninety-seven students, and thirty-three were not degree men; during the next, 1864–1874, there were one hundred and fifty-five students, and sixty not degree men; during the next, 1874–1884, there were two hundred and eighteen students, and seventy were not degree men; during the next, 1884–1894, there were about two hundred and sixty-six students, and about one hundred and two men who were not graduates; out of one thousand and ten students, three hundred and sixty-seven were not degree men, therefore.

These figures show further, that in every decade at least one-fourth of the students have not been degree men; that sometimes nearly one-half of them have not been such; that considerably more than one-third of all our alumni have not had college degrees; and that between 1834 and 1864 there seem to have been relatively fewer non-graduates among the seminary students.

Moreover, a study of the alumni shows that among the graduates of colleges and universities attending the institution there were in these same years, 1834-1834, a larger proportion of men of high training. Bearers of the A. M. degree of the university are found mostly in those decades.¹

It is not a matter of wonder that there was so large a proportion of non-graduates during the first decade. In the first years of the life of an institution there is always a strong desire to swell the numbers of the students; and a heterogeneous body is apt to be gathered for various reasons. Nor is it a matter of surprise that during the last three decades the number of non-graduates has been large. During 1864-1874 many men came to the seminary whose college courses had been interrupted and greatly shortened by the war. During 1884-1894 there has been a sturdy stress brought to bear on the church to bring, whether prepared or not, more men into the ministry. The growth of the church has called for an increasing number of ministers. Under stress the church has taken Dick, Tom, and Harry.

True, it must be said that many of the non-graduates were men of very considerable training, some of them of more training than some of the graduates. Yet, in a general way, the above facts show that the training of our ministerial candidates is very inferior to what is commonly supposed.

The constitution of our church does not, indeed, require graduation. It recommends it. It does require, however, an amount of discipline which many graduates do not have. It requires an amount of learning about equal to the popular belief on the subject. There is something wrong in the church that makes a claim so far above the fact.

The consequences of the church's duplicity in respect to ministerial education have been bad. They could not be otherwise. Duplicity is not blessed of God. But aside from a lowered sense of rectitude inevitable on such a course, other bad consequences

¹ This study of the alumni has been made from the General Catalogue of Union Theological Seminary to 1884 in the main, and from the annual catalogues in the main thereafter.

have followed, and may be pointed out. 1. It has made the ministry less attractive to the more brilliant and able of our Christian youth. We shall never forget how our own regard and reverence for the Presbyterian ministry was shaken when we came to Hampden-Sidney as a college boy, and remarked the lazy and inefficient college work which some candidates for the ministry were doing. When we noted the lack of moral earnestness on the part of some candidates, and discovered that they, though doing no thorough work and getting no real preparation for their great calling while in college, were yet received into the seminary, and upon respectable compliance with the rules of that institution were furnished with its then certificate at the end of three sessions and soon formally licensed and ordained, we could not but have diminished respect for the whole church of our inheritance and our choice. We learned by conversation that our experience was no uncommon one. And we have heard professing Christian young men express distaste for a calling in which such conduct and life were tolerated. Such a state of things does not, of course, justify any youth of parts and earnest moral make-up in rejecting a call to the gospel ministry. The call is upon him the more urgent rather. Nevertheless, it is natural that such an one should be the less attracted than if every man in the ranks were a *man* and a *fit one* for the place. 2. It has made the ministry less efficient. In the study of our *alumni* it became evident that the men of the required training were far more generally efficient and able. There are "extraordinary cases" who have done noble work. We would wrong no one. We do not wish to tarry on this point. It is not pleasant to handle. But it is clear that the general average of efficiency is not heightened by the loose way in which our presbyteries ordain men. Besides, it must not be forgotten that, as was shown in the preceding point, in making the ministry unattractive to the more earnest, aspiring and noble of our young men, the church has kept out of her ministry men who would have raised the general average of ministerial efficiency.

When the church can draw to her ministry all the leading minds of the age, one single age may produce a Jerome, a Chry-

sostom, and an Augustine. The church may then command the highest linguistic and historical scholarship, the superbest genius of oratory, and the profoundest philosophy and theology; and, as well, the safest guides and winners of souls. The spread of Christianity is dependent under God on the presence of a pious, able and learned ministry. The spread of Christianity, we say—not the spread of some organization or other more or less Christian—is dependent on such a ministry. This is the teaching of history. The great evangelists, as well as the great exegetes, translators, and theologians, since the day of the Apostle Paul, have commonly been pious, able, and *learned*.

The church that would do the most possible for the spread of Christianity must take care to secure a ministry of this stamp.

If the foregoing positions are, in the main, just, the course which our church should take in getting rid of its duplicity in connection with the ministerial standard of education becomes evident. The constitutional requirements should not be lowered; but the practice of the church should be made to conform to these requirements.

This we believe to be evident from the foregoing remarks, without further argument. But the following considerations reinforce the position:

1. Other denominations are steadily raising their standard. This is true of almost all denominations. The Missionary Baptists have now a considerable percentage of finely-educated ministers. The same is true of the followers of Alexander Campbell. The Methodist Church has undergone a very marked change during the last thirty years in this respect. The Cumberland Presbyterians appear to have a growing conviction that they, too, must have a learned ministry. But why specify further? It is a fact that everybody knows, that other denominations generally are raising their standards of ministerial education. The Presbyterian Church once stood along with the Congregationalists as pre-eminent in our country for the education of the ministry. But they have lost their preëminence of the olden time. In many quarters they are absolutely inferior in their educational efforts to their Methodist brethren.

This will give the Methodists relatively greater power with the people. They are thus preparing for a more genuine and powerful propagandism. They will soon be able to give Methodism a more vital and thorough-going hold. They will reach a class of people such as Presbyterianism and Calvinism in the past have been wont chiefly to attract.

Now, if our system of Christianity is more nearly biblical, as we believe it to be; if it gives more glory to God and makes man a nobler instrument of his praise, we ought not to yield our old-time preëminence. We ought to hold to it and more.

2. The polemic demands on the ministry of our age call for a ministry as highly educated as our Constitution prescribes.

Some will say, let us have some fine scholars of course, but let us also have men who are not capable of defending Christianity from the assaults of its peculiar enemies of our age engaged in preaching the gospel to plain people. To this proposition there are the following objections, however. If you wish a pyramid to pierce the clouds with its apex, you must use a vast deal of material in the building. You rarely find a great painter except in countries where many persons are trying to be great painters. You do not, as a rule, find great orators in a country where oratory is not widely and assiduously cultivated. Nor will you find these great defenders of the faith except where the general level of ministerial education is high. This is the witness of history.

Again, why use poorly-prepared and illy-adapted men when others may be had? In the ministry, as in missions, the church ought to "attempt great things for God," and "expect great things of God." Let the church ask for an able ministry and use all proper measures to get such an one. Let it remember, too, that God can save by few as well as by many. In the days of Gideon, Jehovah chose once to save Israel by three hundred, rather than by thirty thousand. The church of God has not holy daring enough. It is not ready enough to take God at his word and do his work in his way. It is better to commit the formal teaching of the word of God to a few "*faithful men, who shall be able to teach others,*"¹ than to commit it to greater

¹ 2 Timothy ii. 2.

numbers of the inefficient. But this by the way; we do not believe that the ranks of the ministry would be thinned. Let the church call good men. God will answer.

And what a boon to any church now is a really able, pious, and learned ministry! Rationalistic skepticism is rampant. Only such a ministry can meet it. How valuable to a congregation now to know that its pastor is not only pious and well-meaning, but able to teach the truth. And, say what you will about character, no man can be respected as a *teacher* and *preacher* who is not believed by his people *to know what the truth is*. They know that many a Mohammedan dervish is sincere and honest in his intention. They need, and know it, a man who is competent to say, "I know what the historic truth is, and I know that Christianity is the true religion." The truth taught by William Henry Green to his students in recent years has been of incalculable benefit to them and their congregations.

3. For aggressive work of all kinds we need a standard of ministerial education as high as our standards require.

There is ever new need for aggressive teaching. In the past, Presbyterians have, in virtue of their pious, able, and learned ministry, been the teachers of Christendom. They have fought the controversies for truth. They are sometimes scorned for their controversies, but the scorn is from the ignorant. Their controversies have led to much of truth in the common creed of Christendom. If they continue the teachers of Christendom in the future, as in the past, they must not lower the standard of ministerial education. They must raise it.

Presbyterians have the largest following in all Christendom. They have been missionary therefore. Education has not stood in the way of its spread, but helped it.

Paul's education did not make him a less but a greater evangelist and missionary. So of Augustine, of Thomas Aquinas, of Bernard of Clairvaux, of Luther and Calvin, of John Knox and Rutherford, of Wesley and Whitefield, of Edwards, of Palmer, and of Moody.

Let us have a ministry which shall not be despised, which shall not be inefficient, which shall be able to defend the faith, which

shall teach Christendom, which can wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, to gather in and to build up the elect, which shall, in the future as it has in the past, march in the forefront of the hosts of the Lord.

Lord, give thy church a pious, able, and learned ministry.
Amen.

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