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## GEORGE BUCHANAN, THE SCOTTISH HUMANIST.

BY PROFESSOR STALKER, Aberdeen, Scotland.

Last year the quater-centenary of John Knox was celebrated amidst demonstrations of interest which not only extended to the remotest parishes of Scotland, but found answering echoes in every corner of the globe. This year is the quater-centenary of another famous Scot—George Buchanan; and the University of St. Andrews, of which he was an alumnus in his youth, and in which he held the distinguished office of Principal of St. Leonard's College in his maturity, issued to the country and the learned world in the beginning of the year an invitation to celebrate the event there in the month of July. The occasion was an interesting one, and speeches were delivered by men of eminence, well able to do justice to the subject; but the echoes from other countries, and even in this country, have been few and faint in comparison with those which replied to the summons to commemorate John Knox.

This contrast is not only an illustration of how in the course of centuries reputations may wax or wane, but is also a sign of the times. Once the name of Buchanan stood at least as high as that of Knox in the land of their birth, and was far better known in foreign parts. Indeed, for two centuries after the deaths of both, Buchanan was the more outstanding figure, Dr. Johnson declaring him to be the only man of European reputation whom Scotland had ever produced. But Buchanan's name may be said to have steadily waned from the time when the Latin language ceased to be the medium through which academic instruction was communicated, while John Knox, on the contrary, has, since about the same date, continued to rise

## THE MINISTER AS A DISSEMINATOR OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

BY REV. WALTER L. LINGLE, D. D.

First of all, let me give the request which came to me: "There is a matter that I believe ought to be written and published at this time. You doubtless know that our Committee of Publication has been giving away a lot of valuable books. Many of these works are masterpieces; for example, Dr. Palmer's little book, 'The Family,' which Dr. Strickler says is one of the best things Dr. Palmer ever wrote. There are many others that are valuable. Now, it has occurred to me that it is a sad reflection on our Church that the reading tastes should be such that such books as these must be given away in order to be disposed of. These books are not in the homes of our people. Their places are often taken by books of an inferior order, books of mere fiction. Can you not write something along the line of suggestion to pastors and teachers as to the duty of directing the reading of our people, and the ways of doing it? We believe you can, and we hope that you can find the time to do it. We will not limit you as to space."

I have quoted this paragraph not only to show my warrant for consuming time and space, but because it is a splendid little article in itself on the subject, on which the author of it wants me to write. It reveals the trend of at least one seminary student's mind, and we like the trend.

Now, let me make an honest confession. It is that I have not been able to work myself up to a great state of grief about those books which our Publication Committee has been giving away. I have examined the list with some care. There are some valuable books among them. But many of these books have served their day and generation, and have fallen on sleep. Some of them were still-born. It is my observation that if a book does not circulate, the fault is generally with the book—either the world has outgrown the need of it, or there is something defective about the book itself. The defect is often a lack of literary form

or style. That is probably the trouble with the majority of books which our Committee is giving away. Books which live owe their life as much to their literary form as they do to their thought. Here is a paragraph which I read last night in a lecture by Dr. Alexander Whyte, on Bunyan's "Grace Abounding." It says for me what I am trying to say: "And, then, there was Bunyan's exquisite style. I have named three men above whose conversion first, and then their after sanctification, stand out beside those of Bunyan in their intense interest to me, and in their deep and continually increasing power over me. But their books are not known outside a very small and a fast-decreasing circle of readers. And that, partly because of the poor and stumbling and repelling style in which they are written. Whereas John Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding' will be read as long as the English language lasts, if only for its incomparably pure, and clear, and strong, and sweet, and winning English style. During my recent holiday, I read the works of two of the most learned theologians of the present and past generations; but, oh! the style! It was harsh and clumsy, and confused, and unintelligible often, and insufferable always. Whereas, when I took up John Bunyan, and read him again—Oh, what grace, what sweetness, what music, what melody! Till I kissed the beautiful book and laughed aloud with joy."

So the fact that some books are being given away by our Committee does not make me take a gloomy view. The fault may be with the book, and not with the people. I take the more comfort when I observe that the writers in our Church who have a message and a literary style have also a wide hearing. What could be more uninviting as a title for a book than "The Creed of Presbyterians," but when the people looked within that little book and saw the grace and charm of the style, and saw that there was a message, it went like wild-fire, and is still selling. I could give other illustrations.

But this has carried me rather far afield from my subject. I am asked to show that it is the duty of the pastor to direct the reading of his people, and also to show how he can do it. Notwithstanding what I have said above, I heartily agree with the one who made this request, that it is the minister's duty to do all he can to disseminate Christian literature and to direct the read-

ing of his people. Of course preaching the gospel is the great work of the minister. We must never forget that. Every minister ought to try, by the grace of God, to make his pulpit his throne. But placing a good book in a home is one method of preaching the gospel. Now, I might go on and argue at length that it is the minister's duty to do what he can to place Christian literature in the homes of his people, but I am not going to do this. I will take it for granted that practically every minister believes this already. When we see how much trash and how many positively vicious books there are on the market, and how ignorant many Christians are on the whole subject of Christian literature, and how few books there are of any kind in many Christian homes, we feel that we must do something to bring our people into touch with a world of Christian literature, which means so much to us and which would enrich and enlarge their Christian experience. The minister does not need to be converted on this point. He already feels deeply upon the subject. But the burning question is how can it be done? How can the minister place Christian books and literature in the hands and homes of his people without turning aside from the great work of his ministry to become a book agent or colporteur? I will devote the remainder of this article to an attempt to answer that question. You will have to let me speak out of my own personal experience, as that is the only way I know. Certainly, that is the only way in which I can make this paper of any practical value.

1. He will have to be a reader himself. His people will soon discover whether their pastor knows anything about books. If he does, his counsel will be sought and his recommendations will have weight. If he does not, he will not be able to accomplish a great deal along this line of work. I am afraid that the majority of us who are ministers do not read as much as we ought. Our work is exacting and very hard to systematize. If we do not know how to use the fragments of time, we will certainly not get much reading done. Worse than this, the average minister does not have the money to spare for even the books which he feels are a necessity. I wonder how many of us reach the high standard in the paragraph below, which I have just run across in an article by Dr. Robertson Nicoll, who probably knows more about books than any man in the English-speaking

world, and who, his biographer says, averages a book a day the year round: "How much ought I to read every week in order to keep the mind alive? To this I reply that one book a week carefully and thoughtfully read, is enough. When a book is long, two or three weeks may be allowed. My view is that there is no intelligent person, however actively employed, who cannot read, say, 15,000 words every day. This means an hour, perhaps a little more in the case of very slow readers. The average book of to-day is about 100,000 words long. Fifteen thousand words a day will be sufficient to accomplish one book. There are many great books much longer, and of course, more time must be allowed to these. This, I fancy, is a minimum allowance to those who wish to keep their intellect fresh, and bright and clear." If we could but reach this minimum in well-directed reading, our problem would be largely solved. Our people would regard us as authorities on the subject of books and would seek our advice. Besides, we would know what books to recommend. One trouble with us is that our reading is so circumscribed that when a parishioner requests us to suggest a good book, we are embarrassed and cannot really think of one. And woe to the man who recommends books indiscriminately without having read them. He will come to grief sooner or later.

2. A second method by which a minister may direct the reading of his people is by preaching an occasional sermon on the subject of reading. Literature occupies a large place in life, and wields a large influence in the moulding of character. Certainly it is worthy of a place in a sermon. It may be a little difficult to find a suitable text, and I do believe in "textual fidelity" with all my heart. "Till I come, give attendance to reading," is rather ambiguous, but I believe that it is perfectly legitimate to use it. If we are doubtful about that, we might try "The Cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Or we might take the story of the burning of the books in Acts xix. 19. I am sure there are wagon-loads of trash to-day which ought to be burned. Others may find better texts than these. Anyway, the minister will find the sermon a very fruitful method of circulating Christian literature. About a year ago I devoted a sermon to this subject. Afterwards I had numbers of requests

to recommend good books. One gentleman wrote me a letter and sent me blanks on which to write the names of some fifty books which I thought ought to be in his library. There are a great many who are eager for suggestions of this kind from persons who have a knowledge of books. We scarcely realize how limited the average hearer's knowledge of any kind of literature is, especially his knowledge of Christian literature. It is simply amazing how few books of any description there are in many of our homes. Try a sermon on this subject once in every two or three years.

3. When you strike an especially good book, tell the people about it on Sunday. When I had read Dr. Egbert Smith's "Creed of Presbyterians," I was so charmed that I took it to church on Sunday, held it up and told the people about it. Before the next Sunday I had been requested to order forty copies. Of course, that was a little trouble, but what good thing can you have or accomplish without some trouble? That was five years ago. I may say that I am still ordering copies of that little book. I have ordered five within the last two weeks. I did the same thing with Stalker's "Life of Christ." I suppose I have ordered fifty copies or more of that. About a year ago I tried this plan on the Confession of Faith. I discovered that some of the officers in the church did not have a copy. I had an idea that every officer ought certainly to have one, so I ordered fifty copies to start with, and placed them with an elder. Then I told the people of them on Sunday. They were all taken, and a good many more copies ordered. By the same method, we have placed "Christus Redemptor," a Book on Missions in the South Seas, in forty homes within the past month. If a minister wants to try this plan, he will do well to select a reliable man beforehand, and, after telling the people of the book, tell them that this man will be very glad to take their orders. This will relieve the minister of considerable trouble and keep him from savoring of the book agent, and at the same time give the other man some useful and interesting Christian work to do. But let me say again, the minister must know his book through and through before he recommends it.

4. Still another good way of circulating Christian literature is through the Sunday-school library. Of course, we must have

books for children, and plenty of them, but let us have more for adults. Every Sunday-school that has a library ought to have a committee whose business it is to keep a constant look-out for books which are suitable for the library. The pastor might be chairman of that committee. In this way, a few carefully-selected books could be added to the library every month, which is better than dumping in fifty once a year. When the new book comes, let the pastor hold it up before the school and tell the children about it. Or if it is especially suited for adults, he might mention it in his notices on Sunday morning. Those churches which have little papers of their own, can always publish the names of the new books in their paper.

And there is the Missionary library, with all its possibilities. Every church, no matter how poor it is, ought to have one. These are the books that tell of the coming of the kingdom. There is no more thrilling, soul-stirring literature in all the world. It is wonderful how much of this kind of literature a pastor can put into circulation by means of the Missionary library.

5. I have found the much-maligned women's clubs a good medium for the dissemination and study of Christian literature. I have been frequently asked to prepare the programs for the year's study. In this way, one club was led to spend two years in studying the Old Testament and Old Testament literature. Another club took the same course for a year. In this study, some of the best books in connection with the Old Testament were put into circulation and thoroughly studied. Another program embraced a year's study in the Life of Christ. Again, some of the best books on the gospels and the life of Christ were put into a number of hands. I have just recently had the privilege of sketching a year's course on Scotland, in which the club will study John Knox and the Reformation, the Covenanters, David Livingstone, and John G. Paton. This means that a number of books, which we Presbyterians would put in a class with the very best Christian literature, will be studied.

6. There is still another way. The minister is going into the homes of his people daily. He is also reading daily. As he goes into the homes, instead of talking about everything under the sun but religion, let him introduce the Christian book that he is reading, and suggest it as a good one for the home. I

think he can do this without seeming pedantic. He will often find it an easy method of turning the conversation from the purely secular to the spiritual, and what minister's heart does not burn within him with a longing to talk of things spiritual?

7. I will mention only one other way. Our church papers and magazines constitute the very best form of religious literature which we can put into the hands of the people. They are fresh. They deal with living themes. I wish that there might be a copy of the *Missionary* and of a good church paper in every home. The minister will do well to make mention of these in the pulpit from time to time, and encourage the people to subscribe for them. He can give no little aid to the representatives of these papers who come to canvass his congregation. He can encourage his missionary society to place a copy of the *Missionary* in every home in the congregation.

But time fails me, and so does space, to tell of all the ways in which a minister, who is dead in earnest about it, may find to place Christian literature in the homes of his people, without turning aside for a moment from his great calling. My little experience leads me to believe that there is no reason to mourn over the depraved tastes of our Christian people, but a reason to rejoice that so many of them are eager for books and papers which have a message for their souls.