

...THE...

# Union Seminary Magazine

---

Vol. XXI.

APRIL—MAY, 1910

No. 4

---

## THE SEARCH AFTER TRUTH.

BY HOWARD AGNEW JOHNSTON, D. D.

There is a widespread impression that our age is one of unusual intellectual unrest. Within recent years a prominent writer issued a book whose title included the words "An Age of Doubt." Another prominent author within a year issued a book entitled "An Age of Faith". Of course we have both faith and doubt; but this age is characterized above all others as being distinctively *an age of facts*. It is also rightly called a "scientific age" as compared to former times, because the scientific method obtains in the thinking world. There is more stability in the thinking world today than ever before, for there is a growing sense of actual knowledge and certainty, resulting from the scientific research and the critical spirit which have canvassed the whole realm of investigation, and have practically decided many things which are henceforth settled for all scholarly men.

In all this research it will be fair to say that men have been asking one question, and asking it earnestly. It is the old question which we have recorded as being asked by Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea: "What is Truth?" There might be various answers to this question offered by different students of the world's life; but the largest consensus of judgment will agree that the deepest purpose of the question goes to the point of bringing men light upon the problems involving the moral and spiritual welfare of the human race. It is not enough to know all the facts about the physical universe. It is not even enough to know all the facts involved in right thinking in the intellectual realm. The supreme asset for humanity is character. The supreme need for humanity is righteousness. The supreme problem for humanity is the moral and spiritual prob-

## EFFICIENCY.

A. L. PHILLIPS, D. D.

As civilization unfolds it makes new demands upon the individual. In the society of ignorant men wants are few and easily supplied. Education is but the process of creating new wants and of showing how to supply them. Civilization and education combine to make the conditions of life complex and difficult. Religion in common with all other great fundamental human interests constantly tends to become complex rather than simple as men rise in the scale of living. The insistent call to the Simple Life, uttered recently by Wagner, makes us pause long enough to measure how far we have departed from it. The return to simplicity in faith and life is probably impossible, and economy of energy requires us to make the most of things as they are. The power to produce results was probably never at so high a premium as at present, and this is but another way of saying that efficiency is the supreme test of a man's usefulness today. The power of simple goodness and willingness is as great as ever, but men insist that one must be good for something. To be sure the passive elements of religion were never more needed than today. When did men ever need self-control and patience, for example, more than now? But passive virtues alone are not equal to the gigantic tasks of production required by the modern Church life.

All will accept the dictionary's judgment that efficiency is the result of the union of knowledge, skill and industry. In order to make this a sufficient definition for the religious sphere, we shall have to write the co-efficient of spirituality before each term of the equation. Knowledge must include spiritual experience; skill must embrace spiritual practice; and industry must be the expression of spiritual energy supernaturally given the soul. If the equation be reduced to the lowest terms perhaps we may say that character plus skill equals efficiency.

No argument is needed to prove that the church of today is in sore need of efficient workers, of trained leaders with large

productive powers. For months past from ten to a dozen of our largest churches have been without pastors, entailing enormous loss of both revenue and spiritual achievement. The sessions of these churches do not hesitate to tell us that they have before them without their solicitation numerous names of available men sent sometimes by the men themselves, but oftener by friends. In spite of the fact that for several years we have not had enough new men from the seminaries and from all other sources of supply to enter unoccupied fields, and in spite of the competitive demand for the men now at work, the churches are selecting their pastors with the most scrutinizing care. The demand everywhere is for efficiency. New elements have entered into the people's idea of pastoral productivity. In many cases, no doubt, false ideals exist. The people are justly proud of their minister's ability to read a little Greek and less Hebrew, and rejoice in his power to make sermons as Dabney and Broadus direct. They take it for granted that their shepherds will visit and tend the flock. But they are now looking for men who have distinct visions of their congregations as a whole and who can turn the forces at hand into an organism, united, aggressive, victorious. There must be pastoral skill as well as knowledge and industry.

A year ago our Minutes of Assembly reported that there were 10,473 ruling elders in our churches. So far as the characters of these men are concerned, it may be doubted whether in the whole world one can find a nobler set of men. They represent all degrees of learning from the humblest, whose crushing misfortune it has been that they were deprived of an opportunity for an education, to the men of the highest professional attainments. They are in almost every conceivable occupation and profession,—farmers, professors, lawyers, mechanics, doctors, merchants, miners, engineers, cattle-men, life-savers, capitalists, printers, soldiers, sailors, statesmen. They are old, middle-aged and young; married and single and expectant; handsome and ugly; rich and poor, near-rich and near-poor. It is not too much to say that amongst the ruling elders of the Southern Presbyterian Church men may be found who can do well any task that falls to a man's hand. As a class they are men of the highest char-

acter and approved industry. What can be said of their skill? The work that they are called and ordained to do is clearly set forth in simple language in our Form of Government. These men of God will be the first to testify to their own grievous lack of skill, and to mourn over their own unproductiveness. Many notable exceptions to this condition emphasize the average state.

The Minutes of Assembly report 9,747 deacons in our churches. These make a body of fine men in every way. Like their brethren of the eldership they represent every station in life and every degree of culture and effectiveness. Of all the Presbyterian family of churches our denomination alone has exalted the diaconate to its proper place as set forth in the Bible. The deacon is being more and more honored by us in consideration of the vital character of his spiritual contribution to our fellowship and activities. The office is now being subjected to an enormous strain in view of the awakening of our men to a new sense of responsibility to God for the use of their money. Whether the deacons will be displaced in the collection and distribution of the pledges now being made for Missions, by a special committee appointed by the session, waits to be seen. From every quarter comes the word that our Church finances are in an unsatisfactory condition. Investigation and criticism are abroad. The most successful churches are disposed to look to the budget for deliverance. What will our deacons produce in this time of our great need? Some of the methods now in use are worn threadbare, and nearly all are unsatisfactory. Never in our history has such an opportunity for permanent and distinguished service to the Church lain at the feet of our deacons. Are they equal to the occasion? Are they efficient?

In our Assembly there are perhaps three thousand Sunday Schools each with a superintendent. We have about 25,000 officers and teachers in these schools. Many of these are elders and deacons; perhaps the majority are women. In knowledge of the Bible, in fidelity to trust, in devotion to their ideals of duty they are the equals of any similar workers anywhere. They have made simply enormous progress in almost every detail of their high calling within the last nine years. They have bought

and read tons of literature in their search for light. Hundreds and hundreds of them have attended institutes and conventions, seeking information and returning home inspired to greater effort. These efforts are a convincing testimony to their constraining sense of need. They are searching for skill to be combined with their knowledge and industry to produce the highest efficiency ever known amongst us. The Sunday School is coming to a place of vastly increased power and privilege. There are problems of control, organization, equipment, instruction, training, ingathering and expansion that were unappreciated amongst us ten years ago. The awakening of old communities to new life through the advent of the railroad and telephone, the rapidly increasing number and size of our towns and cities, and the incoming multitudes of immigrants make a call for Sunday School Extensions that must be heard now. What shall the answer be? Have these devoted workers power to produce what is needed? Can they successfully use their spiritual energies so as to force an advance?

In this connection it is interesting to note the growing demand for men and women who can conduct a Sunday School institute with success. Often proposed plans for enlarged effort in this direction are abandoned because there is no one to lead. Then too there is a growing demand for laymen with special fitness and training to become superintendents at fair salaries. They cannot be found at present. Here is a gracious opening for effective men. Where are they to be found?

Without doubt one of the most serious hindrances to the development of work among our Young People's Societies is the conscious and confessed lack of efficiency on the part of pastors and workers alike. Careful investigation has shown that the young folks are interested in Bible Study, in Prayer, in Christian Culture, in Missions, in Stewardship, in Extension, in Social Work, in Personal Work and literally millions of them are dealing with the difficult problems of the young people's prayer meeting every week. These societies have been the only training schools that have helped to make tens of thousands of efficient workers all over the land. It is simply absurd to expect these multitudes of untaught youth to conduct unaided their own training. To

whom must they look? To pastors? To sessions? How many of our pastors can conduct a young people's meeting with satisfaction to all concerned? It is encouraging to know that many can do this work with high efficiency and are training their young people. Here is no fanciful need, but a present, pressing obligation and privilege. Where is the skill needed?

The missionary enterprise is taking on very rapidly new forms of life. The unprecedented enthusiasm that has marked the recent phenomenal development of missionary interest among the young people and laymen must be sustained by more adequate educational methods if we are to escape the discouragement of a reaction. The American Sunday School with its millions of teachers and pupils is a superb instrument for such work, organized, equipped, receptive, responsive. Men's, Women's, and Children's Missionary Societies are everywhere looking for fresh information and for new methods. Missionaries under appointment for complicated and difficult tasks at home are placed at a serious disadvantage for lack of training. Those who untrained are sent to foreign fields to interpret the Bible and apply it to the most difficult situations conceivable, face awful discouragement and invite defeat. Just as new flowers and new leaves mark the advent of spring, so an awakened sense of responsibility for the spread of the Gospel lays at our feet a new obligation to move forward and outward. Who is to lead the advance? A degree of skill hitherto unknown is needed now.

There is in some places a growing sense of need for the work of the deaconess. The visitation and ministrations to strangers, the care of the sick and of the poor and of the aged in our great cities cannot be done by the minister unaided. Women with special gifts and approved training are surely needed. The work is difficult and delicate. The demand for those already trained equals the supply. The age demands efficiency. Shall it be supplied?

Now and then during some great revival a whole community is brought face to face with the imperative necessity for the services of persons trained to deal with the unconverted and with the anxious. Indeed the best evangelists now provide for some

method of training these personal workers, who may thus be led into the joy of winning souls. The average Christian needs only to think a moment in order to conclude that he or she does not know how to lead an inquiring soul to Jesus Christ. No doubt this conscious lack of skill deters many from doing what is a primary duty and from tasting the sweetest joy on earth. There is scarcely a church in a thousand that makes any adequate provision for training its members to win men to Christ. So it happens that lack of skill is interfering with God's gracious purposes of salvation. Surely it is high time that the accredited leaders of the Church should seriously deal with this crippling condition.

The question naturally arises as to where the raw material for such a training is to come from. Certainly it will be a waste of time and energy to look for it among those who have passed the educable age. An inefficient old Christian is not likely to change the habits formed during years of neglect. We must look to the young for raw material. It is a very common experience to see boys and girls, young men and women admitted to the communion of the Church on confession of faith and then left to their own expedients. When a recruit joins the army he is at once put under discipline and his training begins promptly. There is no time to lose and his efficiency in time of the sorest need will be determined by the energy and constancy of his present training. Upon what grounds can this prevalent neglect of the training of young Christians be justified? Repentance is more in order than justification. The condition of the young convert is rendered the more critical by the neglect of training in his home. Is it any wonder that our registers are filled with the names of men and women who produce almost nothing? In a certain great church out of a total of some 375 male members and constituents, less than fifty are identified with productive activity. In business such waste of raw material would not be tolerated for a day. Careful study of the natural and acquired gifts of the young will quickly indicate the lines of activity to which they should be assigned. There is a musician; here a boy with executive gifts; yonder a girl with rare social powers; here a boy with the gift of easy speech; there a born teacher. They

should be put to work. In the young Men's Prayer Association of the Central Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, young men were helped to discover and to train their gifts until preachers, elders, deacons came forth to enrich the life of the city and to bless the Church with their efficient lives. Think of the contribution to the cause of God in Central Africa that was made through the highly skilled Samuel Lapsley. Here indeed did efficiency follow hard on the heels of knowledge, skill and industry.

How shall this needed efficiency be secured? There can be but one answer to this question. It does not come by chance; cannot be bought; is not caught like the measles. Training alone can produce efficiency. At the base of all training lies sufficient knowledge. Skill is not born of ignorance. There is urgent need for the power to lay the foundation in thorough and systematic teaching, and all the teaching resources of the Church must be drawn upon. Simple teaching, however systematic and thorough, is not sufficient. Expression must follow impression. Action must run close behind instruction. When our young folks learn that "pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep unspotted from the world" they must be sent to the fatherless with bread and to the widows with comfort. They must not stop with learning the Bible lesson and the theory of teaching; they must be tied to classes and made to teach what they have learned. Bible knowledge and Christian activity must be joined together so that no man may ever put them asunder. Such teaching and such training it pleases the Holy Spirit to energize to the boundless good of men and to the endless praise of God. Upon such a broad foundation, it is easy to build special training for this life-work or that.

Can special training be had that will surely produce the results sought? Our theological seminaries help to answer this question so far as the ministry is concerned. Three of our existing seminaries have so revised and extended their courses of instruction that lively hopes are being indulged by the churches that even greater changes will be made. A profounder and more varied scholarship is needed to meet the assaults of enemies within the Church and without. But scholarship is only one of



the elements of efficiency. No amount of mere scholarship can enable a young minister to deal with the problems of the prayer meeting, of the night service, of the Sunday School, of the Young People's Society, of Woman's Work, of Missions and Church Finance.

At present there is little opportunity for Church officers to secure the training needed and desired. It usually happens when new officers are elected, that they are advised to read the Confession of Faith and Form of Government with the purpose of guaranteeing orthodoxy as well as to secure efficiency. Their training then ceases, except in so far as they catch up ideas now and then in the discharge of their official duties. In the course of years the elders learn something of their duties in attendance on the meetings of Presbytery, Synod, and at rare intervals at the General Assembly. Now and then one reads of a Presbytery's holding an Elders' and Deacons' Institute. There is some hope that summer assemblies like those at Montreat and Kerrville may draw our officers by special courses of attractive discussion and conference. It may be seriously questioned as to whether these methods are even remotely adequate. This age will be content with no substitute for efficiency. The Church owes it to her officers to provide the opportunity for training, which should be done under supervision of the Church rather than left to the initiative of individuals.

And for unordained, or lay-workers? In Sunday School work encouraging progress has been made through conventions, institutes, and summer schools. Teacher training courses are attracting increasing numbers of students. Those who seek ampler training have been compelled until recently to seek it outside our bounds and beyond our supervision at such places as The Bible Training School in New York, and the Moody Institute in Chicago. The seminaries at Louisville and Richmond have been offering courses for lay-workers, and Austin Seminary is working out a plan. At Nashville, Tenn., the Bible Training School under private control, is open for varied courses, and a similar enterprise has been projected for St. Louis. It is evident that things are improving, and there is substantial hope for the future. Should not the General Assembly consider this whole

subject as it relates to elders, deacons and lay-workers, and project such plans as would promise to be adequate? In the meantime pastors and sessions need not wait for larger opportunity. The raw material is at hand in multitudes of waiting and responsive youth, who may be made efficient through study and service in the home church.

Some one said recently of another, "He was always ready for the ultimate demand". The ultimate demand of which we are now thinking is spiritual efficiency. Vain is mere knowledge even though it be the knowledge of the Bible. Purposeless all industry must remain that is not aimed well. Fruitless all skill shall ever be here unless it be controlled by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. This influence is not the result of study and training alone. It is a gracious gift and comes in answer to prayer. The prayerless life must ever be inefficient. We need not be surprised at our inability to overcome certain difficulties, or to capture the heights beyond. Untrained we are no match for some forces. In the ninth chapter of Mark the pitiful deaf mute, the despairing father and the indignant Lord were witnesses to the inefficiency of the disciples, which was conscious and confessed. "And when he came into the house, his disciples asked him privately, How is that we could not cast it out? And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing save prayer." And so we must amend our definition of efficiency—Knowledge plus skill, plus industry, plus the Holy Spirit equals efficiency.