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OF
THE REFORMED CHURCHES
HOLDING
THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM.

MINUTES AND PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE THIRD GENERAL COUNCIL,
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EDITED BY GEORGE D. MATHEWS, D.D.

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unequipped. If the sceptic is to be met and vanquished by any adversary, it is probable that it will have to be by the authorized minister of that religion which has been assailed. Preaching against special forms of scepticism is not ordinarily to be recommended. But there are various channels (as, for example, the Press) through which the views of the defenders of the faith can find suitable expression. In the pulpit, too, the well-instructed scribe will know how to guard against the error which he does not care to meet with a direct and formal refutation. In the social intercourse of the expert pastor, many opportunities will arise of touching, as with the point of a needle, the exact spot where the mental trouble aches or tortures, or the mental qualm perturbs. This grave and delicate office can, in general, be performed judiciously and successfully only by one who is not only highly educated, but one who is well up in the correct opinions and vagaries of the times. The minister of the Word is of all others the man of one book, and while this is notably the age of specialists, yet there is a rich and generous sense in which, here and there, he should be able to say, with Lord Verulam, that he has "made all knowledge" his "province."

The pertinency of this consideration to the precise question now under discussion, grows out of the fact that it shows that the time in which we live, is especially inopportune for a weakening of our safeguards in the way of intellectual and moral training.

In conclusion, then, I would express the earnest hope that the Alliance may utter a distinct and emphatic protest against any slackening in the zeal with which the Reformed Churches have hitherto prosecuted the work of education for the ministry, as well as against the removal of those time-honoured barriers which have heretofore kept out many incompetent persons from the sacred office. There is, undoubtedly, some middle ground between extreme opinions on this subject, where the majority of us can stand comfortably together. The thing to be attained is the maximum of laborers with a high degree of efficiency in the work. Let no man who is truly called of God to the work of the ministry, be excluded from the Master's service merely because of inadequate preparation. Some men do not hear (or do not obey) the call to the ministry until they are forty or even fifty years of age. Others, who may be much younger, have been providentially hindered in their studies. If it be thought advisable, let such men still be strictly educated. If, however, the circumstances do not seem to justify such a step, let them be received without the ordinary requirements.

Rev. Professor BENJAMIN F. WARFIELD, D.D., of the Western Seminary, Allegheny, next read the following Paper on

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CANDIDATES.

It is not at all my purpose to attempt to settle on rational grounds the qualifications that should be demanded of candidates

for the ministry. The Great Head of the Church has not left matters of such importance to the caprice of men, and in more than one passage of Scripture, has prescribed the qualifications that must unite in one before he may be fitly ordained to this high office. The classical passage is, of course, the earlier verses of the 3rd chapter of 1st Timothy, and even a hasty glance at that will catch a circumstance worth our deepest attention. Of the fourteen or fifteen requirements there tabulated as especially necessary in a candidate for the office of bishop, only one concerns his intellectual fitness for his work. We have to dig "*aptness to teach*" from out of the midst of a heap of Ethical demands which almost hide it from sight. It does not even appear to be one of the chief gems of this heap of jewels. The selection of it alone as the subject of this Paper is not, however, a practical confession of our neglect of the weightier matters of the law. The spiritual qualifications that are demanded of the prospective bishop are in no sense requirements strange or peculiar to him and him alone, of the people of God. The Holy Ghost only lays specially upon his conscience, the development of these Christian graces which are proclaimed to be the duty of all, and these may, hence, be succinctly summed up in these words: the bishop must be the best man in his community, the best christian in his Church. As there is nothing in the nature of the requirements to demand discussion, so there is nothing in the attitude of our Churches towards them to justify it. In the unspeakable grace of God, they are recognised throughout our communions as of paramount importance, and about their meaning, scope, or stringency, there is no difference of opinion and can be no argument. We all believe that the first and altogether indispensable qualifications in a candidate are, that his soul shall have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that his life shall be richly exhibiting Spirit-given graces.

We confine ourselves to the discussion of '*apt to teach*,' not as the most important or interesting qualification of the list, but as the only one about which there is any difference of opinion among us. And indeed, even in regard to it we are in the main agreed. We all believe that it primarily and chiefly means, that the candidate for the ministry shall exhibit before ordination, an adequate knowledge—a '*realising knowledge*,' as we say—of the truth of God—the truth which we call the Gospel; and that he shall give such evidence of his ability to teach this knowledge, as shall satisfy those who rule over God's house, of his fitness for the office of teacher. It is only when we ask after the kind of evidence that shall be demanded of his knowledge and fitness to teach—and especially after the kind and amount of training that shall be prescribed in order to give confidence in his knowledge and fitness to teach—that we meet with doubts and differences and disputes.

It is worth while to note thus, that the question in dispute is, therefore, necessarily a question of *Training*. All education is a matter of training. But apart from this general truth, the pre-professional education of a minister of the Gospel is emphatically

a question of training. No one will long contend, that he is to get at college what he is to teach. The college is but his training school,—his mental gymnasium. It should be distinctly understood, that what the minister is to teach is the Gospel, and that the best studies for a candidate, previously to addressing himself to learn it, are not those which will store his mind with the most facts about other things, but rather those which will prepare his mind for receiving it, when its truths are presented to him.

Nor is the question, Whether we shall have a ministry or not? The matter is sometimes so canvassed as almost to lead one to believe that to require a certain kind of education in candidates were hopelessly, to close the doors of the ministry to the majority of those whom God has called to preach. But here, there can be no difference of opinion; the Church is bound to recognise every man whom there is reason to believe God has called to preach the Gospel. The question does not concern the opening or closing of our doors to such, but only the *Training* that it is wise to prescribe for the candidates we have received as called of God. Extraordinary cases ought to be dealt with in an extraordinary manner; and our organic law ought—as it does—to allow for them, and throw it upon the conscience of each Presbytery to decide just when, in what cases, and in how many cases, the ordinary requirements shall be relaxed. In all ordinary cases, it is far more important that the candidate be “apt to teach” when he gets into the pulpit, than that he should get there immediately. The question does not concern so much the length of time consumed in education, as the kind of education. Our innovating brethren are careful to explain that they do not wish to lower the standard—they wish more and better education. Let us understand this clearly, then, at the outset. What is in dispute is simply the *kind* of education that is to be prescribed. The number of candidates remains untouched—the amount of labor—the length of time; the only dispute concerns *the subjects of study* on which this labor of these candidates shall be for the time bestowed. The question thus resolves itself into a debate as to the best subjects of study to secure mental discipline.

As a matter of fact, it has resolved itself practically into a debate over the retention of a classical training among the requirements for ordination. The time at my disposal is too short for me to undertake to state and discuss all the forms, more or less radical, which this question has recently taken. To the main question involved, I do not hesitate, however, to return an emphatic, affirmative answer; and I shall occupy the remainder of my time in assigning three very simple reasons why the prescribed pre-professional training for candidates for the ministry of the Reformed Churches should include as its central point, the careful and long continued study of the Latin and Greek languages.

These reasons are: 1, *The study of the classical languages offers the best means of mental training as yet known to educators.* Were we, for any reason, debarred from the use of the classics, I make

no question but that the same training that we now obtain from them could and would be obtained without them. But neither do I make any question, but that the same training could not be obtained without a larger expenditure of both time and effort. And so long as we have the choice in a free field, the classical course must be chosen as supplying the best means as yet known of mental discipline.

The results that have been obtained in the past are a sufficient demonstration of the value of classical drill as a gymnastic of the mind. Although a few men—mostly of erratic natures—have recently testified to the little worth of classical studies to them in the subsequent struggles and labors of life, the name of those who have enthusiastically borne the directly opposite witness is legion, and the complaint is usually found to grow out of some misapprehension of the nature, purpose, or limitations of college training. The college cannot communicate all knowledge—it is not intended to turn out specialists, not even in the classics; it but prepares the mind for the ready acquisition and use of any kind of knowledge in the future. All experience goes to show that for these purposes—the preparation of the soil to receive, foster and nourish the seeds of whatever knowledge are cast into it—classical study is unequalled. The recent experience of the Prussian Universities with the pupils of the Real-Schulen and Gymnasia is but one page of a long-continued history, the lessons of which all read one way. And to testify that the pupils of the Gymnasia outstrip even in the scientific branches, the pupils of the Real-Schulen, is but to testify, that ten years of actual testing proves that the classical curriculum imparts a better mental discipline than the so-called scientific curriculum. The main difficulty with the Real-Schulen, we are told by the Berlin faculty, “is that the instruction given in it lacks a central point; hence the unsteadiness in its system of teaching. . . . In a word, it has not been possible to find an equivalent for the classical languages as a centre of instruction.”

Nor would it be difficult to point out the *rationale* of this superiority of classical study. Men sometimes speak of it as if it chiefly appealed to and developed the mechanical memory. It does exercise memory, but nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that it chiefly or largely depends on it. Its value as a discipline consists rather in the very fact that it does not appeal to memory only or chiefly—that it cannot be mechanically prosecuted—that, in a word, it more than any other known discipline reaches into the recesses of the mind, draws out and engages its every power, and trains harmoniously and develops in due proportion its most varied faculties. No other subject of study offers so continual and so varied exercise for the mental muscles—keeps the mind so alertly awake—so immediately and inevitably sends its Nemesis on the heels of false, indolent, and slipshod thinking—or so cultivates and develops the most useful of its processes—keen observation, exact accuracy, sound and rapid inference. The value of classical training above other training consists in the two facts—

that whereas other kinds of training develop individual faculties, classical training disciplines the whole mind; and whereas, most other kinds of training are apt to demand suddenly, the exercise in tolerable perfection of the faculties they appeal to, classical study can be graduated to suit any and every stage of development, and thus acts as a mild but prevalent stimulant at every step. By it, the young mind is symmetrically developed, gradually and without violence, use being made of every faculty in its order of evolution, and in its due proportion—until, under this healthful and gentle, but constant stimulation, it is wooed to put forth its powers, and is given strength, facility, and confidence in the use of its faculties. Especially, are the faculties of most value in practical affairs and the sternest duties of life, disciplined and drawn into play by it—balance of mind and calmness of judgment—close observation, careful induction, and sharp verification of tentative conclusions—accuracy of interpretation, and nice discrimination in thought and speech; every process, in a word, of logical thought and expression, to say nothing now of the daily broadening of the powers of mental sympathy and openmindedness, through contact with types of thought and feeling so far removed from the grooves in which modern life runs, and the consequent, gradually evolved power to rise above the petty to the great, the temporary and local to the universal and eternal.

I should like to have time to turn aside long enough, to enter at least brief *caveats* against the current objections that are urged against a classical training. It will scarcely, however, be necessary. If what has been already urged is at all true, much more forcible objections than those usually urged will be necessary to dethrone the Classics. It is very obvious, for instance, that the fact that the classical languages are dead tongues, so far from being an objection to them in this connection, is a positive advantage, not only because they offer, therefore, fixed and stable as distinguished from shifting facts to be dealt with, but also because the mind, inflamed and harried by the pseudo-practicality and feverish activity of our times, can attain a semblance of rest here and acquire a taste of the calm and quiet which alone can give it true power and yet which it could not attain, immersed in the life about it. Similarly, the immense difference in spirit and tone, of the literature to which they are the gates from that of our own day, is an almost inestimable advantage to the opening minds of our youth, offering them a grateful home of rest from the turmoil and ceaseless conflict of the life about us. Nor can I assign weight to the objection that the Classics are, as a matter of fact, not learned in our Colleges. I am free to admit that very little of either Latin or Greek has been learned by the average graduate; but in reply, I urge, that absolute thoroughness neither is attainable from, nor ought to be demanded of, youth; that Colleges are not schools for training in specialities, not even if the speciality be the Classics; that neither is any other subject of study mastered; and finally, that the mental discipline to be obtained is not dependent on the mastering of the

subject. The object of a College is not primarily to impart knowledge, but to train mind; and the only apposite question is *not*, "Have the students acquired a complete mastery over the subjects taught?"—a query to be always or in all cases answered in the negative,—*but*, 'Have they received a good and sound mental training?' Equally unmeaning in the present connection is the constant declamation concerning the imperative need of a training in scientific methods of thought. In the name of all that is scientific, is not Philology science? Is not its study prosecuted after scientific methods? Nay, does it not stand near the top of the scientific edifice? Or are we to be taught that physical science is the only science? No 'science' deals with aught higher than the products of life; and language (which is but crystalized thought), or the thought that is embalmed in language (and which is always alive to the sympathetic mind) is certainly as much—as high, a product of life as the bones of a Saurian or the shell of a Mollusk. The antithesis between science—study, and language—study, is a false antithesis and ominous of narrowness. The only legitimate question asks, Through the medium of what teaching can the best training be attained in scientific methods of thought? This is the precise point that has been tested by the German experiments, and settled in favour of classical study by hard facts. It is also the conclusion to which observing men may come without so costly an experiment.

2. *The kind of training that the study of the classical languages gives is exactly that which is most needed by, and most useful for, ministers of the Gospel especially.* Considered a little more narrowly than we have heretofore done, classical training is a gymnastic in the use of words and the art of interpretation. It tends to make the student first of all, a trained expositor and an artist in words and master of language. But if this is true, it is immediately apparent, that the study of the classics furnishes exactly, the training that above all others the prospective minister needs. The preacher emphatically needs to be an artist in words and a master of speech. At the very foundation of all his work lies his duty as an interpreter. All the duties of his office hang thus on his ability to understand and to express—on his ability to get the true meaning out of words and to convey the true meaning in words. And in truth this classical study is a daily drill. Any severe and long-continued drill in true translation between any two languages would, no doubt, secure satisfactory results in this direction. The value of the drill is necessarily proportioned, however, to the amount of difficulty and the number of the difficulties surmounted in the task; and this is but another way of saying, that for this purpose, the study of those languages are most valuable which are most diverse from the vernacular in genius, spirit, and machinery of expression. It can scarcely be doubted, but that for English-speaking pupils, the classical tongues furnish us with just the material we most need. The English language is an

almost perfect example of one kind of speech, and Latin and Greek nearly perfect examples of an exactly opposite variety.

Thought, if left to itself, tends to fly forth in the order of emphasis; but words must arrange themselves in the order of grammatical relation. In an uninflected tongue, this last rule is absolute; subject, action, object, must have their fixed order, which cannot vary beyond certain limits without throwing the expression of the thought into confusion and uncertainty. In proportion as a language is inflected, however, its words carry upon them a badge which proclaims them, apart from the place in the sentence they occupy, to be subject, object, or subordinate limitations; and in that proportion, the expression of thought is loosed from laws of grammatical arrangement, and the words seek the order of thought. It will be easily seen that the correct and forcible transference of thought from one of these methods of expression to the other, especially if it be from the uninflected to the inflected, is the best drill possible to conceive of in interpretation and expression. It just simply cannot be done in any slipshod, word-for-word way. The same thought requires entirely different modes of expression in the two; the emphasis and subtle coloring cannot be preserved in so violent a transmutation, unless understood and appreciated exactly and with precise nicety. In his success in such work, the future clergyman may fitly see the promise and potency of his success in his chosen calling.

3. *The knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages is essential to the highest efficiency of the minister in his work.* We may, no doubt, hold that, *caeteris paribus*, that medium of mental discipline should be required which will, at the same time, communicate the knowledge that will be most useful to the student in his after-work. If the *caeteris* are not *paribus*, this is not true. It would be a crime, for instance, to require a student to get his mental discipline through Greek and Latin because a knowledge of them is needful for his future work, if better media of discipline are at hand. In that case, the Classics should be reserved to take their place alongside of Hebrew in the professional course, and the student be given his training at all hazards. But among means of discipline equal or nearly equal in value for that purpose, clearly that one ought to be chosen which will best prepare the student to grapple with his special work. And it is a happiness to which the Church should be awake, that in the process of training the minds of her sons who have the ministry in view as their life-work, she can, as well as not—nay, better than not—also provide them with the indispensable instruments of their professional study, and with part of their necessary equipment as mouth-pieces for God. By requiring Latin and Greek from candidates, previous to the beginning of their divinity course, she secures that they shall come to that course, not only with minds disciplined by the best known disciplinary training, but also provided with a stock of knowledge, which shortens the time necessary for the divinity course, and provides the instrument of their life-long study. When the boy

begins his Latin and Greek six to ten years before entering the Divinity Hall, he has already begun the professional studies of the ministry; he has already broken ground on the subjects of study which he must master before he can be a well-equipped clergyman.

I am ashamed to argue so plain a proposition as that the knowledge of Greek is essential to the minister of the Gospel. If the Holy Ghost saw fit to subject Himself to the trammels of that tongue in delivering the Gospel to men, we who profess to be His interpreters, are bound to train our ears to listen to and understand His voice. I am far from denying that the Gospel lies in our modern versions adequately exact for the saving and sanctifying of souls. I praise God that He has not bound the efficacy of His truth to any form of words; but that, as on a burning prairie, each spear of grass is the instrument of communication of the living spark to its fellow, so the fire of God's grace runs along over the surface of the world, springing from man to man, and the humblest and most ignorant may be its chosen conductor. It is the Gospel, not as chained in the toils of a dead tongue but as enshrined in warm and loving hearts, in which the hope of the world rests. The necessity of a knowledge of Greek by our ministry may not be declared, therefore, absolute. The world may be saved without it.

But it is a disgrace to any ministry, and a weakness for which no gifts can compensate, and which the Nemesis of time will not fail to avenge, for it to be content to supply the Water of Life to its people from aught else than the living fountains. We have but to look at the history of the Romish Church to read in lurid words the fate of any body which will first practically, and then formally, replace the living originals of God's Word with man-made versions, as the source of inspiration to its clergy, and its court of appeal in matters of faith and practice. Are we asked to tread the same path and not to expect to reach the same goal? Versions, however good, are like bank-notes, valueless, save as convenient representatives of the true gold on which they rest, and into which they are, on demand, immediately convertible. An inconvertible currency of God's Word has always worked havoc with the faith of the people and debauched the rulers of the Church; and may be always expected to do so.

We need not affirm that the necessity of the knowledge of Latin rests on an entirely different foundation and is greatly less in degree. Of all secular tongues—perhaps of all secular knowledge—it is, however, most important that the minister should know Latin. The theological thought and investigations of a millenium and a quarter are enshrined in it; and after he has obtained a knowledge of what he is to preach and the keys that unlock it for him—viz., the Greek and Hebrew and Chaldee languages—the most valuable acquirement the prospective minister can make is the knowledge of Latin, which opens to him all the accumulated thought and labor of all the Christian generations.

Of course, it is not a valid objection to the requirement of the Latin and Greek languages that it takes time to acquire them.

Haste does not always make speed. And it was pointed out at the outset, that the time involved in education is not now the point in dispute. Or is it after all in the minds—or at least in the schemes—of our innovating brethren, to lower the standard of the ministry? They are strenuous in denying the allegation. But after all that is said, is not the placing of the ministry in a confessed and hopeless secondary position as to the sources of the very doctrine it is to preach, necessarily lowering its standard? I am inclined to think that some confusion of thought has been abroad on this subject, and that we have been invited to chace an undistributed middle, up and down through many briary patches of argument. The phrase 'standard of the ministry' oscillates between a reference to general culture and special fitting. Two separate questions need to be met, however, before the charge of 'lowering the standard' is repelled. No doubt the ministerial standard is lowered, if our ministers are not forced to acquire the ordinary culture prevalent in the community. But even though in general culture, every minister stood head and shoulders above the community, the ministerial standard is lowered if such take a position, as a *class*, of total and confessed inability to read their own commission, or to obtain at first hand, a single word of God to speak to their people—or even, if they voluntarily close their eyes to twelve hundred years of theological thinking. How much this would lower the standard of the ministry, may be seen exemplified in the clergy of the Church of Rome to-day, many of whom are the equals of any Protestant ministry in mental training and general culture,—but as preachers of the Gospel, oh, how inferior! One of two results apparently must ensue:—either the Gospel of culture would take the place of the Gospel of Christ, as the legitimate consequence of the Church's emphasis on culture as distinguished from the Word of God in the training of her clergy;—or, the clergy would become but lifeless and parrot-like instruments in the hands of a central despotism, prescribing authoritatively the Gospel to be preached,—as the legitimate consequence of their conscious lack of ability for private judgment. Nor will it do to declare that as a matter of fact, our ministry to-day is not able to use the Latin and Greek languages, and discovers no desire to use them. If the allegation is true, it is a grievous sore that it uncovers. Our Presbyteries are committed to refusing ordination in all ordinary cases to those who do not exhibit a sound acquaintance with both. Our candidates have nearly all received gratuitous education in institutions which require both and teach one, and they have solemnly pledged themselves to make full use of their opportunities, and to fulfil all the requisitions of these institutions. If the allegation be but half true, then, ministers and presbyteries have not learned—as the evil-disposed charge that they have not—to attach the same meaning to the act of putting their names to engagements that mercantile gentlemen do. I cannot credit the charge. But were it true, would it be so plainly the duty of the Church, to put its official imprimatur and seal on the broken faith?