

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE PLACE OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY IN MODERN HISTORY.*

THE work done by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in one aspect of it, is "the ablest and ripest product" of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. But, in another view, it is the starting point of that splendid religious and political development of the English-speaking peoples, which, on its religious side, is marked by the evangelical revival and the modern Christian propaganda at home and abroad; and, on its political side, is marked by the enfranchisement of the peoples of the United Kingdom, the building up of autonomous colonies within the British empire, and the planting of the continental republic of the United States. Of course, every work done by man, just because it has place in the organic historical movement, has roots in the past and bears fruit in the future. Of the most of these works, we are entitled to say that each of them is one of a vast number of equally important steps which men are always taking in the march of humanity to its predestined goal.

But we shall fall into a grave historical error if we assign to the finished work of the Westminster Assembly a function in the history of the English-speaking peoples of any other than the highest and most critical import. The waters of the great Lakes move continuously through the St. Lawrence basin to the Atlantic Ocean. At no point is the movement uninteresting or without

* An address delivered at the celebration, by Princeton Theological Seminary, of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Westminster Standards.

VI.

SELF-SUPPORT BY THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

WHEN a student in the course of his preparation for the Gospel ministry reaches the threshold of the theological seminary, he has, as a general rule, exhausted his financial resources. In order to complete his course he must either depend on such aid as the Church may furnish him, borrow enough to carry him through, or devote some of his time and energy to securing self-support. That the third of these ways of "making the ends meet" is the preferable one, and that it ought to be encouraged, will not be questioned by any one. The troublesome aspect of the case, however, is not the lack of an abstract desideratum, but the difficulty of adjusting matters so as to reach this desideratum. The question is, When and how can the student earn his self-support? His year is divided into two unequal parts. What is true of one of these is not true of the other.

If we take under consideration the longest of these periods, that which is spent in the seminary, we may assert in general terms that, however desirable self-support may be during its course, it is difficult to secure it under present conditions, and will continue to be more and more difficult unless present tendencies are checked, or others are created to counteract them.

It will be well, therefore, to examine the problem in the light of existing conditions and tendencies. These are :

1. The increasing rigor of scholastic tests We are raising the standards for admission into the seminary, and making the examinations that lead from the lower to the higher classes more and more exacting. The requirements have been pushed upwards all along the line. New methods in education have led to improvement in the theological school as well as in all other classes of schools. If the student, therefore, shall pass from class to class he must devote himself to his work exclusively. It was possible for him a few years ago to do what is required in the seminary and also secure some means for his own support; but under the changed conditions this is becoming less and less possible.

2. But in addition to the increasing rigor of the tests, we have also enlarged and filled out the curriculum. The old course con-

sisted of exegesis, church history, systematic theology and homiletics. The student was required to meet the professors some twelve hours a week in these branches. The work prescribed in these hours he found it a comparatively easy task to do during the remainder of his week. Reckoning eight working hours for each day he had a total of forty-eight hours a week for work. Twelve of these being occupied by the class-room exercises, the remaining thirty-six were ample for the preparation needed for the class-room. He could give two hours of preparation for every hour of lecture or recitation (evidently not too little) and have at his disposal two hours a day, or twelve hours a week, for general reading or self-support. Many students found this condition of affairs not only sufficient for doing the institutional work, but for earning something toward paying their way through. But how is it now? In addition to the above-named four departments we have the department of apologetics commonly recognized in the seminary course; and in these later years the department of Biblical theology has come into full possession of its place. Besides these, many institutions have also introduced the study of the English Bible, elocution and music as required studies, and some are trying experiments with sociology and evangelistics. Moreover, the department of exegesis has been subdivided into its two branches of Old and New Testament, and each of these departments has been enlarged by the incorporation of archæology for the study of the materials brought into them through recent exploration and research. The rise of questions of criticism and introduction has also added to the scope of the departments. They therefore require much more time for their fair treatment than was allowed exegesis in previous years. Add to these further the various lectureships on missions, comparative religions, sociology, the optional courses, *seminars* for private work, which are coming into use, and it is not difficult to see that the once sufficient twelve hours a week must be made sixteen or eighteen in order to afford room for the diversification and enlargement of the course. Few students now can do more than attend to the regular work of the course that is absolutely required of them. And the end of the enlargement and diversification has not yet been reached. The tendency has not spent itself and led to a reaction. How soon it will do this, whether it will do it at all, we are not now concerned to discuss, but as long as the tendency lasts and has its full sway it will effectually bar the way of self-help to students.

3. Another condition adverse to self-support during the term of study is the increased numbers in attendance at the seminaries. The larger the attendance, of course, the more difficult to find

opportunities for outside work. When the classes were small it was within the possibilities to satisfy most of those who had the ability and willingness to do something for themselves by finding them suitable employment. Especially in large cities it was not altogether impossible to set them to work in mission churches, and in supplying vacant pulpits in the neighborhood. But as attendance has increased and our halls are crowded, it becomes naturally more and more difficult to provide work for all applicants. Under present conditions and with the existing system of management of mission work it is simply out of the question to employ from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty students in remunerative mission work in any city. We shall not deny that other methods might make the difficulty less; but as things now stand it cannot be done.

We do not forget, of course, a certain mode of administering scholarship aid funds which claims to have solved this problem. According to this system, every applicant for aid from the scholarship fund is set to work under the direction of a suitable officer of the seminary, sometimes a regular professor and member of the faculty and sometimes an outsider—preferably a city or Presbyterian missionary. Every one who does this work and reports accordingly is given the aid asked for. This scheme may have much in its favor as a scheme for the administration of the scholarship funds of a seminary, but it also has much against it. But whatever may be said for it or against it as a means for the distributing of scholarships, it is not a means of providing self-support. It is not based on sound business principles as a mode of employing students. The principle of gratuity overbalances the idea of remuneration in it. The funds are known to be there for the benefit of the students, and not for the maintenance of the work given. Were the students not in the seminary the authorities would not think of employing others to do the work done by them at the rates paid to them. Students are bound to feel under such a system that they have not earned the money received. No one with any sense or appreciation of values can deceive himself into thinking that for twelve visits a week assigned him by the superintendent of work he has earned \$200 a year. The idea of self-support is simply caricatured in such a system. But even if this system were sound in principle, which as a system of self-support it is not, whatever may be said of it as a system of scholarship distribution, it is not universally practicable. It can only be put into active operation in large cities. Such seminaries as are located in smaller towns—and it is a question as to which are more ideally located—could not avail themselves of it in attempting to solve the problem of self-support by the student.

4. Yet another tendency of our times working unfavorably to student self-support is the possession by specialists of the field, in which students might in a measure earn self-support. We have spoken of city mission work as a means of employing students. But city mission work is coming to acquire a peculiar character of its own, entirely distinct and different from every other form of Church work. For this distinct type of work there is evolving a peculiar type of minister, unfitted by his very experience and manner of life for other forms of ministerial labor. To do the city mission work well one must conform to this type to a greater or less extent. The student is, of course, primarily a student and a worker in a subsidiary and auxiliary way. His chief work is to do what is prescribed by the seminary: The specialist's chief care, on the other hand, is his work.

For this he is, first of all, better prepared to secure results. He enters on his mission because he is fitted to accomplish it better and on better terms for the Church, *i. e.*, with less expense, than general workers or workers who are still engaged in their preparatory studies.

Secondly, because he can devote his whole time to it. His attention is not divided between his field and his studies; his mind is not distracted. He is not obliged to postpone calls on his time and energy until his principal and primary work shall have had its share of attention and time. To all the demands of his many-sided office he can turn an immediate and listening ear. He can live on the ground and be always accessible to the people to whom he is to minister, visiting their sick, conducting their funerals, learning of their special needs, suiting his words to their condition, and illustrating by his life among them the truth which he strives to communicate to them. The student is vastly at a disadvantage in all this. He cannot without inconvenience live away from the scene of his studies or devote himself to this work in such a way as the specialist. This naturally results in his being crowded out of the field.

Thirdly, it is not to his advantage that he should compete with the specialist. While everything that is worth doing is worth doing well, it is a question whether any considerable number of seminary students should be encouraged or even allowed during their course to go into special labors in the city mission field, if they are to compete there with the city missionary as a specialist. Such a course will tend to make their development one-sided. It will give them large ideas and impressions of that sort of work, and inadequate ones of the other aspects of their office. It will lead them to adopt methods which they may have to unlearn

ultimately in some other than city mission field. But the city mission field is simply an illustration of all other fields in which the student might find employment. What has been said of this field may be said in general *mutatis mutandis* of all other forms of work, not excluding secular employment. The genius of specialization makes it yearly harder and harder for one who has given himself up to the ministry, to engage in other kinds of labor as side employments. Paul had his tent-making and Peter his fishing, but they lived in an age when the preacher of the Gospel was not a fully differentiated type and character.

Upon the whole, therefore, looking at the conditions under which we are laboring, we must pronounce it impracticable to aim at the student's paying his way through the seminary, by engaging in remunerative employment during that part of his year which is to be spent for the most part at least in the pursuit of his theological studies.

We have spoken thus far of the difficulties, amounting altogether to an impossibility, of securing enough work to pay one's way through. We have viewed the subject from the point of view of self-help and have said nothing of the effect of work, when secured, upon the studies of the seminary student, or upon the formation of his habits. We have assumed that all this would be at least not positively injurious. We may note at this point the doubtful validity of this assumption. Experience is against it. The student who is giving any considerable portion of his time and energy to self-support is not the student who is getting the most out of his seminary course. Some of the most promising young men are known to have made shipwreck of their scholarly life by taking upon themselves burdens too heavy to carry in the way of paying their way through. No sympathetic and appreciative theological instructor looks upon a student, who has taken some tempting opportunity to earn his living while studying, without a feeling of apprehension and even sorrow.

If, then, self-help is becoming less and less practicable on the one hand, it is, on the other, seen to be less and less desirable the nearer it reaches the point of absolute self-support during the term of study.

Coming now to the other portion of the student's year—his long summer vacation—we meet no longer the questions of desirability or practicability, but of the best ways of securing self-support.

Let us glance at the present practice in the theological schools of the Church. As the summer vacation draws near the underclass men begin to think of what they shall do. Some of them being well acquainted with the Presbyteries from which they have

come enter into correspondence with their Presbyterial missionaries, with the chairmen of the Home Mission Committees, or with their pastors or other friendly ministers, and secure some church to supply for the summer months. Others not so well situated appeal to their professors and secure places through their mediation. Others reach the opening of the summer vacation without any success, perhaps without having made adequate effort to secure church work, and resort at the last moment to secular employment, traveling agencies, clerkships etc., or go home to spend the summer in idleness. To say that this is not an ideal state of things is to put it very mildly. There is a lamentable lack of organized effort here. That there is plenty of work to employ all students is very evident from the fact that after those who have succeeded in securing employment for the summer are all settled and at work, there is still a large number of vacant churches and mission stations looking for men to occupy them. What is needed is generalship.

At two points especially such generalship might accomplish beneficent results.

First, in reducing to order and regulating what is now left to a scramble and haphazard procedure. Instead of making it necessary for each man to secure his own summer employment in his own way, it is highly desirable that he should be either directly led to it or assisted in his efforts to find it. Instead of leaving it as at present uncertain as to whether one will or will not secure the necessary opportunity to earn something for himself, it is desirable that there should be a reasonable certainty that every worthy student who may desire it should have a field to labor in.

Secondly, generalship is needed to raise the rate of remuneration usually secured by students for summer work. This remuneration varies much at present. Some students are able to earn enough during the vacation to carry them not only through the summer months, but also to eke out the aid they receive from the Church through its Board of Education and through the seminary scholarships during the session of study. But not all are thus fortunate. Very many, perhaps the majority, find it difficult to earn more than their support through the summer. Or if they accomplish more than this, the long distances over which they are obliged to travel to reach their places of work and return to the seminary absorb a large portion of the profits, and they come back with little if anything left in their pockets. Others again, especially such as may not have been successful in securing places before the close of the seminary session, are content to go and spend the whole vacation on their fields and return with positively nothing

but their support for the summer as the reward for their labors. This they find themselves compelled to do. It is this with them or nothing at all, and they wisely take what they can get, as they cannot get what they ought to have. There may be some good secured by allowing this "go as you please" method of securing work by students during the summer vacation, but it is certainly overbalanced by the many drawbacks and evil features that result from the system. It is certainly possible to do something toward improving it. If the matter were attended to by some party or parties standing between the churches and the students, and having the interests of both at heart, there is little doubt but that a more regular, sure and profitable system could be devised. As to how such a system could or should be set to work is a question which does not belong to this discussion. If the principle be correct the machinery for reducing it to practical form could certainly be constructed.

In a paper like this, however, whose main object is to feel the way out of darkness and confusion, it may not be out of place to propose a scheme which to the writer of this paper seems quite feasible. It is a scheme beset by difficulties, and it may require some deliberation and discussion to determine whether it is as feasible as it appears at first glance. It is a scheme for which I will not claim that it solves the question of self-support for the student, but only that it minimizes its difficulties. This scheme I would describe as follows: At present the ordinary term of session for study is about thirty-two weeks, or between seven and eight months, leaving a vacation of twenty weeks or between four and five months for work. This vacation, as has already been said, seems to be too short to afford time for the earning of enough by the average theological student to carry him through the eight months or less of the session. The scheme I allude to is based on the system which prevails in Scotland, of dividing the year into equal parts; of giving a continuous vacation of six months to the theological student alternating with six months of study. This vacation would afford the opportunity to earn support for the other half of the year devoted to study. The reduction of the session to six months, however, would necessarily entail the increase of the number of sessions in the seminary from three to four. Otherwise the ground covered by the seminary course now in three terms of eight months each, or more precisely twenty-two months in the aggregate, would have to be limited. Some of the work would have to be thrown out of the course, as it is found difficult even with a term of eight months to give proper attention to the course. If the number of sessions of study should be

increased from three to four it would result in an increase of two months on the whole. Four sessions of six months each would give us twenty-four months for study in the four-years' course as against twenty-two months in the present three-years' course. While this might cause some inconvenience and delay, it would, on the other hand, be fraught with advantages which are too apparent to need detailed explanation. Were such a scheme to be realized it would be necessary to supplement it by the appointment of some central committee to take applications for work from students and seek for fields of labor for them, thus adjusting supply and demand, and acting as a clearing-house bringing into contact with one another theological students and missionary fields.

CHICAGO.

A. C. ZENOS.