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**THE ELDERSHIP IN THE DAYS OF JOHN  
KNOX**

BY THE REV. JAMES STALKER, D. D.,

*Professor of Church History, Aberdeen; Author of "John Knox, His Ideas and Ideals."*

JOHN KNOX may be called the creator of the office of elder for Scotland, Ireland and America; there having been nothing of the kind in the ecclesiastical system which he displaced. He himself, indeed, would have expressed the fact otherwise, for his contention was that he had invented or created nothing, but simply restored the lost image—or, as he was fond of calling it, "the face"—of a Church found in the Word of God. None of the other Reformers—not even Calvin—insisted as rigorously on the principle that nothing should be introduced into the Church, or tolerated therein, which is not sanctioned by this divine authority. Other Reformers, like Luther and the founders of the Church of England, were content with excluding whatever is forbidden in the Bible; but Knox went much further, admitting nothing for which actual Scriptural warrant could not be quoted.

Thus going back to the New Testament to discover the office-bearers of the Church of Christ, he found there three outstanding offices—Ministers, Elders, Deacons. A fourth he was willing to acknowledge—that of Teachers or Doctors, nearly corresponding with professors of divinity in our present system. Also, he admitted, as temporary expedients, necessary in the unsettled condition of the Church at that period and on account of the great scarcity of competent ministers, two other offices; the one being that of the Reader, who, in parishes where no preacher was procurable, might read the Scriptures and the Common Prayers at the meetings for worship; and the other that of the Superintendent, who should have charge of an extended district, the size

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS\*

BY THE REV. WALTER W. MOORE, D. D., LL.D.,

*President of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.*

*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Trustees:*

Twenty-two years have elapsed since you first called me to the service of the church as one of the teachers of her candidates for the ministry. The sense of solemn responsibility with which I entered upon the duties of that position nearly a quarter of a century ago has remained with me in full force to the present hour. It was grounded in a firm conviction that the church is largely what her authorized teachers are, and that her teachers are chiefly what their theological training makes them; and that conviction has deepened and strengthened with the passing years. No man possessed by such a conviction could do his work with a slack hand, and I have earnestly endeavored to be something more than a drone. Yet I am humbled and saddened as I look back upon this long period of service, a past which to my view is crowded with mistakes and failures, an Appian way lined with monuments of unrealized ideals. I do not mean, of course, that I am indifferent to the compensations which have been graciously given me, or that I fail to recognize reverently and gladly the good hand of God upon me during all these years and the measure of success with which he has been pleased to bless any part of my labors. For the most part I have done my work in this Seminary with a thankful and buoyant heart, rejoicing humbly that I have been permitted to do anything on behalf of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." From the beginning I have been upheld and guided by the example and counsel of the able and learned and pious men with whom I have been associated in this faculty, a privilege for which I shall never cease to be grateful. Benjamin M. Smith, Thomas E. Peck,

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\*Delivered at the Annual Commencement 1905.

Henry C. Alexander, James F. Latimer—the names of these men of God send over my soul a flood of sacred and tender memories. “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” And upon my present colleagues their mantles have fallen. In addition to other manifestations of the favor of our Lord to this Seminary, He has strikingly attested His love for it and for the church which dedicated it to His glory, in the character and gifts of the men who have here taught His truth, in their enlightened piety and earnest devotion, in the stress which they have unceasingly laid on the spiritual qualifications for the gospel ministry, and the measure in which they have themselves illustrated those qualifications, in their happy union of wide learning with sober wisdom and sound faith, and in the remarkable harmony of sentiment and feeling and the remarkable concert of action which have characterized their labors—men of strong individual convictions working together for long years, not only without open conflict and rending strife, but without jar or jealousy or distrust or friction of any kind—when I consider the character of the colleagues with whom I have been and still am associated I thank God and take courage.

I have been cheered also by the confidence and affection of my students. I rejoice to believe that every man who has gone out from this Seminary for the last twenty-two years is my personal friend.

In addition too all this, Fathers and Brethren of the Board of Trustees, I have been constantly encouraged by your unstinted friendship and your kind indulgence for my shortcomings. Time after time in these two decades—not only informally but in at least six instances by formal election to positions of trust in connection with the institution—you have expressed your confidence in me in a manner which has gone to my heart and braced me to diligence. No true man could receive such expressions of confidence in the sincerity of his purpose and the faithfulness of his efforts, however ineffectual those efforts may have been, without profound emotions of grateful appreciation. Yet in every case that feeling has been quickly eclipsed by an overwhelming sense of the responsibility laid upon me. How then is it possible for me to express to you the feelings with which I assume the duties of this new position into which your urgency has forced me—the trembling with which I contemplate the magnitude of the work,

the misgiving with which I confront its manifold difficulties, at a time when the cause of ministerial education is at a low ebb the wide world over? Nothing but a trust in the continuance of your kind indulgence and steadfast support, nothing but a settled conviction that this Seminary is a vine of the Lord's own planting, and that He who has blessed it so abundantly in the past will continue to nourish and care for it in the future, nothing but an humble trust in the grace of Him in whom weakness itself can be made strong and who can use the feeblest instrument for spreading abroad His glory—nothing, I say, but considerations of this character would ever have prevailed upon me to suffer myself to be placed where I stand this day. Therefore, Fathers and Brethren, I beseech you to remember constantly at the throne of grace the sacred interests which you have committed to my hands and the servant of the church to whom they are entrusted.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I have made bold, in my remarks to the members of the electoral college, to depart from the formal mode of address that is customary on occasions like this, and have ventured to speak in a more personal strain, in view of the unique circumstances under which I have been called to this office, so now in the presentation of the subject which is to engage our attention this evening, I beg your permission to discard the method of an elaborate discussion and to turn your attention in a direct and homely way to some practical questions in regard to the relation of our theological seminaries to the number and efficiency of our ministers.

The most ominous feature of the Church's condition at the present time is the lack of an adequate supply of efficient ministers. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." The last census shows that in the past twenty years the number of students of theology in the United States has decreased from 120 per million of inhabitants to 114 per million, while the students of law have increased from 61 to 163, and the students of medicine from 196 to 327 in the million. As compared with the previous year, there was in 1900 a decrease of 252 students of theology in the United States as contrasted with a gain of 642 in law and 1,435 in medicine. Last spring the largest seminary of our denomination in the North sent out the smallest class that it has graduated in many years. This year the largest seminary

of our denomination in the South will send out the smallest class it has graduated in many years. It is doubtful whether enough students will be licensed this spring to supply the vacancies caused by death during the year. In other denominations a similar condition exists. In the Southern Presbyterian Church there are six whole Presbyteries that have not a single candidate for the ministry. There are fifteen others which have only one each. In 1894 there were in our Church 445 candidates. This year (1905) there are only 315. That is, we have 130 fewer candidates now than we had ten years ago. This is going backwards with a vengeance. Our Church, like other Churches, is pushing its aggressive work all too slowly. Yet, slow as that is, we are organizing congregations more rapidly than we are making preachers, so that our long roll of vacant churches has been steadily growing longer. There is, however, one gleam of hope in the situation. We seem to have touched low-water mark three years ago. Since that time the number of candidates has been slowly increasing. The increase is very small and very slow, but it is an increase. The tide seems to have turned, but it is only creeping up the shore. We ought to bring it in with a rush. I believe we can, if we will.

For this portentous dearth of candidates for the ministry various reasons have been given, and these must be glanced at, though, of course, they cannot now be discussed.

1. It has been attributed to the shortening period of service in the ministry, the disposition to lower the "dead line" to fifty years. Men hesitate to enter a calling from which they are likely to be practically discharged just when they reach the maximum of their efficiency and the full maturity of their powers. Young men are preferred by many congregations, sometimes with an unwise disregard of their meagre attainments and lack of experience. And it is argued that the prospect of thus being laid aside from active work in middle life and left without livelihood for the rest of their days, deters some from entering the ministry. It may be doubted, however, whether many of the abler youth of the Church are affected by this consideration. They are not slow to observe that in many cases the minister himself is to blame for reaching the dead line so early, and that some are so fresh and effective in their preaching and so zealous and active in their pastoral work that they never do reach it till

their physical powers actually begin to fail. Perhaps it is not necessary for men to reach the dead line in the ministry sooner than in any other calling. As to provision for the declining years of ministers, after they have become old and infirm, the Church has shown a disposition of late to roll away her reproach in this matter, though the provision made is still far from creditable to the people of God.

2. Scarcity of candidates has been attributed to "commercialism," the disposition of young men in an age too much absorbed in material things to turn aside from the more intellectual and spiritual vocations to other pursuits, which, while worthy and honorable in themselves, are preferred because of the larger opportunities they offer for the accumulation of wealth. Openings in business are numerous and tempting. Money is easily and plentifully made. Our young men cannot be blind to the fact that, with the increasing prosperity of the country and the larger incomes of men engaged in business, the cost of living has increased, and those who live on fixed salaries find it harder to make ends meet. They know that while the wealth of the country has increased enormously, the salaries of ministers have not increased proportionately, if at all. They see that ministers in the nature of the case are required to live with a certain degree of refinement, that they must be given to hospitality, must clothe their families becomingly, and educate their children. The difficulty of maintaining a home of this kind on say \$600 a year is familiar to their observation. The ministry generally means self-denial and often poverty. It cannot be denied that the average salary ought to be increased. Still, I cannot think this is the main reason for the paucity of candidates for the ministry. To the better men among our youth the heroism of self-denial and the blessedness of sacrifice still appeal.

3. Another alleged cause is intellectual difficulties in accepting the Christian faith, or at least in preaching it, difficulties aggravated by recent developments of destructive criticism. It is said that in an age of intellectual unrest and advance, young men shrink from subscribing to fixed creeds. As to this I will only say that I am quite clear that there is far less skepticism as to the great verities of the Christian faith among thinking young men now than there was twenty years ago.

4. It has been attributed to the decay of religion in colleges.

This is certainly wrong. There has been no decay of religion in the colleges. One hundred years ago only ten per cent. of our students in the colleges of this country were professing Christians. Now more than 50 per cent. of our college students are professing Christians, and they give as satisfactory evidence of vital piety as any generation of college men in our history.

5. It has been attributed to the decay of religion in the family, and that means decay of religion in the country at large. This, I think, is nearer the mark. Here is one fact that is full of significance: Just before the revival of evangelical religion in Holland the church had practically no ministry; since that revival the seminaries and universities have more candidates than the church can place, and it has become a serious question what to do with the surplus.

No doubt the most effective force for the recruiting of the ranks of the ministry has been the influence of Christian mothers. Has that force been neutralized by the decay of family religion? I have no wish to underrate the reality and gravity of the cause here alleged for the scarcity of candidates. But it may at least be asked why the decay of family religion has not paralyzed other activities of the church in the same proportion. That it has not is clear to all. That the church is far from what she ought to be in the matter of faithful work all will admit, but, on the whole, the church to-day as compared with other days is active and fruitful, and there is comparatively little lack of men for other forms of Christian service. It is the ministry that has suffered especially. Must there not be some other special causes?

6. This brings us to the fact that the scarcity of ministers is attributed by some to what is in itself a great gain, viz., the remarkable development of Christian activity on the part of the laymen in the churches. This is pre-eminently the age of Christian laymen. One writer says that "what our forefathers heard as a distinctive call to the ministry is now finding expression in other and widely varied forms of service. Many earnest young men who in former years might have believed themselves to be called to the work of the ministry now believe that they can make their lives count for as much, perhaps more, if they give themselves to other lines of work that at one time were called secular. Many of these so-called causes that keep young men out of the ministry to-day represent a distinct gain in the life of the world.

It is better that a thousand men should be elevated an inch than that one man should be elevated a thousand inches above his fellows."

Still, does not all this make it more certain that if God's call for men to work in the official ministry is made clear to the men of our generation there will be a larger number of volunteers for this form of service than ever before? And yet, with a larger proportion of Christian young men in colleges than we have ever had before, and with more of them volunteering for other forms of Christian service, the appalling fact is that the number offering for the ministry has declined in the most portentous fashion. Then must we not find the true reason for it partly in the fact that the call of God to this work is *not* made clear? To this solution of the problem let us devote a few words.

7. The deplorable dearth of candidates is due in great measure to our failure to *define* the call and to *present* the call. And that in turn is due to our neglect of the Saviour's injunction to *pray* the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into his harvest. When we want ministers enough to pray for them we will also work for them. It may be true that more attention is called to the ministry than formerly, but the conditions noted above, the attractions of other vocations and the like, make it necessary to give a *great deal* more attention to it than formerly. And as a rule we have paid insufficient attention to it. There are two points in this connection which need to be specially emphasized: one is the duty of exerting a religious influence over the boys who are preparing for college, and the other is the duty of sustaining local colleges. The average high-school boy is not effectually reached. "The American churches have mainly abandoned intermediate education to the State, with the effect of thoroughly secularizing intermediate education. The necessary result of this—a result produced in spite of the fact that a majority of the teachers are earnest, consistent disciples of Christ—is the making of the impression on the minds of those who are taught in the schools that religion is a mere side-show, at least so far as education is concerned. Further, the colleges that are favored by the prevailing spirit in the high schools are ordinarily the colleges that prepare very few men for the ministry. The pull against entering the ministry is so tremendously strong



that nothing less than painstaking, wide-awake, persistent, personal effort will counteract it."

The duty of sustaining local colleges for the sake of keeping up the supply of ministers is no less urgent. The Northern Presbyterian Church has published statistics for the year 1901-1902 which show that, as to the students in the theological seminaries that year, there were from ten State universities, with an average attendance of 660, only four candidates to every thousand students; from two Presbyterian universities, with an average attendance of 724 students, there were twenty-nine candidates to the thousand; from eight Presbyterian colleges, with an average attendance of 161, there were eighty-three candidates to the thousand; and from fourteen small colleges, with an average attendance of only 31, there were 196 candidates to the thousand. This shows conclusively that "the decline is more marked where the ministry is less guarded by positive faith and left more to personal opinion than to loyal conscience and habitual discipline," and that if we expect to save the day at all we must give to our local and denominational colleges a strong and steady support, endeavoring at the same time by all means within our power to strengthen evangelical influences in our State institutions.

8. Another cause for the failure of the ministry to secure a certain class of men for its ranks should be mentioned—the class of men who, having not had the matter properly brought to their attention at an earlier stage, do not seriously consider the question of entering the ministry till at or near the end of their college course. In most of our colleges the elective system has been developed to such an extent that many men find themselves at the end of their course unfitted to enter the seminary. "They have taken the scientific course, or chosen history and literature instead of language and philosophy. When they stand facing the world the ministry is closed to them, because they will not be accepted in the seminary."

I am not now referring to that disastrous abuse of the elective system which exalts breadth of culture at the expense of solid attainments in the fundamentals—English Grammar, Rhetoric and Literature, Latin, Greek, General History, and Philosophy—the studies which put the emphasis on man and on thought rather than on the facts of physical nature, the studies which

promote the best general culture and which therefore cannot be neglected without resulting in a general and serious defect in the preparation not only of the men who enter our theological seminaries, but of those who enter other professional schools and other walks of life. It is never amiss to urge that "general culture, particularly in its more restricted aspect of mental discipline, is of first consequence to success in every serious pursuit. Nor is this a mere *a priori* assumption. In 1869 graduates of the technical schools in Germany were first admitted to the universities of that country as candidates for university degrees. This meant that students with little Latin and no Greek, but with much training in the exact sciences, were put on the same footing with students who had had only a modicum of the latter, but who had received the severe classical drill of the gymnasia. In 1880 the philosophical faculty of the University of Berlin, after a fair trial of nearly ten years, requested the Minister of Education to reconsider this order. "The memorial of request distinctly asserts that the gymnasial graduates had shown themselves better fitted than the technical for the departments of study open to them both, that the classical students outstripped the technical in the higher mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, descriptive natural science, the English language, the German language, philosophy, political economy, and statistics."\* That is, liberal culture develops more mental power than technical culture. The study of the humanities cannot be safely displaced by the study of facts relating to the external world. I am quite well aware of the fact that the trend of opinion and usage in our own country is against this view, but there are some very stubborn facts on the side of those who still defend the classics.

How the elective system in our colleges may be abused is well illustrated by the case of a candidate for the ministry in one of our sister churches who was recently found pursuing a course of botany, zoology, French literature, and oratory. This is no doubt a very exceptional case of stupidity and wilfulness. And, as I said, it is not of this kind of abuse of the elective system to which I am now referring. I have in mind a class of really good students, men who have not misused their college course, but who have done more in history, literature, and the sciences than in

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\*Presb. and Ref. Rev., xi. 68.

the languages and philosophy, men who have secured good mental discipline and have fairly earned their A. B. degree, but who have little Latin and no Greek or no philosophy. When such a man, after taking his college course, feels called to the ministry, what is to be done with him? Without dwelling upon other proposed solutions of the problem, I wish to raise once more this question with the friends of ministerial education here present: In view of the fact that such men as I have described, men who are really needed in the ministry, are sometimes deterred from entering the seminary by their lack of preparation in the languages and philosophy, or who, if they do enter, find themselves handicapped—and I am not describing imaginary cases; they are of increasing frequency and difficulty in this very Seminary as well as in others—and also in view of the fact that some other men are readier for the seminary course after the Sophomore year than after the Senior, so far as their facility with the ancient languages is concerned, because they have dropped Latin and Greek at the end of the Sophomore year—in view of these two sets of facts, and in view of the further fact that for a hundred years theological teachers in this country have groaned over the necessity of devoting the whole of the first seminary year in the department of the Old Testament to the study of the elements of Hebrew, whereas the men ought to be ready from the time of their entrance to go right on with the work of exegesis—would it not be well to consider seriously the organization of an additional course in the seminary itself which would give these men the special preparation which they need—a preparatory year which would make provision for the necessary basal studies that have either not been pursued at all or not pursued far enough in college? Might not the Seminary use its Fellows as instructors in this preparatory department, and thus give them additional training while they are training the preparatory classes? Might not the professors give a portion of their time to this preparatory work?

It has been suggested\* that such a course of preparation should embrace the following studies:

(1) The Greek language, with a thorough study of the grammar and exercises in reading the best specimens of Greek prose,

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\*Presb. Rev. 10, 114.

with the aim to cultivate the powers of the student to read at sight in preparation for the study of the New Testament.

(2) The elements of Hebrew grammar and the ability to read easy Hebrew prose in preparation for the study of the Hebrew Bible. (The efforts so vigorously started some twenty years ago to induce the colleges to make provision for the study of elementary Hebrew met with almost total failure, and nothing more is heard of them.)

(3) Latin grammar and Latin prose writers, with the aim to gain an ease in reading at sight in preparation for the reading of ecclesiastical Latin.

(4) Logic, psychology, ethics, sociology and the history of philosophy, in preparation for dogmatic theology and Christian ethics.

(5) English rhetoric and English literature, in preparation for a course in homiletics.

(6) General history in preparation for the study of church history.

(7) A study of the English Bible.

(8) A cultivation of the voice both for speaking and singing. These are the studies that are needed in a course of preparation for work in a theological seminary. They are not adequately provided for in all our colleges. "The American college in its origin used to teach Hebrew, dogmatic theology, Biblical history, and the English Bible. It used to make preparation for the ministry its chief aim; but there are few colleges that have retained this aim. They threw overboard one after another the studies preparatory to the ministry." Even the colleges established and controlled by the churches, those which profess to have for their principal object the training of candidates for the ministry, have in some cases reduced these studies to a minimum. Some of them, for instance, make no provision for the study of the English Bible, contenting themselves instead with one hour a week in some text-book of Biblical History, and thus I fear making the impression upon their students that the study of the Scriptures is the least important thing in the curriculum. Then, when their graduates, after coming to the Seminary and taking the prescribed course, evince in the Presbyterial examinations no respectable knowledge of the factual contents of Scripture, the seminaries are held responsible and the agitation is

renewed for revolutionary changes in the Seminary course, such as the throwing over of the courses in Hebrew and Greek Exegesis to make room for the elementary study of the English Bible which ought to have been done in college. That is, having pulled down some of the pillars of the porch, let us straightway knock out also the foundations of the main building itself and substitute for them the fragments of those same pillars of the porch; having allowed the colleges to put upon us a certain proportion of half-prepared men and to produce the impression upon the church at large that the seminaries are responsible for *their* poor work, let us straightway announce that hereafter we propose to make such changes in the Seminary course as to put a premium on insufficient preparation and to make it certain that the half-prepared man shall hereafter be the rule and not the exception in the Presbyterian ministry; having allowed the colleges to neglect their proper work in the thorough preparation of *some* of our students for the ministry, let us force the seminaries to make it impossible that *any* of them shall receive adequate preparation. Let the Presbyterian Church repudiate her constitution, waive her requirement of a learned ministry, and surrender her historic distinction as one of the intellectual leaders of Christendom.

Mr. President, I know I speak for the Faculty of this Seminary, and I trust that I speak for this Board of Trustees, and also for the rank and file of the Church, when I say that we are not only not ready for this, but are ready to resist it to the last ditch.

Reverting now to the existing situation, as distinguished from the possible consequences of the policy of our colleges—coming back to the specific question of a preparatory year in the seminary for otherwise well-trained college men who have not taken some of the studies necessary to the successful prosecution of the seminary course—let us notice further that by such an arrangement we should probably find the best solution of the long-standing difficulty in regard to another class of excellent men, viz., those who at a somewhat more mature age are called to the ministry from other professions, such as law, medicine, and common school teaching, or from trade or mercantile life. Speaking only for myself, I wish to say that I have never been convinced that it was right for the Church to assume that only boys in the classical academies and colleges were called into the ministry,

that God no longer calls his ministers from the ranks of fishermen, tent-makers, bookkeepers, school teachers, and the other vocations in which the great mass of mankind are engaged. Many such men, of recognized gifts for the work of the ministry, have had no sufficient classical training for the seminary course. They are too old to go to college, and they are unwilling to enter the ministry without becoming thoroughly qualified. Is it not unreasonable to require such men to go through the whole long course of classical study in high school and college at the slow pace of immature boys? Should there not be a place where they can find good instruction in Greek and the other branches mentioned, and can study them, "man-fashion and not boy-fashion," for a year or two, working directly in the line of specific preparation for the seminary course?

It has been the misfortune of these men and the church that whenever any arrangements have been proposed for meeting their needs, these proposals have straightway been entangled and confused with schemes for lowering the requirements for ministerial education. The confusion of mind on this subject in our own church has been deplorable. Those who have spoken out for the reasonable treatment of this class of men have often incurred the opprobrium which belongs only to the advocates of short cuts into the ministry and of unworthy evasions of the toil required to secure the requisite preparation for its duties. Why will not our people see that these two classes of men differ from each other by the diameter of the world? On the one hand we have the dullard or the shirk, the man who is either unable or unwilling to do the hard, painstaking mental labor that is indispensable to a real education; the man who is either incompetent or lazy and contumacious, who manages somehow to meet the minimum requirements of his college, and then despises and neglects his opportunities in the seminary, develops a mysterious affection of the eyes about the third week after his matriculation which makes it impossible for him to pursue any further studies in Hebrew and Greek, mangles his course, cuts the lectures, wastes his time in what he calls doing good, fails to pass his examinations, and finally perhaps slips through Presbytery as an "extraordinary case" when, in fact, there is nothing extraordinary about it but extraordinary unfaithfulness. For such men, who are happily very, very few among us, honest people can have no other feeling

than one of contempt and condemnation. As has been well said, "they ought never to be allowed to enter the ministry. They ought never to receive a dollar from the funds of the Church. They ought to receive no favor in their examinations or conditions. There is a serious lack of moral courage and practical sagacity in the Church in dealing with such cases of student inefficiency which will ere long become ministerial inefficiency."

On the other hand, we have the man of self-respect and energy and diligence, coming from his trade or his profession with no thought of asking to be relieved of the studies of the theological course, but eager to do everything that may be necessary to fit him for the highest efficiency in the ministry. Imperfect preparation is the very thing he does not desire. Is it not certain that such a young man, bringing from his former vocation what Dr. Stalker calls "the primordial mass of manhood" and an eager determination to improve his opportunities to the utmost, will (with a reasonable amount of special preparation for the theological school) easily outstrip such slippery college men as I have described above and prove an infinitely more valuable accession to the ministry?

Now for these two classes of desirable men, the college graduate without Greek or other things necessary to the seminary course, and the recruit from some other vocation who, while perhaps without a full college course, has character, energy and gifts, the special preparation needed could probably best be provided in such an additional year as I have described, at the beginning of the seminary course.

But, it may be asked, are there not dangers in such a plan and would it not be liable to abuse? There is no doubt about that. And the plan, if adopted, should be carefully guarded and used only for the purposes indicated. "No encouragement should be given to any one to shorten his course of study in college. It is designed for those only who have excellent reasons why they cannot go to college and undertake the full college course. No student should be admitted to this preparatory class under twenty-one years of age, and who cannot satisfy the faculty as to his ability and piety. It should be made clear that such a preparatory class is no rival of the college, and that it aims to do a work that the colleges cannot or will not do. The course of study ought to be so severe that it would arrest the progress of those

who lack the proper qualifications. Such an arrangement is designed for the rapid progress of able and eager men, and no dull and lazy students should be tolerated. \* \* \* \* Such a preparatory class might be so hedged in that all the evils might be warded off, and a new source of supply opened up for the Christian ministry that would yield us a class of men that are greatly needed."

I may add that one method of safeguarding such an arrangement would be the requirement of an entrance examination for the theological course proper, a real and thorough examination given by the faculty of the seminary itself. This would seem desirable on other grounds also, for it is perfectly well known to all who are familiar with the matriculation of candidates in seminaries, that the diplomas of some of the colleges cannot always be relied upon as sufficient evidence of a suitable preparation for the theological course.

This part of our subject must not detain us longer. I will only add that such a preparatory course in connection with the seminary as has been suggested is not an untried theory. Such courses are in actual successful operation in both the State seminaries and the free seminaries of Geneva and Neuchatel, and in the Free Seminary of Lausanne. If the suggestion should find favor with us, it is clearly a matter in which we should proceed with the utmost caution. It may be that after detailed and thorough examination the judgment of the Church would reject it. I raise the question for your consideration.

9. There is yet one other alleged cause for the present scarcity of candidates which must by all means be mentioned, one which deeply concerns the theological seminaries, and one which should receive the most careful and unprejudiced discussion. I regret that the limitations of the present occasion in the matter of time will prevent any detailed and exhaustive presentation of it. It is alleged that the character and attainments of the average minister are not such as to inspire young men with respect for the ministry or attract them to it as a vocation, and that the responsibility for this state of things rests with the seminaries and their methods. It is alleged that the spiritual tone of the ministry is so low and the course of study in the seminaries so unwisely organized and so feebly taught that, for lack of thorough mental discipline and furnishing, the intellectual quality of the ministry



has deteriorated, and that to such an extent that this calling no longer appeals to men of ability and spirit. This is an exceedingly grave charge, yet it is deliberately made. A writer in the *Homiletic Review* of last month expresses himself as follows on the popular estimate of ministers: "It is perhaps not too much to say that for the most part, certainly in the larger Eastern institutions, the average student's attitude toward the ministry is one of utter disregard, if not of contempt. The ministry is of no reputation in the university. The college lad who enters expecting to be a minister is ashamed to have it known. The divinity men are held up to constant ridicule. It is said that the ministerials are not manly men; that ministers don't live up to their own preaching; that the ministry is full of cheap unprepared material, and that it emphasises its small men as other professions do not."

Now, of of course much of this is due to the world's opposition to all religion, much of it is cant, and much of it, as in a recent student conference held in this seminary, is the ignorant echo by green and thoughtless men of the captious criticisms of the ministry by dyspeptics and cranks. Of course, too, there may be quoted offsetting opinions exactly contradictory of these from men of real character and force and observation, such as Bishop David H. Greer, of New York City, who, in an article published only last week, says emphatically that "the ministry is at a higher moral and intellectual level than ever before in its long history. This question regarding the deterioration of the ministry has been evolved wholly from the imagination. We forget that it has been always asked since the beginning of the church, and always answered in the affirmative by some minds." There is "no real evidence that the men who occupy the pulpit now are less unselfish, less industrious, have less zeal and faith, and are of a lower moral type than those who filled their places in the past. On the contrary, the ministry has never seemed to me so vitalized with the Spirit, so full of faith and hope as to-day. \* \* \* \* Every fact of my experience and observation teaches me that the ministry has not only not deteriorated, but that we are on the eve of a still more powerful development." This is the view of a man of commanding ability, thoroughly tested character, varied and ripe experience and wide observation—and it is reassuring. With people of sense it will outweigh a vast multitude of vague

aspersions emanating from captious adults or inexperienced boys or well-meaning but weak enthusiasts who think that it is about time for the official minister to be superseded by the practical worker of the Bible institute type—an opinion, by the way, which the solid men connected with the Bible institute work unequivocally repudiate.

Still, this question touching the intellectual and moral quality of the ministry is not one which we can afford to leave to the opinion of any minister, however eminent and efficient. We must either prove that these charges against the ministry are false, or we must admit them in whole or in part, and then address ourselves earnestly to the task of elevating the ministry in the public estimation by elevating the standard of its moral character and intellectual proficiency.

I have already admitted that there is a certain minority of unworthy men in our seminaries who inevitably bring the ministry into contempt by their lack of fidelity and diligence as students and by their consequent lack of knowledge and force as ministers. Who is responsible for the admission of such men into the ministry? There can be but one answer to that question. The Presbyteries are responsible. I state only what every minister present knows to be a fact when I say that some of our Presbyteries not only make no adequate efforts to secure candidates for the ministry, but that they apply no adequate tests of the character and gifts of the young men who present themselves to be received as candidates; that they exercise no adequate oversight of their candidates during the seminary course, and that they employ no adequate tests of their efficiency in the work of the ministry before ordaining them. As to the first point, if the Presbyteries "receive unfit men, they are not only at fault, but through their fault have afflicted the whole church, for such men once started on their careers pass readily from Presbytery to Presbytery. It is difficult to refuse applications, and the best of rules is liable to fail in a concrete case; but if tenderness to the individual overcomes the sense of fidelity to the whole body of believers, there can be but one final result. Fidelity requires that the examination upon receiving a candidate should be close and particular as to his personal piety and his motives for seeking the ministry (and, in my judgment, also as to his gifts for the work). If our Presbyteries content themselves with examinations which are

formal and superficial, it is no wonder that men creep in who bring disgrace upon the Church and the ministry. One such case is enough in the public mind to offset the blameless and devout lives of ninety-nine worthy (and diligent) candidates."

As to the second point, the oversight of candidates during their theological studies, a Presbytery which virtually transfers to the seminary faculty the entire supervision of the training of its ministers makes the same kind of mistake that a Christian family makes in transferring to the Sunday School the spiritual education of its children, and with equally disastrous results. Seminaries should only help Presbyteries in the education of their candidates. This is in accordance with the principles of our constitution, which makes the Presbytery the authority, the parent, the guardian over all candidates. The theological faculty is but the teaching agent of the Presbytery. It is not a Presbytery, and it cannot assume its functions. As an agent it can only report to its employer what the candidate is or is not, what he is doing or not doing. There its power ends. The responsibility for the candidate belongs to the Presbytery. How much attention, think you, do the reports from the seminaries receive in some of our Presbyteries unless, as happens at long intervals, some flagrant and intolerable misconduct is reported? What does the average Presbyter know about the faithfulness and progress of the candidates of his Presbytery in the seminary?

As to the third point, the failure of some Presbyteries to apply any adequate tests of the efficiency of their candidates in the work of the ministry before ordaining them, there can be no difference of opinion. The Presbyterial examinations are sometimes farcical. As a partial corrective of this habit of sham examinations it has been proposed that Presbyteries shall resort to written examinations in whole or in part, but the suggestion, though a good one, has not been received with favor. What I wish you to note at present, however, is the effect of these superficial examinations in driving away from the ministry men of the best grades of talent. I beg leave to quote to you on this point the words of an honored minister and teacher of our Church, a man of exceptional ability, and a life-long student of the subjects now under discussion. He says that this ill-judged facility in licensing and ordaining men without discrimination "operates only to repel

the minds which we should most desire to win. A Presbytery sits under a solemn oath to execute faithfully the constitution of the Church." It proceeds to "perform one of its most solemn acts, the trying of those who are to be examples and guides of Christ's flock. But the tests actually applied are often so different from those prescribed in the constitution that the whole proceeding is a mere mockery of fidelity. The candidate is professedly tried to see whether he can write Latin, whether he knows well Greek and Hebrew, science and history, theology and interpretation, and when the trials are carried far enough to make it pretty manifest that he does not know these things in a proper sense, it is voted that he does know them, and he is licensed. How can it be made more certain that this candidate thus admitted shall be himself an inefficient, unfaithful presbyter all his ministerial life than by thus signalizing his clerical birthday with a general example of presbyterial unfaithfulness? And what can be the impression concerning the moral grade and dignity of the ministry among those who propose to pursue their secular professions with an honorable energy and fidelity? Much has been said concerning the unwillingness of our young men of promise to seek the ministry, and many explanations have been suggested. We verily believe that one of the most important is this, that admission has been too easily obtained. The spirited and ingenuous young man feels no disposition to enter the lists for a prize which he sees bestowed with indiscriminate looseness on the unworthy and worthy alike. He was proposing to win the honor by industry and strenuous exertion; he is disgusted to see it bestowed on mediocrity. Only the ignoble value a prize which may be won without exertion or merit. The spectacle exhibited in the seminaries thus concurs with the mismanagement of the Presbyteries to repress the zeal and aspirations of every young man of mettle. In proof we point to the well-known fact that in those colleges and universities where a high grade of scholarship is faithfully applied, this strictness and consequent difficulty of obtaining the honors is a prime element of their popularity with all spirited young men, such as are worth having in the seminary. \* \* \* The church should be satisfied with no diligence in her ministry beneath that which is exhibited by the foremost in secular professions. While she has employment and reward for every

grade of *capacity*, even the humblest, she has no use for any grade of indolence, or for any but the highest *energy*.”\*

These are sharp but wholesome words, and they describe conditions which really exist in some seminaries and some Presbyteries, and we shall do well to lay them to heart. Still, it would be clearly unjust to include all seminaries and all Presbyteries in the same sweeping condemnation. As I have already said, the incompetents and dead weights thus inducted into the ministry constitute but a small minority of our ministers. But it is that minority which is repelling good men from the ministry in some cases, and therefore it is that minority which we wish henceforth to exclude altogether. In order to do this, however, there must be concert of action between our seminaries, and faithfulness on the part of the Presbyteries. So long as it is possible for a man who has failed to pass his examinations in one seminary to go to another and graduate with flying colors in spite of his inefficiency, and so long as some of the Presbyteries persist in their superficial methods of examination and their indiscriminate licensure of all applicants, the attempt to keep this kind of material out of the ministry is bound to fail.

Of the other things charged against the seminaries by way of holding them responsible in part for the insufficient supply of candidates for the ministry, we shall have time to notice only one or two, and that very briefly.

It is charged that the system of providing pecuniary aid for some theological students is abused, and that as a consequence the character of the men is affected unfavorably, manhood, independence and self-reliance being weakened. No one can doubt that in some cases this is true. The indiscriminate aid offered by some of the seminaries is a great evil. There *must* be a change in this matter if we expect to maintain the character of the ministry and to retain for it the respect of the people. We believe that “as a rule, men should not be the recipients of gifts. They should be helped, but not unconditionally.” All aid should be “regulated by the scholarship, the labors, and the accomplishments of the student.” One plan is to have the recipients of aid “to devote at least two years after graduation to work in the Home Mission field as an equivalent for the help received.” Another

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\* Discussions by R. L. Dabney, D. D., Vol. II., pp. 62-3.

plan is to give the men who need aid some kind of work to do in connection with the seminary by means of which they *earn* the money instead of receiving it as a *gratuity*. This is one of the plans pursued here, so far as possible, and it gives me the greatest pleasure to state that the number of applicants for these positions is always far in excess of the number of places at our disposal—which shows that our students have the correct view and the right spirit.

No reform is more urgently needed in the theological seminaries of this country and none would be more heartily welcomed by the students themselves, than a thorough-going change in the prevalent disastrous methods of aiding men in their studies for the ministry. Perhaps no conference that could be proposed would do as much real good as a conference of representatives of the faculties of all the Presbyterian theological seminaries of America, North and South and West, for the purpose of reaching an agreement and entering into a covenant for the correction of these abuses and the establishment of a system which would provide assistance for only two classes of men, viz., those who win the bursaries as prizes for proved scholarship, and those who are willing to render service that is a fair and full equivalent for the help received.

If such an agreement were made and kept a reform could be effected at once which would brace and tone the seminaries like an elixir of life, eliminate the dullards and the shirks, deliver the manly and worthy students from the galling sense of being confounded in the public mind with the general refuse of the college world, replenish the ranks of our ministry with a still larger proportion of real scholars and real men, correct and elevate the popular estimate of the character and attainments of the ministry, and make this august and blessed vocation still more attractive to the men of mind and mettle. But if, on the other hand, the present policy of some of the seminaries is continued—if they will not all fall in line in the effort to put such a premium on scholarship and character, there is before us a weary task which it will take years to accomplish, if indeed it can be done at all.

One other damaging charge against the seminaries is that by their *unpracticalness* they keep down the average of force and effectiveness in the ministry and so repel some good men from its

ranks. Dr. Demarest, writing of this point, says that the seminaries "are continually represented by the secular press, and also to a considerable extent by the religious press, to say nothing of some Christian people of presumed intelligence, as being far behind the times, as entirely occupied with the study of dead languages, of dry and tedious historical studies, and of scholastic and metaphysical theology; all of which, it is coolly assumed, have nothing to do with the great practical work of the ministry which is to save men, but tend, on the contrary, to educate students away from the people instead of bringing them into closer sympathy with them and of giving them practical training that will qualify them to work among all classes and to win them over to the Lord's side." \* \* \* The sentiment is widespread. From all quarters we hear that students in theological seminaries are leading the lives of recluses; that they are walled in from the world and carefully watched lest one should happen somehow to break out and get away; that they are constantly occupied with digging Hebrew roots and wrestling with Greek paradigms, and loading the memory with dry definitions of abstract dogmas, and floundering in the mire of metaphysical speculation, and that their chief pastime is debate on the high themes of predestination, divine sovereignty, free will, original sin, and probation, first and second. These young men are pictured as coming out of the seminaries at the expiration of three years, dazed by the light of the outside world into which they are thus suddenly and unpreparedly thrust. They wink and blink as did the prisoner when released from his years of confinement in the dungeons of the bastille. What little of practical sense and tact they may have had when they entered must, it may well be supposed, have taken its departure long before the expiration of the three years. It is seriously held that the first thing for a graduate from a theological seminary to do, if he would be of any service in the world, is to unlearn much that he was taught in the seminary; he must shake off the impedimenta with which he has been loading himself so diligently and conscientiously. He must wake up to the idea that there are men and women and children in the world, and that it is for them and among them that he is to work.

"All this is a shade amusing to professors who find it a daily recurring but most discouraging task to try to get a little more of the reclusive element into the seminaries in which it is their

province to teach ; who know too well that the evil is in the other direction ; that the world outside is getting an undue proportion of the student's time, and that it is the Hebrew and Greek and history and theology that are suffering, rather than the worldly wisdom that is so much lauded. Familiarity with various forms of Christian work is not a strange thing to find in a theological student. If preaching is to be done in churches needing supplies ; if conventions and anniversaries, associations, conferences of all sorts are to be held ; you may be sure that theological students will not be far off. I have a suspicion that they know as much of what is going on in the world as most other people, and that they are not unprepared on their graduation to spring right into such practical work as they may be called to, and to adjust themselves to whatever circumstances they may be placed in. I, for one, fail to see the prevailing helplessness and the painful veridancy, and the miserable inefficiency that are pressed as arguments for radical changes in our methods with an air of assurance that says, nobody can deny the facts, we can differ only on the question, What is to be done about it? Of course, some young men are deplorably helpless and inefficient, but they would be so after having enjoyed a score of years of the best means for making them practical, efficient men. The truth is that it is not in them, and no change in seminary methods would avail to put it into them."

A theological school is not intended to be chiefly a depot or storehouse of supplies for vacant pulpits, nor is its main object to train for pastoral or missionary work by the actual doing of the things that are afterwards to be done through life, nor is its supreme aim to make first-class scholars and specialists in the various departments of theological science. The true aim of a seminary is to make good ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will serve Him and His Church with increasing efficiency year after year. "The students are placed in training for the service of the Church so that they may be ready for such service when called to it ; in other words, the present is the time for the preparation, and not for the actual service. The present is the time to secure thorough mental discipline, and to lay the foundations of intelligent, manly Christian character, and of scholarship that will qualify men to be leaders and judicious workers and safe advisers in their future." And it is the abiding judgment of the



Church that the way to do this is to give them thorough instruction in the four great departments of exegetical, historical, dogmatic, and pastoral theology. Some people seem to think that the theoretical and the practical are "in their nature antagonistic, and that a theological school cannot be practical because it is dominantly theoretical. The practical is, on the contrary, dependent on the theoretical, and could not exist without it," and it will be an evil day when in our theological schools "the directly practical element shall supersede or overshadow the theoretical." Therefore in the interest, not of scholarship, mark you, but of practical efficiency in the ministry, we plead for undiminished attention to the four great departments of the time-honored organization of our theological seminaries.

But why pursue the discussion further? There is a short and decisive argument—the appeal to your own observation. Look around you. Who are the men that can do the work of the ministry wherever you place them—the men of sound judgment, real capacity, solid attainments, and true efficiency? They are precisely the men who as students in the seminary addressed themselves with all diligence to the four great disciplines which I have enumerated, and who never neglected their proper work as students for what it called with amazing short-sightedness practical training for the ministry.

I must close this discussion abruptly for lack of time to pursue it further, though there are several other aspects of the subject yet untouched which I had intended to present. But I do not wish to be misunderstood in what I have said. Does any one, for instance, infer from the trend of my remarks that I am not in full sympathy with the views expressed by Dr. Smith in charging me that steady effort should be made to keep theological education as close to life as possible? Then you have not caught my meaning. I agree with him fully about that. It is perfectly plain that, while the narrowing of range that is necessarily involved in a course of special study gives a weight and force to a man's subsequent ministry that nothing else can give, it does nevertheless temporarily derange the adaptation of his thought and diction to the popular understanding unless he is exceedingly careful to guard against this result. And the sessions of our seminaries are so arranged purposely that, besides what may be done in the twenty-four months of the three terms of study by

teaching our great subjects with a constant view to their bearing upon the actual needs of the men and women now in the world, there are eight full months that may be entirely devoted to outside work of various sorts under the direction of the Presbyteries, and during which not a single recitation is required—the eight months of vacation.

Allow me to express also, in conclusion, my earnest intention to heed the counsel given by your spokesman concerning the necessity of emphasizing and developing the character and spiritual life of the student. From what has been said already I think no one can doubt our determination to do all that in us lies to maintain a high grade of intellectual attainment in our seminaries. But, as God shall help us, we mean to heed that charge concerning our responsibility for the spiritual development of our students and to recognize clearly the supremacy of character over learning in the ministerial equipment. The primary object of this institution is not to make learned linguists or learned theologians even, but to make effective preachers of the cross. While it is true, as a rule, that the more faithful the student here the more fruitful the preacher hereafter, it is also true that faith, courage, patience, love, sympathy, and Christlikeness of spirit are of vastly greater importance than any scholarship whatsoever. The prime qualification for the Gospel ministry is conversion. The indispensable prerequisite of large fruitfulness in the work to which these young men are called is growth in grace. May the Spirit of all wisdom and grace therefore guide us and help us in the discharge of the tremendous responsibility laid upon us of training true ministers of the gospel of the grace of God.