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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE POSSIBLE FEDERATION OF THE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

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THE question of church unity is being more and more pressed upon us. In 1886, the Bishops of the American Episcopal Church adopted a declaration that they were ready "to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church." Many responses have been made to this; committees of conference exist, and correspondence is actually in progress. This is a single group of facts, one of several groups. In that most notable of the American ecclesiastical movements of the past year, the revision movement in the Presbyterian Church, the idea of closer union with other churches has prominently asserted itself. The measures taken for securing a formula that shall express the consensus of doctrine among the several Presbyterian bodies, were much more eagerly adopted than those for securing the revision of the present standards. Many Presbyterians are anxious that revision shall take such a form as to lower the barriers between them and other churches.

Among possible modes of greater unity, that by federation is prominently mentioned. The term federation is conveniently elastic for this purpose. We need not define it more closely than by saying that it indicates something less than the consolidation of existing churches into a single body, having governmental functions, and something more than the mere recognition that all the churches are in reality one. It implies, perhaps, a council of some sort, common to the bodies composing the federation. It implies some kind of accepted organization, some kind of official community. The common organization may have only advisory power, but it must be the power of advice that comes from a regularly accepted source.

It is a thing by no means to be taken for granted that such a federation, if feasible, should be confined to the churches that are com-

II.—THE STUDY OF THE CLASSICS BY MINISTERS.

BY PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

FEW graduates of our colleges, it is said, make any pretence of keeping up their classical studies after graduation. This was to be expected from those students who could with difficulty translate their own diplomas, granted perhaps as in the case of Dean Swift, *speciali gratia*. But it is difficult to assign any reason for the neglect of the classics by others and especially by clergymen. It cannot be that the subject was exhausted at college, for at the best, the college course includes but a small portion of the great field. It cannot be that the subject itself, like the primer or the arithmetic, belongs in its nature only to the primary stages of culture, for as *literature* they fascinate and instruct our best and amplest scholars. It may be in part from disgust at the way in which they were taught, disgust at the barren grammatical drill which usurped the place of some high, inspiring interpretation of a great author's thought and style. But in life we often have to learn to conquer our disgusts. If they conquer us we may often miss securing very valuable things. To leave Homer unread because we were once wearied with dry questions about his prosody or his dialects is surely a lame and impotent conclusion. It may be in part also that the classics are dropped because the difficulty of reading them in the original is so much greater than of reading the same amount of poetry or philosophy or history in English. But in these days of "reading at sight," which is cultivated in all our colleges, this difficulty ought to be vanishing, and at any rate, as we shall see, it may be readily overcome by a little patience and more method.

It is indeed urged by some high authorities in literature, notably Mr. Emerson, that they are better read in translations; that thus at any rate we can catch some idea of what the classics are and at an immense saving of time. That we have some fine translations of classic authors, such works as the Virgil of Covington, the Iliad and Odyssey of Worsley or the Horace of Theodore Martin cannot be denied. Better by all means read them in *such* translations than not at all. But the ordinary *hack* translations which are cheaply furnished in our Bohn's edition, are simply the ponies on which our boys ride to the diploma. Even of the best translations the truth in a modern poet's lines holds abundantly good:

"I thought the sparrow's note from heaven
Singing at dawn on the elder bough
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it pleases not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky,—
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.
The delicate shells lay on the shore;

The bubbles of the latest wave
 Fresh pearls to their enamel gave ;
 And the bellowing of the savage sea
 Greeted their safe escape to me.
 I fetched my sea-born treasures home
 I wiped away the mud and foam
 But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
 Had left their beauty on the shore
 With the shore and the sand, and the wild uproar."

But if this is true of the best translations, what is to be said of the worst. Make all we can of the really meritorious efforts to give us Homer from Chapman to Bryant, or Virgil from Gawain Douglas to Sellars they can never take the place of the direct communion with these great classics in their own tongue. If then the classics are dropped at graduation or their places supplied by translations they may well adopt the plaint on the tombstone of the unfortunate infant :

"If I was so soon to be done for
 I wonder what I was begun for."

The need of prolonged study of them can be readily shown. It must be kept up in order to justify the pains already taken, the labor already spent upon them. Not otherwise can the full value of their collegiate study be gained, not otherwise can they make a really vital part of our culture. All that has gone before is but preparation. The best classical scholar on the day of his graduation can hardly be said to have more than crossed the threshold. He has had glimpses—clear and fascinating glimpses of what is in their poetry and philosophy and history. He felt their power over him begun as the noble passages were conveyed to his appreciating mind in the class-room. I cannot envy the mind or heart of that scholar who can read unmoved that scene in Tom Brown at Rugby where Arthur breaks down in his reading the matchless lines in Homer, "the most beautiful utterances of the most beautiful woman of the old world." But if one had only read as much of an English classic and had but just entered on the field of thought and imagination opened to him and should stop then, what verdict would be pronounced! Will it answer to read Hamlet, or the Merchant of Venice, and then stop? Or to read Ivanhoe or the Heart of Midlothian and then stop? Or a chapter from Burke or Carlyle and then stop? Yet many stop with six books of the *Æneid*—with fewer, perhaps, of the *Iliad* and none of the *Odyssey*—and then wonder that classical studies had done so little for them. Why, if English classics were treated after this fashion, our English culture would be a "pinch'd thing" indeed. The fact is that the very contact with life, which years after graduation bring, the broadening culture, the ripening powers, are all needed to make us enter in and reap fully the harvest of those long years of classical study in the academy and college.

Ministers are said to be the defenders of classical study as an integral part of a liberal education. The way to save the classics to education is to exemplify a far wider and more thorough use of them than the college curriculum can give. If there is any better argument for classical study than is found in Trevelyan's *Life of Lord Macaulay*, it would be hard to find it. Macaulay in India and on his voyage thither—absorbed in the great task among all his other labors of framing a Penal Code for India—finds time for a wonderful course of classical reading. Let me give a few extracts from the appendix to Vol. I. and refer readers of this Review to the full statement therein contained. They are taken from the notes pencilled in Macaulay's Greek and Latin classics :

"This day I finished Thucydides, after reading him with inexpressible interest and admiration." February 27, 1835.

* "I am still of the same mind." May 30, 1836.

"I read Plautus four times at Calcutta."

"Finished the second reading of Lucretius this day, March 24, 1835."

"I finished Livy after reading him with the greatest delight, interest, and admiration, May 31, 1835; again April 29, 1837."

"I have now gone through the whole of Ovid's works, and heartily tired I am of him and them. Yet he is a wonderfully clever man."

At the end of each drama of the Greek tragedians, his biographer tells us, Macaulay wrote in pencil a little critical essay, from three to twenty lines in length.

"The first half of the *Eumenides* is equal to any thing in poetry."

"The 'Seven against Thebes' is a noble poem full of dramatic improprieties; but all on fire with the finest poetical spirit."

In his *Prometheus* he wrote : "One of the greatest of human compositions." These instances will show what the classics were to Macaulay—the man of affairs engaged in the work of a statesman—as well as the scholar and the historian.

Now, of course, he was in every respect an exceptional man—his ideal of happiness, as he said, being to read Plato with his feet on a fender. The ordinary parish minister is very far removed from him in gifts and perhaps in opportunities. But the ordinary parish minister may be a good classical scholar—able to follow Macaulay over this track of reading. And if the clergy do not keep up classical studies, the race of classical scholars may die out, save as the chairs in our colleges shall keep them alive. No class of men have better chances for making classical reading a part of their culture. If ministers drop the classics it is not strange that lawyers and doctors should. Dr. Thatcher Thayer of Newport in his green old age daily studies his classic authors. Dr. Howard Crosby is, if not the busiest man in New York, next to him, and he has never yet failed to find time for classical study. The same may be said of Dr. Talbot W. Chambers.

* Every such memorandum implies a separate perusal.

The list might perhaps be extended. But the point I wish to make very clear is, *first*, that if the classics are to be saved to education it must be by an extended use of them after college days are over and the work for life has begun. And, *secondly*, this being so, the ministers are the men first of all to do it. The salvation of the classics is largely in their hands.

I am well aware that some ministers into whose hands this paper may fall, will say that they can use their time to better advantage than by poring over obscure passages in Herodotus and Plato, Cicero and Lucretius; that it is better to read Isaiah in the original Hebrew than Xenophon in the original Greek and St. Paul than Seneca. I shall not advocate any such study of the classics as will interfere with the completest study of the Scriptures. Nor shall I prescribe any such *critical* study of them as involve such a cost of time and labor. It is rather a popular study of them—a study of them as *literature* that I have in mind. Later on it will be shown that this can be gained without sacrifice of any higher study—and without any drastic effect on a minister's time. For it is certainly true that there may be found a sort of mental recreation in the study. Nothing refreshes a weary body like change of place. Nothing refreshes a weary mind like change of thought. Let a man dip for a few moments into his Virgil* or his Tacitus, he is in a new world or rather has gone back from the new to the old world. The change is the most absolutely conceivable in thought, in feeling, in life, in religion, in social usages, in moral ideas, in the *tout ensemble* of existence. If the minister smokes he may take his classics and his cigar at the same time. The method of Lord Macaulay is the one to use. "I read, however, not as at college, but like a man of the world. If I do not know a word I pass it by unless it is important to the sense. If I find, as I have of late often found, a passage which refuses to give up its meaning at the second reading, I let it alone. I have read during the last fortnight, before breakfast, three books of Herodotus and four plays of Æschylus."

Such a method of reading his classics will surely prove recreative. Try it with one of the easier classics, say with Virgil's Æneid. Have Sellar's or Covington's translation by if you choose. If it does not prove a mental recreation the fault will not lie with Virgil.

Mental recreation is an important thing. Its importance is not fully enough understood. But higher advantages accrue to classical students. Among them is discipline in power of expression. Years ago the Country Parson (the Rev. A. H. K. Boyd) gave the world a capital essay on the "Art of putting things." It is, I think, the best of his essays. It contains many admirable hints for all writers and speakers. In this "art of putting things" ministers greatly differ. Some are masters of it. They make sentences that are like "nails

* Virgil—is, I believe, the modern spelling. But I am too old-fashioned to adopt it.

fastened in a sure place." They stick in the memory of hearers. How often, however, the same thought in other hands leaves no impression, gets only hearing by the ear, not by the mind. The wrong word is chosen, the idea gets tangled in circumlocution, the preface is too long, the emphasis is put in the wrong place, in a word, the thing is "put" awkwardly or cumbrously or blindly. Every one is conscious of this in hearing sermons. In fact it makes all the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful preacher. No more important thing in homiletical training can be found. A good plan for a sermon is secondary to it. Many a well-planned sermon has failed because the body of its thought was not well "put." Now it will not answer to say that only men classically trained have this art. It is sometimes a natural gift. Some popular preachers might be named who have this knack of saying the right thing in the right way, who are not at all in touch with classical authors. But what is not a natural gift may be acquired. The majority of preachers will have to acquire it—if they get it at all, and what is more, to take some pains in acquiring it. I believe that if more attention were given to this matter, the power of the pulpit as a public teacher would be doubled. One help toward securing it would be found in a study of the classics. This art of expression is found in the Greek and Latin classics, carried to perfection. No modern literature equals it—few approach it. The French comes far nearer than the German. The English is next to French. But the Greek excels all, and the Latin is only a little way below the Greek.

If, then, the ministry will keep up its classical studies, it will find itself in companionship with the great masters of this art. It will catch something of their power. The effort at translation will fix it far more firmly in the mind than reading in the vernacular an equal classic, if it could be found. Clearness, terseness, force—these are resident in many an old author. What an amount of "wordiness" would be cured by a thorough reading of Tacitus! What a discipline in clearness by reading Xenophon could be gained! What force from Cicero! We have in English two great prose writers—Hooker and Bacon—whose style, indeed, is too much latinized. But what a magnificent power of expression they had gained. Their mastery of it is due largely to the classics with which they were so familiar.

Advantages of a more substantial kind will also ensue. It is safe to say that ministers who keep up their classical studies will be men who keep up also the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In our praise of the English Bible, it must not be forgotten that the student who is familiar with the Scriptures in the original tongues gets nearest to the inspired source precisely in the same way that he gets nearest to the real Homer who reads the Iliad and the Odyssey in Greek. Further than this even we may go and say that every minister

should know his Greek so thoroughly that he would always read his Greek Testament in preference to any translation of it. That this would be the case if the classics were more studied there is good reason to believe, It is hardly the question whether a minister can get on without a knowledge of Hebrew. He can, of course, with all the English helps *get on*, have a successful ministry, etc., etc., but he will get on better with far more comfort if can do his own reading of the originals.

There is, however, another point to be made. The great body of pagan thought in the classics is of special importance to a Christian minister. Here is a whole literature uninfluenced by Christianity. All modern literatures have come more or less under its power. The former give us the best type of human thinking apart from the light of Christianity. How can we adequately measure the forces of the latter till we can institute some comparison—not at second hand—but for ourselves! During a recent walk with my friend, Professor Packard, we fell to discussing this point. His own mind was strongly impressed with the importance of the subject, and I asked him to give me what he would consider a desirable course of classical rules for ministers. He has kindly, in compliance with my request, drawn out the following syllabus. I need not say his reputation as a well-furnished classical scholar gives interest and weight to his suggestions.

“There are two lines of classical reading in Greek and Roman classics, one in the masterpieces of literature and history; the other in some leading works containing the best results of pagan thought on morals and religion.

“The first would involve reading in Greek, Homer, Iliad and Odyssey (with Gladstone’s *Juventus Mundi*, of which a new edition is promised), Herodotus (Rawlinson’s Ed. has very full excursus and commentary), Thucydides, Greek Tragedians and Orators, Demosthenes and Æschines.

“In Latin, Cicero’s Orations and *De Oratore* (not superseded by any work on Rhetoric and Oratory), also his correspondence, Virgil, Horace.

“On the second line, Plato’s Dialogues and Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, Aristotle’s *Ethics*.

“In the period close to and contemporary with the beginnings of Christianity especially, we have three authors easy to read in the original, presenting those views of practical truth and life which challenge comparison with ethical teachings of the New Testament Scriptures. Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum* and *De Fato*, contain the most complete account we have of pagan thinking concerning the Divine Being and His relations to the world, and his *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* presents and discusses the different views of the chief good and the nature of virtue in a way still worthy of study. *De Officiis* is a more elementary

but valuable treatise written by him, the last of his ethical works, for his son, then 20 years old.

“Seneca’s Moral Treatise and Epistles approach nearest to Christianity and challenge the most direct comparison with New Testament teachings. They abound in material for the preacher’s study and illustration. In them, as also in Plutarch’s *Moralia*, but in a less degree than in Seneca, may be found in greater warmth and fulness than elsewhere, those stoic teachings, so pure, earnest and powerful in their effect on many lives of his pagan contemporaries in every rank of life which later definitely claimed to rival Christianity. Earlier they produced that wonderful series of self-disciplined and devoted men, who doubtless had no knowledge of apostolic teaching and life, but who were pagan forerunners of the best types of monks, street-preachers, court-lecturers, father-confessors, and imperial counsellors the Christian world has had. In their teachings, their lives, and their deaths, anticipated and paralleled Christian teachers and Christian martyrs, and through the early empire and the age of the Antoinines, they were the great rivals of Christianity before it became the world’s religion. Christian fathers claimed Seneca and others as essentially Christian.

“Bishop Lightfoot’s account of Stoicism, its excellencies and its defects, in his introduction to his commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians is able and just.

“Farrar’s *Seekers after God* gives a graphic account of the lives of representative stoics from Seneca to M. Aurelius—both Latin and Greek.”

Perhaps it may be expected that some hints be given as to how such a reading of the classics may be secured. The ministers, it is urged, are busy men—can they wisely give time to such pursuits? If the reading of classics were to absorb much time, it would not be widely urged. Much of Macaulay’s classical reading was done *before breakfast*. It is related of the late Dr. Thornwell that while dining with a company of literary men at Cambridge, reference was made to a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He astonished the group by quoting it in the original from memory. Few ministers perhaps could give the amount of time and study to the classics which Dr. Thornwell gave to Aristotle. But how richly he was repaid for his devotion to his favorite classics, his sermons on “Truth” testify, and he was none the less powerful as an ecclesiastical debater, as a theologian or as a preacher that he had spent so many hours with the great Stagirite.

If the following hints are observed I think any parish minister cannot fail to get a good hold of that fine old classical literature.

1. Begin the habit of reading the classics early. By “early” I mean immediately after graduation from college. So soon as seminary

studies are begun let *some* classical reading begin. It will not do to wait long after college days. It is somewhat hard to take up the practice when once it has become disused. Here is the secret of so much neglect of the treasures hid in classic fields. After five or six years—the vocabulary has been forgotten, the idioms are grown unfamiliar. If, however, the habit is made continuous, it becomes more and more easy and reading “at sight” the pleasant occupation rather than the hard task.

2. Make it an integral part of every day’s work in the study. Give—if no more—a good quarter of an hour to it, before work in the exegesis of Scripture or on the sermon is begun. It will be found a good preparation for any day’s work. Fifteen minutes a day will soon bring the reader through his Virgil—or through his Odyssey either—if he be a reasonably good Grecian. It is surprising what can be accomplished in this way. In a single winter, giving no more time than I have said, some of the best classics may be read.

3. Choose the classic that interests you specially to begin with—if one of the easier ones—so much the better. If you annotate on the margin, the process of reading will grow in interest. Not every one may follow Dr. Thornwell in his choice of Aristotle. But surely one more than another will appeal to the student. Let him take the one he likes best.

4. Do not read too critically. Remember Macaulay’s rule clearly quoted. Get at the sense of the author—get his style and mark the nobler passages. But let mere scholastic questions alone. Leave them to the scholiasts.

If these four rules be observed, it may safely be said that the reading of the classics will soon be recognized as one of the most profitable and delightful occupations of the minister’s study.

III.—THE DECADENCE OF COUNTRY CHURCHES.

By REV. W. H. LUCKENBACH, GERMANTOWN, N. Y.

To us country pastors who are doing the Master’s work in fields of limited area, and whose successes or failures are not of sufficient interest to be inquired about by enterprising interviewers, with the view of parading them in the public press, it is often a question of deep concern, How can our country churches be perpetuated?

It may surprise some of the readers of *THE HOMILETIC REVIEW* who have never had experience in country pastorates, and, perhaps, don’t want any, to be told, that hundreds of them throughout the land, including churches of all denominations, are declining to such an extent as to make it improbable that they can be restored to the degree of prosperity which they enjoyed twenty, thirty, or more years ago. There is not a denomination that cannot count