

ARTICLE VII.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

No. V. — DIVERSITIES IN THE CURRICULUM OF OUR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS.

THE four preceding Articles on Theological Education have, with more or less emphasis, suggested the following ideas.

1. Our theological seminaries should be so regulated that some candidates for the ministry may make farther progress than others in special studies. Some can and should pursue Hebrew and Greek literature to a greater extent than others. Some can and should devote more time than others to historical investigation. It would be comparatively useless for some men, but eminently important for others, to study the more complicated theories of philosophers who oppose the Christian system, to master the more recondite speculations of theologians who defend that system.

2. Our theological seminaries should be so regulated that some candidates may be more thoroughly instructed than they now are in the fundamental studies of their profession. Here and there a man leaves the seminary without such an acquaintance with the English language as will enable him to prepare a sermon for the press. He does not even know how to divide the sermon into paragraphs, the paragraph into sentences, or to punctuate the sentence. Here and there an alumnus cannot construct an argument in logical form, nor explain the Biblical passages which support it. Still, in certain respects, these men are better qualified for usefulness in the ministry than are some of their better educated classmates. Not a few of the more accurate scholars prove themselves to be unfit for the pulpit. The more scholastic ought to have been more carefully trained for their practical work; the less scholarly ought to have been specially disciplined in the fundamental branches of clerical study. There is an antiquated stanza, familiar to us in our childhood, and capable of new and various applications at the present day:

“ In point of sermons, 'tis confest,
Our English clergy make the best;
But, what seems paradox at first,
They make the best, and preach the worst.”

3. From these, and from other facts like these, arises the necessity, or at least the importance, of an elective system of theological study.

4. From a large variety of similar facts arises the importance of in-

structing one class of students in large part by public lectures, and another class in large part by private conversation. For some theological students the public lecture is in some measure lost. It is not understood, or it is misunderstood. These men need to study a printed text-book; to be questioned familiarly in regard to it; to converse individually with their instructor; to receive daily from him words of counsel, direction, or encouragement. They need substantially the old system of private instruction, but to receive this instruction at a public seminary.

5. From a multitude of facts, some of which have been stated in preceding Articles, but more may be stated in succeeding Articles, results the importance of a special course of study in our theological seminaries. The men who pursue this course ought to be under the special discipline of their teacher or teachers; ought to be instructed in large part conversationally, as all candidates were instructed a hundred years ago; ought to be questioned until they were well grounded on the fundamental topics of the clerical profession. Not a few students who pursue the regular course in our seminaries would be more thoroughly educated if they would pursue a special course fitted for them individually. The special course is intended to combine the advantages of the private system pursued in the last century with the public system pursued at the present day. The special course is intimately connected with the elective system. It will tend to elevate the scholarship of the ministry. It will enable those men who pursue the regular course to advance farther and faster than they now do. Those men, for whose accommodation the regular students are now kept back in their studies, would make more extensive and more rapid progress if they were classed by themselves under the more familiar guidance of an instructor or instructors specially devoted to them. The special course in a seminary should be modelled, in some degree, after the course pursued in the old family and parochial schools of such men as Bellamy and Backus; but it will enjoy the peculiar advantages of large libraries, of rich personal associations, of what is called a "literary atmosphere."

These suggestions are here repeated for the purpose of introducing a series of general remarks on the importance of diversifying our methods of theological education. From the prevalence of lay preaching we may derive a hint in favor of varying these methods. Why are so many useful laymen rushing into the pulpit? Is it because we have not a sufficient number of "approved preachers"? Perhaps so, in some degree. Is it not likewise because there is a lack of varied fitnesses in the ordained ministry? We would not depreciate lay effort. It is essential to the welfare of the church. Some of our lay-preachers have had some marked qualifications for their work. It is often said that these preachers would have been spoiled, if they had been thoroughly educated. It is wise to say that they would have been more useful if they had been *appropriately*

educated. Education is always an advantage; ill-adapted education is not. It is often said that the native pastors at our foreign missionary stations would be unfitted for their work, if they should pass through the ten years course of study which the foreign missionaries themselves have pursued. These native pastors are in a peculiar condition; they need to be educated in a peculiar way; they would not be injured by any amount of education, provided that the education be appropriate to their peculiar needs.

There are many communities who cannot support thoroughly educated pastors, and may yet derive valuable instruction from laymen who will superintend their Sabbath-schools, conduct their Bible-classes, and preside at their religious Conferences. There are also many communities who can support thoroughly educated pastors for only a part of the year; can enjoy his pulpit services on only one Sabbath in two, three, or four. On the Sabbath when they cannot obtain his services they may find valuable substitutes in such laymen as are *well instructed*, although not *thoroughly educated*, in the truths of the Bible. These substitutes may labor under the supervision of the regularly ordained pastor. In actual fact such substitutes *are* employed although they have not been well instructed in divine truth. In actual fact such substitutes *will be* employed. The question is: Ought they not to receive instruction when they can receive it in a special course at our theological seminaries? Such questions come under the general one: Ought not our systems of theological training to be more diversified than they now are?

It is a common remark that in educated circles at the present day there is a want of "individual spontaneity." The words of Prof. Max Müller, in a recent Number of the Contemporary Review, are less applicable to our own country than to some European districts, but they suggest to us much wholesome truth. He says: "The principle of individuality has suffered more at present than perhaps at any former period of history. The world is becoming more and more gregarious, and what the French call our *nature moutonnière*, 'our mutton-like nature,' our tendency to leap where any bell-wether has leaped before, becomes more and more prevalent in politics, in religion, in art, and even in science. M. de Tocqueville expressed his surprise how much more Frenchmen of the present day resemble one another than did those of the last generation. The same remark, adds John Stuart Mill, ought to be made of England in a greater degree. 'The modern *regime* of public opinion,' he writes, 'is in an unorganized form what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents, and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.'"

The late Mr. Richard H. Dana long ago complained of the "sequacity"

in our own literary circles. Our theological education as now conducted often elicits the same complaint. It is said that the alumni of a seminary bear a seminary stamp;—even their elocution betrays them; that our systems of collegiate and high school instruction tend to the same equalization and monotony; that some of our colleges develop less individuality in the large classes of to-day than they developed in the smaller classes of forty years ago. The testimony of some philosophical thinkers is, that our common-school system tends to repress superior capacity for the sake of accommodating the average mind, and to run different classes of children in the same mould. This antecedent education affects the minds of some ministerial candidates long before they enter the seminary. It tends to repress their individuality; to make every minister like every other; to afflict the pulpit with a monotony and a consequent dullness of ministration. The ripest fruit of education is the appropriate culture of the scholar's peculiar faculties. Culture cannot impart the agreeable individuality; it can develop it, educe it, and improve it. It can thus provide for versatility in the pulpit. Parishes that have just dismissed their minister often say: "Our next pastor must be as different as possible from our last." The Methodist plan of annual appointments meets in a certain degree this popular desire for versatility in the pulpit. A diversified course of theological study in our seminaries would meet it. Give to sixty men in any one seminary a higher standard in the regular course, together with a short course by its side, and eclectic studies in addition, and at least three times the versatility now secured would follow. The men who enjoy these richer and more liberal advantages in the seminary would not only, man by man, have more made of them by their instructors, and be stimulated to make more of themselves in the particular lines in which their individual aptitudes run, but would also learn a more generous appreciation of the differing aptitudes and development of each fellow-student whose culture is different from their own; would acquire more scope; would feel the importance and need of adapting themselves readily and in a Christian spirit to their people; would not go forth into the world so sadly lacking, on this side or that, as they often do; would be less liable to short settlements, and the churches to frequent pastoral changes. A high style of education can be as narrow, inflexible, and impracticable as a low one; the very learned cleric as bigoted in adhesion to his one way as the very unlearned; and as we carry up the structure of theological and Biblical scholarship we must carry it out more widely in respect to the relations and wants of men. Therefore we must widen the scope and multiply the varied processes of our seminaries. In no other way can we thwart or check the tendencies that destroy the wholesome variety in the clerical calling. We may find ere long that the special course alone demands the services of more than one professor to do it justice; for the special course requires a greater degree of personal

intercourse between the teacher and the taught, a greater amount of individual drill and minute discipline, than is required by the regular course.

We need only glance at the world at large, or even at our own country, in order to see that various phases of the ministry are now demanded, and that no one style of the ministry can possibly meet this demand. The one style may be ever so good according to some favorite ideal, or according to some actual pattern in the past, but it is not adapted to the varying wants of the age. If we are to have any ideal, any "regulation pattern" to which all are required to conform, we must put so much into that ideal that no man can realize it all. The *Bibliotheca Sacra* has inserted an Article in favor of establishing a Professorship of Foreign Missions. Is not such an office important for one class of our students? There has also been proposed, by one of our most eminent philanthropists, a Professorship of Christian Work. Such an office is important for many; but is it for all our candidates? There ought to be a Professorship of the languages cognate with the Hebrew; but must every student learn them? It is requisite that we have a Professorship of the secular sciences, so far forth as they are supposed to be in conflict with the sacred science. Some of our theological candidates ought to pry into the systems of Hume, Hegel, Comte, Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Tyndal; ought to be able to defend the truth as it stands related to these systems. It is impossible for all our candidates to pursue this course of study, and at the same time pay due attention to the regular course. What one man cannot do another man can and should do. It is also important to have a Professorship of Biblical, as distinct from Systematic, Theology; but Biblical Theology is in itself an engrossing department; very few students can pursue it as it ought to be pursued within the period of three years, and at the same time give to the other departments the attention which the laws of the seminary require. We *must* introduce new branches of study; if they be introduced, there must be other changes in our present curriculum. There must be either a seminary course of four years, instead of three, or there must be more elasticity in the course of three years. The present fixed type of seminary drill, lecture-hearing, and note-taking, — essential as these are within certain limits, — must be modified to some extent. Men designed for a peculiar work need a peculiar education, — not an inferior one, but a peculiar, and in some aspects a superior one.

We have often insisted on the truth that a theological seminary is not designed to make specialists in the clerical profession. Still it must recognize certain exceptional cases. Common sense has been defined to be the power of seeing *when, where, and how* to make exceptions to a general rule. The fact that a theological seminary is a repository of learning need not conflict with the duty of its being governed by common

sense. The fact that the seminary should recognize things as they are, and should make suitable provision for exigencies, need not conflict with its main plan to give a general rather than a special culture. Its main plan is to lay the foundation on which the student may rear the superstructure, each one for his own specialty. It is designed to give that general discipline which will prepare the student to become a specialist, should Providence call him to do so. Still, while giving this discipline common to all theologians, we may well remember that some of these theologians will at length become specialists. There must be a division of labor. Even in special departments there must be more special students. In the language of Bishop Ellicott: "Our resources are now too abundant for the various details of criticism, lexicography, grammar, exegesis, history, archaeology, and doctrine to be happily or harmoniously blended in one mass. One mind is scarcely sufficiently comprehensive to grasp properly these various subjects; one judgment is scarcely sufficiently discriminating to arrive at just conclusions on so many topics. The sagacious critic, the laborious lexicographer, the patient grammarian, the profound exegete, the suggestive historian, and the impartial theologian are, in the present state of Biblical science, never likely to be united in one person. Excellence in any one department is now difficult; in all, impossible. I trust, then, that the time is coming when theologians will carry out, especially in the New Testament, the principle of the division of labor."

As our theological seminaries are not designed to make specialists in theological science, but to qualify men for becoming such, so they are not mainly designed to make specialists in Christian work, but to lay a broad basis on which individual students may found their own specialty. In laying this basis, however, we are not to forget that some candidates have special gifts for special offices; and the discipline which is common to all candidates may be supplemented in special cases for the nurture of these special gifts. The same discipline which would be most appropriate for qualifying Dr. Caird to be one of her Majesty's chaplains would not in all respects be most appropriate for qualifying Rev. Mr. McAll to perform his distinctive work in Paris. The dissenting churches, colleges, and training institutions of England accommodate themselves more than our own to the specialties of such men as Mr. McAll. They are nearer than ours to the unchristianized masses of the continent, have readier and more frequent communication with them. It has been the necessity of their circumstances and organization, under the cold and depressing shade of the great universities, to adapt themselves to different strata of society, where society is distinctly and offensively stratified. We have not thus adapted our methods of culture.

If the day shall ever come when, with strength and skill and favoring providences that augur success, our American Board re-enters upon a work once inaugurated by it in Italy, it will call for such provisions for

preparing the workers as we have never yet attempted. If we are ever ready to enter upon a great work of missions *promptly, at the opportune moment* (like that to which our churches are now called in Africa, or that which offers "great opportunities" in France), rare and instant Christian liberality in providing funds is but a small part of what is needful. As when the men are to be had the funds often are not; so when the funds are, the fit men are not. It is true that each individual foreign missionary is to diminish the necessity of foreign missionaries by bringing forward native laborers as soon as possible; and it is true that these laborers in Oahu, Jaffna, Robert, and Central Turkey Colleges, and in the seminaries at Honolulu, Ahmednuggur, Pasumalai, Marash, Marsovan, must go through a very different course, in some respects, from that pursued in our institutions at home; but as long as our churches have a living Christianity they will provide for different spheres of foreign work men who have been educated appropriately for those different spheres.

There are parts, also, of our own land where De Pressense's description of the ages succeeding the apostolic is a true one: "There was no distinction there between home and foreign missions; the Christian had only to cross his own threshold, and walk the public streets of his own city, and he found a pagan people at his own door to be converted."¹ It may not be necessary to learn Norwegian, Swedish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, etc., in order to succeed with immigrants who speak all these tongues; but it is necessary to adapt ourselves to their mental habits, at least, or to rely upon the calling in of ministers of foreign birth, already so adapted. Obviously the former course is the more desirable for us as Christians, more in keeping with the indications of Providence, more true to the character of "a missionary nation." Nor is it possible to supply the German-speaking immigrants, for example, with men from such sources as Basel and Herrmansburg; to say nothing of those of other nationalities. This is, then, a question of adaptation, or, on the other hand, the non-fulfilment of great Christian trusts for the souls of men; but it embraces in its scope a wider and profounder conception of theological education, — as related to this application and these trusts — than is common among us. It is not a mere professional question; it is a solemn one of duty to our generation and to the world. And we have no right to assume that the multitudes who come to us from all parts of the earth will adapt themselves to our ways so as to receive the gospel through them. It is we, rather than they, who may be expected to become all things to all men that by all means we may save some. Nothing so assimilates these often incongruous and troublesome — not to say dangerous — elements to the American people as the gospel of Christ; but we are not to look to them to assimilate themselves for the purpose of receiving that which is

¹ "The Martyrs and Apologists" (Eng. ed.), p. 20.

necessary to assimilate them. In many senses our young preachers must go to them, must *find* them, in order to bring them to Christ.

Moreover, we are not to forget that the native American stock has been steadily and marvellously modifying itself towards variety of types of character. There are to-day hardly any secluded and unchanged communities in the land. When immigration ceased with the British exodus from England, and the less than twenty-five thousand people that had come over in the first twenty years of New England were left to their natural increase in this new land, a certain homogeneity resulted; character in communities, families, and individuals, bred in and in. That has never been possible since a new immigration began to crowd upon us; that was the utter opposite of the distracting heterogeneity to which we have come in the last thirty years. In sixty-two years about five and a half millions have come to us from England alone. They brought with them our language, but little else that is characteristically ours. It is never enough that the minister merely make his hearers understand the words he uses. He must be *en rapport* with them in a thousand other respects. To know the same speech is only the first step towards the influence of mind upon mind. Senator Blaine said, at the anniversary of the New England Society of New York, in 1878: "Seven millions of people spoke the English tongue when the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth; not sixteen millions spoke it when the American Revolution was born; and to-day a hundred millions speak it." Yet how few are the men who could with equal success preach Christ wherever it is spoken, and to whomsoever it is vernacular. In the last nineteen years alone the Eastern and Southern States have had an increase, together, of 7,834,690 souls; the Western States of as many more—7,902,632. We are not what we were, in the old states or the new, twenty years ago; not so much like one another in states, cities, towns, or neighborhoods. An immense differentiation is steadily going on, to which the churches and the heads of institutions for Christian education must take heed. Events have powerfully stimulated it; modifications of civilization affect it; the pouring out of old elements of population upon new areas, as well as the pouring in of new elements, give it volume and power; and it not only renders *some* old usages idle and hindering as to ministerial usefulness, but also makes it certain that new ones must be very various to meet wants and habitudes so various in the people.

Take the one single point of the occupations of our countrymen. In no country on earth do individuals so often change their employment; but more than this is true; in no country have there been so great changes in the employment of great masses of population. The rise of New England factories furnishes one striking illustration. Hunt's Merchants' Magazine sixteen years ago predicted another, which is now taking place. "Another census will tell the story of one more progressive step taken, and the West

will have become, not only the granary of the world, but the seat of manufactures for this continent at least."¹

In 1850 the East had a dozen times as many persons following manufacturing occupations as the West; in 1860 about eight times as many; 1870 between three and four times as many; to-day two hundred thousand less than twice as many. If these figures do not give the fulfilment as yet of the prediction of the commercial writer quoted above, they show that we are on the way to it, and that already that marvellous process of mingling great multitudes of occupations over immense areas of national territory, which calls for an unexampled diversity in those who are to mentally and practically mould them to religion, is in full operation. Now, if parishes are so different, and ministers need to be so different from each other in all peoples of homogeneous character and employments, how much more in a population such as ours is to-day; and now how much more in the near future than at present.²

We have alluded to various classes of men in pagan lands, in nominally Christian lands, and in our own land who need the ministrations of American preachers. There is one class who stand apart, by themselves, and whose wants demand special attention. This is a class of our own countrymen, some of whom are as ignorant as pagans, others as ill-fitted as Russian serfs for a free government. Multitudes of our own countrymen who can neither read nor write, and have never been instructed in the principles of religion, are apt to be shunned rather than sought out by ministers educated according to our present "regulation pattern." Europeans express their astonishment that, after we have given the ballot to our freedmen, we do not adopt more decided measures to educate and christianize them. Our presidential elections are vitiated by the ignorance of the negroes and the "poor whites" of our Southern States. Our liberties are endangered by the fact that so many voters do not know enough to avoid the impositions of demagogues. The education which our students now receive at our seminaries does not prepare them to labor among those degraded voters. Not many of our students will apply themselves to such a work. They do not feel that they are trained for it. They are

¹ Art. on "The Past and Future of the West," April 1863. Carefully prepared tables show a relatively slow increase of manufacturing population in nine Eastern States, including New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the highest ratio for twenty years being in Rhode Island, the lowest in New Hampshire, viz. fifty-three per cent and twenty-two per cent, respectively; and a very swift one in nine Western States, "the lowest rate of increase (Michigan) is 175 per cent, which runs up as high as seven hundred per cent, in the new State of Nebraska."

² The Princeton Review, Nov. 1879. "Comparative View of American Progress." By Robert P. Porter, Esq., Chicago. It is to be expected that changes like these which have been mentioned will ultimately necessitate changes in secular and classical education.

trained for China more than Arkansas. It is said that we should found special schools for this department of labor. Here is the folly of Americans. We are called to establish distinct colleges and distinct theological seminaries for all distinct sects and distinct parties and distinct objects. The rational policy is to associate at the same school students of different gradations who may derive aid from each other as well as from their teachers. Our seminaries should be schools of mutual instruction in some degree. Besides, we have not the time to found new seminaries for training the hundreds of preachers who are needed for our freedmen, and northern as well as southern poor whites. The danger is imminent. "The battle-axe is even now ringing on our door-posts." Our seminary edifices are erected, our libraries are furnished, the literary atmosphere is created; hundreds of young men ought to be trained, as speedily as possible, for this work of saving the liberties of our country, and at the same time saving the souls of men. We do not say that the training of ministers designed for the old slave-states should be inferior to that of other ministers, nor that it should be superior. Diversity may be neither superiority nor inferiority. We only say that hundreds of ministers should be so trained that they *will* go to these states and will be *able* to labor in them successfully. The same institution can train men who will be good translators of the Bible even if they be poor preachers, and also men who will be good preachers even if they be poor translators of the Bible. Some of the preachers who go forth from a German university are far superior to some who go forth from our own seminaries; some are far inferior. The German seminaries are more elastic than ours, and allow a far greater degree of elective study.

It is said in answer to one portion of the preceding remarks, that the diversity for which we plead is already provided for in some of our theological seminaries. Where the seminary is one department of a university the theological student may supply his peculiar needs by attending the university lectures; and when the seminary is in a large city the student has rich opportunities for extending and varying his professional studies. It may be replied, first, that some of our seminaries are neither connected with universities nor are they in large cities; secondly, that not many students are able to combine an attendance upon university and city lectures with a due attention to the regular studies of the seminary. The attempt to pursue such various courses of instruction at one and the same time, will distract and thus enervate more minds than it will enlarge and strengthen.

It is said again that the courses of instruction are different in different institutions, and the student can supply some of his peculiar wants at one institution and then remove to another for the supply of other wants. The differentiation which is desired may be obtained by a resort to various seminaries, as well as by diversifying the curriculum in any one seminary.

In many instances this is feasible. The American church has long ago detected the need of the diversity for which we plead, and has sent pupils from one school to another in our own land, and then from one school to another in Scotland and Germany. Still, this change of institutions is often inconvenient, if not impossible. The resort to the German universities is sometimes perilous. As an independent Republic we ought to enlarge our seminaries of learning so that our young men shall not need to expose themselves to the distractions of different and distant schools, and especially to the perils of European cities.

If these papers on theological education have appeared in some aspects to be purely professional, and remote from the wants of our churches, they become thoroughly practical in other aspects, and seem to grow directly out of our own practical wants. The problem of producing a ministry has wonderfully changed in its elements since our oldest seminary was founded; that change has gone on since the founding of the youngest. It cannot stop. We can never say that we have included all that the churches need to have included in the qualifications of these religious leaders. Such men as have honored our history — if Divine Providence should give them — would honor it again, but not in the same way. The curriculum and processes which answer for many will not suffice for all. A seminary blessed with all the advantages and appliances which these papers have contended for; a seminary complete for the thorough and best furnishing of the more learned and the less learned students, of the more scholarly and the more practical, would be none too good for the day. The springing up of lay colleges, alumni institutes, and other instrumentalities for teaching the Bible and religious truth, implies that we have not given to our seminaries the resources for the broad, diversified, and variously adapted culture which the times demand. They have been as useful in their own restricted line, they have widened and multiplied the lines of instruction, as far as their means have allowed; but has not the time come for a generous, enterprising, and adequate reconstruction of them?

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