

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 41—January, 1900.

I.

DR. MCGIFFERT'S HISTORICAL METHODS.

PROFESSOR MCGIFFERT'S *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* came before the world with more than ordinary claims to attention. It had the novelty of being an original contribution to the literature of the subject by an American scholar, and the further novelty of reaching its results by methods hitherto more familiar to the German than to the English reader. It was issued as a volume of the "International Theological Library" and deemed worthy to be associated with the other works of that series emanating from well-known theologians and designed for the use of theological students on either side of the Atlantic. As such, it was ushered into the world with the apparent sanction of those who, as editors of the series, are presumably responsible for the selection of the writers, if not for the indorsement of their general views. And it was sent forth under the imprint of an eminent publishing firm long and honorably known for its services in introducing to the English public translations of Continental theology and not less enterprising of late in the publication of new works, English or American, in that domain.* It is a book, moreover, marked by freshness, vigor and adequate scholarship as well as by readiness of resource, power of ingenious combination, and ample license of conjecture, discarding commonly received opinions and advancing others with singular freedom and self-confidence.

* [Dr. Dickson's allusion is to the well-known publishing house of Messrs. T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, by which the work was issued in Great Britain. His words of praise would, however, apply equally well, *mutatis mutandis*, to the American publishers, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons.—EDITORS.]

III.

THE ELECTIVE SYSTEM IN OUR COLLEGES AND THE CURRICULUM OF OUR THEO- LOGICAL SEMINARIES.

THE purpose of this paper is to present the results of some investigations suggested by the following questions: (1) Whether in such fundamental studies as English, history, philosophy, Latin and Greek there is in the preparation of those who enter our theological seminaries any general and serious defect; (2) If so, whether this defect is due in any degree, and, if it is, to what degree, to the "elective system" of studies in our colleges; and, (3) Should this system appear thus chargeable to any dangerous extent, what means ought to be recommended to correct the evil.

These are not the most important or the most pressing inquiries relative to education for the ministry. The writer wishes it distinctly understood from the outset that they are not raised and prosecuted by him with the idea that they are. Because of present conditions as well as intrinsically, no question concerning the training of our theological students begins to be so serious as that which regards their spiritual culture and particularly the development in them of the conception and of the spirit of worship. This statement is not intended to reflect on the character of our candidates for the holy office. It is meant simply to call attention to the fact that, with all their diligence in study and activity in Christian work, many of them do not seem to feel the paramount obligation of the devotional services which are held in their respective seminaries and without the influence of which study must be in danger of becoming at least secular in its tendency and even the preaching of the Gospel must lose its peculiar power. In a word, the many empty seats in the chapels of some, at any rate, of our theological schools raise the question of supreme moment, and its urgency is not relieved by the conspicuous earnestness and promise of those who ought to fill these seats. Every Christian needs the divinely appointed means of grace, but no Christian needs them so much as does the minister of grace. Neglect of their observance on his part, though thoughtless, is suicidal. No

other question, consequently, is to be compared with the one just alluded to. Indeed, the church would better close her seminaries, if they, through failure to solve this problem, are really to train some of our pastors to put a higher value on study and work than they do on worship, and even to suppose that they can themselves study and work as they ought in independence of public worship.

While all this is so, however, and can scarcely be emphasized too strongly, the line of inquiry presupposed in this paper is also of great importance.

This is the case, if the studies in question be considered in relation to the technical training to give which is the special function of the theological seminary. Homiletics—it is founded on grammar, rhetoric and literature, the three chief subjects of the English departments of our colleges. General history—Church history is almost unintelligible to one without acquaintance with it. Philosophy—it so imparts form to theology that Sir William Hamilton has said that “no problem has emerged in the latter which had not previously emerged in the former.” Latin—it is necessary only to name Augustine, Anselm, Calvin and Turretin, to realize that it is in this language that the classics of our Reformed theology at least have been written. Greek—it is in this tongue that the Gospel itself was given to us. More need not be said. Not so indispensable to the study of medicine are chemistry and biology as are the branches of learning under consideration to the study of theology. It does not merely involve them; it is based directly on them.

The importance of these studies is even more evident in view of their relation to general culture. They are the studies which put the emphasis on man and on thought rather than on the facts of physical nature. They are the studies which have made and which, because of their just-mentioned emphasis, must tend to make men and thinkers. So true is this of one of these studies, Greek, that Isaac Todhunter has said (*Conflict of Studies*, p. 135): “A decline in the state of Greek scholarship implies even more than the failure of esteem for the most valuable and influential of all languages; it involves with it a gradual but certain decay of general culture, the sacrifice of learning to science, the neglect of the history of man and of thought for the sake of facts relating to the external world.” Now 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 *à priori* presumption. In 1869, graduates of the technical schools of 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." Unless, therefore, the curriculum of our seminaries can be shown to be less exacting than are the studies just mentioned, the great importance to it of mental discipline, and so of the studies which, as we have seen, have most disciplinary value, must be evident. Our curriculum presupposes the *power* which they develop even more than the special knowledge which they impart.

But this is not all. Culture is of the whole man as well as of the intellect. It is the *humanitas* of the Roman; that indescribable but immediately perceptible something which, to vigor of mind, adds breadth of view, refinement of taste, grace of manner, delicacy of sympathy, in a word, the complex charm that results from the symmetrical as well as high development of what is best in the natural man. This general culture is, as has been already intimated, the product, preëminently, if not solely, of the studies referred to above. Because of this they are often called the humanities. Now such culture is also the need of the ministry, if not exclusively, yet peculiarly. Indeed, of merely human qualifications for the sacred office it is the most essential. This is so for three reasons. Culture attains perfection only in "the man Christ Jesus;" and so far as His human nature is concerned, it is what enabled Him to bring to *all* men a salvation in itself adapted to and sufficient for all. In so far, therefore, as the minister of Christ lacks culture is he naturally unfitted to represent Him whose ambassador he is and to give His proclamation of grace. Again, it was just when unaided culture had reached its height, when it had done its best, and when, consequently, it had demonstrated its inherent inability to save men from their sins that Christ came; and it was to deliver them from what culture had thus shown that it could not itself deliver them that He came. Hence, unless one has the culture, and particularly the classical culture, to appreciate the marvelous civilization of the age in which Christianity was revealed, as the regenerator not only of the world, but even of culture itself, must he fail to feel the power

and, in so far forth, to urge the claims of the cross of Christ. Beyond this, the scientific comprehension of Christian culture, the choicest fruit of the Gospel, involves the comprehension of classical culture. The latter is a presupposition of the former. It is the stock on which Christianity was grafted. Its divinely appointed end was to furnish this stock. If the Gospel saved what was best in it, it enabled, and was intended to enable, the Gospel to bring forth a new culture which the world could not have developed, of which the world had never even dreamed. But enough. It is surely evident that, while the question of supreme moment with regard to the training of our theological students is the spiritual one alluded to above, the inquiry which we have raised is of the next importance. In comparison with it, all inquiries but the spiritual one are unimportant.

The method of prosecuting this inquiry has been to appeal to the facts of the case and to these alone. Two circulars were mailed, one to every professor and instructor in the following of our seminaries: Auburn, Danville, Lane, McCormick, Omaha, Princeton, San Francisco, Western; the other, to every college graduate among the regular students in the seminaries. The four of our seminaries not in the above list were passed over, not because they do not give the same education as the others, but because, existing for special classes, as the Theological School of Lincoln University for the colored people, they draw their students mainly from their own collegiate departments, and not, like the others, from the various colleges of the country. So, too, our inquiries were confined to college graduates among the regular students in our ordinary seminaries. Postgraduate students and special students and regular students not college graduates would manifestly be outside the proposed investigation.

The circular addressed to the professors asked the following questions:

1. "Is it your observation that our theological students are in many cases inadequately grounded in such fundamental studies as Latin, Greek, English, History, Psychology, Ethics, etc.?"

2. "If such is your observation, do you think that this defect is due at all to the elective system of studies that prevails in so many of our colleges?"

3. "If such is your opinion, do you regard the evil as grave enough to call for concerted action of any kind?"

4. "If you do so consider, is there any suggestion that you care to make?"

5. "Would you object to your opinion being quoted, should I find it useful to do so?"

The circular to the students made inquiries as follows :

1. " Did the college from which you graduated have the elective system of studies ? "

2. " *If it did*, please answer these questions also :

" *a.* How many hours in each one of the four college years did the following studies enter into the *required or fixed* part of the curriculum—Latin ? Greek ? English (Rhetoric, Literature, etc.) ? History ? Philosophy (Metaphysics, Logic, Psychology, Ethics, etc.) ?

" *b.* How many hours of work additional in each of the above studies did you *elect* during each year of your course—Latin ? Greek ? English ? History ? Philosophy ?

" *c.* Does your election of studies, *now that you are in the semi-nary*, seem to you to have been a wise one ?

" *d.* If not, how might it have been improved ?

" *e.* At what stage in your course did you decide to enter the ministry ?

" *f.* From what college did you graduate ? "

Both these circulars were in every case accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope for a reply.

The extent of this undertaking and the response to it are exhibited in the following tables :

1. *The Professors' Circular.*

	Circulars sent.	Replies.	Failures.
Auburn	6	4	2
Danville.....	6	5	1
Lane.....	5	4	1
McCormick	8	3	5
Omaha	6	5	1
Princeton	11	9	2
San Francisco	7	6	1
Western	6	3	3
	55	39	16

2. *The Students' Circular.*

	Total of Students.	Regular Students.	College graduates among these, to whom the circular was sent.	Replies.	Failures.
Auburn	104	98	95	55	40
Danville	34	34	29	18	11
Lane	35	31	20	11	9
McCormick.....	146	138	113	82	31
Omaha.....	30	29	11	11	
Princeton	238	214	187	162	25
San Francisco	31	31	23	19	4
Western	99	95	79	14	65
	717	670	557	372	185

That is, replies were received from 70.9 per cent. of the professors in our seminaries and from 66.7 per cent. of the college graduates among the regular students. These replies were in the main full and, generally speaking, they evidenced careful preparation. They came, so far as the professors were concerned, in nearly equal proportion from all the seminaries; and this was true as regards the students also, except that only fourteen in the Western Seminary answered the circular. On the whole, Princeton aside, and in the case of both professors and students, the smaller institutions responded better than did the larger.

It must be confessed that these results were disappointing. It was hoped that almost all would reply to the questions. It is believed, however, that the answers returned are sufficient. They amount to about two-thirds of the full number. Moreover, there is no reason to think that, were the other third at hand, it would change materially the conclusions of this paper. Even the failure of the students in the Western Seminary was due to local causes without any significance to our inquiry. Let us, then, at once consider the bearing of the statistics obtained on the questions proposed.

I. Is there any general and serious defect in the preparation of those entering our theological seminaries in English, history, philosophy, Latin and Greek?

What the students themselves have to say on this point appears in the following table:

	No. of coll.grads. among students in regular classes.	Replies from these.	No. of these under elective system in college.	Of these, the following desired more:				
				Eng.	Hist.	Philos.	Latin.	Greek.
Auburn	95	55	50	15	7	11		4
Danville	29	18	13	4	5	5		
Lane	20	11	7	2		1		
McCormick	113	82	58	11	13	13	2	5
Omaha	11	11	7	2				
Princeton	187	162	128	8	14	18	5	20
San Francisco	23	19	13	3	2	6	3	3
Western	79	14	14		3	1		2
	557	372	290	45	44	55	10	34

That is, of 78 per cent. of those who answered the circular, which may reasonably be assumed to be also the percentage of all the graduates in the regular classes who were trained under the elective system, 15.5 per cent. express themselves as needing more English than they received; 15.2 per cent., more history; 19 per cent., more philosophy; 3.5 per cent., more Latin; 11.7 per cent., more Greek. It is not often that the same student speaks of

inadequate preparation in more than one of these studies. It would, therefore, be approximately correct to say that 64.9 per cent. of our regular students who were graduated from colleges with the "elective system" emphasize defective training in at least one department. These complaints, if we may so call them, are more numerous relatively from the students of the smaller seminaries. For example, the San Francisco Seminary leads in references to inadequate grounding in philosophy, Latin and Greek; and Danville Seminary does the same in the case of history and English. So, too, if we consider the sum of the complaints from the different seminaries, San Francisco has the largest proportion, and Danville comes next. On the other hand, however, Omaha appears to have the lowest proportion. On the whole, these expressions on the part of the students should not be regarded as decisive in themselves. Students are naturally averse to admitting defects in a curriculum which they have themselves chosen. Beyond this, defect may frequently exist and they themselves not be conscious of it. This will be the case if, as is no doubt often done, the instruction in the seminary is adapted to what the student's preparation is rather than to what it might be expected to be. For example, if the student of dogmatics is not required to refer to the great Latin theologians, he will not feel his inability to do so to be any defect. It should not, therefore, quiet our anxiety that complaints of inadequate preparation are not more numerous from the students and that we do not always meet with them where it might be supposed that we should. That they are as numerous from *students* as they are indicates real defect. This is so real that even students cannot help either seeing it or speaking of it.

Of much higher value is the testimony of the professors in our seminaries. This testimony is exhibited in the following table :

	Professors.	Replies.	These replies affirm defective preparation in :				
			Eng.	Hist.	Philos.	Latin.	Greek.
Auburn	6	4	1	1	1	1	2
Danville	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
Lane	5	4	3	3	3	3	3
McCormick	7	3	2	2	2	2	3
Omaha	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
Princeton	11	9	7	9	9	7	7
San Francisco	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Western	6	3	2	2	3	2	2
	54	39	31	33	34	31	33

That is, of the thirty-nine professors who replied, and presuma-

bly of all, 79.5 per cent. affirm the preparation of our students generally to be inadequate in English ; 84.6 per cent., in history ; 87.2 per cent., in philosophy ; 79.5 per cent., in Latin ; 84.6 per cent., in Greek. One of the Omaha professors goes so far as to say that one-half of our students are inadequately prepared, and another professor from the same institution declares that this evil is on the increase. On the other hand, but one or two hesitate to express an opinion ; and only one, a professor from Auburn, gives a contrary opinion. Of course, it must be kept in mind that a teacher is always in danger of regarding what he would himself wish, rather than what in the nature of the case is possible, as the standard of preparation. Still, while some allowance should be made for this universal and inevitable weakness, it should not seriously detract from the force of the above results. As a rule, our professors are practical men. They are accustomed to deal with things as they are. Their answers in many cases show that in formulating them they have been constantly on their guard against the temptation just alluded to. Moreover, there is a correspondence between the views of the students and the testimony of the professors which makes them mutually corroborative. Where defect in preparation is acknowledged by the students, it is always emphasized, and more strongly, by the professors ; and that they call attention to imperfection in some institutions in which the students say little of it is, as we saw when considering the replies of the latter, only what was to be expected. On the whole, combining the results from both sources of information, the answers of the students and those of the professors, it would seem that the Omaha professor rather understated the truth when he wrote that " one-half of our students were inadequately prepared." The facts appear to show that in one or more studies so fundamental to the seminary curriculum as English, history, philosophy, Latin and Greek, probably a majority of our students, and in all our theological schools, have failed to receive a training in any true sense sufficient.

II. Is this serious and general defect in preparation due to the " elective system " of studies in our colleges ; and if so, to what degree ? The writer would frankly say that he supposed that it was and to a very considerable extent. It seemed altogether likely that men so young as most college students are would choose unwisely if left to select their studies for themselves. It was known that, as a matter of fact, they often did. Why should students looking toward the ministry be exceptions ?

That this view is shared by very many of our professors the following table will show :

	Professors.	Replies.	Affirm.	Hesitate.	Deny.
Auburn	6	4	1	1	2
Danville	6	5	3	1	1
Lane	5	4	1	3	
McCormick	7	3	3		
Omaha	6	5	5		
Princeton	11	9	9		
San Francisco	7	6	5	1	
Western	6	3	1	2	
	54	39	28	8	3

That is, of the thirty-nine professors who answered, and presumably of all, 71.8 per cent. attribute the manifest deficiency in the preparation of our students to the abuse of the "elective system," and particularly, some add, to the practice of discontinuing the study of the classics with the Sophomore year; 20.5 per cent. hesitate to express an opinion because of ignorance of the facts; and 7.7 per cent. deny that the "elective system" is in any wise responsible. Indeed, one of these last, a professor from Auburn, holds that this system has been "the greatest quickener of modern education, and that it has helped to break the bondage of scholasticism and widened the content of culture." The trend of these views is undoubtedly against the "elective system." Nor are they all *à priori*. In many instances they are evidently based on facts. Still, we should not forget how natural, specially in a case of this sort, is the tendency to draw conclusions from a too narrow basis of facts. We should be reminded of this by the hesitation of a not insignificant minority to express any opinion. Our caution should be further increased, because, of those who have been recorded as affirming the responsibility of elective courses, several qualify their opinion and some make other causes, as the abuse of the lecture system in our colleges, equally responsible. These considerations rather than the few denials, strong though the Auburn professor's is, would seem to show that, while the abuse of the "elective system" is probably a cause of the imperfect preparation of our candidates for the theological seminary, it can scarcely be the sole or even the chief cause. If it were, a heartier as well as a nearer approach to unanimity of opinion on this point might have been expected of our professors. The result which appears thus to be indicated is confirmed by our examination of the facts of the case.

1. By no means all of our students have been trained under the "elective system" of studies. This may be seen from the following table :

	Regular students who are college graduates.	Replies.	Under "elective system."
Auburn	95	55	50
Danville	29	18	13
Lane	20	11	7
McCormick	113	82	58
Omaha	11	11	7
Princeton	187	162	128
San Francisco	23	19	13
Western	79	14	14
	557	372	290

That is, of the 372 students who answered the circulars, and presumably of the 557 college graduates in the regular classes of our seminaries, only 78 per cent. were educated under the "elective system." At least 22 per cent. of our students, therefore, could not have been affected by it in any way: they were never under it.

2. In the great majority of the colleges in which our students are trained the "elective system" prevails only to a limited degree. It is confined to the Junior and Senior years; and in these, while Latin and Greek are often elective, English, history, and specially philosophy, are usually required. The writer recalls but two colleges of all those attended by our students, the University of Toronto and Leland Stanford University, in which the "elective system" held full sway, and only one other, Lake Forest University, in which it prevailed to such an extent that the student could drop the classics at the close of the Freshman year. As a rule, our smaller colleges, and particularly our denominational colleges, that is, those from which the majority of our students come, offer curricula which are predominantly required and in which the proportion of time allotted to the different studies leaves little to be desired. They may be open to criticism on the ground of a manifest tendency to complete certain fundamental studies, as Latin and Greek, at a comparatively early stage in the course, and then leave them to be forgotten by the student; but to consider this tendency would take us outside of our subject. It should be remembered, too, in this connection, that it is precisely in the West, where the smaller colleges, and notably the denominational colleges, whose curricula have just been referred to as excellent, are most numerous—it is there that, as we have already seen, the complaints of imperfect preparation seem to be loudest and are most frequent.

3. The reports of our students themselves prove that the relatively few opportunities which the majority of them have for

electing studies are seldom abused. In illustration of this the following tables are offered :

	Students under "elective system" among the college graduates in our regular classes who replied.	Had little English.	Had little History.	Had no Philosophy.
Auburn.....	50		2	1
Danville.....	13			
Lane.....	7	3	3	
McCormick.....	58		7	
Omaha.....	7	1		1
Princeton.....	128		3	
San Francisco.....	13			2
Western.....	14			1
	290	4	15	5

That is, of the 290 students more or less influenced by the "elective system" among the college graduates in the regular classes who replied to the circular, and so presumably among *all* the graduates of colleges with the "elective system" in the regular classes, only 1.4 per cent. took little English; only 5.2 per cent., little history; and only 1.7 per cent., no philosophy. Evidently the cases in which these studies were passed over are not numerous.

	Students under "elective system" among the college graduates in our regular classes who replied.	Took Latin to end of Freshman year.	Took Latin to end of Sophom. year.	Took Latin to end of Junior year.	Took Latin all through the course.	No Latin.
Auburn.....	50	50	50	25	21	
Danville.....	13	13	13	4	3	
Lane.....	7	7	7	1	1	
McCormick.....	58	58	56	17	15	
Omaha.....	7	7	7	7	7	
Princeton.....	128	127	124	69	35	1
San Francisco.....	13	13	13	6	6	
Western.....	14	14	14	11	1	
	290	289	284	140	89	1

That is, of the 290 students in the regular classes who graduated from colleges with the "elective system," and who answered the circular, and so presumably of all the graduates of these colleges in the regular classes, 99.7 per cent. took Latin to the end of Freshman year; 98 per cent., to the end of Sophomore year; 48.3 per cent., to the end of Junior year; 30.7 per cent., throughout the course, and only .4 per cent. took no Latin. This is not a bad showing. One can scarcely be said to neglect Latin who drops it after having had it, as the curricula of most of our colleges

require, for five hours a week in Freshman year, and for from three to five hours a week in Sophomore year, not to speak of three or four years of daily training in it in the academy. Indeed, were he to do otherwise, he might be in danger of neglecting other and equally fundamental studies. May we not say, then, that of our students who were under the "elective system" while in college only those who discontinued Latin before the end of Sophomore year may justly be charged with slighting it? Now those who did this were but six. That is, only 2 per cent. of the whole number.

	Students under "elective system" among the college graduates in our regular classes who replied.	Took Greek to end of Freshman year.	Took Greek to end of Sophom. year.	Took Greek to end of Junior year.	Took Greek all through the course.	Took no Greek.
Auburn	50	50	49	35	30	
Danville.....	13	13	13	4	3	
Lane.....	7	7	7	1	1	
McCormick.....	58	57	55	37	28	1
Omaha.....	7	7	7	7	7	
Princeton.....	128	125	123	74	43	3
San Francisco.....	12	12	12	6	4	1
Western.....	14	14	14	11	1	
	290	285	280	175	117	5

That is, of the 290 students in the regular classes who graduated from colleges with the "elective system," and who answered the circular, and so presumably of all the graduates of these colleges in the regular classes, 98.3 per cent. took Greek to the end of the Freshman year; 96.5 per cent., to the end of the Sophomore year; 60.3 per cent., to the end of Junior year; 40.3 per cent., all through the course; and only 1.7 per cent. took no Greek. Besides this, it should be noted that of the 128 students under consideration at Princeton nine, that is, 7 per cent., or 3.1 per cent., of the 290 students under consideration in all our seminaries, omitted Greek during the Junior year, but took it again during the Senior year. This surely is a good showing. In the great majority of our colleges, as much of Greek as of Latin is required during Freshman and Sophomore years. It would seem, therefore, that the same reasoning would apply as we have just applied in the case of Latin. If so, deficiency in preparation in Greek may be charged to the "elective system" only in the case of those who elected to drop Greek before the close of Sophomore year. These, however, were but ten. That is, merely 3.4 per cent. of the whole number.

In a word, combining the results of these three tables, it would appear that of all the college graduates in the regular classes of

our seminaries who were trained under the "elective system," only 13.7 per cent. could on any supposition have made unwise choices in the case of the fundamental studies under consideration; and that, consequently, it is only to this limited extent that the generally and seriously defective preparation of our students may reasonably be ascribed to the abuse of this system.

4. This conclusion, so different from what was anticipated, may be explained as well as proved from the answers to the circulars. As might have been expected, the young men in our colleges who subsequently enter our seminaries are a picked body. Though not lacking in youthful vivacity or even in boyishness, they are really profoundly in earnest. Hence, they mean to choose their studies wisely. If they do not do so, it will be only because they have not decided on the ministry, or because they do not know the kind of preparation for which the ministry calls.

That the former of these two supposable causes could not operate in many cases the following table establishes :

	Students under "elective system" among the college graduates in regular classes who replied.	Decided to enter the ministry :						Uncertain.
		Before coming to col.	In Fresh. year.	In Soph. year.	In Junior year.	In Senior year.	After graduation.	
Auburn.....	50	34	3	2	1	4	4	2
Danville.....	13	8		2			2	1
Lane.....	7	5				1	1	
McCormick.....	58	33	1	5	7	3	9	
Omaha.....	7	4	2			1		
Princeton.....	128	73	7	7	13	13	12	3
San Francisco.....	13	7	2	2	1	1		
Western.....	14	12	1			1		
	290	176	16	18	22	24	28	6

That is, of the 290 students in the regular classes who graduated from colleges with the "elective system," and who answered the circular, and so presumably of all the graduates of these colleges in the regular classes, 60.7 per cent. chose the ministry before entering college; 5.5 per cent., in the Freshman year; 6.2 per cent., in the Sophomore year; 7.6 per cent., in the Junior year; 8.2 per cent., in the Senior year; 9.7 per cent., after graduation; and 2 per cent. were uncertain. This shows that 72.4 per cent. of our students decided on the ministry before Junior year, and so before any election of studies, except in the case of a very few colleges, was offered them. With respect, therefore, to about three-fourths of our students, the first condition of a profitable use of the "elective system" was fulfilled: they knew what their profession was to be.

They knew also the studies which the best preparation for their

chosen calling required. The tables already given clearly indicate this. In many instances, moreover, the replies of the students expressly state that they chose as they did with the ministry in view. Some say that they consulted the president of their college, himself a minister, and made their elections according to the counsels of his experience. Indeed, the intelligence of those in our colleges who are looking forward to the seminary would seem to be as marked as we saw that their conscientiousness appears to be. We do meet five students who took no Greek in college, and one who took no Latin; but these were among the comparatively very few who did not decide on the ministry until after graduation. We do read, too, in Dr. W. S. Plumer Bryan's recent and very able report to the Synod of Illinois on "The Loss, Decline and Shrinkage in the Cause of Ministerial Education," of a candidate for the ministry who was found a year ago, "pursuing a course of botany, zoölogy, French literature and oratory." This, however, so far as the facts obtained indicate, is a very exceptional case, so exceptional as to prove the rule to be the other way. Evidently, while we may still admit abuse of the "elective system" to be a cause, possibly the cause, as we have seen, of as much as 13.7 per cent. of the imperfection in the preparation of our seminary students, we must look elsewhere for the chief reasons why this imperfection is so general and so serious as it has been shown to be: probably to such causes as, the abuse of the lecture system in teaching English, history and philosophy; failure, particularly in the preparatory schools, to teach the classics as if they were living languages; the arrangement of the curriculum so that Latin and Greek, if other important studies are not to be neglected, must be completed at an early stage of the course, and so may be almost forgotten before graduation; and, above all, the well-nigh universal development of "cramming" through the emphasis put on set examinations.

III. This being the state of the case, we are led to ask, "Should any means be devised, and if so, what means, to correct the real, though limited evil resulting, as we have seen, from the abuse of the "elective system"?"

We may remark at once that some means for doing this should be found. Though not nearly so great as supposed, the evil is great enough now to demand a remedy. Were there only the instance of it to which Dr. Plumer Bryan refers, that one would be sufficient. In a matter of such supreme importance as the training of our theological students no defect can be unimportant.

Moreover, the evil under consideration, not only is not insignificant at the present time, but is almost sure to increase. Indeed,

it is steadily on the increase, at least so far as the classics are concerned. The trend generally is against them. Proficiency in them is coming to be regarded more and more as the ornament of special literary culture rather than as the condition of high mental discipline. Our Church is yielding to this influence. Is it not significant, at any rate, of a lower appreciation of the worth of a college training in general that out of the 670 students in the regular classes of our seminaries last year, not to speak of the "specials," 17 per cent. were not graduates of any college? And the effect of this may be seen in the instruction being given in our theological schools. The tendency is to bring it down to the level of this 17 per cent., and of the many graduates whose training has been quite other than such as a college should afford. For example, sacred rhetoric is sometimes slighted that the commonest principles of ordinary rhetoric may be presented. Church history is often made to yield to profane history. The professor of apologetics frequently gives no small part of Junior year to instruction in the elements of philosophy. Dogmatic theology is taught not seldom without reference to the great Latin theologians. The effort is made to continue Biblical exegesis in the original languages; but the Church is raising such a hue and cry for the study of the English Bible in our theological seminaries that this effort, which is often heroic, has little encouragement. What are we to conclude from all this, if not that there is a general tendency to let down the bars, to waive what is known as a liberal education for our ministry, to tolerate the idea that a college training is not necessary and that, if taken, it is not necessary that it should be in the fundamentals? Such, at least, must be the inference of our students from the frequency with which Presbyteries recommend "exceptional cases" to the seminaries and from the way in which the seminaries lower their instruction to these and like cases. Because of the sure increase of the evil under consideration, therefore, even more than because of its present proportions, ought we to seek a remedy for it; and, if possible, one that shall correct at the same time the other, and, as we have seen, presumably more influential causes of the generally and seriously defective preparation of our theological students?

Let us clear the way, first, by putting one side two suggestions which appear scarcely practicable. One is that the "elective system" should be abolished. To attempt this, however, would be, as an Auburn professor has remarked, "to play again the rôle of Canute and the tide." The "elective system" is here, and it is here to stay. Moreover, it is well that it should stay. It is its abuse, not its use, that is evil. As may be seen from the replies of most

of our students, it enables them, if they will, to secure a training more closely related to the theological curriculum than did the old-fashioned college course. Another suggestion is that each seminary should have its own preparatory department. This, however, our theological schools have neither the teachers nor the money to have. Nor would it be wise to secure these, could that be done. The Christian colleges of our land may not be what they should be, but they have cost too much to be thus ignored. Moreover, were all this not the case, there would still be an insuperable objection to the proposition. A theological preparatory department could never give the general training and culture required. The theological student needs above all men to have mingled with students having other professions than his own in view. The seminary preparatory department might make him a better scholar, but the college will make him a better man; and it is the man even more than the scholar that counts in the minister of "the man Christ Jesus." In a word, neither the abolition of the "elective system" in our colleges nor the assumption of their work by the theological seminary is either practicable or desirable. Not thus can the problem under consideration be solved.

Toward its solution, however, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Let the Board of Education supervise carefully the studies of the young men under its care in our colleges, insisting that so long as they receive its aid they shall elect, and in due proportion, the studies named at the beginning of this paper. It is necessary that the Board should do this, not only because of such occasional cases of stupidity and willfulness in the choice of electives as that to which, as we have seen, Dr. Plumer Bryan refers; but specially because some of our most earnest and intelligent men in colleges where, as in Princeton University, the range of electives is wide, honestly suppose, as their replies show, that breadth of culture rather than solidity of attainments in the fundamentals is what is demanded for the best prosecution of the theological curriculum. These need guidance; and if they are under the care of the Board, who can guide them so properly or so wisely as its Secretary?

This supervision, moreover, should extend to the colleges in which our candidates for the ministry study as well as to the courses which they elect in them. While their curricula are, in the majority of cases, all that they should be, there are exceptions. There are colleges in which history is not taught, and there are others in which the English department is so slighted that it might as well have been left out. Beyond this, while philosophy

usually receives a fair degree of attention, in many of the colleges of our land and in some of those that are strongest along this line, the philosophy taught is contradictory of the philosophy implied in and underlying the "Word of God." On this account it is quite as important that our candidates for the ministry should study in really Christian colleges as that they should attend only orthodox seminaries. Nay, it is more important. One who has been thoroughly grounded in the principles of sound metaphysics, logic, psychology, and ethics will not easily fall a victim to the "Higher Criticism" or to the "New Theology:" he cannot do so unless he repudiates what he has come to feel to be fundamental, unless he changes his conception of thought and his very habits of thought. On the other hand, however, one who has been taught only the sensationalism of Mill and Spencer, or the idealism of Hegel and Caird, or the professed indifferentism to metaphysics which underlies Ritschlianism, cannot receive the Reformed theology unless he is so dull intellectually as to preclude the hope that he will ever become "apt to teach." Indeed, one who has been so trained cannot accept the Gospel unless he can deny or, at least, ignore the first principles of logic.

Still further, it would seem, that the Board of Education could help to correct the general evil under consideration by publishing semi-annually, in the denominational papers, a full and plain statement of the kind of preparation required for the theological seminary. This would keep the subject before the young men and their parents, and might save from mistake some of our students who do not draw aid from the Board, and so are not subject to its control.

2. Let our Presbyteries exercise the same supervision as has been described over the candidates for the ministry who are under their care. This Presbyterian supervision is necessary for several reasons. One is, that the Board of Education may be kept up to its duty in this respect, and that the consequences of failure in duty on its part may be neutralized. Because the supervision in question is so important as we have seen it to be, it ought not to be left in the hands of one person or even of one Board. Again, not all of our candidates for the ministry are under the Board of Education. If supervision is exercised only by it, many will pursue their studies without any supervision. Still further, in every case the Presbytery is the body primarily responsible. The student is taken under the care of the Board of Education because of the recommendation of Presbytery. While he is under the Board his attendance at college or seminary, and his progress in study, are reported, or are supposed to be reported, regularly to

his Presbytery. When he completes his studies it is his Presbytery that examines, licenses and ordains him. From first to last, therefore, he is the ward of the Presbytery; and, consequently, from first to last, his work ought to be supervised by the Presbytery. Directly responsible as he always is to it, it is always directly responsible for him.

3. In addition to requiring a college diploma and the other usual credentials, let our seminaries regularly subject candidates for admission to an entrance examination and matriculate as *regular* students only such as have passed it.

This examination could be held, as is now done by most of our universities, at several centres; and thus unprepared students could be saved the time and money that otherwise would be expended in traveling to the seminary only to be rejected.

The reasons for this somewhat radical proposal are neither few nor light:

In the first place, an entrance examination is called for because a college diploma, in our country, at least, means so many things that it means almost nothing. In the case of some colleges it is a certificate of real scholarship. In the case of others it is a certificate of scholarship only if he who receives it has had grit enough to acquire scholarship in spite of unscholarly methods of instruction and still more unscholarly teachers. Besides this, as has been remarked, there is scholarship and there is scholarship. There is scholarship that may be the servant of orthodoxy and of piety, and there is scholarship that must be the foe of orthodoxy and of piety. Hence, the necessity of an examination by the seminary. A student may have mastered all agnostic science and all agnostic philosophy; but if this is all that he knows—and even the prize men of some of our colleges know only this—he is less fitted by far to take up the study of Christian theology than he would be if he knew no more of science or philosophy than does the little child. An entrance examination, therefore, is demanded that neither unscholarly men nor agnostic scholars may be received into our seminaries. The former would not appreciate their curriculum, if they could; and the latter could not, if they would.

In the second place, such an examination is required as a stimulus to the Presbyteries and the Board of Education in their already described work of supervision. Experience shows that Presbyteries, however faithful, are bound to be biased in favor of their own candidates, who are usually from the number of their own young men; and that the Board of Education, while strictly conscientious, may, because of the number of the candidates under

its care, as well as for other reasons, fail to keep itself fully informed with reference to each one of them. There is needed, therefore, by both the Presbyteries and the Board the stimulus that such an examination as has been advocated would be. In view of it, they would surely do all that could be done by the supervision of students. Their interest in them, so far from tending toward relaxation, would tend toward strictness. Even if they were partial toward any of them, they would supervise their work all the more carefully. The inevitableness and searching character of the proposed entrance examination would effect it.

Beyond all this, the majority of our students for the ministry do not come under the care of Presbytery until they enter the seminary. These, consequently, pursue the whole of their college course without any supervision from either Presbytery or the Board of Education. They may study at a good college or at a poor one. They may learn a Christian or an anti-Christian philosophy. They may improve or abuse their opportunities. It makes no difference. If they can produce a diploma, a certificate of church character and membership, they must, as the system now is, be admitted to our seminaries. Who does not see that, as we have observed to be the case, many will be admitted who are quite unprepared? The wonder is, not that these are so numerous; it is that they are not more numerous. An examination for entrance to our seminaries would seem, therefore, to be a necessity, both that our Presbyteries and the Board of Education may be stimulated to such supervision of the students under their care as it is the right of these to expect and as their interest demands, and specially that the unprepared men may be sifted out of the great body of applicants who have pursued their preliminary education without any ecclesiastical supervision at all.

Nor is this proposition, radical though it may be, entirely novel. Our medical schools are beginning to feel the necessity of such an examination. The requirement of a diploma of all those entering them it was at first felt was a great step in advance on the quite elementary examination that, in the case of our better medical colleges, was demanded of those seeking admission to them. Now, however, it is being urged that a diploma in many cases is not a safe substitute even for such an examination, that under cover of the diploma not a few get in who could not pass the examination. May it not be that in this, as in some other instances, "the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light?"

The examination to be required by the seminaries should be general rather than particular. That is, it should test the stu-

dent's knowledge of subjects rather than of books. For example, its requirements might well be, the writing of a short essay without errors in spelling, grammar or rhetoric; and a general acquaintance with Shakespeare and some four or five other standard English authors: the outlines of Grecian, Roman, mediæval, English and American history: the main principles of metaphysics and logic, the fundamental facts of rational psychology and of ethics, the development and chief characteristics of the great schools of philosophy; and all from the Christian standpoint: ability to translate ordinary classical Latin prose at sight and readily and correctly: and ability to translate at sight simple classical Greek prose also readily and correctly. An entrance examination along these lines would, it is believed, be general enough to be suited to the graduates of any good college and yet exacting enough to exclude from the regular classes of our seminaries all candidates inadequately prepared.

4. It only remains to notice four objections that are sure to be raised to the plan just outlined. First, it would involve a longer, a more expensive, a higher, preliminary training than our students can take. This is not so. There is no good reason why the average graduate of any one of our average colleges should not be able at any time to sustain such an examination as has been indicated. At all events, he has studied long enough and hard enough and broadly enough to do so. If he is not able, it is only because he has not studied or has not been taught in the right way. In confirmation and illustration of this, I venture to quote from an address delivered before the alumni of Brown University, June 17, 1884, by one of the ablest and most scholarly members of the New England bar. What he says refers directly to preparation in Greek, but will apply *à fortiori* to the other branches under consideration. "Many of us," he says, "who, after receiving our degrees, were sent to continue our studies at continental schools, can recall the feeling of surprise and discouragement with which we took up the work imposed on us by the daily lectures that we attended. Instead of the few pages we were wont to spell out with the aid of a lexicon and notes, our professors threw at us Latin and Greek by the chapter and the book, and they expected us day after day to follow them and to read their references. Our companions in the lecture-room, no older than ourselves, but trained in their native schools, were able to do it; we were not, until we had spent in laborious drudgery months which should have been otherwise employed. For my own part, I shall never, during life, forget the feeling of heart-sickening indignation with which I saw others who had studied no longer and no harder

perform tasks beyond my own power, and with which I turned back to work which ought to have been long before finished. Great changes and great improvements have, doubtless, been made in our modes of teaching and study during the last quarter of a century, and I do not wish to be unjust; but I appeal to those of you who twenty-five years ago went from an American college to a German university, to corroborate or refute my statement. How many of you endured the torture of a similar experience? Now this was all wrong, and the more wrong because remediable. I do not believe that learning to read Greek is more difficult than learning to read German, so far as the vocabulary is concerned, and the subtleties of expression in any language are only appreciable to one who has read much and carefully. I do not know whence came the idea that the classical languages, unlike all others, are themselves ends and not means; are the adytum and not the vestibule of learning. Nor do I know why a student, if properly taught, should not, after four or five years of study, be able to read ordinary Greek with ease." No, the examination outlined would not demand a higher preparation than the college diploma now calls for. It would simply secure, as the diploma does not, that that preparation shall have been actually received. It would not result in longer, harder, more costly study on the part of our students. It would cause them all to study in Christian colleges, and it would cause these to revise their methods and improve their teaching force. The Christian college whose graduates could not sustain the entrance examination to our theological seminaries would have to reform or succumb.

Secondly, the entrance examination is unnecessary. The student can be turned back when he proves himself unequal to the curriculum in the routine work and examinations of the seminary. Yes, he can be; but is he likely to be? It is much easier to reject a man whom you have never taught and do not know than it is to reject one whom you have taught long enough to know and probably to become deeply interested in. Experience shows that in, perhaps, a majority of cases, such men will be kept on and will be graduated. If nothing else can be said for them, this will be said, that it is too late now to send them back. And there is some truth in this. If a student has been received into the seminary, and has been allowed to incur the expense in which this involves either him or the Church, we may well hesitate to reject him. It is in every sense too costly an act to be performed lightly. This, however, only emphasizes the necessity of such supervision of students and especially of such an entrance examination to the seminary as shall render it improbable, if not im-

possible, that so painful and expensive an act will ever become a duty.

Thirdly, our whole plan overlooks the spiritual and supernatural factor in success in the ministry. It puts the emphasis on learning and culture and ignores the accompanying demonstration of the Holy Spirit. Far from it. To insist on the instrument being as nearly perfect as can be is to honor Him who is expected to use it; it is not to ignore Him. Specially is this so when, as in this case, the Holy Spirit, though He could work without us in saving men and establishing the kingdom of Christ, has chosen ordinarily to work through us and in connection with what we do and are rather than independently of us. Nor may this be disputed. At least the Presbyterian Church will have to go back on all her traditions, will have to repudiate her constitution, if she questions the supreme importance of a learned as well as godly ministry. God has often chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the things that are wise; but this is to glorify His own wisdom, it is not to encourage His ministers to make fools of themselves.

Fourthly, this is not the time for a change so radical as that which has been suggested. It would necessarily result at first in a considerable reduction in the annual output of our seminaries; and this ought not to be permitted when so many in our land, not to speak of the millions of heathendom, are still without the Gospel. This reasoning, however, while plausible, is only plausible. Three facts show this to be so. One is that our Church has at present a surplus of ministers. That is, though she does not, of course, have nearly so many as are needed, she does have more than are wanted. Our Home and Foreign Boards can afford to commission only a very small proportion of the men who apply to them; and, according to Dr. Plumer Bryan's careful report already referred to, we had last year, 1897, 885 ministers without charges, most of them sincerely anxious to work and many of them able to render good service; whereas there were but 837 vacant churches, probably a majority of which would have to be grouped with one or more other churches if a pastor was to be supported. Another significant fact is that scarcely anything is such a discouragement to our ministers or such a reproach and hindrance to our Church as this multitude of unemployed preachers. Why go into the ministry? ask our young men, and often the brighter of them; its ranks are overcrowded. Why push the activities of our Church? say our laity; it must be radically at fault or it would not suffer its forces to go thus unutilized. The third reason which we venture to urge as a fact, is that nothing would so tend to correct the crippling evil in

question as the measures proposed. The reduction for some years of the number of graduates from our seminaries would compel the settlement of many, at least, of our ministers now without charge, and the development of a more thoroughly trained ministry would help to restore it to its old position of honor and demand. What time, then, could be better suited to the inauguration of the plan that has been outlined? It would seem to find in the present widely existent lack of sympathy between our churches and our pastors the opportunity which it needs and to promise a kind of reform which this abnormal condition of things urgently requires.

PRINCETON.

W. BRENTON GREENE, JR.