

# THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

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NO. 4—MARCH-APRIL, 1891.

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## I. LITERARY.

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### REACHING THE MASSES.

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There are some questions that once asked can never cease to be asked until they are answered. There are some demands that once made can never cease to be made until they are satisfied. The question why Presbyterianism has not reached the masses to the same degree as other modes of Christianity is one of these questions, and the demand that it shall do so is one of these demands. Though often suppressed, though often crowded out, the inquiry again and again presents itself with a persistency that refuses to be put aside, and an emphasis that refuses to be ignored.

When we consider the *start* that Presbyterianism had in this country—the advantages in the prestige of past achievement, and in the superior learning of its ministers and influence of its members, it is evident that *something* is wrong when we find that it only ranks third among the denominations of our country, and that the two which lead it were practically not in the race—one of them not even in existence—when it took the field.

The old theory with which we used to console ourselves, that it was our mission to be a regulative, conservative power among the denominations of the country, has been ruled out. Almost any programme of a Presbyterian convention contains something about "Presbyterianism and the Masses." We have recognized the demand that a church shall reach the masses to be a legitimate one. We have admitted that the reaching of the masses is the very purpose for which the church was instituted. We have granted that a church must vindicate its very

right to be by its fulfilment of the Savior's command to disciple all nations.

But we have done more. We have set to work to show that ours is the very system that *ought* to reach the masses; that it is pre-eminently suited to this very end, and that those who have succeeded where we have failed, have done so in spite of hindrances that we did not have to overcome, and of lacks that we did not have to supply. Our advocates have never been more eloquent (nor more successful) than when demonstrating that our doctrines—the doctrines of grace—were the only doctrines to reach lost sinners, and that our government was the very government to reach “the people.” And behind this abstract argument is the great argument of history. Where Scottish heather was stained with Covenanters' blood, where Paris streets were slippery from the slaughter of Huguenots, where Netherlanders contended at once with Spanish cohorts and ocean waves, we see that what Pauline theology and Apostolic government did in the first ages, it can do wherever it is applied, and that the nearer the historic churches have approached the Presbyterian standard, the mightier has been their grip upon the masses.

Why then has not this been true in the United States? Certainly not from any lack of purity in the type of Presbyterianism we present. No Presbyterian bodies have been sounder in Presbyterian faith than those of America, and in our polity we have shaken off the inconsistencies that marred the State churches of the old world. Certainly not because our ministry has been less learned or less zealous. For in learning and ability the Presbyterian ministry has led all other denominations in our land; in every forward movement our ministers are foremost; in every undenominational gathering they shine conspicuous both in intellect and in devotion. Certainly not because of the quality of our membership. In wealth, in culture, in social position, in influence, we outweigh all others. What then *is* the reason?

This is the question that we have been asked to discuss in the UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE, and this is the question that we will now endeavor to answer. We will not stop to consider the various answers that have been given by others, but will simply state our own views. We rejoice to say they are neither original nor peculiar, but that they are coming to be recognized

throughout the church. If asked to give a single answer, we would say, it is because we have copied a model instead of developing an organism. We took Presbyterianism just (or almost) as we found it and have tried to work it upon new soil and under changed conditions. But to come down to particulars there are in our opinion four causes, as we have elsewhere\* maintained, for our failure, or partial failure, to reach the masses.

1. We allow too many of our churches to remain vacant, and too many of our ministers unemployed. As <sup>one</sup>† has admirably stated it, "a vacant church is not reaching the masses." He recommends the use of the "episcopal power of Presbytery." It will not, of course, do to take away the rights of the churches and the liberty of the ministry, as our Methodist brethren do, for whatever is unscriptural must prove harmful; but Presbytery can undoubtedly exercise its power of grouping churches into pastoral charges, and require them to act as a unit, and thus do much toward the solution of this problem.

2. We have not sufficiently developed the energies of the people. The ministers had tried to do it all, and the people had forgotten that they had anything to do. The church membership was the *field to work upon*, instead of the *force to work with*. Even the elders and deacons instead of aiding the minister in organising the host and leading them into action, to a great extent fell into the inactivity of the mass of the membership. Such a practice will never reach the masses. To accomplish this the energies of the whole host must be called into activity. It must be man to man, and heart to heart.

3. We have not used the evangelistic arm of the church. This is the very arm the Lord gave us with which to *reach out*. If we have not used it of course we have not reached the masses. After the church recognized formally the evangelistic office, its usefulness was rendered nugatory by underrating its importance. When a man had failed as a pastor, Presbytery had to do something with him, and made him an evangelist. When a licentiate had no call, he was set apart to the same work. The men that would not do to build on other men's foundations were chosen to lay the foundation in new fields! Such a policy could never succeed. Exceptional cases (like

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\*N. C. Presbyterian, Feb. 4, 1891.

†Rev. G. A. Wilson in N. C. Presbyterian, Jan. 28, 1891.

Daniel Baker in Texas, for instance,) only show more glaringly what could have been accomplished if such exceptions had been made the rule.

It will be seen at a glance that in these last two particulars radical changes have been made during the past few years. The earnest efforts for organizing the activities of our congregations, and the rapid development of the evangelistic work in Presbyteries and Synods are the answers that the Presbyterian church is making to the demand that it shall reach the masses. But the most energetic and successful efforts in these directions will fail to meet the conditions of the problem if one other change is not effected. We have been intentionally brief on these points in order that we might address ourselves more particularly to that element of our failure which the church has not fully begun to face ; namely,

4. Our failure to provide an adequate supply of ministers. It is evident at a glance that we must remedy this if any of our other remedies are to be completely successful. The "episcopal power of Presbytery" will not be able to supply vacant churches if there are not enough men to go around. The activities of congregations, the individual responsibility of Christians, cannot be developed without men, without leaders. The evangelistic work will be pressed in vain if we have not men to follow it up.

But is this question in our hands? Is not the call to the ministry in God's hands alone? Can we do more than "pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth reapers into his harvest"? To answer these questions we must ask another. Have we put any restrictions upon the response to this call that the Lord has not put? We believe that we have, and if we have, we must bear the responsibility. Our failure is in this: We have provided no *ordinary* way for men without classical education to enter our ministry. We did not get this requirement from the Lord. We cannot find it in the New Testament. We simply accepted it from a scholastic age when classical education was the rule, and have tried to work it in an age and a country wholly diverse in all its conditions from the age and countries from which we inherited it. A little door was opened by the provision for "extraordinary cases," but only the boldest and most persevering have the temerity to seek admission there. Men in the nineteenth century cannot see anything extraordi-

nary in not having had a classical education, and naturally think that there must be something extraordinary in their gifts, or in the nature of their call, to enable them to find entrance through this door. For this reason many have sought the ministry of other churches, others have become "lay evangelists," while many more have given up the idea of entering the ministry altogether. But would these men have made useful ministers? To answer that question let us consider what are the *essential* qualifications of a minister:

(1.) As he is to be a public leader of men, he must be able to influence them through speech. Classical education is certainly not essential to this as is proved by the thousands of successful leaders upon the hustings who know nothing of Greek roots or Latin syntax. He must know his mother tongue and know how to use it.

(2.) As he is to be a moral and spiritual leader he must be a man of high moral character and of earnest piety. No one pretends that classical education is essential to the possession of these qualifications.

(3.) As he is to be the instructor of the people in the "faith once delivered to the saints," he must himself be "sound in the faith." He must know truth from error, and to this end must be instructed in the elements of theology, and in, at least, the leading facts in the history of the church.

(4.) As the authoritative expounder of God's word he must be thoroughly familiar with its contents. He wants to be versed in its history, saturated with its devotional language, ready to apply its moral precepts and examples, and able to quote it to establish the truth or to silence gainsayers. All this—and it is beyond the common standard—can be had by a thorough knowledge of the English Bible. The English Bible is a far more accurate translation than the Septuagint, yet we find the Apostles almost always quote from the Septuagint—the vernacular of their day—and not from the original Hebrew.

Now the church will make a great error if it fails to have at any time a large body of ministers who understand the original languages of the Word of God. It must always have workmen who need not to be ashamed in the very centres of learning, of refinement and of culture. It must have men who can meet men of education anywhere upon an equal footing. But it does not follow from this accepted fact that *all* its men

must be of this stamp. It needs men for the cottage and the workshop as well as for the drawing-room and the library. And while culture and classical education by no means disqualify a man for work among the common people, if we have not enough men of culture for all classes, shall we fail to provide men qualified for this work, simply because they would not shine in city pulpits, and might appear to a disadvantage in cultivated circles. The logic of this would be about as convincing as that which would require of our ordinary ministers the same degree of learning as is demanded for a theological chair, or which would refuse to license any one who could not discuss philosophy with Herbert Spencer or Higher Criticism with Kuenen. Peter wrote execrable Greek—judged by the classical standard—yet in one day three thousand souls were converted under his preaching. Paul was the most learned of the Apostles, yet in the metropolis of Greek culture he appeared to be “a babblers.” And there was One who was set at naught by the scribes and rabbis, but of whom it was recorded that “the common people heard him gladly.” Surely “it is enough for the disciple to be as his master and the servant that he be as his lord.”

The question then for the church to solve is how to open the door wide to this class without lowering the general standard, and so losing the power and influence of a highly educated ministry. We cannot see that the question presents any very great difficulties. There are just two things to be done, to provide for their entrance in the constitution, and for their education in our theological seminaries.

The constitutional changes necessary are neither many nor great. In the article on trials for ordination (F. of G. Ch. VI. Sec. V. Art. III) we would omit all reference to literary or scholastic requirements. All these considerations should be, and practically are, settled at licensure. We would make this have reference solely to the spiritual and theological qualifications. We would omit the word “philosophy” and the clause “the Greek and Hebrew languages, and such other branches of learning as to the Presbytery shall appear requisite, and as to his knowledge”; add the clause, “and as to his knowledge of the nature and contents of the Holy Scriptures, and his ability to use them in the establishment of truth and the refutation of error.” It is one of the most grievous defects in our book that it provides

for no examination on the Holy Scriptures, and we have often noticed that our candidates while able to state a doctrine correctly, are unable to quote a single text in support of it.

In Sec. VI. of the same chapter we would add to Art. III the words, "except as herein further provided;" and instead of Art. VI. we would substitute the following:

Candidates who have not passed through the usual course of academical studies, and who, on account of age or other reasons, cannot, in the judgment of Presbytery, profitably do so, shall be examined by the Presbytery as to their knowledge of the common English branches; of the elements of theology; of the history, government and sacraments of the church, and of the nature and contents of the Holy Scriptures.\* They shall also be required to present to Presbytery a discussion of a *thesis*† on some common head of divinity with the expository lecture and sermon required of other candidates. And no candidate, except in extraordinary cases shall be licensed until he shall have studied divinity at least two years under some approved teacher of theology; and whenever any Presbytery shall see reason to depart from this rule it shall always make a record of the fact upon its minutes with the reasons therefor.

These amendments it will be seen to provide for the regular, or ordinary entrance of candidates without classical education, but at the same time leaves it entirely in the hands of Presbytery to decide when it is expedient for them to dispense with the collegiate education. It makes no provision for persons who have had the proper foundation laid, or who have the youth and capacity to take the academic training, to omit any part of the seminary course that is now required. Furthermore it lays down a prescribed course of examinations upon essential points instead of leaving it, as is now the case, to each Presbytery to prescribe upon what subjects it will examine its "extraordinary cases." It retains the provision for extraordinary cases still, but this provides for no waiving of any of the examinations, but only a departure from the ordinary way of preparing for them. It applies, then, only to those unusual instances where Presbytery finds a candidate fully equipped when he seeks admission to the ministry.

\*We would also add this to the requirements of Art. IV., for the reasons given above.

†We think it would be desirable in Art. IV. Sec. 1. to omit the words "in Latin." Theological discussions are not now carried on in Latin, and the practical effect of this provision is to produce some very sad twaddle in very bad Latin. The thought has to be reduced within the compass of one's Latin, and the net result is generally a few theological platitudes, a few quotations from Turretin, and a few more from the Vulgate. If these discussions were in English they would be a valuable part of the trial; now they are only a venerable farce.

But the constitutional difficulties having been removed, how can our Seminaries provide for the training of these candidates? Regular training they need, as much, if not more, than men who have had academical training. One of the great evils of the present state of affairs is that Presbyteries feeling the necessity of admitting men as "extraordinary cases," have to content themselves with such slipshod, unsatisfactory training as the candidates can pick up themselves.

The first requirement, of course, is a thorough course of study in the English Bible. This has been now recognized as desirable for all students, but for this class it is indispensable. The study of the Bible is the most important part of a minister's preparation, and if that study in the seminaries is confined to the study of the originals, these men are shut out altogether. Happily Union Seminary has provided for this, and the greatest obstacle to the preparation of candidates who are ignorant of the ancient languages is removed. We regard the foundation of the "Fifth Professorship" as one of the longest steps towards reaching the masses that our church has taken in this generation. This, however, does not meet the whole difficulty. We have placed theology and church history among the *essentials* of a minister's preparation, because the systemization of truth, and the history of its progress and conflicts, are essential to prevent those one-sided views of truth that are half-sisters to error. But now the manger is too high for these candidates to feed at it. Send men without academic training to study these courses, and they would "only get enough light to make the darkness visible," as one of the professors wrote us when we were making some inquiries in behalf of such a candidate. Or if they studied only a part of the course, they would get a microscopic view of a part rather than a general view of the whole. They might have a very thorough knowledge of original sin and know nothing about redemption. They might be familiar with the first six general councils and be entirely ignorant of the period of the reformation. What, then, can be done? The other students cannot be reduced to the level of the capacity of these, and it would obviously be a waste of forces to have a separate course for these candidates. Yet the difficulty is not insurmountable. We think the interests of these students could be entirely provided for without sacrificing those of other students, if in each of these departments the first year's course was made a *general survey of the whole field*, while the following years were devoted

to the minuter study of the field thus outlined. We believe this method to be sound in theory and beneficial in practice\* even if the need of only the one class of students had to be consulted, while it has the additional advantage of meeting the demands of those whose claims we are now advocating. This first year's course would be an illuminating process enabling those who went on to the end to study more intelligently, while it would suffice for the absolute needs of those who were not prepared to go further and deeper. With these slight modifications of method, a student with only an English education could obtain in two years a comprehensive general knowledge of theology, could master the leading facts of the history of the church, could learn the principles of our government, the art of preaching and the duties of the ministerial office, and could study the Word of God historically, theologically and practically.

When these things are accomplished we believe that under the blessing of God a brighter day will rise upon our church. Its dawn seems already upon us. Its life is tingling in our veins. Its hopes are beating high in our hearts. When it reaches its meridian our church will be not only the purest exponent of Christian doctrine, but the most powerful factor in reaching the masses, and bringing them into "fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ."

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\*Speaking of this to a recent graduate of the Seminary we were pleased to learn that it is the method now employed by Dr. Peck in the theological department.

