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I. IDEALISTIC MONISM.

I do not care to prefix a rubric of titles of idealistic authors to this criticism, as could be very easily done after the pretentious and pedantic fashion of some review writers. I could cite quite a list, beginning with Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, down to Herbert Spencer, Kuno Fischer, of Heidelberg, and Paul Deussen, of Kiel, and could profess to give outlines of their several phases of Monism from histories of philosophy. But my object is to instruct students who are guided by common sense and their Bibles in the central doctrines of this pretended philosophy which are common to all its phases, and to expose their common errors. No two idealists are consistent with each other, nor even with themselves; hence the attempt to particularize their different schemes would be tedious and hopeless, and would disappoint my practical aim.

Idealism is, in plain terms, that doctrine which tells us that the whole universe, including ourselves, consists of ideas only, and contains no other perdurable substantive beings, material or spiritual, distinguishable from mere trains of ideas or actions. Monism is the doctrine which insists that there is no distinction of mind and matter, that both are one and that there is no true philosophy until all things are traced to one single principle of being. The monism of idealists is, that the universe exists for me only as my representation in thought. Thought and real being are identical. To think a thing is to give it existence, the only kind of existence which anything has. There is not, and cannot be, any creation *ex nihilo*, even if there were an almighty

VI. EARLIER LICENSURE.

AFTER many years of agitation and discussion, the principle of earlier licensure has been endorsed by the General Assembly, and is now fairly before the Presbyteries for decision.

HISTORY.

Not to go farther back than 1888, in the fall of that year the Synod of North Carolina adopted the following overture to the General Assembly:

"The Synod of North Carolina respectfully overtures the General Assembly to consider and answer the following question, viz: Is the formal licensure of a candidate for the ministry an indispensable prerequisite to ordination?"

"The reasons which move the Synod to ask for an authoritative decision of the point are three, briefly:

"*First*, The practice now prevalent in the church of permitting its candidates to try their gifts in preaching from the time they enter upon their theological course in the seminary, and of employing them as preachers in established churches, and in mission fields, during the summer vacation—all which answers to virtual licensure.

"*Second*, A Presbytery in this Synod did see its way clear under all the circumstances to ordain a candidate without previous technical licensure, and the Synod at its present meeting did decide that action to be irregular and unconstitutional only by a bare majority vote, evincing a very wide difference of opinion upon the point in question.

"*Third*, The Synod is of the opinion that this whole subject of licensure needs a careful revision; either our practice must again be conformed to that which was the customary one when the constitution was framed, or the law itself changed so as to legalize the present practice."—*Minutes*, 1888, pp. 212, 213.

To this overture the Assembly made answer:

"Our law plainly supposes that licensure should precede ordination."—*Minutes*, 1889, p. 587.

To this answer, however, was added a recommendation of the committee, adopted by the Assembly, to appoint a committee to report to the next Assembly "on the whole subject of licensure, of the holding of services by unlicensed persons, of the preaching of ruling elders, with the end in view of reducing our practice to uniformity." (*Ibid.*)

At the next Assembly (1890) this committee reported:

"*First*, That trials for licensure of probationers to preach the gospel remain as at present.

"*Second*, In view of the fact that there are many destitute fields greatly in need of the preached word, and that these are increasing yearly; and whereas we have many young men of ability and undoubted piety, who have the ministry in view and have partly fitted themselves for this work; we would recommend that they be permitted to conduct religious services under the jurisdiction of Sessions and Presbyteries, but at no time to assume the regular functions of the ministerial office in administering the sacraments, or in blessing the people in the name of the Lord. We would further recommend that, so far as practicable, all such unlicensed persons submit their discourses to some Presbyterian minister for criticism before their public delivery."—*Minutes*, p. 16.

There was a minority report advocating extensive changes, but all in the direction of modifying academical requirements. Both reports were referred to a special committee, whose report was rejected (*Ibid*, p. 53), but its purport is past finding out from the *Minutes*. It is known, however, that it favored a change.

The subject of licensure came up again before the Assembly of 1891 in response to overtures from many Presbyteries and memorials from individuals. Two reports were returned from the Committee of Bills and Overtures, each signed by eight members of the committee. The first paper recommended two classes of changes in the constitution—one class having reference to academic requirements, and the other to the relations of licensure to ordination. The following is an extract from the preamble:

"The grounds of complaint against our present system as appears from the papers before us, are— *Second*, That the requirements for licensure being the same as those for ordination, the latter trial has in most cases become merely nominal, while a new mode of practical licensure, unknown to the constitution, has become the prevalent practice of the church, and has received the endorsement of the General Assembly."—*Minutes*, pp. 247, 248.

A full set of amendments was then submitted, embracing the following provisions:

The minimum term of licensure was made two years; the requirements for licensure had reference only to a man's soundness in doctrine, his familiarity with the Scriptures, and his ability to use his knowledge in preaching and exposition—such acquirements as he could obtain in one year at the seminary; while dignity and emphasis were given to the examination for ordina-

tion by adding to the present requirements the "parts of trial" now required at licensure. (See *Minutes*, pp. 248, 249.)

This paper was never voted on by the Assembly, but the vote on the substitute offered by Dr. W. W. Houston for *Paper No. 2*, was, by the Moderator's ruling, made to settle the whole question. The forty-two negatives votes may be considered as the votes in its favor. While thus decisively rejected, it will be noticed that *Paper No. 2* makes no reference to any changes but to those affecting the academical requirements, and the same was true of the speeches opposed to it. The hue and cry was against "lowering the standard." The question now before us was in no sense settled.

In 1893 a judicial case came before the General Assembly. The Presbytery of Ouachita had empowered a church to employ an unlicensed man as "stated supply," and had been rebuked by the Synod of Arkansas. The Presbytery complained, and the General Assembly sustained it in the following decision:

"That inasmuch as Mr. Geo. Lacy was a candidate for the ministry under the care of Ouachita Presbytery; that inasmuch as he was expressly put under the care of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbytery to do such work as the General Assembly has enjoined upon the Presbyteries as desirable and proper for our candidates to perform; and inasmuch as there is nothing in our standards prohibiting such work on the part of our candidates; therefore, our judgment is, that the Presbytery of Ouachita did not err in granting permission to the church of Mt. Holly to engage Mr. Lacy to perform such services."—*Minutes*, p. 33.

The decision called forth vigorous protest, first in the commission appointed to try the case (*Ibid*), and afterwards in the Assembly (pp. 46, 47). Dr. Samuel A. King, who presented the protest against this action as in violation of our present law, was also chairman of the Committee of Bills and Overtures, and introduced from his committee the following recommendation, which was adopted:

"In view of the manifest desire in many parts of the church to have such change in the matter of licensure as will authorize those seeking the gospel ministry to try their gifts in a regular and orderly manner at an earlier period in their course of preparation than is permissible under the present law of the church; also, in view of the fact that so many of our candidates are now preaching under a seeming authority which Presbyteries have no constitutional right to grant—

“*Resolved*, That an *ad interim* committee be appointed to consider and report to the next Assembly the advisability of making such changes in the requirement for licensure as may be necessary to correct what seems to be a growing irregularity.”—*Minutes*, p. 28.

It thus appears that the protest against the decision of the judicial case was not based upon opposition to student-preaching, but to student-preaching without license. And it further appears that so great was the dilemma growing out of the *unconstitutionality* of the thing and the *desirability* of the thing, that the same General Assembly practically contradicted itself in two different utterances. This state of things the Assembly wisely proposed to end by revising the constitution. It is as a result of the report of the *ad interim* committee thus appointed that the last General Assembly recommended the amendments now before the Presbyteries.

ARGUMENTS.

1. *The beneficent results of student-preaching.* Student-preaching has passed the stage of experiment in our church. From the employment of a candidate here and there to do mission work during his vacation, the practice has grown until it has become the settled policy of the church. Churches, Presbyteries, Home Mission Committees—both in Presbytery and in Synod—have been employing this agency for years. Seminary professors have become bureaus of information to bring students and fields into correspondence. The General Assembly has repeatedly recognized the propriety of thus putting into use the energies of our candidates. Thus practically the unanimous voice of the church is in favor of student-preaching.

The beneficent results that have followed have been twofold. *To the church* there have come the blessings of vacancies supplied, of dying organizations revived, of struggling congregations strengthened, and of souls born into the kingdom. Towards the close of the summer season nearly every paper that one picks up has such notices as these: “Mr. —, a student of Union Seminary, is spending his vacation with the churches of Royal and Fire Creek, in Greenbrier Presbytery. . . . At Royal twenty-four were received on profession of faith, and at Fire Creek two.” “Barboursville.—This church has recently enjoyed a sea-

son of reviving. Mr. —, a candidate of West Hanover Presbytery, assisted Rev. — for a week in services, morning and night. There were ten or twelve professions of faith." "Olivet church.—It has been my privilege during my vacation to minister to this very promising mission of the First Church, Staunton. . . . The attendance on all the services during the summer has been excellent, and on many occasions the house has been more than filled. . . . The services were concluded on last Sunday afternoon by a very delightful communion, at which time three united on profession of faith." These three notices are all from one paper. In each case the fruits were gathered in by an ordained minister holding a meeting after the seed-sowing by the candidate. From another paper we take the following: "Candidate — labored in these two churches during the summer, and the increased activity seems to be the fruit of his faithful labors. This leads to the reflection that other candidates are doing good work of the same kind every year. Their labors generally seem to be blessed to the good of the churches they serve, and certainly tend to develop those gifts that are requisite to successful work in the ministry. We cannot afford to do without their work, and they cannot afford to give up this important part of their education. *Why not, then, have some provision for doing LEGALLY what must and will continue to be done?*"

But perhaps the best evidence of the good results of this work is, that even those who oppose this constitutional revision are so fruitful in distinctions that will allow it to go on; and none, or almost none, have the hardihood to say, Away with it.

But the other benefit is to *the candidate himself*. The experience of students, the observation of on-lookers, and the testimony of professors is, that students come back to their studies with greater zest, that they have a more intelligent conception of their needs, and a more serious purpose in the prosecution of their course of preparation, in consequence of their practical experience of the work for which they are preparing themselves. It is true that a contributor to this discussion upon the other side has produced the high authority of Phillips Brooks in testimony to the injurious effect upon the student of preaching during the prosecu-

tion of his studies. But an examination of his testimony shows that it is not *ad rem*. It refers wholly to the dissipation of the student's energies when he should be at his books, and has no relation whatever to vacation work. On the other hand, one of our most successful pastors and preachers, and the successful manager of the Home Mission work of one of our largest Synods, gives this testimony: "I was a student-preacher myself, and for several years I have had unusual opportunities for studying the field work of student-preachers and for noting the reflex influence of such work upon the students so engaged. The result of my combined experience and observation is the decided conviction that student-preaching is an unqualified blessing both to the students and to the church at large." With his experience accords that of all who have close relations with our young ministers. They come to the full work of the ministry with a better knowledge of its needs, and a better equipment to meet them, than those of us who came out ten or twelve years ago.

2. *The danger of unconstitutional practices.* To a Presbyterian this head needs no argument to support it. Whatever encourages lawlessness is fruitful in all evils. It is only necessary to apply the principle to this case. To authorize a candidate to preach is virtual licensure. Hence churches send up to Presbyteries calls for his services. He has been with them now two successive seasons, perhaps. His seminary course is finished. The churches need the full ordinances of the church, and clamor for his ordination. There is no need of any further probation, for all the ends of probation have been reached. So the Presbytery proposes to license at the morning service and to ordain him at night, allowing the afternoon to try his gifts and receive a good report from the church! Some of the members refuse to take part in such a farce accompanied with the solemnities of religion. So the Presbytery extends his probation until the next morning! The next case that arises, Presbytery dispenses with licensure altogether, and is rebuked by Synod therefor. These are actual cases, and others like them have occurred all over the church. Authority to preach is licensure, and preaching under that authority is *probation*—the trial of one's gifts. We have already seen the

contradiction in which the Assembly became involved, pronouncing the practice constitutional and unconstitutional in the same Assembly. Another serious evil is the mental effect upon those who do not want to change the constitution and who dare not oppose the practice. As a venerable minister expresses it, "These brethren are deceiving themselves by hairbreadth distinctions between *preaching* and *preaching*." It is a serious matter when the leaders and teachers of the church are driven to use terms in a sense that plain people do not, and cannot, understand. To tell one of our plain elders that a student whom the Presbytery has authorized to do everything in his church that he has ever seen a minister do, except bear rule, administer sacraments, and pronounce the benediction, is *not licensed to preach*, is simply to insult his intelligence. It is true, the distinction is made that in the case of its licentiates and ordained ministers the church is responsible for their teachings. But in what sense responsible? That it endorses everything they say? *Not at all*. Only that it pronounces them safe. And if it has not ascertained that its students are safe, it ought *not to permit them to preach at all*. This suggests the most serious evil of all. There being no prescribed conditions for student-preaching, there are none of the safeguards around it that are necessary to protect the church against unfit men. Our brethren who are so opposed to opening the gate a little wider to formal licensure, *leave the whole fence down* for practical licensure. There are, then, only three possible alternatives, as one has put it:

First, To leave both our book and our practice unchanged, and thus encourage lawlessness. *Second*, To conform our practice to our book by putting a stop to student-preaching and to all the benefits to students and the church at large which do accompany or flow from it. *Third*, To conform our book to our practice by changing the conditions of licensure so as to secure an earlier day for it, thus allowing our students to make *lawful* trial and exercise of their gifts during the course of their three years' preparation, instead of only at the end of it.

3. *The unfortunate working of our present law, and its effect upon our ministerial standard.* The present law requires sub-

stantially the same examination for licensure and ordination. This twofold barrier to a candidate's entrance into the ministry, so far from increasing the safeguards thrown about the sacred office, has precisely the opposite effect. The first is frequently and notoriously slighted, on the ground that there will be a second and decisive test. The second is yet more universally slighted, on the ground that substantially the same examinations have already been passed. This is not theory, it is fact—a fact which the experience of most of our ministers will confirm. It may be said that the remedy is not to change the law, but to obey it. But a law that renders itself so open to violation by such fair specimens of human nature (regenerated) as Presbyterian ministers and elders must have some defective principle in it. But yet more serious is the effect in removing altogether the idea of probation from the relation of the probationer to his Presbytery. The fact that licensure and ordination are put upon the same plane in the examinations required leads to the theory (openly avowed) that the probation is only before the church, and that *if the man gets a call* Presbytery has nothing further to do with the matter except to register the voice of the church and ordain him. Now, in these days of many vacant churches, and of impoverished churches, the view often prevails that any sort of a preacher is better than no preacher. Hence any man that the Presbytery licenses can get some kind of a call, or, if he does not, Presbytery will call him as evangelist for some destitute field. Thus many enter the ministry who, as subsequent events show, were never called of God to preach the gospel; for if they were, *they would be preaching*. The Presbytery has tested, it may be, their scholastic attainments fairly well; but it has deprived itself of all power over the decision of the great question of all: Does the man's work stand the test and show that he is commissioned of God? The only wonder is that we have not more uncalled men in our ministry. This leads to—

4. *The true theory of licensure.* One of the ablest of our opponents puts the matter thus: "The reception of a candidate is in order to training; training, to licensure; licensure, to a call; a call, except for unforeseen circumstances, to ordination." This

involves (1), that the candidate must go through the whole of the long and expensive course of training without any test of his gifts for his own satisfaction or that of the Presbytery; (2), that the practically final decision of Presbytery must be made without any trial of his gifts, except the formal preaching and examinations before the body; (3), that the trial of his gifts that follows licensure is only a trial before the church—like the “trial sermon” of a candidate for a vacant pulpit. That there may be no doubt on this point, we quote from another eminent divine: “The book, as it now stands, makes the object of licensure to be to authorize the licentiate to make trial of his gifts before the church, that the people of God may determine whether or not he possesses requisite ministerial qualifications. The only question pending before Presbytery after licensure is, whether the licentiate shall be invested with the full responsibilities of the ministry? and this is to be determined by the voice of the church.”

These brethren, from trusting to memory and the cadence of familiar expressions, have fallen into a very common mistake. The constitution does not speak of the probationer’s trial of his own gifts as the end of licensure, but of the Presbytery’s trial of the probationer’s gifts. The confusion arises from the use of the plural pronoun to refer both to the Presbyteries and the probationers. But a glance at the article in question shows that they who ordain are they who try: “Presbyteries shall license probationers to preach the gospel, in order that, after sufficiently trying their gifts, and receiving from the church a good report, they may, in due time, ordain them to the sacred office.” (F. of G., Chap. VI., Sec. VI., Art. I.) This settles the whole question. *Licensure is in order to probation*, and it is the Presbytery that is to prove or try, not trusting to formal examinations, but requiring the test of experiment. Of the success of that experiment Presbytery is the judge, though the report from the church is one of the elements entering into the final decision. The *theory* of the book is correct, but the practical working of its machinery has caused that theory to be lost sight of. Licensure has no meaning, and no lawfulness, except as it is a *probation*. Its scriptural authority is only the command not to ordain a novice, and to “lay

hands suddenly on no man." *The Form of Government adopted by the Westminster Assembly had no provision for probationers at all.* Yet our very machinery for licensure, down to the minutest detail, is contended for as a part of the *jus divinum* of Presbyterianism! That form of licensure which gives the best test, the truest *probation*, is the true form. The whole matter is so admirably put by one of our most venerable and thoughtful ministers, that we give his language: "In my solitude many questions are suggested by the discussions: (1), Ordination is a scriptural institution, but is licensure equally so? (2), What reason exists for such a provision, except as a test of qualification, that the candidate may exhibit to the Christian public and the Presbytery his fitness for ordination? (3), If so, ought not this public exhibition to be made *after* licensure? (4), Inasmuch as this test requires time for its satisfactory application, ought not a reasonable interval to be prescribed between licensure and ordination? (5), Since the whole process of candidacy up to ordination has for its object to satisfy the judgment of the church as to the qualifications of the probationer, including *experience in preaching*, ought not the interval to be sufficiently long to avoid the installation of *novices* in the pastoral office? (6), Ought not the Presbytery to regard the crucial test of several years' authorized preaching as the best possible security against the "lowering of the standard," and the most satisfactory of all proofs that the candidate may be safely entrusted with 'the care of souls?'"

5. *The true theory of education.* Education is not a force-pump process by which the tank is filled with that which it is subsequently to emit. True education is a process of *growth by assimilation*. It is a *drawing out (e-ducere)* of the inherent powers under proper conditions. The conditions for assimilation are *nourishment* and *exercise*. This is as true of the mind as it is of the body. Hence the best educational methods are based on this principle. The recitation-room is next door to the laboratory; field work follows the text-book; the clinic follows the lecture. To *know* one must *use*. Application must follow acquisition, and precept must be succeeded promptly by practice. If theology were merely an abstract science it might constitute an exception

to this rule. But theology is not merely a science, it is a *life*, and must be subject to the rules that govern all life and growth. The Christian life is preëminently a process of education. "The grace of God hath appeared to all men, training us; in order that . . . we may live soberly, righteously, and godly." (Titus ii. 11, 12, Grk.) What is the method of its training—to teach us a fully rounded theology, and then send us forth to live it? Not at all, but, "whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." (Phil. iii. 16.) If the work of the ministry is the fullest exemplification of the Christian life, should not the training for it observe the same law—to turn our knowledge into practice as rapidly as circumstances will permit? This is likewise the rule observed by those who train for other Christian work than that of the ministry. By constant practice they prove, they assimilate, they appropriate, what they acquire. Hence, with far inferior equipment, they are often so much *readier* than our carefully trained ministers. This leads to—

6. *Our Lord's example.* In the training of the Twelve our Lord pursued the truly scientific method of education. We will not go into any quibbling as to what constituted "licensure" and what constituted "ordination" in the experience of the apostles. We have no patience with the effort to trace every detail of method and organization to the Scriptures. Principles are what we are after, and principles are what we find. The training of the Twelve, and their enduement for their work, was not complete until Pentecost. But less than a year after his choice of the Twelve our Lord sends them forth to preach the elementary doctrines of the kingdom (Matt. x. 2, 7; Mark vi. 7, 12; Luke ix. 2, 6). Then they return to him and tell him all that they had done and taught (Mark vi. 30; Luke ix. 10), and he withdraws with them into the desert for another season of instruction and intercourse (Mark vi. 31, etc). The same method is observed with the seventy (Luke x. 1, 17). At this time both of these classes were very far from being thoroughly trained. Even at the end of the Lord's ministry there were many things that he had to tell them that they were not prepared to receive, and which they could only understand after his death and resurrection and the descent of the

Spirit (John xvi. 12, 13). Many of these things are what we rightly consider the fundamental principles of the gospel, that we expect even our Sunday-school children to know. But, nevertheless, Jesus sent them forth to preach what they knew, and they brought back joyful tidings of success; *and the closer our training conforms to his, the more certainly may we look for the same results.*

OBJECTIONS.

"It is a bad plan to cure an evil by licensing it." Very true, if the evil is in the *thing* and not in the law. We think we have shown this evil to be in the law.

"It is not Presbyterianism to license a candidate to edify the church for three years without probation." The very *essence* of the proposed law is probation. The present system, as now interpreted, cuts out the element of probation altogether, or almost altogether. If the probationer gets a call Presbytery has only to say, *So be it.* Neither before nor after licensure is there any real probation according to this theory; but the proposed law puts the probationers on probation for the whole time. The three years' term is not an absolute license for that period. Art. XII. still remains in force, making the license revocable at the will of the Presbytery. But the fixed term is a *limit* upon what is now unlimited. The license expires by limitation at the end of that time, and throws upon the candidate the burden of proof why it should be renewed, instead of leaving upon Presbytery the burden of proof why it should be taken away.

"These three-year probationers would constitute another order of the ministry—a set of irresponsible rulers." Why more than present licentiates? Or, if you say the average life of a licentiate would be longer, why more than our present candidates, who fill our vacant churches and mission fields during their vacation, and are, for all practical purposes, what these new probationers would be, except that they are under less restriction and have less responsibility to the Presbytery? And if the influence of any prove evil, is it not better to discover it when license can be removed by a mere resolution, instead of after ordination, when a long judicial process is necessary?

"These one-year students would not be orthodox—they would not have touched theology." There is no reason why students should not have a comprehensive grasp of the outlines of theology in a single term at the Seminary, and, as most of our courses are now arranged, they do. Whether they are orthodox or not, it is the Presbytery's business to find out. As a matter of experience, there is no class so intensely conservative and so fearful of the slightest doctrinal divergence as the average theological student.

"If high requirements for ordination are scriptural, they must be equally necessary for all teaching; if they are wrong for licensure, they are equally wrong for ordination." The answer is, that licensure gives no office in the church; it is simply an expedient for testing the fitness of candidates for office. As soon as there is *probable evidence* of fitness and sufficient preparation to *begin upon*, it is proper and right to begin the testing process, and to this we are encouraged by our Lord's example.

"The change is radical, sweeping, revolutionary." If it cuts at the root of what is false, sweeps away what is *effete*, and revolutionizes what is wrong, so much the better. But the revolution has already taken place in the practice of the church, silently, gradually, and beneficently. All that is needed is the stroke of the legal pen to recognize what God has wrought and his Spirit has blessed.

PEYTON H. HOGG.

Wilmington, N. C.