

THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXXIX.

JANUARY, 1928.

No. 2.

CREATIVE PREACHING.

BY REV. GAIVUS GLENN ATKINS, D. D.,
*Professor of Homiletics and Sociology, Auburn Theological
Seminary, Auburn, N. Y.*

(The following article is the inaugural address of Dr. Atkins as Professor in Auburn Seminary, delivered May 4, 1927. Owing to lack of space, a few paragraphs here and there have been omitted.—Editor.)

Preaching is, in one form or another, one of the oldest crafts in the world. The first light of Council fires must have fallen upon the face of some paleolithic preacher, upon whom vision or conviction had laid a message to be said. He had no tools but words, nor any force save his passion to persuade, and his own persuasion that something beyond himself spoke through him. And when he was done, something would be true and real, which was not truly real before. His words would become customs and battles and migrations. They would build an altar and light a fire upon it. They would be wrought into the changing structure of society and he and his like would have bequeathed to unborn generations, rostrums and forums and pulpits to outlast nations and thrones, and be perpetually renewed though all the works of men should flee away and ancient and holy things fade like a dream. You may search out, thread by thread, as you please, the weaving of such a web as this. The power of the persuaded to persuade is there, and the power of the impassioned to rekindle

DOES MODERN EDUCATION MEET OUR NEEDS?

BY REV. R. AMES MONTGOMERY, D. D., LL. D.,
President of Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio;
Formerly President of Centre College, Danville, Ky.

Three important factors must be taken account of in the problem of Education:

First. There is the enormous increase of our school population. From 1890 to 1922 the population of the country increased 73.5 per cent, the high school enrollment 610 per cent, and the college population 346 per cent. These enlarged enrollments in the schools and colleges have required a vast expansion of plants for housing and for equipment, gigantic enterprise in the development of teaching talent, and multiplied enlargement in administrative organization.

Second. The problem of education has been made more complex by the march of invention and material prosperity. The radio, automobile and moving picture have created a new atmosphere in which educators have to work and vastly extended the boundaries of their influence. Moreover, they have greatly affected the capacities and powers of the student to attend to the subject in hand.

Third. The scientific methods and principles in vogue preceding and following the great war have created an atmosphere and led to attitudes in the process of education that vitally affect the moral order of the world. We live in a different world from that in which our fathers lived. Our knowledge of our world is vastly increased and our capacities to utilize the forces resident in our world have so developed that old methods and old instruments are inadequate. A new method, a plus of power, must now be brought to the work of preparing our youth for the task of life.

When we take up the subject of education we find, everywhere, criticism and complaint. The "Research Bulletin of the National Education Association for September, 1924", was

engaged entirely with the question, "What is right with the public schools"? this statement being intended to awaken us to the fact that there still remains something good. They are not wholly bad or out of date. The editor cites one carping critic for refutation. "Our present educational system," says the critic, "unfits young people to deal with actual necessities. It takes away self-reliance, begets conceit and draws attention to what is ornamental rather than what is fundamental." Another, Mr. Irwin Edman, writing in the *October Century* of that year, complained that—"In all our colleges every year a large group of students, among them the most sensitive and responsive who go through the educational mill, toward the close of their college career are unprepared for life."

In a discussion of our social needs it is said, "Teachers, even if they are tempted to tell the essential facts, dare not do so for fear of losing their places amid the applause of all the righteously minded".

So do the critics proclaim the inadequacy of our educational process and performance. But their examination does not seem to have been sufficiently searching to lead us to expect or receive a satisfactory diagnosis.

Our real difficulties are found, first, in the fact that in our progress in population, in material development and accumulation of things, we have not been able to keep up with ourselves in the development of a physical basis for mind and morals. This cannot be done in haste. We may invent a machine to speed us over land, through air and sea; but a nervous system in the human frame with poise, stability and precision to use that invention, without excitement or hysteria, is not so easy of production. We may be able to develop a vehicle for expression, such as the radio, or for travel, such as the aeroplane, that will make the world a neighborhood in a day; but the development of an understanding, a spirit of sympathy and co-operation, of international and inter-racial appreciation is another achievement. This is the task of the educator, but he needs a psychological medium adequate for his task which it takes time, sometimes generations, to develop. We have been,

therefore, frequently led into hysteria and extravagance in our efforts to meet our situation and solve our problems.

No one can say truthfully that our educational efforts are a total failure. Most of us can read and write and cipher. In Massachusetts 40 per cent of the boys and 22 per cent of the girls are said to be good college risks. Some residents of Massachusetts may not consent, but the rest of us believe that boys and girls of other States are as good in quality and achievements as Massachusetts boys and girls.

Nevertheless, it is everywhere recognized among educators that modern education is not meeting our social needs. Our processes have been determined too much by job-getting considerations; they have been foreshortened by the clamor for practicability; they have lacked definition (*e. g.*, the function of the college); they have lacked appreciation of the value of personality, human and Divine.

The first practical question, in order to secure an educational process and compendium to meet our social needs, is to ask, What are our social needs? At least four can be named.

The first is Individual Morality. By this we mean the conscious worth of self, or other selves, of God, as superior to all things. This is that quality of our being that leads a man to recognize his duty to *be* and not simply to *appear*. It is that quality in a man that leads to and begets confidence and trust of others in him; that attitude toward himself, toward his fellow and toward God that is basic and upon which the character of the man rests, to which all social relations may be referred, and on which ultimately institutions can be built. This is what we mean by morality. At this point our modern education has been wanting.

Years ago movements began in this country calculated to reduce the religious agencies in education to impotency. We began the effort to build morality on some other basis than God, and as Manning said in his "Sin and the Consequences", "This morality without God for school children is bottomless impiety if it be not the stupidity of unbelief". We secularized our schools, in assuming that the intellect is sufficient and su-

preme to interpret, direct and control life. Then we excluded all moral and spiritual factors from our curricula. Concentrating our efforts on brain development and in relating it to *things* primarily, we forgot to lead out and develop the character. We became so zealous in our scientific pursuits, we reduced all criminality and sin to mere physical deformities and defects, until we led ourselves to the inference that Right and Wrong are mere traditions of unlearned and Puritanic days.

There is much alarm felt, and much criticism being made of our youth today, for the unconventionality, the license and immorality that describe them. If they are so we should not be surprised. Wise men expected this. Such youths are but the legitimate product of our educational postulates in which there has been little emphasis of the truth: *Individual morality is the first great need of Society.*

II. *The second social need is acceptance of social responsibility—personal, national and international.*

The present condition is the legitimate offspring of unqualified individualism. The worth and protection of the individual has been the dominant note of our national institutions. We have emphasized the importance of individual expression. We have safeguarded the liberties of the individual citizens. We have lauded the achievements of individual performers. We have asserted the rights of individual claimants. And we have done all this to the neglect of emphasis on individual responsibility, indebtedness to others and duty of cooperation. In this land of the free and home of the brave individual, we have developed individual initiative and achievement to a surpassing degree. Such individual feats in invention, in discovery, in organization, in accumulation of wealth, no land has ever seen as the world now sees in America. A consideration of the recently published tax payments of individuals in this country, reaching in one instance to nearly \$8,000,000, not to speak of the additional millions paid by corporations wholly controlled by father and son, will vindicate the claim that individualism has nowhere been so gloriously expressed in material ways as here.

But there are widespread rumblings of discontent. The failure of the rich to recognize their personal and social responsibility is widely stressed. Underneath is an active ferment of rebellion against this individualism and an assertion of the claims of the mass against the unit gains in strength and volume year by year. While it is true that responsiveness to appeals for benevolent and social causes have been munificently sustained by individual gifts, these have not been as magnificent, proportionately, as the private fortunes built up; and they have not been expressive of individual responsibility to the mass for the possessions held. Seldom do benefactions to public institutions come as an avowed acknowledgment of a debt to society as a whole.

In the field of national relations, the type of citizenship we have developed does not seem to take responsibility much to heart. The character of our office holders, the character of our amusements, the maintenance of our churches, the equipment of our ministers and public school teachers, the activity of corrupt agencies in politics, in legislation and judicial procedure, the character of our international policies in government are not matters upon which we have a very lively consciousness.

It takes immense resources to poll our vote. The advertisements that appear at the door of our movies awaken no public action to condemn them; though our children are corrupted and their morals debased by such advertisements and exhibitions. The sacredness of our constitutional enactments are scorned and trampled beneath the feet of multitudes of respectable citizens, on no other pretext than the assertion of "personal liberty" to violate the social and political consciousness of the nation expressed in constitutional enactments.

Now in an aristocratic form of government such conditions might be less perilous, so long as the few who make the laws respect and obey them. But in a democracy where legislation springs from the mass, or through the representatives of its choice, where the people in whom authority ultimately resides,

pour contempt upon their own enactments, if such conditions continue to prevail, the day of doom is not far away.

III. *The third social need is the working efficiency of every unit in the mass.*

In this, America has achieved commendable success. The various types of schools for the citizenship of this land, the variety and equipment of these schools, the number and opulence of the courses they offer, the effort made to secure the attendance of every youth, and the doors we have opened for collegiate, technical and professional training, are provisions which all worthy citizens may boast.

However, the criticism previously made applies here, that the job-purchasing value of courses offered has been too largely stressed. Under such an emphasis we easily lose sight of the wealth resident *in the student*; his latent possibilities which ought to be drawn out soon suffer from neglect. The ultimate end of such an emphasis on practicality means sterilization of the creative forces and the debasement of the ideals by which men and nations live. On the other hand, the problem which the schools offering cultural values face is, to handle the majorities coming up to college who have not the capacity for receiving these cultural values. With the rapid multiplication of our college and university populations, the problem grows more and more complex—how to maintain standards in the presence of so many incapable to attain them. Quoting again from the Brown University survey of Massachusetts—"For the two sexes combined (of high school seniors) more than 50 per cent are bad (college) risks and only 25 per cent are good (college) risks."

In the face of a situation like this we ask, Is it possible that the 75 per cent of bad, and partially bad, to which the report refers, are in the same classification for all types of schools as well as colleges? I think not. The great need, in order that the embarrassment of an unassimilable mass for the colleges may be disposed of and cared for, is a proper distribution of the educatable population to the schools for which they are capable. We are fast approaching the day when it may

not be possible for the existing institutions to care for the multitudes knocking at their doors, and when the country cannot carry the burden of taxation a proper care for all will require. But if there is a sifting of applicants and a directing of the sifted to institutions for which they are capable and to which they properly belong, then efficiency in the output of all schools will be secured and a working efficiency of the mass established.

IV. *The fourth need of society is reverence*—the spirit of worship, humility and awe, the sense of dependence and the gift for praise of the Unseen, of God.

In the speeding up of our generation, and the one that is coming on to succeed us, we have gone so fast we have forgotten God; we have, so to speak, left God behind. We are reminded of the remark of Professor Brander Matthews concerning a certain famous French writer, "that he understands everything except, perhaps, those very commonplace virtues which sustain the social fabric". That might be said of us in this day of schools, magazines, newspapers, the printing press and the radio. While we are so wise with the break of day of what went on in the ends of the earth yesterday, we have neglected to learn and to become wise in "the commonplace virtues which sustain the social fabric".

We have not devised a way of teaching our children in the schools about God. We have allowed those who utterly repudiate the Revelation we have received, and in which the mass of the people have inherited some belief, to crowd out all teaching in that Revelation. The citadel of our religious teaching, the home, has abandoned the hour of worship and instruction, abdicating its responsibility to the Sunday school; while in our institutions of higher learning we have been chilled by the atmosphere of the rationalist and the method of the critic.

What is the result of all this in our national life? We may at least name one result, the spirit of prudentialness in moral convictions. Certain things we will not do, not because from time immemorial they have been considered wrong and are wrong; but because it is not prudent to do them. We might lose social standing, if it were known we did some things. We

might contract disease, if we did other things. A man might do several things if he could get by with them. But can he? That is the conception of the problem too frequently found among us.

Too many people consider heinousness in the violation of law, in a lapse in virtue, in a prostitution of honor, in a failure of trust—lies in its publicity. If a man can hide his criminality, if a woman can cover up her irregularity, if a politician can conceal his duplicities, if a student can hide his ignorance, or get by in spite of it, then all is well!

In short—we have developed, and still continue developing, citizens in this fair land of ours, possessed of success, of respectability, of station, of rank and wealth; but utterly devoid of moral sense and religious reality. We have failed to give our children some definite impression of the fact of God, of His presence, which brings all things into publicity, of His righteousness before which all doings must ultimately appear.

There is a fine passage in Ulhorn's "Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism", which it would be well for Americans to consider: "In Greece, in Rome, it had been shown what the human spirit can accomplish in its own strength. It is capable of great things, and gloriously had it wrought. But all its greatness sank into ruin and all its glory paled and there was one thing it could not do. It could not satisfy the longing of the human spirit for the eternal, for God."

THE NEGRO AS A HOME MISSION TASK.

BY REV. R. A. BROWN, D. D.,

Superintendent of Colored Evangelization, Atlanta, Ga.

When we speak of the negro the average white person inadvertently think of him in terms of flesh and blood. We have magnified his physical traits to the extent that we have almost lost sight of the moral and spiritual man. May we forget that he is black and once our slave and look prayerfully at the soul