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THE ELDERSHIP IN THE DAYS OF JOHN KNOX

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JOHN KNOX may be called the creator of the office of elder for Scotland, Ireland and America; there having been nothing of the kind in the ecclesiastical system which he displaced. He himself, indeed, would have expressed the fact otherwise, for his contention was that he had invented or created nothing, but simply restored the lost image—or, as he was fond of calling it, "the face"—of a Church found in the Word of God. None of the other Reformers—not even Calvin—insisted as rigorously on the principle that nothing should be introduced into the Church, or tolerated therein, which is not sanctioned by this divine authority. Other Reformers, like Luther and the founders of the Church of England, were content with excluding whatever is forbidden in the Bible; but Knox went much further, admitting nothing for which actual Scriptural warrant could not be quoted.

Thus going back to the New Testament to discover the office-bearers of the Church of Christ, he found there three outstanding offices—Ministers, Elders, Deacons. A fourth he was willing to acknowledge—that of Teachers or Doctors, nearly corresponding with professors of divinity in our present system. Also, he admitted, as temporary expedients, necessary in the unsettled condition of the Church at that period and on account of the great scarcity of competent ministers, two other offices; the one being that of the Reader, who, in parishes where no preacher was procurable, might read the Scriptures and the Common Prayers at the meetings for worship; and the other that of the Superintendent, who should have charge of an extended district, the size

THE CHARGE TO PRESIDENT-ELECT W. W. MOORE ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.*

BY EGBERTH WATSON SMITH, D. D.

When I was notified of my appointment to a part in the ceremonies of this auspicious occasion, curiously enough there sprang at once to my mind a passage from Tennyson's "Guinevere." To the little maid whose cloistered life had kept her ignorant of human nature, and whose crude judgments lacked both knowledge and charity, the unhappy queen impatiently replies:

"Oh, closed about by narrowing nunnery walls,
What knowest thou of the world and all its lights,
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?"

These lines phrase for us the commonest criticism of theological seminaries, "narrowing nunnery walls," and the commonest criticism of theological students, "What knowest thou of the world?" The worst thing about this criticism is that it is partly true, and to some extent incurably true.

There is always a narrowing tendency in a course of training exclusively theological, or exclusively anything else. But this tendency is more harmful in the training of a minister than in the training of any other man whatsoever. The doctor, the teacher, the lawyer, each deals with a class. The ministry is absolutely the only profession that deals equally with all men of every class. To the minister, therefore, breadth of mind and sympathy is a necessity. Whatever narrows him to that extent unfits him for his life work.

With the narrowing goes also the separating tendency. This tendency is often harshly exaggerated by unfriendly critics, but it does exist, and it is not wise to deny or ignore it. Nearly all professional experts on ministerial training agree that there is a rift between theological education and life, the living world of sinning, suffering, tempted men and women. This rift is less observable, perhaps, in this Seminary than in others, but in the nature of the case it can never be wholly closed. Theological graduates, as a rule, have been in college and seminary for the greater part of seven years, the very years when life-long habits

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of mind and soul are being formed. During this long and formative period of their lives their thoughts and studies have largely been upon the languages, the literatures, the histories, the problems, the men and manners and modes of thought, of by-gone centuries and by-gone peoples. With some truth the theological student can say with Southey, in his lines on his library :

" My days among the dead are passed;
 Around me I behold,
 Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
 The mighty minds of old;
 My never falling friends are they
 With whom I converse day by day."

Is it any wonder that when he emerges from this long-breathed bookish and scholastic atmosphere he has lost, to some extent, and irrecoverably, that instructive sympathetic grasp of life, that profound sense of unity with his brother men, which gave such point and tact and tenderness to all that Christ said and did?

As I have stated, these confessed and chief defects of modern ministerial training cannot in the nature of the case be wholly eliminated. Yet it is my fixed conviction that these defects can be minimized and the entire course of training vitalized by keeping vividly in view the supreme aim of ministerial education, the prime object for which a theological seminary exists. And that object is to communicate power. The mission of a theological seminary is to train and send forth ministers whose words, like their Master's, shall be "with power," men fitted to act on men, to influence society, to bring things to pass. To impart knowledge is its indispensable duty, but not its whole, or most arduous, or highest work. Knowledge is a means; power is the end. The former when accumulated, as it often is, with no vividness of conception, no depth of conviction, no warmth of feeling, is of little or no worth to the preacher. It comes from him as a faint echo, with nothing of that mysterious energy which alone can send it home. We want knowledge, but we want something more and greater than knowledge; we want force of thought, of feeling, of conviction. What profits it to arm the student with weapons of heavenly temper unless his hands be nerved to wield them with vigor and success? Said a world-famous thinker and preacher: "Power is the attribute which crowns all a minister's accomplishments. It is the centre and grand result in which all

his studies, meditations, and prayers should meet; and without which his office becomes a form and a show." In stating this as the supreme good to be communicated by a theological seminary, I announce no discovery. I affirm nothing new or in the least degree original. But this truth, like many others, is too often acknowledged only to be slighted. It needs to be brought out, to be made prominent, to become the living, guiding principle of education for the ministry.

Touching this power which it is the seminary's chief end to impart, we shall consider three questions: First, power on what? Second, power for what? Third, power of what?

I. *Power on what?* I reply on present day men and women and children. The student's prime need is power to appreciate the difficulties, to answer the questions, to solve the problems, to shape the characters, of the people of this twentieth century. His message and mission are not to the dead or the unborn, but to the men and women and children of his own generation. To enable him to hit that target, to grasp and mould that audience, is the one purpose of his theological education, the point on which his entire seminary training should be focused.

If any part of the curriculum is antiquated and no longer adapted to this end, it should be dropped. If any new study or chair or lectureship which is essential to this end is lacking, it should be added. The whole curriculum, whether by addition, subtraction, or both, should be made to converge on this, viz., to give the student all needed power to deal effectively with present-day men and women and children.

The same principle should rule the choice of teachers and the mode of teaching. There are two ways of teaching. The one is inflexibly abstract in form, and would serve for any century. The other, while sacrificing nothing of truth, takes its color from the times. The difference between the two is that between the quick and the dead. By the one the student is weighted; by the other whetted. The one method is hard and dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage. The other is interesting, juicy, vital.

I know, of course, that Scripture truth is of equal value to all centuries, and that human nature has unchanging needs. But I know also that adaptation is a condition of access to every mind and of success in every calling. Moses, Isaiah, Paul, the Great Teacher, spoke always and first of all to their own times, with-

out the less speaking to all times. Power upon present-day men and women and children, this aim made regnant throughout will go far to charge teacher and pupil and text-book, nay the whole Seminary atmosphere, with the breath of life.

II. *Power for what?* Why do we need power on these living people about us? Let the Lord Jesus answer: "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." There we have Christ's own ministerial ideal, which should dominate every school of the prophets. A defect in the ideal is a defect in a fatal spot. Yet how many students unconsciously err just here! They want power to be elegant essayists, graceful declaimers, preachers of learned sermons, eloquent sermons, brilliant sermons. Their ideal is the pulpit orator. Now all this is but a foolish mistaking of the means for the end. The power they are thinking of is a power that expends itself in the pulpit. The power Christ is thinking of is a power that expends itself on the people, to open their eyes, to turn them from sin unto God. The difference is heaven-wide. The true minister's mind is not on his eloquence, but his audience. If he can reach them with literary finish, he will use that; if with common-sense bluntness, he will use that; if through the wisdom of the schools, he will use that; if through becoming a fool for Christ's sake, he will use that. But his one thought is to reach his audience with his message. He never becomes such a fool as to mistake the means for the end. A vast amount of so-called pulpit oratory is nothing but the flourishing of bloodless weapons before admiring spectators, reminding one of that familiar verse in "The Battle of Blenheim":

"But what good came of it at last?"
 Quoth little Peterkin.
 'Why, that I cannot say,' said he,
 But 'twas a famous victory?"
 But 'twas a famous victory.'"

To his first ministers the Saviour said, "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." What fruit? What is the minister to show for his work at the last day? A barrel of brilliant sermons? No, a company of saved and sanctified people. As Paul says to the Thessalonian Christians, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of

our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." The true minister judges himself and his sermons by the one standard of effectiveness. Does his life and preaching turn men to Christ and build them up in Christ?—that is his question. "By their fruits ye shall know them"—that is his test. That question, that test, should guide the ambitions and shape the ideals of every Christian seminary.

III. *Power of what?* The power of the Holy Ghost, of course. For Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase.

But as I am speaking mainly of the human side of ministerial training, I reply, first, the power of knowledge. The minister is God's messenger to men. To speak and act with power, two things he must know: what his message is, and how to deliver it. The student should profit by to the utmost, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. The seminary student who neglects the golden opportunities here offered of acquiring this necessary learning is not only condemning himself to future feebleness, incompetence and shame; he is preparing to degrade before the eyes of the world the high standards of his own profession. So fully understood and appreciated is this seminary function that I pass on at once to the second kind of power a seminary is to impart, and that is the power of character.

The seminary is a school of learning, but it is something higher and greater than that—it is a school of Christian manhood. Much as the age requires intellectual culture in a minister, it requires in him above everything else, full spherical exemplary manhood. Every element of lasting ministerial power roots back into character. Diligence in study, which alone secures mental growth and equipment, is a moral trait, and the lack of it, which is sometimes seen even in seminary students, is a moral defect. If lack of diligence makes a man a bad student, it is because to that extent he is a bad man. Industry and perseverance in ministerial work, however hard and unappreciated, love of truth, sin-

cerity of purpose, purity of life, that courage which through good report and evil report reverently hears and fearlessly obeys the voice of conscience and God, inspiring that boldness of speech for which Paul prayed—all are moral traits. And above everything else that love which gives tact and tenderness to speech and bearing, that faith which attempts and achieves great things for God, that spirit of self-sacrifice which is willing to go wherever and do whatever the Master requires, which says with Paul, "I count not my life dear unto myself that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus"—all these things which are the supreme elements of ministerial power, the supreme conditions of the Spirit's baptism, the things without which every other qualification is chaff and dust—they all root straight down into character. And therefore the seminary training in all its parts should conform to this end, the making of strong, robust, devout, apostolic Christian character.

Here lie the teacher's chief responsibility and opportunity. Character, as we all know, is rather caught than taught. The Professor's self and not his subject ought to be his greatest power for good; his self, alive, informed, in love with his subject for the sake of his pupils and his Lord. He is to be an epistle to be known and read by the students. Erudition is always second to inspiration. He must be pastor as well as professor. The Great Master, the Teacher of teachers, lived with his students in the most confidential relations, and so the Professor must keep in touch not only with the advancement of learning, but also with the doubts and fears and aspirations of his own students. He is a teacher of books, but he is something greater far than this; he is a trainer of men.

Power of what? The power of knowledge, of character, and last, but not least, the power of enthusiasm. A minister without enthusiasm is not only a failure in, but a libel on, his profession. A cold handling of Calvary's Gospel is not only a worthless, but a wicked performance. A tame and frigid preacher of Christ is not only a futility, but a profanity. As the electric current can take two black carbon sticks and make them a fountain of radiance, so a holy enthusiasm can take the humblest faculties and fire them to a dazzling energy of heat and light. Oftentimes new faculties seem to be created, and more than

human might imparted, by a pure and fervent enthusiasm. So unsearchable is its power that no man can understand his full capacity of thought and feeling, his strength to do and suffer, until he gives himself with a great and holy enthusiasm to some supreme cause.

This power a minister must have. This power a seminary must seek to impart. It must be not only a school learning and a nursery of character, but also a generator of enthusiasm. Its whole life and teaching should be penetrated with the awed yet exulting assurance that of all men on earth or saints and angels in heaven, not one has such cause for enthusiasm as the minister of Jesus Christ, an enthusiasm born of the unrivalled grandeur of his calling, a calling as far above every other vocation as the unsounded arch of the heavens is above the bend of a man's hand; an enthusiasm born of a burning conviction of the necessity of his message, a message as necessary to man's immortal soul as food is to his mortal body; an enthusiasm born of the conscious presence of God in him, with him, and for him as he goes forth to his life-long warfare with moral evil; an enthusiasm born of the joyful certainty that the evangel he preaches is the one solution of all human problems, the one cure of all human ills, the one regenerative power of the world; an enthusiasm born of sanctions as awful as the judgment, as solemn as eternity, as dear as the precious blood, as alluring as the vision of that land where "they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." God grant that through the coming years this Seminary may more and more be to our church its "upper room," whence men shall go forth in the twentieth as in the first century baptized with fire.

And now, my brother, I have endeavored, though feebly and imperfectly, to outline the aim and work of the great institution, the oldest and largest seminary of the Southern Presbyterian Church, of which you have been chosen the first President. I congratulate you on the unanimity with which the Church, not only of the controlling Synods, but the whole Church, under the guidance, as we believe, of the Holy Spirit, has turned to you as the man to fill her most responsible post. In the name of the Board of Directors, representing the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina, I assure you that you possess in the highest degree our love and confidence, and that you will have, in the

labors and trials of your office, our cordial co-operation, our brotherly sympathy, and our fervent prayers.

This Seminary has had a long and honorable history, with which in recent years your own name has been most fruitfully identified. We believe that under your leadership its future will not dim, but diadem its past. We charge you to be faithful to your high trust. We charge you to seek continually strength and guidance from above. And we invoke upon you in all your duties the blessing of our Heavenly Father.