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ARTICLE I.

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MINISTERIAL TRAINING.*

The question discussed in this article is not a settled one. As a denomination, it is true, we have attained a standard of opinion and practice, at least as nearly definite, intelligible, and acceptable to ourselves, as any other branch of the visible Church. Yet it is not with us out of the arena of discussion, and we may

* This article had its origin in the one published by the author in this *Review* in Oct., 1871. In that article, which was on the Practical Efficiency of our Church, it was intimated that our efficiency might be increased by a modification of the method pursued by us, in the training of candidates for the gospel ministry. This was stated for the reflection of those concerned, and not for discussion at the time; it was intentionally left for elaboration in a separate article, if any one should feel inclined to take it up. There were some strictures, however, submitted by the editors in a foot-note accompanying that article, which placed the views of the author in a false light, and were calculated to darken the subject itself. To correct such misapprehensions, an explanatory and supplementary note was forwarded for the following number of the *Review*. This note was returned, with the request that it should be enlarged to the dimensions of a separate article. Under these circumstances, the following article has been prepared on a subject, which we have felt disposed to leave with those of larger experience, and who are more directly concerned in the subject discussed.

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say of controversy. It has been approached and discussed with more or less fulness in the religious press at intervals for the last several years; it has been, discussed in some of the Presbyteries, and the Assembly itself was overtured on the subject at its last session. It is not with the design therefore of raising a new question, nor of becoming party to a useless discussion, that we approach it. Nor is it with any apprehension that it is likely to become a vexatious question in our Communion. If not altogether agreed; in the principles of our system, we are sufficiently agreed to prevent any decided dissension. And yet there is evidence of a state of mind not altogether satisfied with our system, at least as practised, which should receive consideration, that as far as possible we may be of one mind and one accord in this important matter.

In this article we propose, 1st, to consider the subject of Ministerial Training, proper; and then to inquire, 2dly, to whom this matter is especially committed in our Form of Government; and, 3dly, what is the province of our Theological schools therein.

I. Ministerial Training.

Ministerial Training may be defined as that course of preparation for the gospel ministry determined by the Church for its candidates, by which the scriptural qualifications for this sacred office are revealed (if existing), and are developed to an extent to be edifying, at least to some part of the visible Church of Christ. It is true in the highest sense, that ministers of the gospel are the gifts of the Lord Jesus, the Mediatorial Head and King of the Church. And all the gifts and attainments that fit them for usefulness, are of his conferring, and become effective by his grace. By his power, his Word, his Spirit, and his providence, in such action and coöperation as he pleases, he calls and fits every true minister of the gospel for his work. The Church, however, as his appointed and visible agent, has a part, and a most important part to perform in this matter. God, it is true, calls whom he will to this sacred office, and by the method of his own pleasure prepares them for it. And sometimes, in the exercise of his sovereignty, seems to dispense to a good degree with

the ordinary means of preparation for it. Yet he honors his Church, to whom he has committed this subject, and would have us clearly understand our duty and province therein.

The Church, as the guardian and expounder of the oracles of God, should understand, in the first place, what qualifications are needed as specified in God's Word for the proper discharge of the duties of this office. In the second place, it is manifestly the province of the Church to bring these qualifications to the mind of God's people, and particularly to the minds and hearts of those seeking this office, and to guide and aid such persons in attaining such qualifications. And, in the third place, the Church, as guided by God's Word, is the judge of the existence of the qualifications for the gospel ministry—in other words, of a call to the ministry. She is to say in what degree and relative proportion they must exist in any particular case to constitute a valid and satisfactory call to the ministry; and, under all the circumstances of the case, guided by the Spirit and providence of God she is to decide the question. Under the second of these divisions of the duties of the Church we place the subject of Ministerial Training, which is simply the Church using those means that are calculated to reveal and develop the qualifications for the ministry in the person of its candidates.

In adopting, or in modifying any system of Ministerial Training, it will be readily seen that reference must be had directly to the qualifications to be cultivated and attained as necessary to the gospel ministry. This is the end in view, the object to be attained, and of course the means must be adapted thereto. If there is not a correct scriptural knowledge of the qualifications themselves, there will not be adopted of course such means and measures as are adequate and appropriate to accomplish the desired end. It will be necessary therefore to obtain an intelligent, correct view of these before we are prepared to say what is the system of Ministerial Training best calculated to secure them.

The qualifications which the Scriptures enumerate as necessary for this office, will be found to be enumerated, particularly in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. As here specified, they may

be stated as including a spiritual and saving, acquaintance with the gospel salvation, a respectable Christian character, a blameless life, and a capacity to teach the truths of the Christian religion. These embrace directly or indirectly all the natural and spiritual gifts and attainments that God has ordained as conditions of preaching the everlasting gospel. These we will classify into *the spiritual, intellectual* and *practical* qualifications for the gospel ministry.

By *spiritual* qualifications, we mean such an acquaintance with experimental religion, and such attainments in scriptural and gracious knowledge as will render the party a safe guide and counsellor in practical religion. By *intellectual* qualifications, we mean such mental culture and furniture as will enable the candidate to edify the Church, rightly to divide the truth of God, and to convince gainsayers. This requires a good and sound mind, with a system of study to discipline and furnish it. By *practical* qualifications, we mean the power and facility to use effectively the spiritual and intellectual qualifications which are possessed. All qualifications for the ministry are one in their design, and that is to secure efficiency in calling men from darkness to light, in saving their souls from sin and death through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course there must be a respectable knowledge of human character and the power to use it, as a condition of usefulness in the gospel ministry. This classification will cover the scriptural teachings on this subject, and is sufficiently accurate to guide us in the discussion of this subject. Let us inquire, therefore, to what degree our system of Ministerial Training conforms to this classification, and to what extent it is calculated to develop and attain such qualifications in our candidates.

1. The spiritual qualifications for the gospel ministry we place first. We do this intentionally. We should ever regard it as of the highest importance, and as an invariable requirement of those who undertake to be teachers in the Church of God, that they should themselves have a personal and saving knowledge of that salvation they proclaim to others. And not only this. There should be such an acquaintance with the gracious truths of God,

and of the methods of his saving and spiritual operations, as will qualify them to counsel, instruct and guide men in the way of life. Our system of Ministerial Training should be such as to promote, and that directly, personal holiness and gracious knowledge, as of the greatest importance to the minister of the gospel. "Holiness to the Lord" should be written over the portals of our Theological schools, and be marked and honored by those who induct men into the ministry, and by those who are to instruct in our seminaries. It should neither be supplanted, or lowered to a subordinate place. Without this, there is no spiritual perception and realisation of the truth and power of the gospel, and hence no witness can be borne to its saving efficiency; without this, there is no Christ-like compassion for the lost, and no personal sympathy in the spiritual sorrows and joys of God's people; without this, the power of a godly life to enforce the teachings of the pulpit, is lost. A living, healthy, active piety, and this combined with more than usual attainments in gracious knowledge, is the fundamental qualification for the gospel ministry. And of course every system of Ministerial Training should be such as to promote personal piety, and to insure a knowledge of practical godliness.

This qualification is recognised in our Standards and in our practice. There must be an assurance given in the very commencement of a preparation for the gospel ministry, and as a condition essential to even an entrance upon such a course, that there is a personal and saving knowledge of the salvation of the gospel, and a connection with the visible Church; the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, and a promise of respectable attainments in piety and knowledge. This is the design of the requirements which the Presbytery makes of those who are taken under its care. It must be satisfied of their exemplary piety. And to this end there is an examination of the candidate as to his experimental acquaintance with religion, and as to his motives in entering the gospel ministry. And on this subject the Presbytery should always be satisfied before encouraging any formal steps tending toward the ministry.

To what extent this object, the cultivation of piety, and the

knowledge of experimental religion, is definitely sought in our method of Ministerial Training, it may be well to inquire. In the pastoral letter to the churches in connection with the establishment of our first Theological school in America, is found this clause: "It is to be hoped that we shall never cease to consider vital and experimental religion as the first and most indispensable qualification for the gospel ministry": a truth which should never be forgotten by the Church. Is it kept distinctly in view in the plan of instruction prescribed for our Theological Seminaries, and in all the exercises connected therewith? Is the atmosphere of these, institutions preëminently one favorable to the growth of piety and the cultivation of personal holiness? Is the chief design of all the instruction here imparted, to make men apt in dispensing the truth and grace of God to each and every necessity of man's spiritual nature?

This is evidently the prime requisite to eminent usefulness in the service of Christ. The design of the ministry of the Word is not to awaken, to interest, and to develop man's intellectual, but his spiritual nature. And it is not those ministers who are distinguished for ability, so much as those eminent in godliness and spirituality, that God honors in leading men to holiness and heaven. We do not disparage the former, nor mean to assert that the most profound intellect is necessarily a hindrance to the attainment of the most eminent degrees of holiness. But we mean to say that personal holiness and gracious knowledge, which involves the consecration of the whole man, soul and body, to this ministering and heavenly office, is the chief and great requisite for attaining its end, and fulfilling its mission. This should be distinctly realised and definitely sought by the Church of God in all her efforts to prepare men for this work. And no other qualification should ever be sought except as subordinate to this and tributary to it; otherwise it will cease to yield any fruit in the legitimate and distinctive design of this office, the conversion of the ungodly, and the edification of the body of Christ.

2. In the line of the *intellectual* qualifications, as we have classified them, has arisen most of the discussion to which we have

alluded. As a Protestant denomination we may say without presumption, that we have above all others most assiduously guarded the entrance to the gospel ministry from the intrusion of ignorant men, and have attained an enviable distinction by exalting the standard of intelligence and learning for this important office. Nor is there the slightest probability, in view of our past history, the present attitude of the cause of education in the mind of the public at large, and the advance made in this particular by other evangelical denominations around us, that we will ever fall below the spirit and intent of our Standards on this subject. On the contrary, the question has been raised, whether, under these influences, we have not exalted learning as a qualification for the gospel ministry too high.

The scriptural authority for such attainments in learning as our Book requires, is found in such passages as these: "Apt to teach," "able to teach others also," "by sound doctrine to exhort and convince gainsayers," etc. These passages certainly justify the Church in demanding of those who seek this office, mental endowments and furniture which will render them acceptable, and instructive expounders of God's Word, and enable them to maintain the truth against those who oppose it. And it is evidently to carry out this scriptural position and injunction, that our Form of Government has undertaken to say what attainments shall be made, and what trials shall be sustained to satisfy the Church on this subject. That some such requisition is wise and necessary there can be among us no question; and that these parts of trial and attainments in learning which we demand, are such as will be calculated to do this all will agree. The question is as to the *interpretation* and *intent* of this part of our Book, and *what liberty* is granted in its application.

Learning as a qualification for the ministry is certainly made in our Standards very prominent, and more so in our present system of ministerial training. And whilst it is not exalted too high in our Constitution, it has become too distinctive, too invariable, and is made relatively too prominent in our practice, as a qualification for the ministry. It was evidently the design of the framers of our system to furnish the Church a rule by which

we might understand in the general that ministers ought to be *educated as* distinguished from *ignorant* men, and that they must in addition be especially proficient in those branches of study essential to the proper knowledge of the Scriptures; by which, of course, the Church should be satisfied that they were men able to impart their knowledge to others. The design was to provide a ministry both willing and able to fill this office to the edification of the Church, and to the credit of religion. The *specified conditions* were made and they should be construed with reference to this, the manifest intent of our Standards. And whilst of course no palpable neglect of any part of these constitutional requirements should be recognised, there should not be such an invariable and unyielding adherence to every part thereof as subordinates the spirit and intent of such requirements to the letter. The passages of Scripture upon which our constitutional provision on this subject is based are evidently general in their nature, and whilst sufficiently definite to guide the Church, and to secure good and competent men in the ministry, they evidently admit of some liberty in the application. And in the interpretation of our rules on this subject, we should look to such inspired directions as support them, and thence learn their proper intent and purport. We should never construe our formally adopted Standards without such reference, and certainly in solving any question thereon, this should be the final appeal. And if we look for practical examples to those who were inducted into the ministry in the Old and New Testament dispensations, we find many who had not the advantage of what we term a liberal education. And though it may be true that the special communications then made of God to his messengers, may have rendered any such qualification superfluous in some instances, there was evidently room for the use of those acquirements, and that preparation which we now demand. In the history of the Church, too, there have been in every age examples of eminent usefulness and devotion in the gospel ministry among persons who were not possessed of great intellectual attainments, and yet men the validity of whose call to the ministry could not be questioned. Now if this be true, does the measure

of learning we exact exclude any from the ministry whom God has called? Certainly we are not prepared to say that we should place ourselves in such an attitude. For whilst the entrance way to this sacred and responsible office should never be made such as to encourage slothfulness and ignorance on the part of those who are seeking it, never certainly should it be so exacting as to exclude humble and good men who may become edifying to God's people, and instrumental in leading souls to Christ. We know that the attainments of those who teach must excel those of the taught, at least in those branches of knowledge in which instruction is proposed to be given; and we readily see that attainments in any department of learning will contribute to excellence in an instructor. It is necessary of course that a minister of the gospel have that amount of natural capacity, and those attainments of knowledge in the Scriptures, and in whatever is necessary to a just and intelligible exposition of them, that will render him a good minister of the Word, rightly dividing the truth. And a liberal education is certainly of great value in any calling, especially valuable in the learned professions; and most assuredly, wherever circumstances will admit of it, those who fill the office of the ministry should bring all its worth and power to bear to secure abundant fruitfulness therein. And yet there are many places in the world in which eminent attainments in learning are not necessary, and many men who never can attain them, and nevertheless can be very useful in the ministry. We are not in the habit, for instance, of demanding exact compliance with our rules in this respect, from the heathen natives who seek this office. Such attainments in grace and in knowledge as, coupled with good sense and a sound mind, lead to the hope of usefulness in the ministry is all that is required.

The conclusion we wish to reach on this subject, as that justified and supported by the Scriptures, and the general practice of the Church, is, that we *have a gospel liberty in this matter, which we should neither abridge, nor be afraid to use.* We fully appreciate the value of sanctified learning to the ministry, and heartily approve the standard which we have adopted in our system of

Church government as a rule and method to attain this; but when we place such a restrictive and literal construction on it, that we can have no liberty in its application, we not only make for ourselves a yoke of bondage, but greatly cripple our efficiency. We assume a position which can never be sustained. Learning is of value when properly used, but they that exalt it, in itself considered, are little attentive to its history, or to the career of many of its votaries. God has used it, when sanctified by himself and consecrated to his Church, for the maintenance of the truth and the propagation of the gospel. But the enemies of the gospel have made it the avenue of the most formidable attacks on the religion of our Lord and Saviour. The most dangerous and persistent enemies the Church of God has ever had to encounter have been among the learned men of high intellectual capacity and attainments. And though God has been pleased generally to defeat them upon their own assumed position by the means of sanctified learning, he has often confounded the wisdom and learning of the world, by the faith, love, meekness, and patience, of the lowly of the earth. We should encourage and promote learning as of value in its appropriate sphere, it is true, and we should afford every reasonable facility for intellectual cultivation to those who seek the gospel ministry, but never exalt it to such an eminence as to overshadow other important qualifications for the gospel ministry, or make it an idol for the intellectually proud.

It may be well for us to remember, too, that preparation for the gospel ministry, in the line of *formal study*, may be carried to such an extent as of itself, largely to counterbalance the benefits of an educated ministry. We may expect it, if carried to an extreme, to form a barrier which will intercept many good men in seeking this office, but this is not all. In the cases of those who are inducted into the ministry, there are not unfrequently effects of it that seriously detract from their usefulness. It is well enough for us to know that there is such an extreme, and it is well enough to have some landmarks to indicate where it is. Upon this point we make a few suggestions. *First.* We go to an extreme, if the course of preparation we demand for the

ministry necessitates such an amount of close and long-continued application of mind, as to *impair the physical constitution*. The old adage, *sana mens in sano corpora* is one of great truth and significance. And this, taken in connection with one of higher origin, "much study is a weariness to the flesh," should lead us to be careful, lest in disciplining and furnishing the mind, we so weaken the body as to render it unequal to the task of supporting an active mind and a fervent spirit in the work of the ministry. A man is not half equal to himself with a feeble, impaired physical constitution. And it is true to a greater extent we fear than is realised, that our young men by severe and long protracted study, have their constitutions overtaxed and enfeebled. Whether this is true, because our students are unequal to the study imposed, or because no means are used to preserve and sustain their constitutions under it, is not material. If it is true, it should receive the attention of those to whom this matter is committed. Physical power and capacity of endurance, is capital we cannot afford to loose, and we should carefully protect and preserve the health and constitutions of our students. *Secondly*. We certainly go too far if we exalt learning above holiness and gracious knowledge as a qualification for the gospel ministry. Learning without holiness, is not only "inadequate, but pernicious." And whenever we so exalt it in our practice, or in our estimation, as to make it the one great condition for usefulness in the gospel ministry, we certainly are in error. No amount of knowledge, nor any degree of intellectual discipline and power can of itself render us efficient in the gospel, or save us from spiritual ignorance, weakness, and sin. But of the relative importance of these qualifications we have already spoken. *Thirdly*. We go to an extreme, when our system as practised *yields a type of ministerial character out of sympathy with the people among whom we expect to live and labor*. This may be done by cultivating to an excess a purely literary taste, by forming habits of seclusion which cannot be overcome, by the development of the mind to the neglect of personal religion, by the culture of theoretic speculation and investigation to the neglect of the practical principles of human life and character. Any or all of these

may arise by pressing too far, or by exalting too high the intellectual qualifications which we demand for ordination to the gospel ministry. Such suggestions as these may aid us in defining and regarding the proper line of limitation in this matter. And we repeat, it is important that the system we adopt for securing an educated ministry be not such, as to entail evils that will to a greater or less extent detract from its good results. It is not an unavoidable evil of any system, nor of our system.

We would say in concluding this part of our subject, it is not the intent of anything here said to reflect upon the prescribed rules of our Form of Government on this subject. Such requirements are important in themselves, and necessary to secure able and faithful men for this office. The objection lies against a tendency to misconceive and to misconstrue the real design of these provisions. Instead of maintaining and using these requirements as a wise rule for securing the intellectual qualifications which are needful for the gospel ministry, we are in danger of construing them as if they were a system for securing *eminence in literature and in intellectual cultivation*. Efficiency in the special work of the ministry is the end to be secured, and whenever we are clearly satisfied that this is done it is enough, and all the requirements and qualifications for the ministry are in this very act satisfied and attained. Let us look upon our constitutional provisions upon this subject in this light, and use them with this intent and with the liberty it involves, and yet in no case let us forget or ignore the fact, that those who fill this office must themselves understand the nature and the doctrines of the religions of the gospel, and be able to teach others also.

3. The *practical* qualifications, as we have termed them, for the gospel ministry, are very important. The capacity to use well and wisely the spiritual and intellectual qualifications above mentioned, is most essential to any considerable degree of usefulness. And whilst we may find this power to some degree in the very possession of the spiritual and intellectual qualifications, and though it is to some degree a natural gift, it is nevertheless unquestionably necessary that the power for practical

usefulness and efficiency should be sought and cultivated. We all know by our observation, that it is not every one who is both a good and an educated man that is efficient in this office. There is a deficiency in practical knowledge, in discernment, in wisdom, which renders other qualifications in some instances absolutely useless. Those stewards whom the Lord would make rulers over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season, must be both faithful and wise. They must be as harmless as doves, but as wise as serpents. There must be a respectable knowledge of human character, of its nature, its principles, its laws of action, combined with a power to reach and influence it through the truth of God; for the very design of all religious instruction is to make the truth effectual in the hearts and lives of men. The medical man must not only be proficient in the knowledge of the human system and its diseases, but he must be able to discriminate the presence of particular diseases amid the various circumstances of constitutional temperament and local influences which modify special cases of sickness; and he must know how to reach the disease most effectually by its appropriate remedy with due regard to such attendant facts. In truth, this constitutes the really valuable and skilful physician, and this distinguishes him from the abstract theorist, who, with all his professional knowledge, is often practically inefficient. No degree of proficiency is of service in any avocation without the practical knowledge how to use it. We see this strikingly displayed sometimes in the gospel ministry. We have instances of almost utter failure on the part of those who are without question good men, and who are educated men whilst, on the contrary, we have cases of eminent usefulness in those who may not be equal to the others in some of these respects, but who have the facility and power of reaching and influencing men by the truth. They know how, when, and where to approach men. And, doubtless, the reason why we are surpassed in certain species of ministerial labor as a denomination, is found here. We are not as well informed with actual human life, with the manner in which men live and act, and with the manner in which they are to be approached and moved; in few words, we do not know as much of

the subject with which we have to deal. It is deficiency here that leads men of the world to laugh at ministers of the gospel for their ignorance and mistakes in practical matters and to say (as we once heard it said) that, taken out of the pulpit they were the greatest blockheads in society. And some ministers, it would seem, esteem it to their credit that they are thus ignorant; as though it were a reflection on their consecration to their work to have this practical knowledge. But our Saviour in selecting the Apostles chose those who were familiar by actual experience with all the wants, trials, and weaknesses of human nature, and who knew the principles, passions and capacities of mankind, as these are only to be really known by personal contact with men. And we had best not seek to be wiser than our Master, nor count that of little moment, which he evidently recognised as of value.

This capacity for practical efficiency in the gospel ministry, which we designate as one of the qualifications therefore, is in a sense a gift, and in a sense an acquirement. The capacity must be to some extent pre-supposed to make it possible to cultivate it. And that it differs in its native strength and in the degree in which it can be cultivated, as all other capacities, is unquestionable. It is true also, as we have said, that the possession of other qualifications to a certain degree may embrace this, but it does not follow that special attention ought not to be exercised to secure its possession, and to guard ourselves against cultivating any other qualification to such extreme as to shut out or supplant this. This practical qualification of which we speak, will be learned in part by an acquaintance with the principles of our own heart and life under the teachings of the Spirit of God; it will be learned in part also from the portraiture of human character in the Word of God; but it can never be fully attained except in connection with a thorough and personal acquaintance with the human character as learned by actual contact with it in this world. Nor can we ever hope to know how readily to deal with the spiritual maladies of our fellowmen, heal their spiritual diseases, and minister to their wants, till we learn by experience how to approach and influence them. We should take some steps,

therefore, to develop this practical power in our candidates for the gospel ministry, and certainly to avoid any course which will cut them off from the ordinary methods of acquiring a knowledge of the subjects, whose spiritual and eternal welfare it is their life-long business to promote.

It was upon this point, as one affecting the practical efficiency of our Church, that we had something to say in the article in this *Review* for October, 1871, to which allusion has already been made. It was then said that "the student's life which our candidates lead for so many years, and so purely such, does but little to teach them those methods of practical thought and influence which prevail among men, and in fact yields a type of ministerial character in many instances out of harmony with the people to whom they have to minister." "It is certainly important too," as there remarked, "if not positively necessary, that our theoretic principles should be tested in the crucible of experimental life before becoming impervious to such influences. How far it is wise to carry a course of professional education, without such a course of practical instruction certainly deserves attention." And the inquiry was then made, "Can nothing be done to insure in our system a somewhat parallel progress by our students of divinity, in the professor's course in the lecture-room, and in the pastor's work among the people? . . . How to adjust the two, a thorough preparation in the departments of formal study, and at the same time an experimental acquaintance with the methods of practical usefulness, so that both may be attained as equally valuable qualifications for efficiency in the gospel ministry, deserve careful thought by the Church." These words we repeat as meriting consideration, and we quote them furthermore for some explanation.

In the criticism accompanying the above, submitted in a footnote, these remarks were misconstrued, and we presume misconceived. Though we were careful to say that to our mind the end intimated could be attained without seriously modifying our Seminary system, they were treated as tending directly to injure and that seriously our Theological schools, and this by leading students to break in upon their regular course of study during

the Seminary course, "by frequent engagements in supplying vacant pulpits, by spasmodic efforts to advance here, there and every where the interests of religion, and by gadding about in promiscuous society and mingling in the occupations of other men." It is not necessary for us to say that our remarks were not open to any such criticism. It was expressly said that a thorough preparation for the ministry in the line of formal study was to be kept in view, and in no way to be jeopardised, and that the desired end might be attained without any serious modification of our Seminary system. And assuredly we did not intimate in the most distant way that, for any purpose, it would be desirable to break in upon the regular course pursued by students attending our Theological schools for any such purpose, much less to encourage them in "gadding about to fill vacant pulpits," "in cultivating promiscuous society," "in mingling in agricultural, mechanical, and mercantile pursuits," etc. Such conduct is so palpably inconsistent with any method of preparation for the gospel ministry, and in fact with the dignity and gravity of the ministerial character itself, that it is needless, we trust, to assert that no such thing was ever thought of. We did intend however to suggest the propriety of giving more attention in our course of preparation for the ministry, to the attainment of the qualifications for the practical, pastoral work of this office, as equally important with the intellectual qualifications sought in our system of education. Let us dwell upon this matter awhile as one important to our usefulness.

In this department of ministerial qualification there is nothing done by us with intent or system. In the circumstances in which most of our ministers were prepared for this office previous to the adoption of the present system of Theological schools, any special attention to this matter might have been superfluous. Candidates studied with some divine, who was engaged possibly at the time in the pastoral work, who himself appreciated its nature and importance, and who would naturally give many valuable lessons therein, as well as afford to such students opportunities for practical usefulness and improvement. And in fact the opportunity for any high degree of learning was so limit-

ed that there was no necessity for any provision such as we mention. The difficulty then was to secure the book knowledge needful, the practical part of the work there was no danger of neglecting. Now however it is different. Our candidates generally are closely engaged in study at our primary schools, then at our Colleges, and then at our Theological Seminaries, from six to ten years, which must make a decided impression upon them. They must necessarily cease to be a part of active society during this time. They live in an atmosphere that is literary, intellectual, and speculative, and rarely come into the business and domestic associations of the world. But this is just where ministers of the gospel preëminently are to live and labor. And how to identify one's self with such a situation, after spending a long series of years as a student, so as to feel at home with the people, and be an acceptable and useful pastor, is a hard task, and one attained often only after much effort and years in the ministry, if ever. Now, whilst it is true that there will be much that can be learned of practical usefulness, after any special preparation looking to this end, it is certainly unwise to overlook this matter entirely on this account. There should be some reference to it as a part of our system. And in regard to such provision we would say, *first*, that a definite part of the student's time should be set apart, to be spent in this the practical work of the ministry. Doubtless there was reference to this in the long interval allowed between the sessions of our Theological schools. How much time should be given for this object, the proper parties to whom it is entrusted should decide. Some division of time becomes necessary however, from the fact, that in the nature of the case, during the time the student is at the Seminary, this whole time is given to the course of study there prescribed. *Secondly*, such time should be spent by the student of divinity, by the direction of the Presbytery, under the supervision of some pastor in the practical labor of the ministry, learning by experience, and from the pastor himself, the nature of the work in which he is to be engaged, and the best manner of doing it. Something of this kind is done here and

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there now, as maybe suggested by the student himself, or by the necessities of some needy field. But in the general, such time as is not spent at the Seminary by our Theological students, is regarded as an ordinary vacation. There is no defined system on this subject adopted by our Presbyteries, that our candidates may all be placed in their vacations, so termed, in positions that will be profitable to them as schools of practical knowledge, and in which at the same time they may be useful to the Church. There are many such situations, where great assistance might be rendered to the pastor in conducting meetings for prayer, organising and superintending Sabbath-schools, distributing our religious publications, and preaching in the sense in which it is done at our Seminaries, that is, with the oversight and criticism of some ordained minister. *Thirdly*, this same end should be sought during the period of licensure. Licensure is not tantamount to ordination to the full work of the ministry. It gives the liberty and right to the candidate to preach as a probationer for the gospel ministry. And not until he has proved himself, not only competent to prepare and preach to the edification of God's people, but to take the pastoral oversight of them, to lead them into the paths of righteousness by a Christ-like example, to minister in private to their spiritual necessities, and to rule over them in the Lord; not until this is done are they prepared to extend a call to him, founded on his fitness in full for this office and work. The Presbyteries are authorised to license probationers to the gospel ministry, that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment of the talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed, and that the ministry be not committed to weak or unworthy men. And after a competent trial of their talents, and receiving a good report of the churches, they may be ordained to this sacred office. Of course there should be a sufficient period given for the churches to judge truthfully and wisely in this matter, and for the licentiate fully to evince his qualifications and capabilities for the duties of such an office. And in this period, which is anterior to his entrance on the full work of the ministry, and subsequent to the period of special study for the ministry, the licentiate

may especially cultivate the qualification for usefulness in the practical work of the pastor among the people.

We have thus gone over the subject of Ministerial Training as proposed in the outset, and shall conclude what we have to say, by calling attention to the fact, that the history of those who have been eminent in the service of God in the ministry of his Son, proves them men who combined all of these qualifications. And this is especially true of the fathers and founders of our Church in this country. It is but necessary to recall to memory such men as William Graham, Archibald Alexander, Moses Hoge, Matthew Lacy, John H. Ride, Dr. Baxter, Conrad Speece, and others of their day and class. Many of them were men of marked intellectual strength and cultivation, but this was in subordination to the power of practical piety, and made subservient to God's grace and truth. They were eminently men of *practical* power too; men who wielded a great influence for God and his cause, through their knowledge of human character, and their influence over men. They were men, it is true, whose character received an impress from the period in which they lived and labored, but men whose characters and lives will never cease to be interesting and instructive, and whose memory will be long cherished. For to them we are greatly indebted as a Church. The history of their early training, and their qualifications for this sacred office, as evinced by their trials before the Presbytery and the people, speak a great deal on this subject, and enable us to see the conditions of real efficiency in the ministry of the gospel. It is not "University men" that God has honored preeminently in this work, but men whom he has trained in other literary schools, and by other methods beside those there used.

We are now prepared to proceed to the second general division of this subject as proposed.

II. To whom is Ministerial Training entrusted in our Form of Government?

This is a question of some importance. For to secure the proper degree of attention to this subject, to have it orderly and well done,

it is evidently necessary to understand to whom it is committed. And if it is thus fixed by the provisions of our Constitution, we should seek to preserve the integrity and harmonious working of our system by the proper observance of such provision. If we will turn to Chapter XIV. and XV. of the Form of Government, we readily see that this question is fully and explicitly answered. There we learn, that the whole jurisdiction of this subject, all that pertains to the proper and wise exercise of this important branch of ecclesiastical power, is expressly and exclusively committed to the Presbytery. Nor will any question either the fact or the wisdom of this constitutional disposition of the subject. And in all our places and provisions to promote this interest, if this be true, we should act in direct reference to this fact. We will mention what we conceive to be the right and duty of the Presbytery in the premises, under these constitutional provisions.

1. It belongs to the Presbytery to make the *necessary provision* for Ministerial Training. The trials to which candidates are subjected by the Presbytery, demand that there should be a provision co-extensive therewith for their training. And if there is not at hand such provision as is needed to secure the requisite qualification, which the Presbytery approves, and of which it may avail itself, the right to provide it is inherent in this Court. It is under this implied right that our Presbyteries in the past have established high schools and academies for the prosecution of an education, such as is required in the trials for licensure and ordination. This right and necessity led our fathers to establish schools of this class, which have, many of them, since grown to our present colleges. And when not necessary by special action to provide such schools, it is the duty and right of the Presbytery to encourage such of those already established, as will afford the necessary facilities for such an education, and at the same time will throw around our students a healthful religious atmosphere and a Presbyterian influence. There should certainly be such action as is necessary in this matter, to provide such schools and colleges, and to secure such influences therein as are required by the best interests of our

candidates and of our Church. And the right to do it is entrusted to these courts. And beside this, it is manifestly the part of the Presbytery to provide for the study of divinity proper. This may be done by directing the candidates to some approved divine of its own to be instructed and prepared for trial by the Presbytery, or to such Theological school as it may approve for this purpose. It may be well for us to recall just here the utterance of our General Assembly when adopting the plan of our first Theological Seminary: "The Constitution of our Church guarantees to every Presbytery the right of judging of its own candidates for licensure and ordination; so the Assembly thinks it proper to state most explicitly, that every Presbytery and Synod will of course be left at full liberty to countenance the proposed plan or not, at pleasure; and to send their students to the projected seminary, or keep them as heretofore within their own bounds, as they think most conducive to the prosperity of the Church." There is a principle and right involved in this declaration which is well worth our attention. It shows in what light this subject was received when Theological schools were first founded, and how clearly the right and duty of the Presbytery was understood. It is equally true now. If any Presbytery is expected to patronise Theological schools or any particular Theological school, it should have a direct influence in its control. For certainly this Court owes it to the constitutional trust confided to it, as well as to the interest of religion, to see that such institutions are officered and controlled to the promotion of sound doctrine and evangelical piety, and in harmony with our Presbyterian system; and if this is not possible, immediately to resume its constitutional right and privilege of training its own candidates within its own bounds. Of course it will not be supposed that any such statement is made with any special reference to our present schools. And yet no amount of confidence in special Theological schools or professors should ever lead the Church to overlook the constitutional attitude of this subject, and the primary and supreme control of the Presbyteries therein.

But beside the special training necessary in a literary and

theological course, the Presbytery should see that other qualifications are attained. They must place our candidates for the ministry under such influences, and require such practical religious work, as will develop an active, healthful, and practical piety, as a most essential requisite for this sacred office. Thus they at once train them for active usefulness, and learn at the same time whether they possess these traits and qualifications, which will stand the heat and burden of actual ministerial life. Young men who have only learned of the ministerial office and work in the professor's lecture-room, it is true may and ought to have learned much that is of great service, and that is actually necessary, and yet they know, we may say, little or nothing of what the real and practical work of the ministry is, nor of their qualifications and capacities therein. And something of this should be known, and some qualification for it attained and displayed before ordination to the full work of the ministry. A completion of the course at the Seminary is not all of Ministerial Training nor preparation. A certificate of proficiency from our theological faculties is not licensure. It is to be considered as an assurance of having completed the prescribed course of study preparatory to the ministry, and of proficiency in the branches of learning therein taught, but this is all. The whole responsibility in every case of licensure or ordination devolves on the Presbytery. And it should subject each candidate to such trials as it may deem necessary within the provision of the Book, and to such exhibition before the people of their talents as will satisfy the Church that they are called of God to this sacred office.

2. It is the duty of the Presbytery, too, not only to provide for the training of candidates for the ministry, but also to *super-
vise each candidate in such course of preparation.* This is evidently the design of our custom of taking young men, who are seeking the ministry, "under the care of the Presbytery," that they may be under its guidance, supervision and counsel in prosecuting their course of study and general preparation for this office. And it is the manifest intent of the Constitution, that as soon as such a course is definitely determined on, every candidate for this office shall place himself under care of that Presbytery

to which he naturally belongs. This of course implies, that the candidate shall not undertake himself to say, without consultation with his Presbytery, where he shall prosecute his course of study, but at that Theological school or under that approved divine, which this body shall think best. And it is certainly invading this right of the Presbytery and the province of our Theological Seminaries, for ministers of their own accord, to undertake to prepare young men for the ministry. It may be necessary that such instructions should be rendered by ministers in private, under certain circumstances, but in all cases the Presbytery should be the judge; and only under such a condition should it ever be done or encouraged.

3. It is also the province of the Presbytery, *to judge of the qualifications of those seeking this office, and formally to induct them into it.* After a full and fair opportunity has been given for the acquirement of the qualifications needful for the gospel ministry, such as will enable the student to do himself justice and the Presbytery to form a correct judgment, the candidate shall be subjected by this court to the trials prescribed in the Form of Government for this purpose and such like, till it is satisfied that they are good and faithful men, who are able to teach others also; or, in other words, till they are persuaded that they are called unto the gospel ministry of him who is the Head of the Church. And when this point is reached, the Presbytery, under its solemn obligation as a court of the Lord Jesus Christ, is formally to set apart such candidate to the holy ministry; and he thenceforth is to give himself wholly to these things, that he may be a workman which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Under this general provision the Presbytery possesses the right of construing the requirements of the Constitution in every individual case of ordination, so as to secure the design of our Standards, and yet not sacrifice its spirit to the letter. The manifest *intent* of these provisions, taken in connection with the scriptural authority upon which they are based, is to be our guide. It should always demand such qualifications from every candidate as justice to our own system and the inherent impor-

tance of the case demands, and yet it is for the Presbytery to yield the letter to the spirit of these requirements in favor of extraordinary cases, as the Book provides. It shall say in any such particular case, whether it may or may not be done; and what special requirement may be excepted, and in what degree. It is well enough, too, to have some definite knowledge in what cases this may be wisely and safely done.

There is a liberty possessed by the Presbytery here, which, as we have said, it should not be afraid to use, yet it is a right which evidently must be exercised under the guidance of the wisdom of the gospel. Upon this subject we would say, that what we term the spiritual qualifications, are of absolute and the highest importance to the proper discharge of the duties of this office, and can never be excepted. Without a personal acquaintance with the salvation of the gospel, and such knowledge of its nature and truths as will qualify the candidate to be a competent and safe guide to God's people therein, of course he is not qualified for this office. If there is any blemish or any great defect in the Christian character such as will destroy the standing or usefulness of a minister, this also should decide the question. Of the special acquirements in classical and theological studies demanded, if there is such a degree of proficiency as will exhibit intellectual competency and insure usefulness, and yet a deficiency in some part of the prescribed course which is unavoidable under the circumstances, it should not be made an insuperable hindrance to an entrance to the ministry. In such cases some of the studies indicated as desirable, may more properly be dispensed with in part or entirely, than others—those we should say, that were less directly necessary to the special demands of the ministry. Those attainments necessary to the understanding of the Scriptures, and a truthful exposition of the same, and all such subjects as are intimately connected with the duties of this office, and contribute directly to usefulness and success therein, should always be required to be possessed to a respectable degree. Purely literary and classical studies can better be dispensed with, than the knowledge of the original languages of the Scriptures, Biblical literature, eccle-

siastical history, theology, or the laws of interpretation. And of course, each case of this kind must stand upon its own footing, and carry its own justification with it. No action of the kind should ever be such as to ignore our recognised standard of qualification, or to reflect upon its merits, as rule for general action. No one, for instance, should ever be encouraged to neglect any branch of these studies, who can by reasonable and proper exertion acquire them all. There is a marked difference between cases that are really extraordinary and these that are only encompassed by some decided difficulties. He that will not take the time and expend the labor to go through the whole course of preparation, whenever it can be done, may well doubt whether he will be found willing to endure the hardness of a good soldier of the cross. And certainly such exceptions should never be made under the plea that the Church will suffer if they are detained for full preparation. This is making a short cut that does not contribute to advancement. Haste to get into this responsible office at the expense of any part of a course of study long recognised as tributary to usefulness and success therein, is of itself a bad omen and should never be encouraged. And yet there are cases which we all would recognise as extraordinary, in which, if not indispensable, it would be unreasonable to require a full and unexceptionable compliance with the letter of our rules on this subject; instances, too, in which we are satisfied there would be decided usefulness in the ministry, and in which there would be no sacrifice of the spirit of our rules, and no precedent established which would give us trouble. In such cases, the liberty mentioned is manifestly to be used, and used without fear or hesitancy, and yet used under the guidance of that spirit of wisdom freely given from above. It might be well for the Presbytery to exercise a little more liberty in directing the studies of such candidates. It is the case sometimes that such difficulties might be removed if the candidate were authorised to study in private with the supervision and instruction of some pastor.

Thus much for the duty and rights of the Presbytery in this

work of training men for the gospel ministry. It is assigned to these Courts by our Constitution. Here let it remain.

Let us consider briefly the last of the topics proposed in this article.

III. What is the Province of our Theological Seminaries in Ministerial Training?

Theology has been a subject of study and of discussion since the foundation of the Church. And, doubtless, in some method and to some extent, instruction has been imparted on the subject in every age. It was the subject of minute and extended discussion and speculation in the schools of the Middle Ages. There was a department of Theology in the Universities of Europe previous to the Reformation; and after the Reformation it was taught and studied as one of the learned professions, just as the profession of Law or Medicine. It was taught simply as part of the course of a University, which course to be such must cover all the departments of liberal culture and professional training, theology included. But Theological Seminaries in the sense in which we understand them, schools established by the Church, and under its care, for the exclusive purpose of instructing candidates for the gospel ministry, are of recent date. Such institutions have only been known among us for about sixty years. A writer in the *Presbyterian Critic*, in the days of its existence, remarked on this subject: "that although the period of their existence is more than the lifetime of a generation, it is but a short space in the lifetime of systems, whose lifetime is to be measured by centuries. So that we may regard the system of theological training as still a novelty in our Church. It certainly shows the unsettled relation of a new thing, in some respects, and calls for the watchful heed and correcting hand of the Church, until it is far more matured than now and until we have ampler experimental assurance than now of the safety of its workings." If there is any point in all our system, or in any other system of Church government, where there should be posted a watchful vigilance, with urgent and

solemn injunction to keep an eye ever alive to its nature and movements, it should be at this point. Not only the efficiency of the ministry depends on the influence and instruction imparted at these institutions, but the purity, the power, and the very life of God's truth and Church depend on it. From thence comes the type of Christian activity and belief, that is to characterise and govern our Church in all its history. We do not speak thus as inimical in the least to the system, and much less as questioning in the least the purity, the soundness, or the efficiency of our present institutions. They have done an honored service for the Church of Christ and for our denominational interests. But we cannot but see that they are in a most responsible position, and one that if abused would bring untold evil on the whole Church. It is well, then, to understand the attitude and province of such institutions.

The province of Theological Seminaries, then, is to instruct our candidates in those branches of knowledge which will qualify them to be acceptable and edifying ministers of God's Word, *as the agents of the Presbyteries*. The Presbytery finds that it is "more conducive to the prosperity of the Church," that our candidates should attend these schools, established and sustained for this purpose of instructing candidates for the ministry, and hence sends its students here instead of undertaking to teach them in its own bounds. This Court in the mean time, however, still maintains its supervision and control over its students. We do not mean, of course, that any narrow and suspicious course should be pursued toward our Theological faculties, but as ample and as liberal allowance of jurisdiction should be yielded to these brethren as is needed, and every encouragement given them that is necessary to make their important labor effective for the Church. There should evidently be an understanding of the constitutional attitude of such institutions, and an adjustment of the mutual relation of the Presbytery and its representative in the department of instruction, the theological faculty, that there may be a full and faithful performance of this important work of preparing men for the gospel ministry. There should be a direct and close connection between the two, the nearer the more

constitutional the safer and the more satisfactory to the Church. And to our mind the authority and control which the Church is authorised to exercise over such institutions, is lodged here. And the more nearly we recognise this fact the more fully will this system be understood and sustained by the Church at large, and the more harmoniously will it work. There evidently is a want of unanimity of sentiment and action on this subject, and consequently some want of accord and agreement in the management and patronage of these institutions. This should not be. But not only should the rights of the Presbyteries be recognised in the establishment and control of such institutions, but their inherent right of controlling their students should never be invaded by the theological faculties. The Presbytery alone is the proper party to direct them in their labors, and only by its authority and direction have candidates of the ministry a right to exercise their gifts or conduct any public service, other than that of a private Christian. And certainly it is disorderly for any theological student to go within the bounds of a Presbytery other than his own, and without any consent of such Presbytery, to supply its churches. Such things are done, however, though a positive invasion of the jurisdiction of the Presbytery. Theological faculties are entrusted with all needed authority over these candidates whilst at the Seminary, that may be necessary or conducive to their highest improvement in the course there taught, but nothing more than this; and they have absolutely none as to their location or labors outside of the Seminary.

But, on the other hand, whilst these institutions should not invade the distinctive rights of the Presbytery, the Presbytery should give them, when within their appropriate sphere, every encouragement and support, and fully recognise the important work entrusted to them. Our candidates should always be encouraged to study in our Theological Seminaries, and not in private with our ministers, unless in special cases, and then only by advice of the Presbytery. The Presbytery should not encourage their students, or permit them, *sub silentio*, whilst at the Seminary, to drop off any part of the regular course; and certainly not without consent of the faculty, and that for a good

and sufficient reason. Presbyteries should not encourage their students to leave the Seminary for licensure before the close of full term of such institutions. It is not treating the faculties of such institutions and their work with due respect to license candidates at the close of the second session. It is generally, too, a great injury to the student himself, by subjecting him to the temptation of leaving the Seminary altogether or greatly neglecting the remaining part of the course. And, if possible, the Presbyteries and Seminary faculties should so arrange it that students shall not be compelled to neglect the latter part of their course in attending meetings of Presbyteries to stand their trials. The Presbyteries, too, it seems to us, should always demand, as an item of consideration in licensure, certificates of student's fidelity and of his proficiency. Some report, it occurs to us, of this kind should always be rendered by the Theological faculties who have been so intimately associated with our candidates, as their religious instructors and guides, to the Presbyteries, and should be always considered by that body in the question of licensure. This would be a bond of union between these parties which would be mutually advantageous, and tend to secure the highest improvement of the Seminary course by the student himself.

It is important that the proper sphere of both the Presbytery and the Theological school be understood and observed, that both may harmoniously coöperate in the work of training men for the gospel ministry; the Theological Seminary discharging a most important part of this work, as the representative and agent of Presbytery; and the Presbytery giving every encouragement and assistance to these institutions in this labor.

But we must bring this article to a close. If anything has been said which will, in any degree, tend to the clearer perception of this important interest of the Church of Christ, or to more satisfactory settlement of it in our practice, the author is abundantly repaid.