

THE

PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 23.—JANUARY, 1893.

I. SOME POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

There is about the title of this article a faint and somewhat unpleasant suggestion of the old play upon the words orthodoxy and other-doxo, my doxy and your doxy. Bigoted though the paronomasia may sound, yet the gist of the jest is just; no one would willingly hold aught but the truth, or yet, aught less than the truth; any man's real creed, therefore, must necessarily be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as he sees it; so, then, to a writer sincere in his purpose, and true to his conviction, every conception other than his conception is misconception. If, however, one readily recognizes and candidly confesses his limitations, repudiates all pretence to speak *ex cathedra*, disavowing any individual illumination to see, or any special authority to declare, the truth, perhaps there will be nothing presumptuous in an attempt to set forth, and to set right, what he believes to be certain very prevalent misconceptions of Presbyterianism in the popular mind.

Of course the writer recognizes the fact that Calvinism and Presbyterianism are not synonymous terms; yet as the Presbyterian Church is, more than any other, thoroughly and generally identified with this system of faith, and inasmuch, moreover, as the chief objections obtaining against Presbyterianism are directed against its Calvinistic doctrine, we may be pardoned in an article designed to be popular for using the terms somewhat interchangeably.

Abuse of Calvinism has long been the favorite resort of igno-

III. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES.

A university, according to the generally accepted definition of the name, "is a universal school, in which are taught all branches of learning, or the four faculties of theology, medicine, law, and the sciences and arts." Such were the great universities of the middle ages, those of Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, and others. Such are the universities of modern Europe, of Germany, England and Scotland, and such is the plan upon which those institutions in America which call themselves universities are projected, though they may not all be able to work out the plan thoroughly, owing to circumstances peculiar to our own country. In those institutions which are established and controlled by the state, the theological faculty is omitted, as in the Universities of Virginia and Michigan. In those which are under denominational control, or which at least profess to bear a distinctive religious character, such as Harvard, Yale, Vanderbilt, Cumberland, and Sewanee, the theological faculty is accorded a place of special importance.

No one has ever seen fit to question the propriety of attaching the faculties of law and medicine to the university. Even religious institutions seek to enhance their importance and usefulness by founding or adopting such schools. Sometimes, it is true, the connection is merely nominal, there being neither local proximity nor direct control on the part of the parent institution; yet the idea of the university, it is thought, necessarily implies such an appendage. And it does seem to be reasonable that, if the church undertakes to direct the work of education at all, she should seek to exercise an elevating and sanctifying influence upon the higher class of studies, those which bear most directly upon the preparation for the active duties of life, and that she should seek to guard against materialism and infidelity in those professions which are so influential for good or evil, and so necessary to the existence and welfare of society. There is also something agreeable to the mind in that unity of purpose, of plan and of

result in a system of education which finds its visible expression in a great university, infusing a common spirit, and that a sanctified spirit, into all the various branches of human learning. Nor is it a matter of inferior importance that all the sons of the church, in preparing themselves for the several walks of life, should receive their education in the same institution, and thus feel themselves bound to one another by the bonds of a common maternity and a common brotherhood, and that intermingling with one another up to the very time when their paths diverge into their various occupations, they may form those affectionate relations which can never be entirely dissolved. Surely this would tend to prevent the narrowness, prejudices, and exclusiveness of the professional spirit now so common, and except for such influences as these, almost unavoidable.

Now, is it not strange that, while the importance of these considerations is universally admitted, and as far as possible acted upon, the education of the candidates for the ministry should be thought to constitute an exception? that while lawyers and doctors and scientists and men destined for all other occupations should as far as possible be educated together, and go out to their work acquainted with each other, in harmony with each other, ready to cooperate with each other in all the common interests of society and of the church, the ministry, which should be the least exclusive of all professions, the most human and many-sided in its sympathies, intended to interest and influence all classes, must be educated alone, shut off to themselves as if they would be contaminated by contact with other youth, or as if the purpose was to educate them out of all sympathy with their kind? This system would be much more in harmony with Romanism than with Presbyterianism. By those unacquainted with the history of our church it might be thought to be the outgrowth of that principle of the essential distinction of the clergy and the laity which so soon appeared in the early church, and which has been such a fruitful source of error ever since. To this principle is due the celibacy of the clergy, monasticism, priestly power, and the hierarchy. This system of education, however, is an anomaly in Presbyterianism, which

seeks to draw together the ministry and the people instead of separating them. Whatever tends to educate the ministry away from the people, to hinder a thorough identity of interest and sympathy between them, is unpresbyterian and a hindrance to our usefulness as a church. How often do we hear it said that Presbyterian ministers do not reach the people, and that they are surpassed in this important qualification for their work by men of inferior gifts and culture. Indeed, their defect in this particular is sometimes wrongly attributed to their excessive literary culture, to too much education. Should it not rather be attributed to their wrong method of education? Many a minister looks back with regret to his three years' seclusion within the walls of a theological seminary because he discovers there the fostering causes of his social timidity, his awkwardness, his inability to adapt himself to general society and to sympathize with the feelings and habits of thought of all sorts of people. His associates during that time were those of a single class, whose subjects of thought, experiences, characters, and expectations were essentially the same. Under such influences his own character becomes to a certain extent stereotyped in a form alien to that of the people at large. This would not have been true if he had been educated in contact with the great variety of characters which are represented in a school of general as well as religious learning. There is a certain flavor of monasticism pervading the air of a theological seminary which is not found in a university. The evils thus described are subtle and intangible, but they are not imaginary. The writer remembers to have heard at least one of his cotemporaries in the seminary say that during his three years' connection with the institution he had never entered a family or spoken to a lady, all his associates being his fellow recluses. Such a training would furnish a very unsuitable preparation for the office of pastor or evangelist. No doubt any system of education implies more or less seclusion from general society, hence all the greater reason why the associations of academic life should be as free as possible from the narrowing influences of caste. Let them be such as shall enlarge rather than contract the social nature.

These considerations seem to us of great importance. And yet, there are those who find fault with an earnest, and, it may be added, a successful, effort which has been making for several years to educate ministers for the Presbyterian Church in a seminary which is operated under the charter of a university, as if it were a dangerous novelty.

But whatever may be said about it, the plan is not a novelty. The historic method of theological education has ever been in connection with schools of general learning. The separate theological seminary is a modern and exclusively an American idea. Such an institution was never known until after the beginning of the present century. The first theological school of which we read in church history was the celebrated institute in Alexandria, in Egypt, in which Clement and Origen were the most eminent teachers. It grew out of a parochial school intended for the instruction of catechumens, or candidates for membership in the church; but became, especially under Origen, a seminary of secular as well as sacred learning, and was frequented by Jews, heathens, and Gnostic heretics, many of whom were there led to embrace the gospel. The principal universities of Europe anterior to the Reformation originated in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and were schools of both secular and theological instruction. In them the great philosophical theologians, the schoolmen, great notwithstanding their defects and errors, taught. In them, the great Reformers, Wickliffe and Huss, taught. It was in such an institution that Luther began his great work. The clergy of the English Church have always received their training in the universities. The men who constituted the celebrated Westminster Assembly, and drew up our Confession of Faith and Catechisms were, with few exceptions, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. The Presbyterian, John Howe, and the Independent, John Owen, were from these institutions. The Scotch Presbyterians knew nothing of theological seminaries distinct from the universities until the seceding bodies borrowed the American plan. It is very easy to see why *they* established separate theological schools and not universities. They had no need for the latter class of institutions, there was no place for them. The *national* uni-

versities were accessible to them, were ample in their provisions for all, and were unexceptionable as schools of secular learning. It was only necessary to provide for the training of their own ministry under their own care, and to place their schools in close proximity to one of the universities, to which their students might have access without restrictions. Coming to this country, we find that all the earlier schools of theology were in connection with universities or colleges. In the course of time, however, this combination was abandoned for separate theological seminaries, except in a few cases, such as Harvard and Yale. For this departure from the historic method of theological education, no adequate reason can be discovered, except such as arose from the force of circumstances. In some cases, no doubt, the funds of the colleges were insufficient to support a theological faculty. This was true of Oakland College in Mississippi, in connection with which an effort was made to establish a divinity school for the Southwest. After being successfully conducted for several years, during which time a number of able and useful ministers were graduated, the experiment was abandoned because of the loss of the endowment in the financial reverses of 1837 and 1838. In other cases it was impossible to secure the sufficient support of the church in favor of any one out of a number of rival institutions. And in others, the charters under which the colleges were operated did not give to the church that absolute control which would be necessary in an institution intended for the training of her ministers. But there seems to be no evidence that the establishment of separate theological seminaries was the result of a conviction that the older system was faulty.

The advocates of the university system have argued that the connection of its professors with a broader range of studies would in some measure counteract the well-known tendency of specialists to take one-sided views of truth and thus run into errors. On the other hand, a distinguished writer upon this subject in a recent number of the *QUARTERLY*¹ has undertaken to show by a historical review that, in fact, a greater number of heresies have

¹ PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY, April, 1892.

originated in the university than in the seminary, which is, no doubt, true for the simple reason that the university system has been in use for centuries, and still widely prevails everywhere except in America, while seminaries are of recent origin and are comparatively few in number. In regard to the perversion of Harvard from the orthodox faith, and the eccentric theology of Yale, especially cited by the writer, both of these facts may be accounted for as we account for the errors of the Union Seminary, New York; that is, by the absence of an efficient church control. The independent form of church government does not afford any efficient guard to the orthodoxy of its schools or its ministry.

The establishment of the Southwestern Presbyterian University in the city of Clarksville, Tenn., with a Divinity School as one of its constituent parts, has furnished the occasion for the discussion, before the courts of the church and by the religious press, of the comparative merits of the two methods of theological education treated of in this paper. It was a cherished idea of the late Dr. J. A. Lyon, of Columbus, Miss., to unite the whole Southern Presbyterian Church in the founding and support of a great university at some central point in our territory. It was his hope that with a patronage and endowments derived from so large and wealthy a constituency, an institution might be established equal in its equipment to any in the land, and in which all other academies and colleges in connection with our Southern Church might find their complement and crown. It was a grand conception, and met with considerable favor, but was found to be impracticable and was abandoned. This, however, suggested another plan both desirable and practicable. Looking over the States of the southwest at the close of the war, it was found that there was no Presbyterian college in a high state of efficiency between the southern border of Kentucky and the Rio Grande. La Grange and Oakland had perished; King, Austin, and Stewart, were struggling for existence. Then it was that the plan was conceived of uniting the whole southwestern church in the support of an institution, which, without interfering with local or synodical enterprises, would furnish facilities for the higher education, both academic and professional, accessible to all. Committees of conference and co-

operation were appointed by the Synods of Alabama, Arkansas, Memphis, Mississippi, Nashville, and Texas, to consider the whole subject and devise a plan for the establishment of such an institution. The result of their deliberations was the founding of the Southwestern Presbyterian University, and the selection of Clarksville as its seat. The names of the men who constituted the original board of directors will be regarded as a sufficient guaranty that their action was not hasty or ill-considered, either in the decision to which they came, or in the plans by which it was carried into effect. They were Rev. C. A. Stillman, D. D., and T. A. Hamilton, Esq., of the Synod of Alabama; Rev. T. R. Welch, D. D., and Rev. E. McNair, of the Synod of Arkansas; Rev. J. N. Waddel, D. D., LL. D., and Hon. B. M. Estes, of the Synod of Memphis; Rev. B. M. Palmer, D. D., LL. D., and Rev. Joseph B. Stratton, D. D., of the Synod of Mississippi; Rev. J. B. Shearer, D. D., and D. N. Kennedy, Esq., of the Synod of Nashville; and Rev. W. K. Marshall, D. D., and D. McGregor, Esq., (afterwards Rev.) of the Synod of Texas. They were a body of eminently wise and intelligent men, thoroughly acquainted with the wants of the southwest, and thoroughly conversant with the principles and practical details of the whole subject of education. Their action was cordially approved by their respective synods. The Synod of Texas, having undertaken a few years later to establish a theological school of their own, and becoming more deeply interested in the brightening prospects of Austin College, very naturally and properly withdrew from the active management of the university which they had helped to establish, in order to concentrate their efforts upon their synodical institution. But there was never any indication given that they ceased to approve the plan upon which the university was constructed. The other synods have never ceased to reiterate from year to year their expressions of interest and approval, and when recently earnest efforts have been made to induce them to abandon their cherished enterprise and join in the establishment of a separate theological seminary, they declined, not merely because they were pledged to the one, but because they preferred it to the other, deliberately preferred it after an experience of seven years. In this prefer-

ence they have the endorsement of some of the leading minds of the church, not members of these synods, who have made this whole matter of ministerial education a subject of profound thought. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of giving, in this connection, an extract from a letter of the most eminent living theologian of this country, Rev. Dr. R. L. Dabney, which has already appeared in print.

“The great Reformed churches of the Reformation era,” he says, “none of them adopted the plan of educating their pastors in separate professional schools like our theological seminaries. They are an American invention, and, indeed, of congregational devisement, imitated by the Presbyterians, first by Dr. John M. Mason, and then at Princeton. The parent churches all preferred the plan of educating their pastors in the same Christian academies and universities in which other children of the church pursued their studies. I have never been certain that our plan was wiser than theirs; obvious advantages and economies of labor might be found in the old continental plan. And for many years I have felt convinced that one of the large mistakes made by the directors of Hampden-Sydney and Union Seminary in Virginia, is their failing so to affiliate their courses of instruction as to make them, combined, a university course. There are endowments buildings and teachers enough there to-day, and of sufficient talent and scholarship, if combined, to fill before the public eye the place of a great university and to do its work. Insulated from each other, they present to the public the aspect of two small institutions; and the learning and teaching ability of the theological faculty is confined to the theological students—a peculiar and insulated class, discounted by the press and public from general attention, so as to make no general impression for the truth on the mind of the country. Many other wastes of energy and ability flow from our present arrangements. You may judge, then, how entirely my way of thinking concurs with that adopted by the Southwestern Presbyterian University, in resolving to have, as a part of the university, and in strict affiliation with the other departments of the university, a theological department. It is precisely the experiment which I wish to see tried somewhere.”

At the first formal meeting of the directors, a constitution and by-laws were drawn up in which it was provided, “that at the proper period in the progress of the university, the directors shall enlarge the scope of its operations by adding to the system departments of professional education, Theology, Law and Medicine.” In 1885, it was judged by the board, that the time had come to make the first step in this advance, and the Divinity School was organized with four professors. The endowments of the university, together with a special fund raised for the purpose, enabled the board to make this enlargement without any violent strain. From that time the Divinity school has moved on *pari*

passu with the other departments of the university, growing in efficiency and in the favor of God's people, and accomplishing results fully as great as the most sanguine could have reasonably expected. Students completing their course in the academic department of the university and passing into the Divinity School, have furnished a regular supply of recruits from year to year, while a goodly number have come from other institutions, attracted by the peculiar features of the system. At the end of every collegiate year, the university has sent out its contribution to the ranks of the ministry, and has been gratified to know that these young men have been pronounced by the Presbyteries examining them the peers of the graduates of any institutions in the church. If the tree is to be judged by its fruits, the friends of the university have no reason to feel that their system is not a good one. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles."

It has been represented by some ignorant of the truth, or prejudiced against it, that because such a Divinity School is a *department* of the university and not an independent institution, it is necessarily a second rate and insignificant concern. But why should it be? Will not the same number of professors of equal learning, ability and fidelity, teaching the same course of study, accomplish the same results? There are as many professors in the Divinity School of the Southwestern Presbyterian University as there are in the seminaries of Union and Columbia, and it is the purpose of the directors to keep abreast, in this respect, with the foremost institutions in our church. But, they say, it is a mere *department*. Does any one object to the law school of the University of Virginia, one of the most celebrated in the land, that it is a mere department? The professors and students in the Divinity School of the Southwestern Presbyterian University sustain precisely the same relation to that institution that the professors and students of the Law school of the University of Virginia sustain to that institution. The one are members of the University faculty, and the others are members of the student body and subject to the laws of the university; that is all.

It is thought by others that the object of the university plan is to shorten the course of study. This is not true. Under the present arrangement of the only institution of the Southern Church

in which the historic system is in operation, the *time* is shortened but not the course of study; the time is shortened by lengthening the session and shortening the vacations, by omitting the weekly holidays, and by devoting more time during the academic course to the study of the English Scriptures than is usual in other institutions. But nothing could be further from the purpose of the directors than to shorten the course of study in the theological department, or in any way lower the standard of preparation for the ministry; on the contrary they hope to render the preparation more complete by affording opportunities for special study. Even the present two years' arrangement is not essential to the system, and may be changed whenever it is thought best to do so. But so far it has worked well, and under it the students gain one year in time, and the church is saved one-third of the expense of educating a candidate for the ministry. Another mistake as to the advantages of the university system made by those who are not familiar with its working is, that they are valuable only to a certain class of students, who, beginning their preparation for the ministry comparatively late in life, have only a limited time to devote to it. It is true that such combinations of studies may thus be made as will enable young men of mature years and defective academic training to repair somewhat their deficiencies while pursuing their theological studies. This class of candidates for the ministry is becoming more and more numerous every year, but no suitable provision is made for their peculiar needs in the seminaries. By entering the university and taking a three years' course, they may devote part of their time to the pursuit of those academic studies which have a special bearing on their professional studies. Some of our best men decide to enter the ministry comparatively late in life, and no doubt many more would come to this decision if they knew of some means by which they could, in part at least, repair the deficiencies of their early education, without consuming too much time. We think that the provision made for this class of students by the university system is of very great advantage, especially in view of the urgent need of an increase of ministers. But at the same time it should be understood that this *is only an incidental feature in the system*, and that such combinations of studies are not re-

commended to those who are not too far advanced in life to take their academic degrees, and then pass on into the Divinity School.

The advantages of theological education in universities may be summed up as follows :

1. *The economy of means.* It costs far less to maintain such a combination of schools than separate institutions. The buildings, libraries, appliances, endowments of the university, constitute the support of the theological school. The amount of money necessary to found and conduct both a college and a seminary, if combined in one, would give the church an institution of incomparably greater respectability and usefulness.

2. *The economy of men.* Our colleges as well as our seminaries take many of our best men from the active duties of the ministry. It is unavoidable. For some branches of instruction they are specially qualified by their professional studies, while it is also desirable to have their moral and religious influence in the training of young men. But the church can ill spare them from the appropriate work of the ministry. In the university, the number of ministers required may be greatly lessened because the labors and influence of those engaged in theological instruction may be enjoyed by the whole institution.

3. *The wholesome effect upon the students of a literary institution of the presence of and their daily intercourse with such a body of Christian young men as are found in our theological schools.* They are young men of literary culture already, they are exemplary models of good order and diligence and Christian living. Their influence cannot but be powerfully felt in elevating the tone of college life, and leading many to Christ. Moreover, most of our educated young men make their choice of a profession while at college, and it is natural to suppose that the existence of a theological school at their side would be the means of leading many to adopt the ministry.

4. *The influence upon the theological students themselves of association with other young men not pursuing the same line of study and work.* The effect of this will be to prevent that contracted professional spirit which is apt to be engendered by the opposite system, to give a broader culture, and a more practical character to their preparation for the work of the gospel ministry.

ROBERT PRICE.