

Preaching and Scholarship

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
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The relation that scholarship bears to preaching is, I fear, not always understood, and is in fact often misunderstood. For real attainments in scholarship, so far from being a help to preaching, are sometimes supposed to be a positive hindrance. And if a man happens to like books, it is by some people doubted whether he will ever be a successful preacher, or strongly suspected that he will become a bookworm and lose all sympathy with the people and hence all warmth and power in his preaching. Reading Greek and preaching are often supposed to be uncongenial companions. A presbytery was once examining a young minister for ordination and he was asked what he would do if he did not succeed as a preacher. He at once replied that he would try to get a place as theological professor. He evidently thought that played out preachers were good enough to teach others how to preach.

There exists a half-suppressed feeling among many good people that much learning is not good for a preacher. And this feeling is not [3] always suppressed, but finds expression in various insinuations aimed at educated ministers and the schools they attended. Some people, having heard that “a little learning is a dangerous thing,” conclude that much learning is much more so. Hence they would limit the “much” to a very small amount, and so do many preachers. A tender fear is entertained that the young minister will become heretical if he knows too much. And so he may, if he studies along heretical lines. But all learning is not skeptical. There is still such a thing as reverent scholarship. Surely infidelity and rationalism have not absorbed all knowledge. You may even hear that a theological seminary is a very nest of heresy, and that, too, where Calvinism of the strictest sort is taught. But such an objection to theological education may arise from ignorance of the real workings of the institution.

It is even sometimes predicted that the preachers will become too learned—too “high larn’t”—if they go to school much, a fear, I am

persuaded, based on limited acquaintance with theological students. There is small ground for uneasiness here. Your much learning, my brother, has not made you mad, nor any one else. Such cases do occur where a man be- [4] comes top heavy with supposed knowledge, but they are very rare, and, is usually when one is not deep rooted in the faith or is lacking in spiritual power. True knowledge comes so hard that it will serve to keep you humble and all you can digest will not hurt you, provided, of course, that you do not run after knowledge falsely so-called, but seek the real knowledge of God's truth. The schools get over-much credit. Not every preacher that is spoiled, you may be sure, is spoiled by an excess of learning. Do not believe it. If an education gives a man the swell head, he must have a very soft head. It is amazing how little it takes to turn some people's heads.

You sometimes hear it said that a theological education will make the minister "dry." Perhaps it is thought that much learning will make him dull, if not mad. There are many men who never went to school that can be as dry as the most learned. An education will not make a fountain in a desert, and if it does, it will be an artificial one. It will only run when forced. There is certainly nothing in a theological seminary to stop a fountain, if the professors have any religion. A prominent man once admonished a student who was going to a theological [5] seminary as follows: "Don't lose your juice," he said, "when you go to the seminary." He seemed to think a seminary was a drying machine to fry all the life out of a man and leave him all starch and powder. If by "juice" is meant the unction and fervor of a soul set on fire by the Spirit of God, it is hard to see why biblical study should have such an effect. Why can not the Holy Spirit work through a man that has learning as well as through one that has none? Does God put a premium on ignorance in the ministry? We know that he has no use for the pride of learning, but neither does he care for the arrogance of ignorance. Certainly, ignorance and laziness are no recommendations for a preacher. Does a man gain power by boasting that he has no "book learning"? If the Spirit that stirs the soul be in a man, his preaching will not be dry nor barren of results, even if he has tried to learn books. Perhaps what is meant is that the educated preacher often becomes too abstruse and shoots over the heads of the congregation. He is so far above their level, that it is all Greek to them.

Now, no one has a right to use strange tongues in the pulpit. It sometimes happens that highflown language comes from the pulpit, [6] but as often from the uneducated as from the educated preacher. And the best educated ministers with the best taste use the simplest language. But many people hold study and simplicity incompatible. A certain church heard that a theological professor and a D. D. was to supply for them for a while. And they had long faces at such a combination coming to preach for them until they were told that though a professor he could preach. This shows the existence of the feeling mentioned.

It is gravely feared by some that young ministers will become stereotyped in style, if they go to a theological school. A cut and dried preacher made to order out of a "preacher factory" is abhorred and ought to be. But this is hardly a real objection to scholarly ministers. For if a man has so little force of character as to lose his individuality at school, he would anywhere. If a man lapses into mental desuetude and takes everything at second-hand, the school is not to blame. For theological training will not grind him out sermons according to demand without native wit and hard work. Do not expect any amount of training to take the place of brains, work, and the grace of God. In fact, a glib sermon does [7] little good anyhow. It must take root in the heart and life of the preacher, if it is to reach the hearts of other people. If a numbskull comes to the seminary and goes away a numbskull, do not blame the seminary. For some men are hard to teach. Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers; for it was the only kind of instruction that would penetrate their obscure consciences. But thorns and briers cannot make preachers or scholars out of some men. A seminary can only work with the material that the churches send, good, bad and indifferent. I noticed a criticism upon our seminary this fall in one of the denominational papers to the effect that some of its students had a very poor delivery. If a man will pass through the course in elocution here with a very poor delivery, is it not his fault? Elocution can not make good speakers out of men with no gifts of speech, nor out of those with gifts if they do not apply themselves. Again, it is insisted that to spend two or three years at a seminary is a waste of time. You can do well enough without seminary training, it is urged. Is anything well enough save the best of which you are capable? Some good brethren shook their heads

when you started to [8] school, and lamented this waste of time from preaching. A good woman once remonstrated with a young preacher that he could preach well enough without going to the seminary three years. But when he insisted that he must go, she said, "Lor', if you can preach this well now, I just would like to hear you then." She, at any rate, had faith in the power of a seminary course to improve a preacher. Many young men listen to this silly flattery and fail to take a theological course or complete their college work. They even think their friends about half right and that perhaps they are smarter than they at first supposed.

It all depends on what you want to do. Bottom, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, said that extempore speaking was nothing but roaring, and hence he could do that to perfection. Now, if you simply want to roar all your life, you can do that without much sense or religion either. It is right for a man to look high and deep into the mission of his life. And the amount of preparation that is necessary for your life work is not to be decided by the urgency of the work alone. For Christ waited until he was thirty years old before he began his mediatorial work. The demand for ministers is [9] always greater than the supply, and always, will be, no doubt. The harvest is always great and white for reaping and the laborers few. There is great need for all who will put in the sickle, but greater need than ever for men that are well equipped and approved of God. No man in these days should cut his preparation shorter than the line of duty indicates.

For the two or three years subtracted from school life may not make up for the loss in power. And power is what is wanted in men to-day. The apparent loss in time will be more than atoned for by increased momentum and facility for work. The sum of a life work is equal to time plus momentum. It is time and power. I saw this summer in Antwerp women and dogs pulling the carts over the streets. I felt that I had gone back five hundred years past the age of steam and electricity. The age compels you to live at high tension. You must learn how to do this with the best results and the least harm to yourselves. If a theological education will increase your power for Christ, is it not your duty to gain that added power? If a higher dam will give more power to the mill, you do not begrudge the time that it takes to build it. Never say you are losing time by [10] going to school. You are saving time, buying it up for the future and storing it away. Time used in storing power is not lost.

Reverently seek to know, not in conceit, what you can do for God. If you have a high opinion of his service, your own insufficiency will lead you to larger and wiser preparation. So theological education saves time in enabling the pastor to come to his work with improved methods and appliances. A man must work both rapidly and well, if he is to come up to the demands made upon him now. It is a great thing to be able to do well in two hours what used to take you three.

Now, these are some of the current objections to theological education. Many young ministers feel this outside pressure, and consider themselves justified in their inclination to make a dash here and a splash there and swim gloriously ahead. They may regret all their lives that they did not stay longer at school. But, if it were only some stray brethren here and there that shy at young upstarts from the schools and shake their heads dubiously at some “high larn’t” preachers of doubtful behavior, it would not be worth while to waste words about the value of an educated ministry. The matter, [11] however, is of a more serious nature than this. With us in the South theological education is comparatively new, and has had to remain new to great masses of our people on account of the trying circumstances through which we have passed in the last third of a century. But the denomination is more and more seeing the need of such instruction as is offered here, and there is an increasing desire among our young ministers to avail themselves of the opportunities of the seminary. It is chiefly to accelerate this desire that I now speak. For there are still many that rail to see the importance of theological study. They are not to be blamed too much, for one rarely rises above the standards around him. In such cases, few of one’s friends may have gone to the seminary, and those that did may not have been very good specimens of the educated preacher. And these specimens with some arrogance and much palpable ignorance still, in spite of a few months in a seminary, have not helped to remove the prejudice against learning that lingers as an heirloom of other days. And so it has come to pass that young men have often had to go to college and seminary against the prejudice and advice of their best friends. For there has always been op- [12] position to educated ministers, based partly on inherited prejudices and partly on the indiscretions of a few men of bad taste and small learning.

I said that prejudice against theological education was a relic of other days. Do not understand me to say that all the old Baptist preachers in our part of the world were unlettered men, nor that most of them were. At least they did not remain so always. Many of them were college men and earnest advocates of education. And others still that were far from any school, save the “old field school” that ran a few months only, made struggles to obtain a little education that ought to bring the blush of shame to every young man that is too unambitious to go to school or too lazy to work after he goes. There were men like Lewis Lunsford, of Virginia, that plowed all day and studied by the light of the pine knot at night, and then would preach on Sunday sermons that you and I can never equal. But it is so easy now to go to school, with our boards to help and our numerous and excellent schools, that we may not all appreciate the value of such opportunities. A man is beneath contempt who trifles with such advantages today. I have no respect [13] for a man who receives more help from an educational board than he actually needs or thinks a seminary should pay him for coming to school. For those who yearn for the chances you have I feel the deepest sympathy. Nothing stirs me more than to see a noble young man striving against great obstacles to obtain an education with which to glorify God and to serve mankind. And so this subject in a measure makes me sad. I think of the thousands of young ministers scattered over the South and West trying to fit themselves to preach the gospel. And many of them get no guidance from pastor or friends. They never go to school, but do the best they can. God bless them and help them. Much of the work of our denomination has been done by men like them. They deserve high praise for what they have achieved. They would go to school if some one showed sufficient interest in them to suggest how they might get an education. The yearning faces of these struggling men make a strong appeal to all friends of Christian education. I remember the life and death of James P. Boyce, how he toiled and died that these very men might have a place to find theological instruction. What is the matter? One thing is, they need their at- [14]tention called to the subject, for they do not comprehend what such training will do for them. And then they are very poor and need wise financial help. Some are flattered into going to work at once because of their remarkable powers. Others still get married and cannot come.

One young minister went to college one year and tried to marry a widow's daughter. Failing in this ambition, he married the widow herself and quit school. When our young preachers really want theological training and the churches are willing for them to get it, our seminary will have five hundred students.

Some of the popular objections against theological education have been alluded to in order to show that it was not a mere man of straw that I was fighting. And since so many complaints of like nature are made, it is not simply commonplace to insist that there is no real antipathy between scholarship and preaching. It is entirely possible for a man to be a respectable scholar and still be able to preach. When scholarship is spoken of, a critical scholar is not meant, but simply that degree of learning that comes as the result of a college and seminary course with diligent study afterwards. The question is simply this, Is the average [15] man with these qualifications, other things being equal, better prepared to preach than without them? In other words, does the college and seminary training tend to make better preachers? If not, it is a failure. The German idea is to make scholars first and preachers incidentally. But ours is to make preachers, and scholars only as a means to that end. We have small need in the pulpit for men that can talk learnedly and obscurely about the tendencies of thought and the trend of philosophy, but do not know how to preach Christ and him crucified. The most essential thing to-day is not to know what German scholars think of the Bible, but to be able to tell men what the Bible says about themselves. And if our system of theological training fails to make preachers, it falls short of the object for which it was established. But if it does meet the object of its creation, it calls for hearty sympathy and support.

Now, all scholars cannot preach. No such claim is made. Not every man with a taste for books has the popular gifts necessary to make him a public speaker. Certainly, there is ample room for American Christian scholars that cannot preach. They are not slaves of the past as is Rome, nor despisers of the past as is Ger- [16] many; but with due reverence for the past and yet with sufficient independence for accurate work, American scholars occupy a unique position for the best and soundest results. And we need such men to preserve the equilibrium of scholarship.

For all scholars are not Christian, but godless men invade the domain of Christian doctrine and presume to pass judgment on the oracles of God.

But my plea is for a scholarship that helps men to preach. For after all, the great need of the world is the preaching of the gospel, not saying off a sermon, but preaching that stirs sinful hearts to repentance and godliness. Our complex civilization has made more difficult and more necessary the task of the preacher. For a highly refined culture that breeds itching ears has turned many away from the old message to tickle those diseased ears with softer sounds. They worship the golden calf as Jehovah, and proclaim a feast unto the Lord. Give us men in the pulpit to-day above all things that fear God and think the gospel good enough for anybody and make no apology for preaching it. The preacher must be bold, not with a zeal above knowledge. In a time of countless heresies that have sprung from distortions of the [17] Bible, there is need of keen intellects and honest hearts rightly to divide the word of truth. It takes a sharp blade to cut asunder God's work with no injury to either part.

But while there is great need of the best and soundest scholarship irrespective of preaching, it is certainly true that learning will not make a preacher. It is equally true that knowledge does not necessarily prevent one from being a good minister of Jesus Christ, but helps him to preach. In *The Mill on the Floss* the rector had been preaching historical and argumentative sermons of an abstruse nature, and the Independent minister political sermons, and neither had any power to "shake the souls of men" at St. Oggs. Nothing save the gospel of Christ can do that, and this they were not preaching. For it is not superfluity of learning, but lack of religion that leads men into such ways as these. They did not preach Christ, but shook in the faces of the people the skeleton of defunct theology, or held up for their worship a new Christ of the kingdom of the world and men knew him not, for he had not the marks nor the power of the old Christ. It was scholasticism on the one hand, and politics on the other, neither of which will ever regenerate the [18] world. Do not take up the dry bones of scholasticism and shake them in the faces of the friends of theological education to-day. If the Spirit does not breathe upon the bones they are dead and will rattle in the pulpit where the power of the living Christ should be. And no amount of learning will make a preacher unless he is filled with an unction from on high. He may

quote poetry and Latin and cite authorities by the score, but his preaching will never result in the conversion of a soul.

Moreover, all preachers cannot become scholars. Some men who can preach grandly and powerfully have no great gifts with books. They cannot become learned, yet they have so learned Christ and have such deep spiritual knowledge that they can preach gloriously. God is not bound by ironclad rules in using men. He is not dependent on the exigencies of human attainments for the proclamation of his word, although he freely uses all such acquirements for the promotion of his glory. He does not put men into a mill and turn them all out with the same brand. Ministers are not all cut according to the same pattern. And the glory of the Baptist ministry is its diversity and versatility. Composed of all classes of men [19] with varied talents and accomplishments, it can easily become all things to all men. But our educational system has no such formal tendency as is sometimes supposed. For it takes men just as it finds them, with little or much preparation for theological instruction, and seeks to make the most out of each one. His own individuality is intensified and he should become a man of personal force. As there is diversity of gifts, there should be diversity in preparation. No one has a right to say that you must go to school so many years before you will be allowed to preach the gospel. You cannot conceive of the Apostle Paul's saying that a man must go to Jerusalem to school before he could become a preacher or missionary. Such a principle is not Baptist, not Apostolic. Let there be liberty and let duty and not compulsion regulate the amount of preparation for the ministry in each case. It is not a question of short cut or long cut by the wholesale. Each man must make it a personal matter and settle it in the light of his duty to God and men. And if every man takes what he is or can be prepared for, he will not go far wrong.

The clergyman used to have almost a monopoly of learning in the old times when he was [20] the clerk or school teacher of the nobility. But nobles and peasants are able to write their own names now. And the clergyman is no longer the embodiment of the knowledge of the day. In truth, he has a hard time to keep up with much of the new learning. Shall the seminary fall behind or keep to the front in intellectual force and attainments? If you are to have any power as a minister, people must have confidence in your character. And your acquirements must comport

with your professions. You cannot hoodwink people by gyrations and beatings of the air. If you say nothing all the time, they will know it and will let you know it. An editor, complimenting the preacher, said, "Your sermon did not seem long, for after you had spoken an hour it didn't seem that you had said anything." The only way to avoid saying nothing is to draw deep from the fountain of spiritual knowledge. And people do not want a simpleton to preach to them. You must have common sense whether you ever heard of a college or not. And some preachers that never saw a seminary have more sense than you or I can ever have. They were born with one talent, but they used that, instead of wrapping it up in a napkin. If you are too dainty to touch sin- [21]ners with your delicate fingers, you had better quit preaching.

Now, a busy pastor cannot become a specialist. He has to leave that for other men, if he is to prosecute the work laid upon him. He can do scholarly work on his sermon, but cannot branch off much. For he is a man of affairs and must know the hearts of men. And few have the time and fewer still the taste for minute scholarship. This is not contended for. Let a man acquire scholarly methods and apply them to his work. And that work will be less slipshod in style and more effective in results.

So all preachers cannot be scholars. But do not be afraid that you will learn too much. For your seminary course will not make you a scholar. You will be a long way still from any such goal. There will seem to be more for you to learn when you leave than when you came. You will know less about Cain's wife than you do now. But you will have more rapid and effective methods of sermonizing, clearer ideas of biblical study, and juster conceptions of scriptural exegesis and doctrine and the relation of Christianity to the history and wants of men. And these are the main things that you need to get from a theological education.

[22] But woe unto you, if you are so wild as to think that these results will come ready-made and drop at your touch. There is a long road of toil and sweat if you wish to accomplish much. A true education is never finished, and a finished education is of little use. John Richard Green said, "I die learning." For an education is more the ability to grapple with the present than mere knowledge of the past. The dry preachers are those that learned it all long ago and have relied on that little ever since. There is plenty of fresh truth in the Bible to water your soul, if you will find it.

And the oldest will be the freshest, if you get below the surface of superficial meaning that your ears may have become used to. For there will be life and power in the words then. Gladstone says, "I have been a learner all my life, and am a learner still." Whether you keep up your Greek and Hebrew or not, as you ought if possible, you must be continually extending your sphere of knowledge in one or more directions, and so gaining new power. He alone has fresh power who does fresh work. A man can have a scholarly method of work and not be scholastic. What is wanted is the mill to grind the corn, whether it be by steam or water or hand. [23] The corn must be ground. God's truth must be kneaded well in the mind and heart of the preacher, if it is to be adapted to the wants of his audience. He must not make the truth bleed by rough handling, and so destroy the right proportion that one truth sustains to another. This is the function of scholarship in preaching. It is mechanical, perhaps, and yet in this age of mechanism we see the importance of having the right kind of machinery. But there is no virtue in a dead machine. It needs the fire to give motion and power. The wire is of no service, save when charged with electricity. It is the electricity that is wanted. Away with a scholarship in the preacher that refuses to be the vehicle for the spirit and word of God, but is laden rather with the crotchets of men. This is over education, or too much of the wrong sort. A few men go to school too long. You can rub all the edge off of some blades, but they are thin blades. If you are a thin blade, do not whet all your edge away.

This then is true; not all scholars can preach, and not all preachers can become scholars. There are varying degrees of both, but the best preachers have generally been men of the best training in the schools. This is all that can be [24] said and it is enough. For each man wants to do the most that is in him for the glory of God. The leading examples of preaching will confirm this statement. Paul was an educated man, and so was John Chrysostom, the Golden Mouthed preacher of later days. Luther was a theological professor. Calvin preached every day for a long time while professor of theology at Geneva. John Knox learned Greek and Hebrew between the ages of forty and fifty. Whitefield and Wesley, the great popular preachers, were Oxford men. The famous French preachers, Bossuet, Bourdaloue and Massillon, were likewise scholarly

men. And the exceptions usually prove the rule, for even Spurgeon has made a respectable scholar of himself in spite of the lack of early training. Incidental cases here and there do not alter the general fact that the best and foremost preachers of Christendom have been not simply men of the largest gifts of mind and heart, but likewise of the most thorough training their times could give for their work. Given the grace of God in a man's heart and natural parts, and he will be a better preacher if he pursues the study of God's Word with a sound and reverent scholarship. And so the whole [25] question of theological education amounts to this, is a man better fitted to preach, other things being equal, with a working amount of scholarship or without it? For it is not such an education as is necessary for a professor that the preacher needs, but such as can be brought to bear upon the exposition of Scripture. This is the question that every young minister has to face. It is not whether you can preach well enough now to satisfy Deacon Jones or Sister Brown, but whether your usefulness for life would be enhanced by a college and seminary course. If this be true, it becomes a matter of duty, and a conscientious man will be slow to cut short his usefulness by a short cut or any other contrivance that will give him the shadow instead of the substance of an education. But each man will seek to adjust his preparation to his capabilities and circumstances. With the question thus stated, one needs to be slow in refusing to get hold of this apparatus for biblical study that comes from a course of theological training.

But some people have queer notions about preaching. They seem to think that the operation of natural laws does not apply to the preparation and delivery of a sermon. It is as [26] if a prophetic inspiration swept down upon the preacher and suspended the working of his faculties. Now, the minister should seek and expect divine help both in the preparation and delivery of a sermon; but it is not reverence to look for the divine blessing upon wild impromptu ravings more than upon the sober reflections of a thoughtful mind drawn from the Word of God and the promptings of a heart full of the deepest Christian experience. And if such people half believe the preacher inspired in the manner of his message, they certainly do not act as if they believed the inspiration binding on their lives. But the highest excellence is where reverent learning is united with great pulpit ability and deep piety. For full

preparation is apt to make a man careful about fanciful interpretations of Scripture. He will not so readily make a hop, skip and jump to remarkable conclusions. And real knowledge should keep the preacher from the pride of unconsecrated scholarship and the presumption of ignorance. The true minister of the word will seek not to dazzle, but to enlighten. And the Bible will become clearer to him by deep study and earnest seeking of the Holy Spirit. His learning will result in not mere [27] theoretical speculation, but an effort to unfold the Scriptures and make them plain.

Hence I contend that the best average results are to be obtained by the regular system of collegiate and theological training with flexibility enough to meet all cases, and this flexibility the elective system best affords. A course in Systematic Theology should precede Swamp Theology, as a friend of mine terms missionary work in the swamps of North Carolina. The Swamp Theology will be all the better after the systematic training. For if a man is to preach, he must be able to think. Right education should lead to this result, and make more than a parrot out of a man. That is the best training that makes a man the best thinker and enables him to have the best use of himself and to bring all his powers to bear upon a given pursuit. For thinking is hard work with the ablest of men. What the world needs to-day is men that can think clearly and speak strongly so as to make the truth felt, that can put wings to the seeds of truth, to use Homer's idea, which will catch hold in unpropitious soil. He is wise who knows how to put on such hooks as will catch the hearts of men. And if a man has learned how to think he will not have to be [28] poring over books all the time to get ideas. He will get them there but also from the men he meets and everything he sees. The world will be an open book to him.

But simply going to school will not make a man of you. Hanging around a college or seminary few or many years will not make you a scholar nor a preacher. And the inertia of ignorance that clings to you there will cling to you still. I make no apology for such greenhorns as imagine that mere attendance on a theological seminary will give them a patent right to success by some sudden process that involves little effort on their part. What prestige without power you might acquire will melt away so rapidly in the heat of earnest work that you will wonder where

your little learning has gone to—you will be left so far behind in real work in the cause of Christ. Such men are not spoiled by an education. They did not get enough to leave a trace. They spoiled before they got any. You will never become a preacher worth listening to without travail of soul. There has to be some severe thinking and suffering before you will command the ears and hearts of men. Mere dabbling in books will not make you a deeper man. But if you [29] get a studious habit upon you, it will help you to go to the bottom of things.

No, do not hinder any honest preacher from becoming a scholarly man, if he can. It will not hurt him, but will help him, if he is a man. And if he is not a man, it will not make much difference whether he knows much or little. For if he will be puffed up because he has the good fortune to go to school, perhaps he would be made vain by looking in the glass, and with as little ground for it, or have his head turned by the prattle of flatterers. If a preacher has religion, learning ought not to and will not chill his ardor, when tempered by the grace of God. Unspiritual scholars can never become preachers. God deliver us from a set of schoolmen who simply squabble over how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, and neglect the weightier matters of the gospel. May the chilling pall of godless learning never fall upon our schools! God forbid that our American schools should ever become places where pupil and teacher merely rummage among the cobwebs of the past just to find the spiders.

The educated preacher needs to be a man. You cannot put clothes on a dead man and breathe life into him by education. It is necessary to have a live man to start with, a man with grit and purpose. Tom Tulliver's idea of a man was to be able to play at heads and tails as much as he wished. Some men never get over this childish foible, and play at heads and tails all their lives. Life is a chance and not a purpose with them. A dillydallying man has no business in the ministry. He would better play mumblepeg. Polish must not come at the expense of power. And why should it? The shining blade can be very sharp and strong. Let a man retain his manhood and vitality along with his scholarship. For palefaced jaded scholars stand a poor show beside vigorous manly men with plenty of religion but less learning. Christian education should not emasculate the ministry, but develop a sturdier type of man with a larger and firmer mental grasp. The phrase, "gentleman of the cloth," is not a

good expression. It is always repulsive to my conception of a minister of Jesus Christ. A preacher is not a gentleman of cloth and ease, but a man of work and sturdy manliness and rugged virtue, anything but smooth and sleek. He should be more like John the Baptist with his raiment of camel's hair and his homely message of repentance than like the [31] Pharisee with his soft raiment and softer speeches for the people. If a man is not willing to work he has small business preaching the gospel, whether he ever goes to school or not. Most people believe that it is a good thing to get a little education, a first dash to get a start in life. But to make an honest effort to know things is not so popular. It is for this that a plea is made, that our young ministers may become strong in character and attainments. And this is not simply a matter of natural talent, but largely of slow and labored toil. It takes patience to get an education and to make a preacher.

The churches clamor for fresh preaching and often will not let the preachers stay at school long enough to learn how to study and to think—two very important items in the preparation of a sermon. What can a preacher do, if he has not learned how to think? When his stock of ideas is exhausted, he will have to seek pastures new; for the churches are unreasonably intolerant as to the repetition of old ideas. You might get some one else to do your thinking for you, but that is a rather humiliating business, unless it be your wife. Some people pay for their thinking as they do for their clothes, only [32] not so much, for it takes less to do them. But the unhappy preacher must work his brain or change his pastorate. Yet you will not let him get his thinking machinery into good working order. Young preachers' brains are in no better condition than other people's and need a deal of rubbing to get them into good trim. Ask these theological teachers of many years experience. They could tell you volumes that they have or have not found within young preachers' heads.

Hence a minister, if he is to last, must be fertile in resources. A few sermons at first will represent the top soil. The deep subsoil of his nature must be stirred, if his mind is to be fruitful. Greek and Hebrew roots may be tough and may jar a little in the breaking. But break them. It will pay. You will get deeper down when they are cleared out of the way, and the harvest will be larger and richer. A man should never be satisfied to give the scum of his thoughts that float on the surface. Stir up the depths. Let

God's truth sink and settle in the depths of your soul. Dislike to theological study is often the expression of laziness. The plea that is made of sturdy mentality, trained [33] to think, whose minds shall drink at the fountains of knowledge. And the Bible is the best fountain.

Go to school, if you can and as long as you ought. If you cannot go a long time, go a short time. It is better to preach with one year at school than with none. And it is better, a thousand times better, to preach with no education at all than that the glorious gospel of Christ should not be given to the world. If our colleges and seminaries so make a hedge around the ministry that the gospel cannot be given to the perishing thousands, they will have lost their mission among men. Let the gospel be preached though seminaries fall. Let men be fitted to preach in the way best suited to the times and in accordance with the spirit of Christianity. This way seems to lie in the existing institutions of the denomination. In these institutions is supplied ample training for our ministers if they will avail themselves of all that is within their power.

And the best training is furnished for the existing ministry, because there is allowed the largest liberty, regulated by counsel when needed, so as to meet the wants of all. If you cannot take the best, take the best you can. For thus the demands of Christian work among [34] us as a denomination will be best met. Let each one do his duty in this matter in the fear of God. I am persuaded that a larger number than ever before are seeing the importance of the widest preparation for the great and exalted work of the gospel ministry. This hope will meet fulfilment in the freest discussion of this great subject. For the proper education of the rising ministry is a matter that lies close to the hearts of our wisest men, and is worthy of the most serious consideration. Let all that is said and done for the solution of the grave problems that affect theological education be with a breadth of mind and earnestness of purpose commensurate with the dignity of the subject. Let us all seek to gain just views as to the training of the men who are to be the preachers of the future. And let us all sustain all wise plans for the promotion of biblical knowledge among the men who are to interpret the Scriptures to the churches, and pray that they may do it with the demonstration and power of the Spirit. But let the gospel be preached, whatever we do or

think; else the very stones will cry out and give glory to God, if we refuse to give him praise for his wonderful redemption.

In the course of time prejudice against ministers that have had scholastic advantages will [35] die away. It lies largely with those that share such advantages as to how soon this will be the case. If you conduct yourself discreetly and preach with greater power, men will bless God for such an institution that sent you forth. You may have heard the story of John Kerr, a wonderful preacher of a generation ago. When he came from school he was put up to preach. An old farmer at the outskirts of the congregation, with deep-rooted prejudice against “high larn’t” preachers, said, “That school boy can’t preach.” He pulled his hat over his eyes and determined not to listen. But by and by he got a little interested and looked up. He soon leaned forward. After a while he stood up. At last he took off his hat and shouted, “Bless God, he can preach.” The educated preacher had overcome the prejudice of the farmer by doing the one thing, which is the end of all theological education. He could preach. And his preaching was all the clearer and more convincing because of the training he had gotten in the schools. But whether such prejudice ever wholly dies away or not, it becomes the duty of every young minister to prove himself superior to it, and to lay hold of every opportunity the college and seminary afford to increase his power and efficiency as a minister of Jesus Christ.

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