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## ARTICLE V.

## THE EDUCATION OF A MINISTER.

BY THE REVEREND A. A. BERLE, 'D.D.

## I.

THE probable or prospective removal of Andover Theological Seminary from its ancient seat on Andover Hill to Cambridge or Boston, and the discussion of the probable gain or otherwise to that institution by such removal, has opened anew the question of the relation of seminary instruction to the effective work of the Christian ministry. It certainly is a very superficial view both of the ministry and also of theological training, to suppose that mere *locus* has anything vital to do with the preparation of a man for the service of the Christian church in the practical work of the pastorate. It seems like a puerile view of the case to imagine that mere relation to urban or institutional work can give or necessarily provide the elements which will secure to the churches the kind of ministry which the church wants on the one hand, or which the times seem to require on the other. And it is a rather curious fact, too, that, in the discussion of the removal of an institution with the history and aims and power which Andover has exhibited in times past, the ideal elements should be so utterly left out of the consideration of the question, and that the whole discussion should lie apparently in the realm of material expediency, if the securing of candidates for the ministry can be so termed.

At all events, the primary element in the discussion seems to be the lack of students and the desire to get them. Nobody

pretends, so far as the present writer knows, that, if Andover had the students at this moment, there would be any desire to move. The presence of a large number of students would be evidence *par excellence* that the Seminary was fulfilling its function, and that the present location was both suitable and satisfactory. What becomes, or might become, of the students, is left out of the question. How effective they might or might not be is not discussed. To get students, the location must be changed. This seems to be the whole of the problem in the minds of those who wish to remove. What, if, when the Seminary is moved, it still does not get students? Will it be moved again? What, if, after ten years' experience at Cambridge or in Boston, there still remains a great dearth of men for the Christian ministry? Will each succeeding board feel it needful to look around for a new location? If it is sound as a principle to change the location as a device to get students, then it is sound to change the Seminary's location as often as the opinion as to the most desirable spot changes, which of course reduces the matter to an absurdity.

And yet nobody has, at least not audibly, impeached either the character of the instruction offered at Andover nor the quality of the men who teach there, nor questioned the presence in that institution of every needful resource for effective training. It seems at first blush a very curious position to assume. And this, too, at a time when, in the industries, for example, the speed and ease of transportation makes it almost immaterial where a great factory is located. For instance, more than one large establishment in Chicago has its factories in Ohio and Indiana, and distributes its product all over the world with ease and effectiveness. And yet Andover is but an hour's ride from Boston; every Boston or Cambridge movement can be felt at Andover, can be participated in, with ease and effective-

ness, and there is not the slightest reason in the world why Andover students should not be in close and immediate touch with everything they need, or want to be in touch with, in Boston. As a matter of fact, it is as easy, and easier, for the Andover student to be *en rapport* with things in Boston, than it is for students in Chicago Seminary to be with things at the more distant points in Chicago. It is safe to say that, with some reciprocal arrangement with Harvard, Andover students would have less difficulty, certainly no more, in getting what they want from Cambridge, than Chicago students would have, in a similar arrangement with the University of Chicago. The present writer knows whereof he speaks, from intimate knowledge of the geography of both situations.

But the purpose of this article was not to discuss Andover's problem, but merely to point out that the mere question of *locus* is the very least in importance of the whole series of questions involved. It is not a question of lo here or lo there! It is a question of seminary reform, root and branch. It is a question of ministerial adjustment, thoroughgoing and determinate. It is a question of real and effective training of the minister, with some relation to the things he is going to do. It is whether the minister must take five or more years of his early ministry in finding out that the things which, in the practical work of the pastorate, count for most, in general have been left out of his training. It is a question whether the men who have ostensibly trained him for the ministry know anything about the ministry themselves. And it is a question whether the divinity school shall be or not a place where certain qualities of approach to life have or have not free play.

In general, the present writer has no hesitation in saying (1) that most of the theological seminaries of this land have about as little relation to the real problems of the minister as

it is possible for them to have; (2) that to move along the lines prescribed for them by their seminary training is for most of the men to be condemned to mediocrity as professional men, or mere pawns for the uses of ecclesiastical politicians, in which every denomination abounds; (3) that, to acquire a personality which is independent of the ecclesiastical machine, and has a personal strength and constituency which the machine cannot break, and which is its own justification, most of the men who have acquired such power owe the least for the achievement to the theological seminary as such. In making this statement, the writer does not deny, and would not be understood as denying, that each and probably all our seminaries have certain effective and inspiring personalities which produce under certain conditions effective men. He merely denies that the seminary as such has anything to do with it. These men would exercise exactly the same power, and would produce exactly the same results, if they were pastors, or employed the old-fashioned method of training young ministers by having the candidate in residence with them. These men succeed as a rule in spite of the seminary life, arrangement, and curriculum. They are powerful as men, not as seminary professors. It is with this general conviction that the present article proceeds.

#### THE MINISTRY AS IT IS.

The proper *ausgangspunkt* of this discussion is, first of all, to ask what the condition of the ministry in this land is at this moment. That ought to reveal what the men are to go into when they leave the theological seminary. That will afford a fair elevation from which to judge whether the seminary is preparing the candidate for the thing which actually exists. Of course any view of this matter must very largely depend upon the opportunities of the writer, for seeing the ministry

in its various phases, scholarly or institutional, pastoral or inspirational, administrative or reformatory, correctional or nurtural. There are all of these accents in the ministry. There are parishes in which one or the other of these phases of ministerial equipment must be the major qualification, if he is to succeed. It seems perfectly clear that here, temperament, habits of thought, origin, point of view, and a variety of other things come into play at once.

Take, for example, the distinction between an urban and a rural or suburban ministry. Here you have three phases which are as distinctly marked as things have any possibility of being; and it seems, on the surface, as absurd as anything can be that a man with the marked urban spirit should be dropped into a rural or suburban parish. The man who knows anything about the ministry knows at once these distinctions, and the men in the churches know them too. At all events, the people, the great mass who do not utter themselves in the management of the church, know infallibly. Now to imagine that one kind of training is going to do for all these types is perfectly foolish, utterly apart from the personal or spiritual qualities. Knowledge of the world, type of thought and habits of intelligence, rearing and personal manners, enter in these things in a way which is vital to the success or failure of the theologian. The present writer has known a dozen candidates rejected for posts for which they had every apparent qualification, except good breeding. If a man will eat with his knife and will tuck his napkin into his collar, he may get a seminary scholarship, but it is very certain that he won't get certain kinds of parishes to preach to. By these same tokens the leading and most influential man in one of the largest and most powerful churches in New England said within six months to the present writer, "Whatever else happens, —

Church must have a *gentleman* for a minister." This same church found fault with a previous pastor, whom the present writer believes to be one of the soundest scholars and most interesting preachers in this country, because, as one of the elegant ladies of the institution remarked, "—— Church couldn't have a minister who tied his wristbands with strings!" which scandalous fact was discovered when the aforesaid lady, being one of a committee, visited the doctor to measure him for the gift of a new silk gown! If he had drunk cocktails with the gentleman who wants, and will have, a "gentleman" for his minister, and had taken sundry afternoons with the same individual and others like him at the golf links, and spent less time in mastering the literature of his profession, of which he is one of the few masters in the land, it would have been all right. As it was, he joined the list of ministerial martyrs.

Take again the problem of the real urban ministry of to-day, meaning by this the down-town church. Here the average trained minister has no more conception of the problem than he has of the raising of elephants. The effective down-town minister of to-day must be, and is usually, a genius, who succeeds largely because he wont do what the theological seminary taught him was absolutely necessary; and most of the great, or formerly great, down-town churches are mere shells, because they held on, as long as they dared to hold on, to an obsolete type of ministry, and gave over only when forced to, and then, for the most part, were compelled to accommodate themselves to the problem, and then called some young man to repair the ruin which an obsolete ministry took ten or more years in bringing about. Even then, sometimes, stupidity, and unreadiness to deal with the situation as it is, have brought about martyrdom for the minister, and calamity for the church. As a matter of fact,

the most unprogressive institution in the land to-day, as regards adjustment of itself to its problem, is the Christian church. And this is not saying, let it be understood, that the church must be made a circus, or an amusement hall, or anything but a Christian church. It can be affirmed, that the greatest of the practical maxims of St. Paul, "All things to all men, that by all means we may save some," finds acceptance everywhere except in the churches. In sheer stupidity, linked with selfishness and love of private control, few institutions are much more culpable than the churches of to-day. The minister in the church of to-day who succeeds, does so in spite of the men associated with him, and gains his pennyworth of power and usefulness only because he steers around the selfishness and private prejudices and caprices of most of the officials with whom he has to deal. Most ministers among themselves admit this; obviously they cannot make such statements in individual cases.

The present writer has in his possession hundreds of letters which would prove this statement. They come from all kinds of ministers, in parishes in the city, and in the country, in college towns and factory towns, in cultured suburbs and uncultured semi-slum regions. Bishop Lawrence, of Massachusetts, stated recently, that if all the committees that manage the churches were to resign, and the minister alone were made the supreme manager, most of the Episcopal churches of Massachusetts would be better managed than they are at present. The same thing can be said of most of the Congregational churches. And the perpetual succession of debts (bankruptcies or assignments, they call them in business) of our benevolent societies shows that the same thing is true about them. As a simple matter of truth, the minister is the hardest worked wage-earner in the country. No first-class car-

painter or plumber or mason or other skilled artisan has to surrender so many personal rights, and submit to so many indignities, both with respect to himself and his family, as the average minister of to-day, and the wages of the skilled artisan are now higher to boot. The *Nation* was strictly within the line of truth when it said, that the minister of to-day not only had to earn his wages, but had also practically to collect them at the expense of his personal dignity as a man. This is the ministry of to-day as it actually is,—the lowest wages possible, the largest surrender of personal rights, the least progressive institution to serve, and the least certainty of tenure possible!

But there are other things to be considered. The minister has a relation to the general public, beyond his relation to the church which he serves. And here he faces in some respects a graver problem than that just indicated in his personal relations to the church. The air is seething with new ideas, ethical, social, industrial, economic, and educational. To reach and understand these ideas and the vast mass of the people who hold them, the minister needs to show himself *en rapport* with the spirit of his time and its aspirational life. But let him undertake it, and what usually happens? He will find, as a rule, that his "conservative" constituency does not care to have these things brought into the pulpit; it does not care to have its minister identified with their public discussion, much less with their propagation. Controlled, for the most part, by men of bourgeois intellect and habits of thought, the very methods employed by all the apostles are *tabu* in the church. Loyalty to the church leads usually to the stifling of this message to the larger community; and the result is what we see,—the church abandoned by the masses, not merely of the lower classes, so-called, but also of the intelligent thinking

men and women, who want to see the great evils of the world dealt with.

It will be a suggestive illustration of the accuracy of this statement to quote from the anonymous author of "Commerce and Christianity"<sup>1</sup> in his chapter on "Churches Dead-and-Alive" (significant characterization) as showing that the picture is not overdrawn. He quotes Dr. Temple, then archbishop of Canterbury, as saying, after hearing an address by a labor leader at a church congress at Bradford, "Is it possible to hear without being stirred to the depths the things which our fellow-men have sometimes to suffer? We cannot listen without saying that we must somehow—*somehow*—put a stop to evils such as these"; and then adds:

"It is a right worthy resolution. But there are thousands of good Christian people who have been saying exactly the same thing for a quarter of a century past, at the very least. Preachers have preached, and people have prayed, and committees have been formed, and inquiries have been held, and schemes have been devised; and, though I will not say that no improvement has been made, I do say that much of the improvement that has been made in the conditions of labor and the scale of wages has been none of the Church's doings, but has been won by the people themselves, not only without the help of the Church, but often enough in determined opposition to it. I do not say that no progress has been made toward a solution of labor problems, but I do say, and I say most deliberately, that, so far as the great body of the churches of this country are concerned, they are not one step nearer any real solution than they were twenty-five years ago, and, more than this, *I believe it to be a demonstrable fact that for many years past there have been going on changes in the commercial world tending to put business matters farther and farther beyond the influence of the churches and will continue to do so while the churches adhere to their present lines. . . .* There is a strong, steady drift in the direction of great joint stock enterprises managed on the severest system of commercial principles, which continually render it increasingly difficult to get any play at all for the ethics of the New Testament. To this inevitable drift and its consequences most of the churches seem at present to be quite blind.

<sup>1</sup> Macmillan, 1900.

*Sooner or later they will awake to the fact, not that the power of Christianity has disappeared, but that the greatest application of its essential truth that the world has ever dreamed of is being made by those who are not only not members of Christian societies, but do not even call themselves by the Christian name."*

Upon which, the *Daily News* of London, concurring with the view expressed, says that the churches are continually appearing, after a thing has been accomplished, as converts rather than as teachers, and sarcastically adds, "There is really no possibility of an art of leading from behind."

The present writer believes this to be nothing more or less than a true picture of the relation of the churches to the advancing social and ethical spirit of the time in the United States as well as England. What this author would have written, had he had before him Mr. Harriman's testimony before the Inter-State Commerce Commission, and known the dreary and wretched story of the *Christian* directors of the great insurance companies recently under investigation, is difficult to imagine. But, again, the contention that the church has lost initiative, and has definitely given up in many quarters her claim and power of leadership and her gift of uttering the message of deliverance, was most strikingly set forth in the visit of a committee of New York ministers, within a day or two of the time these lines are written, to President Roosevelt at the White House, begging the President to do something toward the religious awakening of New York City! And the President graciously promised to take the matter under consideration, and the committee left, firm in the belief that the chief executive would presently send a statement, or write a message, or deliver a speech, in the interest of salvation (Protestant brand preferred, as it appears) of New York City! What a picture of imbecility, impotence, and spiritual confusion! What a theme for satirist and cynic! And this

is the church of the Living God! And these are the ministers to whom the promise is delivered: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel. . . . Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world!"

Here again hundreds of letters are in the writer's possession as proof. In their earlier years, the ministers, seeing that these things are vital, sometimes break forth and deal with them, in spite of consequences. When they have been forced out of one parish or another, it is but human that they begin to think that they are either mistaken or wrong in method, and sink to the dead line of innocuousness, and preach only what is called by these pseudo-custodians of religion "the gospil." The present writer has seen a letter from a prominent layman in which the rejection of a good and true man is urged, because he had had the temerity to appear before a legislature to urge the passage of certain legislation against the employment of children under a certain age in an industry in which he himself was interested, and he added, "A man who will meddle with things of this kind may any time become troublesome in your business." Fortunately the man to whom the letter was written was a Christian man, and the letter became the soundest of guarantees for the young man, and he is to-day the pastor of the man to whom the scoundrel's letter was written, loved, honored and respected, and *free!* But his case is exceptional.

Then again we live in an era of reform. Some of the reform movements are rational and some are irrational. But, at all events, most of the subjects around which the ethical and spiritual interests of to-day group themselves call for some kind of public activity. The spirit of the age is social and socialistic. Whether one recognizes it or not, the spirit

of the time takes on attitudes which are singularly in accord with the general spirit of the New Testament. Most of the books that deal with social conditions, the housing of the poor, the evils of unjust taxation, the ravages of predatory wealth, all use the language and the illustrations arising from the teaching of Jesus Christ. All the facts seem to bear out the statement of Emile de Laveleye, "As the oak springs from an acorn, so may Socialism be traced to Christianity. In every Christian there is a germ of Socialism, and every Socialist is unwittingly a Christian." But singularly, too, for the most part, these advocates are not in the churches. Predatory wealth has more churchly defenders than any other kind. The pleaders for social and moral "stand-patism" are in the churches chiefly. And yet these insist on doing this, in the face of their diminishing influence and power. It seems as if, rendered powerless, they are being rendered in many cases mad also. Nothing bewilders a man of to-day much more than to see the blind unwillingness of the churches as a whole, to respond to the aspirational ideals of the age. But the ministers respond, and want to utter their sympathy with it, but for the most part cannot or dare not, because most of them are faced with the question of bread for their wives and children, if they do. In this respect there is a great advance being made, and the liberation of the clergy is going on apace. To some of us such liberty has always been given, and the writer has the profoundest gratitude for the group of men in Boston who for nearly twelve years stood for his freedom in these special lines. But most ministers in private admit that when the reform tends to become effective, they must drop out of it. This means that, so long as they plead in the innocuous fashion, it will be all right. But when the axe is laid at the root of the trees then comes the trial, and usually the minister gets the

axe. While it is true that many of the great reforms are led and sustained by ministers, it is, nevertheless, also true that the vast majority of the ministry cannot take part, and do not and dare not, even though, as in Pennsylvania, the political platform be, "Thou shalt not steal."

Nor must it be inferred that any such advocacy would do violence to the teaching and principles of the New Testament, or that any real spiritual function of the minister or the church need thereby be in the slightest degree impaired or neglected. The conception of Christianity, even from the earliest days, as represented in the book of Acts, contemplated these things. On this point, Fremantle says in his "World as a Subject of Redemption," the Bampton Lectures for 1883:

"It has been pointed out that the chief concern of the national church must be the elevation of its weaker members. The existence of pauperism and of prevailing poverty, in contrast to the progress of wealth, must be made to weigh upon all men's consciences, especially on those of the ruling classes; and no effort, no change that can be suggested, can be too great, if it results in the wiping away of this reproach to our Christian state. *It is not by dealing with pauperism and with poverty in their actual manifestations that this reproach will be wiped away, but much more by such a direction of political interests as will operate through law and administration for the removal of the evil and the further framing of laws not merely to make men equal before the law but so as to afford the poor and the weak the uplifting help which they need.* . . . There are men who have worked upon the principle that economic science must not be contented with merely tracing a law, but must minister to the corresponding art of social well-being, that it must show how to apply its principles according to the wants of the community, and must acknowledge the paternal care for the weak, and even the necessity at certain times of giving them a dead lift, to place them in a position in which they can use economical principles for their own advantages. *When this is done in a truly Christian spirit, the conditions which political economy reveals may be the light by which we walk in the path of Christian benevolence, and the nation may become the channel of God's beneficence to all its members.*"

But no one will venture to deny that the spirit and discern-

ment which are here visible in every line, going, as this analysis of the situation does, to the very depth of the social problem and the relation of the church to it, are in the present attitude of the churches of the United States practically impossible of full expression by the ministers of the land. They feel it in their hearts, they know by actual contact and experience, that the present relation of organized Christianity to the spiritual and social welfare of the masses of men is utterly incompatible with the spirit and teaching of the New Testament, but they cannot without violence, or martyrdom, or hardship to those whom they love and for whose bread they are responsible, utter themselves or the gospel they have in their hearts. It is not that they are directly menaced or threatened. The agencies of greed and selfishness and social wrong are far too enlightened for these methods. But in the steady pressure which inevitably leads to professional degradation and rejection, with all that this implies, they secure either silence or servility; and, in either case, the common consciousness of men understands that the Christianity of Christ has been sacrificed.

This is the ministry as it is. Under such circumstances it is plain that an exceptional and peculiar breed of men is needed to face the hardships, the martyrdoms, and the privations which the ministerial calling, rightly held and practiced, involves. It calls for a race of spiritual giants. It demands a hardy breed of moral and spiritual pioneers who shall know the truth and in the truth be free. It involves a kind of worldly sagacity, which is something far and above academic education. Obviously no university fellowship supplies precisely the things which are required here. And obviously, too, the utterance of the truth must have a certain prophetic temper and power, which is not "sicklied o'er with the pale

cast of thought." The minister needs to be full-blooded, virile, determinate, and cast in the mold of the storm and stress of the age. His education and his training must fit him for treachery to the ideals of Christ within the church, and indifference to them without. He must literally be a living Christ-italized rescue mission for both the church and the people. He must be a tribune of the people. He must have popular sympathies, and yet be the peer of those who are the custodians of learning and culture. He must be a gentleman and an agitator. In short, he must aline himself with the apostolic ideal, "All things to all men, that by all means he may save some." Observe that the saving is subjunctive, and then it concerns only "some." This is the ministry required for to-day. One chapter more might be written, but should not. It concerns the pitiful poverty of many ministers, their struggle merely to live, their spiritual sorrow in the ingratitude of those for whom they pour out their lives, and the old age of wretched, often half-fed, dependence on charity. Let that be remembered, but it must remain an unwritten chapter of the ministry as it is.

All this shows very clearly that the training of a minister is a very complicated problem. It is not a matter of curricula entirely, though there must be curricula of course. It is not a matter of intellectual excellence, though the young minister must be a first-class man intellectually, or he might as well not start at all. It is not an academic question in the first instance at all, and the whole history of the ministry shows as clearly as anything can, that personality is involved in the training of ministers more than all other things beside. It is the great preachers who produce good preachers, not the professors of homiletics, as a rule. It is the great pastors who lead the way in the production of good pastors, not the ex-

pounders of pastoral theology. It is the great Bible lovers who produce good Bible students, not the gifted exegetes and critics. And all this comes about because training for the ministry is not, when really comprehended, the fitting for a calling, but the consecration of a life.

[In the second article of this series the writer will consider "The Divinity School as it is."]