

ARTICLE VIII.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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No interest of any church is greater than that involved in the proper education and training of its ministers. All earnest churches give great attention to this subject; and it is not an unfavorable omen of the future of Christianity that at the present time the best methods of ministerial preparation are the subject of mutual investigation on the part of different Christian denominations.

In the belief that so far as such investigations may be conducted in a fraternal spirit they can hardly fail to be advantageous, the present Article has been written. It is but just to the writer to say that it was not volunteered, but produced in answer to specific inquiries from a highly respected source.

Those inquiries assumed that the successes wrought out by the Methodist Episcopal Church during the comparatively brief period since its organization in December 1784, were in no small degree due to the efficient character of its ministers. They further indicated that many ministers and people of sister churches were desirous of understanding the nature and requirements of the system of ministerial preparation recognized by the church referred to, and also the nature and extent of any modifications of the system found desirable within recent years. The effort to respond satisfactorily to such inquiries makes it necessary to present a brief summary of facts which will illustrate in historic order the origin, development, and modifications of the system in question.

The idea seems to be more or less prevalent that very

decided, if not radical, changes have recently taken place in that system ; whereas facts will show that the recent adoption of institutional instruction for ministers is but a realization of the full plan of ministerial preparation originally proposed by Mr. Wesley, and in perfect harmony with the system of training or field discipline which he and his followers were led to adopt as a providentially dictated necessity of their initial work.

The Methodist Episcopal Church owes its origin under God to what is known as the great Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century. Two distinguishing characteristics of that revival were, first, a prominent recognition of the divine call as a necessary prerequisite for every true minister of the gospel ; and, secondly, the practice of enlisting lay co-operation as a direct auxiliary of evangelistic effort. It cannot be claimed that either of these features of his subsequent ecclesiastical system was originated by Mr. Wesley. The first he believed to be required by the word of God. The second was taught him by the providence of God, contrary to his early and churchly prejudices. Nevertheless, both were, in due time, heartily received by him and his early coadjutors, and have been cherished with equal cordiality by his successors to the present day. In reference to the second, the process of persuasion was gradual and instructive. Among the earliest fruits of the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield were converted men of the common people who were impressed with the duty of warning sinners to "flee from the wrath to come." Corresponding to this important fact, the necessities of the work of grace in which those great evangelists were engaged were so pressing that they felt compelled to welcome sincere and promising co-operation by whomsoever offered. From ministers of the Church of England, with a few exceptions, they encountered either cold indifference or bitter opposition. Hence, from the first they encouraged good and competent laymen as "helpers," to read and explain the scriptures and to exhort wherever they could find listeners.

But even this policy, especially in the mind of Wesley, was far from that of sanctioning lay preaching. To the latter he was brought unexpectedly to himself. The story, though often told, has still its significance. In the year 1741 Wesley, on going from London to the north and west of England, had left Thomas Maxfield in the Foundery Society to read the scriptures, pray with the people, and give them suitable religious advice. This man, who was one of his earliest converts, and who had accompanied Charles Wesley in his travels for a year or more, was insensibly led from praying to preaching. Wesley received a letter at Bristol informing him of the fact. His prejudices for "church order" were still strong, and he hastened back to London, with no little alarm, to check the new irregularity. But his mother, a woman of extraordinary capacity, and herself the widow of a clergyman, was at hand to influence his conclusions. "She perceived on his arrival that his countenance expressed dissatisfaction and anxiety, and inquired the cause. 'Thomas Maxfield, he replied, with unusual abruptness, 'has turned preacher, I find.' She reminded him of her own sentiments against lay preaching, and that he could not suspect her of favoring anything of the kind without cause. But 'take care,' she added, 'what you do respecting that young man; he is as surely called of God to preach as you are.' She counselled him to examine what had been the fruits of Maxfield's preaching, and to hear him himself. He heard him. 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good,' was all he could further say."¹ From that time lay preaching, under the regulations which will be explained further along, became a feature of the Wesleyan economy. Nor was a long period required to demonstrate its inestimable value as an agency for bringing men to the knowledge of the truth. After only four year's experience with his lay preachers, whose number continually increased, Wesley vindicated them and their office fully in his celebrated "Appeal to

¹ See Stevens's *History of Methodism*, Vol. i. Chap. v.

Men of Reason and Religion.”¹ After having repeatedly and patiently replied to objections against lay preaching and lay preachers, he became more severe, if not more convincing, in his replies. In one instance, when a clergyman had reproached him for his manifest “breach upon the order of the church,” he closed his explanations with this emphatic declaration: “Soul-damning clergymen lay me under more difficulties than soul-saving laymen.”

The rapid extension of the work in connection with the efforts of Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors soon rendered formal consultations necessary. Hence, the origin of Conferences. The first Conference was held in London in the year 1744; and there were present, besides Mr. Wesley, five clergymen of the Church of England, and four lay preachers, including Thomas Maxfield. At that initial Methodist Conference, the question of ministerial education was formally considered, and the conclusion reached was indicated by the following record:

“Q. Can we have a seminary for laborers?”

“A. If God spare us till another Conference.”

At the ensuing Conference the question was repeated in this form:

“Q. Can we have a seminary for laborers yet?”

“A. Not till God gives us a proper tutor.”

Thus it appears that an institution for ministerial education was at that early day proposed by the founders of Methodism, although its realization was delayed for a long period by providential hinderances. Chief among the hinderances was the pressure for all available help to occupy, without delay, the fields of ministerial service which opened before them in so many directions, and with such urgent calls.

In these facts may be seen a striking illustration of the principle that “Man proposes, but God disposes.” So far, however, from interpreting providential hinderances as reasons for inactive waiting, or for any pause in his work, Wesley rather felt quickened by them to greater activity in

¹ Wesley's Works (Am. ed.), Vol. v. pp. 156-160.

making use of such means of ministerial cultivation as were possible, aside from institutional advantages. It is affirmed by Wesleyan authorities that he never abandoned the design and hope of "a seminary for laborers"; but in his intense desire to work while his day lasted, and to do what his hand found to do, he was led to devise a system of *ministerial training*, or education *in* the ministry *for* the ministry. Nevertheless, he was ever on the alert to realize, as far as possible, his original idea of what was desirable as a means of thoroughly preparing ministerial laborers for their work. On one occasion he actually collected together at Kingswood "seventeen of his preachers, whom he divided into two classes, for the purpose of reading lectures to them every day during Lent, as he had formerly done to his pupils at Oxford."¹ Before one class he read and discussed Pearson on the Creed, and before the other Aldrich's Logic. To both he gave "Rules for Action and Utterance." It is not recorded whether the entire period of Lent was thus employed; but Tyerman records the opinion that about a month was devoted to this form of ministerial training. That author adds, "Who were Wesley's favored pupils? This is a question we cannot answer; but from the books selected we learn that Wesley's object was, (1) to teach theology; (2) the science of reasoning; (3) the art of elocution. Leisure hours were occupied in making preparations for the Christian Library, and in preaching in the surrounding neighborhood."

While Mr. Wesley and his associates freely encouraged unordained men to preach, whom they believed to be divinely called, yet they by no means allowed men to enter upon that work at will, or upon their own impulses. They permitted no one in connection with their organizations to preach without a license, annually renewed; and no license was granted unless, in addition to the candidate's profession of a personal belief that he was moved by the Holy Ghost to preach, the following questions could be answered affirmatively by an official council of his brethren:

¹ See Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, Vol. ii. p. 34.

(1) Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation? (2) Have they gifts as well as grace for the work? Have they in some tolerable degree a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? (3) Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching?

So appropriate have these tests seemed, that from the day they were instituted till now, it has been the custom of all Methodist churches to inquire concerning each candidate for the initial grade of their ministry—the local preacher's office,—has he grace, has he gifts, has he fruits of his Christian labor? No doubt, a very charitable and hopeful construction has often been put upon the gifts of men believed to be truly regenerate and sincerely desirous of doing good; nevertheless, the principles on which the official members of the church have been required to form their judgment and base their action are stated above.

From the first, a large part of the business of each Conference related to the examination, the admission, and the instruction of helpers. The code of rules and advices drawn up at that period for the guidance of young ministers in reference to their personal, religious, and ministerial duties, has never been surpassed, if equalled, in any uninspired document. The value still set upon the precepts they contain is indicated by the fact that they are, in substance, embodied in the current official documents of every branch of Methodism throughout the world. In perusing them, one is at a loss which most to admire, their comprehensiveness or their minuteness, their scope or their detail; but still more, to form any just conception of the degree of influence they must have exerted upon the lives and characters of the hundreds of thousands of ministers who have in successive years solemnly pledged themselves to be governed by them.

To serve as samples of their style and spirit, the following extracts are inserted.

On the Employment of Time.

“Q. What are the rules of a helper?”

“A. (1) Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away the time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.”

“Q. What general method of employing our time would you advise us to?”

“A. We advise, (1) As often as possible to rise at four; (2) From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read, partly the Scripture with the notes, partly the closely practical parts of what we have published; (3) From six in the morning till twelve (allowing an hour for breakfast) to read in order with much prayer, first, ‘The Christian Library,’ and the other books which we have published in prose and verse, and then those which we recommended in our rules of Kingswood school.

“Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, or at least five hours in twenty-four.”

The Christian Library referred to in the extract, was a series of fifty volumes, duodecimo, which Mr. Wesley published in 1749, for the purpose of making more accessible the best portions of the then existing religious literature of the English language. While those fifty volumes formed a theological library of themselves, yet the series as a whole was only one (the forty-first in order) of one hundred and four different publications written or edited by Mr. Wesley during his lifetime. Thus it may be seen, that however unlearned any lay-preacher may have been at the beginning of his career, by devoting five hours a day, according to the rules to which he was pledged, to reading and study, he could hardly fail to secure in the course of a few years a very creditable education, even though his reading did not extend beyond the Bible and the books which Mr. Wesley himself published. His education, too, would be all the more serviceable from the necessity of its daily application in the instruction of others.

But we are not left to mere theory in judging of the efficiency of Wesley’s system of ministerial training. Nothing has been better attested by facts. Its influence soon

became known and felt in every part of Great Britain, by the results it produced in arousing the public mind to the consideration of religious truth, in the actual awakening and conversion of multitudes, and in its increasing and permanent influence upon the religious character of the nation. Nor were the results of the system limited to the United Kingdom. They spread beyond the Atlantic on the tide of emigration. As early as 1766 they began to appear in New York and Baltimore, from which places, chiefly, through the agency of volunteer lay-preaching, they radiated in various directions. At this stage, Mr. Wesley, on application, sent out as missionaries the first of his itinerant ministers who visited America — Asbury and Whatcoat. In 1773, about eight years subsequent to the first sermon of the lay-preacher Philip Embury in New York, a Conference of preachers was held in Philadelphia. After organization, those present proceeded to recognize “the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists,” as contained in the English minutes, to be “the sole rule of their conduct.” It was thus that Mr. Wesley’s system of ministerial enlistment and drill was adopted in America.

Experience during the period of the Methodist societies, that is, from 1773 to 1784, proved it to be as well adapted to the exigencies of religious effort in the New World as it had been in the Old. Hence, in the formal organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the same system with only slight and immaterial modifications was adopted, and incorporated in the Discipline by which that church was to be governed. The practice of ordaining ministers, which in America commenced with the organization of the church, soon caused the terms “helper” and “assistant” to pass out of use, having been substituted by those of “preacher on trial,” “preachers in full connection,” and “preachers in charge”; while, as with reference to clerical orders, ministers after ordination were designated as deacons and elders.

In the order of historic progress we have now reached the period when Methodism was inaugurated in both hemispheres

in the form of organic and working churches. Did these churches modify, in any essential particular, Mr. Wesley's original methods of training young ministers, and educating them to the work of the ministry while engaged in it? On the other hand, those methods were maintained both in England and the United States with entire unanimity, and with increasing attachment, on account of the results that became apparent in ever widening spheres.

It was found that in proportion as these churches began to secure the fruits of their own action in the moral and educational elevation of the communities to which they ministered, and also in bringing within their influence a larger proportion of educated persons, there was a corresponding increase in the mental maturity and educational attainments of the men who were raised up for the work of the ministry. But not on this account was the system of training and education in the ministry abandoned or allowed to decline. On the contrary, efforts were made to improve it. Nor was any difficulty experienced from the fact that the degrees of antecedent preparation were exceedingly diverse among the candidates for the itinerancy. Some, like Dr. Coke, came from University halls, and others like Samuel Bradburn, a prince of orators, rose from the shoemaker's bench. Yet, if the brother of low degree could rejoice in that he was exalted, the brother of high degree had no occasion to grieve that he was depressed. On the other hand, a loving rivalry was promoted in the joint endeavor of both to do all they could for the glory of the common Master.

The system in question was specially adapted to develop whatever kind or degree of talent any individual might possess, and it succeeded in bringing into effective service large numbers of men of respectable, and not a few of rare, talents, while it sternly rejected those incapable of improvement.

It prominently recognized what scripture, no less than universal experience, points out — the existence of a diversity of gifts among ministers. Hence, one of its leading objects

was to cultivate and use such special talents as God had bestowed on each. As among the "gifts" demanded in any person offered for trial, it required a respectable degree of knowledge and cultivation preliminary to the special studies and studious habits that were thenceforth enjoined upon him. To be able to preach and to secure fruits as a sower of the good seed of the word of God was indeed the first great and indispensable requisition. But there were found to be various modes of successful preaching. Some were sons of thunder, and others were the sons of consolation. Some were specially gifted to awaken dead and dormant souls, others as teachers in righteousness. The policy of the itinerant system was to employ each minister where most wanted at any particular time, and thus to secure for his special gifts, not only continual cultivation, but the widest field of action.

Severe as was this system in its demands upon all who were subject to it, nevertheless it had the effect to stimulate in not a few a high degree of productive scholarship. Mr. Wesley himself not only enjoined stern precepts in reference to the redemption of time, but he illustrated them in a remarkable manner. Notwithstanding his travel on horseback of four thousand five hundred miles a year, or an equivalent of the entire circumference of the globe every six years, yet he had so disciplined himself as to maintain the custom of reading while in his saddle up to his seventieth year, when his friends insisted on his riding in a carriage. When engaged, at eighty-three years of age, in writing the life of Mr. Fletcher he maintained his studying hours from five in the morning till eight at night, and regretfully recorded, "I cannot write longer in a day without hurting my eyes."

Of a man who could form and maintain such habits it will not be thought strange that, notwithstanding his itinerancy of a quarter of a million of miles, his forty thousand preached sermons, and his more than one hundred printed books, his biographer could make this additional record: "In general scholarship and knowledge he had few superiors; whilst such was his acquaintance with the New Testament that,

when at a loss to repeat a text in the words of the authorized translation, he never was at a loss to quote it in the original Greek." The example of such a leader could not fail to exert an influence favorable to diligent study on the part of his associates and followers. Hence it is not surprising to find that among the itinerant preachers there were, even from the earliest period, scholars of high attainments. Of these, the brief career of Thomas Walsh would have been regarded extraordinary in any age or circumstances. He was at nineteen an Irish Roman Catholic lad with a fair English education and a little knowledge of Latin. Having been converted through the agency of a lay preacher, he entered the itinerancy when twenty years old. He only lived eight years longer ; but during that period he became distinguished for impressive power as a preacher, for thorough diligence as a pastor, and for unusual attainments in scholarship. Mr. Wesley, who preached his funeral sermon, spoke of him as "so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible that, if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a brief pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but what it meant in every place. Such a master of biblical knowledge," Mr. Wesley added, "he never saw before, and never expected to see again."

The case of Adam Clarke, the celebrated commentator, was very similar. He was another Irish boy who commenced preaching at the age of twenty, with only the elements of a common-school education. Nevertheless, he acquired his great and varied learning, and also wrote his voluminous Commentary and other works, while discharging his duties as an itinerant minister. Jabez Bunting, the great legislator of British Methodism after Wesley ; Richard Watson, the theologian ; Robert Newton and Joseph Beaumont, the popular preachers and platform orators, and hosts of other truly great and useful ministers, were the subjects of a precisely similar form of training and self-development after having entered the ministry.

Great as was the influence of the Wesleyan training system upon men of extraordinary talent, like those named above, it was no less, in point of fact, upon men less distinguished, and, indeed, upon the itinerant ministers generally, whom it elevated in the face of stern difficulties to a position of ever-increasing moral and religious power. Similar results appeared in the early history of American Methodism, as may be seen not only from Bangs' and Stevens's Histories, but also from the seventh volume of Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*.

In the introduction to the volume last named Dr. Sprague says: "If the mass of Methodist preachers have been less favored in respect to intellectual culture than those of most other denominations, it cannot be denied that there has been, in many instances, an offset to this in the rugged working of great natural powers, and in a spirit of heroic adventure that was schooled and developed amid the perils and hardships of the western and southwestern wilderness. I shall be much disappointed if this volume does not furnish evidence, even to those whose religious associations place them at the greatest remove from Methodism, that there have been in this communion some of the most eloquent preachers, as well as some of the most earnest and devoted propagators of Christianity, whose labors have blessed the American church." Several of the ministers sketched by Dr. Sprague, and others, their contemporaries and successors, added to the labors of their ministry the toils of successful authorship.

No adequate idea can be formed of the Wesleyan plan of training ministers in the field, aside from some just conception of the nature and demands of the itinerant system of which it was an integral part. The men who planted and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church were actuated by one controlling thought—"the spread of scriptural holiness over these lands." For this they renounced all ideas of personal comfort or advantage, all hopes of a life of ease and quietness, all prospects of literary distinction, of settled homes, or of permanent pastorates. For this, like the apos-

bles, they were "in journeyings often," "in perils of water," "in perils in the wilderness," and not seldom "in weariness and painfulness" through watchings and fastings, if not through cold and hunger. Next to direct aid from on high, the help they wanted was similar service from men of like spirit and equal devotion to this one work. Hence the primary and essential trial of any man who offered himself for the itinerant ministry related to his Christian manhood and his adaptation to the self-denying life he would be expected to lead. Tastes and capacities for scholarship were not overlooked, but they were regarded as of secondary importance; to be cultivated, indeed, but only in subordination to the more urgent demands on time and energy. In pursuing this course with their novitiates in the ministry, the Methodist fathers believed themselves to be legitimate followers of the apostles; indeed, of our Lord himself. The original twelve were called from among the common people of their day — from among the laboring, and not the learned, classes. They were chosen for their personal qualities, and not their scholastic attainments; and when chosen they were taken into immediate service as a means of practical training and instruction for future responsibilities. The same was true of the immediate associates and successors of the apostles, who, as in the cases of Timothy and Titus, while being tested as to their adaptation to the work to which they were sent, were exhorted both "to give attendance to reading" and to "study" as a means of becoming workmen needing not to be ashamed, and also by other appropriate means to make full proof of their ministry.

The prompt and ever increasing successes of the early itinerant ministers and their junior associates confirmed them in the impression that the system of ministerial induction upon which they practised was a good one, and specially adapted to their times and circumstances. Nevertheless, as soon as sufficient time had elapsed to enable them to take measures for the more complete establishment and edification of the church, they also adopted measures for increasing the

qualifications of the ministers thereafter to be associated with them. In the General Conference of 1816, following the deliberations of an able committee appointed to consider the "ways and means" of more effectually promoting "that system of itinerant preaching which, under God, has been so successful in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ," the following resolution, in connection with others, was passed :

"Resolved, That it be the duty of the bishop or bishops, or a committee which they may appoint in each Annual Conference, to point out a course of reading and study proper to be pursued by candidates for the ministry ; and the presiding elders, whenever a person is presented as a candidate for the ministry, shall direct him to those studies which have been thus recommended ; and before any such candidate shall be received into full connection, he shall give satisfactory evidence respecting his knowledge of those particular subjects which have been recommended to his consideration."

The plan of probationary studies thus inaugurated was proved, on experiment, to be of so great utility that it has not only been retained ever since, but enlarged and improved, from time to time, by successive revisions ; while the standard of examination has also been correspondingly elevated.¹

¹ As at present in force, the following is the course of study to be pursued by candidates for the ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church :

CANDIDATES FOR ADMISSION on trial in the travelling connection must be acquainted with, 1. The common branches of an English education ; 2. Ancient History (Rawlinson) ; 3. Scripture History, Old and New Testament (Smith) ; 4. History of the United States (Willson) ; 5. History of Methodism, abridged (Stevens) ; 6. Rhetoric (Haven) ; 7. Logic (True) ; 8. Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. [Read (1) Wakefield's Theology ; (2) Watson's Life of Wesley ; (3) Whitney's Hand-Book of Bible Geography ; (4) Foster's Christian Purity ; (5) Student's Gibbon.]

FIRST YEAR. — 1. Theological Institutes (Watson) Part I ; 2. Plain Account of Christian Perfection (Wesley) ; 3. Church History (Waddington) ; 4. Homiletics (Kidder) ; 5. Psychology (Munsell) ; 6. Written Sermon. [Read (1) Wesley's Sermons ; (2) Stevens's History of Methodism ; (3) Townsend's Sword and Garment.]

SECOND YEAR. — 1. Statement and Scripture Proofs of Bible Doctrine ; 2. Theological Institutes (Watson) Part II ; 3. Baptism (Hibbard) ; 4. Moral Science (Wayland) ; 5. Written Sermon. [Read (1) Whedon on the Will ; (2) Emory's Defence of our Fathers ; (3) Porter's Compendium of Methodism ;

Like Mr. Wesley in England, Bishop Asbury in America made strenuous efforts to establish an institution of learning contemporaneously with the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In this view, Cokesbury College was founded at Abingdon, Maryland, in 1787. The plan of education for that institution was published in the Discipline of the church for 1789, proposing, among other important designs, the following :

“The institution is also intended for the benefit of our young men who are called to preach, that they may receive a measure of that improvement which is highly expedient as a preparative for public service.”

Unhappily, Cokesbury College had but a brief career. It

(4) Gausson's Origin and Inspiration of the Bible ; (5) Rawlinson's Historical Illustrations ; (6) Shedd's Homiletics and Pastoral Theology.]

THIRD YEAR. — 1. Theological Institutes (Watson) Parts III. and IV. ; 2. Introduction to the New Testament (Nast) ; 3. Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion (Butler) ; 4. Hand-Book of the Bible (Angus) ; 5. Logic (Whateley) ; 6. Written Sermon. [Read (1) Hagenbach's History of Doctrines ; (2) Hurst's History of Rationalism ; (3) D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation ; (4) Wythe's Agreement of Science and Revelation.]

FOURTH YEAR. — The course of study for the fourth year is the same as now printed in the Discipline, viz. preparation for detailed examination on sixty-two comprehensive topics, classified in sections as follows : 1. Personal Religious Life and Habits ; 2. The Bible, the Canon, and the Life of Christ ; 3. The Doctrines of the Bible ; 4. Church Organization and Government ; 5. Ecclesiastical History. [Read (1) Thomson's Evidences of Revelation ; (2) M'Clintock's Methodology ; (3) Kidder's Christian Pastorate ; (4) Conybeare and Howson's Life and Epistles of St. Paul. And also the following books of reference : Fleming's Vocabulary of Philosophy, Smith's Classical Dictionary, M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia, Haydn's Dictionary of Dates.]

[N. B. — All answers to the questions in the fourth year's course of study are to be submitted to the Committee of Examination, in writing.]

In addition to the above course of study for candidates for the itinerant ministry, the Discipline prescribes two other courses somewhat less full : 1. For local preachers who are candidates for deacon's orders ; 2. For local preachers who are candidates for elder's orders. It also prescribes three corresponding courses of study for German preachers, travelling and local. It may here be explained that no *scholastic* examination precedes the licensure of a local preacher. Nevertheless, no one can be licensed to preach in that capacity without being first “examined in the Quarterly Conferences on the subject of Doctrines and Discipline.” Whenever any one desires to enter the itinerancy he is required, as indicated in the above course of study, to pass five successive examinations before committees of an Annual Conference.

was destroyed by fire a few years after its establishment, and, although rebuilt in the city of Baltimore, it met, in the second instance, with a similar fate. To a young and feeble church such results were so discouraging that further efforts for the founding and support of institutions of learning were suspended till about 1820. The General Conference of that year advised each of the Annual Conferences to found a seminary of learning within its boundaries. Thenceforward, academies and seminaries under the patronage of the church became common in various parts of the country. A few years later several colleges were founded, and ever since that period both classes of institutions have continued to increase, not only in number, but in strength and patronage.

Not many years passed by before the influence of the literary institutions referred to was seen in higher grades of preparation on the part of ministerial candidates who had enjoyed their advantages. But, even in the case of college graduates, no exemption was made from the rule requiring them to pass their theological examinations before the Quarterly and Annual Conferences, or committees appointed by the latter.

In England ninety years elapsed from the date of the first Methodist Conference before Mr. Wesley's original idea of "a seminary for laborers" was realized. The propriety of founding one began to be formally considered as early as 1823; but it was only after the most mature consideration that the experiment of institutional education for ministers was inaugurated, in hired premises, in 1834. Ten years later two elegant and substantial edifices had been erected and occupied as the northern and southern branches of the theological institution of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The former was located at Didsbury, near Manchester, and the latter at Richmond, near London. From that day to the present, the education of junior ministers in schools specially established for that purpose has been regarded in England as an assured success. It was found in actual result to have so decided an influence in promoting the spirit

of foreign missionary labor and due preparation for it, that, in 1864, the institution at Richmond was set apart solely for the education of missionaries. At the same time, a third branch of the general institution was established at Headingley, near Leeds, for candidates contemplating the home work.

Respecting the general influence of theological education, as thus established and conducted in Great Britain, a venerable Wesleyan minister, in 1874, wrote as follows: "The anticipations cherished by the promoters, that the institution in its several branches would prove a nursery for the personal piety of the students, as well as a suitable and efficient means of preparing them more fully for the wise and zealous discharge of ministerial duty, have been fully realized."

Only a little later than the movement in England just described, corresponding efforts were incepted in the Methodist Episcopal Church for the promotion of theological education through the direct agency of schools. The first practical fruit of these efforts was the organization of theological departments in several literary institutions. The first separate and independent institution for theological instruction was established at Concord, N. H., in 1847. Twenty years later it was removed to Boston. In 1856, a similar institution was organized at Evanston, Illinois, near Chicago; and in that year the first formal sanction was given to theological schools by the General Conference. Since that period this class of institutions has had the approbation of the highest authorities of the church. In 1867, a third was established at Madison, New Jersey, near the city of New York. The judgment of the church now seems to be that the institutions mentioned — so advantageously located at focal points of the Eastern, Western, and Middle States — form an ample supply for a long time to come, and that it is better to make these three strong in endowments and patronage than to found additional schools, unless for specific purposes.

The theological seminaries referred to, like the oldest and best similar schools of other American churches, prescribe a course of study arranged with reference to the attainments

of college graduates, and requiring three years for its completion. They give full instruction, by means both of textbooks and lectures, in the several departments of Hebrew and Greek exegesis and literature, ecclesiastical history, systematic theology, and practical theology, including homiletics and the pastoral work. The foregoing enumeration indicates, to some extent, the order of study. Biblical interpretation has precedence, as being fundamental to the right comprehension of revealed truth, as well as the great facts of history and providence. Systematic theology exhibits scriptural truth in its appropriate relations and in logical forms; while practical theology teaches the application and uses of all forms of truth in the proclamation of the gospel and the establishment and edification of the Christian church.

In two particulars, deemed important, the regulations of the Methodist theological seminaries are peculiar. 1. They require every student, in addition to his personal profession of conviction of a divine call to the ministry, to bring an official expression of a corresponding conviction on the part of the church, either in the form of a local preacher's license or of a certificate issued by a Quarterly Conference—the body authorized to license local preachers¹—affirming the

¹ The regulations of the Methodist Episcopal Church in reference to its local or lay ministry, as distinguished from its regular or itinerant ministry, seem to be somewhat difficult of comprehension to persons of other denominations. It may therefore be explained, that in order to become a local preacher a person must first be recommended by a meeting of the leaders and stewards of the church of which he is a member, as a suitable candidate for the office in question. He must then pass a satisfactory examination on the doctrines and discipline of the church before a Quarterly or District Conference. As to the nature of the investigation expected to be made in reference to his character and religious experience, see p. 563 of this Article. At the end of the prescribed examination, and of a consultation held in the absence of the candidate, a license may be granted by a vote of the examining Conference. That license is valid for only one year, but may be renewed annually thereafter if, on due examination of his personal and official character, involving his gifts, grace, and usefulness, the person is approved as a local preacher. Local preachers are considered laymen, and are usually engaged in some kind of secular business as a means of self-support; yet they are expected to give, and in fact do give, much of their time, as well as their best efforts, freely to active co-operation with their pastors whose assistants they are, and under whose general direction they act.

judgment of its members that the young man is called to preach the gospel. 2. They encourage students to preach, to a limited extent, during their undergraduate course.

Many reasons might be given to illustrate the propriety of the last-named regulation. Among them are the following: 1. Oftentimes churches and surrounding communities within easy access need the services of young men called to the

When, therefore, a young man comes to a Methodist theological seminary as a licensed local preacher, he has certain rights and is subject to certain duties quite independent of the institution. Hence, it is not for the institution to say, unless in an advisory manner, when or how often he is to preach. His allegiance in that regard is considered due to the church, and not to the school. Moreover, the circumstances and qualifications of individuals differ so widely that the schools would find it difficult to prescribe fixed rules. Nevertheless, the prevailing sentiment of the schools is, that, unless in very particular circumstances, students should preach but little while engaged in the studies of the junior year; that during vacations they should make themselves as useful as possible in the churches and neighborhoods they may visit; that from and after entering upon the study of homiletics in the middle year, they should pay special attention to the preparation and delivery of sermons; and that during their senior year while studying pastoral theology it is very well for them to serve as pastors of small churches not too far away. This theory is in harmony with the appropriate order of theological studies, which it is not deemed best to change in view of exceptional cases. As a rule, the students who attend our theological seminaries are those who expect to enter the itinerant ministry in the manner explained on pp. 579, 580, in order to which they must first have made proof of their ministerial gifts as local preachers. Nevertheless, many persons remain permanently in the local preacher's office, while those itinerants who in good standing cease to be members of Annual Conferences, fall back into the rank of local preachers from which they started. It is to be observed, however, that superannuated and supernumerary itinerant preachers retain their membership in the Annual Conferences, as do other ministers employed in official work recognized by the Conferences. At an early period of Methodism in America, owing to the inadequate number of regular ministers in many parts of the country, a custom was established which has never prevailed in England, viz. that of ordaining certain lay ministers in order to qualify them to administer, and to assist in administering, the sacraments. Hence, rules have been instituted by which persons who have rendered four years of acceptable and consecutive service as local preachers, and also passed a satisfactory examination on a prescribed course of study, may, by election of an Annual Conference, be ordained as local deacons; following which, after four years of additional service, and a satisfactory examination on a second course of study, they may in like manner be elected and ordained as local elders. Corresponding ordinations in the travelling or itinerant ministry are secured in half the time, or in two and four years respectively, as may also be seen from the statement on pp. 579, 580.

ministry. 2. It is for the spiritual good of persons cherishing convictions of duty to preach the gospel that they exercise their gifts as they may have opportunity. 3. Talents, whether great or small, improve with use, specially the talent of public speaking. 4. The necessity of using knowledge in persuading men stimulates the zest of study, and increases the interest of students in the instructions of their teachers. 5. It is important that habits of responsible Christian action be formed at the earliest practicable period in the life of an intending minister; otherwise he will be but a novice at the end of his curriculum of study. 6. While these and other kindred advantages are gained by encouraging ministerial students to preach with more or less regularity, many are thus actually enabled to support themselves, and avoid all necessity of borrowing from church or other funds during their course.

If it be asked whether the preaching of students does not interfere with their studious habits, it may be answered, Not necessarily. It may interrupt their studies to some extent, and at the same time quicken them to better habits of redeeming their time, as it presses them with higher motives. But even though it should in some degree lower their standing in mere scholarship,—as, indeed, it sometimes does,—yet if it should also, in an equal degree, increase their skill and power to win souls, the gain is quite certain to be greater than the loss. This is specially the case when the preaching tasks undertaken are not too frequent at too early a stage of their studies. Of course, judicious teachers seek to maintain a wise control, to any extent that may be necessary, over the preaching engagements of young men while students, not only that the former be not in excess, but that there be a suitable correspondence between the qualifications of the preachers and the requirements of the fields they may visit or occupy.

It is an encouraging fact, that from the period of their origin, the theological institutions of the Methodist Episcopal Church have been regularly increasing as to their number of

students, and also growing in influence and in favor with the churches and the ministry. Although the number of their alumni is as yet very small when compared with the whole body of the itinerant ministry, yet the record their representatives are making in the various Conferences and mission-fields of the church is such as to greatly commend them to all candidates for the ministry who can possibly secure their advantages. Indeed, the fact that such institutions are freely open to proper candidates just at the period when, for the first time in the history of the church to which they belong, there is a surplus of young men offering themselves for the ministry, is in itself a providential indication of duty to which thoughtful young men cannot be indifferent. Hence it is to be expected that the number of students will continue to increase, and that the standard of admission to the Annual Conferences will be elevated from time to time, so as to make it more and more a necessity that young men aspiring to the sacred office profit by the advantages they offer.

Adaptation has from the first been acknowledged as a cardinal principle in the economy of Methodism. By it the original system of training and education in the ministry was prescribed at a period when the services of good and true men were indispensable, whether fully qualified in an educational point of view, or not. In improved circumstances, the same principle now prescribes institutional education in theology, as well as in literature and science, to the full extent to which it is available. Formerly, the young preacher was almost invariably associated with a senior minister, on whom devolved the responsibility of the pastoral charge, and from whom counsel and instruction could be readily secured. In those days, several towns and neighborhoods, requiring the services of two or more preachers, were grouped together ecclesiastically under the title of a circuit, of which a senior minister had the official charge, including that of his assistant preachers. At present, circuits are few, while stations or separate pastoral charges are the rule. Consequently, each minister should be prepared in advance to serve

as preacher in charge, or as the sole official pastor of the flock over which he is appointed. Thorough pastoral work, even in the smallest field, leaves but little time for study, beyond that essential to the preparation of sermons. Hence the necessity, by no means so great under the former system, of thorough general preparation in advance.

While this view, as a matter of theory, scarcely admits of question, it is to be regretted that many individuals are slow to measure up to its practical requirements. Lack of time or of means is the prevailing excuse under which numbers of candidates still seek admission to the ministry by a shorter and less thorough course. These excuses are usually rendered plausible to their own minds by the self-flattering supposition that they can succeed as well as the fathers did in former times. But, being subjected to very different tests, they often signally fail, and seldom or never rise to the degree of influence and usefulness they might have attained by patient perseverance in preliminary study.

In some minds, greater weight is given to the excuses named from the fact that as yet no provision is made by the discipline of the church for shortening the period of ministerial probation in consideration of time spent in theological schools. That some such provision will ere long be made is not improbable. In England the Conference itself sends young men to the theological institution, where their time counts as if they were in actual service, though in a diminished ratio. But in this country, as yet, young men have to secure admission to Annual Conferences or a membership in the itinerancy on their personal merits, even after graduation at theological schools, by the same process as other candidates who have not had similar advantages or put forth similar efforts in preparation.

The meaning of this statement is, that though a young man may have graduated honorably at a theological seminary, he will be required to serve two years on trial for the itinerant ministry before he can become a full member of an Annual Conference, and thus entitled to regular appointments as a

minister. Nor can he receive his ordination as a deacon short of those two years of probation, unless he have been previously an approved local preacher for four years. He must then, unless elected under a rule applicable only to foreign missionaries, serve as an accepted minister two years longer prior to receiving his ordination as an elder.

While to some this may seem to be a tedious delay, it must be acknowledged to be in harmony with the apostolic precept, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Moreover, it may be seen to be advantageous in other respects. In the first place, a man who is properly prepared by previous study finds the examinations to be merely a pleasant and profitable review of theological topics in which, if his profiting appears to his brethren, he will have excellent opportunities of illustrating to others the value of the advantages he has enjoyed. In the second place, even the most thorough student finds that there are other tests of his manhood and of his capacities of public and ministerial usefulness than those to which he has been subjected in schools, and that there are many reasons for commending caution in electing persons to membership in ministerial bodies, and thus accrediting them as approved teachers and pastors in the church. Moreover, it is by a ready compliance with regulations found important to the itinerant system as a whole, that one enters into the *esprit du corps*, and becomes recognized as an acquisition to a band of workers in the vineyard of the Lord whose object is not self-seeking or personal distinction, but the edification of the church and the salvation of men.

It cannot be denied that there have been a few examples of persons who after having enjoyed the best institutional advantages have failed to succeed in the actual ministry, yet such cases have been proportionally far less frequent than failures among candidates of inadequate advantages. In point of fact, so generally and so appropriately have the graduates of the Methodist theological schools entered into the labors, the sacrifices, and the spirit of the itinerancy and of foreign mission work as to cause general admiration.

In this result, as well as in their acknowledged zeal and competency in all forms of ministerial work, the graduates of the schools referred to have effectually disappointed all fears that they would not happily affiliate with their brethren who had enjoyed inferior opportunities, or that those brethren would not welcome and appreciate the former as true yoke-fellows in the service of a common Master.

In the promotion of ministerial education by means of theological schools, the church has gradually seen the necessity of providing aid to a limited extent for approved candidates of inadequate means to pursue as students an extended course of study. Efforts for this object were at first local; but during the year 1866, celebrated as the centenary year of American Methodism, a connectional educational fund was collected, which now aggregates over one hundred thousand dollars. In 1868 a Board of Education was organized by order of the General Conference to administer that fund and to encourage auxiliary organizations in the various Annual Conferences. Of the latter, several are in efficient operation, and securing increasing approval and support on the part of benevolent persons.

Neither the term "beneficiary" nor the idea of charitable dependence find favor in the denomination. Hence, the proceeds of the educational fund and the collections of the auxiliary organizations are usually disbursed in the form of loans, to be repaid at remote periods without interest. In this manner the self-respect of the students is preserved, while, at the same time, they are encouraged in habits both of industry and economy. No experiences have as yet arisen to call in question the propriety of thus aiding young men of a well-established religious character and of clear convictions of duty to devote their lives to the ministry of the gospel.

In review of all the facts stated and alluded to in this Article, it may be said that the original Wesleyan system of ministerial probation during a period of field-training and testing in the actual work of the ministry is yet in full force

in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, that system has been modified and improved in adaptation to modern circumstances, and the church is at the present time welcoming as one of the greatest improvements auxiliary to that system, institutional instruction in the higher branches of theology. It is being demonstrated that by means of well-organized "seminaries for laborers," in which large libraries are accumulated, and the great departments of theological study are manned by competent and experienced teachers, advantages of inestimable value are secured to intending ministers. Among these advantages may be mentioned the following :

1. A great saving of time by the concentration of attention and effort.

2. Greater completeness and thoroughness in study.

3. Familiarity with the original languages of the Bible, which can rarely be studied to advantage apart from skilled instruction.

4. Specific and detailed instruction in reference to the responsibilities and duties of the pastoral office.

That a young man who profits by such advantages will greatly increase his probabilities of success in the actual ministry does not admit of question; whereas one who should fail after having enjoyed them would be regarded as having obviously mistaken his calling.

As to the liability of over educating, or of educating ministers out of sympathy with the people, it is believed that all occasion for apprehension is removed, wherever true piety is the governing trait in a man's character; whereas the absence of that complete consecration which brings every motive and feeling into "subjection to the obedience of Christ" leaves the highest human attainments of no more value than "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." In this view, great attention is, and ever ought to be given in our theological schools to the maintenance of a high standard of personal religious experience.

It is not to be denied that in such institutions, as in other

spheres of human life, occasional instances appear of a phlegmatic nature or a supercilious manner, which no education can wholly remedy. That persons of these and certain other types of character do not, however highly educated, succeed well in the ministry, is not the fault of their scholarship, which, in point of fact, is rarely ever superior.

On the other hand, young men of sterling sense and of absorbing devotion to God and his service are usually those who make the most of their opportunities of improvement, as they do of their opportunities for saving men, for Christ's sake. Their tastes may have been refined and elevated, and their love of books intensified, in the process of their education; but as they have coveted the best gifts as a means of promoting the glory of God, so their delight in consecrating all that they have attained to his service is the more intense. So far from not being able to "condescend to men of low estate," they do it most effectively and from the highest motives. Hence, while in our church no confidence is placed in learning as a substitute for piety, no reason is seen to fear the acquisition of too much knowledge, if it be duly seasoned with grace.

As to the logic of facts, it is a matter of great rejoicing that in the American Methodist theological schools, not less than in the English, the result of systematic education, so far from being prejudicial to the personal piety of the students, has been highly favorable to it. This has not only been shown by fruits following their graduation, but by numerous and sometimes extensive revivals of religion attending the ministrations of undergraduates while still engaged in their course of study. The same fact has been attested year after year by the general religious experience of the students themselves, who have found the institutions not less means of grace than helps to knowledge.

In further illustration of the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church has committed itself to theological education through the agency of schools, it may be stated that, in addition to the three institutions referred to above, she

has established several in the Southern States for the education of freedmen, and several more in her mission-fields, e.g. in Germany, in India, in China, and in Mexico. Those last named are yet too young to have produced very mature fruit, although their beginnings are full of promise. That in Germany has had a successful career of nearly twenty years with satisfactory results. That similar and even increasingly encouraging results will follow in all our mission-fields, as well as throughout the United States, is the universal hope, if not expectation, of the church.

ARTICLE IX.

NOTICES OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE. By John William Draper, M.D., LL.D. pp. 373. New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1875.

There is so much manifest error in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church, and there has been so much in her practices to be condemned, that it is very easy to pass from cool criticism of these into sweeping denunciations of everything that has the label of infallibility. Dr. Draper's book on the Conflict between Religion and Science, while justified to a great degree by the present attitude of the papacy, and by numberless instances of ecclesiastical illiberality in the past, is open to many objections, and needs to be read with a good deal of caution and scepticism.

In the first place, the author speaks with positiveness regarding too great a range of subjects to insure the confidence of his reader. The book carries you over the whole range of history, profane and sacred, of wars, of philosophy, of religion, and of science; it treats at some length of the genuineness of the Pentateuch, of the conquests of Alexander, of the influence of Tertullian and St. Cyrill, of Nestorius and Augustine, of Constantine and Torquemada, of Mohammed and Averroes; it has something to say concerning the virginity of the mother of Christ, the nature of memory, the proof of immortality, the origin and antiquity of man, the decline of the influence of the pulpit; it glorifies Stoicism; it praises Mohammedanism for the attention its devotees gave to mathematics and the physical sciences; it brushes aside the orthodox doctrine of providence and prayer; it reproaches the church with having spent the Middle Ages in profitless speculations, with having repressed scientific investigations, with being, in fact, the embodiment of bigotry and intolerance, while asserting that scientific men are models of candor and toleration. Upon