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THE PROBLEM WITH SEMINARIES

Gary North

So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him (I Kings 19:19-21).

So, you want to become a minister. First, however, you need training. You think you should go to seminary. A word of warning: seminaries are staffed by people who learned to write term papers in their teens or early twenties, and who then decided to parlay that peculiar skill into lifetime employment. Seminaries are not staffed by successful ex-pastors; successful pastors remain in the ministry. Seminaries are staffed by baptized college professors who chose to specialize in a field so obscure that no college has a sufficient number of students to make hiring them come close to paying off.

A Makeshift Institution

The seminary was invented in the early eighteenth century by a small group of Presbyterians who correctly concluded that the colleges of America had gone sour theologically and could therefore no longer be entrusted with the task of training ministers. This tiny band of men created what became known as "the Log College," later known as Princeton Theological Seminary. They began this project in 1811, just before the War of 1812.

The seminary was a makeshift addition to American higher education because the established colleges, one by one and without exception, by the nineteenth century were becoming humanistic, i.e., Unitarian. They went Greek, in other words. I don't mean Greek letter fraternities and sororities, a later development; I mean they went **Greek**. They became consistent with their classical presuppositions. They abandoned trinitarian theology as an unnecessary hypothesis. Then, in the years after the Civil War, they went Darwinist. They abandoned even the Unitarian god.

The scholars who taught theology were themselves graduates of colleges, and their methodology had been learned in college. The college curriculum of the West had always been tied to classical literature. Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Tacitus, always had a place in the classrooms at least as prominent as Moses and Jeremiah, a fact that can be seen in the debates over the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. The pamphleteers adopted names like "Brutus" and "Publius," not "Joshua" and "Lazarus." From the invention of the university in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the dominant methodology had been a form of baptized Aristotelianism.

The seminaries did not make a clean break with Greece. The log college Presbyterians were evangelists, leaders in the second Great Awakening. Their successors were less enthusiastic about revivalism. They were more interested in scholarship. So were their many imitators. The seminary was set up to give men the courses that the colleges were no longer equipped to give: biblical languages (especially Hebrew), systematic theology, preaching skills, Bible exposition, and similar training. The problem was, these skills were highly specialized, and the professors who were equipped to impart them were even more highly specialized. Professors of Hebrew tended to know a dozen other ancient languages, and they preferred learning additional languages to teaching Hebrew to students whom they knew would never remember any of it three years after graduation (or three months). Thus, there was an inherent tendency to go in the direction of **antiquarianism**: knowledge for its own sake.

Similarly, professors of systematic theology tended in those days to be specialists in the technicalities of philosophy, meaning humanism, and they mixed their theological expositions with the arcane insights of dead pagan philosophers. A good example is Charles Hodge's three-volume Systematic Theology, which sometimes seems to be as much a debate with Sir William Hamilton as an exposition of Scripture. This makes for intolerable reading. The book is still being assigned. (Can you imagine any other contemporary academic discipline that relies on an 1873 textbook?)

Another problem of the seminary has been that it is regarded as a place only for previously certified scholars. Seminaries required young men to go through the gauntlet of college before enrolling. After all, one supposedly needs educated ministers, i.e., men trained and then officially certified by God's enemies. The pastor of 1830 was supposed to be a liberally educated person, meaning a man skilled in Attic Greek, Latin, mathematics (especially geometry), and classical history, and then -- and only then -- an expert in systematic theology. Even here, the dominant theological framework was that of Protestant scholasticism: a system based on the six loci of seventeenth-century theology, the Protestant response to the Aristotelianism of the scholasticism of the Counter-Reformation. And so it is today: theology proper, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. A lot of "ologies," but not much on evangelism. Not much on ethics, either. And what ever happened to creationism, biblical chronology, the covenant, and creeds?

To make sure the seminary faculties had to suffer their fair share of gauntlet-running, they strongly advised prospective faculty members to attend German universities where the full-time God-haters, the "higher critics" of the Bible, were holding forth.

And then, one by one, the seminaries also went liberal. Surprise, surprise!

The Humanists' Target

The institutional strategy of Satan is always collectivist. He must imitate God, and God is omniscient. Satan is not. Thus, he needs information. He needs a chain of command, with his subordinates -- not morally impeccable sources -- supplying him with data. Also, he is not

omnipotent, so he needs a top-down hierarchy through which he can issue commands.

The humanists in the U.S. spotted what was obvious by the eighteenth century: the key institution to capture was the college. This institution trained the nation's professionals, especially ministers. Thus, they began a program of infiltration and subversion. The Unitarians captured Harvard in 1805. The rest of the colleges followed. Humanists could certify everyone else by making Harvard, Yale, and finally Princeton University (after Woodrow Wilson's coup in 1902) the prestige universities, i.e., the certifying universities. They also imported the graduate school and the Ph.D degree from Prussia, which had been the German-speaking model for capturing the academic certification system. It was all a top-down operation. They screened all those who hoped to become certified and to certify, and they also persuaded all the professions that certification was mandatory.

Their operating model had always been the Roman Catholic church, the most successful bureaucracy in the history of the West. Later, their model became the Jesuit order. (Calvin and Loyola had studied at the University of Paris at the same time.) The humanists realized by 1870 that they would have to capture the seminaries to capture the prestige denominations. The seminary was the ultimate sitting duck: the Christians' version of the professional certification system. The prestige churches had bought the devil's line: no undergraduate gauntlet, no seminary training; no seminary degree, no ordination.

By the grace of God, only the stagnant Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Lutherans believed such institutional nonsense. (Can you imagine Calvin or Martin Luther requiring each candidate for the ministry to graduate from an accredited university, when all of them were Roman Catholic? That would have made more sense than requiring seminary candidates to graduate from the Darwinian swamps of today.) By the end of the second Great Awakening (1850's), the Baptists and Methodists had become dominant in the U.S., as they have remained, and for many decades, they paid little or no attention to seminary education.

The Presbyterians and Episcopalians got their educated ministry, and the majority of them by 1935 were liberals. The Lutherans took a bit longer. By means of the seminary, Satan had captured the prestige (hierarchical) churches in a little more than a century.

Ministry Through Ministering

"Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." Here is the mark of the minister: he ministers. He ministers initially to another minister. This is the diaconal model. He finds a representative of God who is busy ministering to God's people, and he attaches himself to that representative. He becomes an apprentice.

The apprenticeship system is God's model. This is why the modern world is so hostile to apprenticeship. The devil's system is certification by committee, not the student's imitation of individually skilled performance. His organizational system is top-down and as impersonal as possible; God's is bottom-up and as personal as possible. Satan's system is based on the

assumption of cosmic impersonalism (especially after Darwinism); God's is based on the assumption of cosmic personalism: the absolute sovereignty of a trinitarian personal God.

The economist and social philosopher F. A. Hayek has for over four decades argued that the knowledge imparted by the free market is vastly more accurate and comprehensive than knowledge imparted by a central planning committee. Hayek devoted his later career to opposing top-down bureaucracy as a method of organizing economic production. Hayek's point is that real-world knowledge is more complex than anything that can be written down in a manual or tested at the end of the term.

You can test his thesis by writing down the steps you must go through to tie a shoelace. Then give your instructions to someone else. See how fast he can tie his shoelace by following your detailed instructions. To make things interesting, if you're right-handed, describe the proper approach for someone who is left-handed.

If learning how to tie a shoelace requires apprenticeship, what about learning how to start and run a church?

Physicians are forced to go through internship programs. This makes sense. (It is also a subsidy to hospitals, which is why they have consented to the narrowing of the market supply of physicians which the medical school certification system produces.) Bureaucratically trained newcomers receive on-the-job training. There is also at least a loose relationship between what physicians study in the classroom and what they face daily in the hospital.

Not so with seminary students. What they face in the seminary classroom is at least as far removed from the day-to-day problems of the gospel ministry as what the M.B.A. faces in the business world. It may be even farther removed.

Example: the seminary student is asked to prepare a sermon. He takes 20 hours to do this a few times during his seminary career. No one tells him that he had better not take over two hours per sermon in his pastorate, and that he needs at least 50 sermons in hand when he walks into his first pastorate. No one tells him what a church budget is. No one tells him that if he marries a girl from the congregation, he has to leave, since there are a dozen mothers in that congregation saying to themselves, "So he thinks **she** is better than my Debbie? Well, we'll see about that!"

What he learns is that Schleiermacher was dead wrong.

Conclusion

What churches have done is preposterous. They have hired theologians to train future ministers. Theologians should train theologians; ministers should train ministers. This is so obvious that only a theologian could fail to grasp it.

Denominations really do not think a graduate school of theology is worth the money. They are wrong. They do think a seminary is worth the money. They are wrong again. So they try to kill two birds with one stone. They set up a school of theology to train ministers. Both birds then die. The denominations either shrink (if they somehow keep their theology professors orthodox) or go liberal and then shrink three generations later.

The church in Jerusalem grew by 3,000 in one day (Acts 2:41). Where did their ministers attend seminary?

Five billion people need to hear the gospel and join God's church today. Want to make sure that 99 percent of them go to hell in the next 70 years? Easy! Just require a three-year seminary degree for all pastors.

SEMINARY EDUCATION AS BAIT-AND-SWITCH

Gary North
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Bait-and-switch is a proven marketing technique. A store advertises a wonderful deal, but when the customer arrives at the store, the salesman tries to get him to buy something different, and always with a larger profit margin. This is illegal in most states, but theological seminaries are exempted. This had led to the triumph of theological liberalism. Allow me to explain.

In writing *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), I was amazed at how easy it was for them. They infiltrated the seminaries early, and they never surrendered control of one of them. One by one, Presbyterian seminaries went liberal, culminating with Princeton in 1929. Fifteen years after J. Ross Stevenson took over from Francis Patton as president of Princeton in 1914, the last academic bastion of Northern Presbyterian Calvinism fell.

What was true of the seminaries was equally true of Presbyterian Colleges. Princeton University under Woodrow Wilson (a family friend of Machens) is the model. When he took over its presidency from Francis Patton in 1902, it was seemingly Christian, though riddled with humanism. By the time he ran for Governor of New Jersey in 1910, it was openly humanistic. Yet Presbyterians continued to donate money to it.

The seminary was invented by American Calvinists. Andover began in 1808; Princeton Seminary opened in 1812. The seminary was necessary, Calvinist laymen were told by their leaders, because the liberal arts colleges in the North that trained Calvinist ministers had either gone Unitarian or were headed in that direction. This was an accurate assessment of the problem. The question is: Was the seminary the best solution?

Bait-and-Switch in Action

From the beginning, seminaries had a marketing problem. The language of commerce may seem inappropriate, but I am quite serious. It was a matter of money. They had to sell the idea of seminary education to donors. Seminaries raised money for two things: to train ministers, which laymen were willing to pay for, and to train academic theologians, which laymen were only marginally interested in funding. Seminaries solved this dilemma with a public appeal based on the training of ministers, and then quietly hiring faculty members in the systematic theology and New Testament and Old Testament departments who saw themselves as academic defenders against liberalism and higher criticism. The academic defenders had to do double duty: train pastors in the classroom and defend the faith in print.

For decades, Princeton Seminary had an unwritten rule: its theology faculty had to attend - though not graduate from -- a German university. This was an effective barrier against the appointment of pastors in the theology faculty. The faculty members had to be ordained as teaching elders, but they were pastors without sheep or shepherding experience. Classes were structured by academic models. Seminaries immediately became graduate schools in theology for college graduates who had rarely studied academic theology and who wanted to be ordained. Academic theology replaced theology. To put it specifically, Turretin replaced Calvin. When incoming students could no longer read Latin, Hodge's *Systematic Theology* replaced Turretin.

Here was a major delegation of power from presbyteries to seminaries: the power of screening candidates for the ministry. Presbyteries consented to this transfer of power over ministerial screening because they had previously demanded that all ordained ministers attend college: a prior delegation of power. Either they had to abandon the traditional rule and cease making college education a stepping stone to the ministry, or else add consent to another three years of stepping stones. They chose the latter.

Young, intellectually defenseless ministerial candidates were told to run two expensive and time-consuming gauntlets: the Unitarian collegiate gauntlet and the graduate school of theology gauntlet. Meanwhile, minimally educated Methodist and Baptist preachers fanned out across the West and South, capturing both. There were under 500 Baptist churches in America in 1780; there were almost 50,000 in 1900. There were under 500 Methodist congregations in 1780; there were 54,000 in 1900. There were under 500 Presbyterian congregations in 1780; there were 15,000 in 1900, and not many of them defended Old School Calvinism. None of this has changed, except that the heirs of the Unitarians now attend mainline Protestant churches, which they control.

Institutional Schizophrenia

If I told you that a Bible college is basically the same thing academically as a liberal arts college, you would not believe it, nor should you. If I told you that a seminary is the same thing academically as a graduate school of theology, you probably would believe it. You may even have cancelled donation checks to prove just how much you believe it.

I contend that seminaries and graduate schools of theology have never been the same, cannot be the same, and will function poorly as both ministerial training institutions and high-powered academic institutions for as long as the two functions are mixed. The principle of the division of labor (I Cor. 12) tells us that there is a loss of productivity when feet try to be eyes and legs try to be arms. Pulpits are not podiums. Sermons are not verbal term papers. The training for success in either calling must be different.

Seminaries should teach pastoral wisdom. Graduate schools of theology should teach the skills of academic conflict. We need both, but laymen so far have been willing to pay only for the former. So, they have been asked to subsidize the production of cotton/wool academic robes, mainly wool (heavy, itchy, and expensive to clean), but defended as necessary in the name of cotton.

What we do not need is polyester, which is popular these days: counselling courses, Christian education courses, communications courses. These are suitable for optional correspondence courses. But I digress.

A graduate school of theology is involved in an academic battle. It must train its graduates to conduct themselves according to academic procedures, which Christians do not establish today. In much the same way that students at Oxford and Cambridge are supposed to learn how to speak with the English upper-class accent, so are theology students expected to learn to speak with a foreign accent: the accent of academia. (Pastoral candidates rarely learn to speak this way, and there is no good reason why they should.) Theology students seek academic certification from the institution, though hopefully not an institution that has received accreditation from its mortal enemy, the humanist educational guild. ("We tell our students that people like you are going to hell, but we'll follow your rules if you'll certify us. From now on, every time we tell them you're going to hell, we'll add a footnote, using either MLA style or Chicago style.")

Academic certification mandates time spent in a world turned upside-down, a world where students are not taught by practitioners of the profession that they are training to enter. English literature students are not taught by poets and novelists. Journalism students are not taught by reporters. Criminology students are not taught by policemen or judges. Computer programming students are not taught by professional computer programmers. Business students are not taught by businessmen. They are taught by people who have been certified academically by others who are also non-practitioners of the trade. Here is a rule of thumb: the day that the term paper becomes part of the formal training, the move to non-practitioner screening has begun.

The first profession to succumb to this process of non-practitioner screening was the clergy. The medieval university was a screening system in which prospective ministers were trained by theologians and philosophers, not by pastors. The church consented to this crucial transfer of authority to a legally independent institution as early as the twelfth century. The seminary has merely extended this tradition. The seminary has always been an institution run by academic theologians. The term paper, not the sermon, is the formal exercise of the seminary. It

is the visible symbol of the seminary's schizophrenic problem, and the church's. Students are trained in a truly foreign language -- not Greek, not Hebrew, but the language of academia. There literally was a foreign academic language required until the late nineteenth century: Latin. When the term paper is substituted for the sermon, the move toward bureaucracy has begun.

This was why the Protestant Reformation insisted on the Bible in the vernacular: the decentralization of authority and the shattering of the existing ecclesiastical bureaucracy. This was why the Roman Church fought the vernacular Bible so strongly. But both Wycliffe and Luther were men of the university, which protected them. They refused to break with this academic hierarchy. Liberals from medieval times -- called "spirituals" in that era -- have always understood the enormous power of this independent hierarchy, and they have mastered the art of capturing academic institutions and therefore capturing the minds of the next generation of leaders.

Because seminaries are disguised graduate schools of theology, they evolve according to the laws of academic evolution. Those who fund seminaries should understand this evolutionary process.

Laws of Academic Evolution

Here are the three primary laws of academic evolution:

1. Academic institutions that require their faculty members to earn degrees from humanist-certified academic institutions eventually go liberal.
2. Academic institutions that grant tenure eventually go liberal.
3. Academic institutions that are formally accredited by humanists eventually go liberal.

There is also a corollary (which some analysts of the process believe is a fourth law):

The representatives of these institutions will publicly deny that this process is taking place until at least 80% of their funding comes from liberals.

There is only one way to reverse the effects of these three laws, other than by immediately shutting down the institution: by honoring a more fundamental law, the most fundamental institutional law known to man. "He who pays the piper calls the tune."

Because of their resistance to this law, pipers organize into guilds. These guilds decry this law as professionally denigrating and productive of shoddy, irresponsible piping. They proclaim an alternative law: "An accredited piper deserves to be paid a living wage if he plays from the *Official Book of Tunes*." Under competitive pressure, payers are occasionally granted the right to select tunes from other tune books, but only those that were originally issued by the guild but which have gone out of print.

A test of this guild process in a Calvinist seminary is easy to conduct. Examine the catalogue of courses. See if Calvin's *Institutes*, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms have become a "medley of old favorites," excerpts from which are played only on special occasions.

If a tune is to be played loud and clear, the call must be even more loud and clear. Connected to the call must be the threat of sanctions -- also loud and clear. The fundamental rule that must govern the calling of tunes is this: "Speak loudly and carry a big stick."

Calling the Seminary's Tune

The seminary must always be an adjunct of the pulpit and the sanctuary. If it is asked to be anything else -- or is allowed to -- it will revert to form and become academic.

Institutionally, a seminary must be under both the formal and operational control of the institutional church. Psychologically, this means that those who pay the pipers must have sufficient self-confidence to call the tunes. They did not in the P.C.U.S.A., 1871–1929.

Primary screening for the ministry must not be academic; it must be confessional. Academia screens in terms of intellect, and its confession is not orthodox; it is Unitarian-humanistic: common-ground knowledge through autonomous reason. (This is why Van Til's apologetics constitutes a true revolution.) Hence, there is a conflict of goals: church vs. college. This conflict is eight centuries old. Non-mainline American churches have won some battles, though not the war, only by abandoning or de-emphasizing collegiate screening: Methodists (until the 1850's, after which they went liberal), Baptists, and now charismatics. No American university has ever been captured by orthodox Christianity. The church has not retaken lost ground. There is only Bob Jones University: defiantly and wisely non-accredited.

The seminary is based on a collegiate model. This is why seminaries have always resisted presbyterial control. Tenure is the symbol of their independence: a radically anti-presbyterial symbol.

Learning is more than reading books and writing term papers. Information is more than whatever can be written down. (Test: teach a literate bushman to tie a shoelace by writing down instructions. Teach another by kneeling behind him, holding his hands, and telling him what to do. See which one learns first.) What is needed is a screening procedure based on the teachable characteristics that consistently produce successful ministries.

There is a term for such a procedure: apprenticeship. Few Presbyterians have ever believed in apprenticeship as the primary training system. You can be ordained by graduating from a humanist-accredited seminary without ever serving as an apprentice. You can only rarely be ordained by serving as an apprentice without ever attending an accredited seminary.

What a New Minister Needs

To become a great preacher, it helps to spend a lifetime reading, mastering, and interacting with a large number of good books. Charles Spurgeon is the premier example. He never went to college, and his library at his death was over 12,000 volumes. You can sense this breadth of learning in his published sermons, yet he offered no footnotes. The man never wrote a term paper, as far as I have been able to discover.

A new minister does not need to have read widely in seminary. He does need to have read thoroughly. Show me a young preacher who has mastered Calvin's *Institutes* -- three or four careful readings, plus a few commentaries on it. Add half a dozen of Calvin's commentaries, and I will be truly impressed. Let him have mastered the Westminster Confession and the other great Reformed confessions: chapter, verse, and supporting Bible verses. Then let him display a comprehensive knowledge of the English Bible. (Test: "What are the major themes of each of the minor prophets?") Whether he has read Karl Barth is irrelevant to me, just so long as he does not think like Barth. A very good way to keep him from thinking like Barth is not asking him to read Barth in seminary, which frees up more time for reading the Bible and Calvin.

During his candidacy, let his presbytery assign him a reading list with questions. Let the presbytery monitor his progress intellectually. Let him buy the CD-ROM of Van Til if he needs work on apologetics. (If!) Let him read the *Collected Works of John Murray*. Let the presbytery buy videotapes of those distant seminary faculty members whom it trusts. Unlike a lecture in a classroom, you can rewind a videotape and see a confusing part of the lecture again; this is much better than being in the classroom. Also, videotapes allow the presbytery to monitor what is being taught in the classroom, which is healthy: the piper/tune factor.

I distinguish between theology and academic theology. Calvin wrote theology. Murray wrote theology. Machen wrote theology. Machen took his stand with a book on theology: *Christianity and Liberalism*. True, he also wrote academic theology: *The Origin of Paul's Religion* and *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. Nobody reads his academic theology these days; almost nobody did in his day, either. His war was a theological war, not an academic theological war. The General Assembly in 1926 and thereafter did not deny him his appointment in apologetics because of *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. It denied him the position because of *Christianity and Liberalism* and all that it represented. Academic theology is no immediate threat to theological liberals, and they care mainly about immediate threats. Theology, under certain conditions, can become a threat to them, and they suppress it if they can, by whatever means they can, though never in the name of theology, always in the name of institutional peace.

As part of his training, have this young man serve for several years under a successful church-builder. Have him teach the 4-year olds in Sunday school. Have him preach at the local Presbyterian skid row rescue mission. (I'm kidding about the Presbyterian part.) Have him serve in a ministry at a prison or a convalescent home. (They're kidding about the convalescing part.)

Conclusions

When the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at long last decides that it must have its own seminary that teaches its unique distinctives -- understand, I am a postmillennialist -- it should insist on the following: (1) presbyterial funding and therefore control over both hiring and the curriculum, with no academic tenure; (2) on-the-job training for students in local churches (one-third of the curriculum, minimum); and (3) student mastery of a small number of Calvinist books, mainly written by Calvin, with regular pre-ordination oral exams formally administered by the presbytery and open to all presbytery members.

The goal is for every presbytery to have its own seminary, accredited by the denomination, not by some regional association of covenant-breakers. This means decentralization: funding, control, and instruction. The presbytery ordains men; it should also train them. Presbyterial discipline is to be exercised continually, not merely for an hour or two after a three-year process of "elimination by term papers." The presbytery must not delegate training to distant, independent experts in academic theology, especially those who belong to other denominations. Better to pay a pastor in the presbytery to oversee on a part-time basis the theological education of all ministerial candidates than to delegate their formal education to a distant bureaucracy. Any presbytery that cannot locate within its own ranks someone sufficiently competent to do this can hire someone from the outside.

To separate the presbytery's formal positive sanction of ordination -- an exclusive authority mandated by God, insist Presbyterians -- from ministerial education, is to commit institutional suicide on the installment plan. The classroom authority of professors to screen candidates for the ministry is an authority based on eight centuries of highly self-interested assertions by professors. It means the surrender of a God-given responsibility to an institution not under presbyterial authority. Presbyterian ministers see a building full of men in black academic robes, and they get weak-kneed. (Whenever I see a room full of men in black academic robes, I hear a voice: "Pay no attention to the little man behind the curtain!")

For over three centuries, presbyteries have not had the self-confidence to insist on their God-given authority to control all aspects of the ordination process. They have claimed only token authority over the form and content of theological instruction, and the professors, being politicians and therefore polite, have graciously granted them their minimal claim. Up until the day of the ordination exam, the presbyteries in effect tell those under their care: "We'll pretend to teach you, and you'll pretend to learn." For centuries, everyone in the process has known it was a charade; long ago, it became a respected tradition.

Most Presbyterian pastors resist clerical robes. They should resist even harder the delegation of power over ordination to those in academic robes.

One more time: "He who pays the piper calls the tune." Of all offices on earth, this principle of payment applies most legitimately to the ministry. Ordination is payment for tunes competently played by candidates. The presbytery must call the tune. The problem is,

presbyteries have never been willing to pay, so they have never called the tune.

Well, not quite. One presbytery did call its own tune: the New York Presbytery. It had its own seminary, Union. After 1892, Union was independent from Church control. Yet its graduates remained eligible for ordination, and the New York Presbytery ordained them. So did others. Through the leadership this presbytery and this seminary, the liberals captured the Northern Presbyterian Church, 1869–1936. The New York Presbytery was willing to pay the price. The pearl was of great value.

One more thought. Any skill that is lost by 80% of a presbytery's pastors within five years after their ordination should not be mandatory for ordination. It should therefore not be required in the curriculum. My favorite example is Latin. It was mandatory for ordination in the P.C.U.S.A. until 1911 -- at least a generation after most seminary students could no longer read it. The Church then substituted the B.A. degree, which by 1911 was Latin-free. Because the humanist educational system had abandoned Latin as no longer necessary for learning, the Church felt free to follow the humanists' lead. The academic tail in 1911 was still visibly wagging the ecclesiastical dog. It still is.