

Period. 2006
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1896-97

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THE
UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. 1—SEPT.-OCT., 1896.

I.—LITERARY.

THE TESTING SYSTEM FOR MINISTERIAL STUDENTS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND.

The testing system for ministerial students in the Southern Presbyterian Church is far from giving universal satisfaction. No proposed changes have met with a favorable reception at the hands of the majority of our rulers. But all parties are ready to admit that practically the examining of our candidates is very often most imperfect and unsatisfactory. Laxity is the common characteristic of most of the examinations conducted by the Presbyteries, while incompetence on the part of the examiners is not unheard of.

We are not concerned here to inquire whether the trouble springs from the requirements of the Book, or from the nature of the personnel of the Presbyteries—whether the standard set up in our Constitution is too high, or the material of our Presbyteries too low. We merely affirm as an acknowledged fact that there is dissatisfaction with the system by which we test the students' qualifications for the work of the ministry.

This being so, it may be fairly assumed that an account of the testing system in application in a sister church of noble repute will be received with interest. We do not think of advocating the adoption of the Irish scheme by our own church. We hope simply to stir up the minds of our brethren, by giving them a new plan to think on, to the bettering, in a way which shall seem good to them, our testing system.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY: ITS HISTORY AND STANDARDS. Being the Baird Lecture for 1882. By *Alexander F. Mitchell, D. D.* Professor of Ecclesiastical History, St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, Joint Editor of "Minutes of the Westminster Assembly," etc. London: James Nisbet & Co., 21 Berners Street, 1883.

Our Memphis Assembly of the present year took steps to secure "the celebration, during the next Assembly, of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the origin of the Westminster Standards." This is an important step. The Westminster Standards are the noblest held by any church. The history of their origin is, when at all understood, calculated to inspire increased respect for them. We heartily concur in this action of our last Assembly. We hope it will give to our own standards a higher place in the affections of our people.

Anticipating an increase of historical interest about the origin of the Westminster Standards, we commend Dr. Mitchell's work to our readers. True, the book has been familiar to some of them for a dozen years; but to others it may be unknown.

It is from the greatest living authority on the subject. Hetherington has given us a very interesting history of this Assembly. It is however wanting in judicial tone. Dr. Mitchell's work is fair, based on the most thoroughgoing researches, and written in a plain, simple, direct style. By his laborious, and painstaking editorship of the "Minutes of the Westminster Assembly," issued from the press in 1874, our author got the kind of preparation needed in order to writing the standard history on the subject.

Our space does not permit our giving the table of contents. We can only say that the book contains thirteen lectures; that the first three of these present in vivid outline the history of Puritanism in Britain previous to the calling of the Assembly; the fourth, the preparation for and summoning of the Assembly; the fifth, its opening, proceedings and debates while engaged in revising the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Solemn League and Covenant; the sixth, the arrival of the Scottish Commissioners, taking of the Solemn League and Covenant, consequent extension of the commission of the Assembly, debates on office-bearers and courts of the church. Then follow in successive lectures, accounts of the making of the directory of Public Worship, Treatises on Church Government and Discipline, Debates on the Autonomy of the church and the *jus divinum* theory of Church Government. The confession of Faith: the preparation of; Sources of; and Objections to the Confession, the Catechism. Finally we have the "Conclusion and Results of the Assembly."

The work also contains a valuable Appendix of thirty-six pages; and a good index.

No one can read this volume and escape the conclusion that the Westminster Assembly was a body of pious, able, and learned men. The reader will not find much difficulty, perhaps in accepting the estimate of old Richard Baxter. He modestly says, "Being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak that truth I know, even in the

face of malice and envy, that so far as I am able to judge by the information of all history the Christian world since the days of the apostles had never a synod of more excellent divines."

As he remarks their ability, and their conscientious and protracted labors to get at the truth, their good conservatism and their desire for progress in stating the truth, no matter how much he may have loved the Westminster Standards the reader will give them a still higher place in his regard. Truth is more beautiful in proportion as it is more clearly and certainly seen.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

Hampden-Sidney, Va., Aug. 22nd, '96.

FOREIGN MISSIONS AFTER A CENTURY. *By Rev. James S. Dennis, D. D., of the American Presbyterian Mission, Beirut, Syria. Fourth Edition.* Fleming H. Revell Company: New York, Chicago, Toronto.

The Fleming H. Revell Company sends forth many excellent books, but it is safe to say that it has not yet sent forth a worthier volume than this one; nor is there likelihood of its doing so in the near future. This is a volume to tell powerfully on the life and progress of the church.

Not only does the publisher deserve a share of praise for this book, as for every good book readily and well brought out; but Princeton Theological Seminary has the credit of having called forth the present work from Dr. Dennis. The establishment of lectureships on missions in many of the theological seminaries of the country is timely. It is one of the ways of acquainting the people of God with his great works among all peoples, the grand progress of his kingdom, the opportunities of service, and the consequent responsibilities. Princeton now has such a lectureship. And Dr. Dennis's book gives to the reading world the six lectures first delivered on the basis of this lectureship. He says in his preface, "These lectures were delivered in spring of 1893, before the faculty and students of Princeton Theological Seminary, on the basis of the newly established Students' Lectureship on Missions, being the first course delivered on that foundation."

The author writes over his dedicatory page:

TO THE
MEMORY OF
ARTHER MITCHELL,
WHO LOVED THE CAUSE OF WORLD-WIDE MISSIONS
WITH A PASSION WHICH HE CAUGHT FROM HIS MASTER,
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED.

In his first lecture, Dr. Dennis aims first to prepare his hearers to readily receive all that can be justly said of the history and conditions of Foreign Mission work. He shows that his message, if adequate, ought to be received, on account of the nature of the work, with special honor. In the latter part of this lecture he sets forth the call to the church for increased efforts in this department of work. He shows that it is at once