

# THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

---

NO. 2—NOV.-DEC., 1896.

---

## I.—LITERARY.

---

### THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The fundamental question of the christian religion is the origin of the Scriptures. It is fundamental because the answer we must give to almost all other religious questions depends on the answer we must give to it. What we are to think about God and his attributes; about the law and its penalties; about sin and its consequences; about Christ and his salvation; about life and its duties; about death and its issues; about the future that lies beyond death, and the destiny that awaits the righteous and the wicked; what we are to think about these and number of other subjects, is determined by the conclusion at which we arrive as to the source whence the Bible has come. If it originated with men in the exercise of their own unaided powers, its contents are merely human speculations, having no more authority than human reason can confer. But if it came from God, and, in all its parts, is a record of divine truth, its teachings on all subjects come to us with authority that precludes all debate, and that demands immediate obedience.

A very important question, then, is, how may the ordinary reader of the Book, who has no acquaintance with its original languages, and who has no time for protracted study of books on the evidences, come to a satisfactory conclusion as to its divine origin, so that he may be able to rest upon its teachings all the weight of his eternal interests without any misgivings that his hopes will at last go up as dust.

reader, while it instructs and enlarges the views of others who may go no farther.

Second—Every lover of his Seminary will be glad to see any publications which reflect credit on the Institution whose reputation he cherishes, and which shows that her teachers were men of thought and learning, and

Third—Students who cherish the memory of a loved and venerated teacher, will cheerfully deny themselves to purchase some memorial which recalls the days of young enthusiasm in the study of sacred things, and all the sweet memories of the past, as they listened to the voice of the sainted dead, and remember the holy fervor with which he urged them to pursue truth, and will preserve and read with delight what they may have heard from the pulpit or to the class-room while to the church at large, valuable truth will be given from one of her own sons.

E. H. HARDING.

---

THE PRESBYTERIAN STANDARDS: AN EXPOSITION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS. *By Francis R. Beattie, B. D., Ph. D., D. D.* Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics in Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and author of "An Examination of Utilitarianism," "the Methods of Theism," and "Radical Criticism." Pp. 481. Price \$2.00. Richmond, Va.: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication.

Looking at the externals of this volume, one finds much to praise and little to complain of. The work of printer and publisher has been well done. The page is attractive to the taste and may be perused without weariness to the eye. Messrs. Whittet and Shepperson, who do the Committee's printing, do good work.

But good as the externals of this book are, the book itself is better; and to the committee and to Dr. Beattie are due no small thanks on the part of the church for it.

The aim of the work, as stated in the Preface "is to give a simple, connected exposition of the entire Westminster Standards." It is intended for Bible class and Sabbath-School teachers, for members of Young Peoples Societies, for the various office bearers of the church and for all others who may wish to intelligently comprehend our standards and yet not have the opportunity or the time to secure acquaintance by the ordinary courses. The plan of the work, as set forth, also, in the Preface, is as follows: "The shorter catechism is made the basis of the exposition, but the contents of the Larger Catechism and the Confession of Faith are carefully incorporated at every point. In addition certain topics not included in the catechism are embraced in the confession. Brief explanations of these topics are also made, so that the whole ground of the standards is thereby covered."

The author modestly but justly claims that this work fills a unique place, not being "aware of any book which follows closely the order of topics found in the standards, and which at the same time weaves into a

single exposition the contents of these documents of which the Westminster symbols are composed."

So much with reference to the aim, the plan and the hopes of the author. It remains to say something of their achievement in the body of the work.

We have to confess a rather hasty and superficial reading of the book; but we feel perfectly safe in the assertion that it is an excellent piece of expository work. The style is admirable for the purpose, clear, simple, and direct. There is no attempt in the chapters of exposition at any thing like "fine writing." But the writing is excellent for the purpose: and it is easy to read the book. While, of course, this is due in part to the interest of the matter, it is due, to some extent also to the style of writing.

We believe, too, that few men in the church could have done more justice to the standards in any attempted exposition of similar length. No work is without flaws save God's. And, perhaps, no man could write a book on the subject of the present one that would not be subject to some just criticism.

Taken as a whole, we believe it will prove very helpful to all the classes for which it was designed. We, ourselves have been particularly pleased with the chapters on "The Decrees, or the Eternal Purpose of God," on "Original Sin," "Man's Free Agency and Ability; Guilt and its Degrees." Generally the great subjects treated in the confession are expounded as clearly and simply as any man could do them.

The least praiseworthy chapter in the book, as it appears to us is, the First chapter, "Some description of the Great Christian Creeds in general, and of the Westminster Standards is particular." This chapter is fitted to beget a good many false impressions. Yet the inaccuracies are of no great moment and are, perhaps, due in part, to the desire for brevity. For example, on page 20, the author says, "The articles of Smalcald may be next mentioned for they were drawn up in 1537. Melancthon's hand again appeared in these articles, although others were also prominent in drafting them." These words taken in this context evidently represent Melancthon's hand as the most prominent at least in giving form to the Smalcald Articles. This is not historical. Luther's hand was *the* hand that gave matter and form to these articles. Melancthon's hand appeared indeed in an Appendix on the Power and Primacy of the Pope; but not prominently in the Articles themselves: and when he signed the Articles of Smalcald, he did so with a qualification, making concessions to the Papacy in direct contravention of the Spirit of the Smalcald Articles.

On the same page in speaking of the purpose of the Form of Concord, the author says it was to bring peace and concord to the Protestant cause after a long period of bitter controversy." He makes the purpose too broad. It was to bring peace and concord to the Lutheran wing of the Protestants. The Reformed church had attained large dimensions before 1577.

In speaking further on, on the same page, of the character of the Form of Concord, he says, "While in many respects a good statement of

doctrine, it exhibits at several points a decided toning down of the doctrine of the *Augsburg* Confession, especially in regard to what is known as synergism." The plain reader who gets any intelligible idea from this statement will in all probability get a wrong idea. He will be as apt as otherwise, at least, to think that Dr. Beattie speaks of the Augsburg Confessions as synergistic. Here desire for brevity has occasioned the production of an ambiguous statement. It would be easy to point out similar defects in other pages of this chapter.

There is a mistake of somewhat similar character on page 328, where the author speaks of "the mere symbolic" view of the sacraments as the view of Zwingli. This is a fashionable mistake. Zwingli held a much higher view of the sacrament than is commonly supposed.

Still, these are very small defects; and one feels like begging Dr. Beattie's pardon for pointing them out in so good a work.

In the last chapter, "Summary and Conclusions," in which the chief characteristics of the Westminster system are set forth, a chapter of great worth and containing noble paragraphs, there is, now and again, a want of a peculiar kind. For example, when the author speaks of the "race's" relation to Adam and his sin and fall," he says, "While we are clearly of the opinion that what is termed the immediate imputation theory is most consistent with the contents of the standards, and especially with the covenant principle upon which they are constructed, yet we would be far from maintaining that the theory of mediate imputation, of generic unity, or of concurrence is to be regarded as heresy." On reading such a statement the question at once arises: But suppose a man denies the theory of imputation while maintaining that of Generic unity, where is he to be aligned, according to the Westminster Standards? This question has arisen. It will perhaps arise again. It is not sufficiently answered in this chapter.

But, we repeat, the blemishes on this work are slight in comparison with its excellences.

THOMAS C. JOHNSON.

---

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT: A COLLECTION OF SERMONS. *By Ministers of the Southern Presbyterian Church.* 8vo. Pp. 408. Price \$1.50. Richmond, Va.: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication.

Our able Committee of Publication has gathered into this volume thirty-three sermons from as many of our ministers.

In the Preface it is declared that two motives have prompted the issue of the volume: 1. To supply a "distinct demand for a book of practical sermons, suitable for reading in the public worship of God when conducted by ruling elders of the church." 2. "To put in permanent form some examples of the work of our Southern Presbyterian pulpit."

These motives are thoroughly approvable. It is eminently desirable that our own pulpit should give of its cream to feed, at least in this way, a thousand destitute folds. The people who shall have read to them one of the best sermons of our pulpit, by a good reader, will not lack for its Sabbath rations. Moreover, whoever has the slightest interest in the