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## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR R. C. REED, D. D., LL. D.,  
COLUMBIA, S. C.

The fifty-fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, met in the Central Church, Kansas City, Mo., May 21, 1914, and was dissolved at 3:30 P. M., Thursday, May 28th. This is the third Assembly in succession which has limited the span of its life to six working days. These precedents will probably have the force of law for the future. Time was when the Assembly had to rush its business toward the close, in order to dissolution by the end of the ninth day from date of organization. The volume of business has increased rather than diminished. The recent Assemblies have shortened the time not by covering less ground, but by increasing the speed. The liberty of speech has been abridged. It has come to pass that by the time a speaker gets fairly launched, the cry of "question," "question," warns the speaker that further effort to get a hearing for his views will be useless. Age and distinguished services do not secure immunity from such discourtesy. The Assembly is ceasing to be a deliberative body, and coming to be an organization merely for business routine.

Obviously, our Assemblies are inoculated with the speed-madness of the age. It could hardly be otherwise. The members, who compose the Assembly, are accustomed, by the use of the telephone, rapid transit, and other time-saving devices, to dispatch business at a rate that would have made a former generation dizzy. The speed at which we live is constantly increasing,

**STEMS AND TWIGS: TEN-MINUTE TALKS TO CHILDREN.** *By J. Ellis.*  
Price, 50c; cloth; 191 pages. Published by George H. Doran Company, New York.

Extremely simple in form and well adapted to small children. A book that Primary Department teachers in the Sunday School would do well to read, as an example, and use in preparation for class work. There are some very clever and effective stories worked in to enforce the lessons. A few of these fall of a perfect fit, but the reader can choose. The book is well worth a place in the working library of any who have the responsibility of leading children into helpful thinking.

W. C. SMITH.

*Richmond, Va.*

**STUDIES ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL.** *By F. Godet, D. D.,* Author of "Studies in the Old and New Testaments," "Commentary on the Gospel of John," etc. Translated by Annie Harwood Holmden. George H. Doran Company, New York. Pp. 359. Price 50c. net.

**THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON AND THESSALONIANS.** *By Joseph Parker, D. D.* George H. Doran Company, New York. Pp. 303. Price, 50c net.

Both of the above are reprints of well-known works, and are recent additions to the "Hodder and Stoughton Library of Standard, Religious and Theological Books." This library, now numbering 128 volumes, is made up of books which were formerly sold at \$1.50, \$1.25 and \$1.00. They are now printed from the original plates, uniformly and neatly bound in blue cloth and gold lettering, and are sold at the modest price of fifty cents.

In this way many valuable books are placed within easy reach of many who could not otherwise afford them.

The two volumes in question are too well known to require any review of their contents. They are expository in nature, and will be found suggestive and helpful.

T. R. ENGLISH.

*Union Theological Seminary.*

**THE INTERMEDIATE CATECHISM, WITH PROOFS FROM SCRIPTURES.**  
Twenty-four pages, 12 mo. Price, 7c per copy. Philadelphia. Presbyterian Board of Publication.

This Catechism was the subject of a brief notice in the April-May issue of the Union Seminary Magazine for 1913. We expressed the conviction then that children known to us would, after having com-

mitted to heart the Children's Catechism, lose by being put into this Intermediate Catechism, instead of into the Westminster Shorter Catechism. A subsequent revision has improved the Catechism considerably. It has been gratifying to see that two defects pointed out in our former notice have been removed. But other defects remain, e. g., the question, "What is meant by the kingdom of God," is insufficiently answered. Again, this Catechism would leave the child (see questions 46, 47, 48) in the dark as to whether the minister is an elder or whether he is to take part with other elders in the exercise of Presbyterian authority. Question 51 might be construed as throwing some light on the foregoing interrogatories, and as implicating, but not necessarily, that the minister is a member of the Presbytery. Again, the duty of the deacons is not made comprehensive enough, too large powers are given to the trustees. It is not to be granted for an instant that the trustees are "to manage its (the church's) material interests, so as to promote its spiritual welfare." It goes without saying that if the trustees had the right to "manage the *material interests* of the church at all, they would be under obligation to manage them "so as to promote its spiritual interests." But no such power should be lodged in the hands of the trustees. They should be regarded merely as the organ of the congregation for the purchase, holding and sale of property at the expressed will of the congregation. The deacons also care for the property, under the control of the session. It never should be forgotten that government of the church, and hence of its property, is by the session. This thing of giving the control of the property, which at times means the support of the services, into the hands of men, some of whom may be not even members of the church, is far from the scriptural idea of church government. We are not unmindful of the fact that this last view as to the trustees prevails in the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. But this does not make the view scriptural. We regret to see the view taught in this Catechism to the young people of the church.

There are still other questions that are unsatisfactory. Some definitions are so meagre as to contain little that is vital. We should greatly prefer that a child of ours should go straight from the Children's Catechism to the Shorter Catechism.

THOMAS C. JOHNSON.

Richmond, Va.