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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.

In setting forth the Irish system, we shall quote copiously from the *Book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland*.

62. SECTION V.—JURISDICTION OF THE PRESBYTERY OVER STUDENTS FOR THE MINISTRY.

299. In the Presbytery is vested the right of receiving under its care students for the ministry, of superintending and directing their education, of deciding as to the qualifications of candidates for the ministerial office, and of licensing them to preach the gospel.

300. Every student for the ministry should, before entering college, place himself under the care of the Presbytery which has jurisdiction over the congregation to which he belongs.

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Education of Students. 302. In superintending the education of students under its care, the Presbytery shall see that the following rules are observed:

1. Students shall attend college at least six complete sessions—the first three to be passed in the undergraduate course, embracing English, Latin, Greek (two sessions), Logic, Mental Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, and at least one of the following subjects: French, German, Geology, Chemistry, Zoology, or Botany; and the last three sessions in the course of theology.

1. Each session in the undergraduate course shall extend over at least five months, or two full terms.

3. The General Assembly sanctions the attendance of students during the undergraduate course at the following colleges: The Magee Presbyterian College, Londonderry; The Queen's Colleges in Ireland; Trinity College, Dublin; and also at the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews.

4. During the undergraduate course, students shall attend a class of Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics; but in places where there is no such class they must attend, in lieu thereof, the Bible and Catechetical class of some evangelical minister, and produce to the Presbytery a certificate of such attendance.

5. Students may attend a Hebrew class during one session of the undergraduate course.

6. The attendance of a student on a theological class, before he has taken his complete undergraduate course, shall not be sustained by the Presbytery; but this shall not apply to the classes of Hebrew and Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics.

7. The Presbytery shall encourage the student to engage in appropriate Christian work during his undergraduate course; and shall, before he enters the theological classes, satisfy itself that he is manifesting a spirit and maintaining a walk befitting a candidate for the ministerial office.

8. In the theological course each session shall be not less than five months in duration.

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9. During the theological course in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COLLEGE, BELFAST, students shall attend the classes in the following order :

First Session.—Hebrew ; Christian Ethics, including Natural Theology ; Ecclesiastical History ; Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics.

Second Session.—Hebrew, if not taken in the undergraduate course ; Systematic Theology ; Ecclesiastical History, including Church Government and Pastoral Theology ; Biblical Criticism ; Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics.

Third Session.—Systematic Theology ; Biblical Criticism ; Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics.

10. During the theological course in the MAGEE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, LONDONDERRY, students shall attend the classes in the following order :

First Session.—Hebrew ; Ethics ; Church History and Pastoral Theology ; Catechetics.

Second Session.—Hebrew, if not taken in the undergraduate course ; Theology, Church History and Pastoral Theology ; Oriental Literature and Hermeneutics ; Catechetics.

Third Session.—Theology ; Oriental Literature and Hermeneutics ; Catechetics.

11. The General Assembly sanctions the attendance of a student at any fully-equipped theological college of a church which holds the standards of this church ; but requires the student to take all the classes and do all the work in each class prescribed by such church for its own students, and to present certificates to the Presbytery showing that he has done so in a satisfactory manner. Should a student take his whole theological course at such a college, he shall attend, for two complete sessions, each of the following classes : Hebrew, Systematic Theology, Ecclesiastical History, Hermeneutics, Pastoral Theology, and Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics. He shall also attend a class of Ethics for one session.

12. During their theological course in any college, students shall attend an Elocution class for at least one session ; and they are strongly recommended to attend a class of Sacred Music.

13. Every student (undergraduate or theological) under the care of the Presbytery shall lay before it, at its first stated meeting after the close of each college session, class tickets from the several professors under whom he has studied, certifying that his attendance, moral conduct, and progress in his studies have been satisfactory ; and that he has attended the usual class examinations, performed the prescribed exercises, and passed the examination in each department at the close of the session. He shall also produce from some minister of the Presbyterian Church a certificate of his regular attendance on public worship.

14. Each Presbytery having students under its care shall hold a special meeting on the first Tuesday or Wednesday of September in each year, for the purpose of examining them, either orally or by written papers, and transacting any other business connected with their education. Of this meeting each student shall be apprised when he submits his certificates to the Presbytery. In order to secure an early and con-

tinued attention to Scripture and the subordinate standards of the church, every student shall be examined on the following subjects:

(1), After his first session, on the Old Testament, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, inclusive; and the Shorter Catechism, questions 1-38, with the scriptural proofs.

(2), After his second session, on the books of Scripture, from Joshua to Job, inclusive; the remainder of the Shorter Catechism, with proofs; and the *Confession of Faith*, Chapters I.-III.

(3), After his third session, on the remaining books of the Old Testament; the Larger Catechism, questions 1-90; and the *Confession of Faith*, Chapters IV.-X.

(4), After his fourth session (first in the theological course), on the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles; the Larger Catechism, questions 91-148; and the *Confession of Faith*, Chapters XI.-XX.

(5), After his fifth session (second in the theological course), on the remaining books of the New Testament; and the remainder of the Larger Catechism, and of the *Confession of Faith*.

15. When, in accordance with paragraph 301, Rule 3, a student is taken under the care of a Presbytery, during the progress, or at the close, of his undergraduate course, he shall present to the Presbytery the certificates required of students of his standing who have been taken under its care at the beginning of their collegiate course; and shall be examined on the books of Scripture and portions of the Catechisms and *Confession of Faith* appointed for such students.

16. A student from another religious denomination, on becoming connected with a Presbytery, shall present such certificates and submit to such examinations as are prescribed for students of the same standing.

17. The Presbytery shall not, at any one meeting, extend the examination of a student beyond the subjects appointed for a single year; nor shall a student be examined oftener than once in three months.

Trials of Students before License. 303. When a student has passed the prescribed examinations, and has attended one session of the theological course, the Presbytery may take him on trial for license. Before doing so it shall satisfy itself as to his personal religion, and shall put to him the following, or such like, questions:

(1), So far as you know your own heart, have you felt your need of a personal saviour, and have you been persuaded and enabled by God's Spirit to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to you in the gospel?

(2), Have you been induced, so far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Christian ministry from love to Christ, and a desire to promote his glory in the salvation of sinners?

304. The Presbytery shall prescribe to the student the following pieces of trial:

1. A homily on a given subject.

2. An exposition of a portion of Scripture.

3. A critical exercise. In the critical exercise the student shall (1), Establish the correct reading of the text, if that is contested; (2), Critically analyze and expound the text from the original; (3), Point out and remove difficulties of interpretation, if any occur; (4), Paraphrase the

text; (5), State the doctrinal propositions contained in the passage; and (6), Discuss one or more of these propositions.

4. A discussion of a controverted question in theology. In this discussion the student shall (1), State the question; (2), Explain the terms; (3), Adduce different opinions held; (4), Support by appropriate arguments the view which appears agreeable to truth, and illustrate it by a portion of Scripture which may be adopted as a text; (5), Answer objections to the view advocated.

5. A popular discourse upon a prescribed text,

305. Of these pieces of trial, the first and second shall be given to the Presbytery by the student before the commencement of his second session in the theological course; the remaining pieces, before the commencement of his third session. The first, third and fourth may be read; the second and fifth must be delivered without manuscript. The Presbytery shall not accept more than one piece of trial from the student at any one meeting.

306. The Presbytery shall criticise each piece of trial privately, in the presence of the student, that he may profit by its judgment, and may, if requisite, give explanation of his statements.

307. When the student has satisfactorily passed the examinations required after each of the first five sessions of the collegiate course, has given evidence that he has been engaged in appropriate Christian work, and is manifesting a spirit and maintaining a walk befitting a candidate for the ministerial office, and has delivered the first and second pieces of trial, the Presbytery shall give him a certificate of these facts to the Theological Examination Committee of the General Assembly, and recommend him for its first examination.

308. Every student must, before receiving license, pass two examinations conducted by the Theological Examination Committee.

309. The first examination by the Theological Examination Committee shall be annually held in the month of October, shall be conducted by written papers and shall embrace the following subjects: (1), A specified portion of the Hebrew scriptures, with Hebrew grammar; (2), A specified portion of the Greek New Testament; (3), Ethics from a specified text-book; (4), A specified portion of Church History. Students must pass this examination before they enter on their final session in the theological course.

310. A student coming to the first examination must send to the convener of the Theological Examination Committee, eight clear days before the examination, his diploma of Bachelor or Master in Arts, or the General Assembly's Certificate in Arts; satisfactory tickets from all the undergraduate classes on which attendance is enjoined by the General Assembly; and the proper certificate from the Presbytery with which he is connected, recommending him for examination.

311. When a student has passed all his examinations in Scripture and in the formularies of the church, has delivered all his pieces of trial to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, and has finished the third session of the theological course, he may proceed to the second examination by the Theological Examination Committee.

312. The second examination by the Theological Examination Committee shall be annually held in the month of April, shall be partly by written papers and partly oral—all the students in the oral examination being questioned, as far as possible, upon the same topics—and shall embrace the following subjects: (1), Systematic Theology, from a prescribed text-book; (2), Biblical Criticisms and Exegesis; (3), Scripture, including Biblical History and Geography, and Catechetics. Students shall also be examined as to their personal religion and motives in seeking the ministerial office, and shall be asked whether they are prepared to sign the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

313. A student coming to the second examination must, eight clear days before the examination, send to the convener of the Theological Examination Committee satisfactory tickets from all the theological classes on which attendance is enjoined by the General Assembly, and a certificate from the Presbytery with which he is connected, testifying that he has delivered all his pieces of trial and passed all his examinations in the Presbytery.*

Licensing of Students as Probationers for the Ministry. 314. When a student has delivered all the prescribed pieces of trial to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, has passed all the presbyterial examinations, has presented to the Presbytery the certificate of the Theological Examination Committee stating that he has passed its first and second examinations, and has signified his desire to be licensed, the Presbytery shall appoint a minister to address him on his responsibilities and duties.

315. The student, before receiving license, shall be asked the following questions:

(1), Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2), Do you believe the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as described in the *Book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, Chapter II., paragraph 20, to be founded on, and agreeable to, the word of God; and, as such, do you acknowledge it as the confession of your faith?

(3), Do you approve of the Catechisms compiled by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and received as the catechisms of this church?

(4), Are you resolved, through divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the said Confession and Catechisms, and to teach and defend it to the utmost of your power against all errors?

(5), Do you believe the Presbyterian form of church government to be founded on, and agreeable to, the word of God; and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the courts of this church?

(6), Have you been induced, so far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Christian ministry from love to God, and from a sincere desire to win souls to Christ and promote the divine glory?

(7), Are you prepared to subscribe to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in terms of the General Assembly's formula?

*He must also furnish certificate of attendance on a class of music and elocution.

319. The student, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall subscribe the following formula in the minute-book of the Presbytery :

"I believe the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to be founded on, and agreeable to, the word of God ; and, as such, I subscribe it as the confession of my faith."

We now have before us the constitutional requirements of the Irish Presbyterian Church on the subject under discussion. It will be of more interest to learn how far these requirements are complied with in practice. Accordingly, we present next a copy of the examination-papers given their candidates on the 17th and 18th of October, 1895, by their Theological Examination Committee.

FIRST THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION,

17TH AND 18TH OCTOBER, 1895.

CHURCH HISTORY—MOELLER.

Examiner—REV. R. T. MEGAW, LL. D.

1. Write brief notes on—
 - (a), The Shepherd of Hermas.
 - (b), The Second Epistle of Clement.
 - (c), The Didache.
2. State distinctly the functions of Evangelists, Prophets, and Teachers in the early church.
3. Who were the Ebionites?
4. Account for the existence of three superior orders of the clergy (*ordines majores*), Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons; and write a note on the "Female Diaconate."
5. Who were the lower grades of the clergy (*ordines minores*), and what were their duties?
6. The Roman Bishop Cornelius praises all ascension "*per omnia ecclesiastica officia sanctis religionis gradibus.*" Explain his meaning.

LINDSAY'S HANDBOOK OF THE REFORMATION.

Examiner—REV. JAMES BINGHAM, M. A.

1. Describe the Revolt of the Nobles and the Revolt of the Peasants, and show the influence of each of them upon the Reformation.
2. Explain what is meant by the Tulcan Bishops.
3. Describe the Consistorial System of Church Government, and state the principles of Ecclesiastical Government and Discipline laid down by Calvin in his *Institutes*. Wherein do the latter differ from the Ecclesiastical Ordinances?
4. State the views held by Zwingli and Luther, respectively, in regard to the Lord's Supper. On what points did both alike differ from the Romish doctrine of the Eucharist?

5. Why did Henry VIII. at first support the Papal supremacy? What reasons have been assigned for the change in his attitude?

6. State briefly the peculiar social conditions amidst which the Reformation arose. How did it affect social and political life?

CHRISTIAN ETHICS (BUTLER'S SERMONS).

Examiner—REV. JAMES LOUDEN, M. A.

1. How does Butler demonstrate the truth of St. Paul's assertion, that every man is naturally a law to himself?

2. "As there is no such thing as *self-hatred*, so neither is there any such thing as *ill-will* in one man towards another, emulation and resentment being away." Explain and illustrate this statement of Butler.

3. Wherein consists the difference between *virtue* and *vice*, according to Butler? And how does he show that virtue coincides with personal happiness?

4. What does Butler mean when he says that *compassion* is preferable to *good-will*? And which of the two, according to him, is productive of the greatest happiness to our fellow-men?

5. What is the ethical significance of the *natural* passion of resentment? Explain the following quotation: "One point in Butler's account of resentment has been admired as happy and novel; I mean the *distinction between sudden anger and settled resentment.*"

6. Butler says that there is frequently a secret prejudice against *public spirit*. What is the occasion of this prejudice? And can you show that there is no foundation for it?

7. What influence do you consider Butler's Sermons to have exerted on modern Ethical Science?

WUTTKE'S CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

Examiner—REV. GEORGE WOODBURN, M. A., F. R. U. I.

1. What is the relation, according to Kant, between Morality and Religion? Explain fully.

2. Criticise the "Categorical Imperative," and the doctrine that "the good must be done for its own sake."

3. Explain—

(a), "Casuistry."

(b), "Moral Probabilism."

(c), "Romish asceticism simply hides from view the inner lack of a truly evangelical moral depth."

4. (a), State and criticise Augustine's classification of the virtues, mentioning the sources whence he derived his technical terms.

(b), What is the relation between Christian Ethics and Dogmatics?

5. (a), Show in what manner the Old and New Dispensations differ in regard to the "grounds," "essence," and "goal" of morality.

(b), "Old Testament Ethics must have an historical development."

*Trace this development briefly.

*Hebrew and Greek examinations omitted for the lack of necessary type.

In order to passing at all, the student had to attain a grade of at least thirty-three per cent. in each study; and the average of his grades in the several departments had to reach at least forty.

This seems, on first sight, a low minimum. But the marking appears to be rigid in exactness. And, by the way, it is much higher than obtains in our presbyterial examinations. It seems quite probable, too, that the Irish church will, in a few years require a higher minimum.

Such students as were not able to pass this October examination were given another (known as "the supplemental") in January, covering the same ground, and of about equal rigidity. From these examples the character of the second theological examinations, which are given in April of the students' final term of preparation in the theological schools, may be proximately inferred.

The subjects of all these examinations for the year 1895 to 1896 has been published in the Assembly's Minutes (1895) and otherwise; so that months ahead the students knew what they should need to be prepared on. For example, we take from the "Report of the Theological Examining Committee" to the General Assembly, 1895, the following notice:

"THE FIRST EXAMINATIONS

Will be held in the Assembly's College, Belfast, and in Magee College, Londonderry, on the 17th and 18th of October, 1895, commencing each day at 9:30 o'clock.

SUBJECTS.—*New Testament Greek*, The Epistles of James and 1 and 2 Peter. *Hebrew*, 1 Samuel xv.-xx., inclusive; Proverbs i.-v., inclusive; Principles of 'Hebrew' Grammar. *Christian Ethics*, Butler's Sermons, Preface and Sermons i.-xv., omitting iv., vii. and x.; Wuttke's *Christian Ethics*, Vol. I., §§ 27, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, 38, 39, 43. *Church History*, Moeller's *Church History*, the Ante-Nicene Period; Lindsay's "Handbook of the Reformation."*

And against the meeting of the Assembly of 1896, the examination papers, offered by the committee during the ecclesiastical year 1895-'96, must have been printed in the calendar of the Assembly's College, Belfast, and in the Assembly's Blue Book. Thus the whole church could see what sort of examinations had been offered their candidates during the year just closed. All who are competent could judge at once of their testing quality and their fairness. The examiners were examined as well as the students by the church at large.

* See p. 185 Minutes of Assembly.

The report of the Theological Examination Committee to the General Assembly brings each student individually before the whole church—gives it an opportunity to see what kind of work he has been doing. The manner in which this is done may be most satisfactorily shown by an extract from the report of the committee in 1895. It is as follows :

The Theological Examination Committee report that during the past year they have held the following examinations :

1. The first Theological Examination on the 18th and 19th October last, when the following students, whose names are arranged in the order of merit, with their respective colleges attached, were adjudged to have passed : James Croskery, New College, Edinburgh ; Hamilton Martin, Assembly's College ; W. T. Linster, Magee College ; Wm. M'Coach, do. ; James McLean, do. ; R. Anderson, Assembly's College (these two equal) ; Wm. Smyth, Magee College ; Samuel Reid, do. ; John A. F. Young, Assembly's College ; R. R. Johnston, do. ; D. D. Boyle, Magee College ; James J. Macaulay, Assembly's College ; S. J. Hamilton, do. ; John Martin, do. ; Wm. Keers, do. ; J. Beatty, do. ; W. J. Dunlop, Princeton College, New Jersey.

2. The first Theological Examination (*Supplemental*) on the 10th and 11th January last, when the following students, whose names are in alphabetical order, were adjudged to have passed : George Andrews, Henry Dinsmore, James P. C. Glendinning, Thomas J. Harrison, John Omelvena, F. W. S. O'Neill, Thomas Roulston, Samuel D. Stuart.*

3. The second Theological Examination on the 23rd and 24th April last, when the following students, whose names are in the order of merit, with their respective Presbyteries attached, were adjudged to have passed : Samuel Gillespie, Belfast Presbytery ; John Omelvena, Armagh Presbytery (equal) ; F. W. S. O'Neill, Belfast Presbytery ; Mm. M'Coach, Derry Presbytery ; Hamilton Martin, Comber Presbytery ; William Keers, Coleraine Presbytery ; R. Anderson, Belfast Presbytery ; John A. F. Young, Route Presbytery ; James McLean, Tyrone Presbytery ; William Smyth, Derry Presbytery ; W. T. Linster, Derry Presbytery ; Samuel Reid, Glendermott Presbytery ; James J. Macaulay, Ards Presbytery ; R. R. Johnston, Belfast Presbytery ; D. D. Boyle, Limavady Presbytery ; James P. C. Glendinning, Belfast Presbytery ; Thomas J. Harrison, Ballybay Presbytery ; S. J. Hamilton, Down Presbytery ; Thomas Roulston, Donegal Presbytery ; R. J. McFarland, Letterkenny Presbytery ; Henry Dinsmore, Tyrone Presbytery ; W. J. Dunlop, Tyrone Presbytery ; S. D. Stuart, Coleraine Presbytery ; John Martin, Dromore Presbytery ; George Andrews, Banbridge Presbytery ; David Browne, Strabane Presbytery.

4. The Oral Examination on 1st and 3rd May last, when the foregoing students, who had passed the second Theological Examination, were examined in Catechetics and Holy Scripture, and as to their motives for entering the Christian Ministry, and their approval of the doc-

*Supplemental students not classed.

trines of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and were recommended to their respective Presbyteries for license, except Mr. W. J. Dunlop, who had to submit class-certificates in second-year Greek, and Mr. S. J. Hamilton, whose case is to come before the General Assembly.

The students who pass successfully the examinations given by the committee are furnished certificates by the committee to their respective Presbyteries, who may then license them to preach the gospel as candidates for the Christian ministry. No Presbytery may license a student without this certificate.*

The reader will remember that in the Irish church the presbyterial examinations of the candidate embrace only Catechetics and Scripture, personal piety and aims in seeking the ministry, and the pieces of trial. These examinations in Scripture and Catechetics are not very satisfactory. The Irish brethren think that they are not so bad, however, as ours. So, at any rate, writes Dr. Alexander Field, the convener of their Theological Examination Committee.†

Of course, the examinations by the Assembly's Theological Examining Committee no more interfere with the examinations given by the theological faculties of their institutions than our presbyterial examinations interfere with our examinations in the seminaries.

With this exposition of the Irish system and its application, let us now run over its history.

The present scheme of examinations has been in existence since 1885. It originated in this way: The final examinations of the students had been entrusted to a committee of the Assembly since its formation in 1840; and previous to that date to a similar committee of the old Synod of Ulster.

"The examinations of this committee were confined to theology, Scripture, Scripture history and geography. They were oral, and were

*See paragraph 313, quoted above, from the *Book of the Constitution*, etc.

†On the 28th of May, 1895, we had the pleasure and privilege of meeting Dr. Field. It was aboard a train on our way from Giant's Causeway to Larne in Northeastern Ireland. He and his excellent wife refreshed Mrs. Johnson and myself with their conversation during our whirl over some miles. Among other things, Dr. Field told me much of the testing system in his church. What he said was of so much interest that I asked him to send me the literature which would enable me to comprehend fully the whole system. He not only, in the course of time, sent me the accessible printed matter bearing on the subject, but with great kindness wrote a long letter full of historic information of great interest. The reader is really indebted to Dr. Field for anything of interest he may find in this hastily-prepared sketch.

not conducted on any system. When the committee met, a chairman was appointed; and any member of the committee might be asked to examine a student. It was not known beforehand what questions this examiner would ask. Sometimes they would be fair and testing. Sometimes they were the reverse. Perhaps the examiner had been reading some theological book before coming up to the examination, and the questions would be taken from it, though the student had never read or heard of it. Sometimes the questions were catching, minute, puzzling, and of no testing value at all. And, then, the course was so wide and uncertain. A man might be taken on some part of it on which he was not particularly well up and fail, though a really good scholar. Then there being no standard but the judgment of the members who were present, a student was in danger of not getting fair play. And an inferior student who did not deserve to pass, by having his own minister present and canvassing other members of the committee and getting them to be present, could by their votes get himself passed. I should state that the constitution of the committee gave facility for this state of things, as it was representative of the church—each presbytery returning annually so many of its members according to the size of the presbytery, or members of the Theological Examination Committee.’

“Such a state of things was very unsatisfactory, and caused great complaint. And I have known students who had been rejected come before the Assembly, express their grievance, and turn the examinations into ridicule. Of course, it was only a student of brains and power who would venture to do this. All students disliked the examination for the uncertainty and risks connected with it. A reformation became necessary; and so the present scheme of examinations was inaugurated.”

“It is wider in its scope than the old examinations were, embracing the subjects of the whole theological course: Hebrew, New Testament Greek, Christian Ethics, Church History, Systematic Theology, Biblical Criticism and Interpretation, Catechetics, and Holy Scriptures. And they serve the double purpose of keeping the students to their work during the theological course, and also of testing the professional teaching in the colleges.”*

Dr. Field further says that the present scheme is giving much satisfaction; that the student respects the examinations, and works hard to pass them, which he will never do if the examination is a farce.

“These examinations are testing; and as, in the two regular examinations, in October and April, the students are ranged in order of merit, it is a matter of consequence to them to be well placed. It is also a matter of pride to our two colleges, the places that their students respectively secure.”†

That the examinations will be fair, too, as well as testing, the student feels certain beforehand. The question of their fairness is hardly raised in his mind, since he knows that the

* From Dr. Field’s letter, dated Mansefield, Dervock, County Antrim, Ireland, Februrry 17, 1896.

† Dr. Field, *ut supra*.

questions will be read by all the ministers in the church, and that they would soon call the examiners to account for any injustice.

It has been noted that at the second examination by the committee, in the spring, they conduct an oral as well as a written examination in Scripture and Catechetics. This is in the presence of the committee, and is for the purpose of bringing the committee into personal acquaintance with the young men, that their bearing, and so forth, may be remarked.

“But the examiners in this oral examination must submit their questions to the committee before they are put to the students; so that there is no haphazard in the examination. If a question is considered unfair, or non-testing, or too difficult, another has to be substituted.”

“In this oral examination we examine in batches. Say there are thirty men to be examined. We divide them into batches of five each, taking them in alphabetical order. The examiners prepare their sets of questions as nearly as possible of equal value. The members of each batch are called in individually, and the same questions are put to them. The man first of the batch examined is retained in the examination-room. The second of the batch is then called in; the same questions are put to him, and he also is retained in the examination-room; and so on until the whole batch is through. Thus the students hear one another examined by the same questions, and if one or more in the batch answer badly, and one or more answer well, perhaps answer every question, those who answer badly cannot complain that their questions were too difficult; and thus the mouth of complaint, in the case of failure—which, you know, is outspoken enough—is stopped. All this convinces the students of the thorough fairness of the examinations, and wins their respect, and the confidence of the church.”

“Also there are very strict rules against copying, using helps, or any unfair means. The student detected in doing so, *ipso facto*, loses his examination, and cannot be readmitted for twelve months.”*

“After each examination the committee meets to receive the report of the examiners, and the marks obtained decide the issue. There is no use now for a weak man to get his minister to be present to plead his cause, or to canvass the committee to help him. His figures are inexorable, and, if the standard is not attained, he loses the examination. No other consideration is admissible. Nine men failed at the last regular examination out of twenty-seven, and three out of twelve at the following supplemental, who must now lie out for another year, there being only one supplemental to each regular examination.”†

Thus the examinations appear to be pretty thorough as well as in good repute in the church.

Lest some brother be misled into underestimating the tests in the Irish church, let him reflect on this fact. Dr. Field says

* Dr. Field, *ut supra*.

† Dr. Field, *ut supra*.

that some of their students who fail in their collegiate work come across and pass through the theological seminaries in America and are preachers before their stronger and successful classmates in the old country have been able to complete their necessary training.

Let us look, finally, at the personnel of the Theological Examining Committee:

Dr. Alexander Field, Mansefield, Dervock, County, Antrim, mediates between the committee and the Assembly. He was appointed by the Assembly as this committee's convener in 1885, the date of its inauguration, and has held the position ever since. No doubt he has contributed largely to the success of the committee.

As the term convener is not a common one in ecclesiastical parlance on this side, it may be worth while to say that as convener it is Dr. Field's duty "to summon the committee to meet when required; get them to appoint the examiners in the several subjects, having carefully selected them from the ministers of the church of highest university and collegiate reputation in the respective subjects; communicate with them about their examination papers; get these printed; superintend the examinations at one or other of the two colleges where they are held, getting a reliable man to superintend for him at the other centre; if an examiner from any cause falls out, get a substitute or take his place." * To take the place of an examiner is not, however, regarded as desirable, as the convener is the head of the department and brought into intimate relations with all the students by correspondence. To him students apply for admission to examination, and send their degrees and certificates for his examination; and without his approval of these papers no student may sit for examination. After the committee's oral examination, in April, in Catechetics and Scripture, the students are examined, one by one, on personal piety and motives in seeking the ministry. This delicate work falls on the convener.

The convener also presides at all meetings of the committee, to see that all is done decently and in order, and to enforce the rules framed by the committee from time to time, as experience demands.

Finally, he draws up the report for the Assembly and pre-

* Dr. Field, *ut supra*.

sents it to the Assembly and conducts it through its adoption.

The committee itself is nominated by the Presbyteries of the church in the ratio of one to every five ministers in the Presbytery. But Dr. Field says, "Many think that it would be much better to have a standing committee composed of the best men of the Assembly and appointed directly by the Assembly itself; and I think that before long this change will be made."*

The committee always meets during the meeting of the Assembly, after the annual report is passed. It is at this meeting that the examiners are selected and appointed. They are always appointed a year in advance, so that they may have time to read up anew their subjects and get ready. As a rule, they are appointed for a second year.

The students are not allowed to sit as they please in the examination-rooms. The superintendent places them by affixing to each desk such a card as this :

Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATIONS.

Candidate's Name,

Candidate's Number,.....

The Candidate is informed that he is to sit at the place indicated by this card; that he is to use his number only to indicate to the Examiner his identity; that he is to write his number and the subject on the front page of each Examination Book, and write only on one side of the paper.

The student writes his answers "on paper supplied to him," and sewed two sheets together. No other paper is permitted. The students' names do not appear on their papers. They are examined by numbers, so that the examiners have no knowledge who they are, and cannot be influenced in marking by such knowledge.

* Dr. Field, *ut supra*.

It is hoped that the reader may gain, from this paper, a pretty satisfactory view of the tests in the Irish Church which the students for the ministry must pass through.

As we believe that the standard of ministerial education in our church is far too low, we propose to present some reasons for this painful belief in a subsequent article.

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