

THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1917.

BY A COMMISSIONER.

This was the fifty-seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Fifty-six years have passed since the first General Assembly met in Augusta, Ga. This covers almost two generations. Years they have been of blended sunshine and shadow; of war and of peace; of defeat and victory. And through them all the pillar of cloud and of fire has led us. And our church came to this Assembly this year stronger, we believe, than it has ever been; stronger in numbers and stronger in wealth; stronger in evangelistic zeal and stronger in family religion; stronger in love for souls and stronger in its loyalty to its Lord.

For we are not of those who place its golden days behind us. Our Atlantis has not sunk beneath the waves of materialism and commercialism. Our look is forward and outward; forward to other heights to scale and outward to the lands yet to be won for Christ.

The Assembly met in one of our new cities; Birmingham, our great iron center; Birmingham with its mountain chains of iron and coal over against each other; Birmingham with its mines, its furnaces, its forges, its massive mills; Birmingham that today fixes the price of iron for the world and tomorrow must rank as one of the world's great cities. The Assembly met in the South Highlands church, a church that has a splendid location, that has had some gifted pastors, but that has had a sad and checkered career. It is a church that our whole

THE GREATEST PRESENT PROBLEM OF HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY THE REVEREND EGBERT W. SMITH, D. D.,
Executive Secretary of Foreign Missions, Nashville, Tenn.

The familiar saying that fools rush in where angels fear to tread is about to receive another illustration. My theme will require me to speak of over-churching and some of its ill effects, a question sufficiently dangerous in itself, but involving the still more dangerous question of some of the results of extreme denominationalism, the two exposing any speaker to grave and well warranted suspicion regarding his character and motives. Spite of this fearsome prospect, I select this theme because there is no theme, it seems to me, at once so vitally related to the progress of Christ's kingdom both at home and abroad, and at the same time so generally overlooked by our Protestant churches. It is a cheering sign of a new day that one leading denomination of America, through its Home Mission Board, has been making careful investigations along this line for the guidance and betterment of its work.

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL.

If the objection be raised, "Why present the facts of over-churching, if you have no specific remedy to offer?" I reply, the facts suggest their own remedy. Even were this not true, knowledge of the facts must precede intelligent search for the remedy. Diagnosis must come before prescription. It is better to face the saddest truth than to be blinded by the merriest lie. Facts are always friends. In business, in science, in religion, in every department of thought and effort, progress depends on knowing the facts. Time and study may be required to construe them aright and draw from them the proper inferences, but the first essential is to know them. To spread the knowledge of them is also a plain duty, for the more minds we can focus on the facts, the sooner will their true meaning and

bearing be perceived and the needed remedies and readjustments discovered.

THE CHIEF OBSTACLE.

The greatest bar to improvement is the prevalent dense ignorance of the facts. To a little company of four representative leaders of our Church, three of them well known doctors of divinity and one a prominent ruling elder, I put this question: "In our Southern States there is one evangelical church" (meaning the local church building and organization) "to every how many people?" They all said they had never given the matter a moment's thought. When pressed for an estimate, the business man said one church to every 3,000 of the population. The three ministers guessed 5,000, 7,000 and 10,000. The average estimate of these four experienced church leaders was thus 6,250, or about twenty times the correct figure.

This incident fairly represents, we believe, the prevalent lack of definite knowledge, or rather of definite thought, regarding the extent of the supply of the religious needs of our own land. Yet this is a subject on which the most ample and exact information, covering individual States, counties and communities, would seem to be required by Christian denominations and workers as the very first condition of wise planning and expenditure.

HOME MISSIONS NEEDED.

To prevent misunderstanding let me affirm with emphasis that more churches and ministers are undoubtedly needed in many places in the South and among many classes of people such as miners, mountaineers, immigrants, and the like. In the effort to meet these needs a vigorous and discriminating home mission work has ample justification and incentive.

Let us remember also that the over-churching in our cities is not near so marked as in the towns and country. No student of city work can fail to note the tremendous disproportion between the sums expended in establishing and maintaining costly church plants, church music, and the like, and the results ob-

tained in the actual reaching and molding of the cities' masses. In the effort to abate this painful contrast lovers of the kingdom will find a noble and needy field.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

Some of the things I saw in Texas, while visiting a number of towns there, made me heartsick. In one little place, for example, there were four struggling Presbyterian churches each of a different Presbyterian family. All four together would have made one really efficient church, with a well-supported resident pastor, while the releasing of three ministers and the sale of three unneeded church properties would have meant a large net addition, without any countervailing loss, to the home and foreign forces of Christ's kingdom. I remarked jestingly to a Texas friend that as Texas was once an independent republic, so all Texas Presbyterians of every name and family, with consent of the proper authorities, should unite to form the Independent Presbyterian Church of Texas. I reminded him that through the immense saving in men and money resulting from consolidation along congregational, educational, and other lines, through the superior efficiency thus secured, and the sale of scores of unneeded church properties, the Independent Presbyterian Church of Texas would be for its size one of the most efficient, powerful, and best equipped churches in America for both home and foreign mission work.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

But this subject far transcends the limits of any one family of Christians. A most practical inquiry is, "What proportion should the number of evangelical churches bear to the local population?" Two years ago an expert special committee, under the auspices, I believe, of the Federal Council, made a report to the Commission on Church and Country Life, in which it stated, as the result of careful study, that for the best results there should not be, in towns of 2,500 and less and in the open country, more than one church and trained pastor to a thousand

of the population, except where the population of an entire township was less than this.

THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH.

From a study of the United States religious census of 1906 (the figures for the decennial religious census of 1916 being not yet available) it was found that in Alabama there was an average of one evangelical church to every 248 people; Arkansas, one to every 293; Florida, one to 249; Georgia, one to 258; Kentucky, one to 362; Louisiana, one to 437; Mississippi, one to 244; Missouri, one to 397; North Carolina, one to 254; South Carolina, one to 267; Tennessee, one to 272; Texas, one to 400; Virginia, one to 299; West Virginia, one to 356.

For seven of these States the average was one church to every 256 people, and for the South as a whole one to every 319. In other words, there are more than three churches to every ten hundred people. Of this ten hundred only one-third are church members. Of these members nearly two-thirds are women and a considerable proportion young people. The bearing of these facts on the size, growth and financial support of churches is evident.

Since the census on which these figures are based was taken eleven years ago, and since the church membership in the last twenty-six years has increased 94 per cent to the population's 61 per cent, the natural inference would be that the figures are certainly not too low to represent present conditions. This inference is strengthened by the results of more recent studies of certain districts which show, for example, in a section of Missouri one church to every 240 of the population, of Ohio one to 268, of Tennessee one to 248. Whether or not the South is the most truly religious part of the Union, it is certainly the most church-full.

Since cities have usually more than a thousand people to each church, or three times the general average, it follows that in the towns and country the proportion of people to churches must be below this average. I recall meeting Bishop Lambuth on a southern train two years ago and his telling

me that he had just come from preaching in a town which had seven churches to a population of 700. Such cases are by no means so unusual as might be supposed.

A CONTRAST.

While Home Mission Boards and Men and Religion Movements are very properly collating and studying such facts as these for their immediate bearing on our American church life and efficiency, to every student of the kingdom in its world relations they have a profound and conscience-stirring significance.

In the East today there are entire countries with populations aggregating 100,000,000 with no resident missionary among them. In the South we have multiplied ministers for ourselves till we have an average of one evangelical minister to every 470 people, while the whole Protestant world has sent to China one minister to every 200,000 of her people. In Georgia, with its two and three-fourths millions of people, there are more than three times as many evangelical ministers as in the whole of China with its population of one-fourth the human race. In every Southern town and city you can take your choice of from one to half a dozen churches in easy reach, while in China there are more than 1,500 large cities with millions on millions of population and no resident missionary in any one of them, and in Africa tens of thousands of villages where Christ's name has never been spoken.

A SCRIPTURE PARALLEL.

This selfish policy of the modern church has its exact illustration in the history of God's ancient people. When the children of Israel were entering the Promised Land, they came to the grassy plains east of Jordan whose heathen possessors they defeated. This region the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh begged might be assigned them as their permanent home in the land of Canaan. But Moses sharply reminded them that Canaan as a whole was yet unpossessed. He declared that if they selfishly settled down to the enjoyment of

this captured fraction of the land, leaving the larger task unaccomplished, they would be committing a sin whose punishment would surely overtake them. "If ye will not go all of you armed over Jordan until the land be subdued before the Lord, then behold, ye have sinned against the Lord. And be sure your sin will find you out."

This sin so sternly denounced in the ears of God's ancient people as carrying its own most certain punishment, is the outstanding sin of God's present-day Church, the sin, namely, of settling selfishly down in our Christianized fraction of the world, multiplying churches for ourselves till they crowd each other, while the larger part of the world we have scarcely more than touched. Has this sin found us out?

UNDERPAID MINISTERS.

1. It has found us out in the hardships and impaired efficiency it entails upon Christian ministers. They are the chief sufferers. According to government statistics the average salary of ministers in America is \$663, while the average wages of stablemen are \$689, and of New York City hod-carriers \$900. Leaving out the largest 125 cities in America, the average salary of ministers is \$573. Where a fraction of every ten hundred people must support three churches, where several ministers must be paid where one should suffice, no one receives a living support. In the investigation of one hundred of the smaller towns in Massachusetts it was found that the average salary paid in towns with one church was \$874, with two churches \$687, with three churches \$473.

If a minister is worrying over money matters, hampered by hardships and family expenses he cannot meet, how can he preach inspiring sermons or radiate strength and hopefulness in his parish work? Harassed by debt there is little juice of courage or joy left for his work. Without the means to buy necessary literature to enrich his mind, starved for books and ideas, his congregations must also starve. If a few geniuses succeed in spite of poverty, that does not help the average man who needs the equipment as a substitute for genius and is

doomed to deterioration without it. The utterly inadequate support given the average minister is a chief source of ministerial inefficiency and a curse to the Church. Its deadening results along all religious lines, and its underlying cause, are alike beyond question.

INEFFICIENT CHURCHES.

2. Our sin has found us out in the blight it entails upon tens of thousands of churches. Where the churches are over-multiplied, the average membership must be small. Half the evangelical churches in the United States have less than 65 members apiece, of whom nearly two-thirds are women and a considerable fraction young people, leaving a handful of men to bear the chief brunt of its support. These churches cannot afford resident pastors because no one of them can support a resident pastor. And no three or four of them in the same community can unite to support one because they belong to different denominations. They cannot support a live Sunday-school or young people's society, because there are not enough young people to make a live Sunday-school or society in any one of them. Small church attendance begets small church attendance, listless activities beget listlessness, occasional services by an absentee pastor are unable to inspire activity, and little to pay for makes small challenge to generosity.

Of course small churches where they are needed and have room to grow should be planted and helped. Every large church was once little. In growing States and communities weak churches are often on the way to being strong churches. Here, as elsewhere, faith and foresight reap large returns.

But in mature and settled older States, as are most of those in the South, it has been found that there is a direct ratio between the size of the church and its prospects of growth.

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY.

The Department of Church and Country Life of the Home Mission Board of the Northern Presbyterian Church, in connection with other agencies, made an exhaustive investigation

of four sections of Ohio, taking an average of about five counties each in the Northeastern, Northwestern, Southeastern and Southwestern sections of the State that their field of survey might be thoroughly representative, and including in it the open country and all towns and villages of 2,500 population and under.

A study of the 1,515 churches in nineteen counties showed that where the membership is

- 1- 25 2% of the churches are growing.
- 26- 50 17% of the churches are growing.
- 51-100 48% of the churches are growing.
- 101-150 58% of the churches are growing.
- 151-200 and over, 79% of the churches are growing.

The report says, "The regularity with which the increase of efficiency and ability to survive parallels the increase in membership is very striking."

It was further found that of the churches enjoying the full time of a minister 60% were growing, while of those with one-fourth his time or less only 26% were growing.

The report finds that in settled and mature communities 80% of the churches having fifty or less members are losing ground, and that in such communities not till a church has at least one hundred members does it have an even chance to grow. It names over-churching, and non-residency of ministers, as the chief troubles.

In the report's final summing up we read:

"It can be shown from county after county that those neighborhoods in which there are a large number of small poorly equipped churches are responding the least readily to the influence of those churches. The religious forces are in those cases so divided that their impact upon society is almost negligible. Communities with a large number of weak churches as a general rule show a smaller proportion of their population in the church membership. In the average Ohio county one church to every 500 or 600 of the population gives an ample number, provided those churches are properly equipped and maintained. We may take Ashtabula county as an example. Here there are five townships which have one church to approximately every 175 of the total farming population. These five

townships show an average of 17% of their population in the church membership. Six townships have one church to every 250 and show 21% of the population as church members. Eight townships have one church to every 350 and show 24% as church members. Four townships have one to every 450 and show 26% members. Then there are four townships which have not churches enough. In these there is one church to from 700 to 1,300 of the population and but 11% of the population are church members. These figures could be duplicated for other communities. Over-churching is not only a matter of having more churches than are needed, but of having more than can be so equipped and maintained as to do the work properly and efficiently. Geauga and Defiance counties (two out of 19) are the only counties surveyed which do not show clearly the serious effects of over-churching."

IN OUR OWN CHURCH.

Our own beloved Church seems to have an unusual number of weak churches with absentee pastors or none at all. The average membership of Northern Presbyterian churches is 157. The average membership of Southern Presbyterian churches is 101. The Northern Church reports 98% as many ministers as churches; the Southern 54% as many ministers as churches. Out of our 3,437 churches the 1916 Assembly Minutes show 915 vacant, or more than one-fourth of the whole number, while 1,579, or nearly half the whole number, have a membership of 50 or less. What this means in poor equipment, lack of resident pastoral oversight, infrequent services, meagre attendance, general inefficiency, and lack of impact on the young people and the community, I need not describe.

Of course there are exceptions, numerous and beautiful exceptions, but they cannot radically modify the general situation.

ECONOMIC WASTE.

3. Our sin has found us out in the economic waste and lack of return that marks the present system. Here are four weak churches, for example, in a village or country community. In each church a faithful few strain themselves to pay for part of a minister's time, and for fuel, light, and repairs for their

one-room church. All honor to them! And what do they get in return? A fraction of the service of an absentee minister who is not and cannot be a pastor to them, infrequent services thinly attended, a Sunday-school too small to generate enthusiasm, occasional long lapses when they have no minister at all, a poorly equipped building, a chronic sense of struggle and failure, a church too weak to exert a commanding influence in the community,—nay, a church that “cheapens Christianity in the estimation of the world and the young people by identifying it in their minds with the kind of half-starved religious life that the present policy necessitates in myriads of communities.”

Were these four little churches to come together, they could have a resident pastor for all his time; regular and better preaching every Sunday; Sunday-school, young people’s society, church fellowship, and community influence, quadrupled; while the sale of the unneeded church properties would give them a beautiful church home adequate to modern requirements; and all this, not by taxing any one an extra dollar, but simply by substituting economic wisdom for economic waste.

IGNOBLE RIVALRIES.

4. Our sin has found us out in the unworthy motives, rivalries, and competitions engendered by the present system. When three or four churches are struggling to sustain themselves among every ten hundred people, where one church would suffice, the temptation to jealousy and rivalry is too strong for average human nature. Where the financial eligibles are so few and the churches so many and poor, the results should surprise no one. The Home Mission report already quoted says, “Denominational prejudice exists in all of the communities studied. In 20% of them it was discovered breaking out into more or less open strife.” For obvious reasons this temptation is far greater in towns and villages than in cities. How inimical it is to any community service pro-

gram, how opposed to that social constructiveness which is the heart element of Christ's kingdom, I need not point out.

The story goes, and behind its humor there is food for saddest thought, that in one little town where the churches were crowded on adjoining corners within easy hearing of each other's music, one Sunday morning the Methodists were singing "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown?" and the Baptists promptly replied, "No, Not One; No, Not One," whereupon the Presbyterians shouted "That Will Be Glory For Me."

How often is a minister pained to see many of his most active workers inspired by a sectarian zeal to have their own church distance all rivals! Nay, how often are a minister's own motives and ideals gradually and insensibly tarnished by the atmosphere of competition in which he lives, by the manifest discontent of his own officers and members when some neighboring church and minister seem to be getting ahead, by their hinted or clearly voiced feeling that he is not getting the results they want or proving himself the kind of pastor needed, by the consequent reluctant sacrifice of his highest ideals to the allurements of methods that promise visible victory and success, till finally he wakes with a start to the realization that the old happy sense of peace and fellowship with his Saviour is gone and that he is feverishly working not from love of Christ and immortal souls, but from motives that move on a far lower plane.

Do you say that nevertheless more activity is thus generated, since competition is the life of effort? I reply, this kind of competition is the death of spiritual religion. It takes the soul out of it, leaving only the rattle and clank of church machinery. Of course God can make the wickedness of man to praise Him. But of this we may be sure that ignoble motives are sins against Christ, and that however they may enlarge the visible church, they can never build up the kingdom of God either within or around us.

Were this temptation in its present intensity a necessity, were it involved as some temptations are in the essential nature

of things, we could face it without inward misgiving. But it is not. In large measure it is simply our sins finding us out.

SELF-ABSORPTION.

5. Our sin has found us out in the self-absorption which the present system tends to produce in the majority of churches. Since most of the evangelical churches in the United States have less than 65 members apiece, the struggle to live, to exist, to keep their heads above water, is so severe that they are forced to think mainly of themselves and to spend on themselves nearly all that they can give.

A certain rare bird, writes a fellow-secretary, which its keepers had kept alive with difficulty, finally to their great delight laid an egg; but when the chick was hatched, the mother bird promptly ate it. Tens of thousands of weak churches undoubtedly produce eggs, often at the cost of heroic effort, but most of them they are compelled to eat themselves.

The popular idea that the organization of every new little church means of necessity the opening of a fresh and growing fountain of missionary liberality, is lamentably untrue. In settled communities the vast majority of little churches are doomed to remain little, with their gifts and activities largely absorbed in the supply of their own necessities.

Not only is this an incalculable loss to the world work of the kingdom, its effect on the churches themselves is spiritually narrowing and depressing. Their gaze is turned inward. They become self-centered, or, in St. Peter's language, "blind, seeing only what is near."

When John G. Paton went to his first missionary field he was so troubled with mosquitos and malaria that his wife and child died and his own life seemed doomed. But moving his hut to a higher part of the island he got above the mosquito level, and was troubled no more. The Saviour wants no church to dwell in the malarial valley of self-interest, shut out from the wide horizon of church duty, shut in to mosquito aims and tasks and temptations. He wants it to climb up to

the missionary hill-top and share with him the world vision and the world program. But so weak are most of the churches under our present system, and so loaded with local burdens, that few have heart or breath for climbing.

HOW IT LOOKS TO CHRIST.

We have seen some of the results of our present policy. Their appeal to every Home Missionary statesman, to every student and lover of our American churches, is evident.

But I cannot help wondering how this over-churching of our own land must look to him who, when laboring in one city, was ever thinking of those "other cities also" yet unvisited; who, when his narrow-minded Jewish disciples were asking only about the restoration of the kingdom unto Israel, rebuked them with, "Go ye into all the world; make disciples of all the nations; preach the gospel to every creature." When they still clung to Jerusalem, he sent a persecution to scatter them. When in the third largest city of the Roman world a little Christian church had gotten root-hold, though it was but ten years old, though heathenism was still regnant and rampant around it, yet from God Himself came to it the direct command to send away their two best men to carry the gospel to other nations.

That is God's policy. To give effect to that policy Christ organized his church. What must he think now, after nineteen centuries, to see 97% of his churches and ministers crowded into a few favored countries while half the world has hardly yet heard of him? Nay, to see our own land so thickly planted with churches that they actually have not room to grow, while sister lands perish for lack of churches? What must Christ think?

UNION SEMINARY REVIEW.

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Editorial Comment



A PIECE OF GOOD NEWS.

The best thing that has come to Union Seminary for many years was announced on commencement day. A generous, Christian friend, an elect lady, has offered the Seminary one hundred thousand dollars for the erection and endowment of a model Sunday-school building on the Seminary campus, provided sixty thousand dollars should be raised for endowing the chair of Sunday-school work and pedagogy, and that forty thousand dollars should be raised for other urgent needs of the Seminary. That was good news, indeed. But that is not all. Other generous friends have promised to give the sixty

thousand dollars to endow the chair. Still others have given twenty thousand towards the final forty thousand named in the conditions. So we lack only about twenty thousand dollars of having the full amount. We do not know just where this last twenty thousand is coming from, but we feel sure that the friends of Union Seminary and the friends of Sunday-school work are going to provide it in some way. We know them too well to believe that they would stand by and see such a great proposition fail for the want of twenty thousand dollars.

We can scarcely realize what this Sunday-school building and this new chair will mean to the Seminary and to the Church. The statistics read at the Birmingham Assembly in May showed that 19,647 persons had been received into the Southern Presbyterian Church on profession, more than 11,000 of these came from the Sunday-schools. In other words, more than 55 per cent of all those received by profession into the Southern Presbyterian Church last year came from the Sunday-school. What if we could make the Sunday-school work of the Church still more efficient? There seems to be almost no limit to what it might accomplish under the blessing of God.

The best and surest way to make our Sunday-school more efficient is to train our young ministers thoroughly in Sunday-school work. Our students in Sunday-school work visit the Sunday-schools of Richmond each year and report their observations to the class. It is almost invariably the rule that when these students report on a great Sunday-school they report the pastor as the key man.

If Union Seminary could train every one of her students in all that is best in Sunday-school work and send each one out to be a key man in the Sunday-school of his church, even the keenest imagination could not foresee what it would ultimately mean to the Church and the kingdom.

This is precisely what this splendid offer will enable the Seminary to do. The model building will provide a model Sunday-school as a kind of clinic for every student who comes

to the Seminary. The endowed chair will enable one professor to give his whole time to the teaching and organizing of this ever-broadening department of the Church's work. This same professor can direct the Sunday-school activities for Seminary students in all their mission work in and around Richmond. These few observations indicate the vast possibilities of the great offer to the Seminary.

We are deeply grateful to the friends who are making such a work possible and to our heavenly Father who has put it into their hearts to do this great thing.

W. L. L.

THE BIRMINGHAM ASSEMBLY.

The Commissioner who writes the review of the Birmingham General Assembly in this issue is an outstanding man in the Church and was an outstanding man in the Assembly. For a good reason his name is withheld, but there is no mystery about it. The higher critics claim to be able to determine the authorship of a book or parts of it from its style and contents. They claim to know just what Moses wrote and what he did not write. It has occurred to us that here is a good opportunity for a higher critic to try his hand.

The editor-in-chief attended the General Assembly, not as a commissioner, but as a member of an Ad Interim Committee and an onlooker. What a temptation there is to write all that one knows and thinks about it. But our leading article covers the ground and we will refrain with a few observations.

When I was a student in the Seminary, Dr. Moore led the criticism on a student's Wednesday evening sermon with this as his opening remark: "Mr. H.'s sermon had in it the most extraordinary amount of extraneous matter that I ever heard in one sermon." That remark came back to me as I listened to the numerous speeches nominating various men for the office of moderator. It would be fine if each speaker could hold himself down to the points which bear upon a man's fitness for the moderatorship.

There is one vital qualification which a moderator ought to have, but which we have never heard mentioned in any nominating speech. He ought to be well fitted to be chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures at the next Assembly. There is an unwritten law in our Church courts that the retiring moderator shall be chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures. It is rather a strange custom when one comes to think of it. The chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures in an Assembly possibly has more power to shape the future policy of the Church along all lines than any other man in the Assembly. As long as we continue the custom of appointing the retiring moderator chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures we ought to select a moderator with that in view as part of his duties.

The Assembly of Birmingham was especially fortunate in the choice of its moderator. We have seen a good many moderators, but never saw a better one than Dr. John M. Wells. He knows church history and law and he knows parliamentary order. His decisions were made accurately and clearly without the slightest hesitation, and he was eminently fair.

Dr. Wells is in the full prime and vigor of life. There is often a plea to elect an old man moderator as the men in their prime can wait. We join in most heartily with all those who would honor old age, but would it not be far better for the Church and for the man if we would take that same man and make him moderator while he is still in his prime and can do his very best. The Assembly this year gave a splendid object lesson on this point.

We will mention just one other point. The Assembly has an efficient Permanent Committee on Systematic Beneficence, consisting of one man from each Synod. That committee meets several times during the year and presents to the Assembly a well-digested report. It is perhaps the most important single report which comes before the Assembly. This report, which has been wrought out with such care, is read to the Assembly and referred to a Standing Committee on Systematic Beneficence which is compelled to hold hurried meet-

ings and which finds it impossible to secure or consider all the facts which were before the Permanent Committee. After awhile this standing committee brings in the revised remains of the Report of the Permanent Committee and presents them to the Assembly for action. This is not meant to be a criticism of any standing committee, but of a method.

Would it not be far better for the Assembly to consider directly the Report of the Permanent Committee on Systematic Beneficence? Provision for this is made in the Minutes of the Assembly of 1913, on page 41: "When the Report of the Permanent Committee on Systematic Beneficence is presented to the General Assembly, the Assembly may consider it directly, without reference to any standing committee, etc." Would it not be better for the Assembly to act directly upon the report of all permanent committees? Why refer the work of a capable committee, which has toiled for a year on its report, to a standing committee which must necessarily do very hasty work? Such procedure would also save much valuable time for the Assembly.

The Birmingham Assembly was above the average Assembly in ability and was pervaded by a deep spiritual note.

W. L. L.

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Books

Any book noticed in these pages may be had at publisher's prices through the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va.

LETTERS OF JOHN WESLEY. *Edited by George Eayrs.* F. R. Hist. S. George H. Doran Company, New York City. Pp. 510. Price \$2.50.

"John Wesley was the greatest force of the eighteenth century in England. No man lived nearer the center than John Wesley, neither Clive nor Pitt, neither Mansfield nor Johnson. You cannot cut him out of our national life. No single figure influenced so many minds, no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England." These are the words of the Right Honorable Augustine Birrell, who has written for this book a learned and witty chapter on "John Wesley, His Times and Work."

Every intelligent Christian ought to know something of such a man and his work. There are numerous biographies of John Wesley

which we might read. The best of these for the average reader is Fitchett's "Wesley and His Century." But there is a more excellent way than this. We can learn to know John Wesley through first-hand sources. Perhaps no man that ever lived has left us quite so much first-hand material by means of which we may learn to know him. First of all we have Wesley's Journals. They are remarkable documents and give us a vivid picture of the man and his times. A new edition of the Journals, which will be the last word on this subject, is coming from the press now.

But we cannot know any man thoroughly until we have read his letters. They reveal his real inner life. John Wesley was a prolific letter writer. He wrote thousands of letters and he wrote to men and women in all walks and stations of life. Our author has made judicious selections from all these letters and has printed for us in this book between two hundred and fifty and three hundred representative letters. They show us the heart of John Wesley. He was a wonderfully wise and winsome man.

A paragraph from a letter written to a group of American Methodist ministers in 1775 just at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War is eminently appropriate for this particular time: "You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peacemakers; to be loving and tender to all; but to addict yourself to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side. Keep yourselves pure; do all you can to help and soften all . . . Never was there a time when it was more necessary for all that fear God, both in England and America, to stir up the gift of God that is in them, and wrestle with God in mighty prayer." That sounds like a Southern Presbyterian.

Holiness is the one great word that sums up the life and theology of John Wesley. Righteousness is the great word in Calvin's life and system. It seems to me that if the two men could have lived at the same time they would have supplemented each other in a remarkable way. If you want to know John Wesley better you need to read these letters.

WALTER L. LINGLE.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

THE SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY. *By Dr. Shailer Mathews.*
Harvard University Press.

This volume contains the Noble Lectures of 1916. In it Dr. Mathews makes a distinct contribution to the religious thought of our day.

There are two classes of books, each with a special sphere of usefulness. First, the basic books, few in number, which open to us

new fountains of truth, new channels of thought. Second, the books which present to us in attractive and helpful form, and in a measure modify, the thought currents of our day. Their name is legion, and their mission is important. To this second class Dr. Mathews' book belongs.

With skillful hand he proves the inadequacy of the mere geographic or economic interpretation of history and shows that a study of "the historical process itself discovers a tendency which compels the recognition of spiritual forces, if not a spirit, in social development."

In the succeeding chapters he discusses the three great movements in which the course of social evolution tends to set from materialistic to spiritual values. (1) The substitution of the inner authority for appeal to force. (2) The increasing appreciation of the personal worth of the individual. (3) The transformation of the fight for right into a giving of justice.

The last chapter points out our spiritual opportunity in a period of reconstruction. The closing appeal should echo throughout our land, "No generation ever faced such possibilities of future weal or woe as does ours as it sees nations being reborn, civilization looking to Christian people for guidance. The opportunity is marvelous and appalling. It is a challenge to our generation to spiritualize world-history in the making."

DUNBAR H. OGDEN.

Atlanta, Ga.

AN AMBASSADOR. CITY TEMPLE SERMONS. *By Joseph Fort Newton, D. Litt.* 12 mo. cloth, net \$1.00. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York.

In the summer of 1916 Doctor Joseph Fort Newton, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was invited to supply the pulpit of the City Temple, London. In this volume he has collected together the sermons preached while in London, and has added to them four others, preached at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. These sermons are characterized by a high order of literary merit; but cannot be called evangelical, much less evangelistic. The purpose of the author doubtless was to minister comfort to his hearers in these trying times; but from our point of view it was not the kind of comfort that would be soul satisfying. Some of the sermons, naturally, are better than others; but in all of them the author seems to be straining at effect, and not offering to the people the gospel of Christ. Each one of the sermons is preceded by a prayer, supposedly offered at the beginning of the service. The prayers also are cast in a literary mould, and are less satisfactory even than the sermons. Both the sermons and the prayers will

appeal to a certain order of mind, alas! too common in our day, which is seeking for rest in speculative thought, rather than in divine revelation.

We regret to see that Dr. Newton has recently been called to the pastorate of the City Temple. He is an appropriate successor to the Reverend R. J. Campbell, who, after years of wandering in the mazes of "The New Theology," retracted his steps, and found refuge in the Church of England. But there is a mighty chasm between the preaching of Dr. Joseph Fort Newton and Dr. Joseph Parker, who formerly occupied the pulpit of the City Temple and gave to it the wide reputation for evangelical power which it for a long time enjoyed. It is a thousand pities that the congregation of that famous church should be willing, after their long and happy experience with Dr. Parker, to sit under the preaching of such men as Doctors Campbell and Newton.

RUSSELL CECIL.

SUNDAY STORY HOUR. *By Laura Ella Cragin.* George H. Doran Company, Publishers.

The writing of stories for children is no mere child's play. It requires at once a profound mind, a responsive heart, and a ready imagination. Our child classics are the work of men of genius, Hans Christian Andersen, The Brothers Grimms, Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling. Only one who has entered into the secret of the Lord can really guide the thought of a little child.

Miss Cragin, the author of this little volume of Sunday stories, possesses all these gifts of mind and heart which are essential to a successful writer of child literature.

There are forty stories in the collection. They touch upon most of the fundamental problems of childhood. The writer has the rare gift of telling a child a story, telling it interestingly, and with a lesson hidden away in it, and so skilfully that the little listener is not conscious of that tiresome part which so often begins, "Now, dear children, what does this teach us?"

The best proof of the pudding is always the eating, and the eager eyes and rapt attention of the reviewer's own little children while Sunday Story Hour is being read is the best testimonial to its success in the purpose for which it was intended.

STUART NYE HUTCHISON.

Norfolk, Va.

THE PREACHER'S IDEALS AND INSPIRATIONS. By *William J. Hutchins.*
Fleming H. Revell Company, New York. Pp. 187. Price \$1.00.

The author of this book is Professor of Homiletics in the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology. The five chapters which constitute the book were delivered as lectures on the George Shepard Foundation at Bangor Theological Seminary. The titles of the chapters are as follows: "The Preacher and His Times," "The Preacher and His Sermon," "The Preacher and His Bible," "Abraham Lincoln, The Preacher's Teacher," and "The Preacher and His Master."

I really had no intention of reading this book and picked it up only to give it a passing glance. It gripped me and I read it through at a sitting. I expect to read it again. The author has the happy faculty of being interesting. He abounds in fresh and interesting illustrations. There are also many wise suggestions in the lectures. The chief value of the book is that it is stimulating and inspirational. One lays it down with a longing to be a better preacher.

There are some features in the book which a Southern Presbyterian does not like. For example, the author is in full sympathy not only with the methods, but with the results, of the modern historical criticism of the Bible. This, however, is only incidental. Perhaps you are wondering how Abraham Lincoln could be a teacher of preachers. The author uses him as a great teacher of pure, simple, English style.

I can commend the book to all ministers who are looking for good ideas and who are seeking a stimulus for their own souls.

WALTER L. LINGLE.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

PSALMS OF THE SOCIAL LIFE. By *Cleland B. McAfee.* Association Press, New York City. Pp. 187. Price, 50 cents.

This is a book to be meditated through. There is a reading from the Psalms and meditations on it for each day in the week for thirteen weeks.

The title hardly gives an adequate idea of the contents of the little book. I was expecting something didactic but found something which is highly devotional. It has stirred and helped my own soul. In his comments Dr. McAfee shows a wide knowledge of devotional literature. Nor does he confine himself to devotional literature. He lays all literature under tribute as he seeks for illustrative material.

These devotions bear mainly upon social questions and the Christian's place in the social order. Those who object to the word social

need not shy at it in this book. They will not find the word offensively used here. I commend the book.

WALTER L. LINGLE.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE JEWISH PROPHETS. *By William Bennett Bizzell*, President Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. Sherman, French & Company, Boston.

"This volume is the outgrowth of studies begun in the University of Chicago several years ago, and since made use of in a series of lectures delivered to college students and instructors." This paragraph from the preface gives us at once the general style and the general point of view of the book.

In addition to the great Messianic and Prophetic teachings the prophets certainly addressed themselves to the sins and wrongs of their own times. We have in the prophets the largest body of social teachings to be found in the Holy Scriptures. Those students who wish to search out these social teachings of the prophets will find in this book a most suggestive and helpful guide. There has been a real need for just such a book.

WALTER L. LINGLE.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

READINGS IN SOCIAL PROBLEMS. *Edited by Albert Benedict Wolfe*. Ginn and Company, 17 Ashburton Place, Boston. Pp. 803.

This is a very valuable book for all students of social questions. The editor has gathered together what he considers to be the very best discussions of all phases and sides of certain social questions. In this way many writers are made to contribute to the book.

The main questions discussed are: "Problems of Population," "Immigration," "The Woman Problem," "Marriage and Divorce," and "The Negro Problem in the United States."

It can be readily seen that the man who selects the very best that has been written on all the phases of these subjects will have a large and valuable book. I do not know of any other book of the same compass which has such a variety of valuable material on social subjects.

WALTER L. LINGLE.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP AND OTHER SERMONS. *By Father Stanton, of St. Albans, Holborn.* 12 mo. Pp. 183. Price \$1.35 net.

This is a delightful and interesting volume of sermons. They are quite out of the ordinary. In the first place they are printed just as they fell from the preacher's lips. They were taken down by a stenographer and, as they were published after the preacher's death, they were never revised by him. However, while they lack the smoothness and polish which we look for in carefully written work, they possess a directness, a vigor, an animation which is abundant compensation and even more. One wonders if more of the volumes of printed sermons would not be vital and widely read if they were suffered to appear in the form in which they were actually spoken.

In the second place, these discourses are the sermons of a Roman Catholic priest. Every now and then the views of that communion come to the front. But it is surprising how seldom one encounters anything that suggests the cardinal errors of Rome. The reader is rather impressed with the evangelical fervor of the preacher. He loves the Saviour. He loves the souls of men. He is passionately seeking men's salvation. Again and again we are thrilled with his appeals. The last two or three pages of the last sermon on "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end," are worth the price of the book. We commend the book heartily to ever Protestant minister.

THERON H. RICE.

THE JESUS OF HISTORY. *By T. R. Glover, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge University Lecturer in Ancient History. With a Foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury.* Association Press, 124 East 28th Street, New York. 1917. 225 pages. One dollar.

This book presents a theme of transcendent importance, especially at this time—the personality of Jesus Christ. Another feature gives the volume added importance—it is intended especially for the young men and women of the American college world. A note by the publishers informs us that "The Jesus of History" was prepared for the British Student Christian Movement and published in Great Britain by that organization. And inasmuch as Mr. Glover is well and favorably known among the students of America, the publishers decided that his book should be made available in this country.

"The object before us in these pages," says the author, "is the attempt to know Jesus, if we can, in a more intimate and intelligent way than we have ever done—at least, to put before our minds the great problem, Who is this Jesus Christ? and to try to answer it." Upon the right answer to that supreme question on the part of our young people depends the kind of Christianity we are going to have

in America in the next generation. Hence, the importance of this book.

Mr. Glover is known as a historian who knows how to make history a thing of life. His style may be characterized as brilliant and yet extremely simple. He says: "Everything worth while can be put in simple language"; and he does it. While his style is so simple, candor compels us to say that his thought is not always clear, neither has he worked out his analyses with sufficient thoroughness and logical power, nor has he treated some of his themes with such dignity and close grappling as their importance demands. The result is that the book pleases and charms rather than convinces and grips. Here and there we run across some mist and mush. These things should not be in a book that will be read by large numbers of our young men and women.

In a fresh and interesting way the following topics are discussed: Childhood and Youth; The Man and His Mind; The Teacher and His Disciples; The Teaching of Jesus Upon God; Jesus and Man; Jesus' Teaching Upon Sin; The Choice of the Cross; The Christian Church in the Roman Empire; and Jesus in Christian Thought.

Mr. Glover well says that in proportion as the Christian Church has magnified Jesus Christ and made him the center of everything, so has the Church risen in power, in energy, in appeal, in victory. And on the other hand, as the Church in one way or another has minimized Jesus, so has it declined, its life has waned. "That, to my mind, is the most striking and outstanding fact in history," declares the author, who has made history the study of his life. He also well says that the greatest weakness of the Church today is that it makes too little of Jesus.

Now that is precisely the criticism we make of this admirable book. It does not make enough of Jesus Christ. It would better be entitled, "The Humane Jesus," for it is largely concerned with the human side of our Saviour. In the closing paragraph, it is true, the author seems to take his stand for the Deity of Jesus. I will quote what he says, and let the reader of this review give his own interpretation to his words: "The simple rule of knowing things before we talk about them holds in every other sphere of study, and it is the rule which Jesus himself inculcated. We begin, then, with Jesus Christ, and set out to see how far he will take us. Experience comes first. There can be no other way of knowing him." Then Mr. Glover quotes with approval from Hermann's book, *The Union of the Christian With God*: "Luther's Reformation doctrines only countenance such a confession of the Deity of Christ as springs naturally to the lips of a man whom Jesus has already made blessed." This is the nearest our author comes to the expression of his belief in the Saviour's Deity.

Thus the whole book is concerned with the humanity of Jesus. At the outset the author tells us that he will confine himself to the first three gospels. Even so. Still we protest that the "Jesus of History," the Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke is the Divine, Eternal Son of God. Mr. Glover apparently ignores everything in the first three gospels that points to the Deity of Christ. He dismisses the miracles with this scant notice: "There is little reasonable ground for doubt that he healed diseases. Of course, we cannot definitely pronounce upon any individual case reported; the diagnosis might be too hasty, and the trouble other than was supposed; but it is well known that such healings do occur—and that they occurred in Jesus' ministry, we can well believe."

Mr. Glover states that the New Testament writers played with the Old Testament as they pleased; they quoted from it regardless of connection and real meaning; and when they were pressed for a defence they took refuge in allegory. "The Old Testament was emptied of meaning to fortify the Christian faith with proof-texts."

The chapter on "The Choice of the Cross" is the least satisfying in the book. Why did Christ choose the cross? The author answers, to show his love for men, to obey God who called him to the cross, and to reveal God's love for men. But the question arises: Why was the cross necessary to accomplish these objects? This question, which contains the heart of the problem, Mr. Glover does not attempt to answer.

EUGENE C. CALDWELL.

Union Theological Seminary.

THE MYTHICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL. CRITICAL STUDIES IN THE HISTORIC NARRATIVES. By *Thomas James Thorburn, D. D., LL. D.*, New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1916. 356 pages. \$1.50 net.

This book won the second decennial prize of six thousand dollars offered by the Bross Foundation Lectureship of Lake Forest College. The first prize was awarded in 1905 to Dr. James Orr's book, *The Problem of the Old Testament*. The judges for the second contest were President W. D. Mackenzie, of Hartford Theological Seminary; Professor R. M. Jones, of Haverford College; and Professor B. L. Hobson, of MacCormick Theological Seminary; and they awarded the prize to Dr. Thorburn, of St. Helen's Down, Hastings, England.

What is the mythical interpretation of the gospels? It is the theory that the events recorded in the four gospels as having actually occurred did not really take place, but are merely the revamping of ancient nature-myths, and that the central figure of the gospels is not a real historical person, but only an embodiment of one

or more of the various cult-gods with which the ancient races peopled the lands of Asia and Egypt and Arabia.

Dr. Thorburn takes up the arguments of those who advance this fantastic theory, and completely demolishes them. He clearly shows that the advocates of this theory have modified and at places actually misrepresented these nature-myths in order to make the resemblance of these myths to the gospel narratives more close and striking.

Dr. Thorburn has rendered signal service to the cause of truth by this masterly and scholarly book.

EUGENE C. CALDWELL.

Union Theological Seminary.

THE GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. *By William Evans, Ph. D., D. D. Associate Dean, Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Cal. F. H. Revell Company, New York and Chicago. 270 pages. \$1.25 net.*

Here is another of Dr. Evans' popular and practical expositions of Scripture. In the preface the author declares: "The great spiritual need of today is the presentation of the contents of the Bible in such a manner as will interest not only the ministry, but also Christian laymen." Dr. Evans himself knows how to meet this need about as well as any man we know. He is issuing from time to time a series of volumes on the Bible, whose motto is, "Through the Bible Book by Book." He uses the book method. An earlier volume on the first five books of the Old Testament was recently highly commended in this Review. It now gives us pleasure to commend this volume on the first five books of the New Testament. When Dr. Evans has completed the series we want to have every one of the volumes on our book shelf. We know no better guide in the book method of Bible study than Dr. Evans. By all means get his books.

EUGENE C. CALDWELL.

Union Theological Seminary.

THE LIFE IN CHRIST. *By Edgar Young Mullins, D. D., LL. D. President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. F. H. Revell Company, New York and Chicago. 1917. 240 pages. \$1.25 net.*

A volume of twenty-two short, crisp, incisive sermons by one of the leading lights in American Christianity. Dr. Mullins sticks to great gospel themes and great gospel texts, which he illuminates by means of clear analysis and many short illustrations. His illustrations are singularly fresh and striking. He makes large use of brief quotations—often only a line or two—from the great poets. Dr. Mullins is not afraid to let the skeleton of his sermon show and to

call off his points one by one. These sermons deserve and will receive a very wide circulation.

EUGENE C. CALDWELL.

Union Theological Seminary.

CAMBRIDGE GREEK TESTAMENT FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. *General Editor, R. St. John Parry, D. D.* Fellow of Trinity College. The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, edited by R. St. John Parry, D. D. With Introduction and Notes. Cambridge at the University Press. 1916. Pages LXXVI, 284.

There are seventy-six pages of Introduction where such questions as authorship, date, place, readers, doctrine, unity, analysis and text are discussed. Dr. Parry's Introduction will be found more usable and helpful to the preacher and Bible teacher than the sixty-seven pages of Introduction in Robertson's and Plummer's commentary in the International Critical Commentary; although the explanatory notes in Robertson and Plummer are fuller and more illuminating, and the International Critical remains the best commentary on 1 Corinthians.

Twenty-eight pages are given to the printing of the Greek text of 1 Corinthians. Then follow 230 pages of notes. A most excellent plan is followed in the notes. The general theme of the section under discussion is first given; then an analysis, after which comes a luminous paraphrase and finally the detailed notes on each verse. There are also thirty pages of additional notes, in which topics of special interest raised in 1 Corinthians are more fully discussed. The book closes with a very complete index.

This book is a marvel of condensation, and is easily one of the best of the briefer commentaries on 1 Corinthians.

The following quotation is a sample of the author's general style and of the richness and accuracy of his interpretation: "St. Paul offers in this Epistle, as a solution of the divisions and perplexities of the Corinthian Church, the profound and penetrating apprehension of the true union of men in the all-sufficing, all-embracing life of the risen Lord. If we have any hope of the restoration, in God's good time, of the community of learning and the fellowship of faith, it is because we believe in the exhaustible power of the life that is from above."

EUGENE C. CALDWELL.

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