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I. IDEALISTIC MONISM.

I do not care to prefix a rubric of titles of idealistic authors to this criticism, as could be very easily done after the pretentious and pedantic fashion of some review writers. I could cite quite a list, beginning with Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, down to Herbert Spencer, Kuno Fischer, of Heidelberg, and Paul Deussen, of Kiel, and could profess to give outlines of their several phases of Monism from histories of philosophy. But my object is to instruct students who are guided by common sense and their Bibles in the central doctrines of this pretended philosophy which are common to all its phases, and to expose their common errors. No two idealists are consistent with each other, nor even with themselves; hence the attempt to particularize their different schemes would be tedious and hopeless, and would disappoint my practical aim.

Idealism is, in plain terms, that doctrine which tells us that the whole universe, including ourselves, consists of ideas only, and contains no other perdurable substantive beings, material or spiritual, distinguishable from mere trains of ideas or actions. Monism is the doctrine which insists that there is no distinction of mind and matter, that both are one and that there is no true philosophy until all things are traced to one single principle of being. The monism of idealists is, that the universe exists for me only as my representation in thought. Thought and real being are identical. To think a thing is to give it existence, the only kind of existence which anything has. There is not, and cannot be, any creation *ex nihilo*, even if there were an almighty

VII. LICENSURE AND ORDINATION.—THE PROPOSED CHANGES.

THIS paper has been written by request, and, by agreement of publisher and writer, is limited as to space.

A preliminary examination of each of the amended articles touching Licensure and Ordination is necessary to show the force of the objections following:

I. THE CHANGES AS TO LICENSURE.

Article I. adds the sentence: "Every man who feels called of God to undertake the work of preaching the gospel shall go before the Presbytery within whose bounds he resides, and obtain license before he begins to preach." This addition, in view of our whole law and practice from time immemorial, contains nothing new. The same Article substitutes for "shall license probationers to preach the gospel" the phrase "shall license *candidates* as probationers," etc. This change seems intended to intensify the idea that our licentiates are to continue *candidates*, an idea fundamental in the new plan. Article I. also changes the *time* of licensure, making it after the first year in the seminary, instead of after the second.

Article IV. omits the requirement of any examination, at licensure, on Hebrew; omits the Latin thesis and the Greek critical exercise. It substitutes for the examination on theology, ecclesiastical history and government and the sacraments, at licensure, an examination on "the system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism," not, as will presently appear, to test the candidate's *knowledge* of the theology in the standards, but to test only "his soundness" in the little that he does know. (See Article VIII.) It prescribes an examination on "*his knowledge* of the English Bible." He is to be examined on the Confession of Faith merely to test his soundness; on the English Bible alone is he to be examined to test his knowledge.

Article VI. omits the requirement that the candidate must have studied theology for two years. It adds the sentence making the license on the basis of Article IV. valid for three years and no more, with the privilege, however, of renewal for three years longer.

Article VII. substitutes for "If the Presbytery be satisfied with his *trials*" the phrase "If the Presbytery be satisfied with his *examinations*." Manifestly, because his "trials" have been largely dispensed with.

Article VIII. substitutes for "We do license you to preach the gospel, as a probationer for the holy ministry, wherever God in his providence may call you," the clause "We do license you, *as a probationer for the holy ministry, to preach the gospel under the direction of Presbytery, wherever,*" etc. This change foreshadows the policy, afterward more clearly revealed, of holding the licentiate *as a candidate* for three or six years, to work in vacant churches while pursuing his studies. Again: Article VIII., in the record of licensure, substitutes for "proceeded to take the usual parts of trial" "*proceeded to subject him to the usual examinations*"; it adds "and the sciences" to the record of the things of which the candidate has given satisfaction; it omits from that record the statement that he has given satisfaction "as to his proficiency in divinity," thus excluding from the record any attestation of his knowledge of theology; it inserts, instead of such an expression, merely the general statement "*as to his soundness in the faith*" in the much or little that he may know, thus showing conclusively, as already stated, that the object of his examination on the Confession (prescribed in Article IV.) is merely to see if he *accepts* it—whether he is proficient in its theology or not. If he is "sound" in respect to it—*i. e.*, accepts it and holds nothing inconsistent with it—he may be licensed. Lastly, Article VIII. fixes it that the licensed candidate is to be "*a probationer for the holy ministry to preach the gospel, for a period of three years, under the direction of Presbytery.*" This provision serves due notice upon two parties: (1), Upon the Presbytery, that, on the face of its own record, this man has license to preach for three years, and his license cannot fairly be with-

drawn within that time, unless the Presbytery can show legal cause; (2), Upon the young man, that he is to be held a licentiate in training for at least two years. (See Article XI.)

Passing over Article IX. as containing only insignificant changes which have already been adverted to, we find Article XI. almost entirely new: "*Except in extraordinary cases, Presbyteries shall require probationers to continue their regular course of study at some approved seminary, or under some approved teacher of theology, and, while engaged in the same, to exercise their gifts in preaching, under such restrictions as may, in the judgment of their respective Presbyteries, be necessary to preclude interference with their studies.*" Note here, (1), The repetition of the notice served on the student in Article VIII.: he may expect to be held as licentiate for two years; (2), The mandatory language to the Presbyteries: they "*shall require*" this thing; (3), They shall also "*require*" that these student-licentiates intermix preaching with seminary study for two years. This is the plan. The boat appears calked in every seam. But, alas! as with the flirting of a whale's tail, the whole craft may be thrown into the air by the modifying clauses, "*except in extraordinary cases,*" and "*under such restrictions as may to the Presbyteries seem necessary.*" In impracticable legislation all the cases come to be "*extraordinary cases.*"

II. THE CHANGES AS TO ORDINATION.

Under this head Article I. retains the provision that "when a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deem it for the good of the church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed." It then adds this provision, to-wit: "But no probationer, except in extraordinary cases, shall be ordained until he shall have taken a regular course in divinity at some approved theological seminary, or the equivalent of the same under some approved teacher of theology." Departure from this rule, and the reasons for it, are to be recorded. This settles beyond dispute, that, in all ordinary cases, the licentiate is to be held as such until he finishes his seminary course, two years after he has been licensed to preach three

or six years. The call of God's people can avail nothing; the young man's convictions, nothing; the Presbytery's own conviction conceded in licensing him to preach, nothing. God himself by all three of the concurring evidences of a divine call may say, "Separate me this man." The Presbytery's answer, riveted upon her by her usurpation of legislative function, must be: "It is written in our law: 'no probationer shall be ordained until two years after he has been licensed'!"

Article III. substitutes for "a careful examination" "a close, particular, and thorough examination." Some readers may prefer this redundant rhetoric. The Article also receives from the omitted provisions for licensure the requirements for the exercises in Exegesis, the examination in Hebrew, Church History and Government, Theology and the Sacraments, all transferred from licensure to ordination.

This examination of the changes proposed is believed to be very nearly exhaustive. It is time to offer, suggestively, as the limits of this article require, objections to these constitutional amendments.

III. OBJECTIONS TO THE CHANGES.

1. Amendments to organic law should be of obvious necessity, and to meet a very general demand. Each minister and elder in our church has been asked, "Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States?" and he has answered, "I do." This is the basis and bond of our covenant. The movement toward annulling or altering it should have the marks of spontaneity. But nothing of that kind can here be found. Again and again, by overwhelming majorities, the Assemblies have declared that they see no reason for the changes proposed. In language almost minatory, the agitators have declared, "This thing shall come up again." The movement has all the appearance of having been forced upon the church. It is in evidence that letters have been written to influential men in Presbyteries urging overtures to the Assembly. It is also in evidence that some of these wisest men and strongest Presbyteries declined. It is furthermore on record that out of

the seventy-three Presbyteries only six could be influenced to overture the last Assembly in favor of the changes, and two or three of these contained the original agitators who have all along declared that the agitation shall not cease. There is not the least appearance of spontaneousness about this movement.

2. When a General Assembly recommends to the Presbyteries grave changes in organic law, that recommendation, to carry weight, ought to be by a large majority. But in this case there is no decided recommendation at all. The minority report, offered as a substitute for that of the majority, lacked only nine votes of being adopted, the vote being seventy to seventy-eight. The Assembly, therefore, makes her voice heard here only in faintest whisper of uncertain sound. Nor can it be forgotten that the Assembly had no proper opportunity for a discussion of this question. A matter of paramount importance, threatening the very being of the church, distracted thought, consumed time, and exhausted energy. Still further, the recommendation manifestly slipped through the Assembly by a peculiar coincidence. The measure was advocated almost solely upon the ground that it was intended to "stop this unlicensed preaching."¹ This secured for it the vote of many who have become disgusted with the excesses of lay evangelism, and these, uniting with those who have all along desired the changes for other reasons not so good, barely passed the recommendation. All things considered, it is easy to see that the action of the Assembly lacks the weight which should characterize a proposition to change radically the constitution of the church. The deliverances of former Assemblies, made after full deliberation, and despite the presence and advocacy of the warmest and ablest friends of the measure, are on record. Let their overwhelming majorities be put against the eight votes which passed the recommendation at Nashville.

3. These amendments, if adopted, must change the fundamental doctrine of the Presbyterian Church with reference to the

¹ How it can effect this it is impossible to see. The "unlicensed preaching," so called, generally begins with the sophomore class in college, and is a sophomoric symptom. To cure the evil by licensing it, the law must reach downward to the second collegiate vacation.

ministry. In our ecclesiasticism, throughout all our history, the parity of ministers of the word has been recognized as essential to our system. The controversy between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism has ever been over the oneness or plurality of orders in the clergy. The germ of plurality is inherent in these proposed changes. Indeed, it is openly urged that distinctions of classes *should* be made, both as to the degrees of education that should be given and as to the eminence or inferiority of scholarship that may be anticipated; and we are expected to adapt legislation to these higher and lower classes. It is undeniable that the man licensed to preach three years or six years is in the rank of the gospel ministry just as truly as is an Episcopal deacon or a Methodist local preacher. But he is in the rank, both as inferior and as subordinate: inferior, because he has not equal qualifications; subordinate, because under the control of a higher class of the very same officers—the preachers of God’s word. In the church of Japan this very thing of licensing men to preach and holding them as licensed preachers for a definite term of years, has given rise to more jealousy and heart-burnings in the ministry than any other feature of their polity. To hold Presbyterian preachers thus subordinate by legislation would be simply impossible. Presbyterians believe that the power of the church is solely ministerial and declarative. They will never be bound by any mere enactment which contravenes the teaching of God’s word; and they have ever held, and ever will hold, the parity of ministers as a part of the truth of Holy Scripture. The constitution which makes a law against that *doctrine*, universal in Presbyterian faith, will bring forth a dead letter; it cannot be enforced. It can only awaken in the souls of our Episcopal brethren the fond but delusive hope that, as we have adopted two orders of clergy, we may soon be in full union with them under the “historic episcopate.”

4. These amendments undermine and overthrow the settled doctrine of our church with reference to vocation to the gospel ministry. That we have such a doctrine clearly taught in our works of theology and breathing through our Form of Government will not be denied. Its fundamental postulate is that none

but the King can appoint to office—none but God the Holy Spirit call to the function of preaching. Another thing is just as true: none may restrain from preaching him whom God calls. The instant that awful voice is clearly recognized by competent authority, that instant the man and the court must alike bow in willing obedience. No reasons of expediency may urge delay. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" leaves no option as to a three or six-years' temporizing: the thing must be done when God's call is clearly evidenced. Now, what evidences it? (1), The man's Spirit-wrought conviction; (2), The voice of the same Spirit speaking through the church court; (3), The voice of the same Spirit speaking through God's people, who, in an important sense, are the body from whose womb courts and rulers alike spring. When these three elements of evidence, authenticating a call as divine, concur in a given case, the court ought to render its solemn finding. There is no more proof to wait for. Ordination is the act by which in formal manner the court renders its decision upon the evidence adduced, to the effect that God has called the man to preach and, for that reason, he is set apart to the full work of the gospel ministry.

Now, see how this proposed law utterly undermines these doctrines: (1), It changes the whole meaning of licensure, which no more signifies that the man is on trial to discover whether he can get the third and last element of evidence of God's call—the approbation of his people—and now means "we license you to preach at least three years without having had the remotest reference to God's people in the whole matter." It is true that the Presbytery may *afterward* have respect to the people. But the point is that licensure for a definite and prolonged period antecedently to such an expression of the people practically inducts the man into the regular work of preaching, utterly ignoring this element of evidence essential to knowing whether God calls him or not. Such a call comes, therefore, from the Presbytery and the man. It *may* come from God; but it may not. The objection that the present law does the same thing may be successfully refuted. The present law does not license a man to preach through the years irrespectively of the call of God's people. No

such thing as licensure for a definite time is known to us. Nor can it be, for (2), according to the foregoing principles, the man must be ordained as soon as the proof of God's call is before the court. But this law deliberately proposes that the Presbytery shall have before it (*a*) the man's conviction that he should preach, (*b*) its own conviction expressed in giving him license to preach for many years, and (*c*) even the call of a church [see amended Article I. of Ordination]; and even *then* shall be bound by its own legislation to say to God himself, speaking through all these recognized channels of evidence, "We positively decline to set this man apart; we will hold him, to educate him two years more!" And when asked, "By what law can even a Presbytery decline to obey God on admitted evidence of his call?" the only possible answer must be, "Upon *our* law. We made it. The candidate and ourselves deliberately entered into a compact that he should not be ordained for two years after we admitted he could preach and licensed him to do it." If it be urged that under the present law licentiates sometimes preach for years before ordination, the answer is: (1), Such cases are exceptional; (2), They are not deliberately enacted; (3), They, unless for peculiar providences, are in spite of the law and not because of it. Our whole doctrine implies that the court must not delay to find its verdict after all the evidence has been adduced and weighed—and the formal rendering of that verdict is, ordination. To enact a long stretch of training between a license to preach for three years and ordination is, therefore, to erect a human invention against our divinely revealed doctrine of vocation. What is even a Presbytery, that it can arbitrarily decide that God must not call men to the full work of the ministry until two years after licensure?

5. The new movement is irreconcilably at variance with the historical teaching of our church, to the effect that, so far as preaching is concerned, the qualifications for licensure and for ordination ought to be the same. That this has always been our teaching is not denied. Rather, the advocates of the new measure impeach the wisdom of the doctrine, and declare that a candidate ought to be licensed to preach (even for years) on a lower basis, and ordained to preach on a higher. We wonderingly inquire,

Why? Is not the function, preaching, identical? Is not the responsibility in the one case as great as in the other? Is it not the same man, handling the same word of the same God? Does he not in both instances bear authority to preach from the same Presbyterian Church? And if the Presbytery licenses him to preach on a lower basis of qualification and ordains him still to *preach* on a higher, has she not, in making a difference of qualification for the same function, done an unscriptural thing in the one case or the other? Has she not, somewhere in this proceeding, transcended her declarative power and obtruded her methodizing, upon grounds of expediency, into the forbidden realm of human legislation for a divine kingdom? Surely, if she licenses to a function on one examination and ordains to the same function on another and higher, she cannot have found and applied the scriptural qualifications in both. This point, so clearly and forcibly made by one of the ablest of the younger men of our church through the press, seems to this writer absolutely unanswerable.

6. This movement must inevitably lower the standard of ministerial education. Here the advocates of the changes are not in unison. Some declare that the standard *ought* to be lower, and they urge the changes in the hope of having one class of preachers for one kind of work and another for a more scholarly kind. Others repudiate this, and say, sincerely, that they are seeking to elevate the standard. Their favorite plea is, that Presbyteries neglect the examination for licensure in anticipation of that for ordination, and then fail as to the latter because they have passed through the former. Now (1), nowhere on earth, in things temporal or things spiritual, has God given any remedy for "neglect" except to *stop neglecting*. (2), If the Presbyteries have two opportunities and neglect them both, how can the giving of only one opportunity diminish the danger of neglect? (3), If the Presbyteries are thus loose in the enforcement of law, with such a spirit in them, is it not morally certain that, having licensed a man to preach on a lower standard, they will never refuse him ordination for the lack of a higher, especially after he shall have preached with possibly some success for two years? (4), If the man shall obtain a call, and he and the representative of the church appear

and ask installation, can the Presbytery consistently refuse, even though the man have no more education than when he was licensed? He has been preaching in the Presbytery's name, with *her* commission in his hand, for two years. During all this time the Presbytery has been saying to saints and sinners, "Look to this man for bread." How can she now venture the plea, "He is not educated"? It is safe to predict that such a plea will never be made. Low licensure will lead straight to low ordination.

7. This movement is expected to work radical changes in some of the oldest, most warmly-cherished and most fully-blest enterprises of the church. It stands in close connection with the action of the General Assembly recommending that our theological seminaries have four sessions of six months each rather than three sessions of eight months each. That the two (the changes as to licensure and as to the sessions) are nearly related is easily proved: (1), The same Assembly recommends both. (2), The distinguished and much-loved chairman of the Committee on Theological Seminaries (the committee recommending the change in the length of the sessions) is, if not the originator, at least one of the earliest friends, of the changes as to licensure. It can hardly be possible that the relation between the two things escaped his acute observation. (3), The friends of the change as to the length of the seminaries' sessions are universally the friends of the new movement as to licensure. (4), The most prominent and aggressive advocate of the movement as to licensure, after discussing it and the recommendation to theological seminaries and their interrelation, writes: "This is the Assembly's plan. If the Presbyteries shall adopt the one part of the scheme and the directors of our seminaries the other," etc. The movement is one, and now stands before us in all the aspect of revolution. Our doctrines, as we have seen, are to be contravened. Our time-honored practice is also to be radically transformed; our seminary sessions, six months in length, are to be extended over four years. At the end of the first year the student is to be licensed. His license is to be valid during the remaining three years of his student-life. Meanwhile he is to preach, thus making money in vacation with which to support himself the next session. Beneficiary education is to be

“reduced to the minimum”; vacant churches are to be ministered to by these licensed students, and by them the “destitutions” are to be supplied; and there is not one party involved in these transactions whose interests are not bound to suffer: (1), The interests of the student: He will scarcely have begun one thing before he will be called to stop and go into an entirely different thing. He will do neither well. (2), The interests of the seminaries: Their students will be smatterers. Study will wait on the convenience of preaching and sermon-writing. Professors will hardly begin the short session before they must quit teaching and take a long vacation. (3), The interests of vacant churches: The food they feed upon will be poor. The habit of not employing pastors, but of being content with preaching six months a year, will become fixed upon them. (4), The interests of beneficiary education: That cause which, in proportion to the money expended, has yielded a larger revenue to the church in contributions, in spiritual gifts and energies, than any other, will be crowded out by the dubious experiment of making the candidates self-supporting. Faith in the cause will fly just as soon as it is announced that the church has practically disowned it in favor of another plan. (5), The interests of Presbyterian scholarship: Other denominations are elevating the standard; we appear to be degrading it. The tendency in all educational institutions is now to make the sessions longer, and not so numerous. We propose to fly against the wind and buffet along for four years in sessions of six months each, after having had our students in college the four years preceding. Add to all this the danger of putting nearly the whole body of our seminary students under the support and patronage, and, largely, the control, of our Home Mission committees, and the growing power of those committees by reason of their special pecuniary relation to this ever-multiplying class of preachers, and who can fail to see that these stupendous changes ought to “give us pause”? We honor our Home Mission agents and committees for their zeal in their own line of work, but we cannot close our eyes to the tendency of every specialist to see all interests in the light of the particular one to which he is devoting his energies and his prayers; nor can we repress the thought that the natural

eagerness to "supply the destitutions" may make us impatient under providential delays and impel us to lay the hand of human intervention upon the ark of our divinely-revealed doctrine and our divinely-blest practice. Should this occur, history would but repeat itself, and again it would be seen, as in the case of our Cumberland brethren, that an uneducated ministry would develop an un-Calvinistic church. If it be claimed that these evils must be imaginary since the proposed changes are the work of able men, the candid answer must be, that the thing to be changed, our constitution, is possibly the work of men not less able. The soul of Thornwell breathes through it; the minds of Adger and Dabney approved it; the solid judgment of Peck endorsed it and deprecated any interference with it almost unto his dying day. The book gives us law as the evolution of deep principles in God's law, and no mere methodizing to meet the changing aspects of human events should be permitted to set it aside.

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