

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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ARTICLE I.

THE ARTICLE ENTITLED “A THOROUGHLY EDUCATED MINISTRY” EXAMINED BY THE AUTHOR OF “AN INQUIRY INTO THE AGGRESSIVENESS OF PRESBYTERIANISM.”¹

In essaying an answer to the criticism of our views contained in the April number of this REVIEW, we are aware that we undertake no light task. There are in the criticism elements of extraordinary strength. Judging from the admiration it extorts from a mind already satisfied to the contrary, it must have proven irresistible to others. As *a priori* reasoning, the argument amounts to a demonstration, but the strongest presumptive demonstration must yield to obstinate fact; and here, we think, lies the weakness of this otherwise strong paper. Its author has ignored some of the most conspicuous developments of the last half century; he has hung his votive tablet in the shrine of Logic, and right royally has the divinity responded to her devotee. We invoke the aid of her less brilliant sister, History.

Conviction is always strong; that of our author is so absolute

¹ It is due to the writer of this article to say that it was received in time for publication in the July number of the REVIEW, but our space was already fully occupied with previously accepted articles.—EDITORS SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

ARTICLE VII.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1883.

The Lexington Assembly was the largest court of our Southern Church that has ever yet convened. The number of commissioners enrolled was one hundred and forty-seven—being only seven less than a complete roll of the delegates chosen by the Presbyteries. Every one of our sixty-seven Presbyteries was represented. Every ministerial representative was present, the seven absent commissioners being elders. Of these one hundred and forty-seven commissioners, one hundred and thirty-four were on the floor the first day; by the third day, one hundred and forty-seven were enrolled. Very few members left before the Assembly was dissolved, only eight having retired up to the day before adjournment.

THE OPENING SERMON.

Precisely at 11 o'clock a. m., May 17th, 1883, Rev. R. K. Smoot, D. D., the retiring Moderator, ascended the pulpit and preached the opening sermon, on Isaiah liii. 10, a splendid discourse on "The Sufferings and Glory of Christ," worthy of the occasion, and of wide dissemination. The closing passage is quoted here for its strong practical ring:

"If the work before us looks like an impossible thing to be performed, let us look upon that picture in the Gospel of Luke, where our Saviour commanded his disciples to feed, with the five loaves and two fishes, a multitude of five thousand people, and learn the lesson that the measure of our duty is never limited by our present ability to do, but that an accruing power to perform shall come step by step as we march on in the line of our duty. Away with that plea of poverty and inability. We are not poor. A rich man may talk himself into a belief that he is; a poor man may so manage as to enjoy all the real benefits of riches. No true gentleman ever parades his poverty, and no true Church of God should be found whining about her's. Let us throw the same business energy into the Church that is given to tunnelling mountains and bridging rivers for the advance of commerce, and the song of our victory will go ringing through the land. Against the infidelity of the day, the speculations of science and philosophy falsely so-called, let us

entrench ourselves in the infallible word of God as the constitution of the conscience and the great bill of rights to the soul, and there make our stand, knowing

“That the bird is safest in its nest;
O'er all that flutter the wing to fly,
The hawk is hovering in the sky.”

THE ELECTION OF MODERATOR.

Dr. Theodoric Pryor, of East Hanover Presbytery, Va., was unanimously chosen Moderator; Rev. H. R. Raymond, D. D., of South Alabama Presbytery, Temporary Clerk; and Rev. J. P. Smith, in Dr. Brown's absence, was chosen to act in his place. He made a most admirable officer. Dr. Pryor, venerable with the frost of eighty-two years, is remarkable for his mental and physical vigor. He has been in the ministry fifty-one years; his strong, eloquent voice rings with clarion tones when he becomes roused in speech. He won all hearts by his earnestness, honesty, and kindly manner.

NEXT PLACE OF MEETING.

Vicksburg was chosen as the place for the twenty-fourth Assembly, to meet on the third Thursday of May, 1884.

RECEPTION AND SPEECHES OF THE NORTHERN DELEGATES.

Saturday morning, the delegates from the Northern Church were introduced to the Assembly by Dr. Bullock, chairman of the Special Committee of Reception. They were a fine body of men, a credit to the Church which sent them. As Dr. Pryor said, in response to their greetings: “If we ourselves had made the selection, we could not have done better.” Judge S. M. Moore, of Chicago, spoke first. He read his address with a warm, yet modest, earnestness and dignity, impressing himself on all as a man of eminent honesty of character, purity of purpose, and kindness of heart. The drift of his speech was, that since the two bodies had established friendly intercourse on the basis of mutual regret and withdrawal of everything regarded as reflecting upon or offensive to the other, their common heritage of doctrine and polity, history and hope, was an argument for mutual

love and help, without strife or interference in each other's separate work and organisation. Had the Church North maintained its purely spiritual functions as sketched in Judge Moore's peroration, teaching through its courts and pulpits "only a crucified Redeemer," there never would have been anything "offensive" to withdraw.

Dr. S. I. Prime, of New York, spoke next with a warm, chaste greeting from the Northern Church to the Southern. After referring to the measures taken to secure fraternal intercourse, he said: "We come to you on equal terms. We meet as Churches and as gentlemen." He said there was no tendency in the Northern Church to the union of the two Assemblies; but only a desire for friendly efficient coöperation. In his person Dr. Prime won the respect and good-will of all.

Dr. S. J. Niccolls, of St. Louis, followed. His address had more of rhetoric and oratory than any of the others, and contained passages of genuine power and beauty. He repeated what the preceding speakers had said about "*everything offensive*" being withdrawn; adding, "If it were not so, we could not stand unabashed before your faces." His allusion to the "explanatory resolution" was somewhat "hard to be understood," to put it mildly. As an explanation it had as much of a sphinx character as the thing explained. Dr. Niccolls's speech sounded like a subtle masked argument for organic union. If it was his intention to put forth a casual feeler to see how the idea would take, he could not have arranged his speech better for the purpose. His figure of the two clouds uniting would have been a fine illustration in an open argument for union, and could be as fittingly used in an argument against it; for often when two clouds meet, swept by different currents, instead of a gentle fertilising rain there comes down a destructive cyclone.

Dr. Humphrey, of Louisville, and Judge Strong, of the Supreme Court, closed the salutation with short addresses, which were closely listened to.

Dr. Pryor responded in a hearty speech, assuring the delegation of the honesty and cordiality of Southern men in all their actions. At the close of the speeches the Assembly adjourned,

and the members gave the Northern guests a courteous, cordial greeting in person. Those who had objected to the terms and manner of the invitation which brought these guests, were as polite and kind as those who had been satisfied with every part of the ceremony. The delegation made a pleasant impression on the Assembly.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEES.

This question was sprung incidentally on the Assembly in connexion with certain overtures on Fraternal Relations.

Saturday morning, when the overtures were presented to the Assembly and assigned to the various committees, Dr. T. D. Witherspoon moved that certain Fraternal Relations overtures be referred to the Committee on Foreign Correspondence. Dr. Smoot favored the reference of all these overtures to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, which, as the eye to look through, the mind to digest, and the hand to arrange, would sift them, and recommend their reference to the proper committees, as the speediest way of distributing them. At the suggestion that Dr. Smoot's plan would be economy of time, Dr. Witherspoon withdrew the motion.

Tuesday afternoon, when the report on Overtures Nos. 44, 47, 49, and 55, and the report on Nos. 39-46 inclusive, concerning Fraternal Correspondence, were taken from the docket for consideration, Messrs. Ponder, Evans, and Rayl presented a minority report, "That these overtures be returned to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, and placed in the hands of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, as being the usual course in such cases, as right that this action should be taken in the premises, and otherwise a seeming discourtesy to the Committee on Correspondence."

A debate of much interest ensued on the motion to adopt the minority report. It was argued by the defenders of the Committee on Bills and Overtures that this was not a matter of courtesy or discourtesy, but of right; that it was the right of this Committee to handle all questions relating to the Constitution of the Church; that correspondence with other Churches was such a

question; that after this Committee had suggested and the Assembly had adopted a method of correspondence, the Committee on Foreign Correspondence carried on the correspondence after this method. Against this it was contended that the action of previous Assemblies was opposed to the Committee's view; and, further, that, admitting the right of the Committee to act upon the overtures relating to a continuance of fraternal relations, it had no right to touch those relating to the method of correspondence. On the vote to refer the Committee on Bills and Overtures was sustained by 76 to 56, and their report being divided, the first part was adopted.

The question thus incidentally raised is an intricate and interesting one. A spirited discussion of the subject has since taken place in one of the Church papers between Dr. Smoot and Dr. Witherspoon: the latter urging that *usage* in our Assembly for twenty years favors the reference of such overtures to the Committee on Foreign Correspondence; Dr. Smoot, on the other side, arguing that the original laws and functions of the Committee on Bills and Overtures are still in force, even though they may have been in some instances disregarded.

The following is a brief synopsis of the law and history of the Committee on which Dr. Smoot based the rightfulness of his Committee's claim to retain and answer the overtures in question.

The first Committee on Bills and Overtures was appointed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1710. It consisted of three members. "They were to *prepare and bring in overtures to the Presbytery, and also take cognizance of whatever may be laid before them and prepare it for Presbytery.*" In 1768, fifty-eight years after its origin, the question was raised as to its *functions*, a member of the Synod asking "whether the Committee on Overtures are to be considered as agents and councils, or shall they be considered as judges?" the "consideration of which is to be deferred to the next Synod." The next Synod, 1769, answered as follows:

"To the question concerning the business and powers of the Committee on Overtures the Synod answers, that the Committee is intended to introduce business into the Synod in an orderly manner; that they

give advice concerning either the matter or manner of business brought to them; but have no power to suppress any that comes regularly before them from inferior judicatories, according to our known rules, or such overtures and petitions as inferior judicatories or particular persons desire to have laid before the Synod."

Their powers and functions remained, as thus defined, until the organisation of the General Assembly in 1789. At that meeting "a committee was appointed to prepare rules for the government of the Assembly in their proceedings." "The committee reported; and the rules having been amended were adopted, and were ordered to be entered in the minutes of the house." These rules are printed (see Baird's Digest); the 3d and 4th are as follows:

"3. The General Assembly, at every meeting, shall appoint a Committee on Bills and Overtures to prepare and digest business for the Assembly. Any person thinking himself aggrieved by the Committee, may complain to the Assembly.

"4. Petitions, references, and appeals, and usually all new propositions tending to general laws, shall be laid before the Committee on Bills and Overtures, before they are offered to the Assembly."

According, then, to the original law on this subject, it is the duty of the Committee on Bills and Overtures "to prepare and digest business;" to "give advice concerning either the matter or manner of papers brought to them;" "to consider all new business tending to general laws."

In 1822, the powers of this Committee were more fully defined in these words:

"Petitions, questions relating to either doctrine or order, and usually all new business tending to general laws, shall be laid before the Committee on Bills and Overtures before they are offered to the Assembly."

The Committee on Bills and Overtures at Lexington felt that, under the provision of these laws, which had never been repealed, they were right in retaining and answering the overtures in question.

It has been well said, both in the Assembly and in the newspapers, that the question would not have arisen, nor would the debate have taken place, but for the difference of opinion in the Assembly as to the *answer* which should be given to three overtures, and the well-known fact that the Committee on Foreign Correspondence would have given a different answer from the one

recommended by the Committee on Bills and Overtures. In dismissing the subject, we venture the suggestion that, as difference of opinion exists in regard to this matter, and as there are obscure and debatable points about the rights and powers of Committees, it would be wise for the next Assembly to appoint a Committee to frame a digest or manual, setting forth clearly the rights, duties, methods of procedure, etc., of all the various Committees. Such a manual could specify, or at least classify, the subjects appropriately belonging to each, and lay down the rules and forms according to which their reports should be drawn up and presented to the house. This manual should also embrace a more complete set of parliamentary principles than are given in the brief "Rules of Order" adopted by the Assembly of 1866.

CHANGING THE STANDARD OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

The subjoined statement of Rev. Dr. J. H. Nall, concerning the origin of this movement, is given as introductory to the subject:

"This question was brought before the General Assembly of 1882, by a memorial of Rev. Dr. C. W. Lane, of Georgia, requesting the appointment of a Committee *ad interim*, to consider certain proposed changes in the course of study prescribed for the training of our candidates for the ministry, and to report thereon to the General Assembly of 1883.

"This movement, we suppose, resulted from the concern on the whole subject of an adequate ministry, which has been deeply felt and widely manifested in the Church. No one can disguise the fact that the supply of ministers has not kept pace with the demand. In one view of the case, it would be distressing if the reverse were true—if the supply should exceed the demand. In the present state of the world, it would be fearful if we could not usefully employ all the available ministers. But looking at the case as it is, there seemed to be serious danger of losing ground from want of ministers. And this appears to have suggested the thought that our requirements for entrance into the ministry are too rigid, and that by providing alternative and equivalent courses of study, together with the division of students into three

classes, according to age, viz., those under nineteen, those between nineteen and twenty-five, and those over twenty-five, many might be led into the ministry who are debarred under the present order.

“The Committee could not agree as to the conclusions which should be presented to the General Assembly. Hence two reports were submitted. Five of the Committee reported against the changes proposed, and suggesting one change which might properly be made. The two remaining members reported not in favor of the changes proposed, but recommending a certain overture to be sent down to the Presbyteries.”

Several Presbyteries overtured the Assembly against changing or “*lowering the standard of ministerial qualifications,*” in opposition to the movement that had been so widely discussed. These overtures (Nos. 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35) from Potosi, Tuscaloosa, Abingdon, Holston, Upper Missouri, and Lexington, were placed in the hands of the Committee on Bills and Overtures. The ground covered by them being substantially the same as that of the *ad interim* Committee’s report, the Assembly’s action on one would decide the fate of the other. The chairman of the Committee had sent the report to the Assembly in the custody of a member of the Committee on Bills and Overtures (the present writer). In this way the Committee learned the drift of the argument, and the conclusions arrived at in it, and their answer to the six overtures on the subject was meant substantially as a recommendation to adopt the *ad interim* Committee’s report as the Assembly’s official interpretation of the clause in question. Hence, when their report was made on Monday morning, they asked that it be docketed and taken up for consideration along with Dr. Nall’s paper. Both were subsequently taken from the docket together and discussed as one. At the end of Dr. Lane’s speech, Mr. Woods of North Carolina asked whether Dr. Lane’s paper was proposed as a substitute for the Committee on Bills and Overtures’ report, or for that of the Committee appointed by the last Assembly. Mr. Flinn, of New Orleans, replied: “If Dr. Lane’s paper is adopted, it will be a substitute for both, for the ground covered by them is the same. The whole subject is now before us, and

the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures will stand or fall with that of Dr. Nall." Later on in the discussion, Tuesday morning, some one suggested that Dr. Lane's proposal should be reversed, and instead of an overture from the Assembly to the Presbyteries, asking for an interpretation of the law, it should more properly be an overture from the Presbyteries, asking the Assembly to interpret the clause. Mr. Flinn replied: "The adoption of the majority report will be an interpretation of the clause of the Constitution referred to; so that an overture to the Assembly was not necessary." The report of the Committee on the six overtures is as follows (Assembly's Minutes, p. 21): "It is considered unnecessary by this General Assembly to make any change in our standard of ministerial education or qualifications."

The following is an outline of the *ad interim* Committee's report, drawn up by Rev. Dr. J. H. Nall, the chairman:

"I. General preliminary principles:

"1. Some general law is necessary, regulating the training of candidates for the ministry.

"2. Such a law must specify what should be required to constitute a 'competency of human learning,' etc.

"3. All cases not conformable to this general law should be provided for as 'exceptional or extraordinary.'

"4. Possibly, with some slight amendment, the present law meets these requirements.

"II. Following these general principles are two conclusions: that the Constitution of the Church should not be changed in the manner proposed; because,

"1. The sentiment of the Church at large does not demand it.

"2. The changes proposed practically involve a reversal of the principles and policy of our Church, as the necessary consequence of which the present 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' courses must exchange places; and this should not be, in view of two facts:

"(a) That other denominations are elevating their standards of education; and

"(b) That in this age we need ministers not less, but more, thoroughly trained.

"3. The scheme proposed is arbitrary, complicated, and impracticable.

"4. That the change is not necessary, even to effect the object contemplated, inasmuch as the introduction into the ministry of men otherwise qualified, who have not pursued the ordinary course of study preparatory thereto, is subject to the discretion of the Presbytery.

"As between the two reports, this is the main issue—the minority maintaining that the provisions as to 'extraordinary cases,' etc., refer only to licensure; while the majority report, resting on all the statements of our Form of Government, insists that the provisions in question apply to ordination also, since licensure is in order to ordination, etc.

"5. In like manner, special provision for 'an English divinity course,' is unnecessary.

"6. The ordinary course for those preparing to 'preach the word,' should rest most directly on the study of that word in the original and inspired form.

"7. The plea in favor of change is based on the assumption that many men would thus be brought into the ministry. Here the proof is wanting.

"III. The report suggests that, to the parts of trial (Form of Government, Chap. VI., Sec. 6, Par. 4) might properly be added: '5. An analysis of one book of the Old Testament and one book of the New Testament each, according to the authorised English version.'

"*In conclusion*, it is suggested that, if the matter should be further investigated, the records of the Church show:

"1. That similar necessities have been felt and urged in the past.

"2. That similar efforts were made to secure some relaxation of the requirements as to preparation.

"3. That such proposals have been uniformly declined.

"4. That other measures were adopted, which, under God's blessing, were successful."

The following is a synopsis of the minority report:

I. The Ordination Section in our Book, in all cases, *without exception*, requires Greek, Hebrew, and Philosophy, as well as Divinity, as conditions precedent to ordination. The design of the framers of that Section was to specify a *minimum* of the requirements essential to ordination, both for ordinary and extraordinary cases of licensure. Hence, in the Ordination Section they omitted three things found in the Licensure Section: (1) The exception of extraordinary cases; (2) The Latin language; (3) The Mathematical course. Besides, it is uncertain what they included under the word Philosophy. If candidates were not masters of Greek, Hebrew, and Philosophy, they were expected to make them up before ordination.

II. The views of only a small number in our Church on this subject are known. Those favoring practical changes are numerous enough to warrant a full consideration of the subject, by sending down to the Presbyteries the following overture:

1. Does the exception "extraordinary cases," found in our Book of Church Order, in Chapter VI., Section 6, relating to *licensure*, also belong to Section 5, relating to *ordination*.

2. If not, shall the Constitution be altered by inserting "except in extraordinary cases" in Section 5, or by adding a paragraph defining in what cases Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the higher secular education generally, may be dispensed with as prerequisites for *ordination*, as well as *licensure* ?

After reading the Committee on Bills and Overtures' report, part of the *ad interim* Committee's report, and Dr. Lane's paper, Mr. Flinn moved the adoption of the two former; Dr. Lane moved his report as a substitute, and opened the debate. He was followed by Messrs. Primrose, S. C. Alexander, Bracken, Davies, Allen Wright, Park, Aiken, Fentress, Hemphill, Woods, White, Flinn, Clark, Campbell, Stratton, Armstrong, Watson, and the Moderator.

At the end of Dr. Pryor's speech the question was loudly called; the vote resulting in the defeat of Dr. Lane's substitute by a vote of 104 to 35. Mr. Flinn then moved the adoption of the Bills and Overtures Committee's report and of Dr. Nall's paper. Some one remarked "that as all the *argument* of this paper had not been read, and it would require too much time to hear it then, it would perhaps be wiser to adopt the conclusions and main substantive propositions of the paper, though no doubt, if the Assembly read the argument, they would endorse it too." In accordance with this suggestion, the following propositions in the report were read, and in connexion with the Committee on Bills and Overtures' report, adopted almost unanimously, viz. :

"That the Constitution of the Church should not be changed in the manner proposed.

"The proposed change of the Constitution is not necessary, even to effect the object contemplated, *i. e.*, to open the way to the ministry for men otherwise qualified, who have not pursued the ordinary course of study preparatory thereto; inasmuch as this is a point which, so far as it should be an open question, is left to the discretion and decision of the Presbytery.

"The Presbyteries already possess the constitutional powers in question, both for *licensure* and for *ordination*."

The subject came up again Friday night on the report from the Committee on Bills and Overtures, in answer to Overture No. 31, from the Presbytery of Athens, asking the Assembly to define what is meant in our standards by the phrase, "*extraordinary cases.*" The Committee recommended the following: "In answer to the request from Athens Presbytery to define '*extraordinary cases*' this Assembly refers to its action already taken on the report of the Committee appointed by the Atlanta Assembly to consider Dr. Lane's paper on this subject." The mind of the Assembly had already been expressed in its action substantially adopting Dr. Nall's report, which declared that no definition could be given of "*extraordinary cases,*" from the very nature of the case, and that the decision of this question as to what made a case extraordinary, was designedly left with the Presbyteries; hence the overturists could learn the judgment of the court in the matter by referring to its decision already given.

Dr. Lane moved as a substitute to this answer an overture to the Presbyteries for a definition of "*exceptional cases.*" In support of his motion he urged that the language was so indefinite that he never could find any one who could explain the meaning of this term, and it needed explanation, so that any minister could readily define it without having to refer to the Presbyteries for an explanation. He insisted that it was best to have the words defined fully, and by the Presbyteries, so that there could be no mistake or doubtful interpretation in the premises. He did not want the Assembly's interpretation at this late hour, but a calm and thoughtful definition by the Presbyteries. He also insisted, in reply to others, that this was a different action in the premises from that just before determined by the Assembly.

To this it was replied that this question had already been settled by the Assembly, and that no definition of extraordinary cases could be made, without destroying the very purpose of the provision.

Dr. Junkin moved that the substitute be laid on the table, in view of the reasons above given. This motion was then carried, and the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures was adopted.

Of course it was a parliamentary blunder to move the adoption of the Committee's report after the substitute to it was laid on the table; for "when a motion to table is carried affirmatively, the principal motion, together with all the motions subsidiary and incidental connected with it, is removed from before the Assembly" (Cushing's Manual). This was neither the intention of Dr. Junkin, nor of the Assembly in voting for his motion, as is shown from the nearly unanimous (though unparliamentary) adoption of the Committee's answer.

As the report was really, though unintentionally, tabled in this way, the Assembly's action was technically nothing, and hence no mention of it is found in the Assembly's Minutes of Friday night's proceedings.

A careful study of the *ad interim* Committee's very able document would, perhaps, had prevented this long debate. It should have been read in full, or printed, before it was acted on. The reading was omitted to economise time, but it resulted in loss of time. The report embodies substantially every argument made in favor of it, and meets fully every objection urged against it in the discussion. The debate was exhaustive and exhausting, occupying nearly two days. Some of the members seemed to have speeches "in their hearts as a burning fire, shut up in their bones," that had to come out. Thirteen speakers supported the Committee's report, and seven favored the substitute, at least that part of it which proposed a reference of the matter to the Presbyteries. Some of the ablest men in the Assembly desired to speak, but the question was called before they obtained the floor.

The substitute proposed to send down to the Presbyteries, (1) A *categorical inquiry*, concerning the interpretation and application of a clause in our law; and, (2) A *hypothetical question* involving two alternatives, should a negative answer be given to the first inquiry, viz.: (a) Shall the clause referred to be *inserted* in another Section of the law? or, (b) Shall a new paragraph be *added* to the Book specifying what requirements for ordination—and under what circumstances—may be omitted? This complex question is reducible under two heads:

(1) A question of constitutional interpretation;

(2) A question of constitutional amendment.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the debate should take a wide sweep. In spite of the frequent disclaimers on the part of those who supported Dr. Lane's substitute, disavowing all desire to "lower the standards," the speakers on the other side insisted that this would be the logical and speedy result of the measure proposed; hence they laid themselves out to check this apparent movement. We believe it was the unqualified judgment of all who voted against the substitute, and of many who voted for it in part, that the third clause would necessarily result in lowering the scholarship of our ministry. Several members of the Assembly who made no speech on the subject have favored us with their views on this point, confirming our statement.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

This report was presented by the Chairman, Dr. T. D. Witherspoon, on Thursday and adopted on Friday. It makes an encouraging showing, and contains some important recommendations. Two proofs of growing interest and more fervency of prayer on the part of the Church, and of God's blessing upon it, are found in the larger contributions to the cause this year than last, and in the increase of candidates for the ministry. In view of these facts the Assembly adopted the recommendation that an effort be made to raise at least \$21,000 for the Executive Committee of Education to carry on this work. This amount was apportioned among the Presbyteries, the object aimed at being to give more definiteness and system to the effort to raise the needed \$21,000.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

Dr. J. B. Stratton, Chairman, presented this report Thursday; it was adopted in the afternoon of the same day (Assembly Minutes, 33-35). The subjects considered by it are the Annual Reports from Columbia and Union Seminaries and of the Tuska-loosa Institute for the Training of Colored Ministers. These were all very gratifying. Columbia Seminary, which had been closed two years, opened in September, 1882, with five Professors and

twenty-eight students. The finances and Library of the Seminary were reported as in good condition and rapidly growing; over \$17,000 having been added to the endowment fund this year through the energy of Dr. J. B. Mack, the Financial Agent, while the Library contains about 23,000 volumes. The death of the loved and venerated Dr. Howe was officially announced, and the Assembly, on the Committee's recommendation, adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That this Assembly hereby expresses its profound grief at the death of the Rev. George Howe, D. D., which occurred on the 15th of April, 1883, and records its high appreciation of the eminent services which, as a teacher in the Theological Seminary at Columbia for the long period of fifty-two years, as a minister of the gospel, and as a Christian man, distinguished by everything which is 'lovely and of good report,' he has rendered to the Church and to the world. For the rich endowments, both of nature and of grace, with which he was gifted, we render thanks to God, and while lamenting the loss of them, would gratefully reflect that though withdrawn from the field of labor himself, his works still follow him, and that though dead, through the lips of hundreds trained by him for the Christian ministry, 'he yet speaketh.'"

Union Seminary reported four Professors and fifty-six students, the finances in sound condition, and 12,000 volumes in the Library. Both institutions are striving to increase their Libraries and endowments, and add new Professors to the Faculty. The Columbia Alumni and Directors are making an important move for annual lecture courses, and for the erection of a large fire-proof Library building. The Smyth fund will soon be large enough for its revenue to be used for library or lectureship purposes, or perhaps both. Attention should be widely called to this fund as a nucleus which can be speedily augmented and made of great service to the Seminary and to the Church. We need a system of annual endowed lectureships at both our Seminaries as a help to the students and as a stimulus to the literary activity of our ministers. Some such definite incitement would transform capacity into actual work, furnishing valuable contributions to the various departments of Theology, Criticism, Church History, and Apologetics.

The Assembly's action on the Tuscaloosa Institute evinces a lively interest in the work of training colored ministers for the

negroes. Dr. Stillman's address on the subject presented points worth noting. The negroes are a foreign race on our home soil. Our Church has a fine record in her past work for these people, and a roll of noble names who gave themselves to labor for them. While our own ministers should preach to them as much as possible, yet the greatest good we can do them is to train ministers of their own race, and in this way help them to that point of intelligence and power, at which they can stand alone, not only self-supporting but furnishing a missionary army for Africa. Doubts about their capacity for training are disappearing, and they make gratifying progress in doctrinal and biblical study. Early errors of speech are the main difficulties to remove. Baptist and Methodist students come to Tuscaloosa, and the doctrines of our Catechism are thus spreading among them in these Churches. The religious character of the students and their zeal and efficiency in teaching Sunday-schools and preaching to the colored churches, at Tuscaloosa during term time, and in their Presbyteries during vacation, are very commendable.

The coöperation of the Church, the care and zeal of the Presbyteries in seeking out suitable candidates were earnestly desired.

The speech was listened to with great interest by the Assembly, and its sentiments were those of the body, as shown by the resolution which was adopted in regard to the organisation of colored churches.

HOME MISSIONS.

Wednesday morning Dr. T. R. Welch presented his report as Chairman of the Committee on Home Missions. It is an encouraging and stimulating document. The importance of this work is urged with solemn emphasis as the foundation of the Church's progress. The proposal of the Executive Committee to raise during the current year at least \$100,000 for Home Missions was cordially endorsed, and they were authorised to apportion the amount among the coöperating Presbyteries, requesting them to raise their respective quotas by apportionment among the churches. This measure seems to be proper and wise; if carried out, it will secure contributions from a greater number of churches and increase the amount given by those already contributing.

The most interesting and important item in the report is the recommendation to establish a bureau of information for vacant churches and unemployed ministers. Such an agency will be of great value. The Scotch Churches find it very useful. The Free Church employs an agent to keep a list of vacant churches and ministers without charge, with all necessary data concerning each for reference.

On Wednesday night a meeting was held in the interest of this cause.

RESIGNATION OF DR. MCILWAIN AND ELECTION OF HIS SUCCESSOR.

Dr. McIlwaine having offered his resignation as Secretary, and having accepted the Presidency of Hampden Sidney College, the Presbyteries of Lexington and Paris overtured the Assembly to use all proper means to retain him. The Committee unanimously endorsed the petition of these overtures, and recommended his reëlection. The consideration of this part of the report came up on Friday morning. After some discussion, an amendment offered by Col. Fitzgerald, a Trustee of Hampden Sidney, to accept Dr. McIlwaine's resignation, was adopted.

Dr. McIlwaine made an earnest speech, stating that he could not conscientiously retain his position, because he thought it did not demand the whole time and energies of one man, and that the work of Home and Foreign Missions could be easily conducted by a single Secretary. He thought the Assembly ought to consolidate the offices as a matter of economy.

The Assembly felt it would be wiser to continue both, and accordingly elected Dr. J. N. Craig, of Holly Springs, Miss., Secretary of Home Missions. A wise choice; he is the right man in the right place.

THE PARK CASE, AND ORGANISATION OF A COLORED CHURCH.

The action of the Assembly on Overtures Nos. 15 and 16, from the Synod of Mississippi and the Presbytery of Louisiana, on the Park case, and No. 17, from the Presbytery of West Hanover, respecting the organisation of a Colored Church, though involving

a constitutional question, may be properly noticed here. (See Minutes, p. 49.)

The Committee on Bills and Overtures' report, drawn by Dr. W. T. Hall, of Virginia, was unanimously adopted. The mind of the body was clearly expressed by Dr. Hall's speech, which was to this effect:

“This subject is brought before the Assembly in three ways:

“(1) First, by a memorial from the Presbytery of West Over, asking the Assembly to organise, *at once*, all the colored ministers and churches under its care into a separate and independent Synod. The petition is based on two grounds. The fact is urged that it was never contemplated to have negro churches or their officers as substantial component parts of our Southern Church. The scheme contemplates a subordinate and provisional *status* for the negroes until they were sufficiently numerous and well trained to stand by themselves. Again, a number of grave dangers are indicated. The purity and peace of our churches, it is urged, are threatened. Now to this memorial the Committee recommend the Assembly to answer, directing the Synods to erect colored Presbyteries, with a view to the establishing of a colored independent Synod, *as soon as this can be done consistently with a wise regard to the stability and growth of the colored churches*. To organise a separate Colored Church *now* would be premature.

“(2) By an overture from the Synod of Mississippi, asking the Assembly to decide as to the *constitutionality of the plan of 1867 and 1874*, under which the Park case arose. To this it recommends as an answer that *it is inexpedient to open that question*. The plan of the Assembly scheme, finally adopted, after much consideration, was the best that could be devised under the circumstances. It was, perhaps, never regarded by any as strictly constitutional. It was simply a provisional scheme to meet an emergency not foreseen by the framers of the Constitution. But it has worked well enough. As far as there has been earnest effort to put it in operation, we have seen fruit. To unsettle it now would be disastrous.

“(3.) By a complaint from the Presbytery of Louisiana against

the decision of the Atlanta Assembly in the Park case. To this also it is answered, that the question had better not be opened again. It is no doubt unfortunate that Park was induced to cast a vote in one of our Presbyteries; but having done so, and the Assembly having approved it on the ground of the parity of the ministry, the matter had better be allowed to rest. The Presbytery of Montgomery recently received an ordained colored minister from the Northern Presbyterian Church. The question of his standing was raised before the vote. The understanding was that he had all the rights of a presbyter. Thus the matter must rest for the brief period necessary to get ready to set them apart as a separate Church.

“It is greatly to be desired that a spirit of impatience that seems to threaten our work among the negroes shall be restrained. The papers referred to in these remarks *involve the very existence of the work*. We cannot afford to turn this work over to others. Paul said he must be ‘a debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise.’ To have fruit among all classes of society is a holy ambition. The negroes also need just that training that the Presbyterian Church gives.”

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Dr. J. Bardwell, Chairman of the Foreign Missions Committee, in presenting his report, made the gratifying statement that “the general condition of this department of the Church work was never more encouraging.”

The main items in the resolutions are:

- (1) A commendation of the diligence and efficiency of the Executive Committee.
- (2) An exhortation to the Presbyteries to consider God’s call to go forward, and an injunction to strive to increase the churches’ gifts; and
- (3) As means to these ends, the observance of the day of prayer for missions, regular collections, and an effort for a wider circulation of the *Missionary*, were urged.

Proposals were afloat to consolidate the Home and Foreign Missions work under one head, practically retiring Dr. Wilson;

but the Committee and the Assembly voted unanimously against this change.

The recommendation to allow the Executive Committee \$1,200 a year to employ such clerical aid as Dr. Wilson might need, was adopted. The Committee has since employed a clerk at a salary of only \$200, showing that the Assembly's confidence in their conscientious wisdom and prudence in using the Church's money was not misplaced. Dr. Wilson himself draws only \$2,500 of his \$3,000 salary—a characteristic act of this noble Christian veteran. As Dr. Bullock well said, "He is worth far more to the Church than all the salary he draws." His long and valuable services entitle him to honor. One of God's greatest blessings to the Church is the gift of consecrated heroic men. Theories may be very fine, but of far more value is the character to energise them, the heart and soul to give them life, and make them bloom in grand results. A man is a greater power than a plan.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS.

The action of the Assembly on this subject was in two forms : 1st. A number of Presbyteries overtured the Lexington Assembly to modify the Atlanta action. 2d. Eight Presbyteries to conduct correspondence by letter.

The subject was introduced before the Assembly in two other forms : 1st. Four Presbyteries—South Alabama, Eastern Texas, Athens, and Indian—sent up brief overtures (Nos. 45, 52, 53, and 56), informing the Assembly of their approval of the Atlanta action, and of their satisfaction in view of the establishment of fraternal relations. These overtures did not ask for any action, and the Committee on Bills and Overtures' report to this effect was received as information. (2) Overture No. 48 from Louisville Presbytery, asked the Assembly to prepare a pastoral letter on the subject of fraternal relations and organic union. The Committee on Bills and Overtures recommended that the Assembly appoint a Committee to draft the letter called for. This report was presented Friday night, but after a brief discussion was laid on the table.

The report of the Committee on overtures Nos. 44, 47, 49,

and 55, asking for a modification of the Atlanta action, was presented Monday morning, and is as follows :

“While recognising the constitutional right of the Presbyteries to protest against the Assembly’s actions, yet

“First. Inasmuch as the sentiment of the majority of the Church seems to approve of the object had in view by the Atlanta Assembly : and

“Second. Inasmuch as a majority of the Presbyteries regard the establishment of fraternal relations on the basis of the Atlanta proposal as a settled fact, which it would be unwise to disturb : therefore this Assembly considers it unnecessary to take further action.”

The report on the eight overtures, Nos. 39–46 inclusive, asking that all correspondence should be conducted by letter, was read at the same time, as follows : “*Resolved*, That all correspondence with other ecclesiastical bodies shall be conducted by letter.” Both were received and simply docketed.

When taken from the docket for consideration, the minority report presented by Messrs. W. M. Ponder, of Arkansas, J. A. Rayl, of Knoxville, and Rev. R. R. Evans, of Memphis Presbytery, was presented. The discussion of this minority report, involving the rights and powers of Committees, has already been given. At its close, Mr. T. M. Barron, of Missouri, moved, as an amendment to Mr. J. Adger Smyth’s motion, to adopt the Committee’s report, the division of the question, and the adoption of the first part of the report in answer to overtures Nos. 44, 47, 49, and 55. This motion was immediately carried without debate, and by a nearly unanimous vote, only two, as far as known, voting in the negative. The Committee’s report had been printed, and was in the hands of members of the Assembly all day Tuesday before it was taken up for action. Ample opportunity for studying it was given. Its statements are brief, and it was therefore clearly understood. Under these circumstances, the facts and principles embodied in the paper were heartily endorsed and emphasised by the nearly unanimous vote of the Assembly.

After the adoption of this report, Dr. Bullock moved as a substitute to the report recommending correspondence by letter, the following : “While it is our rule to conduct correspondence by letter, yet, under present extraordinary circumstances, and to avoid

the appearance of discourtesy, this Assembly deems it proper that for the present delegates be commissioned to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America."

Dr. Bullock supported his substitute earnestly. The debate which followed was very able, but our limited space obliges us to pass it all over. Drs. Smoot, Bracken, Davies, Bardwell, Alexander Martin, H. M. White, and Mr. J. Adger Smyth, all vigorously maintained that correspondence should be by letter. The writer of this article, and Rev. W. C. Clark and Col. Brooke stood by them. Rev. J. A. McKee, Rev. John S. Park, Dr. T. D. Witherspoon, Rev. Z. B. Graves, and Mr. J. H. Tyler, supported Dr. Bullock.

In the midst of the debate on Wednesday afternoon, Prof. Hemphill, in order to secure unanimity, offered a substitute to send just one more delegation. In offering this substitute he said it was essential for us to be at one among ourselves. Love for others could not justify us in introducing discord among ourselves. There would be bitter feelings if either side gained the victory for their views. The question involved was not one of principle, but of method; and for the sake of harmony, he hoped there would be a compromise. The vote on this substitute was soon reached, resulting in its adoption by 113 to 23. A Committee of seven (Prof. Hemphill, chairman) was then appointed to perfect its phraseology. It was presented next day, as follows:

"That the usual method of correspondence by letter between this General Assembly and other ecclesiastical bodies shall hereafter include the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; with the exception, however, that delegates be appointed by this Assembly to these bodies at their next ensuing sessions in 1883 and 1884 respectively, to convey our most cordial Christian and fraternal salutations; these delegates being instructed to state to them this method of correspondence hereafter by letter, as adopted by this body, with the hope that it may meet with their co-operation; and that the special attention of the Presbyteries be called to this action of the General Assembly, for an expression of their opinion on the mode of correspondence for the future."

Ten members received permission to have their reasons for voting in the negative recorded on the Minutes.

This substitute prevented a square vote on the two modes of correspondence. The expressed views of many prominent defenders of the Atlanta action, and the fact that the substitute adopted by five-sixths of the Assembly, endorses the letter mode of correspondence as proper, and as our Church's settled policy, leaves no room to doubt that, as a naked issue, the letter method would have been adopted almost unanimously. The Assembly felt that the circumstances called for an exception to the rule for this year.

The adoption of this substitute indicated no desire to change our plan of correspondence. The call for the Presbyteries' special attention to the subject, was in no sense meant by the author, or by the Assembly, as an overture to them to consider the question of change, any more than a similar call of attention in the action on Education or Home Missions would be.

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES AND ORGANIC UNION.

An overture from the Presbytery of St. Louis (No. 51), asked the Assembly to appoint a Committee to confer with a similar one from the Northern Assembly (should one be appointed) concerning the organisation of three or four Provincial Assemblies out of the two Churches—the Presbyterial basis of representation, the powers of jurisdiction over their constituencies in these bodies to remain as now. They were each to have an equal number of commissioners, meeting in triennial or quadrennial *General Council*, to consider cases of appeal from each Provincial Assembly concerning disputed interpretations of the Constitution of the Church. The General Council was to have only advisory powers in matters pertaining to the general interests of the Church. The answer to this overture was: "This Assembly judges that the providence of God does not indicate the time to be yet ripe for such action." The genius of Presbyterianism may some day find its logical and natural development in a grander climax than a *General Council* of all the Presbyterians on one continent; but the Assembly's answer was eminently wise. The fit time has not yet come to begin the movement as a co-operative one between these two bodies. This idea is not a new

one. It has stirred the minds of some of our greatest men, North and South, and is at this day shaping itself into a dream or hope of a grand *Œcumenical Presbyterian Council of the World*. Possibly a coming age will witness its realisation in the General Assembly of the world convened at Jerusalem—the mighty tree, whose seed was the Apostolic Council which met there over eighteen hundred years ago.

An overture from the Presbytery of Upper Missouri (No. 54) asked that steps be taken to unite with the Church North in the formation of Provincial Assemblies. The wording of this paper misled the Committee on Bills and Overtures. Their report on it as a move for organic union did not, as Dr. Boude informed the Assembly, correctly represent the intention of his Presbytery, which was to propose measures looking to union and coöperation with the Church North *in the formation of Provincial Assemblies*. The *terminus ad quem* was not organic union, but Provincial Assemblies. The overture was answered as follows: "This Assembly declines to appoint a Committee for the purpose stated in the overture, as our principles are essentially different from the Northern Church; and therefore the idea of organic union cannot be entertained." In the brief discussion of this report, three amendments were proposed. The first making it read: "It is inexpedient to appoint a Committee for the purpose stated." The second: "This Assembly declines to appoint a Committee for the purpose stated in the overture, *for the present*." The third: "This General Assembly declines to appoint a Committee for the purpose stated." The paper was adopted in this last form.

The Assembly's answers to both these papers were consistent with its reply to another overture (No. 50) from St. Louis Presbytery, asking for the "rejection of propositions looking to organic union with the Church North, because of the widely *divergent* and *contradictory* views of the two bodies on several most important and vital doctrines; so that organic union would involve on our part a surrender of principle and a recession from our historic testimony to the truth, for which there is neither occasion, excuse, nor palliation." The Assembly's answer was: "*The question of organic union is not to be entertained as a subject before the Church.*"

Some dissatisfaction has been expressed because the Assembly did not embrace the opportunity afforded by the overtures from Upper Missouri and St. Louis Presbyteries, of restating the distinctive principles of our Church, and the differences between the two Assemblies, which constitute the bar to organic union. Some think that the uneasiness in many minds (caused by the Atlanta action) for the integrity of these principles, and the loyalty of our Church to them, made it the duty of our Assembly to reaffirm and plant the Church more firmly upon them. All this was thought of and fully discussed in Committee and in private conference with leading men of various shades of opinion. Such a statement was determined upon at one time, and was finally abandoned for reasons given below. We give an outline of the proposed detailed statement of obstacles which was privately endorsed by leading "fraternalists and anti-fraternalists," as they are called. To the St. Louis paper the following was proposed: "In response to the overture from the Presbytery of St. Louis, anent organic union, this Assembly judges such union to be impossible, not only for the reason assigned by said Presbytery, but because the divergence between the two Churches, as to the exclusively spiritual functions of the kingdom of Christ, has been proclaimed by the Northern Assembly '*an insuperable obstacle*' to organic union."

The following is a synopsis of the proposed answer to the overture from Upper Missouri: "The union of the two Assemblies is impossible, because of—

"1st. Fundamental differences as to the functions of the Church of Christ.

"2d. Our Books of Church Order and Discipline are different.

"3rd. The change in our executive agencies would work evil.

"4th. There is a contrariety in theological opinion and biblical criticism.

"5th. The absorption of our Church into a larger and richer body, would be sure to work us injury.

"6th. Union with the Church North would be certain to cause division among ourselves, which would be schism, and this is sin.

"7th. The act of the Northern Church, in embodying in their

Digest the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, in the Walnut Street Church case (Watson-Johns) as the rule to govern the property of the Church."

The above were almost, if not quite, the unanimous views of the Assembly. They were not expressed, for the following reasons :

1. Such a statement had been made so often, and the points were so well known, that it was now unnecessary.

2. The Assembly, in answer to overtures (Nos. 44, 47, etc.), had already stated that our Church, in entering upon friendly relations with the Church North, meant to do so on the *unmodified basis of the Atlanta proposal*, "*receding from no principle*;" therefore standing on the same old ground.

3. In answer to overture No. 51, the Assembly had just declared *that the question of organic union was not even to be entertained as a subject before the Church*. The reply was made more emphatic by its brevity, implying that the reasons were too patent and well known to need recital.

4. It was felt that, even if it were desirable, the Assembly had neither the time nor the necessary documents to make a complete detailed statement that would be satisfactory to all.

JUDICIAL CASES.

There were two judicial cases before the Assembly, viz. :

1st. The appeal of Mr. W. S. Turner against the Synod of Georgia, which was tried by a Commission, and the judgment of the Synod sustained.

2d. The appeal of Rev. W. McKay from an action of the Synod of Georgia. Both the legal points and the merits of this case involve interesting questions. The facts are : In 1881, the Presbytery of Macon adopted the following paper : "*Resolved*, That from this time Presbytery will regard any use of Sabbath railway trains by its members, to fill preaching appointments or for any other purpose or on any other plea, as an infraction of the Fourth Commandment, and will deal with it accordingly." Mr. McKay complained to Synod, alleging this action to be unscriptural and injurious to his rights. Synod dismissed the "*com-*

plaint," as not coming under that term, as defined in Rules of Discipline, Chap. 13., Sec. 4. The judgment of Synod was reversed, and the case remanded, with directions that the question be tried on its merits.

Col. Mynatt defended Synod's action, saying that a complaint can be taken only from a "*decision*;" that Mr. McKay complained of what he called a "legislative act," but what was really a mere "admonition," which Presbytery had a right to utter, and against which complaint could not lie. There had been no "decision" to complain of, and Mr. McKay should wait till Presbytery tried to enforce its action before he complained. He was not aggrieved or injured, and hence had no right of "complaint." If Mr. McKay thought Presbytery's action irregular, he should have had it corrected through Synod's power to review and control the proceedings of the court below.

Rev. Dr. D. O. Davies (chairman of the Judicial Committee), Rev. J. L. Rogers and Rev. R. S. McAllister replied, showing clearly that a complaint can lie against any act or deliverance of a court, judicial or *in thesi*; that these acts are "*decisions*," in such a sense that when a man feels aggrieved by them, as detrimental to truth, or injurious to himself, he can *complain*, and the upper court must hear the complaint and decide whether there is a real grievance.

Dissent has been expressed from the Assembly's action in this case; but it was clearly constitutional. The law declares: "Any member of the Church, submitting to its authority, may complain against *every species of decision* except where a party against whom a decision is rendered takes his appeal against it;" which means that when a party in a judicial trial appeals from the verdict of the court, he is then debarred from complaining; but in all other cases, judicial or otherwise, a complaint may lie. The power of review and control carries with it the *necessity* of the superior court deciding on the regularity of everything done by the lower; and a "*complaint*" of any action whatever is virtually a special call of attention by the complainant to some particular proceeding as irregular, wrong, or grievous to himself. A complaint particularises and emphasises some action of the lower

courts as demanding the scrutiny and judgment of the higher, and by so doing increases the already existing obligation to examine into its legality. All non-appealable questions or decisions can be carried up by complaint. It would be a dangerous principle that complaints could only lie against "judicial cases." Mr. McKay's Presbytery said: "If you ride on a Sunday, we will punish you." Mr. McKay, thinking they meant what they said, complained. This decision was Presbytery's interpretation of the Sabbath law, which, *as thus interpreted*, was to be the basis of a trial in case Mr. McKay went contrary to it. Whether the action was right or wrong, the complaint should have been heard.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

I. An amendment to Chap. IV., Sec. II., Par. 6, empowering foreign evangelists to ordain "other evangelists," was sent down to the Presbyteries. (Assembly Minutes, p. 60, should read *Par. 6*, instead of *Par. 7*.) Dr. Bullock offered as a substitute for the Committee on Bills and Overtures' report, that Drs. Peck and Lefevre be appointed a committee to report to the next Assembly. This substitute was vigorously supported by Dr. Bullock, and also by Dr. J. L. Wilson and Rev. E. Lane, of Brazil, who were invited to give their views. The drift of their arguments was, that the committee would understand and digest the matter more thoroughly than the Presbyteries, because they had carefully studied it. A new chapter on the evangelist was needed. The granting of such power to inexperienced young missionaries would be dangerous. It might be abused and mislead the heathen as to the fundamental principles of Presbyterian Government, and would develop into Prelacy or Congregationalism. This power was unnecessary for the practical work of missions, as the power ordaining could and should always be exercised jointly.

On the other side, Dr. Alexander Martin, Rev. J. W. Flinn, Mr. J. A. Smyth, and Rev. G. Nash Morton, (missionary from Brazil, who was invited to speak,) urged that the question had now been before the Church for seven years. Our ablest men in one committee after another had failed to agree in their views. Decided steps ought to be taken to bring this subject to a

speedy issue. A new committee would only bring in rival reports, as this very Assembly had witnessed. The necessities of the mission work demanded a settlement of the question. The Presbyteries must finally act, if the law was to be changed, and all that had been said, or was yet to be said, on the subject could be brought before them, so that their action might be intelligent. The missionaries should act together when possible, as a matter of expediency. But their delegated powers as evangelists made each one a *quasi condensed* Presbytery.

The matter was remitted to the Presbyteries as the shortest and safest way to bring it to a conclusion, without the Assembly committing itself to either of the conflicting views that have been presented in various numbers of this REVIEW. It is to be hoped that the Presbyteries will appoint able committees to consider the subject, and that all who have written on it will lay before them all the data necessary to bring about a wise decision, whether it be to adopt the proposed amendment, or add a new chapter on the evangelist.

II. An amendment in answer to an overture from Mecklenburg Presbytery was unanimously adopted without debate, to limit the Assembly's power to "correspond, coöperate, and go into organic union with other Churches," by making it necessary for two-thirds of the Presbyteries to agree to the terms of the relationship in question before the matter was settled. The proposed amendment, of course, is not meant to prohibit the Assembly from replying to a simple message or communication from another body touching some specific matter that requires immediate attention. The object is to limit the Assembly in concluding formal treaties or agreements of comity with other bodies, just as its power (in the same paragraph) is limited in taking other bodies under its jurisdiction.

Changes in the Constitution can only be made with the consent of a majority of the Presbyteries; and as new relationships with other Churches may logically result in constitutional changes, the Presbyteries should have a controlling voice in determining them. Besides, such a law will lead to a careful study of the history, polity, and doctrines of other bodies with whom official relations are proposed.

In making treaties or in conducting regular official negotiations the Assembly is simply the agent of a sovereign, and that sovereign is the whole Church, whose collective voice is expressed in the Presbyteries. The treaty belongs rightfully to the sovereign, and unless the agent's functions in this matter be limited, some future Assembly, under a rash momentary impulse, may commit the Church to measures which she would not endorse, and which might result in great confusion and strife. It is the Assembly's business as agent to conduct correspondence, etc., but it is for the *whole* Church to decide with whom, and on what terms, it shall be conducted.

III. *All* the Presbyteries were requested to send up *distinct* answer to the following question: "Shall Chapter VII. of the Form of Government be amended by adding a third Section to read as follows: 'Amendments to the Confession of Faith, and to the Catechisms of this Church, may be made only upon the recommendation of one Assembly, the concurrence of at least three-fourths of the Presbyteries, and the enactment of the same by a subsequent Assembly.'" This proposal was almost unanimously adopted. Speeches were made in favor by Rev. Messrs. N. M. Woods, J. W. Flinn, S. B. Campbell, Col. Aiken, Judge Armstrong, and Rev. Drs. Bracken and Smoot. Rev. T. P. Epes wanted two-thirds majority in three-fourths of the Presbyteries in order to amend the Confession. The drift of the discussion was that the Confession is amendable; the mode of amending should be made difficult; that we should be especially conservative in matters binding the conscience, making changes only when the sentiment in favor thereof is nearly universal; that the Presbyteries, as the prime law-making bodies, had chief control in such questions. Messrs. Woods and Flinn held that the adopting act of 1788 was still in force, and that we already have a law for amending the Confession.

Several remarks are proper here:

1. There are always five classes in voting on proposed amendments: (1) Those who vote "Yes." (2) Those who vote "No." (3) Those who vote indeterminately by suggesting something else than the distinct proposal. (4) Some *fail to vote*. (5) Some

fail, by accident or carelessness, to send up their vote to the Assembly. Of these, only two classes are generally counted, viz., those voting either "Yes" or "No." The others are left out as *against* the amendment, which is neither correct nor fair. When there is neither a constitutional majority for or against an amendment, the Presbyteries *not* voting, or voting indeterminately, should be ordered to vote, and there should be time enough taken to secure a categorical answer from all the Presbyteries. Perhaps a still better rule would be to count the *silent* voter with the majority, and leave the *indeterminate* votes altogether out of the count.

2. The rule for amending the Confession, which was made part of the "adopting act" of 1788, was never formally inserted in any of our printed standards.

3. The mode of amending the Confession is a provision of *order*, and it is no part of our creed. It belongs to our system of polity or government—not to our doctrine. The matter of our creed is eternal Scripture truth; the formulation of it, or modification of its form, is a governmental act.

4. The provision of 1788 has never been repealed. If, therefore, the Confession be amendable, under any specific constitutional rule, it is this old one. And as such a law is a provision of order, its place is in our "Book of Order."

5. To transfer this rule from the adopting act of 1788 to our Book, *or to amend it*, requires a vote of only a majority of the Presbyteries.

6. If the proposed three-fourths rule, which is virtually an amendment to the old unrepealed two-thirds rule, is not adopted, the Confession will remain amendable under the adopting act. For, while not incorporated into our present law, the fact that a different mode of amending was rejected by the framers of our new Book, proves that it was their intention to let the old law remain in force. No creed or symbol framed by man can be changeless. The power of creed-formation or adoption, and of creed-amendment, go together and imply each other. The Church is not the creator of the facts on which her creed rests, but her creed is her *interpretation* of these facts, and with varying viewpoints and increasing light it may change.

7. The repeal of the "Deceased Wife's Sister" clause is already a virtually accomplished fact. The next Assembly will be constitutionally bound to count the votes of Presbyteries on this subject under the old unrepealed two-thirds rule. More than two-thirds of the Presbyteries have voted for its repeal. They did so on two assumptions: (1) The Confession is amendable *from the very nature of the case*. (2) It was taken for granted that it was amendable according to the specific mode of 1788.

8. The law concerning the mode of amending the Confession should not be made amendable in the same way that the other parts of the Book of Order are capable of change; but in the same way that the Confession itself is amendable.

Our work as reviewer has been very imperfectly done. The Lexington Assembly was worthy of a better pen and a stronger hand to state and weigh its actions. As Dr. Pryor said, in response to the vote of thanks for his justice and kindness as Moderator, "There never has been, since the first Assembly, a more important one than this, and one intrusted with more important duties, which have been well performed by a conscientious body of men." The most important questions were settled in such a way as to win the endorsement of the Church. The Assembly was a conservative, yet a wisely progressive body of men. In all the great questions discussed, the leaders represented the vigor and vim of youth, the strength of manhood, and the wisdom of age. It was a busy Assembly. It was a body of *representatives*, who felt it was their duty to work for the interests of the Church and the honor of her King.

J. WM. FLINN.