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The PRESBYTERIAN SURVEY

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JULY, 1924

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General Assembly Notes

R. E. MAGILL, *Secretary*

THE ASSEMBLY of 1924 can well be called a progressive—conservative body. The conclusions reached indicate that the members were forward-looking men and that they were not afraid to vote their convictions when the issue was between progress and a backward step.

When the issue touched matters involving the stand of the Church on the fundamentals of faith there was no debate and not a voice was raised in defense of the so-called Modernist views.

The deliverance of the Assembly of 1886, touching the question of Evolution was reaffirmed. This was prepared by Dr. G. B. Strickler and others, and was a strong reply to Darwinism which was rampant in those days, and affirmed the Church's stand on the account of man's origin as found in the Bible.

The Situation in the Foreign Field

The numerous overtures about the situation in the Foreign Mission Field and the presence of Missionaries who represented widely divergent views as to methods and policies promised to precipitate a lengthy and bitter debate on the floor of the Assembly. Wise counsel prevailed however, and the whole matter was referred to a special committee composed of one representative from each Synod.

This Committee sat for twenty hours and missed most of the Assembly sessions in an effort to get all the facts and formulate a report which would satisfy all parties and prevent a long debate on the Assembly floor. The members of this committee came to a unanimous conclusion and presented a report which was adopted by the Assembly without a dissenting vote, and accompanied with the singing of the doxology and prayers of thanksgiving for the harmonious solution of a perplexing question.

Recognition of Women's Work

A number of overtures were before the Assembly asking that the action of last year placing women on the Executive Committees be rescinded. These overtures had stalwart supporters on the Assembly floor and a majority report was presented by the Committee on Bills and Overtures, recommending that the question be sent down to the Presbyteries for consideration and advice. A minority report prepared by three elders was submitted, recommending that the action of the last Assembly be approved.

The debate was spirited and the action of last year was attacked on the ground that it was unconstitutional, unscriptural and contrary to the practice of the Church.

The case for the defense was summed up by Rev. Charles L. King, D. D., Pastor of Grace Covenant Church, Richmond, Va. This was Dr. King's first Assembly, but he commanded attention in his maiden speech, in which he reviewed the formation of the First Executive Committee in 1861. He reminded his hearers that the fathers of the Church fixed no restrictions as to membership on Executive Committees and did not specify that membership should be confined to *male* members of the Church, but provided that *private* members of the Church should be eligible to membership on Executive Committees.

Dr. King paid a merited tribute to the splendid work of the Auxiliary and called attention to the statements in the reports of the Executive Committees that the newly elected members were rendering a service of high value on every Committee. The Assembly, by an overwhelming vote adopted the minority report, thus endorsing the action of the last Assembly in giving women membership on the Executive Committees.

Change in the Church Year

The matter of changing the Church year to correspond with the Calendar year provoked some discussion, but was not given the attention the gravity of the issue demands.

The Standing Committee recommended in a majority report that no change be made. An appeal was made to change to the Calendar year in the interest of the country churches and the issue was muddled by discussing the condition of country roads in the fall as compared with March. The tremendous changes involved in fixing new dates for all the Church courts and rearranging the whole working schedule of the Church was lost sight of, and debate was cut off before all the facts involved could be presented.

If the order for the change stands the Church will have an experience equivalent to going over Niagara Falls and through the rapids below the falls. It is *possible* for a man to survive such an experience, but so far only about one has lived to tell the tale, while scores of adventurers have not even furnished corpses for a funeral.

Membership in the Federal Council

The Assembly voted to retain membership in the Federal Council of Churches and appropriated \$750.00 to the expense of the body. Strong criticism of the action of Commissions of the Council were registered, but the plea was made that we accept responsibility as a Church for only such actions as we officially endorse, and that we would forfeit our right to protest if we were outside the Council membership. The well established law dictum that a principal is responsible for the action of his agent does not seem to operate in relation to the Federal Council. It seemed to some members of the Assembly that if we remain in the Council, we should as a matter of consistency be represented on all the Commissions and endorse all the actions of these agencies of the Council. If this should be done we would perform acts as a Church that would cause the fathers to turn over in their graves.

Forward Looking Program

The Assembly approved liberal Budgets for the Executive Agencies and authorized them to enlarge their work along approved lines.

The sending out of reinforcements to our Foreign Mission stations, was approved and the Home Mission Committee was encouraged to broaden its work in the home land. More generous support for the old ministers and their families, and larger loans to students desiring to fit themselves for full time Christian service were recommended. The fundamental task of evangelizing the neglected childhood and youth of the South and training them for Christian service was urged afresh and the urgency of larger funds for Sunday School Extension was strongly presented.

The carrying out of these enlarged programs will depend upon the extent to which the Church furnishes the necessary funds.

Advances Shown by Statistics

FIGURES are at best a poor medium through which spiritual activities can be presented, but they are the only standard by which certain advances can be shown. The following summary is highly encouraging and it shows that the efforts of the year were richly blest of God.

The total membership of the church is now 437,818—a net gain of 9,526 for the year. The Sunday School enrolment is now 421,176, a gain of 16,796 over last year.

The additions to the church on profession of faith totaled 22,535. Of this number 13,005 came from the Sunday Schools. The Sunday Schools gave \$398,671.00 to benevolences and spent but \$390,240.00 on themselves. The offering for benevolences and for current expenses of the churches made a substantial advance over last year.

The following is the summary:

Gifts to Benevolences	\$ 5,092,253.00
Gifts to Miscellaneous Causes	772,975.00
Current Expenses of Churches	5,261,830.00
Pastors Salaries	2,837,358.00
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Total to all causes	\$13,964,416.00

The gift to Benevolences was \$15.35 and to current expenses \$21.20 per member or a total of \$36.55. This is an increase of \$8.05 per member over last year. Our church stood second last year among the Protestant Churches of America and this splendid advance will probably put us at the top of the list this year.

**THE CHURCH AND ITS STUDENTS
AT STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**

UNDER the above title, Rev. H. H. Sweets, D. D., Secretary of the Executive Committee of Christian Education and Ministerial Relief, has issued a most attractive ninety page book. The book gives valuable information about the State Institutions for higher education in the South, and the relation of the Church to the students therein. Each state is dealt with separately, the names of the State Institutions being given, the location, population of city in which located, number of students, Church preference of students, name of local Presbyterian pastor, and other valuable information.

The following are some of the outstanding facts as brought out in this book:

Today more than one-half of all students who are receiving higher education are in State schools.

Accredited courses in the Christian religion or in

religious education are available for students in twenty-one State universities, and are not provided in nineteen. The State universities employ their instructors in these subjects. In three, denominational representatives work independently of each other, and in six the representatives work in co-operation. In two the local ministers are the instructors. In six States there are said to be legal barriers to the teaching of such courses.

During the past year there were 34,179 young men and young women gathered together in the State Universities of the fifteen Southern States; in the technical colleges 14,759 men and 8,630 women; and in the normal colleges of various grades 9,134 men and 24,157 women; a total of 47,395 men and 41,988 women.

A copy of "The Church and Its Students" can be secured from Dr. Sweets, 410 Urban Building, Louisville, Ky., for only twenty-five cents.