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## THE CHARLOTTE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1920.

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The Charlotte General Assembly will be classed as one of the greatest of all the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It was fortunate in the place of meeting. Charlotte, North Carolina, is a beautiful and thriving city of about fifty thousand inhabitants, situated in the heart of one of our most prosperous Southern States. It is the center of a vigorous and aggressive Presbyterianism. The First Presbyterian Church, where the Assembly gathered, is located in a beautiful grove, and has ample facilities in its auditorium and in the adjoining Sunday-school building to accommodate a much larger body than the Assembly with all of its committees. The conveniences for the transaction of business could not have been surpassed. The able and attractive young pastor, Rev. Albert Sidney Johnson, D. D., together with his good people, did not spare themselves in their effort to entertain the members of the Assembly, and it could hardly have been better done. Those who were fortunate enough to have been in attendance will not soon forget their distinguished and abounding hospitality. The Assembly itself was composed of carefully selected men, both ministers and elders, who had come as commissioners from various parts of the Church, intent upon giving earnest attention to the weighty matters which it was known beforehand would have to be considered by this

Assembly. Less time than usual was wasted in discussions, and in the main the members were persistent and patient in their attendance upon all the meetings. Several things of unusual interest came before the body, namely, the question of closer union with other Presbyterian churches, the relation of the Church to the Interchurch World Movement, the Presbyterian Progressive Program, and the visits of Rev. Dr. Charles Merle d'Aubigne of Paris; Rev. Dr. John McNeill, a Scotch evangelist; and Dr. Plato T. Durham in the interest of the Southern Inter-Racial Committee of Atlanta. Rev. Andrew R. Bird spoke on the religious needs of Washington city, and the Rev. Dr. Charles L. Goodell represented the Federal Council of Churches. It was also announced to the Assembly by the Stated Clerk that twenty thousand, two hundred and eighty (20,280) new members had been received into the Church during the past year on profession of faith. This is the largest accession for many years, and was very gratifying to the commissioners.

The Assembly was called to order by the retiring moderator, Rev. A. M. Fraser, D. D., of Staunton, Virginia, who preached the opening sermon on the text "Called to Be Saints" (Romans 1:7). Dr. Fraser is one of our ablest preachers, and did not disappoint the Assembly in the character of his sermon. It was an illuminating and impressive presentation of the great subject of the sainthood of believers, and was a most fitting introduction to the work of the General Assembly. Dr. Fraser retires from the Moderator's chair with the love, the high esteem and the gratitude of our Church for the admirable spirit in which he has conducted himself while occupying the highest office in the gift of the Church, and for the efficient manner in which he has discharged the duties attaching to the position. The new Moderator, Rev. Walter L. Lingle, D. D., of Union Theological Seminary, who succeeded to the chair vacated by Dr. Fraser, filled the position with distinguished ability and satisfaction to the Assembly. Few men are so well qualified for presiding over such a body as Dr. Lingle, and it may be said that no one has ever succeeded better in guiding the Assembly

in the transaction of its business. He was prompt, courteous, and clear in his rulings, and spared no pains in presenting the resolutions offered in such a way that they could not be misunderstood by any intelligent commissioner.

Nothing was more surprising than the action of the Assembly on closer relations with other Presbyterian churches. The report of the *Ad Interim* Committee, which had for so long a time been hard at work in conference with committees from other Presbyterian bodies in the country, was so carefully wrought out that it commended itself to the good judgment of the Commissioners. The committee itself had been carefully constituted in the selection of its members by election of the Synods, and was so fairly representative of the different elements in the Church that it was felt by the Commissioners in this Assembly that their work had been well done, and that their recommendations were as satisfactory as could be expected. "The Plan of Union" proposed, namely, that of a United Assembly clothed with certain powers under "Articles of Agreement," which are finally to be incorporated into a Constitution, appealed to the different elements of the Assembly as no other plan hitherto suggested. After the reading of the committee's report, and one short address objecting to some of its features as impractical, the consideration of the matter was docketed from Saturday until Monday. Monday morning when it was called up again, and the Moderator asked for discussion, no one offered to debate the question. It was therefore immediately put to the vote, and was carried almost unanimously. It is not fitting that I should enter into a discussion of this plan here. It has been widely published in the religious press, and appears also in pamphlet form, so that the readers of the *THE REVIEW* must be acquainted with its salient features. The Assembly appointed a committee of twelve to confer with similar committees from other Presbyterian churches in the formation of a Constitution for the new Assembly. The following were named as members of this committee: W. L. Lingle, A. M. Fraser, Russell Cecil, S. L. Morris, John M. Wells, T. A. Wharton, R. F. Campbell, J. B.

Hutton, Thornton Whaling, W. F. Stevenson, A. M. Scales and E. T. Miller.

Information was received by the Assembly that the General Assembly of the U. S. A. had also adopted the plan, and was prepared to enter into conference in the formation of the Constitution. It is not known as yet what the other Presbyterian bodies in the country will do in regard to the matter. It is presumed, however, that several of them will become constituent elements in the construction of the new United Assembly.

The Interchurch World Movement created more discussion than any other one subject before the Assembly. The Standing Committee on Bills and Overtures presented a majority and a minority report. The two substantially agreed as to the willingness of our Church to discharge any obligation that we may have incurred in our previous relations to the Interchurch Movement. It appears that only one of our committees had really assumed a legal obligation; but it was the mind of the Assembly that we should willingly discharge any moral indebtedness that might have come to us through the benefits received by us from the surveys which have been carried on by the Interchurch Movement. While it is understood that nothing up to this time has been called for by the leaders of this movement, it is probable that our Church may have to pay as much as \$27,500.00 as our part of the indebtedness. The two reports disagreed in regard to the relations of our Church and the Interchurch World Movement. The majority report reaffirmed the Assembly's endorsement in principle of the Interchurch World Movement, and bade it Godspeed; but instructed the Executive Committees in their future financial support of this work not to exceed the maximum amounts recommended by the Committee of Bills and Overtures for the payment of obligations already incurred. The minority report in its second recommendation asked the Assembly to decline to participate further in the movement. The Rev. J. S. Foster, D. D., offered a substitute for the second paragraph in the minority report to the following effect: "In answer to the overtures from Mecklenburg and other Presbyteries touching the

participation of our Assembly with the Interchurch World Movement, in whole or in part, the Assembly makes the following reply:

"That while the Presbyterian Church in the United States is ever ready to co-operate with the churches of Christ in all world movements not hurtful to the corporate life and spiritual mission of the Church, it declines to participate in the Interchurch World Movement on the ground that it is a voluntary organization, not subject to ecclesiastical control and supervision, and cannot therefore safeguard those vital interests which the Assembly deems essential to the very life and welfare of the Church." After a long and earnest debate Dr. Foster's amendment was lost by a vote of 136 to 103. Dr. Neal L. Anderson, who had presented the majority report, then offered a substitute prepared by himself and Rev. Dr. R. F. Campbell for paragraph 3 of the majority report, which was adopted and became a part of the original majority report. Dr. J. D. Eggleston moved as a substitute for the majority report that the whole matter of our future relations to the Interchurch World Movement be referred to the Presbyteries. This substitute was lost by vote of 118 to 95. Dr. C. M. Richards then offered an amendment as follows: "That under this action of the Assembly our co-operation with the Interchurch World Movement shall proceed for the present year; but in the meantime the whole matter of our co-operation in this movement be sent down to the Presbyteries for their action on the two following questions: (1) Shall our Church continue its co-operation with the Interchurch World Movement? (2) If so, on what basis and with what safeguards?" The vote on this amendment was 99 to 99. The Moderator cast a deciding vote against this amendment, explaining that these questions would simply disturb the Presbyteries; and that they have the right to express their opinions without any overtures from the Assembly on the subject. Paragraph 3 of the report as finally adopted reads as follows:

(3) "That the Assembly appoint a committee of three to nominate for election by the Assembly itself the representatives

of the Interchurch World Movement; that these representatives be instructed to safeguard the historical position of the Presbyterian Church in the United States concerning the spiritual character of the mission and work of the Church of God;

That they be further instructed to co-operate in securing a more intimate relation between the Interchurch World Movement and the Church, and in bringing this movement more directly under the direction and control of the Church;

That these representatives be required to make report to the succeeding Assembly.

That the Assembly instruct its representatives in the Interchurch World Movement and those in the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to confer together with the view of forming a plan for the co-ordination of the Interchurch Movement and the Council."

The following committee was named by the General Assembly to represent our Church in the Interchurch World Movement: A. D. P. Gilmour, D. Clay Lilly, James I. Vance, Russell Cecil, S. L. Morris, H. H. Sweets, J. O. Reavis, C. E. Graham, John J. Eagan, John R. Pharr, R. E. Magill and S. W. McGill.

A respectful protest against this action of the Assembly, headed by Rev. Dr. George Summey, was signed by twenty-eight members. The Assembly thought this protest was not quite accurate in statement, and appointed a committee to prepare an answer. Both the protest and the answer were placed on record.

Later in the session the Assembly answered in the affirmative certain overtures from a number of Presbyteries asking its Permanent Committee of Systematic Beneficence and all of its Executive Committees not to underwrite the budget of the Interchurch World Movement, or any apportionments not especially authorized by the General Assembly.

It was obviously the feeling of a substantial majority of the General Assembly that this Interchurch World Movement, which originated in our own Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, was conceived in the right spirit, and that it should

not receive the condemnation, but rather the endorsement of our people. It was generally recognized that serious mistakes had been made by the management; that unnecessary expenses had been incurred in the surveys; that it should be more intimately related to the ecclesiastical bodies, and perhaps entirely reorganized; but that there was a purpose in it to enlist all the forces of the Protestant denominations in a united effort to further the interests of the kingdom of Christ which should be heartily commended.

This was a "Sunday School General Assembly," and by an order of the last General Assembly the Executive Committee of Publication and Sunday Schools had the right of way. A program for the exhibition of this committee's work had been prepared, and public meetings on Thursday evening and Friday evening were held in the interest of our Sunday school work. These meetings were well attended, and the addresses made and the stereoptican views presented afforded the commissioners an opportunity to understand the great work carried on by our Executive Committee. The report of the Standing Committee was quite appreciative, and concluded with a recommendation touching the election of the heads of the Sunday School Department and the Editorial Department of the Executive Committee's work. Heretofore these offices have been filled by the Executive Committee. In future the Sunday school superintendent and general editor are to be elected by the General Assembly for a term of three years; and the Executive Committee of Publication and Sunday school work were instructed to nominate to the Assembly men for these offices to be elected for a term of three years. This change was made in view of the importance of these offices, and for the purpose of securing a high degree of efficiency.

Saturday afternoon the General Assembly went on an excursion to Davidson College, and enjoyed themselves for a brief season wandering over the beautiful campus and inspecting the buildings of that ancient and beloved seat of learning. Saturday evening was devoted to a public meeting in the interest of Christian Education and Ministerial Relief. The re-

port of the Standing Committee was presented by Dr. J. D. Eggleston, and addresses were made by the Executive Secretary, Dr. Henry H. Sweets, and by ex-Governor Mann, of Virginia. In this report emphasis was laid upon the importance of increasing the compensation of ministers and of securing larger endowment fund for the cause of Ministerial Relief. In connection with this the Assembly expressed its gratitude for the generous offer of Mr. C. E. Graham to give to the endowment fund the sum of \$200,000.00 on condition that the Church raise \$400,000.00 additional for this purpose. Our people are urged to rally to this call, and to meet the offer of Mr. Graham by next December.

On Monday evening a popular meeting was held in the interest of the Bible Cause. The report of the Permanent Committee was presented by the chairman, and interesting and instructive addresses were made by Mr. F. H. Mann, general secretary of the American Bible Society, and by ex-Governor William H. Mann, of Virginia. The Assembly is beginning to realize more and more the pressing necessity of emphasizing the work of the American Bible Society as the agency of our Church in furnishing Bibles to our people, and in securing a sufficient number of Bibles in different languages for the conduct of our foreign missionary work. The Assembly did not deem it wise to clothe the Permanent Committee with the powers of an Executive Committee; but charged the committee with the duty of encouraging the distribution of the Scriptures and the formation of Bible classes among our people.

Tuesday evening was devoted to the cause of Home Missions, with a highly interesting program. No department of the Church's work has shown a greater development than that of Home Missions. In the hands of the efficient secretaries and Executive Committee, it is continually assuming larger and more important proportions. Among the speakers at the popular meeting were Rev. C. R. Womeldorf, who reported concerning his work among the Mexicans in Texas. He introduced Mr. Carlos Delgado, a Mexican elder, who spoke in Spanish, while Mr. Wormeldorf interpreted for the benefit of the audi-

ence. Another ruling elder, a native Indian, Mr. R. L. Frazier, spoke in an entertaining and impressive way of the work among his people in the Presbytery of Indian. The colored work was represented by Rev. J. W. Lee, of the Presbytery of Louisiana, who spoke of what the Stillman Institute was doing, and of the activities of our Church among the colored people. During the exercises of the evening the colored commissioners of the General Assembly sang several of their songs in a pleasing and most impressive manner. Rev. W. M. Fairley, of El Paso, Texas, described the conditions in and around his great city, and plead for the interest and prayers of the Assembly in behalf of the great Home Mission cause in that section. Home Missions in the mountains of Kentucky was represented by Mr. T. B. Talbot, superintendent of Home Missions in West Lexington Presbytery. Mr. Talbot entertained the Assembly with much witticism, and many interesting stories of the people among whom he is laboring so zealously and effectively. Altogether the cause of Home Missions received much attention from the Assembly, and it may be said that too much could not be given to it. Our Home Mission work is of such a varied character, and we are dealing with so many different classes of people, speaking different languages, that it has taken on a new importance in recent years, and cannot be regarded as second to any work in which our General Assembly is engaged. The Executive Committee of Home Missions is really doing much foreign missionary work, and owing to the increasing influence of foreign elements in our country, it should receive the hearty and generous support of all of our people.

Wednesday evening was devoted to a public meeting in the interest of Foreign Missions. The meeting was quite unique in its arrangement. The Executive Committee of Nashville were present on the platform, called to order by the chairman, Rev. James I. Vance, and proceeded to reproduce one of their monthly meetings. The chairman of each sub-committee was called upon to make his report, and several of them did so by calling upon returned missionaries to deliver brief addresses. Lantern slides were shown by Rev. H. F. Williams, D. D.,

giving views of scenes in our foreign field. Dr. Williams has a beautiful collection of stereopticon views, and his exhibition at the Assembly was a pronounced success. The report of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions is the most encouraging for many years past, the receipts amounting to \$1,115,345.00. This sum was not sufficient to pay the expenses and discharge all of the indebtedness; but it leaves the committee in very much better financial condition than for some years past. The matter of needed equipment in our foreign field was presented with much force to the General Assembly, and at last reached a climax when the announcement was made that Mr. C. E. Graham had offered to give \$250,000.00 provided the Church would raise \$1,000,000.00 additional (making \$1,250,000.00) for the purpose of equipment and other special needs of the Church, on condition that the funds be raised in such a way as not to interfere with the plans and purposes of the Presbyterian Progressive Program. Rev. J. O. Reavis, D. D., was elected for three years as Associate Field and Foreign Secretary. All the other secretaries were re-elected to the positions hitherto occupied by them. The Assembly heard with interest the report of the building of Mission Court in Richmond, Virginia, for the purpose of providing a house of entertainment for returned missionaries and their families. The cost of the building, now under process of erection, will be approximately \$30,000.00, most of which is in hand. The cause of Foreign Missions has a thrilling interest for our people, and the prospect looms large for the future. The amount apportioned for next year to this cause by the Systematic Beneficence and Stewardship Committee is \$1,498,500.00. It is to be hoped that all of this sum will be secured. God's true people are beginning to feel, as they have not done before, that the time has come when the Gospel of Christ should be made known to all the heathen. This does not mean that all of the heathen will be converted, but it does mean that an opportunity of accepting Christ should be offered them.

The Committee on Foreign Correspondence, in answer to the address of Dr. Charles Merle d'Aubigne, of Paris, recommended

that the General Assembly ask our churches to contribute a sum of not less than \$25,000.00 to be devoted to the erection of a church in the devastated region of France as a memorial to our soldiers who fell in France during the war. The Committee on War Relief made its report through Rev. James I. Vance, the chairman, which revealed the fact that our churches had done some noble and generous work for the soldiers during the late struggle. The committee was continued under the name of the Committee on French and Belgian Relief, and the matter of the carrying out of the recommendation of the Assembly in regard to the erecting of a memorial church in France was placed in the hands of this Committee on French and Belgian Relief. The Assembly determined to continue its representation in the World's Conference of Faith and Order, and also in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. The following action was passed in regard to our connection with the Federal Council, "While continuing our relations with the Federal Council, we reaffirm our loyal adherence to the principle of the separation of the Church and State, and reserve the right to protest in the future against any action or actions of the Federal Council or of any of its commissions which in our judgment are not in accord with this principle and with Section 4 of the Constitution of the Council itself."

The Assembly heard an eloquent and able address by the Rev. Joseph A. Vance on the Organic Union of the Churches of Christ. But inasmuch as it had approved the proposal to establish a United Assembly it was deemed inadvisable at present to refer the plan to the Presbyteries for their consideration. The Assembly felt that the consideration of one plan of union was enough at one time, and undoubtedly the plan of Federal Union, as contemplated in the formation of the "United Assembly" commends itself to the vast majority of our people.

The Committee on Bills and Overtures, under the able leadership of Dr. A. M. Fraser, dealt with nearly one hundred overtures in a most intelligent and satisfactory manner. It would be impossible to even review these overtures in such a

way as to satisfy our readers. It will be necessary for them to consult the minutes of the Assembly itself when they are published. Some of the overtures contemplated radical action on the part of the Assembly, but these without exception were answered in the negative. Our Church is open-minded, but conservative; and the reason for revolutionary movements must be made very plain to our people before they receive intelligent entertainment.

The report of the Committee on Systematic Beneficence and Stewardship, under the leadership of Dr. Ernest Thompson, was carefully prepared and satisfactory to the Assembly. In answer to numerous overtures touching the five years \$40,000,000.00 campaign the committee recommended that the General Assembly decline to approve of this plan; and that we continue the progressive policy embodied in the present program from year to year. It will be remembered that some three years ago the General Assembly adopted a policy of a progressive program: To raise the first year \$3,500,000.00 for our Benevolent Causes; the next year \$4,000,000.00 for these causes; and the third year \$4,500,000.00 for these causes. It would not have been loyal to our people if the Assembly had been willing to drop this plan for another one which involved such a great departure from it. Undoubtedly the progressive program is the wiser of the two; and as our people last year exceeded the apportionment of \$3,500,000.00, and have this year already subscribed the \$4,000,000.00 it is the only right thing to do to continue this policy for the next year, and ask them for \$4,500,000.00 for our benevolent causes. This policy commended itself to the General Assembly and was unanimously adopted.

In answer to the earnest address of Rev. Andrew R. Bird, of Washington, in regard to the religious conditions of the Capitol City, and urging the General Assembly to assist the congregation of the "Church of the Pilgrims," of which he is the pastor, in the erection of a handsome church edifice, the Assembly expressed its hearty sympathy with that movement, and referred the matter to the Permanent Committee on Systematic Bene-

ficence and Stewardship with instructions to give it favorable consideration.

The General Assembly heard with much interest the report of the Woman's Auxiliary, noting its wonderful growth in numbers and in developing the spirit of generosity among the women of our Church. The Assembly expressed its cordial approval of the whole work of the auxiliary, recommended the Circle Plan to the sessions of all of our churches, and urged upon the sessions the importance of having their local women's societies make their regular contributions through the regular Church collections as members of the Church.

The Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers occupied an important place in the business of the Assembly. The Assembly expressed its grateful appreciation of the services of the faculty during the past year, and approved of their being selected for the next year. It also answered in the affirmative the overture of the Board of Managers to secure a certain revision of the charter, which will authorize the number of trustees in management of the corporation to be fifteen. These trustees are to be elected by the General Assembly—five of whom shall serve for one year, five for two years, and five for three years; and thereafter all of said trustees to be elected for a term of three years. The Assembly also granted the request of the Executive Committee of Publication and Sabbath Schools to donate \$50,000.00 of its funds to the Training School, which shall be regarded as a memorial of the Rev. A. L. Phillips, D. D., the real founder of the Training School. The Assembly also approved the raising of \$500,000.00 for this institution as soon as practicable, and placed the raising of this amount under the supervision and control of the Assembly's Permanent Committee on Systematic Beneficence and Stewardship. In addition to the provisions already made for the benefit of the Training School, the Assembly requested all Presbyteries to urge each treasurer of benevolence to see that the Training School gets its percentage in the distribution of the benevolent funds of each congregation.

The Permanent Committee on Reformation Day suggested as the subject to be presented to our people on the last Sunday in October, "Providential Events Contributing to the Success of the Protestant Reformation"—such events as the Fall of Constantinople and the result of the western movement of Greek learning; the invention of the art of printing, and the discovery of America.

The Assembly chose the Westminster Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, Missouri, as its next place of meeting.

RUSSELL CECIL.