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OF US TOGETHER FOR ALL OF OUR TASK"

# *The* CONTINENT



MAY SEVENTEEN :: NINETEEN TWENTY-THREE

# THE CONTINENT

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## The Gravest Evil in the Church

REACTION AWAY FROM UNITY is the most sinister thing to see in the current Christian situation.

For a good many years and until very recently there has been practically a unanimous voice among American Protestants: "We ought to get together."

Of course, hindrances that made it hard to get together have been realized; they couldn't be ignored. Denominational separations are too ancient to be forgotten in a breath of time.

But if it were possible without violating anybody's conscience to bring together all Christians—or as a more practicable conception, all Protestant Christians—in one consolidated church, it would be a glorious thing to do.

Up to a very recent day, all sorts and conditions of religious men seemed to agree on that much as representing the ideal that Jesus clearly had in mind for his disciples.

But now that ideal is sharply challenged—openly denied. In fact, strong forces are fighting it vehemently.

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Thus the very condition which until now has been generally conceded to be the great weakness of religion is being praised as the best assurance of its purity and reality.

And—logically enough from these premises—the church is being exhorted that it had better increase the depth of its internal divisions and multiply their number rather than let any influence draw it toward less denominationalism.

As yet no actual development of new schism has resulted from this talk. It has not so far convinced enough people to constitute a schism of respectable size. And the talkers don't seem anxious to try out their idea in any way that wouldn't look impressive.

But pending the time when they are able to cause a really portentous cleavage, these prophets of disunity are themselves drawing apart from their brethren in a fashion which must be called true to their principles. In every way that they are able they are drawing around themselves a party line which distinguishes them from all such as believe that the mind of Christ calls for unlimited fellowship.

There is thus in ultra-reactionary circles a strange solidification "contra mundum"; a change from free and glad seedsowing of affirmative truth to the entrenched defense of a limited synopsis of dogma; a fearful repelling of assaults which to others look imaginary; a frowning antipathy toward even those who agree with their theology and disagree only with their bent toward separation.

These are black-browed features of this new temper which seem ill to comport with that sunshiny, open-air sympathy toward all who wish to do the will of the Father which the evangelists depict as characteristic of Jesus.

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At all events this kind of withdrawal and isolation is certainly not apostolic. That can be proved by studying the story of the conflict over circumcision in the Acts.

To say this is not to assert by any means that every schism in the church is non-apostolic. Out of the epistles, if not from Acts, there can be gleaned plenty of evidence that a certain character of difference in the church was recognized as bound to create cleavage. The apostles themselves "cut off" perverters of the faith.

When church members disagree about what the church is and what are its proper claims over the minds and bodies of its members; especially when the church is completely failing to preach or follow its Master, schism may well be thought inevitable.

Such was undoubtedly the case when the reformers revolted from Rome and the Wesleyans seceded from the Church of England.

But where men are at one in ascribing to Jesus Christ "all authority in heaven and on earth"; in acknowledging his love and salvation to be their only trust for this world and for eternity; in proclaiming his life and death and teaching as the sole hope of mankind for the solution of life's problems either in little or in large, the condition is averse to every suggestion of schism. It cries for unity.

Disciples who agree in this much agree in what distinguishes the church from every other force in the world. They have no right to draw apart, to dissolve fraternity.

Their paramount duty is to unite and concentrate all their powers to "make Christ King."

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On this the example of the apostles is unmistakable.

Read the fifteenth chapter of Acts. Here was a very great difference among men who were nevertheless alike devoted to Jesus.

A council met to consider the dispute. The dissension went far deeper than any matter under debate within the circle of the Protestant evangelical churches of our time.

The question was whether Christ's salvation for men had to be supplemented by ceremonial rites to make it effective.

It proved a question on which no agreement could be had.

But did the church divide? It did not. Was any attempt made to constrain all Christians to a uniform practice or uniform interpretation in order to avert division? There was not.

Instead each party gave to the other "right hands of fellowship" in a brotherly agreement to disagree.

Then the apostles went their different ways as undivided brethren with the understanding that each should have his own freedom to preach the gospel as he saw it.

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The single simple fact that all of them trusted one another to be honest in love to their common Lord and sincere in the faith that there was "none other name" than his to preach for the peace and redemption of the world, made possible their unity in spite of their differing so completely about one big point in his gospel.

And it is especially to be noticed that when this adjustment was made which held them together spiritually after an intellectual consensus had been found impossible, the apostles did not regard it as a solution which their wisdom had worked out.

They reported to the church that it was the Holy Spirit who had shown them how to settle their difficulty.

The Holy Spirit could not make them think alike.

But he did something vastly better. He gave them "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

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The notion that divergences of theology in the church—diverse predilections for doctrine—varying tastes for forms—preclude intimate church fellowship among those who differ so, is a wholly unbiblical fiction which is responsible for the appalling disintegration of Protestantism today.

This delusion is the mother of sectarianism. It should be put to death before it brings forth more schism.

The Bible does not contemplate a uniform church. It does not even invite Christians to think alike.

But it does bid them all to love the brethren.

And it does exhort: "Be at peace among yourselves."



not it was feasible for the church to have its own boards. Thus through the agonies of division there came out of the mists of the past through the Old School Church the clear, definite policy of denominational agencies to administer the church's benevolent contributions.

The era ushered in by the division, and closing with the reunion, thirty-three years later, was the one in which the denominational board idea was tested and not found wanting. It was the period in which the leading boards of the church were started and took on their distinctive characteristics under Old School leadership. This church acted immediately on the principle for which it had taken such a firm stand. It claimed for its own the two children of the church, the Board of Missions and the Board of Education, not wanted by the other member of the family, now divorced. More than that, it adopted a little waif that had been seeking for years to be adopted by the undivided church. This waif was the Western Missionary Society, organized in the Synod of Pittsburgh in 1831, which we know today in the handsome development of its maturity as the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, organized in 1837, the same year as the division.

### *Old School Church Founded Its Boards*

Having claimed and adopted all the boards available, the Old School Church now began rearing a family all her own. The next year after the division came the Board of Publication. After an interval, then, of six years, in 1844, the Board of Church Erection had its beginnings. Ministerial Relief came in 1855 and Freedmen in 1865.

And now comes the most conclusive recommendation of the policy of denominational boards. The New School Church that had opposed the idea and stood valiantly for the "voluntary societies," as the interdenominational agencies were called, after a time, followed the example of the Old School Church in starting its own organizations to care for its contributions. They found that their money and men were going to the interdenominational boards, but that they were receiving almost nothing in return. To be sure the New School called the agencies committees instead of boards, but they served practically the purpose of boards. The organization of these committees came in most cases just a few years after the organization of the corresponding boards of the Old School. The following is the succession: Church Extension (Home Missions) in 1849, Publication in 1852; Church Erection in 1853, Ministerial Relief, 1861; and Freedmen, 1865.

Since both Old School and New School were now agreed in their support of denominational agencies, and other causes of division had been removed the two churches came together again in 1870 in a glad reunion, bringing with them their respective boards and committees that were combined to form the boards much as we know them today.

The church was now united in its ideas as to the necessity of denominational boards and also in its support of them; so with the reunion in 1870 the boards started on an era of expansion and intensive development such as they had not known before.

One of the contributions of the New School Church to the reunion was the idea of permanent committees performing the work of boards, the difference between a permanent committee and a board being that a committee is "bound in all cases to act according to the instructions of the Assembly," while a board can act independently, being required only to report annually to the General Assembly.

### *Most Boards Started as Committees*

Most of the agencies started since the reunion have served or are serving a probationary period as permanent committees before being promoted to the rank of boards. The number of agencies has grown apace. The Women's Boards were organized shortly after the reunion, the one for foreign missions in 1870, and that for home missions in 1879. Temperance was committed to a permanent committee in 1881 and after having served a long apprenticeship of thirty-two years as a committee it was promoted to the dignity of a board in 1913, though it had already enjoyed most of the privileges of a board. The Board of Aid for Colleges came in 1883, the Committee on Evangelism in 1901, that on Men's Work in 1906, Ministerial Sustentation in 1909, Vacancy and Supply in 1912, and Sabbath Observance in 1919.

But the most notable development of the boards during the past fifty years has been their intensive development. Just as

the highest form of life consists not in the single celled amoeba, capable only of reproducing itself, but in the complex organism of man, ruled over by a mind capable of thinking and willing, so the highest development of the boards is to be found in the growing complexity of their organization under a unified management. This is to be seen in the diversified work of various boards such as the Home Mission Board, where from simply assisting weak churches on the frontier it has branched out like a widely spreading tree in its departments of immigration, country life work, publicity and research, and educational work.

The most difficult task, however, of all, is being brought about in the modern development of combining separate organizations under a single head in the interests of economy and efficiency. This is particularly a movement of the last decade. In 1912 the newly organized Sustentation Fund was successfully combined with Ministerial Relief. Five years later the General Board of Education was formed out of the old Board of Education and the College Board. The movement was still further carried on in 1921, in the merger of the six women's boards in the one Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, and now we are about to see consummated the most far reaching combination of all, approved by the Assembly of 1922, and just now being carried into execution, viz., uniting all the varied thirteen boards and agencies into four great boards.

This sketch of the history of our boards during the past 100 years, showing something of the travail of their birth and the way in which, in their youth, they commended themselves even to their opponents, and their development in scope and efficiency must impress every loyal Presbyterian with the fact that the boards, as they are constituted today, are a rich heritage to be cherished and used and improved in every way possible.

Any one who may be interested in examining this history, in its earlier periods, more in detail is referred to J. Aspiwall Hodge's, "What Is Presbyterian Law?" seventh edition, 1894, Philadelphia.

## Assemblies a Century and a Half Century Ago

By HARRY PRINGLE FORD

COTTON Mather states in his "Magnalia," that previous to 1640, four thousand Presbyterians had arrived in America. These, however, were so widely scattered among the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard that for more than a half century later no concerted effort, so far as known, was made to form a central denominational organization.

The first ecclesiastical organization of the Presbyterian Church was due to the missionary zeal and executive ability of Francis Makemie who came to Maryland in 1683. In 1706 he visited Philadelphia, where, with the assistance of Rev. Mr. Andrews and others, the first presbytery was organized in Old Buttonwood church. Makemie was made moderator. In the earliest record extant, the names of only three ministers appear—Francis Makemie, Jedediah Andrews and John Hampton.

By 1717 the first presbytery had grown to four, and it was determined to form a synod. The first meeting of this new organization was held in Old Buttonwood church, Philadelphia, September 17, and Rev. Jedediah Andrews was chosen moderator. The synod was attended by thirteen ministers and six elders, and was in session four days, although but little was accomplished.

The action originating the General Assembly was taken in the First church, Philadelphia, at a meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, held May 29, 1788. The first Assembly met in Second church on May 21, 1789. There were twenty-one ministers and ten elders at the opening session. Seven of these ministers subsequently became moderators of the Assembly.

One of the first official acts of the infant Assembly was to appoint a committee, with Dr. Witherspoon as chairman, to prepare an address to be presented to President Washington. At the second meeting of the Assembly, in the following year, President Washington replied most graciously to the address. This letter was framed and for many years hung

in the Assembly room of the Board of Publication in Philadelphia. When that board removed from 1334 Chestnut street to the Witherspoon building the letter disappeared and has not since been discovered.

*Seventy-one Presbyteries in 1823*

The Assembly of 1823 met in Seventh church, Philadelphia, but for some now unknown reasons adjourned to meet the next day "in the session room belonging to First Presbyterian church." This building was then but two years old. Dr. John Chester was elected moderator. At the opening session there were seventy-three ministers and twenty-seven elders present. Twenty-five of the seventy-one presbyteries had no ministerial representatives, and fifty-two had no elders as representatives. Evidently, there was not the desire at that time to attend the meetings of the Assembly which now prevails. Perhaps the primitive modes of travel may have had much to do with this condition of affairs. We are told, for instance, of one commissioner whose horse died shortly after its owner returned home from attending one of the earlier Assemblies. The commissioner, believing that the death was due to a distemper caught from other horses during the journey, presented the case to the Assembly and was "allowed the sum of fifty dollars."

A plan of comity was entered into between the Assembly and the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church. This from the "Narrative of the States of Religion" is interesting:

In the Presbytery of Niagara there are thirty-one churches, and only seven ministers and licentiates. The Presbytery of Albany is among those which are best supplied with the ministry of the gospel, but in four counties within its bounds more than 50,000 souls are represented as destitute of adequate means of grace. In the extensive states of Mississippi and Louisiana, there cannot be found more than eight or ten Presbyterian ministers, and very few of other denominations. The whole territory of Michigan is yet missionary ground; while east and west Florida, with a numerous population, in a very interesting state, have no minister of our communion. In one city, of three or four thousand inhabitants, much anxiety is evinced to obtain a stated Protestant minister. . . The wave of emigration rolls further and further onward; and, unless God interpose, by some special movements of his people in their favor, it would, really, seem that our children are likely to settle on the shores of the Pacific ocean without the Christian religion.

The death of thirteen ministers during the year was reported. One of these was Rev. Henry Blatchford, who died in Princess Anne, Maryland, where he was pastor, in the thirty-fourth year of his age. He had the honor of being a member of the first class to matriculate in Princeton Seminary.

The Assembly "cheerfully and earnestly" recommended to the churches the support of the Colonization Society. This society was the outcome of a suggestion of Thomas Jefferson who, in 1777, proposed to the legislature of Virginia a plan for the colonizing of the free colored population of the United States. The society was organized in 1816 "to promote a plan for colonizing, with their consent, the free people of color residing in this country, in Africa, or such other place as Congress may deem most expedient." Liberia, in Africa, was founded in 1822, and to this place many colored people went as a result of this enterprise. Many states and cities organized auxiliary societies. The one organized in Philadelphia ceased to exist only this year when its assets were given to Lincoln University for the purpose of assisting any of its students who intend to labor in Africa.

*480 Commissioners at Assembly Fifty Years Ago*

The Assembly of 1873 met in Central church, Baltimore, with 255 ministers in attendance and 225 elders. Dr. Samuel J. Niccolls was the retiring moderator, and Dr. Howard Crosby was elected to succeed him. One of the rules adopted for the guidance of the Assembly was "That all stamping, clapping of hands, or other noisy demonstrations, either of approbation or disapprobation, be forbidden." Among other actions taken were the following:

The report of a committee recommending "That further action be indefinitely postponed relative to reducing the number of commissioners to the Assembly," was referred back to the same committee to report at the next Assembly.

A committee was appointed "to confer with any similar committee, if appointed by the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, on the organic union of the two bodies."

Attention was called "to the new and elegant Presbyterian Publication House," which had been recently completed at 1334

Chestnut street, Philadelphia, at an approximate cost of \$150,000.

A committee reported on the importance of improving the occasion of the celebration of the centennial of American independence to be held in Philadelphia in 1876, "to set forth the history, principles and polity of the Presbyterian Church, and to make grateful record of the manifold goodness of God to us as a people."

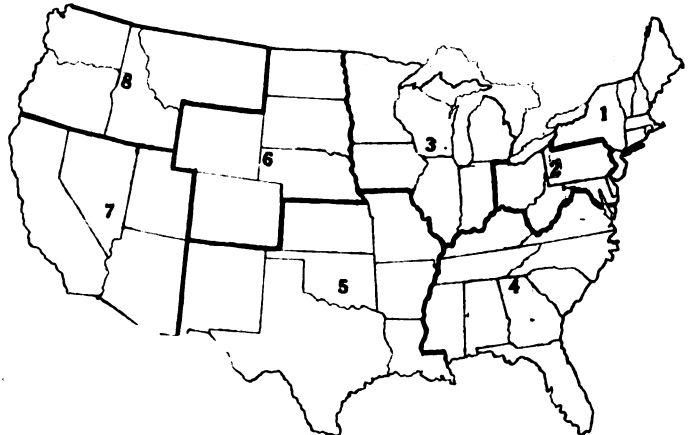
A committee on the consolidation of the boards declared that "Our boards must be thinned out, or consolidated, in order to secure any healthy growth." The report was adopted, and the committee was continued to the next Assembly, to report on the following:

1. Whether the expense of administration would be diminished by consolidation, and how far, on this ground, consolidation would be desirable.

2. Whether such consolidation would give increased efficiency to the different departments of the work now committed to the different boards.

3. If found to be more economical and efficient, to report a plan by which the desired consolidation can be safely and wisely made."

The Assembly deplored the divisions that have occurred and that continue among Presbyterians in the United States, and



Foreign Mission Board District Headquarters—1. New York city; 2. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh; 3. Chicago; 4. Nashville and Chattanooga; 5. St. Louis; 6. Omaha; 7. San Francisco; 8. Portland.

appointed a committee to seek closer and more fraternal relations with other Presbyterian bodies. During the sessions of the Assembly, sixty-seven ministers and fifty-four members were excused from full attendance. Ninety-one ministers, ranging in age from 29 to 92, died during the year. The following action was also taken by this Assembly: "Resolved, That hereafter the column for ministers' salaries be omitted from the minutes."

This column, which appears for the last time in these minutes of 1873, is one of unusual interest. The minister receiving the largest salary in the country was Dr. James O. Murray, pastor of Brick church, New York, \$11,000. A church in the west, by a careful husbanding of its resources, was able to pay the sum of \$1 for its pulpit ministrations during the year. Nearly 100 of our churches paid salaries of \$4,000 or over. It is interesting to contrast the statistics of Scotch and First churches of New York. Dr. Joseph McElroy, pastor of Scotch church, with 331 members, received a salary of \$8,000. The benevolences were \$8,893, and the congregational expenses, \$11,600. First church, which had practically the same number of members—322—paid its pastor, Dr. William M. Paxton, \$5,000. The benevolences amounted to \$84,000 and the congregational expenses to \$99,000. Dr. John Hall, pastor of Fifth Avenue church, with a membership of 996, received a salary of \$10,000.

Of the New York pastors, seven received \$5,000: one, \$7,000; six, \$8,000; one, \$10,000, and one, \$11,000. In Philadelphia eleven received \$4,000 or over. In Chicago the highest salary, \$7,000, was received by Rev. Abbott E. Kittredge, pastor of Third church.

Ministerial salaries have not kept pace with living demands. A recent Assembly took the following action: "Resolved, that synods and presbyteries be urged to appoint committees on ministerial compensation (composed of laymen) whose duty shall be to take up with congregations the question of increasing the salaries of their ministers in all cases where such salaries are manifestly insufficient to meet ministerial necessities."