

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I. CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS.¹

You have called me to the discharge of most responsible duty and exalted service in this honored school of sacred learning. I sincerely pray that your call and my acceptance may unite in being an outward expression of the mind of the Spirit and of the will of God in regard to the way in which Christ's cause may be served and his name honored by means of this institution. Having hope that such is the case, it will be the earnest and undivided effort of my life, so long as I remain in your service, to perform the duties of this high office to the best of my ability, ever seeking the needed wisdom and promised grace which Christ's servants may claim.

You have also informed me that a short time prior to my election the scope of the chair whose work is committed to my trust was so enlarged as to include the entire field of Christian apologetics. This, in my judgment, is a very important change, and it makes exceedingly useful modifications of the work pertaining to this chair possible. Its incumbent will now be in a position to deal with several great topics not embraced in the field of the relations of science and revelation; and he will at the same time be able to construe many things which emerge in the discussion of these relations under the category of Christian apologetics. In this way the work of this professorship may be made wider in its scope and more systematic in the treatment of its materials than was possible under its former designation.

¹ Inaugural address by F. R. Beattie, on the occasion of his installation as Professor in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C., May, 1890.

It is too soon to predict the fate of the Equal Rights movement. It has spread to a considerable extent in Ontario and in some other parts of the Dominion. The political machine will crush it if it can. Already the two great parties have unmistakably signified that, notwithstanding their keen hostility to each other, they are ready at any point to combine against those whose chief offence is the advocacy of a doctrine which both profess to hold. The Association has important work to do, and we trust that in wisdom and charity it will steadily advance, and while not less careful of the rights of Roman Catholics than of Protestants, will vindicate those doctrines of freedom which the Church of Rome has put under the ban—rights essential both to political and religious well-being.

The Protestant churches, it may be said, favor Equal Rights. Certainly they pronounced with sufficient clearness and strength against the Jesuits' Estates Act. Christian people well know that in the triumph of evangelical truth alone will the solution of the problem now before Canada be found. Hence the duty of offering to the French Canadian a purer faith than he has at present; and if this duty shall be wisely and faithfully discharged we shall take the right road towards effecting necessary political adjustment and preserving in the confederation true amity between Saxon and Gaul. But the most complete recognition of this fundamental Christian view is perfectly consistent with the political obligation to resist the admission of false and pernicious principles into the life of the state.

We are not unaware that the Church of Rome has the same aim, and proceeds by the same methods, in the United States as in Canada, and we therefore count, in fighting this battle, upon the sympathy and moral support of our brethren south of the lakes.

Toronto.

WILLIAM CAVEN.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1890.

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States met this year, as all our readers know, in the First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, N. C. The retiring Moderator, Rev. H. G. Hill, D. D., opened the Assembly with an instructive sermon on the mission of the church, from Isaiah lx. 1-3. The Stated and Permanent Clerks were in their places, and the Assembly provided itself with additional officers by the election of the Rev. James Park, D. D.,

as Moderator, and the Rev. E. A. Ramsey and the Rev. W. A. Alexander as Temporary Clerks.

The business of the Assembly was conducted with dignity, earnestness, and dispatch, "without haste, without rest." There were no protracted discussions and no long speeches, but several spirited debates enlivened the proceedings. The good temper and kindly spirit that pervaded the whole body made the meeting most delightful. This was, no doubt, due in part to the pleasant way in which the Assembly was entertained. Who could fail to be in a good humor when all nature was in her loveliest garb, and when sky and mountain and valley seemed to conspire with the hospitable people of Asheville to give assurance of generous welcome. Beautiful for situation is this capital city of the western part of the Old North State. Seated upon her hills and girdled by the circle of her mountains, she delighted our eyes with ever-shifting scenes of mingled beauty and grandeur, and refreshed the hearts of the strangers within her gates by her cordial hospitality. The convenience and comfort of the Assembly had been in every particular anticipated by the thoughtful care of the pastor, Rev. W. S. P. Bryan, and his efficient committee of entertainment. It was a happy suggestion that moved the members of the church to tender the commissioners a reception and banquet on Thursday evening. This gave opportunity for the commissioners to make the acquaintance of each other before they entered on the business of the body, not to mention the fulness of welcome they would receive from four distinguished speakers on that topic, and the chunks of wit, humor and learning they would carry away from the addresses of seven wise men among the guests on assigned subjects. We commend an occasion of this kind for imitation at future Assemblies, though we fear few cities can boast so excellent a place of gathering as Asheville possesses in the Battery Park Hotel, and few churches so graceful a master of ceremonies as we found in Mr. Bryan.

The Assembly had the privilege of hearing others beside its own members. Rev. Dr. Alexander McLean, one of the secretaries of the American Bible Society, delivered an interesting address on the work of this beneficent and useful organization. Rev. Dr. George D. Mathews, of London, Secretary of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches, made two addresses, one on Sunday afternoon, another before the Assembly. Both were most excellent, and Dr. Mathews captivated all his hearers. Two of our missionaries were also present, Rev. J. Rockwell Smith, of Brazil, and Rev. Thornton R. Sampson, of

Greece, and one evening was given to stirring addresses from these brethren and the Rev. A. Pierce Saunders, who joins Mr. Sampson in his field.

Happily for the Assembly and the church, there were no exciting questions before the body. The subjects that might have been expected to arouse most interest and lead to most discussion were disposed of with little debate. Reference is had, of course, to the tithe and societies, on which the Chattanooga Assembly asked expressions of opinion from the Presbyteries. On the tithe, majority and minority reports were submitted from the committee. The majority recommended the reference of the subject to an *ad interim* committee, which should take in hand all the papers sent up by the Presbyteries and present a report for action to the next Assembly. The principal argument for this disposition of the matter was based on the desire to keep the subject before the church for further discussion. The minority suggested that the Assembly content itself with simply recording the statement framed by the committee, presenting a summary of the replies of the Presbyteries. The reason most strongly urged for this action was that the Assembly had asked for the judgment of the Presbyteries; that judgment had been decisively delivered, to the effect that the tithe is in no true sense of binding obligation, and that it was not wise to press the subject further on the church. By a close vote, the minority report carried. It will be seen that a discussion of the tithe on its merits was out of order, and in consequence the debate could not cover the propriety of affirming or denying the obligation of the tithe. The vote, therefore, on the reports before the house failed to indicate any judgment on the main question. The same committee, at a later sitting, brought in a report on societies, giving a summary of the responses of the Presbyteries, and recommending no further action than the record of this summary in the Assembly's Minutes. Without a word of discussion, the report was adopted. In this way the Assembly quietly and comfortably, and probably wisely, consigned to sleep the only live issues it could boast. It is hardly to be doubted that by this method of dealing with these questions the Assembly denied itself the pleasure of hearing many fine extempore speeches, carefully wrought out in the quiet of the study at home and laboriously lugged to this meeting, only to be ignominiously thrust again into valise or trunk and sadly lugged back home. Was not this the height of refined cruelty, especially when you remember that here, if anywhere in this round world, a man would feel himself entitled to speak "for Buncombe"?

The Revised Directory for Worship, which had been submitted to the Presbyteries for adoption or rejection, it was thought would receive final action at the hands of the Assembly. The Committee on the Directory, in view of the fact that a majority of the Presbyteries had rejected it, recommended the indefinite postponement of the whole subject. It was affirmed, however, in the discussion, though this fact does not appear in the committee's report, that a majority of the Presbyteries had expressed a judgment in favor of a revision, and, on this ground, the Assembly decided to continue the Committee on the Revised Directory, with the addition of three members. We hope the able committee, which has given so much labor to this revision, will not grow weary or be discouraged. The history of the efforts to accomplish the great improvements we now have in our Book of Church Order should keep them from despair. It must be said, however, that our ministers and elders have not shown the interest in this subject that its importance demands. If we may indulge in comparisons, surely methods of procedure in our church courts, on which we expended years of study, do not surpass in importance the appropriate conduct of the worship of God. It is beyond question a defect in the Presbyterian Church that many of her ministers do not give sufficient thought and care to the reverent, orderly, and edifying conduct of the public worship. What an unworthy conception of worship is betrayed in the not uncommon allusion to the prayers and hymns of praise and reading from the sacred Scriptures as "preliminary services"! If this committee can do anything to secure improvement in this direction, and if it can present us with a guide to worship more complete and more suggestive than we have at present, it will perform a work for which it will be had in everlasting remembrance.

The Assembly of 1888 raised a committee to consider and report on the subject of temperance to the succeeding Assembly. The committee was continued by the last Assembly, and made a long and carefully prepared report to this Assembly. After hearing the report, the Assembly ordered it printed and docketed for the consideration of the next Assembly. Quite a number of the members, however, regarded certain statements in the report susceptible of a construction favorable to the liquor traffic, and, on Thursday, a motion was made to reconsider the action of the Assembly, in order to refer the report to a committee which should condense its findings into a few propositions and give a statement in accordance with the historic position of our church on the questions involved. The motion to reconsider was carried, but the

Assembly, being evidently in no mood to enter upon the discussion of so large a subject, satisfied itself with thanking the committee for its report and reaffirming its past deliverances on the subject. The writer of this was out of the house when the committee's report was read, and is therefore not qualified to say anything of the contents of the paper. He favored the reconsideration, in order to satisfy the brethren who were troubled over the matter, and, seeing that there was no hope of securing any well-digested deliverance, voted for the final action. But he may be permitted to say that more consideration was due so able a committee, and that too much stress seems to have been laid upon possible misapprehensions and misconstructions of the truths stated in the report. As the report is not to be printed by order of the Assembly, it is to be hoped that in some way it may come before the constituency of the Southern Presbyterian Church and before the public at large, which is sorely in need of guidance in the perplexities of the issues, moral, ecclesiastical, and political, that grow out of the present temperance agitation.

A fate somewhat similar to that which befell the Temperance Committee was visited upon the committee appointed by the Chattanooga Assembly to consider the whole subject of licensure and the conduct of religious services by elders and candidates for the ministry. This committee presented majority and minority reports, which were referred to a special committee of the Assembly. This latter committee, among other things, recommended certain changes in the phraseology relating to the licensure and ordination of candidates, with the purpose of removing the stigma which is thought by some to attach to those who enter the ministry through the door of the provision for "extraordinary cases." There was a short and lively discussion, and the committee's report in this particular and as a whole was rejected. No substitute was offered, and therefore the questions at issue remain as before. On the general subject of modifying the requirements of our book for licensure and ordination, the remark may be ventured that it is scarcely just to class those who desire some modifications among those who desire to lower the standard of entrance to the ministry. It is true that there are pronounced advocates of a radical change in our present standard, but it is equally true that there are some who believe that the phraseology of our book, in its provision for the admission into the ministry of some who have not pursued a classical course of study, fixes more or less of reproach and inferiority on those who are received under this clause, and should therefore be revised. They desire no

change whatever in the character of preparation ordinarily required, but merely wish a more acceptable form of words. Furthermore, it cannot be questioned that some of our most intelligent and conservative men think it unwise to fix with so great rigidity the character of studies that must be pursued in order to entrance into our ministry. They maintain that our ministers ought to be educated, but they hold that it is neither right nor expedient to define education in the terms of our book, and thereby practically to exclude men who are in the truest sense educated men, but who have not followed the old-fashioned classical curriculum. No argument is here intended, but it has been thought a matter of some moment to utter an admonition against the injustice of classifying all who desire some modifications in this part of our book with those who are moving for changes that look to lowering the standard of education for the ministry.

Another committee, raised by the Chattanooga Assembly, to consider the perplexing question of the evangelization of the colored people, seems to have been gifted with prescience of the somewhat summary disposition this Assembly was to make of the reports of *ad interim* committees. At any rate, the chairman announced that the committee had failed to have a meeting, and suggested that the subject be referred to a special committee of the Assembly. This was done, and, on its recommendation, the Assembly directed the Executive Committee of the Tuskaloosa Institute and the Executive Committee of Home Missions, acting together, to appoint a minister, who might be termed a field secretary, for this work. This we regard as among the wisest and most important acts of the Assembly. The negro is the source, in one way or another, of most of our troubles in the South. Amid so much that is dark and ominous in regard to him and his influence on our destinies, we have one guiding star, and that is to be found in his need of the gospel and in our faith in its transforming and elevating power.

Probably the most spicy debate of the session grew out of the report of the Committee of Bills and Overtures on what might be called a conundrum proposed by the Presbytery of Wilmington, in form and language as follows: "Mr. P., an elder of the church at H., removes to the church at B. He is not elected to the eldership in the church at B. He now wishes to demit his position as an ordained, though inactive, elder. Can he do so? and if so, by what process can it be done?" Here was a nut to crack. The committee reported that, "under the circumstances described, there is no constitutional provision for demitting

the office of elder." The committee had, therefore, "given it up," but not so the Assembly. It pounced upon the conundrum with true Presbyterian instinct, and the style in which it attacked the momentous question and brandished that chosen weapon of Presbyterianism, the Book of Church Order, was worthy of a better cause. Various solutions were proposed. One was that the Presbytery was in this case the proper body to divest the elder of the burden of his office; another that it was the prerogative of the session of the church in which he had formerly been an elder, but of which he was not now even a member. Some proposed to cut the knot by boldly affirming that he had no office of which he could be divested, while other some averred that, granted that he was in a certain sense an elder, he was not elder "enough to hurt," and should bid his super-sensitive soul be easy. The final solution was, that "the General Assembly decides that, under the circumstances stated, the ruling elder may be divested of his office without process or censure. The session of the church of which he is a private member is the proper body to divest him of his office." This reply was based on the recognized principles of our polity, which affirm the perpetuity of office in the church, the right of divestiture without censure, the primary responsibility of a member of a church to the session of the church, and upon the explicit provision of the Book of Church Order, Chap. XII., Sec. III., Par. 236, of Rules of Discipline, wherein, after stating how a minister of the gospel may be divested of his office without censure, it goes on to say: "This provision shall in like manner apply *mutatis mutandis* to the case of ruling elders and deacons; but in all such cases the session of the church to which the elder or the deacon who seeks demission belongs shall act as the Presbytery acts in similar cases where a minister is concerned." In justice to the Committee of Bills and Overtures, it should be said that a member of the committee remarked privately that the copy of the Book of Church Order consulted by the committee did not contain this provision. It may therefore be stated that this provision did not exist in the Book of Church Order as adopted in 1879, but was added as an amendment in 1884.

On the whole, this does not seem to have been so favorable a season for overtures as in some previous years. The crop, however, was not to be despised. The most prolific source proved to be the statistical tables. The number of things desired by various Presbyteries to be set down in these long-suffering statistical tables was startling, and the only explanation conceivable for this high-wrought, *figurative* state

of mind throughout the church is to be found in the recollection that this is the year for taking the census, when the very demon of statistics is abroad in the land. Our old friend, too, that asks for the free distribution of the Minutes of the Assembly to all the ministers and to the sessions of vacant churches came up smiling, and the Stated Clerk of the Assembly came up just as smiling to make his annual speech and to tell us how the Assembly had once yielded to the oft-repeated blandishments of this seductive suitor, and completely swamped the treasury. But there are some overtures that have more lives than a certain domestic animal of which we have all read, and we feel confident that this overture will not be discouraged, but will make its appearance, and positively not its last, at the next Assembly. The object the overture desires to compass deserves serious consideration. It is a lamentable fact that comparatively few copies of the Minutes find their way into the hands of our ministers and elders, while it probably occurs to few private members to possess themselves of these records. In consequence of this, many of the suggestions and recommendations of the Assembly never come to the knowledge of the persons they are intended to affect. It is true that the Presbyteries have committees on the Minutes, whose duty it is to bring to their attention the recommendations of the Assembly, but this is not sufficient. Might it not be wise for either the Assembly or the Presbyteries to issue a pastoral letter, to be read in all the churches, in which, in brief space, all the important counsels and requirements of the Assembly could be presented?

In the briefest way possible sundry actions of the Assembly must now be mentioned. The American Bible Society was recognized as a valuable aid in evangelizing the world, was commended to the churches for an annual contribution, a place given this contribution in the statistical tables, and provision made for the appointment of a standing committee on the Bible work. The Home Missions Committee was authorized to begin the publication of a monthly periodical under the title of *The Home Missionary*, and one number per month of *The Children's Friend* was directed to be devoted to the subject of Foreign Missions. The schedule of collections adopted last year was continued, though strong opposition to it on several grounds was developed by overtures from Presbyteries and by members on the floor. A committee was appointed to raise our proportion of the expenses of the western section of the Executive Commission of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches. Delegates were elected to a Peace Congress, to be held in

1891, an act which hardly consists with the principles and precedents of our church. But time and space fail me for the mention even of all that the Assembly did. Enough to say that all the great interests of the church received most serious attention, and the spirit of missions at home and abroad was characteristic of the body. It was an earnest, conservative, and yet aggressive Assembly. Pleasant memories of the few days the body was in session will brighten the days to come. Apologies are seldom in place, but the writer of this sketch may be allowed to say to the brethren of the Assembly that he has been compelled to write *currente calamo*, and with little opportunity for the needful revision, of which there is so much "in the air." He could wish that so worthy an Assembly had found a more worthy chronicler.

C. R. HEMPHILL.

THE NORTHERN ASSEMBLY.

THE General Assembly which has just closed its sessions at Saratoga will be memorable in the history of the Presbyterian Church. The great question before it was that of revising the doctrinal statements of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This had been precipitated upon the church by the surprising action of the last Assembly, in transmitting to the Presbyteries an overture on the subject. Widespread and acrimonious discussion ensued, extreme utterances were made, the Confession of Faith was assailed by its plighted defenders in terms common to the Arminian, the Socinian, and the Pelagian. How was it that this portentous revolution suddenly threatened us? Who would have thought, two years ago, when the Centennial of Presbyterianism was celebrated in Philadelphia, that we would so soon find the foundations of our standards shaken? Three causes have contributed to this. First, the character of the reunion of Old and New School. Fifty years ago, the Presbyterian Church was rent in twain by a controversy, largely doctrinal. Some of the now current questions were then disputed. The reunion was effected, not on doctrinal lines, but in a burst of political enthusiasm. A great and reunited country, it was said, has been secured, and now there must be a great and reunited church to go in and possess the land. But at length politics has receded before doctrine, and the issue is forced upon it, whether the church is at one in its faith. It is not intimated that either of the former parties is responsible for this. Members of