

# THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

---

---

VOL. XXX.

JULY, 1919.

No. 4.

---

---

A REVIEW OF THE NEW ORLEANS ASSEMBLY, 1919.

BY REV. WALTER L. LINGLE, D. D., *Editor.*

It was my privilege to be present at the opening of the Assembly and to attend all of its sessions except those held on the last day. Since the Assembly dissolved I have read with care the reports given of the work of the Assembly in all of our Church papers. It is not my purpose in this article to set down in chronological order all that the Assembly did. The reader is referred to the Church papers and the minutes of the Assembly for that. I wish the rather to pass under review the most important acts of the Assembly and to make such comments as may seem pertinent. I shall try to speak with fairness and yet with the utmost frankness. It is probably too much to hope that all my readers will agree with all that I may say, as the Assembly itself was much divided on a number of the most important questions.

## FEDERAL UNION.

The question that aroused largest interest in the Assembly was that of Federal Union with other Presbyterian Churches. That question was uppermost in the minds of many commissioners when they voted for moderator on Thursday afternoon, May 15th, and continued to be so until it was voted on about 4 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, May 21st. However, this was not the deciding factor in the election of the moderator. The man who nominated Dr. Fraser for moderator

was opposed to the Plan of Federal Union which Dr. Fraser helped to make.

The Plan of Federal Union presented by Rev. J. M. Wells, D. D., with the approval of a large majority of his committee, was wrought out with the most painstaking care and represented an enormous amount of work done. No résumé can do the report of the committee justice, and the reader is referred to the minutes of the Assembly for details.

The Plan of Federal Union proposed to erect a Federal Assembly composed of representatives from all the branches of the Presbyterian Church in America which were willing to enter into such a union. The Assembly was to be composed of two sets of commissioners, as follows: "First, six ministers and six elders, elected by the General Assembly or General Synod of each of the constituent churches; second, of two commissioners, elected by each subordinate synod or body corresponding thereto, and two additional commissioners for each additional 50,000 communicants, or major fraction thereof, after the first 50,000, said commissioners to be ministers and ruling elders in equal numbers, from each subordinate synod or body corresponding thereto."

Each constituent Church in this Federal Assembly was to retain its complete autonomy and all of its property rights, and the General Assembly of each constituent Church was to be the final authority in all matters of doctrine and discipline within that Church.

The main work to be done by the Federal Assembly is embraced in this paragraph of the Plan: "To institute and superintend the agencies necessary to the general work of Evangelization by the Federal Union, namely: Foreign Missions, Publication, Ministerial Relief, Schools and Colleges, Home Missions, Church Erection, Colored Work, Evangelism, Stewardship, and such other causes as may be expressly delegated to it, subject to the provisions of the constitution to be adopted."

It will be observed that Home Missions is included in the above paragraph. The next paragraph strikes one as in sharp conflict with the Home Mission Section of this one. The next

paragraph reads as follows: "Inasmuch as it has been found in the experience of some of the churches concerned that efficiency in the work of Home Missions is greatly increased by local responsibility, supervision and control, the direct administration in Home Missions shall continue to be exercised as at present in each constituent Church through the General Assembly, General Synod and other lower courts, except in cases where any constituent Church shall deem it expedient to commit any part of its work of Home Missions to the administration of the Federal Assembly." In other words, Home Missions was excepted from the Plan of Federal Union.

The Plan of Federal Union as proposed in the Report of the Ad-Interim Committee dealt only with general principles. The details were to be worked out in a formal constitution after the general Plan had been adopted by the required number of churches.

When Dr. Wells had finished reading the Report of the Ad-Interim Committee setting forth the Plan of Federal Union, the whole report, along with several overtures bearing on union, was referred to a special committee appointed by the moderator. The Rev. Tucker Graham, D. D., of Florence, S. C., was chairman of that committee. No more admirable selection could have been made. But why in the name of common sense should the report of an Ad-Interim Committee ever be referred to a special committee? Here was an Ad-Interim Committee selected in a representative way and with the greatest care. They had worked a solid year in the most painstaking way on their report. It was all ready to be considered directly by the Assembly. Why should such a report be referred to a special committee which could at best give only the fragmentary parts of a few hurried days to its consideration? I suppose that tradition or precedence is the only argument that could be given for such a procedure. In this particular case it might be argued that the report of the Ad-Interim Committee had been so carefully guarded until it was read before the Assembly that the members of the Assembly were not prepared to discuss it on the spur of the moment. The Assembly made a

good rule when it voted that hereafter reports of Ad-Interim Committees must be published and sent to each commissioner two weeks before the Assembly meets.

On Wednesday, May 21st, Dr. Tucker Graham presented the report of the Special Committee recommending that action on the question of closer relations be postponed for a year and that another Ad-Interim Committee be appointed "to consider the whole question of closer relations." There was a minority report which recommended the adoption of the Plan of Federal Union at once. The minority report was lost by a recorded vote of 100 to 134. In other words, the Plan of Federal Union was defeated by this vote.

What defeated the Plan of Federal Union? There were probably several contributing causes. First of all, it left out Home Missions. In short, it was the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out. Many of the brethren on the border States are longing for some solution of their problems. In seven or eight States the Southern Presbyterians and Northern Presbyterians are working side by side in almost equal numbers. Often there is rivalry and sometimes there is friction between the two Churches. Many Southern Presbyterians in those States feel that something ought to be done to relieve this state of affairs. The Plan of Federal Union did not touch their problems and they voted against it. With the interesting exception of Oklahoma, the border states gave a large majority against the Plan.

Another cause that contributed to the defeat of the Plan of Federal Union was that many of the friends of organic union felt that Federal Union would be a permanent block to organic union. There was no test vote to show how many of the commissioners were in favor of organic union, but judging from speeches that were made on the floor and from many private conversations I would say that the number was surprisingly large.

Another thing that entered in was that some felt that the Plan contemplated a highly organized and complex piece of machinery which would have nothing in particular to do.

Perhaps some who are opposed to any kind of union voted against Federal Union, but I judge that the number was very small. The great majority of these voted for Federal Union. In fact, it struck one as a bit humorous to see men who had written or spoken most earnestly against any sort of union only a few weeks or months or years ago pleading most earnestly for the immediate adoption of Federal Union. They must have felt that it was harmless.

The report of the Special Committee presented by Dr. Tucker Graham after being amended in a few details was adopted. What does that report mean? I had supposed that the meaning was perfectly clear until I observed that editorials in two of our Church papers take the view that the new Ad-Interim Committee on closer relations is restricted by the action of the Assembly to the consideration of Federal Union only. After listening to the debates and reading the reports carefully I have precisely the opposite impression, and so has everybody else with whom I have spoken. Let us see.

Dr. Tucker Graham's report after naming the various documents placed in the hands of his committee and speaking of the unrest, especially in border synods, mentions five kinds of union which had been proposed. The report then proceeds as follows: "In view of all the facts brought to its attention your committee favors some form of closer relations. Your committee therefore recommends:

"1. That the majority and minority (Ad-Interim) reports, with all other papers that have been in its hands, be referred to an Ad-Interim Committee, which, in conjunction with similar committees from one or more of our sister Churches of like faith and order, shall *consider the whole question of closer relations.*" To my mind that is as clear as a bell and leaves the new committee perfectly free to consider any kind of union or closer relations. Notice the various documents to be placed in the hands of this new Ad-Interim Committee. Here are some of them: The Plan of Federal Union, an overture from Louisville Presbytery touching the synodical plan of organic union, an overture from Nashville Presbytery touching organic

union, and other similar overtures. If the new Ad-Interim Committee is to consider all of these it will have to consider several plans of union. Not only so, but the preamble of Dr. Tucker Graham's report mentions five different forms of union or closer relations which have been advocated, and the inference is very clear that the new Ad-Interim Committee will be expected to study all of these. Not only so, but an amendment offered by Hon. Rhodes S. Baker, of Dallas, and adopted by the Assembly begins in this way: "In case the discussion of closer relations between this Church and any other Church shall contemplate organic union, the attention of the Ad-Interim Committee is directed to past deliverances of this Assembly touching such matter, etc." The plain inference is that the Ad-Interim Committee will have the power to "*contemplate organic union.*" Furthermore, after the Plan of Federal Union had been defeated and while the report presented by Dr. Tucker Graham was under discussion, Dr. Fraser offered the following resolution: "Whereas, the last Assembly appointed a committee to draft a Plan of Federal Union in conference with a similar committee for the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.; and whereas, the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., has refused to accept the report of the two committees, urging instead organic union; and whereas, organic union would split the Church; therefore, be it resolved, that for the present we discontinue the further consideration of the matter of union." When Dr. Fraser offered this resolution he evidently felt that the report presented by Dr. Tucker Graham opened the way for the new Ad-Interim Committee to discuss any kind of closer relations, including organic union. The resolution was lost. If any one will study all of this evidence with even a little care he must see that the new Ad-Interim Committee on closer relations was left perfectly free by the Assembly to consider any and all possible kinds of closer relations, including organic union.

After I left New Orleans I heard a minister, who was not at the Assembly and who is opposed to any form of union, ask the most conservative elder I know, who was a commissioner

to the Assembly, why they did not lay the whole thing on the table and stop agitating the question of closer relations. The elder replied that it was impossible. He had never thought so before, but after having sat in this Assembly for a week he had come to that conclusion. That must have been the conclusion of any one who watched the Assembly closely for a week. Dr. Fraser's resolution contemplated dropping the whole thing, but it was promptly laid on the table. Something will have to be done. I am sure that I do not know what that something is. I have never thought well of the idea of Provincial Assemblies, but it seems to me now that the solution may lie in that direction. For my own part I have never been able to see any great principle of the Gospel or of Presbyterianism separating the Presbyterian Churches of America, though I have sat at the feet of the masters on that subject, but I am fully persuaded that the time for outright organic union has not yet arrived. There ought to be a spirit of complete unity between the Churches before there is union. The spirit of unity is a long way from complete. Let us work and pray for unity and union can come afterwards.

The method of selecting the members of the new Ad-Interim Committee on closer relations is significant. "This Ad-Interim Committee shall be composed of one member from each synod who shall be nominated by their respective synods, and reported to the moderator to be appointed by him." This is one step beyond the method employed last year. The Ad-Interim Committee on Federal Union, appointed by the Durant Assembly a year ago, was composed of seventeen members, one from each synod, and the commissioners present from each synod were requested to nominate one member of that committee to represent their synod.

This new method of selecting important committees is not intended as a reflection on any moderator, but it is an attempt to get back to one of the great, fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, namely, representative government. It is impossible for any moderator to know the whole Church well

enough to be able to appoint the strongest and most representative committee. It is also impossible for any moderator to wholly eliminate the personal equation. The probabilities are that a moderator will appoint a committee the majority of whom will reflect his own personal convictions on a given subject, and it is perfectly proper that he should do so. But such a committee may not be a representative committee. When we come to think of it the present method of having the moderator appoint all of the standing committees puts a tremendous amount of power into the hands of one man and makes it possible for him to direct the work of the whole Assembly along the lines of his own personal thinking. Our Assembly is just beginning to realize this and has adopted this new way of appointing the committee on closer relations. The Northern Presbyterian Church realized this a number of years ago and devised a new method for appointing its standing committees. The Northern Assembly divides its commissioners into twenty-two electing sections with an equal number of commissioners in each section, and then each of these electing sections is directed to appoint one member of every standing committee in the Assembly. The moderator appoints only the chairman. In this way they endeavor to appoint representative standing committees on all causes and subjects. This is a more representative method than the new method our Assembly has devised. It is hardly representative to have each synod appoint a member of the committee irrespective of the size of the synod. To illustrate: it is scarcely a representative method which allows the Synod of Oklahoma with 3,500 communicants to appoint a member of the committee, and the Synod of North Carolina with 58,000 communicants to appoint only one member.

It is to be hoped that each synod will give this matter serious consideration and nominate a strong, representative, open-minded man for this new Ad-Interim Committee on closer relations.



### THE INTER-CHURCH WORLD MOVEMENT.

The Assembly spent a great deal of time listening to and considering speeches presenting the idea that goes under the rather pretentious and formidable name of "The Inter-Church World Movement."

This movement is still more or less vague and nebulous. I have read all the literature on the subject that I have seen, and I have heard all the speeches on the subject at the Assembly, but I am still unable to write down either a definition or a description of the movement. It contemplates a united survey of the world's religious needs, and it contemplates a united campaign on the part of all the churches to raise the funds which are necessary to meet those needs. Just how the survey is to be made or how the campaign is to be conducted has not yet been made clear. The idea is one of such stupendous magnitude that it is difficult to bring it within the limits of a definition or even within the limits of a description. In the movement I see a striving after unity, or unification, in our work for evangelizing the world. This desire for unity has been a growing one for the past ten years and has been greatly set forward by the world war.

The principle underlying the movement was commended by the Assembly, and our participation in the movement was referred to the General Assembly's Stewardship Committee to carry on in such way as they deem best, but with the understanding that this movement must not interfere with the prosecution of our progressive policy and program for securing \$12,000,000 for our benevolences. We trust that the Stewardship Committee may be divinely guided in putting the great idea that lies behind this movement into a tangible and workable form. If it can be worked out into a really practical plan it may mean much to the Church and the kingdom in the whole world.

### POSSIBLE ROTATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS.

The Assembly recommends to the Presbyteries for their advice and consent two new paragraphs for the Book of Church

Order. The first of these paragraphs reads as follows: "Ruling elders may be chosen for an active term of service of five years, and upon the expiration of this term of service may be considered for re-election, together with any other eligible members of the Church." The addition of a paragraph like this concerning deacons is also recommended.

"Ruling elders *may be* chosen, etc." I wonder if that means that the matter is to be left to each congregation to decide for itself if this paragraph should become Church law. There is some ambiguity about the expression. An ambiguous paragraph ought to feel very much at home in our Book of Church Order, for I dare say there is more ambiguous language in that little book than in any other book of similar size in the English language. For instance, I would challenge a "Philadelphia lawyer" to tell from paragraph 63 or any other paragraph what constitutes the quorum of any session if there is no pastor. These paragraphs on "rotary" elders and deacons deserve the most serious consideration on the part of our Presbyteries. We may be disposed to brush them aside at first thought as un-Presbyterian and not worthy of consideration. The principle is not un-Presbyterian either historically or logically.

When "bloody Mary" came to the throne of England in 1553 John Knox had to flee for his life. He at length found himself in Geneva, Switzerland, where John Calvin was at the height of his great fame. When did two such men live in the same small town before or since? John Knox became the pastor of the English-speaking church in Geneva. Among the elders in that church were Miles Coverdale, the Bible translator, and Whittingham, who married Calvin's sister and who afterwards became Dean of Durham. But the most interesting thing about that English-speaking church in Geneva is that the minister and elders and deacons were elected or re-elected annually. This could not have been done without the approval of John Knox and John Calvin, and they were pretty good Presbyterians. Furthermore, when the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was founded in 1560 under the leadership of John Knox it was distinctly provided that elders

and deacons were to be elected annually in the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, "least, that by long continuance of suche officiaris, men presume upon the libertie of the churche." These facts are set forth by such church historians as Dr. James Stalker, Dr. W. M. McPhail, and Dr. D. Hay Fleming, who writes with such meticulous precision.

If we come to more recent times we find that the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., which is by all odds the largest Presbyterian Church in the world, makes provision for "rotary" elders and deacons. The paragraph in their Book of Church Order bearing on this subject reads as follows: "If any particular church, by a vote of members in full communion, shall prefer to elect ruling elders or deacons for a limited time in the exercise of their functions, this may be done; provided, the full time be not less than three years, and the session or board of deacons be made to consist of three classes, one of which only shall be elected every year; and provided, that elders, once ordained, shall not be divested of the office when they are not re-elected, but shall be entitled to represent that particular church in the higher judicatories, when appointed by the session or the presbytery."

The above citations will show that the idea of "rotary" elders and deacons is not un-Presbyterian from a historical point of view. Nor is it un-Presbyterian from a logical point of view. There are three principal forms of Church Government. The Episcopal form corresponds to the monarchy in civil government and tends towards autocracy. It reaches the most absolutely autocracy which the world has ever known in the **Pope of Rome**. The Congregational form corresponds to pure democracy in civil government and tends towards individualism. The Presbyterian form of government lies between these two extremes and corresponds to the republican or representative form in civil government. The Presbyterian Church prides itself upon the representative character of its government. In fact, this is one of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism. But is it possible for a government to be thoroughly representative when the representatives are elected for life? If

the President of the United States and all senators and congressmen were elected for life, would the government of the United States be really representative? When all the officers of a church are elected for life, is the government of that church thoroughly representative? As a matter of fact, many of the officers in the Presbyterian Church were elected by people who have been dead for a good many years, and not by the present members of the Church. In these days when men are willing to die to make the world safe for democracy the Church might do well to make the Church thoroughly representative by giving the people who are now alive an opportunity of saying who the officers, who represent them, shall be.

The "rotary" plan also gives an officer the opportunity to retire gracefully if he for any reason wishes to do so.

The one obvious objection to the "rotary" plan is that it is in conflict with our idea of ordination, according to which we believe that when an elder has once been ordained he is always an elder. That conflict is only apparent. If an elder is not re-elected he is not divested of his office, but simply ceases to be an active elder. There are many such elders in our church today who have moved from congregations where they were active elders and have not been elected elders in the churches to which they moved their memberships. They are still elders and would not have to be ordained if they were elected to be active elders again, but they have in the meantime ceased to be active elders.

It may be retorted that if the rotary idea is good for elders and deacons it might also be good for ministers and even Seminary professors. John Knox and his English-speaking Presbyterian Church in Geneva did not shrink from even this, and the pastor was elected or re-elected every year.

It is interesting to note that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada at its recent meeting voted for "rotary" elders and sent the recommendation down to the Presbyteries for their approval.

## THE DEACON'S OFFICE.

In answer to an overture from the Presbytery of Central Texas, the Assembly appointed an Ad-Interim Committee "to consider enlarging the work of the deacon, co-ordinating it with the work of the ministers and elders in the higher courts of the Church, to the end that the deacon may discharge his full duties in the management of the material affairs of the Church; and our courts, freed from these cares, have the opportunity to become educational and inspirational." The duties and powers of the deacon are very limited at present under a strict construction of our Book of Church Order, which reads as follows: "The duties of this office especially relate to the care of the poor, and to the collection and distribution of the offerings of the people for pious uses under the direction of the session. To the deacons, also, may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the Church." The Assembly of 1892 declared that the deacons did not have the right to elect a sexton and fix his salary unless the temporal affairs of the Church had been committed to them by the session. So far as I can see the deacon has no power of initiative at all.

It will be a great day for the Church when we give to this high office the dignity and the duties which belong to it. I do not know how we can maintain our doctrine that the session is the absolute ruler of the Church and at the same time give the deacons their rightful place, but perhaps a wise committee can solve this problem. Would it not be well to have the deacons take the initiative in planning all financial matters, with the provision that they would submit their plans to the session for approval? This would lift a great burden off the ministers and elders who ought to devote themselves largely to the purely spiritual work of the Church. It would also develop the deacon and give dignity to his office. Deacons might also be used to lift the financial burdens off of the higher Church Courts. Here is an opportunity for a committee to do a fine piece of constructive work.

## SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

The most startling thing the Assembly did was to appoint an Ad-Interim Committee to consider "The Clearing House Plan" and "The One Executive Committee Plan." This indicates that the Assembly had an open mind on these two subjects. If these two plans were adopted they would practically revolutionize the work of the Assembly's great Executive Committees. "The Clearing House Plan" advocates one treasurer for all the missionary and benevolent causes of the Church. What a relief that would be to the church treasurers. The idea commends itself strongly to my mind.

"The One Executive Committee Plan" proposes to bring all of the Assembly's four Executive Committees to one central city and into one building and to direct their work under one strong committee. That would be a very radical departure from our present methods, and I do not see how it could be done in a satisfactory way. Yet a wise committee may be able to work it out. It has been my privilege to be a member of three of the Assembly's Executive Committees, and I have known intimately the inside workings of two of them. I doubt seriously whether the Church at large understands how much time and thought and energy the members of the various Executive Committees are bestowing upon the work of these committees. Practically all the members of these committees that I have ever known take their responsibilities seriously and are freely giving to the Church the best that is in them. But after all this has been said, I am fully convinced that it is impossible for men, who are in many cases already overloaded with the work connected with their callings in life, to give sufficient time to the work of the Executive Committees to do that work as thoroughly as it ought to be done. The work of the Executive Committees is growing all the time, and we need more strong men who can give their whole time to the work. If all the committees were gathered into one building it might be possible to formulate a plan by which all of our secretaries could study thoroughly the work which all the committees are now doing and thus be

prepared to give their expert advice concerning the management of all the causes.

When one looks at the personnel of the Ad-Interim Committee to whom these plans were referred he will not expect to hear any merely perfunctory report from them at the next Assembly. They are capable men with open minds, and we feel sure that they are going to make an exhaustive study of the whole subject.

The combination of the Assembly's Permanent Committee on Systematic Beneficence and the Stewardship Committee seems to be a wise one. It lessens the amount of machinery and gathers up no little lost motion. The whole trend of the times is for unification and simplification.

#### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S TRAINING SCHOOL.

The Assembly heartily endorsed the excellent work being done by the Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers in Richmond, Virginia. Better still, the Assembly made provisions and recommendations along the lines which will set forward the work of the Training School a long way. Among other things, the Training School was placed upon the Assembly's budget for three years, and all the churches in the Assembly are directed by the Assembly to put the Training School on their budgets for six-tenths of one per cent. of all funds contributed to the missionary and benevolent enterprises of the Church. The Assembly also authorized the raising of \$180,000.00 for a building and \$120,000.00 for endowment. The Training School has made remarkable progress in the five years since it was founded and is clearly beyond the experimental stage. It is destined to be one of the greatest and one of the most useful institutions in the whole Church. The greatest problem before the Training School at present is the problem of providing room for all the students who want to come. There is an immediate and imperative need of a building that will house one hundred students.

## THE WORK OF THE ASSEMBLY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES.

I am following the example of the Assembly itself in leaving little time for the consideration of the work of the great Executive Agencies of the Church. The most important work that ever comes before the Assembly is the work of the Assembly's Executive Committees, but this is generally considered routine work and there is never given to its consideration all the time that it deserves.

The reports of the several executive committees indicate that they have had a good year and done good work, notwithstanding the fact that both the war and the influenza interfered seriously in many ways.

The Assembly did nothing startling in connection with the work of any of the executive committees. An overture from Kentucky looking to the co-ordination and consolidation of the various kinds of Home Missions was referred to the Assembly's Executive Committee of Home Missions. Here is a task for some man, or committee, with real constructive statesmanship. There is no greater need in our Church today than the co-ordination and consolidation of our various kinds of Home Missions.

The most interesting piece of legislation in connection with Foreign Missions was the geographical enlargement of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions. Men were put on from North Carolina, Virginia, Missouri and Georgia. The idea is a fine one, but will it work? Will these busy men proceed to Nashville over long distances once a month to the meetings of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions? My first guess is that they will not find it possible to attend with any degree of regularity. It was fitting that the Assembly should take note of the fact that Dr. S. H. Chester has rounded out a quarter of a century as Secretary of Foreign Missions. When the records are written up it will be found that in his own, humble, unobtrusive, Christ-like way he has been a great secretary.



### THE WOMAN'S AUXILIARY.

The Woman's Auxiliary presented an excellent report and was warmly commended by the Assembly. The Assembly again urged all Women's Societies to connect themselves with the Auxiliary, and again called the "attention of pastors and sessions to the importance of having their local women's societies aligned with the Auxiliary by active connection with their respective presbyterials."

### NON-RESIDENT AND NON-ATTENDING MEMBERS.

The Ad-Interim Committee on this subject made a preliminary report and was continued until next year. All church members who move from the bounds of their church are urged by the Assembly to take their church letters with them. Pastors and sessions are urged to see that they do it.

The part of the report relating to non-attending church members excited quite a good deal of discussion. Some of the ministers placed the blame for non-attendance on the elders and deacons, saying they do not set a good example. Some placed the blame upon the ministers, intimating that their sermons were often too long and at times a bit jejune.

The Assembly directed every minister to preach on this whole subject during the next year, and requested every Presbytery to discuss it. The problem of the non-resident member and the non-attending member is not going to be solved by a few resolutions or by revising the Book of Church Order. It can be solved only by the earnest co-operation of pastors and people under the blessing of God.

### SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

No Assembly was ever more handsomely entertained. Every detail was attended to with perfect precision.

The Moderator was notable for his ability, his clearness, his fairness, and his fine Christian spirit.

There was a fine spirit pervading the Assembly from begin-

ning to end. There were no acrimonious debates. I cannot remember hearing a single unbrotherly word on the floor of the Assembly. In this respect it was a good example for all Assemblies yet to come. I think it is probable that the fine spirit of the moderator had something to do with all of this.

It was a slow Assembly. The Assembly met on Thursday, but very little of the real work of the Assembly was done before Tuesday. The Standing Committees took their time in getting their reports ready. Reports from some of the most important committees were not presented until the last day of the Assembly, and then they were rushed through with undue haste. I have heard numbers of thoughtful business men who were commissioners express impatience at the way in which the Assembly wasted time for the first three or four days. This is more or less true of all Assemblies. Can it be remedied? I will venture a few suggestions.

Devote less time to nominating possible moderators. There are too many speeches on this subject and they are too long and fulsome. I always feel that they are out of place in the house of God. The words of the chaplain as he stood by the bier of Frederick the Great came to me: "There is nothing great but God."

Spend less time in selecting the next place of meeting. The Assembly is no place to advertise the respective merits of different cities.

Have fewer outside speakers addressing the Assembly on subjects that are extraneous to the work of the Assembly. If skilfully managed an opportunity can be made for almost anybody to address the Assembly on almost any subject that has a religious flavor.

Let each Assembly appoint a Steering Committee to assist in arranging the order in which business will be taken up by the Assembly and the time at which outside speakers will be heard.

Have all Ad-Interim and Permanent Committees prepare their reports in such a way that they can be taken up directly by the Assembly without reference to special or standing committees. Let the Assembly prepare a manual which will con-

tain rules for the guidance of all standing committees in the preparation of their reports. Many members of these committees never served on such committees before and do not know what is expected of them. A few simple expedients such as I have mentioned would greatly facilitate the business of the Assembly.

I never saw an Assembly in which our theory concerning the parity of the ministry was put more fully into practice. A few men did not monopolize the whole time of the Assembly and a few men did not shape the thought and work of the Assembly. All the commissioners seemed to be perfectly free to express themselves, and every man did his own thinking. I noticed in several instances that men who made able speeches did not carry the commissioners from their own synods with them when it came to voting. All of this is a good, healthy omen.

It was a good Assembly and did good work. I have some friends who love to be on the side of the minority, for they believe that the minority is always right. I must confess that I have never shared that feeling. The minority may be right, but, according to the law of probabilities, I believe that the majority is more apt to be right. It is therefore a source of some comfort to me to find myself in agreement with the majorities in this Assembly. As I have studied carefully all the work of the Assembly, I have not found a thing which the Assembly did that I could not have gladly voted for.