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1914-15

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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXVI.

OCTOBER, 1914

No. 1.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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The fifty-fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, met in the Central Church, Kansas City, Mo., May 21, 1914, and was dissolved at 3:30 P. M., Thursday, May 28th. This is the third Assembly in succession which has limited the span of its life to six working days. These precedents will probably have the force of law for the future. Time was when the Assembly had to rush its business toward the close, in order to dissolution by the end of the ninth day from date of organization. The volume of business has increased rather than diminished. The recent Assemblies have shortened the time not by covering less ground, but by increasing the speed. The liberty of speech has been abridged. It has come to pass that by the time a speaker gets fairly launched, the cry of "question," "question," warns the speaker that further effort to get a hearing for his views will be useless. Age and distinguished services do not secure immunity from such discourtesy. The Assembly is ceasing to be a deliberative body, and coming to be an organization merely for business routine.

Obviously, our Assemblies are inoculated with the speed-madness of the age. It could hardly be otherwise. The members, who compose the Assembly, are accustomed, by the use of the telephone, rapid transit, and other time-saving devices, to dispatch business at a rate that would have made a former generation dizzy. The speed at which we live is constantly increasing,

with the result that we are growing more and more restless. The slightest delay is irksome. The train that pulls into the station ten minutes late creates almost a mob-spirit in those who have been constrained to lose so much of their precious time. When men, who live and move and have their being in an atmosphere charged with the frenzy of hurry, come together in a General Assembly, it is not surprising that they should begrudge every minute that does not show a decided progress in the calendar of business. They are not in the habit of having time to spare. Speech-making is not business, rather it is a clog on the machinery, and the less of it the sooner the members can record their votes and get at something else. The moderator is a good moderator in proportion as he rushes the grist through the mill.

May not an Assembly prize too highly the merit of expedition? Is the business entrusted to it of such a character that it can be properly dispatched with little or no deliberation? Are the members so familiar with all the questions with which they have to deal that they do not need to give time and thought to them? Many of these questions demand for their safe solution an extensive acquaintance with Scripture interpretation; many of them involve fundamental principles of ecclesiastical law. Have all our members grown so expert in these departments of knowledge as no longer to need the help of leaders? Does this explain why they are so impatient with all attempted leadership, with all efforts to discuss principles and precedents, with all appeals to the teachings of the fathers who have fallen asleep? A more probable explanation is that things which deeply interested the fathers do not much interest the children. The boast of this age is that it is intensely practical. What we demand is results. We care little for doctrines, theories, principles, precedents—we are for doing things. When we see what we want, why should we be turned aside, or delayed in the attainment of our object by a discussion of some outgrown theories, or some technicalities of law, or some old moss-covered doctrines touching the true nature and functions of the church? Let the past suffice for debate over these things. We have consumed time enough in talk—this is the day for action. Such

would appear to be the spirit in which our Assemblies meet and transact their business. A spirit not to be condemned unqualifiedly. Doubtless we have had too much discussion by doctrinaries, and by those who think the church's mission is accomplished when it has "contended earnestly for the faith." There are those who prefer to do nothing rather than take the risk of doing wrong. John McNeil says: "Caution and Presbyterians go together, but where do they go?" It is not surprising if some grow impatient of this proverbial caution, nor are they to blame for insisting that we quicken our pace and go somewhere. But we may swing to the other extreme, and for the sake of expedition, sacrifice principles that deserve perpetuation. We are warned against "daubing with untempered mortar." The sad results of haste are seen in the contradictory deliverances of some of our Assemblies. The Lord's work is entitled to all the time and thought that we can give it in order to do it in the best possible way.

This Assembly, which showed such facility in the transaction of business, had a modest estimate of its qualifications. It asked that half its members be sent to the next Assembly on the ground that with their acquired experience they could serve the church to better purpose. The obvious implication is that they could have done better if they had carried into the last Assembly the experience which they possessed at its close. "Give us another chance," they say, "and we will surpass our former selves." The spirit of this request is commendable. Still, it raises the question, Should they be sent to the next Assembly what would be their attitude toward the new members? Would they assume a superiority on the ground of a larger, or more recent experience? Such an assumption would seem to be logical, but it would put to the test the meekness of their brethren. An Assembly made up of two distinct classes of members, one with supposedly superior qualifications based on superior advantages, might furnish a fruitful soil for strife. Possibly the line of demarcation would be drawn as soon as the time arrived for the nomination of a moderator.

There is not much in this idea of going to a General Assembly to acquire experience. The business of a General Assembly

is not so different from that of the lower courts as that the experience acquired in the one would not be available in the other. The Presbytery is a miniature General Assembly. It has the same officers, the same permanent and standing committees, deals with essentially the same subjects and uses the same rules of procedure. It affords a better training school for the reason that it is smaller, and calls into requisition the service of all its members. It meets more frequently, and is largely composed of the same members. Twice a year every minister, if able to avail himself of his privilege, can have the opportunity of going through the regular routine drill. If this does not familiarize him with the book of church order, the rules of procedure, and all other matters necessary to develop a good Presbyter, he is a hopeless case. Such an one, if sent to every Assembly, would profit little by his experience. He simply lacks aptitude for that sort of business.

The Assembly elected a ruling elder to preside over its sessions. The law which makes the ruling elder eligible to the moderatorship of all our church courts is but a corollary of a fundamental principle of Presbyterianism—the parity in authority of all Presbyters. Our church did right to put this corollary into the form of law, and it ought not to suffer the law to lapse into a condition of innocuous desuetude. We cannot be accused of working it overtime. The law was enacted in 1886. It was seven years after that date before it received its first practical recognition in the election of Hon. J. W. Lapsley. Only four ruling elders have presided over our Assemblies in the twenty-eight years since the way was open for them to be honored with this responsibility. Always there is good material among the ministerial members to fill the office, as there was in the last Assembly, and there is never any reluctance on their part to serve, but they, as well as others, allow the propriety of occasionally electing a ruling elder in order to do justice to the principle of parity.

Another reason for electing the particular ruling elder was to signalize the interest of this Assembly in the cause of Christian education. It so happened that in the person of W. J. Martin, the Assembly could honor the president of Davidson College, the largest and most efficient of our church schools. It was

further a happy coincidence that this particular ruling elder, by his activity in the general work of the church, had made himself universally known throughout our bounds. Being a ready and forceful speaker, he has been in great demand for public addresses in Christian conferences and conventions. Be it said to his praise that he does not wait for extraordinary occasions, but is prepared to stand in the pulpit and preach an unofficial sermon to any congregation that desires good preaching. He established a new precedent by occupying the pulpit of the church in which the Assembly met, and doing his own preaching instead of remitting this exercise to a minister of the word as a function pertaining only to the teaching elder. Of course, the sermon was an unofficial performance, but this was amply atoned for by its excellence in all other respects.

Pursuant to the action of the previous Assembly, the Kansas City Assembly devoted special attention to the cause of church and Christian education. Two evenings were set apart on which prearranged programs were carried out. Many excellent speeches were made by those selected because of their expert knowledge, and it is hoped that permanent good will result from the stimulus imparted.

An obvious difficulty of our church schools is the necessary competition with State institutions. These have back of them the taxing power of the civil government. Their income is thus rendered both sure and adequate. They can pay for the best teaching talent, and at the same time offer cheap tuition. Church schools, on the contrary, must depend for their support on students' fees and on the voluntary gifts of those who have already born their share in sustaining the institutions of the State.

The Carnegie Foundation introduces another difficulty. By offering a pension for teachers in schools free from denominational control, it makes a strong bid for all the best teachers in the employ of the church. The teaching profession is poorly paid. As a rule the income of those engaged in it is barely sufficient, by strict economy, to provide food and raiment, with nothing left over for a rainy day. No greater temptation could be offered than a pension to provide against the threatened

poverty of old age. Whether designed or not, Mr. Carnegie, with all his Scotch shrewdness, could hardly have devised a more effective means for crippling church schools. A distinguished educator has said: "The Foundation has deliberately and conspicuously made a mark of the religious college—particularly of the small institutions, which, in their own fields, carried on a great Samaritan work with limited equipment, but a splendid spirit; and one after another many religious colleges have been seduced by great wealth to give up the independence that should be found in a college, and to forsake the faith of their founders. It makes one boil with shame to think that in this generation, and in this republic, any body of men would so brazenly employ the tremendous power of great wealth as to permit it to buy the abandonment of religion."

The issue is clearly and sharply drawn between piety and the pocketbook. The sole objection to State education is that it provides no place for religion. In other respects it is eminently satisfactory. In its higher institutions of learning the State is sparing no expense to secure a broad and practical culture. Moreover, it would be manifestly unfair to charge the State with excluding religion. The State welcomes the efforts of the churches to bring to the students the benefits of religious teaching, and in some cases makes appropriations for the employment of Y. M. C. A. secretaries. These are not only permitted, but encouraged, to organize Bible classes, and to do all in their power to make the teachings of the Bible effective. A large proportion of those who teach in the institutions supported by the State are earnest Christians, and show a practical concern for the spiritual interest of their pupils. In the State in which the writer lives, three out of the four State schools of highest grade are presided over by Presbyterian elders. To say that such schools are purely secular in their spirit and aims would show a reckless disregard of facts. But the objection to the control of education by the State is that in the nature of the case it can offer no guarantee that religion may not be entirely neglected. Worse still, it can give no assurance that education under its control may not be subjected to influences positively hostile to religion. Consequently piety, despite the plea of the pocket-

book, demands an education under regulation of the church, so as to ensure that it shall be dominated by Christian ideals, and suffused with a Christian atmosphere.

All denominations are confronted by the same difficulties, and it is gratifying to note that they are at one in their purpose not to yield to these difficulties. The Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans and Episcopalians are rallying nobly to the support of their own schools, increasing their endowments, enlarging their equipments, and proving their ability to furnish an education which, while loyal to the church, and true to Christian conviction, shall be equal in its scope and thoroughness to the best that the State or other non-religious agencies can furnish.

The Assembly, with perfect unanimity and with much enthusiasm, approved the work of an *ad interim* committee in its well-matured scheme for classifying and co-ordinating the various schools of our church, and appointed another committee to carry forward the work, and to use its utmost endeavors to arouse our entire membership to a more generous support of our educational work. We must address ourselves to this duty or suffer serious loss. The church that leads in education is the church of greatest influence over public opinion and of greatest power in public affairs.

When the Assembly met it found the customary crop of overtures on hand. The number was between seventy and eighty, rather below than above the average of recent years. It is noticeable that comparatively few overtures sent to the Assemblies accomplish any good. They are usually answered with a curt negative. Might it not be well to have a statute of limitation barring certain overtures from our church courts? Many are introduced into the Presbytery by those who think they are asking something new, ignorant of how often and how recently the same questions have been asked and answered. Many are sent to the Assembly which find an explicit answer in our Book of Church Order. Every Presbytery should have a standing rule that would require one introducing an overture to certify that it had not been before the General Assembly within the last ten years, and that nothing could be found in the Book of Church Order covering the point. Our present custom of ap-

pealing to the Assembly to settle any and every question by a mere *obiter dictum* has a tendency to deprive our supreme judiciary of the reverence to which it is properly entitled. The Assembly, crowded with business and rushing to get through, often answers overtures without giving them due consideration. Thus it happens that one Assembly contradicts another. For example, the Assembly of 1896 was asked if one elder without the presence of a minister could perform sessional acts. The Assembly answered in the negative. The next Assembly, being asked the same question, answered in the affirmative. It would tax the wit of the proverbial Philadelphia lawyer to define, in the light of our Book of Church Order and the deliverances of our Assemblies, the quorum of a session.

It is perfectly obvious that if the church cannot remain satisfied with the judgment of an Assembly longer than two or three years, it is a gratuitous bit of folly to trouble the Assembly to give a judgment. Take for illustration, the overture touching the use of fermented grape juice in the communion. Three previous Assemblies have spoken, and there is nothing further to say that can have the slightest influence on practice. The Assemblies of 1892, 1893 and 1911 have declared that the Scriptural element is fermented wine, but that the use of unfermented grape juice does not invalidate the ordinance. The Assembly of 1911 declared that the choice is to be left to the session. In the face of all these deliverances, the last Assembly appointed a larger *ad interim* committee to consider the matter and report. Can one conceive any possible good to come from this? Suppose on the report of this committee, the next Assembly should express a judgment in harmony with previous Assemblies. Would this secure any greater harmony of practice throughout the church than exists at present? Why should it? Suppose the Assembly of 1915 should express a judgment contradictory of the former Assemblies? How could this affect practice? No subsequent Assembly can speak with stronger voice than a previous one. It has been declared that a discretionary right belongs to sessions, and these will continue to exercise this right. No matter what the *ad interim* committee recommends, and no matter what action results, the court which has the ul-

timate decision already has all the moral backing that Assembly deliverances can give.

The question of the tithe bobs up every little while. Beginning with the Assembly of 1889, the subject has been dealt with until now one can find almost any answer he wishes. He can find one Assembly saying that the tithe is "the Lord's ordained plan for the support and extension of the gospel." He can find another Assembly saying that it "has been unable to discover any evidence in the New Testament that the tithe is commanded, or even alluded to as a binding precedent for the authoritative guidance of the church under the gospel in the matter of proportionate giving. Nor is this due to silence on the part of the New Testament writers in regard to the question as a whole. The great apostle to the Gentiles discusses at length the obligations and principles of Christian liberality in the support and extension of the gospel and in the general exercise of benevolence, and while he reproves, rebukes and exhorts with all long-suffering and doctrine, there is in his reproofs, rebukes and exhortations a notable absence of any reference whatever to the tithe as a standard of proportion."

The former of these deliverances was put forth by the Assembly of 1908; the latter by the Assembly of 1909. What more remains for any Assembly to do? If anyone wishes to preach the perpetuity of the tithe law as a binding obligation on Christians, he can do so with the authority of a General Assembly behind him. If he wishes to preach the contrary, he can do so with the same authority back of him. What more can anyone wish? And yet the last Assembly was asked to approve the tithe as a minimum offering, and to instruct the committee on systematic beneficence to advocate it. The Assembly did as it was asked. Suppose the committee does not believe in the tithe as a minimum offering? To what extent will it feel itself bound by the instruction of the General Assembly? Only five years ago, a General Assembly, acting on the report of a large and able *ad interim* committee, expressed the judgment that the New Testament makes no recognition of any law to be appealed to or applied in raising money for the support of the gospel; that on the contrary, it teaches that liberality is a grace to be culti-

vated, not a duty to be enforced; and that the way to cultivate this grace, as illustrated by the Apostle Paul, is to hold up the example of Christ, and to magnify his claims on the love and gratitude of his people; that when Paul mentions proportionate giving, he states the proportion, not in definite terms, much less in the terms of ancient Jewish law, but in terms to be interpreted by God's providential dealings with each individual Christian—"as God hath prospered him." Has the judgment of an Assembly only five years old been vacated of all authority? If so, then the Assembly has already, by its ill-considered and variant deliverances, reduced its influence to the vanishing point. But if not, then the committee on systematic beneficence cannot obey the instructions of the last Assembly without coming in conflict with the authority of a previous Assembly. In either case, it is growingly evident that the custom of calling on the Assemblies at short intervals to give a new pronouncement on the same old questions, is, to say the least, of doubtful wisdom.

Another illustration of this custom is furnished by the question of the rotation in office of elders and deacons. It has been just three years since a most judicious *ad interim* committee, after giving twelve months to the careful study of the subject, presented a report, in which they adduce a number of strong arguments against the proposed change. They argue that such a change finds no warrant in Scripture, that in the apostolic churches officers were elected not for a limited but for an indefinite term of service; that the change is inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of vocation to office, which doctrine is that men are called to bear office by the Lord Himself, as is clearly taught by Paul, when he says that the elders in the church at Ephesus were made overseers by the Holy Ghost; and that the proposed change would tend to detract from the dignity of the office, and to cheapen it in the eyes of the people and of the officers themselves. This able report was adopted by the Assembly of 1912, without a word of opposition, thus indicating that our church only two years ago was perfectly satisfied with the present status. Now an overture comes up asking for a change, and the Assembly sends the question to the Presbyteries. The overture originated on the border, as was the case when the

question was brought before the Assembly of 1911. Evidently the agitation is due to contact with other bodies in which these officers have never been held in the same high esteem as with us. Dr. Charles Hodge would not allow that the ruling elder of the Presbyterian churches is identical with the New Testament Presbyter. He restricted the term Presbyter to the teaching elder, and found no higher warrant for the ruling elder than a corollary from the general doctrine of the right of the people to a substantive part in the government of the church and must, *ex necessitate rei*, exercise this right through representatives. Under such leadership, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America held that the presence of a ruling elder was not essential to the quorum of a Presbytery and that he had no right to lay on hands in the ordination of a minister.

From its birth, our church has done honor to Robert J. Breckinridge, and especially to James Henley Thornwell for the great service which they rendered to the cause of truth in vindicating for the ruling elder his rightful position in the church as the Presbyter of the New Testament. He does not belong to the rank of the laity as distinguished from the clergy, nor act as a mere deputy of the people in the courts of the church. The ruling elder and the teaching elder are two classes constituting one order. They alike receive their call and hold their commission from God. The one class is no more responsible, or subject to the will of the people than the other, Neither is the one class subordinate in any sense to the other..

This doctrine of the eldership has been highly prized hitherto by our church, and has been woven deeply into our organic law. To remove all ambiguity and to secure to the ruling elder his indefeasable rights, the presence of at least one ruling elder is expressly required in the composition of a quorum of Presbytery; and in the ordination of a minister, the ruling elder is expected to lay his hands on the kneeling candidate, and afterwards take him by the hand, saying: "I give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us." The tendency in our church has been to exalt the office of elder more and more, and to widen the scope of his activities. By one amendment to our book he has been declared eligible to preside

over any court of the church from the session to the General Assembly. By another amendment it is provided that he may be appointed to deliver the charge to the people in the installation of a pastor. By frequent deliverances of Assemblies the importance of the office has been emphasized. This tendency needs to go further. There is no scriptural ground for denying to ruling elders the right to administer the sacraments. This right should be accorded, and they should be required, where churches are vacant, to give the people the benefit of these as well as all other ordinances of divine worship. In other words, no church in which there is a ruling elder should ever be vacant.

The proposed change, submitted by the last assembly to the Presbyteries for their consideration, looks exactly in the opposite direction from that in which our church has been moving. There can hardly be a question that if such change should be adopted, the effect would be to rob the office of its dignity, and in the same measure diminish its usefulness. It is freely admitted that there are unworthy and inefficient men in the eldership. But our Book of Church Order makes provision for retiring such. It has been more than hinted that there are some inefficient, if not unworthy men in the ministry, some whose connection with the churches which they serve is a serious handicap to the progress of those churches. As the matter stands, it is easier to dispose of an unacceptable elder than an unacceptable minister. If expediency is to be our guide, let us not stop with ruling elder and deacon, but make a provision broad enough to include the teaching elder as well.

It is much to be regretted that the Assembly encouraged the agitation of this question again, so soon after it had received the most thorough consideration. If one Assembly shows so little regard for the work of a previous Assembly, it cannot reasonably expect its own deliberations to carry much weight with its constituents.

Three amendments to the Book of Church Order, having been approved by a majority of the Presbyteries, were enacted by the Assembly. It is rather the exception when an Assembly meets and adjourns without either amending the Book, or proposing to the Presbyteries an amendment. It would be

interesting to know the total number of amendments made since the adoption of the book in 1879. The work of amending began just two years after the book was adopted, and has continued with no cessation or abatement of interest to the present. The recent Assembly not only completed three amendments, but set in motion the machinery for one other. When all the amendments have been incorporated in a new edition of the book, possibly a comparison with the first edition would show a condition similar to that of the beggar's trousers that had been patched till none of the original cloth remained. This raises the question whether it would not be wise for the Assembly to undertake the task of revising the book from a to z. After all the amendments, the book is still defective. It sins both by way of omission and commission.

By the time the Assembly met, it had become evident to the observant that union with the United Presbyterian Church was a dead issue. The only thing left for the Assembly was to consider the most respectful manner of disposing of the remains. The basis of union was on the docket, carried over from the last Assembly. It was deemed that it would be most soothing to the feelings of any possible mourners to send the basis down to the Presbyteries and let them take part in the funeral ceremonies. The Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church which dealt with the matter a few days later, thought differently, and proceeded at once to conduct the obsequies without troubling the Presbyteries.

Why did the movement for union between these two churches, which had such a promising beginning, come to such a speedy and fatal termination? These churches hold, *ex animo*, substantially the same doctrinal standards; both are of Scotch ancestry, springing from the same root and sharing in the pride of a common history; both are conservative in spirit, and zealously committed to the same task; and representative committees had little difficulty in agreeing on a basis of union. Yet after a year's deliberation the two churches, with remarkable unanimity, laid the movement to rest. What is the explanation? For one thing, all arguments for union were greatly weakened by the fact that the territorial limits of the two churches not

only do not overlap to any appreciable extent, but do not even lie contiguous. Consequently, it could not be shown that much of practical good could result from the union. No reasoning based on abstract principles can make much headway when unaccompanied with considerations of a tangible character.

While some specific grounds of opposition to the union were urged, no doubt the most influential ground with the United Presbyterian Church was that union would destroy its identity. It was proposed to keep the name of that church. It was felt, however, that this could not prevent, but merely veil, the loss of identity. Here is the supreme difficulty in uniting any two churches—the weaker falls under the control of the stronger, and ceases to exist as a distinct entity. When any ecclesiastical organization has lived long enough to make a history, to develop a sense of individuality, to feel a satisfaction in its own achievements, to enjoy the consciousness of independent life and power, it cannot contemplate with complacency the idea of being swallowed up, and becoming an indistinguishable part of a larger body. The risk is great. If the swallowing should result in discomfort, there is no hope of a Jonah-like deliverance. Dissolution of its corporate existence at once takes place, and leaves no possibility of revivification.

The failure of this movement did not end the efforts for union. The widespread, almost universal sentiment for union of some kind between churches belonging to the same family group, came in for recognition. This took the direction of answering favorably an overture from the Council of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. This act of the Assembly "authorizes and directs the Council to give careful and full attention to the whole subject of closer relations and more effective administrative co-operation between the several Presbyterian and Reformed churches represented in the Council, with particular reference to the formulation of an effective federation of their plans, work and executive or administrative agencies both in the home and foreign fields."

It is thought that a scheme of federated union, embracing all the constituent churches of the present Council is more hopeful than a proposal of organic union between any two of them, for

the reason that federation does not destroy autonomy. It is a scheme for subjecting all these churches, the big and the little, the strong and the weak to the limited and delegated authority of a common tribunal. The churches must agree among themselves as to the particular matters of common interest over which this tribunal shall exercise jurisdiction and also as to the manner in which this jurisdiction shall be exercised.

The scheme may be worth trying, but it does not hold out a bright hope of a satisfactory and permanent settlement. The churches favoring organic union will not like it because it does not go far enough, and the churches not favoring organic union will not like it because it goes too far. If closer relations than now exist are imperative as a matter of Christian duty, nothing short of organic union will meet the case.

Frequently our church courts have violated the principle of non-interference in civil affairs. Time was when the conscience of our church was very sensitive touching this matter. The Assembly of 1875 expressed the apprehension that certain expressions may have been admitted inadvertently into our records which were not consistent with the well-considered and formal position on which our church planted itself at its organization. A committee was appointed to examine carefully the records in order that the church might purge itself of every trace of sin touching this vital point. Since that date our various courts have made frequent slips, suffering themselves to be blinded by the passions of the hour. But hardly has anyone of our courts sinned against our historic position so boldly, so dispassionately, and so ruthlessly as the last Assembly. In response to a communication from the W. C. T. U. the Assembly took the following action: *Resolved*, That we are in hearty favor of National Constitutional Prohibition, and will do all properly within our power to secure the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution, etc." Can it be disputed that national prohibition is purely, solely and exclusively political in its character? According to the Standard Dictionary, political means "pertaining to public policy; concerned in the administration of government; belonging to the enactment and the administration of the laws." The same authority defines prohibition as "the forbidding by

legislative enactment of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors for use as beverages." Could anything be more comprehensively and minutely covered by the definition of political than national constitutional prohibition? The mere accident that a question has to do with public morals has absolutely no bearing on whether or not it is political. No more does the fact that it is disjoined from factional or partisan politics. Does it pertain to public policy? Is it something with which the State is dealing? Something which the State proposes to enact into law, and to enforce by means of civil pains and penalties? Then it is political, whether it be a proposition to close bar-rooms, stop Sunday mails, prevent murder, ratify a treaty, or revise the tariff. The one is just as much political as the other, and it just as foreign to proper ecclesiastical action. The same fundamental objection holds in every case—the church has no commission to co-operate with the State in the enactment of any law.

Did the Assembly think to save itself by inserting the word "properly?" What can the Assembly do properly toward securing an amendment to the constitution? There is only one way by which an amendment can be properly secured, and that is by a two-thirds vote of Congress proposing it, and a three-fourths vote of the States ratifying it. Just where in this process can the assistance of the Assembly properly come in?

Is it said that in the resolution "we" means merely members of the Assembly, who, as citizens, have a right to vote, and therefore have a right to pledge themselves to vote for an amendment to the constitution? The answer is that the members of the Assembly were not sent to exercise their rights as citizens of the commonwealth. They were sent as representatives of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they passed the resolution they were organized not as a convention of citizens, but as a court of the church. As a court of the church, who commissioned them to resolve in favor of National Constitutional Prohibition, and to pledge themselves to work for an amendment to the Constitution? There was only one source from which they could receive a valid commission, and that was from Christ, the only Head of the church, and the only Law-giver in Zion. Has he ever ex-

pressed himself in favor of National Constitutional Prohibition, and enjoined upon his followers the duty of working to secure an amendment to the Constitution? If so, then our church is wrong *ab initio*, and should erase from our book every word which defines the mission of the church as exclusively spiritual. We should repudiate all past deliverances of our Assemblies, which assert the non-secular and non-political character of the church. We should amend our confession of faith and write into it that synods and councils should "inter-meddle in civil affairs which concern the commonwealth." Furthermore, we should hunt for a new interpretation of Christ's declaration. "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight." Hitherto we have thought that Christ's kingdom included only his professed followers, and that the jurisdiction committed to its officers was restricted to its members, and that in the exercise of this jurisdiction, only spiritual weapons were to be used. If national constitutional prohibition comes properly under the purview of a church court, then its jurisdiction extends to all classes of citizens in the United States, even to infidels and atheists, and in the exercise of this jurisdiction it may make use of legislative enactments, carrying with them civil pains and penalties.

It should be further understood that if the General Assembly may endorse national constitutional prohibition and pledge itself to use all proper means to secure an amendment to the constitution, it may, on the same principle and with equal propriety, endorse any other congressional legislation that looks to the promotion of public morals; such, for example, as uniform divorce laws, the use of the Bible in public schools, arbitration treaties, and in a word, any and all laws that aim to mitigate the evils against which the church contends. But what is this, if it be not an effort to enter into co-operative alliance with the State in order to influence civil legislation for ecclesiastical ends? If it be proper to exert such an influence then it is proper to make it as effective as possible, even to the extent of making it controlling. Hence the conclusion that the church should, if possible, control all civil legislation that has to do with public

morals. This bears a very close resemblance to the sinister features of Ultra-montanism.

In this connection it may be as well to notice the action of the Assembly in reference to Christian faith and social service. The report of the *ad interim* committee on this subject was in the main most admirable. It laid down scriptural premises, from which it argued to a right conclusion as to the scope of the church's activities, the means which the church should employ, and the motives which should inspire its energies. In perfect accord with our standards, the committee declares that "the power given to the church is spiritual, ministerial and declarative, and her function, through the word and the spirit, is to inculcate and apply those principles, and to quicken those motives which are essential to all true and lasting reform." But the committee was too generous with its labors, and before concluding its report, seriously modified, if it did not directly contradict, its previous conclusion. In section III, the report says: "Inasmuch as all evils, social and industrial, have their source in human sin and selfishness, they can be remedied only by the divinely appointed plan for salvation from sin, and through the divinely given motive which is the love begotten in our hearts through God's great love for us in the gift of His Son." In section VI, the report says: "We believe that, inasmuch as many of these evils are rooted in the past and have grown with the development of civilization, they can be cured only by concerted and organized effort on the part of all good citizens." Here are two remedies prescribed for the same evils, each of which is said to be the only remedy—one only remedy is the divinely appointed plan for salvation from sin; the other only remedy is concerted and organized effort on the part of all good citizens.

It is very evident that the first finding of the committee was to lay down a postulate from which to deduce the true mission and function of the church. The second finding was to make a place for voluntary reform associations. While the process is manifestly illogical, there is no objection to recognizing the right, and even the propriety, of citizens to form voluntary organizations for securing moral reforms. But the committee went further and asserted that "our churches should always encourage

voluntary organizations for the betterment of social conditions, and urge their members to co-operate in them." How is this consistent with the previous restriction of the church's mission to the spiritual sphere, and its function to the application of God's plan for salvation from sin? These voluntary associations do not have a spiritual aim, and the remedy which they would apply is not salvation from sin. Their object is not spiritual regeneration, but moral reform; and they are trusting not to the word and spirit, but to the enactment of law, and the application of civil pains and penalties.

The committee knew that its report would not cover the ground contemplated in its appointment unless it defined the attitude of our church toward the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The committee was preparing the way for such definition in its elaborate enumeration of the social evils of the day, and the obligation of the churches to countenance and encourage reform associations. Its concluding recommendation is that "our churches cordially recognize and encourage the federal council as affording a common ground where all who love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ may meet for conference and co-operation in the vast and holy enterprise of Christian social service." What is this common ground on which all may meet for conference and co-operation? Is it the ground of a common gospel, recognized as the only remedy for social and industrial evils," inasmuch as these and all other evils have their source in human sin and selfishness?" Must the churches needs come together to agree on the use of God's plan for salvation from sin as the only agency permitted to them in their struggle for the renovation of society? Was that, in fact, the object of the creation of the Federal Council, to secure a greater concert of action, or more potent methods, in proclaiming the word of God for the amelioration of social conditions? Has the Federal Council, since its formation, taken any steps in this direction? Was that the meaning of its elaborate social program, in which it embodies substantially the same list of industrial and economic reforms which is emblazoned on the banner of the world's federation of labor? Was that its meaning when it sought an alliance with this labor organization by an interchange of dele-

gates? Was that its meaning when it created the office of associate secretary, and located it at Washington city? To ask these questions is to answer them. The Federal Council is not keeping its designs and methods secret. Anyone who will take the pains to watch its proceedings can see that from the outset its object has been to rally the forces of Protestantism and unite them for the purpose of securing certain ends by means of legal enactments. The appointment of Dr. Carroll with headquarters at Washington, was that he might watch the course of federal legislation, and serve as a medium for giving effect to the influence of the churches. Why else have his headquarters at Washington? Is God more accessible at that point than elsewhere? God is not, but Congress is. Plainly the Federal Council has its agent at Washington for the same reason that the vatican has its representative there. Protestantism, as expressed through the Federal Council, has placed itself squarely on the same platform with Rome.

It is not denied that the ends sought are in themselves worthy. The question at issue is exclusively one of means. May the Church of Christ seek any ends by using the machinery of civil government? If so, then our much-vaunted doctrine of the separation of Church and State falls to the ground; Rome is right, and we have no case against her for pernicious political activity; our church has occupied a false position all these years, and our standards should be revised. When our church weighs anchor and sails away from its moorings to join in the progressive movements of the age, those who oppose have a thankless task. They subject themselves to the odium which attaches to the reactionary and obstructionist. It would be in the interest of peace if we could make our confession and our conduct conform.

Our whole church is to be congratulated on the transfer of the home and school at Fredericksburg to the Synod of Virginia. Few enterprises have been launched that appealed more strongly to the sympathy of the people. The motives which actuated Dr. Saunders in conceiving the enterprise and setting it on foot were most commendable. But the method of its management, the irrepressible tendency to unduly enlarge its scope, involving

the necessity of incurring debt contrary to express stipulation, has made it a source of perpetual irritation and discontent.

Perhaps the experiment demonstrates the unwisdom of the Assembly's undertaking the direct management of school work. But, if so, then we may be preparing trouble for the future in two new enterprises which have just been started. Already the Assembly has fully committed itself to the establishment and maintenance of a school for lay workers at Richmond, Va., and it has a committee investigating the matter of utilizing certain buildings at Montreat for school purposes. The recent educational conference, held by order of the General Assembly, decided that the Synod should be the unit in the management of church schools. This would seem to be a wise decision, and is in harmony with the general policy which has long prevailed. But, if wise, why not apply it to these new enterprises? Could not the Synod of Virginia be entrusted with the responsibility for the support and management of the school in Richmond, and the nascent enterprise at Montreat be placed under the guardianship of the Synod of North Carolina? What is there in the nature of these two schools that would justify the Assembly in making them its peculiar wards? In the very nature of the case, schools must be more or less matters of local interest, and the effort to distribute the care of them, and the responsibility for their management over the whole church, is almost sure to be disappointing and unsatisfactory.