

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The fifty-ninth meeting of the General Assembly began its sessions on Thursday morning, May 15th, in the Napoleon Avenue church, New Orleans, La. Rev. James I. Vance, D. D., pastor of the First church, Nashville, Tenn., the retiring Moderator, called the Assembly to order. Rev. Dr. T. W. Sloan, of Greenville, S. C., and Rev. Dr. Charles E. Diehl, of Clarksville, Tenn., and the pastor of the church, Rev. D. U. Mooney, assisted in the opening services.

Mr. Mooney welcomed the Assembly to the church in a brief and appropriate speech, and expressed his pleasure at having the Assembly to meet here.

Dr. Vance preached the opening sermon from John 12:24. His sermon will be found on another page of this paper.

The sermon was followed by the communion service conducted by Rev. Dr. A. M. Fraser, of Staunton, Va., and Rev. Dr. S. M. Kennedy, of Pulaski, Tenn. The elements were distributed by twelve elders from different parts of the church.

Election of Moderator.

The Assembly went into the election of Moderator. Rev. Dr. Charles E. Diehl, of Clarksville, Tenn., nominated Rev. W. R. Dobyns, of St. Joseph, Mo. His nomination was seconded by Rev. I. C. Hunt, of Covington, Ky.; Mr. Rhodes S. Baker, of Dallas, Tex.; Mr. J. P. McCallie, of Chattanooga, Tenn.; Rev. Dr. C. R. Nisbet, of Kansas City, Mo.; Mr. A. J. A. Alexander, Spring Station, Ky.

Rev. Dr. A. M. Fraser, of Staunton, Va., was nominated by Rev. W. Tallafarro Thompson, of Knoxville, Tenn. This nomination was seconded by Rev. J. P. Robertson, of Galveston, Tex.; Rev. W. M. Walsh, of Sherman, Tex.; Rev. Dr. D. N. McLaughlin, of Norfolk, Va., and Rev. C. C. Weaver, of Oklahoma, Okla.

On motion of Rev. Dr. T. M. Lowry, of Memphis, Tenn., the Moderator led the Assembly in prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the election. The vote was 112 for Dr. Dobyns and 139 for Dr. Fraser. On motion of Mr. George E. Wilson, of Charlotte, N. C., the election of Dr. Fraser was made unanimous.

Rev. Robert Adams and Rev. E. D. Brown were elected Temporary Clerks.

TELEGRAPHIC REPORT.

New Orleans, La., May 16.—Thursday night Dr. James I. Vance, who has recently returned from France, spoke on the doughboy in France. He said that the soldiers wanted the old gospel of salvation. The hero of the war, said Dr. Vance, is not any general, but the doughboy. If the doughboy did not win the war, he made its winning possible. There were one hundred and seventy thousand of them at Chateau-Thierry. The American soldier is the most brutal soldier in the world, but is gentleness personified when the fight is won. The Germans have been amazed to find them gentlemen. As fighters they have won victories little short of miraculous, as at the Argonne Forest. The French said they could not win, but they drove the Huns out.

In speaking of the Young Men's Christian Association, Dr. Vance said that some mistakes had been made, but the work as a whole was of inestimable value to the soldiers. In the Argonne fight seven hundred Y. secretaries were at the front. Many of these were women.

One thing that specially sustained the soldiers overseas was the memory of mother, sister or sweetheart.

The doughboy is coming back less moral, but more religious. They are coming back with the feeling of their need of God increased. The Church has nothing to fear from the soldiers as they come back to their homes. They are not skeptics nor pagans. They are coming back to put their strength and influence into the work of the Church as never before.

The report of the Committee on Federal Union and a number of overtures from the Presbyteries and other papers on this subject were referred to the following committee for consideration and report to the Assembly: Dr. C. R. Nisbet, Kansas City, Mo.; B. D. Brantly, Blackshear, Ga.; Dr. E. B. McCluer, Bon Air, Va.; G. E. Wilson, Rev. J. W. Carpenter, Williamson, W. Va.; Dr. H. T. Graham, Florence, S. C.; Dr. J. F. Winnard, Tampa, Fla.; Dr. H. W. DuBose, Mobile, Ala.; Rev. Herve McDowell, Mt. Olive, Miss.; Rev. J. F. McKenzie, Lake Charles, La.; Dr. J. P. Robertson, Galveston, Tex.; Rev. J. F. Lawson, Little Rock, Ark.; Dr. A. J. A. Alexander, Spring Station, Ky.; Dr. Charles E. Diehl, Clarksville, Tenn.; President J. R. Dobyns, Abingdon, Va.; Rev. R. M. Gollightly, Waterford, Miss.; Rev. W. A. Zeigler, Rocky Mount, La., and Dr. I. S. McElroy, Columbus, Ga., as representative of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance. He said that this body represents the largest number of Protestant members represented by any body in the world. Reports show that the work of these churches is progressing both at home and abroad. The Presbyterian Church is the only church that has a world alliance. There are members of this alliance in nine countries on the continent of Europe with a constituency of ten millions. Rev. Ernesto Giampiccoli, the Moderator of the Waldensian Church of Italy, addressed the Assembly in behalf of his church.

A communication was received from Rev. J. M. Wylie, of Kansas City, Mo., a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, asking that he be given opportunity of presenting a petition to the President and Congress of the United States asking for this amendment to the preamble of the national constitution: "We, the people of the United States, devoutly recognizing the authority and law of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Ruler of nations, and desiring to form a more perfect union, etc." This is proposed in order that the constitution may recognize the fact that this nation is a Christian people.

New Orleans, La., May 17.—Up to this date most of the time of the Assembly has been taken up in the presenting and reading of reports of various kinds. Almost all of these have been referred to committees for consideration and reports. The report of the Committee of Conference with the Northern Presbyterian Church in regard to Federal Union attracted more attention than any other that has been brought before the Assembly. It was presented Saturday morning by Dr. J. M. Wells, the chairman.

The formation of a "Federal Assembly," to represent in one body all the churches federated therein, which, it is held, "will constitute the bond of union, peace and correspondence among all congregations and courts of the constituent churches," was the feature of the committee's report.

The outline of the plan of Federal Union provides that all Presbyterian and Reformed churches of this country shall be invited to join the union. The union shall become effective when

three or more Presbyterian or Reformed churches shall adopt the plan.

The Federal Assembly, it is proposed, shall be the declarative, executive, administrative and judicial agency of the union, and shall have the title "Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the United States of America."

The federal body will settle all questions arising between constituent churches and enforce agreements entered into by them. It will also add such power as to doctrine as may be necessary in the discharge of the administrative and judicial functions, but it shall not have power to frame symbols of faith for any of the constituent churches.

The Federal Assembly, it is proposed, shall consist 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 two constituent churches; second, of two commissioners elected by each subordinate Synod or corresponding body and two additional commissioners for each additional 50,000 communicants or major fraction thereof, after the first 50,000, the commissioners to be ministers and ruling elders in equal numbers from each subordinate Synod or corresponding body. The two sets of commissioners shall sit as one body.

It is proposed the Federal Assembly shall meet biennially and special meetings shall be called as provided in the constitution to be adopted later.

The full report will be found below.

The following minority report was presented:

The undersigned are unable to agree to the foregoing report for the reason that we believe it impossible to have a workable federation while the different churches are exercising concurrent jurisdiction in home work—that is, while they are occupying the same territory.

We therefore respectfully recommend that a committee be raised composed of one man from each Synod and elected by the Synod, which shall confer with similar committees with reference to union with the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America and other bodies of like faith and order.

(Signed)

W. R. Dobyns.

Wm. M. Anderson.

These reports were both referred to the special committee to which other papers on this subject were referred.

The Inter-church Movement was presented by Rev. Dr. James I. Vance and Rev. Charles H. Pratt. These speakers said that this is a proposed plan to unite all the Protestant churches in this country in a spiritual and evangelistic movement to secure men, money and power to do the great work which is before the Church of winning this country and the world for Christ. The effort is to be made to make a complete survey of the needs of all parts of the world and to secure the money and the men to meet those needs.

Time for adjournment came before the Assembly took any action.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF CONFERENCE ON FEDERAL UNION.

Your committee would respectfully present the following report:

1. The history of these negotiations is familiar to your body.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in session in Dallas, Tex., in May, 1917, adopted a report suggesting the organic union of that Church and our own, and telegraphed same to our As-

sembly, in session in Birmingham, Ala.

Our Assembly adopted the following answer:

"While this Assembly does not regard organic union as practicable at this time, yet it hereby appoints the Committee of Conference on Union asked for by the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and recommends to the proposed conference the consideration of the federation of all the Presbyterian Churches of our country upon some practical and effective basis."

The committee appointed as the result of the above action held four meetings, three of them being conferences with the Committee on Church Co-operation and Union of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

After considering in those conferences both organic union and federation under a paper declaring that "the jurisdiction of this committee is to deliberate and reach conclusions as to any recommendations to be made to our General Assembly upon the whole subject of organic union and all phases of federation," the committee presented the following unanimous report:

"Having had three conferences with the committee of the U. S. A. Church in which the differences between the two Churches have been faithfully considered and the difficulties in the way of union and federation have been honestly and frankly faced, it is the judgment of your committee that neither organic union nor federal union at present can be effected.

"We would recommend, however, that the Assembly accede to the request of the committee of the U. S. A. Church, that your committee be continued another year, to receive any added light that may be had and make final report to the Assembly of 1919."

2. This report was heard by the General Assembly of 1918, and referred by the Assembly to a select committee made up of one member from each Synod. This select committee presented two reports, a majority and a minority.

The majority report, signed by sixteen members, recommended immediate steps looking to organic union.

The minority report, signed by one member, recommended the adoption of the report of the Committee of Conference.

Both the majority and minority reports were rejected by the Assembly, and this substitute was adopted:

"The Assembly approves the report of our Ad-Interim Committee on Conference and continues a committee, as requested by the Committee on Conference of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

"The Assembly goes on record as opposing organic union at this time, but as approving the idea of a federal union of all the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the United States.

"It is ordered that the committee be enlarged so as to include one member from each Synod; that these committeemen be selected by the commissioners present from the Presbyteries constituting their respective Synods; and that this committee select its own chairman."

3. The following were selected by the representatives of the Synods as members of the committee:

Thornton Whaling, D. D., R. F. Campbell, D. D., James I. Norris, D. Dr. J. G. Venable, Homer McMillan, D. D., T. M. Hawes, D. D., George Summey, D. D., J. B. Hutton, D. D., W. R. Dobyns, D. D., J. M. Wells, D. D., Erskine Brantly, D. D., I. C. H. Champney, D. D., Hon. W. F. Stevenson, A. B. Curry, D. D., William M.

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