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The PRESBYTERIAN SURVEY

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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

JULY, 1924

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General Assembly Notes

R. E. MAGILL, *Secretary*

THE ASSEMBLY of 1924 can well be called a progressive—conservative body. The conclusions reached indicate that the members were forward-looking men and that they were not afraid to vote their convictions when the issue was between progress and a backward step.

When the issue touched matters involving the stand of the Church on the fundamentals of faith there was no debate and not a voice was raised in defense of the so-called Modernist views.

The deliverance of the Assembly of 1886, touching the question of Evolution was reaffirmed. This was prepared by Dr. G. B. Strickler and others, and was a strong reply to Darwinism which was rampant in those days, and affirmed the Church's stand on the account of man's origin as found in the Bible.

The Situation in the Foreign Field

The numerous overtures about the situation in the Foreign Mission Field and the presence of Missionaries who represented widely divergent views as to methods and policies promised to precipitate a lengthy and bitter debate on the floor of the Assembly. Wise counsel prevailed however, and the whole matter was referred to a special committee composed of one representative from each Synod.

This Committee sat for twenty hours and missed most of the Assembly sessions in an effort to get all the facts and formulate a report which would satisfy all parties and prevent a long debate on the Assembly floor. The members of this committee came to a unanimous conclusion and presented a report which was adopted by the Assembly without a dissenting vote, and accompanied with the singing of the doxology and prayers of thanksgiving for the harmonious solution of a perplexing question.

Recognition of Women's Work

A number of overtures were before the Assembly asking that the action of last year placing women on the Executive Committees be rescinded. These overtures had stalwart supporters on the Assembly floor and a majority report was presented by the Committee on Bills and Overtures, recommending that the question be sent down to the Presbyteries for consideration and advice. A minority report prepared by three elders was submitted, recommending that the action of the last Assembly be approved.

The debate was spirited and the action of last year was attacked on the ground that it was unconstitutional, unscriptural and contrary to the practice of the Church.

The case for the defense was summed up by Rev. Charles L. King, D. D., Pastor of Grace Covenant Church, Richmond, Va. This was Dr. King's first Assembly, but he commanded attention in his maiden speech, in which he reviewed the formation of the First Executive Committee in 1861. He reminded his hearers that the fathers of the Church fixed no restrictions as to membership on Executive Committees and did not specify that membership should be confined to *male* members of the Church, but provided that *private* members of the Church should be eligible to membership on Executive Committees.

Dr. King paid a merited tribute to the splendid work of the Auxiliary and called attention to the statements in the reports of the Executive Committees that the newly elected members were rendering a service of high value on every Committee. The Assembly, by an overwhelming vote adopted the minority report, thus endorsing the action of the last Assembly in giving women membership on the Executive Committees.

Change in the Church Year

The matter of changing the Church year to correspond with the Calendar year provoked some discussion, but was not given the attention the gravity of the issue demands.

The Standing Committee recommended in a majority report that no change be made. An appeal was made to change to the Calendar year in the interest of the country churches and the issue was muddled by discussing the condition of country roads in the fall as compared with March. The tremendous changes involved in fixing new dates for all the Church courts and rearranging the whole working schedule of the Church was lost sight of, and debate was cut off before all the facts involved could be presented.

If the order for the change stands the Church will have an experience equivalent to going over Niagara Falls and through the rapids below the falls. It is *possible* for a man to survive such an experience, but so far only about one has lived to tell the tale, while scores of adventurers have not even furnished corpses for a funeral.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

Box 330

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Nashville, Tenn.

Monthly Topic---Signs of the Times

IN SPITE of very much in the present world situation over which those who love and wish well to their fellow men can only grieve, and which on a superficial view would seem to justify a pessimistic outlook, we cannot get our hearts to consent to give up the long cherished belief that, on the whole, things are moving on, not from better to worse, but from worse to better, and that the triumph of the good over the powers of evil of which all the prophets have spoken is hastening to its consummation.

One thing that must challenge the attention of all those who are studying present world problems is the world wide effort of the common man, who represents everywhere the great mass of our humanity, to throw off the yoke imposed upon him by the man of privilege, and claim his proper share of the things that human labor produces for the supply of human wants. This is essentially a righteous cause and is bound ultimately to succeed. It involves a struggle, however, between classes, which is often bitter and cruel to the last degree, and which results temporarily in just such social and industrial confusion and chaos and general misery as prevails in many parts of the world today. The extreme example of this is what we find in Russia, where the pendulum has swung from the autocracy of the Czar to the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The extreme of this reaction is the natural result of the opposite extreme of tyranny and oppression under the Czar and the old aristocracy. Similar things occurred at the time of the French Revolution a hundred years ago, but in the course of fifty years, as the result of that revolution, the French nation as a whole was in a vastly happier

condition than it was before, or would have been if the revolution had not occurred. Our reading of the Signs of the Times in this aspect of the world situation is that the same thing will happen, within another fifty years, in Russia, and Poland and Austria-Hungary, and all other European countries, and in Mexico and all Spanish America, where the privileged few have monopolized the good things of life and the masses have been

condemned to an almost despairing struggle for bare existence. No doubt there will be oscillations back and forth in the prevalence of radical and conservative ideas and their corresponding political adjustments. But in the long run and in the final settling down of things, we are confident that the future of the world in respect of the enjoyment by the common man of the ordinary comforts and necessities of life will show, not retrograde, but progress.

But our concern is not so much with the economic and social as with the religious situation. How is it with the Church of Christ as regards its present condition and its outlook for the future?

In the city of Washington, our Episcopal brethren are building a great Cathedral, which they have named "The National Cathedral." The Bishop of Washington is now engaged in organizing what he calls "A College of Preachers," composed of the foremost pulpit orators of the land, to conduct a "Crusade"

against the prevalent reign of vice and lawlessness, due, as he and his associates claim, to the Church's failure to measure up to its present day responsibility and accomplish its present day mission. They have issued a pamphlet which says that Christianity has lost its hold on the masses; that the industrial classes have

SIGNS OF TIMES IN CHINA

Speaking of General Feng, known as "the Christian General"—Mother Stuart writes:

"It was a wonderful sight a few weeks ago, when 1,200 of his men stood out on the drill ground and received Christian baptism. Some seven or eight pastors, Chinese and foreigners, went in and out among them administering the rite, which was done in a most solemn and impressive manner; but they were a happy set of soldiers, following their master "even as he followed Christ." We hear that these men are devoted to their great leader, and it is easy for them to accept Christ on seeing the loyalty of their general to Him. A great deal of personal work was done among them for days before this open confession, and while some of them may be insincere, yet it is not often a popular thing to confess Christ in China. Less than 25 years ago thousands of Chinese soldiers, under the encouragement of the Empress Dowager, had all the foreigners in Peking shut up within the walls of the British Legation, doing their best to put them to death. Every Chinese Christian that they could lay hands on had been massacred and no one dared to be known as a follower of Christ. The contrast between the *then* and *now* makes us rejoice in the great change that has taken place here in the last quarter of the century."

ceased to be influenced by it; that Christianity in America is a decaying religion; that we are an outnumbered and an out maneuvered army, slowly retreating toward defect, etc., etc.

Well, let us not overlook and ignore any of the prevalent evils of our time, in the Church or out of it. Certainly there is much lawlessness and looseness of living, and much worldiness in the Church, and much selfishness among those who have professed that the religion that begins with denial of self, and much bitterness of controversy among those who are contending pro and con for what they believe to be the truth.

But is there not another side to the picture? Was there ever before in the history of our Protestant Christendom as much Bible study, as much general missionary intelligence and interest, as large giving for the Church's work, as much earnest and successful missionary work at home and abroad, as there is today?

Our own missionary income, home and foreign, has increased about ten-fold in the last quarter of a century, and more than doubled in the last six years, and the work itself has had more than a corresponding expansion and development. The same is true of all the Protestant churches. Even the unhappy controversy that is threatening further division and disruption in a Protestantism already too much divided is not without its incidental advantages. The Secretary of the American Bible Society recently remarked that there is an altogether unprecedented demand for Bibles, and that some one had asked him if he had not been paying sub-

sidies to the daily press to keep the controversy going as an advertisement of his business. And may it not be that in this matter the Adversary will overreach himself, as he has so often done before?

The progress may seem to be slow, but the all important thing about progress is not the *rate* of it, but the *direction* of it. Nor when for a time things seem to be going backward is there any reason to be discouraged. The tide rises by alternate advances and recessions, but ultimately never yet has failed to reach the limit set for it by Him who rules the tide.

Over and over again we have seen that the Lord has ways of taking care of the interests of His Kingdom in times of stress and peril that are not dreamed of in our philosophy, and that it is simple folly to allow ourselves to be made pessimists as we look out on the future by any conjunction of circumstances whatsoever. And no matter how much we may fail or be discouraged He shall not fail or be discouraged until He has set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law. We need to learn to think, not in years, but in generations and in centuries; only being assured that when the day of triumph comes everyone who has helped to bring it to pass will see it and share in it and rejoice in it. They that are alive and remain will not be beforehand with them that sleep in that day, but all shall be caught up together to meet their victorious Lord when the trumpet of the seventh angel sounds and the great voice from heaven proclaims, "The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."



A picturesque view of the Japanese Alps.