

25, 1891

THE
PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 17.—JULY, 1891.

I. AUTHORITY IN REVELATION AND MORALS.

FIVE FALLACIES AND ONE FIASCO CONVERGENT.

CURRENT literature, popular addresses and constantly recurring conversations in social intercourse, discover six convergent influences actively at work in society. Four are newer; two older. The aim of each is to shift the basis of authority in moral and religious life. The six forces differ widely in nature and in the character of those who direct the propagation and transmission of them through society. But, without collusion and moving along different, and sometimes antagonistic, lines, they tend to the same result, the annihilation of finality and authority in ethics and revelation. The convergence implies the superintendence of the same evil personality, shrewdly intruding himself into these different spheres of life and giving a common direction to their movements.

1. Blatant last century infidelity holds that miracles cannot be proven by testimony, and that, therefore, the claims of Christianity cannot be established because resting on them. It denies the relevancy or pertinency of what are called the evidences of Christianity, and in regard to Scripture would say: granted that a revelation has been made, it cannot be authenticated. It scoffs at religion as a superstition, and sneers at authoritative morals as the silly scruples of childhood and inexperience—greenness. Its ethics are utilitarian only. The best that it can say is, moral principles must be obeyed, because it is for the good of society. The evil of such a system was shown long ago in the famous passage about balances when held in the hands of self.—*David Hume, his confrères and followers.*

righteousness, but only shared it with us, is poor indeed—ghastly poor. If Christ only shared our obedience, then was his obedience only in fulfilment of a rule of duty for himself, and not as a condition of life for us? The old explanation here is simple and satisfactory, and opens no flood-gate to error. The other new positions are subject to similar criticism, especially in regard to the indwelling of the Spirit and regeneration, and the distinction between the Spirit *with* us and the Spirit *in* us, but this may suffice to put us on our guard.

K. M. McINTYRE.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1891.

It might have been wiser on the part of the management of the QUARTERLY to have selected some one who was not a member of the Assembly to write its history, as it is difficult for those who take part in affairs to write impartially concerning them. This difficulty is increased when the writer is unfortunate enough to have been generally found with the minority on most questions where there was serious division of opinion. But if such a person gives his testimony to the high character and earnestness of purpose of the members, and to the general excellence of the work done, his testimony will have more weight, perhaps, than that either of a mere spectator or of a member of the majority.

Many eyes were turned anxiously to this Assembly. It was composed largely of men comparatively unknown. The old leaders were nearly all absent. There was not a member present who had ever sat in the moderator's chair, the retiring moderator, of course, excepted. Of those that were known to the church at large, there were a considerable number—like Bryan, Molloy, McElroy, Boyd, Rose and Chester—who could “neither attempt to palliate nor deny” the “atrocious crime” of being young men—at least as the church counts young men. Then, too, there were measures before the Assembly that some feared as “revolutionary” and others regarded with grave doubt. Moreover, the Assembly was to meet in a “live” town—one of the most marvelous outgrowths of the new South, and perhaps some feared that the ozone of all this new, pushing aggressive life might enter into the Assembly, and cause it to run away with our dignified old church.

Well, none of these fears were realized. The ozone was there, the

life was there, the aggressive spirit was there; but if the Assembly erred anywhere, the most uncompromising conservative will not allege that it was on the side of indiscreet progressiveness. In fact, youth is not necessarily a pledge of aggressiveness. There is no more conservative member of any body than a man who is still too young to do his own independent thinking.

But it must not be imagined that this Assembly was composed entirely of young men. Dr. McIlwaine, of Hampden Sydney College, took a leading part in the Assembly, and was the chairman of one of its most important committees. Dr. Price, of Southwestern University, impressed many as being, probably, the ablest member of the Assembly. The presence of the venerable Dr. Marshall, of Texas, who attended his first Assembly in 1835, was a benediction to the body from beginning to end. Just where to classify Dr. Pitzer we do not know, as his white hairs and youthful spirits presented such a marked contrast.

The ruling eldership was very ably represented. Judge Martin, of Arkansas, an able jurist and charming speaker, was always heard with great interest. Col. Candler, of Georgia, whenever he spoke, made you feel the power of a man used to great public bodies. Judge Grat-tan, of Virginia, spoke always with a zeal and enthusiasm that commanded attention. Prof. Fulton, of Mississippi, one of the youngest ruling elders present, treated ecclesiastical questions with a thorough familiarity that made some of the brethren express the opinion that "he ought to have been a preacher."

The opening sermon presented a theme peculiarly timely—the unseen defences of the church, from 2 Kings vi. 16: "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." It set forth to the eye of faith the power of Jehovah on the side of the church, whether it was contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, or whether it was pushing forward its aggressive warfare to conquer the world for Christ. In this last respect it struck the keynote of the whole Assembly; with no differences to settle, with no controversies to allay, the great work before us was, How to do the Lord's work. There were, necessarily, differences of opinion about this, but this was the ruling desire in all hearts, and all were alike disposed to look to God for guidance in the doing of God's work.

The election of a moderator was in the same direction. The Assembly sought to honor—and thereby honored itself—one who was conspicuous by reason of the work he had done. It desired to honor, not merely a man who had done noble service on one of the outposts,

but to honor and emphasize that great department of the work of the church.

Dr. DuBose made not exactly a model moderator, according to the ordinary standard, but he was better than that. As he freely stated, the nature of his work prevented his having great familiarity with parliamentary law, and sometimes, when the rights of minorities depended on parliamentary questions, his decisions worked some hardship. But this was more than compensated for by the devotional spirit which he constantly maintained and the devotional attitude in which he constantly kept the Assembly. This is a precedent which all subsequent moderators will do well to follow. It was largely due to his influence and example that throughout the whole Assembly "the peace of God kept our hearts and minds."

The Assembly got to work with unusual rapidity. Instead of taking recess the first afternoon, as usual, to allow the moderator time to appoint his committees, the moderator was excused from attendance, and the Assembly heard the reports of the executive committees, which were all referred that afternoon to the appropriate committees, to be announced the next morning. This desire to facilitate business was further manifested by the appointment of an order of the day for Friday to hear the report of the *ad interim* committee on the Revised Directory for Worship, which was taken up the next morning after the standing committees had been announced, and the various overtures, reports, records and communications read and referred. There were a few questions of reference raised, as when it was moved to refer the overtures on the qualifications for licensure and ordination to the Committee on Education, and the overture on the Robinson case to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, but the latter committee properly got the former overtures, while the latter overture was referred to the Judiciary Committee.

There were, by the way, some eminently appropriate appointments in the chairmanship of committees. Dr. Park had bills and overtures as a matter of course. The Education committee was placed under the leadership of the president of one of our most important colleges, Dr. McIlwaine. The appointment of Rev. W. S. P. Bryan to Foreign Missions was a deserved recognition of his eminent services as agent of that cause in the Synod of North Carolina, as well as the remarkable point of development to which he has led his church in recently assuming the support of the whole African Mission. Judge Martin, of Arkansas, as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, was the right man

in the right place. Some doubted the propriety of placing a man with the extreme views on "organic union" of Dr. Pitzer at the head of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, but time—or Dr. Briggs—has wrought a great change in his views, and he proved in the end to be more rankly conservative on those questions than the Assembly itself.

The Directory for Worship was presented in admirable form, but it seemed at first as if it would take the whole session of the Assembly to go through with it. On the second paragraph an amendment was suggested, and what with the amendment and the debate upon it, and the amendment to the amendment, and the substitute for the whole, it looked as if we would never get beyond the question of posture in prayer. A running fire of amendments was kept up for some time until it was found that they were always voted down, and then the brethren became discouraged and rapid progress was made. There was no change made until the optional form for marriage was reached, where the questions were all, "Do you?" and the answers were all, "I will." This had been recognized by the members of the committee as an error, and the chairman sent a message suggesting one form of amendment, and the secretary suggested another, but the lawyers and judges present gave their judgment in favor of "Do you?" and "I do" throughout, and it was so amended. The committee was thanked for their valuable labors, and the Directory sent down to the Presbyteries for adoption or rejection. It is to be hoped that after the next Assembly it will become a part of our organic law, and the Revised Book be at last complete.

The first of the standing committees to get in their report was that on Education. It was read at the popular meeting in the interest of that cause Saturday evening, and taken up and discussed on Monday. It was a most important paper and was taken up by the Assembly with great enthusiasm. Vigorous speeches were made when the clause came up recommending the employment of a secretary for his whole time, and there was a little skirmish of the picket line on the coming battle about the qualifications for licensure and ordination. Those in favor of change were anxious to show that they were in favor of *every other* method of increasing the supply of the ministry, as well as the proposed constitutional change; while those opposed to the change expressed themselves in favor of this as obviating the necessity of such "revolutionary" measures. The vote by which this clause was adopted was like a whirlwind. This settled also the question of consolidating Education with Publication. When the question of the amount to be

raised came up, an enthusiastic brother proposed \$40,000, instead of the committee's recommendation of \$30,000, but more prudent counsels prevailed, and the amount remained as reported. The day of prayer for colleges was set for the fourth Thursday of February, as heretofore. The recommendation enjoining Presbyteries to see that, ordinarily, their candidates go to our own Theological Seminaries, awakened considerable discussion. The amendment was adopted limiting it to candidates "receiving aid," and as another amendment was pending, the debate was complicated by points of order; but when that difficulty was removed, it became evident that, on sober second thought, the Assembly would vote down the whole section rather than settle a question of principle on a pecuniary basis. The amendment was at last reconsidered, and the recommendation adopted as it came from the committee. In answer to the overture from the Presbytery of St. Louis, recommendations were adopted looking to a laying of the claims of the ministry before our youth, from the pulpit, by parents, and by those in charge of our schools and colleges; and also laying it upon the consciences of our "ruling elders, deacons, and other Christian workers, who may possess the scriptural qualifications for the work of the ministry," to consider prayerfully its claims. The unanimous vote on this clause really granted the principle that some were contending for in the matter of constitutional change, but consistency is not always the controlling influence in Assemblies. On a subsequent day the election of a secretary and committee was taken up, and Dr. Richardson and the Memphis Committee reelected. It is due both to Dr. Richardson and to the brethren who suggested a change, to state that no reflection on the administration of that most faithful and excellent officer was intended, but that, the sphere of his duties having been so much enlarged, the new department of his labors—the visiting of colleges and schools, to lay the claims of the ministry before young men—was thought by some to demand an amount of activity—not to say versatility—that was hardly to be expected in one of his advanced years. A question of this delicate nature was never discussed with better feeling.

On Tuesday, Foreign Missions had the floor. Chairman Bryan presented the results of the unremitting labors of the committee, which had sat continuously through all the sittings of the Assembly. The report recognized gratefully the prosperity of the work, the increasing liberality of the church towards it, and the increasing number of young men and young women who are giving their lives to it. It re-

commends the raising of \$150,000 for this cause during the current year; recommends the arrangements for a general observance of the "simultaneous meetings," which have been successfully inaugurated in North Carolina and elsewhere; urges prayer for missions regularly and fervently, especially at the Monthly Concert; sets apart the last Sabbath of May as Children's Day; removes the publication of *The Missionary* to Nashville; divides the office of Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, leaving it to the committee to choose the treasurer; re-elects the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, and the former committee. With regard to the questions about the Greek Mission, concerning which there has been a painful agitation lately in the papers, the reply to the Greek Evangelical Church reciprocates their expressions of Christian fellowship, and informs these brethren of our fixed determination to confine our labors to the Greeks of European Turkey. It further directs the Executive Committee to acquire all possible information with regard to the expediency of continuing our mission to the Greeks, and take such action as may be necessary. In answer to the overtures from St. Louis Presbytery, the request to establish a mission to Jews in Palestine was regretfully declined, and the matter of special reinforcement of the Brazilian Mission was left to the discretion of the Executive Committee. The recommendation of a field secretary for Foreign Missions was stricken from the report. Perhaps this was wise in view of the fact that the man was not in sight, and that the force had already been increased by one officer. But it was not done on wise grounds. The chief difficulty seemed to be that it was a return to the old system of agents, and that it would disorganize our present plan of systematic beneficence, whereas, in fact, the functions of the proposed office were very different from those of the old agents, and the last Assembly did not hesitate to appoint a field secretary for colored evangelization, and this Assembly assigned field duties to the Secretary of Education.

On the whole, this great cause was never more ably handled than at this Assembly. The amount asked, while a large increase on last year, is not extravagant, in view of the awakening of our churches on this subject, the introduction of more systematic methods of raising money, the increasing number of churches that are offering to support missionaries, and especially in view of the principle that when the Lord puts it into the hearts of men to *go*, he will put it into the heart of the church to *send*. The division of the office of assistant secretary and treasurer does not involve the increased expense that would at first

appear, as it has been absolutely necessary to employ office help at almost equal cost.

Home missions did not receive the usual amount of attention from the Assembly. The report of the committee called forth no discussion, and consequently the attention of the Assembly was not concentrated on this work. Earnest appeals, however, were made for increased contributions, especially to the Evangelistic and Invalid Funds. It was expected that the relations of the general work to the Synodical and Presbyterian work would come up in some form, but there was only the usual recommendation to the Presbyteries, to "co-operate." It would appear that before long some system must be devised by which the older Synods would see entirely to their own destitutions, while the strength of the church as a whole would be concentrated on the more pressing demands of new fields. The apparent indifference to this cause (comparatively speaking) impressed us as due to the fact that a general work diffused throughout the weaker and stronger Presbyteries and Synods cannot appeal to the church with the same distinctness as the synodical work that is drawing so largely the sympathies of our people. But if the Assembly's Home Mission work were differentiated from the work in the older and stronger Synods, it would appeal to the heart of our people with the same imperativeness as the Foreign Mission work.

But in one department of the Home Mission work decided and hopeful progress was made. That was the Colored Evangelistic Work. The report of the field secretary and his memorial, together with several overtures relating to this cause, were referred to a special committee, that reported recommending the establishment of an Executive Committee of Colored Evangelization. Birmingham was chosen for the location of the committee, and Rev. A. L. Phillips was made secretary. This committee will appoint directors for Tuskalooza Institute, and its secretary will visit the colored Presbyteries and churches, with a view to their organization into an independent church. If only our Northern friends could see their way clear to work to the same end, and both Assemblies, through their proper agencies, work for the encouragement and support of one independent colored church, this vexed question could be in a fair way towards permanent and satisfactory settlement. As it is, it looks as if our church was addressing itself to a solution of the problem with a vigor never before manifested.

The important cause of Publication received especial attention at the hands of this Assembly. The Executive Committee made it plain

that if the Assembly desired the work of colportage to go on, the church must be aroused to action, and that it could no more continue to take the profits of the business department for the benevolent work of the church, but must use them in the publication department, and only do such benevolent work as the actual contributions of the church justified. To meet this urgent need the Assembly calls for \$20,000.

Dr. Stacy presented an elaborate report on the Sabbath, which, with other papers bearing on the subject, was referred to a special committee. In response, the Assembly united with the great body of petitioners who are demanding that the gates of the Columbian Exposition be closed on Sunday. A committee was also appointed to prepare a pastoral letter to our people with regard to the Sabbath.

On Temperance the Assembly reaffirmed the decision of former Assemblies, and urged our members to use all proper means looking to the abatement of the liquor traffic, and recommended abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks.

The Bible Cause was made one of our regular causes of systematic beneficence. Collections were taken this year amounting to nearly \$4,000. The Assembly had the pleasure of listening to Dr. McLean, the honored Secretary of the American Bible Society, who visited the Assembly fourteen years ago, not to ask our help as now, but to ask how they might help us.

The report of the Committee on Sabbath-schools declined to accede to the request of the Woman's National Christian Temperance Union (non-partisan), that special temperance lessons be given monthly in our schools, and also, for lack of means, answered negatively the overture for a General Superintendent of Sabbath-schools.

Fraternal greetings were exchanged with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the Reformed Episcopal Church, and the delegate from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, Rev. J. Rockwell Smith, D. D., was received and heard with profound interest. The Assembly declined to appoint delegates to a National Temperance Convention, but made arrangements for continued concert of action with other churches with regard to arbitration as a substitute for war. The Committee of Foreign Correspondence reported, recommending that we sever our connection with the Alliance of the Reformed Churches. The difficulty was partly financial, and partly fear of the movement for a consensus creed. The former difficulty was removed and the latter felt to be unreal, and so a substitute was adopted arranging for the appointment of delegates to Toronto, but declining

to appoint representatives on a committee to prepare a consensus creed.

Two Presbyteries were transferred—Indian, to the Synod of Texas, and Savannah, to the Synod of Georgia. In consequence of this latter change, the name of the Synod of South Georgia and Florida was changed to Florida.

In answer to an overture, a strong position was taken on the matter of women speaking in promiscuous religious assemblies; but their right to hold meetings among themselves was acknowledged. There were only two dissenting votes. One member explained that he was in favor of women speaking in the small assemblies of the Christian Endeavor Societies, and the other that he thought it proper for a returned female missionary to tell of her work to a general audience.

The report of the Committee of Bills and Overtures on the various papers placed in their hands, with regard to licensure and ordination, was taken up Wednesday afternoon. There were two papers, each signed by four ministers and four elders. Paper No. 1 advocated the sending down to the Presbyteries a series of amendments that would secure two results, (1), the regular and ordinary entrance into our ministry of men without classical training, on the basis of those qualifications that the Scripture demanded. As a matter of fact, it demanded of them at ordination everything now demanded, except the knowledge of the original languages of Scripture. Special emphasis, at the same time, was laid on the duty of Presbyteries to secure for those candidates whose early training was in their hands every form of preparation that could promote their efficiency. These provisions were to take the place of our perfectly indefinite provision for "extraordinary cases." (2), Such a re-adjustment of the relation of licensure and ordination that licensure might take place after one year's study, and on such acquirements as could be obtained in that time, while ordination could only be after two years' further study and trial, and on an examination that embraced all the topics now required, and in addition the heavier parts of trial now demanded at licensure.

Paper No. 2 declined to send down the proposed amendments, (1), because the matter had been sufficiently agitated in former Assemblies; (2), because it was not an expedient time to lower our standard; (3), because the use of other means would yield a sufficient supply of ministers in the future, and, (4), because the constitution amply provided for the entrance of the class of ministers that these overtures sought to provide for, in its provision for "extraordinary cases."

The points made by the advocates of paper No. 1 may be thus summarized:

All the reasons given for not sending down in paper No. 2 are either false or defective: The *first*, because, as shown by letters read, former Assemblies refused to discuss the matter, and the only way to stop the agitation was to let the Presbyteries decide the question. The *second*, because the changes proposed do not lower the standard. The present standard cannot be lowered, as the provision for "extraordinary cases," as now interpreted, destroyed all standard; it was proposed to *define* the class that we wanted, that they might be invited and others deterred who can now get in. The *third*, because while all these means are important, the Scriptural plan requires us to provide for the *present*, and these provisions only look to the "days to come." That was not the Saviour's way of raising up a ministry. It was, "Go ye." The *fourth*, because this class are not amply provided for in the constitution. There is a provision for extraordinary licensure, but none for extraordinary ordination. And this provision, while so indefinite as to break down all the proper safeguards to the entrance into our ministry, was of such a nature as to deter humble and modest men from making use of it, except when unusual pressure was brought to bear upon them. Then, the paper erred by defect in taking no notice of the urgent demand for a readjustment of the relations of licensure to ordination.

With regard to the first point secured by Paper No. 1, the regular and ordinary entrance into our ministry of men without classical training, the simple question is, "Do we want them?" The answer to that is given by the exhortation of the report of the Committee on Education to our elders, deacons, and Christian workers; and by Paper No. 2, which directs Presbyteries "prudently to encourage" them. But it is feared that if this change was made they would come in too large numbers, and that there are some risks about having too many of them. These risks are supposed to be—

(1), Inability to defend the faith; the workman must be one who needeth not to be ashamed. But this ability is only relative after all. The argument carried to its logical results leads to absurdity. We could ordain none who were not the equal in culture of any conceivable foe. We must rely on the sword of the Spirit, and that can be wielded effectively oftentimes by the plainest man in whom the Spirit dwells. The church will always have great apologetes, but we cannot require this standard of all. We do not now, and never will.

(2), Unsoundness in doctrine. It is said, "An illiterate ministry will become an unsound ministry." But these changes cannot lead to an illiterate ministry. They require an intelligent ministry, though not necessarily a classically educated ministry. Is it meant that knowledge of the original languages is necessary to insure sound doctrine? But (a), our theologies and commentaries are now intelligible to the English reader; (b), the "Cumberland" argument is against them, for the unsoundness of the illiterate candidates was allowed to pass by the educated Presbytery, proving it unsound. (c), History is against them, for from Origen, Arius and Pelagius, down to a case now agitating our sister Assembly, heretical teaching has come in from the learned. (d), Facts are against them now, for the most conservative branch in our church courts is the ruling eldership, who are not learned in the original, and they would hardly become unsound by being ordained to the ministry.

But the great question is, are there men scripturally qualified? Settling that will settle everything else. On this point it was argued: (a), Knowledge of the original tongues is nowhere mentioned in Scripture among the qualifications necessary. The Bible is our charter. (b), It does not follow from the contemporary knowledge of Greek, for the Scriptures from which it was proved that Jesus was the Christ were in a language that was not vernacular even in Palestine; (c), our church has already settled the question. It of course could not approve in any case the ordination of a single person without the Scriptural qualifications; but (1), It has established Tuscaloosa Institute, where neither Greek nor Hebrew is taught, as the only preparation for our colored ministry; (2), Not one of our foreign missions adopts the standard of the home church; (3), This Assembly has decided the question by its exhortation to our elders and deacons "who may have the Scriptural qualifications for the work of the ministry." Surely the committee was not wasting the time of the Assembly by talking about our elders and deacons who know Greek and Hebrew!

But the point may be made that this argument cuts too deep—that according to it, we have no right to require Greek and Hebrew of any. The answer is that there is a broad distinction between what the church may exact as a *sine qua non* for entering the ministry and what course it may require its candidates to pursue for their highest efficiency. In the former respect it can have no "policy;" it has no authority to exact anything that Christ has not exacted; in the latter, as a wise parent or guardian, it is bound to aim at the best possible

results. The standard of highest efficiency cannot, however, be made the standard of entrance.

With regard to the other point secured by paper No. 1, it was argued that it was illogical to demand the same standard for licensure as for ordination. A man should be allowed to try his gifts before he had acquired all that was necessary for entrance into the office. Our present system violated a natural law, and so had adjusted itself, the constitution to the contrary notwithstanding. Licensure had become practically equivalent to ordination, and the examination for ordination a mere form, which informal licensure had become the prevalent practice of our Presbyteries, with the authority of the General Assembly.

The increase of the ministry was the great need of the church. This increase would be operative in that direction in two ways. The first provision would make a plain path for efficient men into our ministry, who could only now enter under a provision that was brought into disrepute by the abuse of it; the second provision would encourage men of all classes by giving them an earlier opportunity to try their gifts and make their calling sure.

But above even this question was the question whether ours was to remain a constitutional church. Brethren were very zealous for the constitution when it came to amending it in a constitutional manner, but were willing to run a ploughshare right through it when it came to observing it. The church should have the courage either to amend its constitution or change its practice. We will be more impressed with the seriousness of those who oppose the former when we see them propose the latter.

The argument on the other side was as follows: ¹

“It is claimed by the advocates of the paper for which the substitute has been offered, that the qualifications for licensure and ordination prescribed by our Book of Church Order, are such as to exclude from our ministry many men who are abundantly qualified by nature and grace, and it is proposed to send down for the adoption of the Presbyteries such amendments of the Book of Church Order as will remove those restrictions.

“The object is to increase the number of our ministers, an end greatly to be desired. But with a strange inconsistency, it is claimed that the proposed amendments do not lower the standard of qualifications for the ministry, but that the end is to be attained by subjecting to a more clearly defined and severer examination those extraordinary cases which are already provided for in our Book. It would seem to be a self-evident proposition that if it is the high character of these

¹To insure absolute fairness in the presentation of this argument we have copied entire the excellent report of Dr. Price's speech in the *Central Presbyterian*.

qualifications that keeps men out of the ministry, the only way to relieve the difficulty is to remove the cause; in other words, to lower the qualifications.

"We have had, therefore, an elaborate argument to prove that these qualifications are unscriptural and unnecessary, while all the time it is being claimed that the proposed changes will not lower the standard of qualifications for the ministry.

"I am obliged to assume that this is the purpose of the overture, and it is in fact assumed by all its advocates. The bars are already down, fourteen out of the twenty-four panels of the fence are down, and it is proposed to throw down the remaining ten. If this is not the object of the overture it is unmeaning. Our church has been working under this rule, which it is sought to change, from the beginning; it is only of late that it has been discovered to be a source of weakness, an impediment to our success. The advocates of a change are obliged to show the strongest possible reasons before they would be justifiable in reversing the traditional policy of the church, under which she has achieved all her success.

"How is it, then, that we can afford to abandon our policy and lower the standard of qualifications for the ministry? First, Is it because the age and state of society in which we live require a lower grade of intelligence in the ministry? Second, Is it because it requires a less fully equipped ministry to defend the doctrines of Christianity? On the contrary, religion is attacked on all hands by the weapons of science and learning. Third, Is it because the other denominations with which we coöperate, and in one sense compete, are lowering their standard of education? Fourth, Is it because there is an increasing unwillingness upon the part of young men to prosecute the course of study required? Never in our history have there been so many candidates. Fifth, Is it because the difficulties of procuring an education are greater than formerly? Sixth, Is it because it is more difficult to raise means for their education? No one denomination can expect to do the whole work. Our part seems to be to conserve and teach the truth. If we abdicate our proper seat our right to exist as a separate denomination ceases."

When each side had presented its case, and the general debate had fairly begun, it was suddenly ended by the call of the question. The manner of its accomplishment was not such as our judgment can approve, and it is fortunate that the painful impression it produced was modified by the willingness of its movers to reconsider the vote of the forenoon when the Assembly convened in the afternoon. The facts were these. The moderator announced that the hour for a recess had come. A member asked leave to make a "motion." The moderator ruled motions out of order. He asked unanimous consent, but objection was made. Some member then moved he have permission to make his motion. The point was made that if motions were out of order, a motion could not make it in order; nothing but unanimous consent would suffice. The point was overruled, however, and the motion to give leave was put and carried by a majority vote. The "motion" was then made and proved to be the call for the question. Many members supposed the motion had no reference to the subject in hand,

and others that it had reference to procedure in the debate. It was generally felt that if a member intended to call the question, he should have said so, and that the call of the question was not properly a "motion." The question, nevertheless, was put and carried, and, on an aye and no vote, the substitute was adopted by a vote of 97 to 42. This substitute, however, was not Paper No. 2, but another paper, proposing the same action, but omitting the reasons. Of course, this action was not legally the action of the Assembly, as it was taken during recess, and without the unanimous consent that alone could make it regular,¹ but it expressed the sentiments of the members, and will, therefore, some day be of historical interest as a milestone to measure the progress of ideas.

The next day the Assembly voted down the amendment unanimously reported by the Committee of Bills and Overtures, providing for an examination for ruling elders and deacons elect. It only established a mode of procedure for the exercise of a right now given by the Constitution (Chap. VI. sec. 1, Art. 3), but the Assembly was as much opposed to raising the standard of eldership as to "lowering" that of the ministry. It is safe to say that if either of the proposed changes

¹ It should be further noted that the only question voted upon was not the question properly before the Assembly. According to all parliamentary authority, according to the uniform usage of our own Assembly, and according to all common sense, the adoption of a substitute for a substitute only places the third paper in the position of the second, and the vote has then to be taken between the third and the first. If then adopted it is still before the house and may be amended before it is adopted as the sense of the house. But the positiveness of the brother who was just then engineering the forces of the majority secured from the Moderator the decision, that if the third paper was carried on the first vote it ended the matter, and although every member of the Assembly who was in the habit of attending our church courts ought to have known better, this decision, revolutionizing all parliamentary usage, was sustained on appeal. The effect of the decision was to bring the Assembly to an immediate choice between the third and first papers. Paper No. 2 was practically ruled out, and it was the friends of that paper that should have complained. But after all the elaborate arguments that were made for it, not one voice was raised asking that it be given a chance. It was incontinently abandoned even by the committee that brought it forth. But if the third paper had been of a tenor friendly to the first (proposing, say, to send down the amendments for *discussion* and *criticism*, not for action), then the palpable absurdity of the decision would have been patent to all. The friends of 1 would have voted for 3 to destroy 2, but that would not mean that, if given another vote, they would not have voted for 1 as a stronger measure than 3. But the point is too well settled to need argument, if the action of the Assembly had not given it importance.

had been now in the Book, and it had been sought to change that, the Assembly would have been as decidedly opposed to change as in the cases before us.

After an animated discussion, Hot Springs, Arkansas, was chosen as the next place of meeting, over New Orleans.

The closing exercises of the Assembly were made solemn and tender by the words of Dr. Marshall, especially as he contrasted the spirit of the Assembly with the bitterness he had sometimes seen, and spoke words of encouragement as to the future of the church, drawn from his observation of the young men who were coming to the front in the work of the church. At Mr. Bryan's request, he led the Assembly in prayer in behalf of the moderator, who is soon to return to his work in China. The moderator, when the vote of thanks was adopted, asked Dr. J. R. Wilson to lead in prayer in behalf of the Birmingham churches, which had not only done so much for the comfort of the Assembly, but had met in special prayer in its behalf before it convened. Rev. Dr. Handley, of the Central church, responded appropriately. The Assembly was then dissolved in the usual manner.

We think, on the whole, that the Assembly was above the average. Of the three we have witnessed, or attended, it made far the best impression. Its spirit was admirable. The impressions it left on the community were all for good. It did many wise things. It left the work of the church better advanced than it found it. If it left some things for subsequent assemblies to do, it but obeyed the universal law of history.

PEYTON H. HOGE.

THE NORTHERN GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Not since the days of 1837 has the meeting of this body been looked forward to with more interest and concern. The interest was universal. The papers of every denomination, and of no denomination, were full of it. The pulpits in all our churches, and in many of our sister churches, were resounding with the special theme that was to be discussed. Scores of Presbyteries were overturing the body on the great question of the day. And no wonder. The matter involved was vital to revealed religion. The issues were of greater moment than those of 1837, for they lay at the very foundation of our faith and involved the integrity of the word of God itself, and related to matters upon which, in all the conflicts of past years, the Presbyterian Church has been agreed.