

The Presbyterian Outlook



Vol. 128

RICHMOND, VA., APRIL 8, 1946

No. 14



ANSLEY C. MOORE

IN THIS ISSUE

THE AUBURN AFFIRMATION

By Walter L. Lingle

APR 3 1946

EDITORIALS

What the Federal Council Did
Methodists Are Doing the Job

Durham, N. C.

TWENTY SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS NAMED



Churches served by Dr. Moore are shown here, reading clockwise, beginning at upper right: McDonough, Ga., Thomasville, Ga., the Peace Memorial Church, Clearwater, Fla., and the Government Street Church, Mobile, Ala., where he is now pastor. His sermon, from The Outlook Pulpit, "Handling Those Anxious Cares," appears on page 4.

The Presbyterian Outlook

OLD IN SERVICE

Established 1819

NEW IN SPIRIT

Volume 128. No. 14. April 8, 1948

13 North Fifth Street, Richmond, 19, Virginia

Early Trend of Poll On Reunion is Held In Later Tabulation

71% Favorable to Presbyterian
Reunion; 29% Are Opposed

With first reports on Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, West Virginia, Louisiana and Georgia, the poll being conducted by the editors of THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK on the question of the possible reunion of the Presbyterian Churches, US and USA, now reflects trends of feeling in all sections of the denomination. A summary of the returns shows 37% favoring reunion "as soon as practicable"; 34% favoring reunion "but not while there is any considerable protesting minority"; and 29% as opposed to reunion.

Postal card ballots have been sent to every minister in the church, to all seminary students, and to hundreds of elders, in churches in all the synods.

Elders responding to the poll indicate very much the same point of view as that reflected by the summary. Their separated ballots show 41% for reunion as soon as practicable; 30% for reunion, with the qualification; and 29% opposed.

Responses to the poll by synods are indicated below:

1. I favor reunion of these two churches as soon as practicable.
2. I favor reunion of these churches, but not while there is any considerable protesting minority.
3. I oppose reunion of these two churches.

SYNOD	1	2	3
Snedecor	47%	47%	6%
Kentucky	62	28	10
Missouri	58	26	16
Seminary Students	48	32	20
Tennessee	46	34	20
Oklahoma	30	47	23
Texas	48	28	24
Arkansas	38	38	24
West Virginia	30	46	24
Alabama	32	43	25
Virginia	39	35	26
Louisiana	36	38	26
North Carolina	37	33	30
Florida	42	24	34
Mississippi	25	35	40
Georgia	26	32	42
Appalachia	16	38	46
South Carolina	16	33	51
SUMMARY	37	34	29
Elders Only	41	30	29

In coming weeks changes in these standings will be printed as they occur and also studies of the vote by presbyteries will be revealed.

Scholarship Winners Named

Mississippi Places 6; West Virginia 3, Out of 20

Six Mississippi young people are announced as winners of scholarships offered by the Louisville Committee of Christian Education, by Executive Secretary Wade H. Boggs. West Virginia places second in this year's contest placing three winners out of the twenty. Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia and Missouri have two winners each while Appalachia, South Carolina and Alabama have one each.

These twenty scholarships are offered to seniors in high school who are members of the Presbyterian Church, US, toward their education in the church's colleges. Scholarships are valued at \$2,000, \$1,600, \$1,200, \$1,000, \$500, \$400, three of \$300 each, three of \$200 each, and eight of \$100 each. The first four awards are on a four-year basis, one-fourth the amount being available for each college year.

Extensive tests are required of competitors in the contest, with several comprehensive papers demanded.

Winners in this year's contest, as announced by Dr. Boggs, are as follows:

1. William Junkin Hamilton, Knoxville, Tenn.
2. Virginia Catching, Hazlehurst, Miss.
3. Charles Till Davis, Fayette, Miss.
4. Donald Woods Shriver, Norfolk, Va.
5. Alethea Wardlaw Mitchell, Memphis, Tenn.
6. Jean Stewart Wasserman, Huntington, W. Va.

7. Irvine Henry Anderson, Jr., Natches, Miss.

8. Carter Lambert Coghill, Charlestown, W. Va.

9. Helen Ruth Coplen, Summit, Miss.

10. Virginia Patricia Murphy, Bluefield, W. Va.

11. Suzanne Catherine Espenett, Kansas City, Mo.

12. Catherine Lenoir Davis, Liberty, S. C.

13. James Venner Cobb, Jr., Louisville, Miss.

14. Anita Viola MacKenzie, Charlottesville, Va.

15. William Wooten Peters, Wilmington, N. C.

16. Betsy Joan Mason, Mobile, Ala.

17. Marjorie Anne Hoffeld, St. Louis, Mo.

18. Sarah June Patterson, Greensboro, N. C.

19. Lois Valeria McFadden, Tupelo, Miss.

20. Harriet Evans Kaveney, Gallatin, Tenn.

Honorable Mention (No Award)

21. Harold Brice Alexander, Chester, S. C.
22. Mary Louise Dickson, Huntsville, Ala.
23. Margaret Elizabeth Bole, Carrollton, Miss.
24. Robert Conrad Palmer, Jr., Pensacola, Fla.
25. Carrie Blanche Dixon, Jacksonville, Fla.

Atomic Warfare Report, Not Adopted By FC, Will Be Published

The report on "Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith," made by twenty-two theologians of national reputation, widely and erroneously reported in the daily press when it was presented to the recent meeting of the Federal Council in Columbus, Ohio, has been acted upon by the executive committee of the council. The Columbus meeting took no action on the paper except to refer it to the executive committee. At the March meeting of this committee the report was neither adopted nor rejected; it was "approved for publication as an expression of the opinion of the 22 signers of the document."

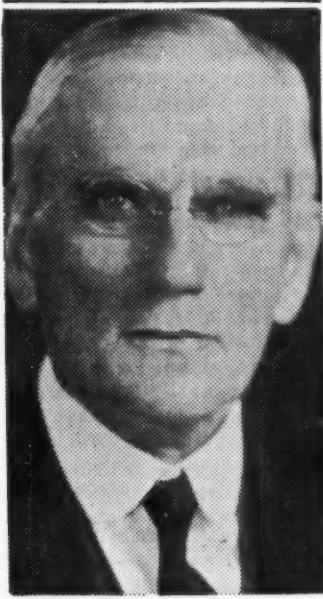
Members of the committee making the study come from all shades of opinion regarding the waging of war. Because of their stature and the significance of their report the Federal Council leaders have thought it worthwhile to provide this report for general distribution. It was well understood at Columbus that any effort to adopt the report would have torn the special meeting asunder because of the wide divergence of opinion regarding the atomic bomb on the part of members of the council.

President Frank H. Caldwell, of Louisville Seminary, was one of the signers of the report. Chairman of the committee was Robert L. Calhoun, professor of historical theology at Yale University.

The Auburn Affirmation

By WALTER L. LINGLE*

THE AUBURN AFFIRMATION has been a much discussed document in recent years. In the minds of some it is the chief obstacle standing in the way of the re-union of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the Presbyterian Church in the United States



Dr. Lingle

of America. This being true, it seems to me that we should approach this historic document with open minds, and try to understand what the signers meant by it. This I have tried to do for myself. When the Affirmation was first issued in 1924 I secured a copy, and by study and by conversations and correspondence with some of the signers I have tried to understand its real meaning. Now I have been requested to interpret it for the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK. In order to do this it is necessary to go back thirty-six years.

In 1910 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., adopted a resolution naming five doctrines which it considered essential for

ordination and good standing in the ministry. This action was re-affirmed by the General Assembly in 1916, and again in 1923. Here are the five doctrines as stated in the Minutes of the Assembly:

1. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error.
2. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.
3. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God.
4. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that on the third day he rose again from the dead with the same body with which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession.
5. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God as the supreme standard of our faith that our Lord Jesus showed his power and love by working mighty miracles. This working was not contrary to nature but superior to it.

The Auburn Affirmation is a protest against this action of the General Assembly. The heart of the protest is found in this paragraph:

"The General Assembly of 1923 expressed the opinion

*Dr. Lingle is president emeritus of Davidson College and onetime president of the Assembly's Training School. Through his writing and speaking he exerts a wide and inspiring influence throughout the church. Perhaps no man in the denomination is more admired and beloved. Because of his qualifications as a church historian and because of his thorough knowledge of American Presbyterianism, he has been requested by the editors to prepare this article.

concerning five doctrinal statements that each one 'is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards.' On the constitutional grounds which we have before described we are opposed to any attempt to elevate these five doctrinal statements, or any of them, to the position of tests for ordination or for good standing in our church."

"Constitutional" Is Key Word

A casual reading of that paragraph might leave the impression that the signers of the Affirmation repudiated all five of the doctrines named by the Assembly, and it has been so interpreted in public print more than once. The word *constitutional* is the key to the real meaning of that paragraph. The signers did not believe that the General Assembly, singlehanded, without the concurrence of the necessary majority of presbyteries had the constitutional authority to set up doctrinal tests, especially if the statements of those doctrines were in words different from the words in the standards; or that the Assembly had the authority to select certain doctrines and elevate them above all other doctrines which are found in the standards. The signers felt that such action on the part of the Assembly amounted to changes in the doctrinal standards of the church, which an Assembly alone has no authority to do. Moreover the signers felt that such action on the part of different Assemblies had become cumulative, and threatened the liberties of the church. Hence the protest.

Just here it may be stated that efforts were made in 1923, in 1924, and in 1928 to have the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) set up similar doctrinal tests, but each time the motion was voted down on the ground that a General Assembly has no authority singlehanded, to set up such tests, and that we already have all doctrinal tests that we need in our Confession of Faith and the Catechisms.

The Affirmation contains another statement which is open to misinterpretation. It reads thus:

"Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures, and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship."

It has been stated in public print that the signers called all the five doctrines named by the General Assembly mere theories. A careful reading of that statement does not yield such an interpretation. The statement explicitly speaks of the facts and doctrines contained in the deliverance of the Assembly. The statement made by the signers does not call into question the facts and doctrines, but it does say that some of the signers could not accept all the theories by which those facts and doctrines are explained.

Take for illustration the first doctrine named by the General Assembly "that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of the Holy Scriptures as to keep them from error." In that statement there is not only the fact of inspiration, but the theory of inerrancy. The signers of the Affirmation say: "We all believe with all our hearts that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God." But they did not believe that inerrancy is taught either in the Scriptures or in the doctrinal standards. By inerrancy is meant the belief that the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible were free from errors of any kind. As the original manuscripts disappeared many centuries ago, there is no way of testing this belief. It is arrived at by a deductive process.

Southern Presbyterian Experience

In 1928 one of our presbyteries sent an overture to our General Assembly inquiring whether "in view of the clear statement of our standards as to the plenary or verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures as given in the original language," a minister holding the theory of evolution and denying the plenary or verbal inspiration of the Scriptures could remain as a minister in our church."

In reply to that overture our General Assembly had a fine opportunity to tie itself to some theory of inspiration, but it did not. The reply is very illuminating. The opening sentence reads: "No doctrinal deliverance of an Assembly can displace the constitutional doctrinal basis of our church." The reply then cites what the Confession of Faith, the Book of Church Order and the Catechisms have to say on this subject, and then draws this conclusion: "The requirement is therefore clear; namely, belief in the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

In writing a review of our Assembly for the *Union Seminary Review* for July, 1928, I wrote as follows about this action of our General Assembly:

"The Confession does teach the great fact of inspiration, but if you will search its pages again you will probably be convinced that, while it does not deny the doctrine of verbal inspiration, it does not teach it. In fact it teaches the great fact of inspiration with power, but you will probably end your study of the Confession with the conclusion that the Confession does not commit itself to any theory of inspiration."

The Affirmation does not discuss any other theories connected with the doctrinal statements made by the General Assembly of 1923. The signers might have discussed the several theories of the Atonement if they had wished. However, their discussion of the theory of inspiration is sufficient to illustrate what the signers had in mind. It is well to note that the Affirmation as quoted above states that some of the signers regarded "the theories as contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of the facts and doctrines." As I understand that statement, some of the signers, it is not stated how many, accepted the five doctrines and theories exactly as they were stated by the General Assembly. Their protests were on purely constitutional grounds. So all the signers were not liberals. The best exposition of the Apostles' Creed I ever saw was published eight years ago by a signer of the Auburn Affirmation. In his book there is the best brief statement and defense of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord that I have ever seen. The book rings true on every article of the Creed.

Re-Affirm Ordination Vows

But let us come to the positive statement of their faith which the signers of the Affirmation made. In the opening paragraph of the Affirmation they make this statement:

"At the outset we affirm and declare our acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as we did at our ordinations, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. We sincerely hold and earnestly preach the doctrines of evangelical Christianity, in agreement with the historic testimony of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, of which we are loyal ministers."

Toward the close of the Affirmation they make this statement:

"We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines; we all believe from our hearts that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God; that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh; that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and through him we have redemption; that having died for our sins he rose from the dead, and is our ever-living Savior; that in his earthly ministry he wrought many mighty works, and by his vicarious death and unfailling presence he is able to save to the uttermost."

About two years ago I submitted my interpretation of the Auburn Affirmation to Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, whom

I have the privilege of knowing, and asked for his comments. He was one of the signers of the Affirmation. He replied as follows:

"You are quite correct in your statement of the Auburn Affirmation. No one in signing the Affirmation said that he did not believe in the five doctrines, but that we objected to having a particular set of doctrines lifted out of their context and made essential without relation to the rest of the Confession. You are quite right in saying that our objection was constitutional and not doctrinal. I think if you will read the Auburn Affirmation you will see what we were trying to do. There was no one of us who prepared that Affirmation who does not accept *con amore* the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and who does not accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

The signers state the purpose of the Affirmation as follows:

"For the maintenance of the faith of our church, the preservation of its unity, and the protection of the liberty of its ministers and people we offer this Affirmation. . . . We hope that those to whom this Affirmation comes will believe that it is not the declaration of a theological party, but rather a sincere appeal based on the Scriptures and our standards, for the preservation of the unity and freedom of our church, for which we most earnestly plead and pray."

1,283 Signed; 8,568 Did Not

In order to make a fair appraisal of the theological position of the Presbyterian Church, USA, it is necessary to keep certain facts in mind. The Auburn Affirmation was signed by 1,283 ministers. In 1924, the year of the Affirmation, there were 9,817 ministers in the Presbyterian Church, USA. That means that there were 8,568 who did not sign it. Of those who signed, some were liberals and some were not. We should also remember that the General Assemblies of 1910, 1916, and 1923, consisting of three entirely different sets of commissioners, voted that the five doctrines quoted at the beginning of this article were essential doctrines of the Word and of the standards. That fact would seem to indicate that the large majority of the ministers in the Presbyterian Church, USA, were conservatives, at least up to 1923. Many of the brethren who attended those three Assemblies are still alive.

Of course there are both conservatives and liberals in the Presbyterian Church, USA, just as there are in our own church, and in all the other churches that I know anything about. It is well that there should be men of different types of mind and different points of view in all the churches, provided they hold to the real essentials. This makes it possible for a church to look at questions from all points of view, and thus arrive at the truth. There is an old maxim which says: "Truth like a torch, the more it's shook, the more it shines."

THE REAL BARRIERS

DISTANCE BREEDS ENMITIES as well as enchantments; we fear the distance because it is strange.

Only yesterday it was geographical distance, now, as any newspaper tells us, with weekly flights around the world, there are no longer any geographical distances. The immemorial pattern of distance has disappeared, and it has all happened so quickly that our minds have not caught up with our planes.

The real barriers to human relationships persist in our habits, our prejudices, and even in our souls. Our maps are fluid as running water, but devious fears and pretentious pride of race and possessions persist. Deep-rooted distrusts and sheer failures in imagination still maintain boundary lines which Jesus Christ lived and died to abolish. We would better close our geographies and open our minds to the disappearance of distance.—GAIUS GLENN ATKINS, in *The Fellowship of Prayer*.