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Reported for the Presbyterian GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Debate on the Transfer of the Western Foreign Missionary Society.

The Assembly took up the order of the day (Thursday morning, the 26th). The report of the committee on the transfer of the Western Foreign Missionary Society. It was moved to adopt this report; when Dr. Skinner on behalf of the minority of the committee, read a counter report.

Dr. Skinner then made a few remarks in support of his report, and read some extracts from printed letters on the Constitution of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, by one of the Secretaries of the Board.

Mr. Jaspur. He considered the present subject as one of vast importance. He felt it to be one of the most important that could come before this Assembly. It ought to be discussed without impugning each others motives. They differed in their views with regard to the best mode of conducting foreign missions by the church, according to ecclesiastical organization; and some by voluntary associations, and he confessed that he was one of the latter; but was open to conviction, if any one could show him that his views were erroneous.

The first question to be considered was, whether the General Assembly had power to bind the present Assembly by any acts of theirs. He insisted that by the constitution of the church the present Assembly were not bound by the acts of the last Assembly. The Assembly was a delegated body, receiving all its powers from the Synod of Pittsburgh.

He admitted that the constitution conferred upon the Assembly the power of sending out missionaries; but this implied also the power to recall them, if it saw fit. The Assembly might take the first steps towards missionary operations, and might upon sufficient grounds refuse to go further. After having made a recommendation one year, the next year the Assembly might recall it, and a manifestation of dissatisfaction by the churches. The last Assembly had adopted resolutions embracing principles directly contrary to resolutions and principles adopted by a preceding General Assembly. If this was correct, then this Assembly has full power to reconsider and reverse what had been done by the last Assembly.

It would require another treasury, distinct from the treasury recognized by the charter of the Presbyterian Church, and not under the control of the Board of Trustees of the General Assembly. Money left by bequest to the treasurer of such a Board, would be void in law, they could not have property, and the funds of such a Board could not be recognized by the laws of the land. Hence would arise, as he could foresee, great difficulties and embarrassments in conducting all their affairs. He believed that the Assembly had exceeded its powers in former times, in the vast amount of its fiscal operations. Another reason why the Assembly ought not to present to the report of the committee, was the instability of character which the General Assembly possessed. This body was always fluctuating; in one Assembly one set of men, having their peculiar opinions and plans in relation to the operations of the church, prevailed; and in the next Assembly a different set of men, with entirely different opinions and plans prevailed; and thus the greatest uncertainty attended all their deliberations and operations. There were diversities of views even in this General Assembly. Should one Assembly organize a Board of Foreign Missions, another Assembly might dissolve it, and resolve no longer to send out Presbyterian missionaries as a church. While the church remained in her present fluctuating state, it was not expedient to consummate this measure by appointing a Board of Foreign Missions.

The report of the committee seemed to say that if the majority refused to organize the proposed Board, it would be an infringement of the rights of the minority. But they could not be bound to the work of foreign missions. But does it follow that because the majority choose to pursue a certain course, therefore the minority are deprived of the opportunity of doing their duty? It does not become the minority to ask to rule the majority; and then to say, "we are deprived of our privilege, and go off from the performance of our duty." If they are overruled in this matter, it is from the operation of the system upon which they themselves have practised. An ecclesiastical organization was not necessary. If there was a desire to organize Presbyterian Churches in foreign lands, then send out Presbyterian missionaries, and they would have an ecclesiastical organization, then the Western Foreign Missionary Society was under the care and supervision of the Synod of Pittsburgh. This was the best ecclesiastical organization in the present state of the church. They who desire ecclesiastical organization, should not be bound by the Synod, and not through the General Assembly. It would suit their views, and accomplish their objects just as well, and would not be liable to the same objections, as if the General Assembly should carry on foreign missions. The ecclesiastical and temporal concerns of the church should always be kept separate. It was not designed by the constitution that the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church should be mixed up together. The funds of the church were vastly increased, and this accumulation of funds had a tendency to secularize the church. The General Assembly as such could not hold or control the funds of the church; all power in pecuniary affairs was vested in a Board of Trustees, and the General Assembly ought to be

entirely disconnected with fiscal concerns; and only exercise a spiritual jurisdiction.

He objected again to the proposed organization of a Board of Foreign Missions, because it would be sanctioning the principles adopted, and the design expressed by the Synod of Philadelphia, in one of their resolutions in relation to foreign missions, at their last meeting. The Synod had resolved "that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions ought to be requested to transfer to the Board of the Assembly, when fully organized, all those stations in foreign lands which were in the hands of ordained persons belonging to the Presbyterian Church." If these were the views which were to be carried into effect, whenever the Assembly's Board was organized, then he must object to the organization, and the churches would soon regret that it had ever been put into operation. He begged leave in conclusion to offer to the brethren, who were on the other side the earnest desire of enlisting the energies of the whole church in the work of foreign missions. They believed that there were those who would contribute under an ecclesiastical organization, who would give nothing to the American Board. But he put it to the brethren, whether it was expedient to admit the aid of the missionary interest, to be conducted by a body liable to so great fluctuations as the General Assembly had manifested for some years past.

Dr. Miller.—He did not deny that the whole subject was open for discussion by this Assembly, and for their adoption. The articles of agreement would not be in force until they were adopted by the present Assembly. Whether the Assembly would now adopt the Report of the Committee, and agree to the transfer, was now the subject under discussion. (Here Dr. M. was interrupted by a member who made an explanation in relation to the word "adoption," as used in the Report, which, as he stated, referred to adoption by the Synod, and not by the General Assembly.) Dr. Miller requested the reading of the paper referred to, and then resumed.—I admit that I was mistaken in supposing that the whole subject of the transfer was open to the discussion and adoption of this Assembly. The Committee of the last Assembly had been clothed with plenary powers to ratify the contract with the Synod of Pittsburgh, provided that Synod should accede to the terms of the Assembly, through its Committee. The reasoning therefore of the members of the Committee, of which Dr. Phillips was the chairman, whose report is now under consideration, was, in his opinion, conclusive. He had the honour of belonging to many voluntary associations, and among others to the American Board; yet he believed that the Church ought to engage in her distinctive capacity in the work of Foreign Missions. It was her duty to maintain in her own bosom the truth of the Gospel, and send the Gospel throughout all the earth in her organized capacity. On her lay the solemn responsibility which the Saviour's words imposed, "Go ye into all the world, &c." The Church was bound by her duty to her Head, to engage in the missionary work. He would not call in question the right to organize voluntary associations for this purpose, yet that it was the duty of the church to superintend and conduct Foreign Missions, he was most decidedly of opinion. He agreed that he desired to see the Presbyterian church in her distinctive capacity engaged in the Foreign Missionary enterprise. Men whose talents and piety he respected, were opposed to ecclesiastical organizations for the purpose of conducting Foreign Missions. They would have what they call a sectarian spirit excluded from this cause. If by the sectarian spirit was meant that narrow and contracted and bigoted spirit, which sees no good out of the Presbyterian church, and no evil in it; which prefers a bad Presbyterian, to a good Episcopalian, Methodist, or Baptist, he repudiated from his heart such a spirit as this. But if by sectarian spirit was meant the spirit, which was a spirit, without which, he apprehended, it would be impossible to get along. What! must the churches in heathen lands assume no form at all, because to organize them according to any form, would be manifesting a sectarian spirit? Would it be manifesting a sectarian spirit for those Missionaries who were brought up Presbyterians, and who believed Presbyterianism to be the form of government which was most Apostolical, and best calculated to promote the prosperity of the church, to organize churches on the Presbyterian plan? Or must they, to show that they are not of a sectarian spirit, organize churches on a plan which they did not believe to be Scriptural? The very mentioning of this, was its refutation, and showed how utterly impossible it would be for the brethren to get along on their own principles, and without practising upon the denominational spirit; unless they would give the heathen churches no form at all, or mix up every different form.

How the missionaries to get on; but with this arrangement there never had arisen any difficulty or embarrassment, so far as he knew. It had been said that if you organize this Board of Foreign Missions, collisions between it and the American Board will be the consequence, and divisions and contentions will be perpetuated in the church. But the plan proposed, you will take the most effectual measures to prevent collision, and arrest contentions. There are those who are holding back their contributions, because they have not such an organization as this which is contemplated. Give them the organization which they desire, and you will soothe and gratify their feelings, and you will hear no more hard words, or unkind insinuations against the American Board. You will take away all occasion of jealousy, and all pretext for unkind reflections. Give them a Board of their own, through which to pour the streams of their liberality, and there would be no occasion for collision. Mr. Moderator (said Dr. M.) I speak that which I do know, and testify that which I have seen. The Presbyterian of New Brunswick are divided on this subject. Some of their churches refuse to give any thing to Foreign Missions until a Presbyterian Board is organized. Some few send their contributions to the Western Foreign Missionary Society. Others give to the American Board, only because there is no Presbyterian organization. It might be proper to state that Princeton congregation, with which he was in some measure connected, sent all their contributions to the American Board. Would brethren say to these persons who desired a Presbyterian organization "keep your money or send it to the American Board, for you shall not be gratified in obtaining such a Board as you desire." He hoped no such spirit would prevail, and trusted that this General Assembly would not countenance it.

As we open our doors to the agents of the American Board to collect what they please, and as he believed that this was right, and ought to continue, and if he were a pastor would admit them into his church, why refuse to oblige the brethren who thought differently, a Board of their own. If the spirit were to prevail in the organization of this Board there need be, there would be no collisions. There was nothing in the plan calculated to promote collision, and he did hope that they would have a unanimous vote on this subject. As there was nothing of a sectarian spirit in this measure, only a laudable desire to see our own church en-

gaged as a church in the work of Missions, he did hope there would be no opposition.

It had been said that there was a contract of pledge between the General Assembly and the American Board, by which the Assembly is bound not to engage in her organized capacity in the work of Foreign Missions, until she had repudiated the idea of any such contract or pledge between the General Assembly and the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. There never was such a pledge given, and the American Board did not consider nor hold the General Assembly as pledged never to engage under an ecclesiastical organization, in the work of Foreign Missions. He had the honour of belonging to that Board, and was attached most affectionately to it. He had promoted its interest, and intended still to do so. But this organization would not diminish the resources of the American Board. It would only open up a channel to those members of the Presbyterian church, who now contribute little or nothing to that Board.

Reference had been made to the resolutions of the Synod of Philadelphia at their late sessions in York, on the subject of Foreign Missions. It did not become him to pass a sentence upon the proceedings of the Synod of Philadelphia on this subject. He could only say that had he been a member of that Synod, he would have voted in the negative on this resolution. He regretted this resolution. Were he to attend a meeting of the American Board, and such a proposal should be presented to them, he would most decidedly vote in the negative. The brother, who preceded him, had referred to the fluctuating state to the General Assembly; as rendering it an unsafe depositary of the original of the resolutions of the American Board, and such a proposal should be presented to them, he would most decidedly vote in the negative. The brother, who preceded him, had referred to the fluctuating state to the General Assembly; as rendering it an unsafe depositary of the original of the resolutions of the American Board, and such a proposal should be presented to them, he would most decidedly vote in the negative. The brother, who preceded him, had referred to the fluctuating state to the General Assembly; as rendering it an unsafe depositary of the original of the resolutions of the American Board, and such a proposal should be presented to them, he would most decidedly vote in the negative.

Dr. Peters said he felt some embarrassment in addressing the house on this subject, on account of the attitude in which he was placed by the report of the Committee. The Committee, in their report, expressed their astonishment, that, in the nineteenth century, there should be found those who were so bigoted, that they would discourage and arrest all missionary operations which were not conducted in their own way, and "who seemed to say to all, unless you belong to our party, you shall not publish the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer to a dying world." Now, Sir, (said Dr. P.) I live in the nineteenth century, and I occupy that ground. I rejoice that I do live in the nineteenth century, and behold scenes which prophets and kings desired to see, yet died without the sight. I fear lest my motives and feelings should be mistaken. I am associated with missionary operations, and I wish to speak in favour of them. My experience leads me to prefer the voluntary plan, but I have no wish to control or interfere with the preferences and operations of others. I am a friend to missions in every form, provided they are efficient, and would not call down fire from heaven, to consume those who cast doubt upon the efficacy of the Gospel. If the General Assembly would be unanimous in this matter, he would not oppose it. But if there be no such unanimity, and one half only are in favour of ecclesiastical organization, and the other half opposed to it, then let us not vex the Church with this question. It was his opinion, that if the General Assembly would be unanimous in this matter, he would not oppose it. But if there be no such unanimity, and one half only are in favour of ecclesiastical organization, and the other half opposed to it, then let us not vex the Church with this question. It was his opinion, that if the General Assembly would be unanimous in this matter, he would not oppose it. 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