

WORK OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

United Presbyterians Find the General Societies Prospering.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDERS THE REPORT

Committee's Recommendation Gets Unanimous Endorsement—Educational and Home Mission Up for Debate.

When the morning session of the United Presbyterian general assembly began there was not so full an attendance as was generally the case last week, but it was expected that when the assembly came together for the afternoon meeting there would be a full attendance. Clerk Reid said he would then like to call the roll very carefully so as to avoid mistakes respecting absentees.

The credentials of Prof. F. Y. Presly, D. D., of Erskine college, South Carolina, as a delegate from the Associate Reformed Synod were read, also Prof. Presly's letter accompanying them, regretting his inability to be present and asking the appointment of delegates to the meeting of the synod at Chester, S. C., November 10, to represent the assembly. These matters were referred to the committee on correspondence.

On motion of Rev. J. C. Kistler of Buena Vista, Pa., the moderator was instructed to appoint a committee to investigate and report a plan of closer presbyterial supervision of pastoral vacancies, the report of the committee on pastoral settlement having been tabled. Moderator Ferguson subsequently appointed Rev. J. C. Kistler, D. Nicolai and Thomas Park.

Young People's Societies.

The report of the general committee on young people's work was read by Dr. D. McGill, general secretary of this branch, and it showed that this year a report had been received from every presbytery and there was recorded a general increase in every item embraced in the statistical resume. Last year the number of Christian union societies was 488; this year it is 529. The number of the Christian Endeavor societies, last year was 136; this year it is 153. The total number of societies last year was 624; this year it is 682. The total membership in young people's societies had increased from 27,808 to 29,648; likewise the contributions had increased from \$33,296 to \$47,872, and the amount contributed to the boards from \$7,271 to \$8,156.

The report included a plan of affiliation for the Christian unions of both the United Presbyterian and Associate Reformed churches, agreed upon at the Indianapolis institute of last year, and which has since been formally approved by the synod of the southern denomination. The uniting of the Christian unions of the two denominations would make them subject to the jurisdiction of the United Presbyterian general assembly. Attention was also called to the coming annual young people's convention in August, at Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

The assembly approved the negotiations looking toward the young people's affiliation by unanimously adopting the report as a whole.

Corresponding Secretary W. T. Campbell of the Board of Education submitted the report of the board's subcommittee on "some comprehensive educational policy."

Aid for Students.

The recommendations of the report were: Pecuniary aid to theological students of the third year not to exceed \$60; \$125 to students of the first and second years; no student to receive aid who has received compensation for preaching on the Sabbath; literary students of the senior year to receive \$100; all students receiving aid to be under the care of the presbytery receiving its formal endorsement; students to attend a United Presbyterian institution, the amount paid to be fixed by the students' time of actual attendance; thorough collegiate education to be required of candidates; presbyteries to certify to the needs and fitness of students, and to make no application for students who are undergraduates and do not intend to complete a full theological course.

The second part of the report recommended putting all the denominational seminaries and colleges under the direction and control of the general assembly, and that the board of education choose an educational committee with a salaried secretary.

Various objections were raised when the recommendations were being taken up seriatim.

Dr. W. H. McFarland of Muskingum, O., asked if the tobacco recommendation would bar young men from whom physicians had prescribed tobacco. The question caused some amusement. Dr. Campbell explained that in such cases the students would not be barred.

One of the strong objections was that the scheme seemed to involve taking away from the supervision of the presbyteries all local educational work, including the whole system of denominational education directly subject to the general assembly, but the chief cause of opposition was found by Elder J. P. Tracey of Chicago in the fact that the scheme provided for practically a new board with a salaried secretary. The assembly, on a motion by Dr. Robert Stewart, had stricken out the provision for aiding the literary students of the senior year. Thereafter Rev. J. H. Littell of Wheeling, W. Va., said he was opposed to the whole plan because, while it "took the bread out of the mouths of young men struggling for the ministry, it was now proposed to create a new salaried secretaryship." Elder Tracey's opinion was that most of the secretaries of the various boards should work without compensation, like the women's board.

President F. M. Spencer of the Cooper Memorial institute, however, came to the plan's support. Too little interest, he thought, is taken in the important subject of church education. "If there were more interest," he argued, "instead of the manager's appropriation of \$26,000 made last year, for seven institutions, there would be a much larger one made, and greater progress would be made in this line of work."

Dr. Reid moved to strike out all the second part of the report covering the plan for a supervisory educational committee, his object being to segregate the report and facilitate action on the balance of it, but the hour for the order of the day had arrived and action on Dr. Reid's motion had to be deferred to some other time.

Affairs of Home Missions.

The order of the day was consideration of the report of the committee to which the report of the Board of Home Missions had been referred. This involved a financial problem. The total receipts from all sources for the year had been \$57,172.19, as compared with \$77,227.18 for the year previous—a falling off of \$10,000. Still, with the exception of last year, the income had been larger than that for any previous year. The cause of the falling off was due to a falling off in legacies and individual contributions. The debt had been increased during the year from \$10,400.94 to \$29,325.96. The general committee on home missions had recommended appropriations for the ensuing year footing up a total of \$79,400—

less by \$2,577 than the grants of a year ago.

The special committee accordingly recommended the adoption of the report of the general committee, and also, that efforts be increased to improve the financial status of the board. On this, Dr. Owens, the corresponding secretary of the board, explained why the financial showing was less satisfactory. Last year the income had exceeded the expenses and the debt had been decreased by \$2,500. This year, though, legacies were \$4,107 instead of \$4,476, for last year, and direct contributions \$2,785 instead of \$7,218. Both these sources of income, he said, were variable and unreliable.

During Dr. Owens' address, which was quite long and covered the whole range of the work of his board, he made an eloquent appeal on behalf of the home mission work. He deplored, also, that the recommendations on settlement of pastoral vacancies had been tabled, leaving still without remedy the situation of the churches in Peru, Mexico and the Antilles. But what Cuba, he asked, compared with the vast field for Christian effort in this broad country. While on the subject of the war, however, he said it was not the grandest, it was, at any rate, the most remarkable in all history because it was for humanity's sake.

The exigencies and needs of the board were very exacting and the volume of work so great and yet without adequate help, causing Dr. Owens to reiterate: "We hear the call of a \$20,000 debt and a cry for help for more favorable conditions of the settlement of our pastors." During his remarks on the subject of the war, however, he said it was not the grandest, it was, at any rate, the most remarkable in all history because it was for humanity's sake.

The following telegram, before adjournment, from the Presbyterian assembly at Winona Lake, Ind., was read:

WINONA LAKE, Ind., May 30.—The United Presbyterian General Assembly, Omaha: The general assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States cordial greetings. Read Psalm CXXXIII.

Some Routine Work.

In the course of the morning routine the report of the committee on Freedmen's missions was adopted. It simply recommended the approval of the board's report; praised the board for its work; and expressed gratitude to Providence.

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WILLIAM H. ROBERTS, Moderator.

After a sharp contest, which had a number of amusing features, the general assembly decided to leave the tobacco question to the presbyteries for a vote upon it. The report of the committee on the Chicago memorial against the use of the weed was the special order for the first part of the afternoon, and it worked up the assembly to a high pitch of controversial interest. Friends of tobacco-users alluded to Charles Spurgeon and Ralph Erskine as examples of good men who loved the smoke.

Reasons Against the Memorial.

His reasons for not favoring the anti-tobacco memorial were: "The memorial is a stigma upon tobacco-users, implying that they were sinners above all the rest; it would in effect be class legislation, requiring of one class what it did not of another; finally, it would be unfair to the workers under the home board, inasmuch as it would imply that they were 'memorials,' according to the language of the document, 'using charity funds, not workers earning their salaries and having the same rights as others.'"

It also called attention to the action of the assembly of 1888, and would advise, as well as the duties of ministers, elders, licentiate and students addicted to tobacco to discontinue it.

A substitute, requiring total abstinence on the part of ministers and students receiving pecuniary assistance from the Home Missions board, and also on the part of the employed visitors to the Fair at Jackson park. As for himself, he had always been consistent in his conduct, both as regards the Sabbath and tobacco. He would go a step further, with respect to the substitute and add to it the words: "and all pastors, theological professors and other workers in the United Presbyterian church."

Substitute Not Fair.

The chairman of the committee, Dr. W. I. Wishart of the Allegheny presbytery, fought the substitute with all his might. He said in substance: "I have always been a strong opponent to the use of tobacco. This question has been before me in various ways. I have tasted the taste of tobacco, for I never tasted it. I only know its smell, which some smokers seem disposed to share with all other persons, and I have seen the effect of making the rule of abstention from tobacco. It seemed to our committee that the action asked for by the Chicago memorialists was not fair and the substitute is not much better. It is also class legislation. It proposes to take advantage of the ministers upon whose salaries the board has a hold. It would have the effect of making a congregation to get rid of an undesirable member, and to make a man who is not being honest enough and many enough to come out and tell him he was objectionable. I think there is a better way of getting rid of a man. Employees of the church care what they get and are fully entitled to it. It seems to me that no such requirement as this should be made until the church makes abstinence from tobacco a condition of its communion."

Another antagonist of the substitute and supporter of the committee's report was Elder Robert Crawford of New York. He contended that to make abstinence from tobacco a condition of the communion was logically followed by the Collins substitute should be through. His observations were frequently entertaining and were delivered in a quaint Scotch style. He had personally known an elder 84 years old who at that advanced age he discovered to be a smoker upon paying him the home salary. Besides the great Charles H. Spurgeon of England, "who," asked Mr. Crawford, "would have the cheek to go into the sanctuary of this eminent missionary to tell him he should not smoke? None of you would."

Belongs to the Individual.

He also reminded the assembly that Dr. William Anderson, of the United Presbyterian church, of Glasgow, Scotland, snuffed. After all, thought the speaker, it was a matter of private judgment and taste. "I am a brother interrupted by way of amending the speaker's connection with Dr. Anderson's snuffing—and he apprehended that if the assembly continued on its course it would be dictating as to what the members of the church should eat, drink and wear. It is an outrage on individual liberty and personal rights," exclaimed Mr. Crawford; it also belittles other ministers. Sometimes the use of tobacco is a blessing. I will tell you another who used tobacco—Ralph Erskine. I would have been ashamed to have tried to 'dictate' to him, though I might have 'advised' him."

At this point Mr. Crawford astonished the assembly and brought smiles to the faces of a large number of women present, all of whom manifested intense interest in the struggle by reciting a poem on tobacco written by Erskine, who was one of the famous Scotch preachers of the Presbyterian family of churches. It was an interesting sermon in poetry, with an allegorical use of the pipe and tobacco as its mystic symbols, and is as follows:

This Indian weed, now withered white, Though green at noon, cut down at night,

Shows thy decay—all flesh is hay! Thus think and smoke tobacco.

The pipe so ill-like and weak Does this thy mortal state bespeak; Though art, 'tis but a pipe, and cough! Thus think and smoke tobacco.

And when the pipe grows foul within Think on the soul deth with sin For, then the fire it doth require— Thus think and smoke tobacco.

Was this small plant for thee cut down? So was the plant of human sin Which mercy sends for nobler ends— Thus think and smoke tobacco.

Does such medicinal proceed From such a naughty, foreign weed? Then what's the power of Jesus' power— Thus think and smoke tobacco.

The smoke like burning incense towers— So should a loving heart of yours With ardor, cries, surround the skies. Thus think and smoke tobacco.

It required a few minutes for the delegates to recover their breath after Mr. Crawford had subsided.

A very long satirical speech was then made by Rev. J. K. Duff of New York in defense of the substitute. He admitted that he was not a member of the church, but he was advised by his physician to use it for obesity, but with doubtful results; however he would now be able to return home to his wife and inform her that there was an anti-tobacco question before the assembly. It was soon evident that the question had stirred up a stubborn debate. Rev. W. H. Howie of Seattle, Wash., took exception to the argument made on behalf of personal liberty and individual rights. Personal preferences, he said, had to be subordinated to the general good. The very system of government we lived under had been advised by his physician to use it for obesity, but with doubtful results; however he would now be able to return home to his wife and inform her that there was an anti-tobacco question before the assembly.

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Thomas McCague of this city were called to the platform. Dr. McCague was the first United Presbyterian missionary to be sent to the Egyptian Delta.

Work on the water tower came up next and was adopted. Final final recommendation was a limitation of salaries of pastors, supported wholly or in part by this source, to \$1,200. The board felt the necessity of borrowing in addition to its debt of \$25,000, but the trustees of the assembly said that would not permit it.

It was a strictly missionary meeting in the evening, when the hour for it arrived, devoted to addresses by Rev. Dr. Samuel Martin of Sialkot, India, and Rev. G. E. Hawes of Portland, Ore., on foreign and home missionary work, respectively. Dr. J. W. Witherspoon of the Allegheny presbytery presided at the services. Many women were in the large audience.

Before the speakers took the platform Dr. Reid's motion to strike out the second part of the report of the committee on comprehensive plan of education—that providing for the support of a salaried secretary—was put and carried as "unfinished business."

A report from the committee on bills and overtures was also read, sending down on overture a question obligating new members of the church to pledge themselves to heed counsel in the matter of money offerings. This was done in response to the petition of the Chicago lithographers' convention.

On the memorial of the Rock Island presbytery for a psalter better adapted to evangelistic work the same committee gave the information that the board of Publication had already arranged for such with the Evangelical association. The Allegheny presbytery had memorialized for a revision of the present regular church psalter. This the committee favored.

On the memorial of the Des Moines memorial asking the board to aid in young men preparing for the ministry be in the shape of five-year loans without interest until after maturity, then to bear 6 per cent.

A portion of the same committee's report, provided for a number of memorials, provided for the board to consider about six or eight memorials, along the Allegheny river north of Pittsburgh, Pa. This particular part was adopted, but there was not time to take action on the rest.

Considering Foreign Missions.

In Dr. Martin's treatment of it the subject of foreign mission work proved peculiarly interesting, and while he had had experience of the difficulty of the work, yet he felt very confident of the future. When introducing the subject the speaker would have felt some discouragement if the church had really reached its financial limit were it not for his confidence in God's purpose. The simple preaching of the cross—Christ and Him crucified—said Dr. Martin, is the real means by which the gospel light is being spread in the world.

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