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To the Presbyterian Church
in the United States, Greeting:

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

DR. CHESTER'S OFFICIAL CRITICISM AND
SPURIOUS DOCTRINE OF MISSIONS.

The occasion of this criticism was a communication from my pen published in the *Presbyterian Standard* and the *S. W. Presbyterian*—for which I now thank them—entitled: "*Rowland for an Oliver—Ament Organic Union.*" Whilst such valiant leaders as Bishop Gordon and Professors Reed and Strickler, with others, were industriously smoothing out the kinkles of the Northern Church, it occurred to me that perhaps it might come in place, with some of them, to assist in a like service to the Southern Church; and, as kinks worthy of notice, The Tolerance of Polygamy and The Negative Character of our Foreign Mission Work were instanced.

But, lo! as a chartered corporation has full charge of our foreign missions, its Secretary and Treasurer belligerently rushed forth, as its official spokesman and apologist, and administered to me a regulation dose of objurgatory criticism, officiously warning the people of our Church "not to be alarmed by any of the statements contained in the article of Dr. Laws." This, of course, is a startled confession that, if the matters alleged are true, they are alarming. In this I agree with him.

I term Dr. Chester's criticism "official" for the reason that he claims that it is "made by the Foreign Mission office," *i. e.*, the office of the chartered corporation of which he is a co-Secretary and the Treasurer, and not of the Southern Assembly or Church, except vicariously.

Very well, I propose to answer my official critic, and to refute his spurious theory of foreign missions. The newspaper

article which was the trumpet blast that waked up this official apologist was only a partial statement of an exposure of the condition of our foreign missions, for which this *Chartered Corporation* is primarily responsible, that was made on the floor of the Synod of Virginia at its meeting in Staunton last fall. So far from my critic furnishing a valid reason for the recall, or even the modification of the points made (then and there or since then), I now propose to make a fuller restatement and to challenge refutation. Indeed, we shall see that my critic has substantially confessed the case and has been exceedingly unfortunate, in both his information and his judgment, in his vain attempt at avoidance.

My statement before the Synod was substantially and now is:

1. That our Southern Presbyterian Church has not an individual church in its organic connection in all the heathen world—not one. After some fifty years of labor and the expenditure of perhaps more than five million dollars, not to speak of the precious lives that have been sacrificed, there is not a church session, not a Presbytery, nor a Synod of our Church connection in the entire foreign mission field.

2. That in our Assembly minutes of 1906 there are given among the mission statistics over ten thousand (10,824) “communicants;” and yet not one of them is a member of any organized church under our care and control, although they are served by missionaries and evangelists at our cost and often referred to by correspondents, in addresses to the church and in the proceedings of the Assembly, as church members. Our people are accustomed to associate communicants with church membership, and in all confiding simplicity, in the absence of contrary information, understand them to have a like membership in the mission field.

It cannot be truthfully denied that this is in general the actual state of mind among what our critic condescendingly calls the “ordinary people” of our Church. And I confess myself to have been among the deluded.

3. That, in our African Mission, where over four thousand baptized converts were reported last year—now probably over five thousand (5,000)—there is not a single church session for government and discipline—no, not a church organization of any kind, congregational or otherwise. And yet our mission work has been carried on continuously at that Luozi mission since Lapsley founded it, in 1891—over fifteen years since.

And yet, in spite of this esoteric information, Dr. Morrison and Mr. Sheppard, during their recent home sojourn of several years, were again and again introduced to our home churches and public audiences as the ministers or pastors of the largest Presbyterian Church in the world; and they addressed their audiences as representing this church. Our people are misled by this unorganized multitude of baptized converts being spoken of, by the Executive Committee in its reports and by the Assembly in its proceedings and minutes, as a church.

4. That the nine (9) churches reported as organized in the mid-China Mission, not to speak of some thirty others, are not only not in our ecclesiastical connection, but they are not even regularly organized Presbyterian churches, as each congregation is entirely independent of every other, so that they may be described as independent or congregational churches; and hence our Church is sailing under two flags—Presbyterianism at home and independency or congregationalism (as explained) in heathen lands.

My critic makes a great parade over my description of these churches as "independent or congregational," which is literally and strictly accurate, notwithstanding his labored attempt, by the use of a capital C in congregational (for which I am not responsible), to give it a technical ecclesiastical sense. This was perfectly gratuitous, and the apologist had good reason to know better, for the manifest purpose was to concisely describe the undisputed fact that these churches are individually organized as independent

congregations, having no organic connection with other churches or church courts.

By means of the cheap fallacy of changing the premise, by virtually fabricating one to suit himself, in the language of college boys, he "rowled"—but it blinks of being at the expense of fair dealing through carelessness or haste.

5. Another and important point made in the statement before the Synod was: That this chartered corporation has had in its employment, at the expense of our Church, a dozen missionaries in the foreign field who are not in our Church connection and are not in any way under our disciplinary care and control. I referred to the Assembly minutes of 1906 and will now quote the announcement and avowal there made, on page 237, which is in the following words:

"Ordained Missionaries.—Under the care of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, but not members of any Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the United States."

This notification is in capitals. There follows a list of twelve names, with their ecclesiastical relations. The second in the list is a colored man—"G. E. Phipps, Luebo, Congo Free State, Presbytery of Lackawanna, Pa., Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A." The others are members of the Synods of Brazil and Mexico. Not one of this list holds a position of responsibility to our Church for his doctrine, preaching, or conduct. The corporation simply hires them at a given compensation. This is a loose way of doing business. It is too plainly at fault for comment. In strictness, what authority have these men to baptize converts or to organize churches in any other ecclesiastical church connection than their own? But this corporation employs them to organize churches in no particular connection. Hudson Taylor employed missionaries of any denomination, and

each might organize churches as he saw fit; but once organized, the church was to continue in that line. This pseudo-Presbyterian scheme is no better.

6. This chartered corporation, to which the entire management and control of our foreign mission work is entrusted throughout the heathen world, tolerates polygamy among its baptized converts and so-called communicants and church members, in both Africa and China. There can be no truthful denial of this. And thus this sanctioned agency is, beyond question, harboring personal and family licentiousness among its converts and beneficiaries without disapproval by Presbyteries, Synods, or General Assembly.

It is a strange freak, that it is urged as a special virtue of this non-denominational mission scheme of the independency of the individual mission churches, that if polygamy is tolerated in them, it is their concern and not ours. Only think of it: Our missionaries may and do organize these "free-born" isolated churches, and may and do, without restraint, baptize into their connection polygamists; yet we are not responsible for putting these serpents' eggs in their nests!

Even conceding the independency of these churches thus constituted, can any man, whose conscience is not absolutely debauched, plead exemption in such case from the gravest responsibility? Strangely enough, it was the following up of the amazing treatment of the Overture on polygamy that went up to the Mobile Assembly in 1904 and was crucified in the Virginia Synod of 1905, and, as some may vainly think, laid away in its grave by the Assembly of 1906, that brought to view the surprising discovery of the condition of our foreign mission work which the polygamist party in our Church is zealously pursuing and striving to defend.

If the fortune of that Overture on polygamy and the defense of it in "*Polygamy and Citizenship in Church and State*" shall only be to draw aside the veil that has hid from the eyes of our people, whether "ordinary" or extraordinary,

the gross deformity and lawlessness of that mission work as now conducted, a great and permanent benefit may result to both the Church and the nations.

I will now add an item of some interest in this connection. When the Overture on polygamy was taken to the Greenville General Assembly by the complaint of a number of the members of the Synod of Virginia, the petition that accompanied the complaint was that an *ad interim* committee should be appointed to gather needed information before final action, although the Synod had perfectly competent respondents, Dr. Fleming being one of them, the Secretary of Foreign Missions, who properly had no connection whatever with the case, chose, at the instance of a single member, "to butt into it," although the complainants and petitioners protested against him as an outsider doing so. But he officially and officiously assisted in defeating the movement adverse to polygamy and in gaining a decision in favor of its tolerance and of ignorance.

7. I also called attention to a financial and business feature of this Corporation, the least objectionable point to which exception was taken, that seems to have a not improbable bearing of importance on the interests of our Church. It is the establishment of "a special donation fund," on the basis of graduated rates of interest for life to all donors over twenty-one (21) up to and over seventy (70). Of course, it is usually understood that all available missionary funds are simple donations. But not so. To illustrate its inequalities: From fifty to sixty-five the so-called donor is to be paid for life five per cent. for his money. If a donor at fifty turns over to this Corporation one hundred thousand dollars (quite a possible case), then he is entitled to five thousand a year as long as he lives. Suppose one such donor to live till ninety—no extravagant assumption—then for the forty years, from fifty to ninety, this beneficiary donor would be entitled to two hundred thousand dollars. This "Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the United States"

would be legally liable to that amount. This may not be without example, and doubtless it is very sincerely intended to subsidize worldly wisdom in the interest of foreign missions. But there may be a worm at its root. There are some prudent business considerations, without urging the propriety of treating all mission donors alike, that may suggest a doubt, and the possibility of an accumulation of liabilities at no very distant day, Hippleizing our Church. The old proverb, "Penny wise and pound foolish," is still worth remembering.

Those who were present on the occasion when the above strictures were made will recognize this as a substantial restatement of what I then submitted to the Synod. No member of that body questioned the truthfulness of that presentation of the condition of our foreign missions. Dr. Chester was present, and at the conclusion of my remarks, for which the Synod had allotted the time, and in answer to the inquiry, "Why no church had been organized in the African Mission?" far from denying the truthfulness of the presentation made, he replied: "Because no suitable material could be found for elders." Considering the length of time this mission has been in operation—over 15 years—and also the fact that forty native evangelists are reported as raised up and now at work there, this did not seem like an altogether satisfactory answer, considering that one of the charter purposes of the corporation is "*to establish, maintain and conduct churches.*" Certainly this purpose has not yet been materialized at Luebo.

Relative to the churches in China, Dr. Chester did not question their distinct and independent individual organization, as described, but claimed that nevertheless they were really Presbyterian and not Congregational churches. To illustrate his view, he gave the South American case, at Araguay where some converted Roman Catholics desired to organize themselves into a Protestant church, and applied to a missionary, Dr. Lane, of the Northern Church, who, instead of

visiting them or giving them specific directions, advised them to read The Acts and Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus, and then organize as they deemed best. The result was, he informed us, that they "organized their church *by the election of elders and deacons*" (the italics are his). This was the crucial test of this being a Presbyterian Church, that it "elected elders and deacons," and it thus served to show his view of the Presbyterianism of the Chinese churches in question. At this point the Rev. J. K. Harris, of Floyd, Virginia, asked Dr. Chester: "How they would get along with a case of discipline?" Dr. Chester replied that "they would take it before the session," and no intimation was given by him of any higher appeal. He made no claim that any one of the Chinese churches, of which nine are given, had any organized connection in this or any other country with any other church or church court. Nothing higher was claimed than their individual congregational sessions.

My critic grievously complains of me as doubting his veracity as to the Araguay Church, and graciously recurs to it and repeats it with the urgent hope that I will deal fairly with him and recognize it and not again speak of such churches as other than genuine Presbyterian churches.

My dear sir, I did not question your story. I accepted it when given for all there was in it, as it was intended to illustrate the anomalous condition of the Chinese churches. And I now take no exception, as I might, to any variation of it in the new and more recent version. But when you (as now indicated) expect and demand of me to recognize such a body, to use your own language, as "organized according to the Presbyterian form of church government," and complainingly censure me for not doing so, I must not only dissent from your claim, but must squarely repudiate your misconception of what constitutes a Presbyterian church. The idea, that if a congregation has "elders and deacons" it is "organized according to the Presbyterian form of church government," will not pass muster. Assuredly, my dear sir,

this is an elementary mistake, and it seems to be the *proton pseudos* of your manifest bewilderment and it may have misled others.

It is radically important to note that there are *three* (3) constituents of every particular church that can be legitimately called Presbyterian: 1st. the people as an essential factor in its government, choosing their own officers and pastor; 2d. the Elders, or Pres-byters, chosen by them, as its highest officers and on a parity; and, 3d. the recognition of the ecclesiastical oneness of those of like faith and order in outward and visible association, so that each part is subordinate to the whole through the organic union and agency of Session, Pres-bytery, Synod, and General Assembly. The power of the whole touches every part. It is not the holding of one, nor of two of these principles of church order (as by the Araguay and the Chinese churches), but it is the holding and the realizing of *all three* that constitute a particular church a Presbyterian church. This fundamental idea of church unity is essential to Presbyterianism and is in opposition to the theory of the independence (or congregationalism) of individual churches. "So that," to quote one of the highest Pre-byterian authorities, "an independent (particular or individual Pre-byterian church) is as much a solecism as an independent Christian, or as an independent finger of the human body, or an independent branch of a tree." "And so ordain I in all the churches," says Paul.

But my critic has the courage of his perverse conviction. Only listen to the following proud boast which he makes of the independency of the pseudo-Presbyterian churches organized by our missionaries in heathen lands. He says:

"We are proud of the fact that none of the churches organized by any of our missions (with the one [unexplained] exception mentioned above) have attempted the absurd and impracticable arrangement of being in organic ecclesiastical connection with

church courts in this country. All of them, however, have been organized according to the Presbyterian form of church government."

Whom does my critic embrace in this "We"? If the Southern Church at large, I protest not only for myself, but for the seven thousand, at least, who have not bowed their knees to this strange Baal of pseudo-Presbyterianism. As he speaks officially for his Chartered Corporation, and none have made disclaimer, it is competent for him to claim them. And yet I feel constrained to believe, that they have inherited a questionable policy from the near and revered past, and sequaciously drifted into its enforcement and perpetuation without due consideration. Of that I feel quite sure. By the "We" it is boastingly denied that any of these mission churches have ecclesiastical connection with church courts, such as Presbytery, &c., in this country, and there is no intimation of their having connection with such courts in any other country. This is a "proud" confession of the correctness of my statement that our Southern Church has neither churches, church courts, nor church members in heathen lands. The third element is absent. As individually independent and ignoring church unity, they are not properly or technically Presbyterian churches. As having or recognizing a plurality of elders in each congregation, they are not technically Congregational churches. Technically and strictly, therefore, they are neither Presbyterian nor Congregational. They do not fit into the Congregational nor either the Southern or the Northern Presbyterian Church order. They are anomalous. They are not amphibious, as they could not have a normal life in either connection. Yet they are severally independent and have ruling elders, so that the nearest approach I can make to naming them is to call them hybrids. I know of but one such church in the United States which has a history, explanatory, and by courtesy it is called Presbyterian because

it has a member of Presbytery as its pastor. The character of the offspring in our missions does not, therefore, indicate its parentage.

This pseudo-Presbyterian and non-denominational foreign mission party—very respectable indeed—in our Southern Church, which my critic represents and defends, not only has under its control a chartered organization and the handling of all the money we give (or invest) for foreign missions, but it also has its organ. As aiding both the “ordinary” and extraordinary members of our Church to understand the radical nature of the issue in controversy, I will quote an editorial of the *Christian Observer*, June 27, 1906, p. 3, col. 2, as it may have escaped the attention of some of my readers. It is too important in this connection to be overlooked. It amazed not a few. It is in the following words:

“CHURCHES IN HEATHEN LANDS.

“It should not be forgotten that the position of our Church from the beginning has been that in foreign lands our missionaries organize free-born native churches. There is no Southern Presbyterian Church anywhere outside the United States. Our missionaries belong to our Church, but their converts do not. Some of these converts may be guilty of polygamy. Yet no one has the right to say that the Southern Church harbors polygamous members, inas-much as their converts are members, not of our Church but of their own. The native Church, under the leadership of the missionaries, may wisely be left to deal with polygamy. It is a question which specially concerns them.”

In harmony with the view here expressed, and perhaps I may say, from the source of its inspiration there appeared in the same paper, August 22, 1906, a review of the Assembly at Greenville, 1906, by my friend, the Rev. R. H. Fleming.

D. D., of Lynchburg, Virginia, from which some extracts must be submitted. Dr. Fleming says:

“Much has been said in the Assembly and elsewhere of the distinctive principles of the Southern Church. But it seems to be forgotten that one of our chief characteristics, and that which until our testimony on this point had time to bear fruit, distinguishes us from all other churches, is that, from the beginning, we have not attempted to organize our Church in mission lands. It is the Presbyterian Church in China. The Presbyterian Church in Africa. * * * The Synod of Virginia, nor the Assembly of 1904, nor that of 1906, has any sympathy with polygamy in the Church; nor has it any sympathy with an attempt to govern the Church in mission lands. The Church in China, or the Church in Africa is free-born. It is self-governing; it is self-perpetuating; the members of the Church at Luohe are not under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly of the Church in the United States, nor of any Presbytery.”

How could independency or individual congregationalism be more plainly expressed? Dr. Fleming took the floor after Dr. Chester at the Synod and did not question a single point in my statement repeated above. Nor did any member of the Synod do so. In fact, Dr. Fleming accepted and defended the indicated condition.

Here we have the new doctrine unequivocally set forth. Quite in harmony with the oracular editorial of the *Christian Observer*, and also with the “proud” proclamation and official utterance of the chartered foreign missionary corporation of the Southern Church, Dr. Fleming says, in terms: “That, from the beginning, we have not attempted to organize our Church in mission lands,” and claims that this non-denominational character of our foreign missions differentiates or “distinguishes us from all other churches.” It is sufficiently obvious that, in this matter, our Church has to deal not only with a condition but with a theory. That

the present polygamous and non-denominational and pseudo-Presbyterian condition is as above indicated, cannot be successfully questioned. I believe, however tardy the Church may have been in waking up to it. That the awakening, and the rubbing of the eyes, have been measurably occasioned by the discussion of polygamy, since 1904, must be recognized as a state of fact.

My critic follows the lead of the *Observer* and of Dr. Fleming, in claiming that this non-denominational theory of foreign missions has been the doctrine of our Church "from the beginning." I must be allowed, confidently, to challenge this declaration. As I read the facts of history they do not sustain it. At the very beginning, in furtherance of our foreign mission work as the extension of our denomination as a branch of the visible Church of Christ, Presbyteries were organized in the foreign field in different countries; 1871 in South America, 1874 in China and continued on the list till 1880; and in 1886 the Executive Committee reported to our General Assembly that it had stated, in correspondence with "sister churches and their missionaries, that the prevailing view in our Church favored the method of having Presbyteries on mission ground composed exclusively of native Presbyters, the missionaries holding only advisory relations to the Presbytery." (Alex. Digest, pp. 49-55, 100.) The only two questions legitimately raised in the Assembly of 1876 were (1) whether the General Assembly or the Synod was the competent and proper authority to organize these Presbyteries; and (2) "whether our foreign missionaries should become members associated with natives in the composition of Presbyteries." The decision was that the Synod is the proper organizing power and against the dual association or membership of Presbyters. That power of Synod is still in our constitution as it was then. The several efforts to change the constitution touching missions were decidedly voted down. And the

gratuitous suggestion of non-denominational missions never has been constitutionally sanctioned by our Church.

But the conservative majority relaxed its diligence in 1887, and the minority seems to have improved its opportunity, for under the chartered organization now doing our foreign mission work, since 1895, explain it as we may, all these marks of our denominational presence among the foreign nations have disappeared. So that our mission in foreign lands has become a sort of non-denominational evangelism, instead of the definite extension and establishment of our branch of the visible Church whereof the fruit would be an index to friend and foe of the tree that bore it.

This mission work from 1861 to 1895 was conducted by annual committees of the General Assembly. Then "a body politic and corporate" was chartered for the purpose under the laws of the State of Tennessee. Such a step may have made the spirits of Thornwell and others turn over in their graves and groan. And unless this corporation faithfully obeys its charter, which subordinates it to the constitution of the Church, without foisting unauthorized novelties into the work entrusted to it, it is to be deprecated as a calamity and a misfortune.

There are some antecedent circumstances which should be recalled, for they seem to serve as a searchlight on the vexed question before us. Prior to 1837, the Presbyterians had done their foreign mission work through the A. B. C. F. M.—that great Congregational organization. But the critical temper of that controversy, sharpened and informed by the experience of a quarter of a century of association and cooperation, led to the entire elimination of the Congregational element from the courts and operations of the Church as ecclesiastically incompatible with Presbyterianism. After the division of 1837, the Old School party, from which some consider that our Southern Church may be viewed as substantially a descendant, decided that it was its duty in "our (its) *distinctive character* as a Church of Christ to send the

gospel to the heathen, Jews and Mohammedans." A plan was at once devised as a solemn duty in the sight of God "to impart to others the same good and in the same form of it which they enjoyed themselves." (Baird, 369, 370.)

The New School party clung to the Congregational Board till their union with the O. S. in 1870: since that, their united missions have been strictly denominational.

When our Southern Church was organized, in 1861, a new school element was incorporated in it (1863-4), and the non-denominational idea of missions, first suggested in 1876 by way of argument, has run a career with us. Certainly the introduction among us of this old bone of contention, whatever the explanation, is most unfortunate and augurs only evil. For strict Presbyterianism never has been and never can be reconciled to it. Some individual and family pedigrees might, perhaps, be an interesting study in this connection.

That the work of Christian missions, projected and enjoined by the Master in the Great Commission, consists in the organized extension of the denomination engaged therein, as ostensibly a branch of the visible church, seems to be a definition that has the consensus and practical support of all Christian churches. The profound principle of human action and moral duty to which this command thus defined appeals is, That in our efforts to bless the destitute and needy with the gospel, we should impart it to them in its best form as we conceive and believe it. This seems to be the dictate of common honesty, in the exercise of a worthy benevolence. It cuts up by the roots the specious and fallacious objection, "That we ought not to seek to propagate our own distinctive Presbyterian body in various parts of the world, but rather to disseminate simply the principles and doctrines that we hold." (Alex. Dig., 53.) This would do for a school of philosophy which is a human embodiment of individualism. But the Gospel is a divine institution and not a mere scheme of speculative opinions. And it is thus

stated in our Book of Church Order, par. 10: "Christ, as King, has given to his Church, officers, oracles and ordinances; and especially has he ordained therein his system of doctrine, government, discipline and worship * * * to which things he commands that nothing be added, and that from them naught be taken away." It is with this organized visible church that our missions have to do. And our Confession of Faith speaks of "The visible Church * * * the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." (Ch. xxv: 11.) The neglect of this visible pillar and ground of the truth is the crying sin of the present. God is jealous of its honor. And anything in the life or proceedings of any denomination that discredits it is to be deprecated as pernicious and displeasing to our God.

If a chemist, in his laboratory, wishes to combine a given gas with kindred gases, his first concern is that it shall be as free as possible from impurities. The strict fidelity of each denomination to its own faith and order, free from bigotry, in mission work, is its best preparation for contributing its part, whether by co-operation or combination, in transplanting the gospel into the foreign field. The idea that churches can ever be established in heathen countries free from the differences of Calvinism and Arminianism in doctrine, or of Independency, Presbyterianism, Prelacy, or Papacy in government, may safely be set down as childishly visionary. It is going too far to claim that Christian churches accept any such fanciful scheme or agree in any such policy as this vain and suicidal pretence implies.

And for any individual church to attempt to exemplify its faith in such a formless, colorless, and characterless result by its own self-abnegation, instead of commending itself as rational, would rather seem to indulge a crazy fanaticism. It is certainly a delusion to think and to act on the idea that we can transplant conscientiously our Christianity from Christendom to heathendom without our differences, actual or potential, so long as mortal man remains human.

Although this communication is running beyond expected bounds, there is another matter which cannot be allowed to pass unanswered. In the matter of establishing churches in foreign lands, my critic censoriously arraigns me for misrepresentation in the following fashion:

“Dr. Laws refers to the policy of the Presbyterian Church North as in contrast with that of our Church in this particular. There has never been any such contrast.”

Let us look into that. As to the labor of the two churches in the foreign field, my newspaper article under criticism mentions two points of contrast: (1) The tolerance of polygamy by one and its intolerance by the other; and (2) the treatment of baptized converts by the one as contrasted with their treatment by the other. And now, (3d), I will lay an important document before my readers which will aid them in forming an intelligent and valid opinion of the fairness of this official criticism and also of the critic himself, in some important particulars.

Last September, to make sure of my footing, I addressed a letter to Mr. Robert E. Speer, one of the F. M. secretaries of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., submitting some questions, and to make assurance doubly sure, requested that his very distinguished and venerable colleagues, Drs. Ellinwood and Brown, would join him in the answer. (Their reply is dated September 18, 1906.) I will for brevity only give the answer to the first question.

“SEPTEMBER 18, 1906.

“MY DEAR DR. LAWS:

“We have received your letter of September 15th with its inquiries.

“You ask *first*: ‘Are the baptized converts in your foreign missions counted and treated as church members and under the care of your General Assembly in the U. S. A.?’ Yes, until the Presbyteries with which their churches are connected are separated from our General Assembly and recognized as constituting an independent national church. In Africa, for example, all church members are mem-

bers of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and the Presbyteries are related to our General Assembly exactly as Presbyteries in Pennsylvania and New Jersey are. In India, however, within the last three years all our Presbyteries have been released by our Assembly and are now parts of the Presbyterian Church in India and church members there have no connection with our General Assembly. The same is true of Japan and of part of China and will be true soon of all of China. But until these independent national churches are set up, it has been customary to organize churches and Presbyteries in connection with our General Assembly, the Presbyteries being connected with those home Synods, as a rule, from which the majority of missionaries originally forming the Presbyteries went out. So long as the Presbyteries on the foreign field are connected with our General Assembly, our General Assembly legislates for them on such questions as properly come before it and its decisions are binding on these Presbyteries."

* * * * *

"Very sincerely yours,
"(Signed)

ARTHUR J. BROWN.
"ROBERT E. SPEER.
"F. F. ELLINWOOD."

There are some instructive and important points so apparent, in this statement from such eminent mission authorities, that they should be distinctly though briefly noted.

1. There is here no abnegation, nor repudiation of the distinctive denominational character of the home church.

(Indeed, the mission work of the Congregational churches, as the Baptists and the A. B. C. F. M., is avowedly for denominational church extension.)

2. The churches organized by the missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Church are "in organic ecclesiastical connection with the church courts in this country." (Notwithstanding my critic pronounces it "*absurd and impracticable*," the success of it has been marvelous—444 churches; 63,000 members, and, last year, 10,000 converts.)

3. In their mission churches—"in Africa, for example,

all church members are members of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.,” subject to its government and discipline.

(It is difficult to see how the dogmatical denial of such obtrusive contrasts can be creditable to the intelligence or careful scrupulousness of my official critic. But this is not all.)

4. Within the past few years a General Assembly has been organized in India and become an independent body. But *prior* to that, for more than half a century, the churches thus set apart had been cherished and nurtured in organic connection with the Northern Church in preparation for this devoutly anticipated destiny.

(Is this, or is it not, in contrast with the policy and practice of organizing so-called free-born churches out of the newly converted heathen, and at once dropping the reins on their necks and starting them off individually as national churches, like young partridges with the shells on their backs, and without proper ecclesiastical disciplinary training for such autonomy, as though the discipline of church and Christian life would come to them “*by nature*,” like reading and writing to Dogberry. This Dogberry scheme of founding national churches should “give pause.”

(On this preparation of mission churches for National Autonomy see “*Polygamy and Citizenship*,” pp. 20-23.)

5. In regard to China, my critic is also at fault. He says: “The Presbyteries of China have been organized into a Synod * * * not in organic connection with any foreign church.” The least that can be said of this is that it is an unrectifiable and inexcusable misstatement of a state of fact. From the 1906 minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., which lie before me, I learn that there are, at this very time, three Synods in China, with a dozen Presbyteries and thousands of members connected with this Church court in the U. S. A. However, after long years of devoted service as a nursing mother, as in India, these churches have been trained in her family for a transition which they are now in process of making with loving approval. It may be consummated

next summer. (For this see Minutes 1906, p. 102.) But of this my critic seems to be quite oblivious. One of the Synods did not ask for the change and may not enter into the movement.

But I am now about to give what has been to me a genuine surprise. It relates to our mid-China mission, whose churches my critic proudly boasts have not been guilty of the absurdity of ecclesiastical connection with any church court in this country. I have received correspondence from China for more than half a century, and will now quote a letter written from China to a friend some time after the meeting of the Synod of Virginia referred to above. It says relative to our Church:

"The mid-China mission now has its own one Presbytery which is one of several forming a Synod in connection with the Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. This to my mind is the correct policy."

But this is not all. Notice the reason assigned for this course of action, which is that they "*cannot form Presbyteries which shall be an organic part of the home Church.*"

I know not whether my critic is in possession of this startling information, or, if so, whether he has condescended to give it to "ordinary people." If not, I hope he will receive this news with becoming docility and inwardly and prayerfully digest it.

I confess that I feel no surprise at Presbyterian missionaries who love their Presbyterianism breaking away from the cramped and cabined scheme of independency and isolated church individualism, so incongruous therewith, and gliding into another but kindred fold rather than endure their isolation. And I sympathize with his expressed surprise "*that the Church is willing to let the condition of things in Nashville continue.*"

The approval of this irregular novelty of non-denominationalism and pseudo-Presbyterianism by our General Assembly, so far from legitimating these aberrations, only ag-

gravates the embarrassment. Every intelligent Presbyterian, Presbyter or layman, is bound to accept, as a valid commonplace, the following deliverance of the O. S. General Assembly, made some seventy years ago: "We believe that our powers, as a judicatory, are limited and prescribed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church. Whatever any Assembly may do which it is not authorized by the Constitution to do, is not binding on any inferior judicatory, nor on any subsequent Assembly."* And to the same test must be brought the approval of male appointments of the committee by Presbyteries; and the charter of the foreign missionary corporation distinctly subordinates it, not simply to the General Assembly, but "to the Constitution of said Presbyterian Church," to the extent not incompatible with the laws of the State. And the Assembly has no power to authorize the Corporation to neglect or violate its charter obligations.

And I believe that this Corporation is so seriously departing from its chartered duties that if the General Assembly do not act, then an injunction should be sued out restraining it from neglect as at Luebo, and also from malfeasance in using the money of the Church in ways not duly authorized.

Dr. Chester officially warns the good people of our Church, who are so liberally supporting our foreign missions as now conducted, that they "need not be alarmed by any of the statements contained in the article of Dr. Laws." It is therein virtually confessed that if my statements are true, there is reason for alarm. But their truthfulness is indicated above, and I will be obliged and stand corrected if in a single particular any one can show them to be substantially untrue. Oh, no: ignoring the truth of the situa-

*The actions of the General Assembly, hitherto, tolerating or approving irregularities in its foreign missions are absolutely destitute of any binding force whatever on subsequent assemblies or inferior church courts. These deliverances cannot be intelligently pronounced constitutional. Moreover, the matters in question are not matters of opinion or simple expediency, but of church order and duty, where discretion is superseded by covenant obligation.

tion, he frantically pleads that "*they have only to read the thrilling reports which are constantly being published in our Church papers.*" This is simply to beg the question at issue. Yes, it is by those very "reports" that hitherto we have been so seriously and innocently misled. The Church has supposed that our foreign mission work is, as we all believe it should be, for the extension of our own denomination: and words, words, words have hypnotized us into the easy faith that the churches spoken of are such as we have and know here at home. I speak with some feeling as well as confidence, for I confess that I have been one of the dupes. But at last I have waked up, and I am intensely in earnest when I say that I shall do all I can, with God's help, to awaken others. I have given my money under a false impression, and I am sure others have done the same; and I am not alone in resolving, unless a change is promptly made, to give no more for this sort of mission work. I could name more than one pastor who on the forward movement plan propose to specially covenant their representatives in the mission field to conform to our standards by not baptizing polygamists and by organizing their converts into genuine Presbyterian Churches, according to our Book of Church Order (ch. 2, sec. 5), and to report the same, as is provided in paragraph 78, last clause, &c., thus repudiating the false plea that our standards do not provide for foreign missions.

The peroration of my critic has the same sophomoric and frothy vagueness that has too long been doled out to us on foreign missions, instead of giving us, "plain people" though we be, the plain facts of the situation. And he who shall plead, though with an air of piety and sincerity, that these ignorant and false views should not be disturbed, and that, if only sincerely entertained, they will be more effective than the simple, plain, straightforward truth, deserves to be regarded and treated as an impostor. We have too much experience with chaffy and superficial evangelism at home, in parading its numbers and discrediting the labors and the work of the regularly organized and solid churches and pastorates, to have any abiding faith in such work abroad.

The present outlook is against it. This work wrongs the missionaries themselves.

I think I see a most impressive object lesson and an unanswerable argument in the career of the Executive Committee of Home Missions. It is chartered under the laws of the State of Georgia. Yet that Corporation strictly conforms to our Church order and faithfully aims at our denominational Church extension in the regions beyond. And in my judgment its work is not only surprisingly successful, but it gives more solid and satisfying promise of the future than does that of the Corporation for foreign missions, with its irregularities and lawless aberrations and superficial and experimental novelties. Yet the law of the Church and the authority of God's word, *for both*, are identically the same.

This whole matter can be promptly rectified by a single deliverance on the part of the General Assembly. And the next Assembly, and every succeeding one, as long as I live, unless effected prior to that not-very-distant event, will be memorialized to rectify this pseudo-Presbyterian and non-denominational mission work of our Church. Brethren, we should first take this mote out of our own eye.

But if the conscience and the intelligence of the Church are so changed as to approve of this new doctrine and practice of foreign missions, then in the holy name of truth and consistency, change the constitution so as to differentiate in principle the foreign from home missions—though a desperate alternative—and harmonize the prayers and gifts of our devoted people with the actual condition of our foreign mission work. Place on the brow of our Church the jewel not of self-consistency, but let it be consistency with the truth. Either change the work or change the constitution.

It is not only the privilege, but the right and duty, of the humblest member of the Presbyterian Church to hold its courts and agencies to strict account. My exposure of the condition of our foreign mission work is not done in a pessimistic spirit, but with an honest and sincere solicitude

for the good of our Church. *Corruptio optimi pessima est*—
The best things when corrupted become the worst.

All this has a vital bearing "anent" all questions of union. The internal reformation of our Church is vastly more important to us than the formation of any external relations can be, and should not be pushed aside thereby. Moreover, the manifestly lapsed condition of our Church, in the respects indicated, should check even the desire, in our present condition, for any new complications. Undoubtedly, in unanticipated ways, these lapses and irregularities would turn up or crop out to disturb and embarrass any new and untried connections. Those who accept and approve these abnormalities should naturally shrink from and oppose an association, in various ways, incongruous therewith. And those opposed to them should favor the prospect of the needed internal reformation, apart from any new complications. Wash our linen at home.

This is a valid though novel and alternative viewpoint from which to *decline* for the present, at least, any change of our autonomous ecclesiastical position, involved in the adoption of the Charlotte or any other articles of superfluous machinery.

"He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper:

"But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." (Prov. xxviii : 13.)

It is vain to attempt to ignore or by criticism to suppress or choke down the views here submitted. They will not down till the truth prevails, and that will multiply fruitfulness.

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers ;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies amidst his worshipers."

SAMUEL SPAHR LAWS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., 1733 Q STREET N. W.,

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