



G. W. Johnson

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, MAY 18. The General Conference met at half past eight o'clock, Bishop Pierce in the chair, the opening exercises by D B Nicholson.

CONFERENCE AND STATE BOUNDARIES. Levi Pearce from the Committee on Boundaries, returned the report of said committee (No 9) upon the resolution of A R Erwin, inquiring into the propriety of conforming Conference boundaries to State lines, with a resolution to the effect that, in the present state of affairs, so many Annual Conferences lie within two or more States, it is not expedient to make the change proposed.

On motion by T W Dorman, the report and resolution were adopted.

LINE BETWEEN HOLSTON AND GEORGIA CONFERENCES.

He also from the same committee submitted their report (No 10) proposing certain changes in the boundary line between the Holston and Georgia Conferences, which lies over one day.

DUTIES OF BISHOPS, ELDERS, PREACHERS, ETC.

A L P Green from the Committee on Revisals, submitted their third report, proposing sundry changes in the Discipline with respect to the election and consecration of Bishops, and the rights and duties of Bishops, Elders, Exhorters, etc.; which was read at length by the Secretary.

D B Nicholson—In the absence of the Presiding Elder, I perceive that, in this report, the committee authorize the preacher in charge to preside at a Quarterly Conference. Now, where there are present three preachers in charge, and no Presiding Elder, I want to know who is to preside at the Quarterly Conference?

Bishop Paine—I beg leave to suggest that the rule, as laid down in Baker, is that where two or more charges are united in one Quarterly Conference, in the absence of the Presiding Elder the preacher in charge where the Conference is held is to preside.

D B Nicholson—I would like to have that inserted.

SUPPORT OF THE BISHOPS.

A L P Green submitted a paper, signed by himself, entitled a plan for the support of the Bishops—from the first of June, 1858, to the first of June, 1862; which was read and referred to the committee on that subject.

J B McFerrin presented a committee report No 4 of the committee on Books and Periodicals.

It states that the Quarterly Review has failed, by \$8000 the last four years, to meet the expense of publication; that, with fifteen hundred copies, it has been a constant drain upon the funds of the Church; and that the committee recommend a new publication, hereafter to be planned, which may greatly diminish its cost.

That the Home Circle is approved popular—should be more highly appreciated—should have 20,000 subscribers—and should by all means be continued.

That the Sunday-school Visitor is an indispensable publication, and should have 50,000 subscribers.

That the Nashville Christian Advocate has been reduced in price from \$2 a year to \$1.50—has a circulation of twelve thousand copies—and is a source of revenue to the church.

That the Southern Christian Advocate has a subscription list of 11,000, and has during the past four years, paid \$15,000 into the general fund of the Church.

That the Richmond Christian Advocate has fallen in arrears—but has over 7000 subscribers, and is likely soon to reinstate itself and pay its arrears.

That the New Orleans Christian Advocate is in a sound and safe condition, with a list of 7000 subscribers, and an open door for usefulness.

That the St Louis Christian Advocate occupies an important position, has 7000 subscribers, and is able to sustain itself.

That the Texas Christian Advocate, for years of hard struggling, has now good prospect of success, with a subscription list of 4000.

That the Memphis, Arkansas and Wichita Christian Advocate enjoys increasing prosperity, with nearly 5000 subscribers, and is confident of success.

That the Holston Christian Advocate, since the death of the late editor, has been merged in the Nashville.

That the North Carolina Christian Advocate asks to be received by the General Conference; which is recommended by the committee, on certain conditions hereafter to be prescribed.

10. There shall be an editor for each of the following papers, viz: the Nashville Christian Advocate, published by the Agents at Nashville; the Richmond Christian Advocate, published at Richmond; the Southern Christian Advocate, published at Charleston; the St Louis Advocate, published at St Louis; the Memphis and Arkansas Christian Advocate, published at Memphis; the New Orleans Christian Advocate, published at New Orleans; the Texas Christian Advocate, published at Galveston; the Pacific Methodist, published at San Francisco, California; and the North Carolina Christian Advocate, published at Raleigh.

11. Each of the officers appointed by the General Conference shall be a member of such Annual Conference as he may select with the approbation of the Bishops.

12. The Annual Conferences may, at their next session, choose such of the above-named papers as they may adopt, for the organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, within their respective bounds, and appoint publishing committees for these papers, to whom the Agent, as soon as convenient after the organization of the committees, and being secured against any past or future indebtedness of said papers, shall release, in behalf of the Conferences so electing, all right and title in such papers, their subscription and their office fixtures, and also all claims of the Publishing House against them for advances made heretofore in their behalf. Provided, however, that these papers shall in future devolve, not upon the Publishing House, nor involve the funds of the General Church in any liabilities for their debts, which shall be used for the support of Conference depositaries. Provided, further, that if any one of these papers, now the property of the Church, shall not be thus adopted and received by any Conference, the Agent shall dispose of it at the close of the next volume. These papers shall be published under the style, "Published by a Committee of Ministers for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South;" and the Publishing Committee shall report, annually, the fiscal condition of these papers to the Annual Conference, and quadrennially to the General Conference.

13. As this plan looks to the making of small profits by our Publishing House, and as an increase of capital may become necessary for expanding our operations or for cheapening our paper, the committee recommend that we should appeal to the church, if they may deem it necessary, for an annual contribution to the Publishing House by a collection, during a special month, in every congregation within our Church. Respectfully,

J B McFERRIN, Chairman. Nashville, May 18th, 1858.

J B McFerrin also presented Report No 5, from the same committee, as follows:

Resolved, That the laymen of the Church who are now in the city be requested to meet the Committee on Books and Periodicals in this hall, on Thursday afternoon, at three o'clock, for the consideration of the proposition of the Alabama Conference in regard to the endowment of the Publishing House.

The report was adopted.

J B McFerrin announced that the contemplated meeting would be public, and invited a general attendance.

J E Edwards presented the exhibit of the Richmond Christian Advocate.

L M Lee explained that the reported losses of the paper grew out of the reduction of its subscription price from \$2 to \$1.50, so that the former price had been restored without any loss of subscribers, and the paper was now able to support itself.

The paper was referred to the Committee on Books and Periodicals.

W M Wightman presented report No 2 of the Committee on Episcopacy, recommending that no additional Bishops be elected by the present General Conference; which was, on motion, adopted.

R J Boyd presented a memorial from sundry lay brethren in the South Carolina Conference, asking for a change of the Discipline allowing a preacher to remain in the same appointment six years, instead of two only.

C E Deems moved the reconsideration of the vote by which the General Conference resolved to receive no more petitions or memorials for the change of the Discipline during the present session. The motion was lost.

Bishop Soule requested an official certified copy of the proceedings in relation to the legacy of Mrs White; which was, on motion of J E Evans, ordered to be furnished by the Secretary.

THE ALABAMA RESOLUTION.

The Conference now resumed the consideration of the unfinished business of Saturday, to wit, the consideration of the report on the Alabama Resolution, recommending that the rule of Discipline against "buying and selling men, women, and children, with the intention of enslaving them," be expunged—the question being on the motion of J E Evans for the question on the first item of the report, viz: That th

subject is legitimately before the Conference.

W A Smith desired to present a measure which he thought would harmonize the views of all parties on this subject, without compromising any principle; but H N Lee, who was entitled to the floor, refused to give him an opportunity, and insisted on making his speech before anything else should be submitted.

He said the matter now under consideration seemed to resolve itself into these two points: 1. Whether, according to the constitution, the Alabama Resolution is legitimately before the General Conference for action.

2. Whether this rule is one of the General rules in the proper sense, and therefore entitled to the protection of the Restrictive Rules.

N H Lee, having the floor, proceeded to finish the argument he began yesterday, which was cut off by the adjournment.

J B McFerrin also made a short speech—representing his desire to proceed constitutionally, but adding in the close, that he must vote for taking out the rule, let it come as it may.

The debate was continued by Dr W A Smith, J B McFerrin, S Kelly, and A L P Green, but our limits forbid the publication of their remarks. Finally Dr T O Summers said—In order to cut short all debate, I propose, at the suggestion of others, including some of the Bishops, to offer a paper by way of amendment in lieu of the item of the report under consideration. It will not interfere with any body's private opinions, which is perhaps the sole merit of the substitute. The report, after giving the vote, goes on to state that there is a surplus of fifty-six votes over the requisite constitutional majority. There it stops; and I propose to strike out all beyond, and add words to this effect: That no account be taken of the California, and the Kansas and Indian Mission Conferences, whose proceedings have not been reported. But as there is room for doubt whether we can proceed constitutionally upon the Alabama resolution, and as some of the Bishops have advised against it; therefore,

Resolved, That this General Conference consider it expedient to waive the question of non-action by these three Conferences, and proceed at once to adopt a new proposition to expunge the said General Rule, and pass the same.

Respectfully, and with much deference, submit that as a substitute; and, if adopted, I shall have another paper to offer.

The substitute was adopted without a division.

H H Montgomery now submitted a series of four resolutions, harmonizing with the above.

T O Summers—I have not at hand the paper to which I referred. It has a preamble setting forth the facts, etc.

The Secretary now read a preamble and resolution submitted by J B McFerrin.

J B McFerrin—I have no objection to that.

On motion by Levi Pearce, the historic part of the McFerrin preamble was stricken out.

D R McAnally moved further to amend the proposition by striking out the words, "purely civil," and inserting "this question" in lieu.

Bishop Soule—There are only fifteen minutes to the time of adjournment. I need not tell you that you have a very grave question before you. It was said by Brother Lee, I believe, that the Northern Church was on a boisterous sea—and why? Why, sir, when the South Church was separated from the North, the North lost the helm of the ship, and no wonder they were tossed. It reminded me of my venerable friend, Dr Dixon, when he said, it would be for the Northern Church to come back to the old soundings. They got off soundings in the General Conference at New York, and they have been off ever since. But what I desire to say to the Conference is, that as they have so short a time for this matter, it might be better to defer it to another day. I wish to make some remarks myself upon the question of a historical character, and should like to have the opportunity.

Bishop Paine said that last Saturday he did not commit himself or his colleagues as to the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of this matter. He had suggested if it would not be better to initiate proceedings and send the proposition round again, as that course would be likely to harmonize the feelings of all. Dr Summers had, perhaps, involved himself and colleagues, by saying, "some of the Bishops." Something was drawn up. He had not the paper; but it was substantially what had been read here. He thought there would be no difficulty about landing the ship—sawing it as the brethren wish. He saw no disposition to act in hot haste on the part of his brethren of the South.

Bishop Andrew corroborated the statement of Dr Summers last Saturday with reference to the episcopal consultation, and his own opinion given.

If that early intimation had been followed, we should have saved two or three days' debate. But he was glad to see the Conference looking in that direction now, etc.

J E Evans—If he had understood the Bishops' decision, as now announced, he should not have made the remarks he did.

W A Smith, by unanimous consent, also read and submitted a paper, to carry out what he now understood to be the object sought.

On motion of C K Marshall, it was ordered that T O Summers, W A Smith, J B McFerrin, D R McAnally, H H Montgomery, and S Kelly, be appointed a committee to digest and arrange the chief merits of the several propositions now submitted, and report thereon at 9 o'clock.

After the announcement of special notifications and proceedings, the Conference adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19. Bishop Pierce called the Conference to order at 8 1/2 o'clock, the opening exercises being conducted by Rev J J Davies.

The journal of yesterday was read and authenticated.

L M Lee, from the Committee on Itinerancy, to whom was referred the resolution to inquire into the expediency of appointing laymen to the management of the financial interests of the church, reported (No 6) that it was, in their judgment, inexpedient to make any change on that subject; but the committee proposed to insert the words "and educational," after the word "missionary," on page 236 of the Discipline.

The report lies over.

THE PRESIDING ELDERSHIP. He also from the same committee, to whom was referred the memorial from Portsmouth, Va., asking for the obliteration of the office of Presiding Elder, or its discontinuance in the older Conferences, submitted their report (No 7), as follows:

The Committee on the Itinerancy, to whom was referred the memorial from Portsmouth, Virginia, asking for the obliteration of the office of Presiding Elder from our ecclesiastical system, or for its discontinuance in the Older Conferences, having given due deliberation to the subject, respectfully represent that while we hold the right of petition sacred, and its sacredness, yet we do not find, in any facts brought to our notice, or in any reasons given in the memorial itself, any grounds for the change in our system of government sought by the petitioners sufficient to authorize or justify so extreme a measure; that the object asked for is not, in the judgment of your committee, desired by the great body of the Church; and believing moreover that the office of Presiding Elder is one of great value to the Church, important as an element of our system, and material to its practical operations, and therefore cannot be abolished or abated without detriment to the prudential regulations and spiritual interests of the Church, we commend to your body the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the request of the memorialists be not concurred in.

Respectfully submitted: LEROY M LEE, Chairman.

L M Lee moved its adoption; the motion was agreed to, and the report was adopted accordingly.

CONFERENCE FUNDS. L M Lee, from the same committee, to whom was referred the memorial in regard to uniformity in the application of the Conference funds, submitted their report (No 8), to the following effect:

The Committee on Itinerancy, to whom was referred the duty of considering the "differences in the several Annual Conferences in the application of Conference funds, especially in relation to the preachers on missions," and report a plan of uniform action in the Conferences, having had the same under consideration, respectfully report that they find no necessity for new or additional legislation on this subject, and recommend to your body the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the whole matter be left, as heretofore, to such action as the Annual Conferences may deem proper to the subject.

Respectfully submitted: LEROY M LEE, Chairman.

The report and resolution were adopted.

ADMISSION INTO THE TRAVELING CONNECTION. L M Lee, from the same committee, to whom had been referred the duty of inquiring into the expediency of so altering the Discipline on pages 61 to 65, and 68, as to require examination for admission on trial into the traveling connection, instead of, as now, receiving them into full connection, also submitted their report (No 9), to the effect that, having examined the subject, and believing the change desirable, both from the propriety of the case and its importance in fixing the character of the ministry, the committee recommend a change of the Discipline in sec iii, pages 39, 40, so as to include those

who are to be received and continued on trial and to be received in full connection; and that the phraseology of the Discipline in other places be so changed as to be conformable to this alteration and arrangement of the 8th section; and the committee submitted and recommended the adoption of three resolutions, carrying out the objects set forth in the report.

Made the special order of the day for Friday, 10 o'clock.

GENERAL RULE ON SLAVERY. The order of the day now came up: the report of the committee appointed yesterday to digest and arrange the chief merits of the several propositions that had been submitted to the Conference touching the General Rule on Slavery.

T O Summers, chairman of that committee, read the report, as follows: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXPUNGING THE GENERAL RULE FORBIDDING THE BUYING AND SELLING OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WITH AN INTENTION TO ENSLAVE THEM.

The committee appointed to report a preamble and resolutions in regard to the expunction of the rule in the General Rule forbidding "the buying and selling of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them," beg leave to report the following as the result of their deliberations:

WHEREAS, The rule in the General Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, forbidding "the buying and selling of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them," is ambiguous in its phraseology, and liable to be construed as antagonistic to the institution of slavery, in regard to which the Church has no right to meddle, except in enforcing the duties of masters and servants, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures; and whereas, a strong desire for the expunction of said rule has been expressed in nearly all parts of our ecclesiastical connection; therefore,

Resolved, 1. By the delegates of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in General Conference assembled, that the rule forbidding "the buying and selling of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them," be expunged from the General Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Resolved, 2. That in adopting the foregoing resolution this Conference expunges from its "understood" to refer.

Resolved, 3. That the Bishops, or others presiding in the Annual Conferences, be and are hereby instructed to lay the foregoing resolutions before each of the Annual Conferences at their next ensuing sessions, for their concurrent action.

Resolved, 4. That the President of each Annual Conference shall be required, as soon as possible after the adjournment of the Conference, to report to the Book Editor the vote on the resolution to expunge the rule in question; and when the Book Editor shall have received returns from all the Annual Conferences on the said resolution, he shall lay the information before one of the Bishops; and if it shall be found that there is a concurrence of three-fourths of all the members of the Annual Conferences present, and voting on the resolution in favor of the expunction of the rule, the Bishop shall direct the Book Editor to expunge it accordingly.

Resolved, 5. That if any Annual Conference or Conferences refuse or neglect to vote on the aforesaid resolution, the members of such Conference or Conferences shall not be counted for or against the expunging of the rule.

Resolved, 6. That the publication of the foregoing preamble and resolutions in the Church papers shall be considered a sufficient notification of the action of this Conference in the premises.

Resolved, 7. That the Bishops are respectfully requested to set forth in the Pastoral Address the platform occupied by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, on the relation of masters and servants, agreeably to the principles contained in the foregoing preamble and resolutions.

All of which is respectfully submitted: T O SUMMERS, Chairman. Nashville, May 18, 1858.

Bishop Soule gave a historical account of the General Rule in question. D S Doggett confessed himself troubled in spirit. He thought the second resolution looked to the approval of the African slave-trade.

T O Summers explained the views of the committee, and their reasons for reporting said resolution—to the effect that the committee wished to harmonize the action of this Conference with that of the last General Conference, as reported in the Journal, p 800. The resolution was reported in order that the present action might not be misconstrued.

A miscellaneous discussion arose, somewhat too chaotic for stenography; during which the ayes and noes were called for on the first resolution of the report.

Permission was asked, and granted, for absent delegates to record their votes hereafter.

The list of delegates being read, the vote was as follows: AYES.—Alexander, Robert; Anderson, J.; Anderson, W H; Atkins, J.; Baldwin, S D; Barringer, W; Bennett, W W; Betts, C; Blackwell, M J; Blue, Q R; Boring, J; Boswell, T L; Boyd, R J; Boyle, J; Bradford, W; Branham, W R; Brooks, J H; Brush, G W; Burks, N W; Campbell, L; Caples, W G; Carille, S; Carter, G W; Closs, Wm; Dandy, W C; Davies, S J; Davis, J H; Deems, C F; Dines, P; Doggett, D S; Dorman, T W; Doub, Peter; Drake, B M; Edwards, J E; Erwin, A R; Evans, J E; Fields, J W; Ferguson, F G; Field, S; Fisk, R; Gamewell, W A; Gardner, T N; Gillespie, C C; Glenn, J W; Green, A L P; Hamilton, J; Harner, J W; Harp, R J; Harrell, J; Harris, G W D; Hefflin, R T; Henkle, M M; Hicks, W; Hughes, J F; Hunter, A; Huston, L D; Hutchinson, J J; Ivey, J A; Jones, G; Jones, J G; Johnson, W C; Kelley, J W; Kelley, S; Kennon, R W; Knox, W; Koger, T J; Langhorne, G W; Lee, L M; Leeper, D A; Lewis, W D; Lively, L P; Lusk, J; Maddin, T; Mann, A T; Marshall, C K; Marvin, E M; McAlister, W M; McAnally, D R; McFerrin, J B; McMahon, W; McSwain, W A; McTyeire, H N; Michaels, R; Mills, J; Mitchell, A H; Munroe, A; Montgomery, H H; Moores, W; Morris, F A; Munsey, T F; Myers, E H; Neely, P P; Nicholson, D B; Oliver, C D; Owen, F A; Parks, W J; Payne, J B; Pearce, G J; Pearce, Levi; Peery, J T; Phillips, J W; Pearce, Lovick; Pitts, F E; Randle, T W; Ratcliffe, W P; Reid, N F; Richardson, S P; Riggs, A S; Robeson, W; Robinson, E; Ross, L; Rowie, W B; Seat, W H; Sevier, S E; Shaffer, G; Shipp, A M; Slater, E C; Smith, P P; Smith, W A; Stacy, J; Stanford, T; Stevens, R M; Stevenson, E; Sullivan, N; Summers, T O; Talley, N; Taylor, Z M; Thwaitt, H C; Tullis, J B; Vaught, S K; Wadsworth, E; Walker, H A C; Whipple, J W; Wiggins, D M; Wightman, W M; Wiley, E E; Williams, S A; Wilson, N H D; Winfield, A R; Yell, M.

NOES.—Ashby, T T; Bruce, J G; Harrison, J C; Lee, N H; Linn, J H; Redford, A H; Seagraves, N W; Sevier, S E; Shaffer, Sam; Sennett, W J; Watson, S.

Aggregate: Ayes, 140; noes, 8; absentees, 3.

Several brethren explained the reasons of their votes.

Bishop Pierce—Mr President, I desire to make a remark calculated, perhaps, to allay the feeling of the body in relation to the action just had. The design of the Alabama Conference in originating that resolution, and of the Annual Conferences which have supported it, is misapprehended by some. The whole philosophy of the proceeding seems to be founded on the fact, that it is not the province of the Church to decide any question with reference to African slavery. The South Church maintains that slavery is not a subject of ecclesiastical legislation. The single object was, that while we disclaimed the right of legislation upon that subject, we wished to make the discipline conform to that profession. The Conference by its action this morning, has not parted with its authority, or the authority of the Church, over its members, in any respect. Every member of the church claims to be a loyal citizen. We declare here that African slavery is a purely civil institution; and there is no reason for alarm about losing Church control. If we turn to the 23d Article of Religion, we shall find there that the Church retains its proper authority over its members with reference to this subject. We therefore, by this act, simply maintain our original position—that of having nothing to do with the subject of slavery more than any other civil matter over which the laws of the country are extended. I beg the brethren therefore to be easy. There is nothing here to warrant any construction looking towards a repeal of the laws of the United States in regard to the African slave-trade. There is no occasion for sensitiveness, nor for any legislation on the subject anywhere else. No harm has been done to anybody to-day. We have only set ourselves right on a vexed question; and we may safely defy all the efforts of our enemies, North and South, to damage the Church for taking a clear position upon this subject.

H A C Walker—Would it be in order for brethren who voted in the negative on the second resolution to have their votes recorded? Some of them have expressed such a desire.

W Close—There is no record of that vote.

CLASS MEETINGS. The Conference now took up the special order of the day, namely, the report of the select committee to whom was referred the memorial of sundry persons in the State of South Carolina, praying for a change in the rules in regard to Class Meetings, so that attendance thereon be made advisory instead of compulsory; and the resolu-

tion to restore the classes to their original size of twelve.

The said report was read at length, recommending the adoption of three resolutions—

1. That the prayer of the memorialists be not granted.

2. That the Annual Conferences look into this matter, and hold their membership to a strict accountability to the existing rules.

3. That local preachers and class leaders be urged to hold class meetings wherever it is practicable.

W P Ratcliffe proposed to amend the report, by striking out the word "resolution," and substituting words to the following effect:

Resolved, That the Bishops inquire strictly concerning the administration by the preachers in the several Annual Conferences in reference to class meetings, and that the several Annual Conferences hold the preachers to a strict accountability on that subject; and that we will sustain the Bishops in their efforts to have the existing rules carried out.

He made a speech in support of this proposition, and also regarding the whole premises, which, in consideration of our limited space, he said he was not careful to have reported.

C F Deems submitted a paper by way of substitute for the report and amendment, embracing three resolutions to the effect—

1. That the regulations in the Discipline on the subject of class meetings be retained.

2. That all that which makes attendance on class meetings obligatory be rescinded.

3. That our ministry be earnestly requested to multiply the number of voluntary classes.

These resolutions were signed by C F Deems, J G Bruce, and S D Baldwin.

I Campbell—Does not that paper propose a change in the restrictive rules? If so, it must be sent round for the concurrence of the Annual Conferences.

C F Deems—That is contemplated.

E E Wiley—I move to lay the substitute on the table.

R T Hefflin—If in order, I move to lay the whole subject on the table.

The Chair (Bishop Kavanaugh)—There is a brother on the floor who has proposed the most important subject now left for this General Conference to decide. I therefore desire the body to act with great care and deliberation; for whichever way we may decide, we are sure to produce a strong impression upon the whole body of the Church. It is now known that the question has come before this General Conference, and the result of our action upon this gravest of all but one of the questions expected to come before us, must have its effect on the Church at large. I claim, sir, to be as devoted a class-meeting pastor as any man on this floor. I claim to be as firmly in favor of Methodist classes and to owe as much to them, under God, as any other man can claim. I have introduced this substitute, not to damage the class-meeting institution, but to advance it—to increase its hold upon us, and to extend its benefits as much as possible. I wish the brethren to understand that. It being fairly promised that my object is to promote class meetings, we shall come to a better understanding.

Those of us who have signed this substitute are opposed to the adoption of the report for reasons like these: In the first place, the report admits that we ought to adopt such measures as seem likely to meet the exigencies of the case in all its bearings; but it does not meet the exigencies of the case so far forth as our lay brethren are concerned. The simple question is, How shall we induce our people to embrace the benefits of this institution? The report, I submit, wholly avoids that question.

A second and still more important objection to the report is this: It assumes that by far the larger portion desiring a change are amongst our ministers, and that it is desired by comparatively few laymen.—But this is quite a mistake. I assume, on the contrary, that far fewer ministers than laymen desire this change, in proportion; that whilst we look at the proportion between the number of ministers and the number of laymen, there are more laymen in proportion who desire, not to abrogate class meetings—I am very deeply opposed to that—but who desire to have something done. There is certainly a deeper interest felt in this matter amongst laymen; and so far as I can ascertain their views, they believe the adoption of the voluntary system is the best that can be done. Then, on the same page of the report, the committee assume that the decline of class meetings is far more attributable to the fault of preachers than people. Where is the evidence of that? The preachers all will tell you how they have labored for the advancement of all our institutions. This, also, is nothing but an assumption; and I will venture to say that if the admitted decline be the result of any fault, it does not lie with preachers or people, but in the manner in which we endeavor to force upon our people an institution, good in itself, provided we could make it voluntary. I believe it to be a good humane institution, and that this decline comes from the nature of our rules. Then, again, throughout the report there seems to be a line of reflection upon the ministry. It is an easy thing for us here to talk about our brethren down there in the Annual Conferences, and to say

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