

SYNOD OF NEW-JERSEY.

November Simultaneous Meetings.

1887.

REPORT BEFORE SYNOD, OCTOBER 18, 1887.

THE Special Committee, appointed at the Camden meeting of 1886, "to take into consideration the possibility of the adoption, by this Synod, of some such method as the 'February Simultaneous Meetings,' so successfully adopted by the Church Missionary Society throughout England; said committee to report at the next meeting of Synod, and, if possible, to inaugurate such an undertaking within the current year," respectfully report:

The duties assigned to us were early undertaken. A full meeting of the Committee was held in New-York, November 16th, 1886, when it was determined, as all the members were favorable to the project, to proceed at once. Mr. Simmons was chosen recording clerk, and Mr. Belden corresponding clerk; to the latter, with the chairman, Dr. Brodhead, were intrusted the duties of gathering opinions in the various Presbyteries, and of developing a plan for a series of Simultaneous Meetings.

Correspondence was speedily sought with co-presbyters all over the State; and meanwhile the pamphlet reports of the English Meetings of 1886 and of 1887 were carefully studied and laid before the public in an article in "The Church at Home and Abroad" for April, to which the editor, Dr. Nelson, kindly opened his editorial columns. The responses to letters having been more than favorable, it was determined at a later meeting of Committee to fix the week in November ending Saturday the 19th, for the date of the enterprise; to raise a fund of five hundred dollars (\$500) as a beginning toward the payment of necessary traveling and printing and mailing expenses, and to invite the joint coöperation of the eight Presbyteries within the State. The sub-committee above mentioned made a tour of the Presbyteries at their meetings last April, prefac-

ing the visitation with articles in the Presbyterian weeklies circulating in Synod, and secured the appointment of Committees specially charged to cooperate with your Committee, in them all. The gentlemen composing these committees were in the main the Standing Committees on Foreign Missions, of their respective Presbyteries, but many others were added, and they entered upon the joint labors with a cordiality full of promise. A meeting was held at the Mission-house in New-York city, May 18th, which was attended by twenty-four of the thirty-seven men constituting the Joint-Committee. From this time the activities of your Committee have been merged in those of this larger organization.

At this meeting, May 18, the Plan now about to be used was mainly developed, and ordered to be set forth in print. (See "N. S. M. No. 1.") This Plan departs from the English model in proposing meetings, not at a few points only in a given district, but at every town where we have a church throughout the State (with which our Synod is coterminous). It has long been felt by some in Synod that we are unfortunate in lacking the impetus to the Missionary work which is enjoyed by some other missionary constituencies in their great annual mass-meetings; and it was the promise to supply this loss apparently afforded by the idea of Simultaneous Meetings, which led to the motion for your present Committee. It was hoped that the incitement of such a large publicity, would stimulate attention to Missions among congregations and individuals whom our methods hitherto available have never reached.

With this intent our Plan was rapidly developed. It was determined to appoint Meetings at fifty-eight leading points, and supply them with leading speakers at the expense of a common fund (\$500.00), which should focus public attention upon the movement; and relying upon the effect of the conspicuousness of these, to proceed, as the main aim, to secure other Meetings in all our other towns. Various devices to secure this, have occupied the unremitting labors of the Secretary, and of the whole Joint-Committee. First of all the public press was laid under contribution; an article, different every one (mostly) from another, was offered to every secular newspaper (220) in the State, and very generally published. Another device was the breaking-up of the proposed "all-day Missionary convention in every town," into so many parts, as might secure, if not the interest of one, of another or another class of our people. Not only was a general mass-meeting, provided by the respective Presbyterial Committees with speakers from a distance, proposed for the evening; but women's missionary societies and all devout women were offered a place on the programme for a meeting of their own, persons interested in children and youth invited to arrange a meeting suitable to their methods, the laity in general asked to share in a prayer and conference meeting, and if there should be any other class, provision was abundantly made for them; that by some means or all, whatever should fail or be refused, there might by some means be brought about some kind of a foreign-missionary meeting in every one of our towns. Then a personal letter, in the handwriting of the Secre-

tary, has been sent to every Ruling Elder, every Pastor, every Sabbath-School Superintendent, and one lady at least in every church, in all these one hundred and sixty-one towns (the "non-centers"); the lists for this close and thoroughgoing advertising having been kindly furnished by the Presbyterial stated-clerks, Dr. Worden's Sabbath-School bureau, and, for a distribution even yet wider, the Presbyterial "N. S. M." chairmen and the Publisher of "The Church at Home and Abroad."

The provision for the gathering of our whole constituency into local missionary conventions having been thus devised, the next step was to furnish them with theme and detail. A unity of thought in all the Meetings was to be desired. This was readily found in the doctrinal basis of our English model. The "F. S. M." scheme rested simply and squarely on the idea that "the Evangelization of the Heathen and Mohammedan World" is *commanded by the Lord*. This is a magnificent declaration. It lifts the whole argument above the reach of petty sophistries, and enables us, instead of standing as suppliants for charity, to speak as the oracles of God, advantaging every department of ecclesiastical need by the fearless application of Gospel truth upon one point. "Give me where I may stand," cried Archimedes, "and I will move the world!" The Church of Christ can do anything she wishes on earth, if she will only avail herself of this God-given leverage of Foreign Missions. "Our Risen Lord's Last Command!" What minister shall tell that, what church shall give it heed, and not reap every spiritual blessing even in their own field?

But experience has shown that missionary meetings, unless skillfully controlled, are easily changed into new machines to grind out "revivals." To guard against this, while a prayer-meeting begins the day, the discussion of Missions, doctrine and exploit, is so nearly as possible assured. The publications of the Joint-Committee thus far issued (emanating from a sub-committee clothed with power) include, first, a circular exhibiting in careful detail the Plan for Meetings, with all the names of the Committees; and another, proffering in the form of pictures two available arguments, one to answer the plea "No Need for Missions," the other to answer that of "Missions a Failure." Of the first of these we shall have printed at least four thousand, mainly for participants in the work and to answer inquiries, and of the second eleven thousand, for general distribution. Nearly two thousand of each of these have already been mailed to separate addresses.

But in order to prevent the possibility of failure in public discussion of the Missionary subject, special literature has been provided for the exclusive use of ministers at the non-centers, and (different) for that of the laymen; while a careful selection of extant literature—an "outline missionary series," and several compact manuals of missionary facts—is indicated and brought within reach for the use of persons in the "non-centers," and after them, of others. The Women's Foreign Missionary Society at Philadelphia have also assured us that their publications will be brought into special service for our Simultaneous Week. It has so

often happened that Missionary meetings have failed, not from the lack of interest, but from the lack of material in hand, that your Committee take especial satisfaction in meeting this need. (The circulars "N. S. M. No. 1" and "N. S. M. No. 2," being the only publications ready at the time of this report, are appended herewith. Mr. Leavens' paper on "The Present Attitude of Evangelical Missions" will be sent to the Stated Clerk when issued, with whatever else may come from the Publication sub-committee.)

Another sub-committee, of which the Rev. Dr. Teal is chairman, have arranged the difficult matter of the assignment of speakers to Centers; so at this writing every one of the fifty-eight Centers is assured of one speaker, some of two. (This list will also be appended when ready.)

The Meetings will all occur within the week November 13-19, 1887, but not all on the same day. The "simultaneousness" thus consists, not in the actual gathering of all our two hundred and ninety-five congregations on a single occasion, but in a general consent and regard to the one theme: "Our Risen Lord's Last Command," for a whole week, culminating in each place in some one gathering according to a common schedule.

A fitting and important preparation is made in the suggestion, not yet sufficiently urged, that the prayer-meetings occurring nearest before our Simultaneous Week, be devoted to mention of our work, and to special prayer. In line with this is the endeavor now making by the Presbyterian "N. S. M." Committees, to arrange a general exchange of pulpits, as suggested by Secretary Gillespie in our magazine for May.

In all our work, no payment for services is made; and only for traveling expenses when incurred beyond bounds of one's own Presbytery.

A wide interest is already shown beyond our borders in this, the first extensive and thorough undertaking of the Simultaneous-Meetings idea on this side the Atlantic. Our Plan has been as generously drawn upon by our Methodist brethren in northern New-Jersey, as the English plan was before by ourselves. The Presbyteries of Allegheny, Geneva, Huntingdon, Philadelphia and Philadelphia-North, have been in correspondence with us, and will observe either ours or the Assembly's Week. The Missionary Secretary of the Reformed Church has asked for our publications, and to that Church we are indebted for one of our expected speakers, President Gates of Rutgers-college. The International Missionary Union, to whose president, Dr. Gracey, we are indebted for special facilities in books, declared more interest in this subject at their meeting in August last, than in any other.

Whatever else comes of our work, we have at least sent good news to many a far country that is doing good to dear distant brethren. Dr. Hunter Corbett, of China, writes us: "Our faith is strengthened and our hearts filled with joy to hear of the proposed meetings. * * * We shall daily pray earnestly." Dr. Eddy, of Syria, says: "Your proposed plan is one in which I rejoice with my whole heart. Christians in America, on their knees praying, fight a large part of the battles of the

Lord carried on around the globe." The Rev. E. P. Newton, of India, writes: "I hasten to reply with an expression of sympathy. * * * We out here, you may be sure, watch every movement of this sort with the keenest interest." Mr. Beall, of Mexico, writes: "The Presbyterian church of San-Luis-Potosi will unite with you in prayer in November." Mr. Alexander, of Japan, writes: "We gladly welcome any news of unusual interest in the home churches in our work and desire to do all in our power to aid." Mr. Wilson, of Siam, seizes part of his last evening with his motherless children, on his lonely way back to the far-off Laos country, to say: "God be with you in all your efforts to awaken the churches to the wants of a dying world;" while Miss Mary L. Cort, also of Siam, says: "When I read of the Simultaneous-Meetings in Great Britain, I began to pray that the idea might cross the Atlantic and be taken up by all the awakening churches in our own dear land; and as soon as I read your article in "The Church At Home and Abroad," I felt like writing you. I trust New-Jersey will find many sister States to join her in this good work." And Dr. Henry Jessup, of Syria, says to us: "I have longed to know that such a movement was to be promoted in our own country, and feel grateful that your State is to take the lead this year. May it speedily be adopted in every church and in every State of the Union. May the Lord be present with you by His Spirit in great power, so that you can have a true and hearty Thanksgiving Day for the spiritual blessings showered upon you."

Our closing word must be mingled with a confession of bereavement. The labors of this Committee, arduous though full of blessing, have been rendered doubly heavy through the decease of our beloved chairman, the Rev. Dr. Augustus Brodhead. The progress of our work throughout the year has been given its character by the progress of his disease, so intimate and devoted were his relations to this Committee. His translation from the midst of us sanctifies with a greater solemnity the work which you gave into his hands and ours.

It may be permitted us to suggest, as the time for the completion of our labors draws nigh, that the peculiar enterprise which has thus far been in our care, should not be left to come to an end then. In view of the large public interest even now manifest in this new method of awakening interest in Missions, and of results which may be anticipated without presumption, we would recommend the following resolution, viz.:

Resolved, That the present Special Committee on Simultaneous Meetings for Foreign Missions, be continued to complete the work of the Meetings to be held November 13-19, 1887, to collate results, and to embody them in a Report, to be presented to Synod next year; and that the Committee be empowered to fill vacancies now existing in the Committee.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

W. H. BELDEN,
ALFRED YEOMANS,
H. E. SIMMONS.

ASBURY-PARK, OCT. 18, 1887.

To Chairmen of Local Meetings.

This Report is sent to each church or Meeting, to be read (part or all) at the beginning of the Meetings, that persons unacquainted with their plan & purpose, or unskilled in speaking ~~to~~, may have due aid. Particularly, let us read the messages from our dear brethren the Missionaries (pages 3 & 4), which will bring them & their work very near to us. They have asked us particularly to pray for them; & they promise that our Meetings shall be Simultaneous in Japan, Brazil, Persia, U. S. Territories, China, Syria, Mexico, India & Siam, as well as in New-Jersey!

(If possible, some additional words from the Missionaries (received in late mail) shall be printed & sent to you.

76. 11. 13.