

SENT DOWN.

Of the acts and deliverances of the General Assembly some part consists of the things "sent down" to be acted upon by the Church. They are overtures to the Presbyteries, recommendations to the lower courts, pastoral letters, and recommendations of special days to be devoted to specific purposes. Last year the Assembly sent down to the Presbyteries, for their concurrence or non-concurrence, four propositions looking to the amendment of the standards of the Church, a pastoral letter on the subject of worldliness, and a recommendation for the observance of several days. The recent Assembly sent down three overtures, two of them looking to changes in the Book of Church Order, and one to a slight change in the wording of a paragraph of the Confession of Faith.

One of the overtures proposes a small amendment to the law of commissions, making it possible for the Synod and Assembly to refer judicial cases to commissions for trial of their own motion rather than by consent of parties first obtained. The other overture is a proposition to change the basis of representation of Presbyteries in the General Assembly. At present each Presbytery no matter how small, sends two commissioners to that body, one minister and one ruling elder, and if a Presbytery numbers twenty-five ministers or more it is entitled to an additional minister and ruling elder. According to this rule, the number of ministers is made the basis of the additional representation. This savors much of clericalism, ignores the membership of the church, and is contrary to the genius of Presbyterianism. The basis in the law proposed is the communicant roll of the churches plus the number of ministers. Each Presbytery shall have, as before, one minister and one ruling elder as its representatives in the Assembly, but when a Presbytery's communicant roll plus its number of ministers is 4,000, it shall have an additional representative of one minister and one ruling elder, and so on for each additional 4,000 communicants and ministers. In other words, the basis of representation is changed so that the membership of the church rather than the ministry is made the determinant factor in the case. The proposed change looks in the direction of more perfect Presbyterianism. Practically worked out, as was clearly shown in these columns a few months ago by a careful study at that time of the membership and ministerial rolls of the Presbyteries, it will make no appreciable difference just now in the total enrollment of the General Assembly's commissioners. A few small changes would be wrought in some of the Presbyteries and Synods. The aggregate Synodical numbers in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas would be unaffected, and within all these Synods except Mississippi, where there would be one change, there would be no change whatever presbyterially. The representation from North Carolina would be increased by six, that from Tennessee by two, while Virginia would be lessened by four, and Georgia by two. Using last year's figures, it would give North Carolina's 45,978 communicants, now having only 24 representatives, 30, and lessen Virginia's 50,892, now having 38, to 32. This would be a decided equalizing. The presbyterial changes would be, in Mississippi, Central Mississippi increase from two to four, and Meridian decrease from four to two; in Georgia, Macon from four to two; in Tennessee, Memphis from two to four; in North Carolina, Fayetteville from four to six, Wilmington two to four; in Virginia, Abingdon from four to two, Greenbrier from two to four, Lexington from four to six.

The third overture sent down is that touching the perennial "infant clause" of the Confession.

The Assembly proposes to the Presbyteries this slight change in the phraseology of the Confession of Faith: Instead of "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated," etc., make it "Being elect, all infants dying in infancy are regenerated," etc. This change, it is claimed, will adjust the statement to the universal belief of the Church, will make the clause impossible of that misinterpretation which the opponents of our Church have wilfully placed upon it, and will at the same time conform the credal statement, as before, to the teachings of the Scriptures.

Another overture sent down to the Presbyteries for their action was touching the requirements in examination for licensure. It looks towards so amending the Book of Church Order as to allow of the substitution of certificates of graduation or diplomas to be substituted for certain examinations, and giving authority to Presbyteries to provide for an English study of some head of divinity instead of the time honored "Latin Thesis."

In addition to these overtures the Assembly has sent down to sessions and Sunday schools, and all others immediately concerned, a pastoral letter touching the use of our Sunday school literature and warning against the "International Graded Lessons." The letter is a strong document, cogent in reasoning, and its conclusions and advice are admirable.

Another matter "sent down" to the Church at large is a recommendation that a Day of Fasting and Prayer be observed, the Assembly naming October 2, 1912, as the date, and recommending also that this day mark the beginning of an active campaign and effort looking to the lifting of the Church from its present low plane as to family worship, family religion, home instruction, and Sabbath observance. The recommendation comes in connection with the Assembly's Narrative of the State of Religion.

Brooklyn is the headquarters of "Pastor Russell" who furnishes stereotyped plates of his sermons free to cheap publications. "Pastor Russell" has been making a tour of Christian missions in distant lands and has been grossly misrepresenting the Foreign Mission work of evangelical Churches. Before his departure he left with his printers an elaborate report of his sermons and addresses, supposed to be delivered at certain places on certain dates. *The Brooklyn Eagle* has secured papers from places actually visited by Pastor Russell and prints in parallel columns what he actually did and said, and what his publishers said he did and said. The incongruity has appealed strongly to the sense of the ludicrous in the public mind. "Pastor Russell" is prominent in some localities as the preacher of another gospel. His religion is properly called "a counterfeit Christianity." Professor Moorehead of the Zenia Theological Seminary (United Presbyterian) exposes triumphantly, in "The Fundamentals," the utter falsity and perversity of Russellism. Its gross errors are listed as follows:

1. Christ, before his advent, was not divine.
2. When he was in the world he was still not divine.
3. His atonement was exclusively human, a mere man's.
4. Since his resurrection he is divine only, no longer human.
5. His body was not raised from the dead.
6. His Second Advent took place in 1874.
7. The saints were raised up in 1878.
8. Both Christ and the saints are now on earth and have been for thirty-seven and thirty-three years, respectively.

9. The professing Christian Church was rejected of God in 1878.

10. The final consummation and end will take place in 1914.

11. Silence as to the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

12. Denial of the punishment of the wicked.

Pastor Russell's followers teach that his writings are truly but not infallibly inspired.

AT CHURCH.

My name on the church register is not the principal thing in church membership; neither is my zeal for my church as the best of all the churches, nor is my contribution to the support of the church; but the essential meaning of church membership is that I am to participate regularly and devoutly in the worship of God's people when they assemble to meet with him and unite in his praise. I have entered into a covenant with him and with his people to seek and promote the communion of saints, and I have professed to believe his word when it gives assurance that he is in the midst of those who gather in his name. Shall I choose to be absent from his sanctuary where he tells me he will meet me if I come?

God's house is sacred; it is set apart to him and by him for his worship. There he holds fellowship with his people. In giving direction for the construction of the tabernacle God said to Moses, "There I will meet with thee and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat." David said, "Thy way O God is in the sanctuary;" also, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary; also, he was in perplexity until he went into the sanctuary of God;" he said his soul was longing and thirsting for God, "to see thy power and thy glory, so I have seen thee in the sanctuary; his prayer was, "The Lord send thee help from the sanctuary and strengthen thee out of Zion;" his exhortation was, "Praise the Lord, praise God in the sanctuary." Paul's instruction was, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."

There are those who are denied the privilege of being in the assemblies of the saints. God has compensations for all such. The offerings that he requires are such as are made possible to us in his providence and by his grace, and where the means of grace are provided, he is dishonored if they are ignored.

The season is near when church attendance is often neglected. Diversions of many kinds tempt the weak away from the habitation of God's house, the place where his honor dwelleth. Physical and mental inertia, allurements which are sometimes called recreations, but which more often prove to be dissipations, temporary absence from the vicinity of the home church, "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in choke the word."

Strong believers resist enervating tendencies; they wait on the Lord, they renew their strength, they mount up with wings as eagles."

The high cost of living seems to be giving impetus to at least one feature of the "institutional Church." The churches are organizing lunch clubs for business women. A small membership fee is charged and some prepared food is furnished at prices below restaurant rates. Rest rooms, reading rooms and sources of recreation are provided. The Brick Presbyterian church is one of the latest to organize a lunch club. Rev. Madison Peters has opened a grocery store in connection with his church to meet the wants of people of limited means and expects to establish other stores of the same kind.