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GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, July 4th.

In continuation of the proceedings of the Council given last week, under the presidency of Dr. Goold, Edinburgh, the next paper was read by Dr. Stuart Robinson, Louisville, on the "Churchliness of Calvinism." Remarking on the distinctive theological opinions of Zwingle, Luther, and Calvin, he showed that Calvin advanced on Luther and Zwingle just as the later astronomical theories advanced on those of Ptolemy and Copernicus. The earlier fathers made the centre of their theological system the Son of God, but Calvin showed the whole system moved round another force, "the eternal purpose of God." What was the whole bill therefore but a publication of journals of eternity, just as they would publish the journals of this Council when they got through? This doctrine of the decrees of God, about which so much was said, was not a doctrine apart in itself, but was rather the standpoint from which they looked at all truths God had ever revealed. It was by interpreting the Bible in that way that they could hope to understand it. The peculiarity of the Calvinistic theory on which the Church rested was that it not only set forth the plan of redemption, but the organisation of a society. The mission of Messiah, when He came to execute the covenants of eternity, was not simply that of a teaching prophet or an atoning priest. He was to be ruling king as well. (Applause.) Hence the visible Church was formed when the first sinner was saved, and would be completed when the last sinner was brought to Christ. It was sometimes said "Oh why don't you preach the Gospel and leave Churchism alone?" But what if Churchism were a part of the Gospel? In preaching the Gospel he must make a sinner feel that he was born into the family of God, and to the society of the people of God. (Applause.) It was because a mutilated Gospel was preached that they had so much Low Churchism in these days. On this footing they could have a clear and healthy and consistent interpretation of Scripture, and they should find that according to this theory the teaching of Scripture concerning the functions of the Church visible was all made plain in the way he went back from the commencement of the Church to Abraham, for he professed to be a higher Churchman than many of his Episcopal friends—(laughter)—that talked about the Church organised by the Apostles. He said the Apostles never organised a Church at all. They found it organised already. (Applause.) They were just an extraordinary convention, with power to remodel the Church of one nation into a church for all nations. (Applause.) Then he found one form of government running through the whole Bible. Moses, for instance, did not go on "his own hook" to Pharaoh. (Great laughter.) He went to his Presbytery and satisfied them that he was truly called of God. Didn't they remember that Elijah was holding presbytery when the messengers of Benhadad came to him? and was not Ezekiel sitting in presbytery also when the spirit came upon him, for he said "I was sitting in my house with the elders?" It was the general assembly of an apostate Church that condemned the Son of God to death; and when the new Church opened, they had the presbytery again, and he might remark in regard to all that had been said about "Presbyteros" and "Episcopos" that, while the former word was frequently used in the New Testament, the latter was only employed four times, and then it was only when the Apostles were speaking to the Greek Gentiles, who did not know the meaning of "Presbyteros." (Great laughter.) "Episcopos" was used as a sort of explanation, just as it would be explained to a stranger that a Scotch provost was the same as a chief magistrate or mayor. And the Church in heaven was not a mob, it was still under government, for John in his sublime vision, when he saw the door of heaven opened and the Lamb seated in the midst of the throne, saw also the same Presbytery, for there was the Church and the four and twenty elders—(laughter)—casting their crowns at his feet. They would see then that there was reason for the spirit which animated the old Covenanters, on whom so much ridicule had been cast, when they declared for "Christ's Crown and Covenant." They might search through the Word of God but they should not find a single place where any man who was not inspired ever exercised by himself ecclesiastical authority. That was always exercised by tribunals, and that was the essence of Presbytery.

Dr. Inglis, California, next addressed the Council. He showed that Presbyterian standards and polity were alone fitted to counteract and overcome the most marked tendencies of our time. To all the false tendencies of modern philosophy and science, the Presbyterian standards and doctrine, as the interpreter of the Bible, were opposed, and they declared that philosophy and science were alike out of step with no chart, no compass, no definite voyage, no positive destination until they accepted the idea of God as supreme, which makes Him the Creator and Ruler and supervising God. Presbyterianism had always held, and never more firmly than now, to the divine authority of Scripture, and here also it met a direct tendency of the time.

Dr. Fabri, Elberfeld, who spoke in German, which was interpreted by Professor Cairns, said that last summer when Dr. Blaikie visited him at Elberfeld the question arose "What do you mean by the Reformed Church; is it the Calvinistic or the Church of the Reformation?" to which Dr. Blaikie said he was quite willing to understand it as the Church of the Reformation in the widest sense. They would ask, perhaps, why any importance should be attached to this interpretation more than another, but

it seemed to him of vital importance that they should determine whether the term "Presbyterian" in this programme applied to the Church of the Reformation or the mere form of Church Government for them on the Continent especially. The answer to this preliminary question was of great importance. They had examples in the Church of England of Churches that held the doctrine of the Reformation without being Presbyterian, without belonging to the Reformed Church in the strict sense. On the contrary, they had examples to the opposite on the Rhine. The Presbyterian system on the Continent, without perhaps knowing it exactly, was celebrating great triumphs. They saw how in the Church in Germany, everyone was now inclined to come over to the Presbyterian system. Although there was still not a little that was obscure and dark, especially in two parts of Prussia, in the acceptance of this principle they still saw that there was an admission of the principle and the freedom of the Christian Church, and in what he might call in a certain sense the voutary principle. He believed that in many parts of Germany a transition of this kind would form a happy change. (Applause.)

Dr. Blaikie, at this stage, said he had been asked by the Business Committee to take the opportunity of laying upon the table the paper on the Presbyterian Churches throughout the world—a sketch of their history, statistics, and work, compiled by desire, to the General Presbyterian Council, and submitted to this meeting in Edinburgh, 3rd July, 1877.

The Council now adjourned.

EVENING SEDERUNT.

Business was resumed at half-past seven in the Assembly Hall, which was again crowded. The chair was occupied by the Right Hon. Lord Moncrieff, Lord-President of the second division of the Court of Session, Edinburgh, who delivered an address on Presbyterianism from a layman's point of view. He upheld the cosmopolitan character of the Presbyterian Church, and exhibited by happy illustrations its complete and symmetrical nature, touching delicately but sharply on the question of its distinction from and advantages over other ecclesiastical systems.

The subject for consideration this evening was "The simplicity and Scriptural character of Presbyterianism: its expansiveness and adaptation, and its friendly aspect to other Evangelical Churches."

Dr. Hoge, Richmond, addressed the Council. He said there was a Church which was stable in character, but flexible in administration; conservative in principle, aggressive in work, and furnished with every instrumentality for promoting the extension of the truth in the home and in foreign fields. In certain quarters there was a certain distrust of the preaching of what were sometimes called the unreach-able doctrines of the Bible. There were men who hesitated to use even the phraseology in which Paul gave expression to some of the grandest truths in his epistles—(applause)—truths in which he gloried, truths before which these craven-hearted temporisers quailed. They said, even if those doctrines were in the Bible, it was not politic to preach them; they excite prejudice, are powerless for good, potent only for evil. Was not that taking a strange liberty with the Divine Word? to bring it to the test of human views of expediency. Was it not very arrogant to take certain truths, bottle them up, and label them "Poison"—truths which God intended to be cordials to the hearts of His children? (Applause.) Side by side by its doctrinal truth their Church was distinguished equally for the ecstacy of its spirit. It was not a Broad Church in the sense of embracing in its arms the Calvinistic creed and the Arminian clergy; it was not a Broad Church in the sense that it believed in the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and then denied the divinity of Jesus Christ; but it was a Broad Church in the sense of believing that, notwithstanding the diversities expressed between Christian denominations as to organizations and forms of worship, there was, and there must be a real unity, in spite of all want of uniformity, among all whose lives are hid with Christ in God. (Applause.)

The Rev. Mr. Henderson, Ballarat, Australia, spoke of the rapid growth of the Presbyterian Church in Australia, and the union that had been consummated amongst them. They took ministers from all branches of Presbyterianism, and they had one minister to every 1000 of the population, and he called upon all Presbyterians, especially in Scotland, to follow the example they had set, and unite in one grand Church.

Dr. Ormiston, Brooklyn, proceeded to speak of and illustrate the expansiveness and adaptation of Presbyterianism in different lands. Noting, in passing, that he had heard with pain some people even in Scotland declare that the Shorter Catechism, which was expressly prepared for those of weaker understanding, was not fitted for children, he assured them it was, because he had tried it. (Laughter.) It might be that the form of some of the words was like a peace-bannock that he remembered in his early days—he found it hard to get his teeth through—but let them crumble at it and round it; let them begin at the middle and go to the end, and then get through it, and having succeeded, they would find that the teaching of the Catechism was strength to the heart, and if they went to the pulpit, grand matter for preaching. (Laughter.) He next considered Presbyterianism in respect to its simplicity in its modes of worship. Got two good Presbyterians together, down they kneel, and if they uttered the Lord's Prayer and a psalm, that was worship in itself complete; and if the one man got up and exhorted the other, and the other returned the compliment, that was good instruction. (Applause.) The simplicity of Presbyterianism in respect of discipline

was also one of its recommendations. If their spiritual life languished in heart or home, if closets were unvisited or family altars were grown cold, if Christian life was not nurtured with the finest of wheat, they must not lay the blame of failure on the system they professed, but rather attribute it to the feeble, helpless, useless way they use their weapons. They had heard to-day that Presbyterianism was of Divine authority, and certainly its simplicity seemed to speak to its origin, all the Divine laws being simple. (Applause.) Dr. Ormiston concluded by advertising to the great progress which Presbyterianism had made over the world, and by urging continued and stronger efforts in the future. (Applause.)

Professor Brunmelkamp, of the Reformed (Free) Church of the Netherlands, who addressed the meeting in his own language, said that from the first moment he learned that there was to be a Pan Presbyterian Council his heart leapt for joy. They could become one, because they were one, having one faith, one hope, one trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything was united to bring them together; there was only one voice against it, and that was the voice of Satan, who was always pushing forward everywhere little differences, and fixing their eyes on them as if they had nothing to do but make them as large as possible, while the great thing was to acknowledge and follow the Lord Jesus as the crowned Head of all. After referring to the synod of Dort, he said these good men did not see the time they wished for, but those now assembled were happier than they. What they wished they now saw realized almost at this moment, and he prayed that they might be one in love.

Rev. Dr. D. Fraser, London, said he had been asked to say a few words upon the relations which the Church ought to maintain towards other Churches or branches of the Church of God. Touching upon the phrase in the creed, "We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints," he remarked that they did not believe—at least he did not—in the communion of Presbyterians. He loved it, but only as a part of the great communion of saints. It had never come into their thoughts to arrogate to themselves a position of exclusive dignity and favour, and to disparage their fellow-Christians who are under administrations different from theirs, and who do not assent to all the points in the Presbyterian confessions and creeds. All their sister Churches might be all the more assured of their respect and regard when they said they were not at all becoming unsettled in their attachment either to their theology or to their polity, but they learned to look, as they believed, quite beyond those considerations that affect their particular branch of the one Church of God to those larger considerations which affect the whole of the Church everywhere. They were slow to unchurch others, and were not anxious to raise invidious questions as to the validity of other forms of Church government. They were not indifferent to matters of Church polity, but, at the same time, they did not lay down that a mere question of external polity could of itself determine the right of any Christian community to be allowed a place as an integral part of the redeemed Church of God. They would be very sorry to think that none were true Churches of Christ except those that were in perfect doctrinal harmony with them. Yet they did not countenance the shallow and, in some respects, mischievous opinion that was abroad that it was of little consequence to which Church a man belonged, so long as he himself was a genuine Christian. While they admitted that the Divine Spirit carried on diversity of operations, under diversity of administration, he did not entertain the chimera notion that they might force or fuse all religious bodies into one. They should be careful, he humbly thought, of using such language as would seem to justify or merely indicate that they were contented with the present ill-arranged and ill-compacted condition of evangelical Protestantism. (Applause.) As students of their Bibles, and as lovers of order, logic, and simplicity, they ought to see whether they could do anything on their part to lessen existing difficulties, and where those difficulties could not be removed, to establish what they called a *modus vivendi*, better relation of intercourse between Churches. They should now proceed to efface from the minds of English people the notion that Presbyterians were a fractions set of people. They were just in the position that if they had only discretion enough and sweetness enough for the task, they ought to exercise a most powerful healing, calming and balancing influence upon the Christian Churches of the world. (Applause.) They had more episcopacy than any Church. Episcopacy was a great principle with them. Congregationalism was a great principle with them, development of congregational life and activity was one of their great principles, and he hoped was well practised amongst them. Methodism was a great principle with them, methodical combination and activity was the principle of Protestantism. There was a truth in every one of these things. It was not by denying or degrading them, but by recognizing and conciliating them that the highest condition of the Church of God as a visible institution ought to exist. They would come to some grand practical conclusions if only they could cultivate love to God and man with their fellow-Christians about them, and to rejoice in one another's welfare, and scorn the feeling of rejoicing over one another's disasters. If there was a Church among them that had better principles or constitution, let it show it by its fruits. (Applause.) Surely those men that had the wisest plans, the highest privileges, the grandest memories, and the brightest hopes were bound

before the Lord and their brethren to think the largest thoughts, and feel the widest sympathies, and to do the noblest deeds. (Loud applause.)

Rev. Dr. Macgregor, Edinburgh, said that it was quite possible that they could make a great deal too much of their Presbyterian principles. He held by them as founded firmly on Scripture, but he did not think our Lord or His apostles laid down any elastic, rigid principles within which all Churches must be confined. It was a great pity, he thought, that the landed gentry and the aristocracy of Scotland had left the Presbyterian Church of the Scottish soil. It was a pity for their own order, and a pity for the stability of these institutions so closely hung together, that so many of the great landowners had become aliens to the religion of the Scottish soil, and had thus estranged themselves so much from the people in what looked man to man in meeting and worshipping together in the same church. (Applause.) This was among the things which had led to the assertion that the nobility of Scotland had to a very considerable extent ceased to be the Scottish nobility. (Applause.)

Mr. J. P. McClure, Belfast, moved a vote of thanks to Lord Moncrieff for presiding on this occasion, which having been acknowledged, the Council was closed with prayer by Dr. Knox, Belfast.

THURSDAY.

The General Presbyterian Council resumed at half-past ten o'clock—Dr. Phin, Edinburgh, Moderator. Professor Calderwood, Edinburgh, read the report of the Business Committee, which stated with reference to the motion made at yesterday's forenoon sederunt by Mr. A. Taylor Innos amount contending, that, if competent under the constitution of the Council, the mover had submitted a short preamble, which he desired inserted, to the effect "that the Council, recognizing the unity of faith in the consensus of the Reformed Confessions, appoint a committee," and so on; and the committee recommended that this be agreed to by the Council. With regard to the discussion on the principles of Presbyterianism in the afternoon sitting, while the papers submitted might be regarded as setting forth substantially what those principles were, the committee recommended that no formal motion need be passed by the Council. The suggested preamble of Mr. Taylor Innos led to some discussion, Dr. Begg at once demurring to acceptance of an alteration which he had heard read only once, without time to consider it, and warning the meeting that if they wished the Council to have a long-continued existence they would avoid specific definitions as far as possible. Dr. T. Smith took a similar view. After remarks from Dr. Goold, Dr. Plumer, and one or two others it was agreed to leave out the preamble and the report otherwise was approved. One or two formal intimations were made, including one by Dr. Blaikie that Dr. Duff, who was unable to be present, had issued an address (as a volume got up in boards) titled "Missions the chief end of the Christian Church," as his contribution to the proceedings of the Council, and copies of which would be presented to members.

Dr. Howard Crosby, New York, read the first paper on "Preaching, and the training of the Preacher." The aim of the Church, he said, is to bring souls to Christ—the pastor's work is the confirmation of the discipleship. His aim is not to civilize man, but to perfect him in God's truth; to build him up in godliness, or God-likeness. He should never let his hearers lose sight of the truths of Divine revelation. A philosophical scheme, the result of his own speculation, is not the Word of God. If he seek to amuse or delight his audience with elaborate rhetoric he has abandoned his holy work. Whatever will turn his hearers' attention from the Word of God is false preaching, however favorably it may be received by the community or applauded in the newspapers. He must not meet atheists, sceptics, and scientists on their own ground and become a comical Humboldt while the Book of God is neglected. A man who knows his Bible well is fit for any opponent. He should not preach too much for men's intellects. The Bible is God's attack on the heart, and preachers lose all their advantage when they prefer men's attack on the intellect. Egotism and parade of learning should be avoided by preachers. He protested against any mingling of amuse-ment or laughter with preaching. The eccentricities of the pulpit, as those buffooneries were emphatically called, were all new wounds inflicted on the Lord in the house of His friends. It was a low state of the pulpit when men went, not for edification, but for titillation. He also protested against mechanical preaching, as if the preacher were a man working at a crank or pump, a hireling rather than a shepherd. As to its manner, preaching should be honest, solemn, natural, simple, clear, fresh, and earnest. It should not be above the people or below the people, but to the people. Preachers should be trained more in exegetics than in systematic theology. The great defect of theological seminaries is that they do not teach the Bible, but teach about the Bible. A minister should go forth charged like an electric battery with the Word of God, and should have his heart consecrated for the work.

Dr. Cohen Stuart, Amsterdam, read a paper containing suggestions concerning pulpit eloquence with regard to the character of Presbyterian Churches. He said that the prominence given to this subject in the Council's proceedings was as if ought to be. The Churches of the Reformation stand decidedly on the basis of the Word. The more consistently the principle of Reformation has developed itself, the more evidently this side of Christian life appears. The Lutheran and Episcopal Churches having not gone so far in rejecting Romanism, are more or less sacramental still. The Presbyterian Churches, more consistent

and radical, with its democratic organization, Calvinistic Creed, and Puritan spirit, forming the extreme left of Protestantism, is most essentially by its nature and tendencies the Church of the Word, consequently, of Gospel preaching and pulpit eloquence. Nowhere in the Christian Church does pulpit eloquence take such a prominent place as in a Presbyterian congregation. No altar here, but the pulpit with its open Bible; no hearsay, merely save the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching with us is the main part of religious service. Might we say, too much so? and the great means of edification. Take it away, and there is nothing left. The more important the place preaching occupies in the Christian life, especially in the Presbyterian Church, the higher our responsibility for doing it. As this responsibility felt and obedience will not fail. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Though it should be cultivated by study, it is indeed nothing else but "truth proclaimed with earnestness and love." If the Spirit's fire be kindled in the heart the tongue will be touched by the burning altar coal. (Applause.)

Rev. Dr. Dykes, London, said he was not satisfied that the pulpit was losing its power. His observation and experience led him to an opposite conclusion. He believed that in all Protestant countries the pulpit was as strong now as at any period in the history of the Church. The pulpit had a greater difficulty to contend with than formerly in the wider culture and the extremely varied intellectual activity of the people; and owing to the incisiveness and freshness with which current topics were treated in the public press, after the manner in which subjects were handled in the press, the pulpit mode of treatment was tame and commonplace. The first suggestion which must occur to every one was that it behoved them to perfect, if they could, their instruments and apparatus of theological and practical training of preachers. He was far from thinking that the Church had adapted their seminaries of training to the changed circumstances and enlarged requirements of the modern time as she ought to have done. The Church of Rome required from the ordinary curates no power of speaking from the pulpit; but the Church of Rome had shown her wisdom in this as in other matters by always picking out and specially training men distinguished for oratorical power, and by bringing her educational apparatus to bear upon them so as to develop and use their powers to the utmost. He thought that when they found amongst them men of eminent pulpit ability it was hardly right to condemn them to perform the whole of the duties of the Christian ministry, so that they never could be trained to the highest pulpit power of which they were capable, and they never got the best work out of them. (Applause.) There was another matter at which they might look, and that was whether it was possible to carry the division of labor in the work of the ministry any further than they had done. He confessed that the events of God's providence within the last few years seemed to him to have been pointing in a direction in which the Church must take conscious and deliberate steps before long. His venerable colleague in the Council who read the first paper had very properly distinguished between what was usually called the pastoral and the missionary work. Now, it seemed to him that subdivision of work lying along the line of that division had been forced upon them by circumstances. Till within a recent time both the work of preaching the Gospel for the conversion of sinners, and for the edification of saints, fell to be performed by the same men. But now they all knew that while there was not less missionary work done by ministers, a great deal more of it was done by those who were not ministers; and so far from viewing that with jealousy, he thought it became ministers to hail it with devout thankfulness. (Applause.) He thought so, because it was absolutely impossible for those who were tied to a particular congregation, and bound to give their main strength to the edification of their own people, to give sufficient attention to missionary work, and the important question here was what methods could be brought to bear for the Church organizing and directing to proper results the voluntary and at present unauthorized and unco-ordinated labors in missionary preaching of the members of the Church. (Applause.) There were three factors which mainly, by their proper harmony and combination, determined perfect preaching. These were—first, a due relation to Holy Scripture as the source and form of truth, and the constant power of the life of the Church; second, a proper relation to the Church's own life and faith; and third, a proper relation to the man himself—to his humanity and idiosyncrasy; and it was in the due apportionment of these three elements that the perfect preacher must be sought. Referring especially to the first of these, he said they had always in the Presbyterian Church attached importance to this, that preaching should be derived from Scripture, based upon that, and informed by it; but it appeared to him that the true relation of the preacher to the Scripture was that it was not so much in the use of Bible phrases that they should seek the relation to Scripture as in the preacher himself, and in his utterances being saturated with the essential thoughts of the Scripture, and his maintaining a Biblical tone of sentiment and feeling in the expression of those thoughts. They must not merely take care in their expositions of Scripture never to make a text prove what never meant, but most preachers were now required to feel that what ought to be aimed at more than this was to make the organic unity and distinguishing development of religion intelligible to their people—so to preach that their people would understand that the Bible was not a mere magazine of texts by which doctrines were to be proved, but would be trained to understand the precise value in its own place in the historical

(Continued on fifth page.)