

in England; Col. Griffin and Rev. R. H. Roberts from the Baptist Union; Drs. Blaikie and Burgess from the Free Church of Scotland; Rev. Alexander Henderson, LL. D., and Dr. Wm. Blair, from the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland; Dr. Beet and Prof. Davidson from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference; Revs. James Travis and John Wenn from the Primitive Methodists; Principal Edwards and Rev. R. E. Morris from the Calvinistic Methodists; Rev. J. Dymond and Mr. F. W. Bourne from the Bible Christians; Revs. H. H. Marshall and Dr. Watts from the Methodist New Connexion; Revs. T. B. Saul and Ira Miller from the U. M. F. Church, and Messrs. Jones and Crosfield representing the Society of Friends.

Another Act of the Council immediately after organization and before business was entered upon was the passage of a resolution of condolence on account of the illness of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. Mr. Spurgeon's son answered as follows: "Mrs Spurgeon is very grateful for the sympathy and Christian love expressed in the resolution passed by the International Council of Congregationalists. The way is very dark just now, but the light of God's love is beyond the darkness. The prayers of all are still needed, for the dear patient's condition is still very critical. Nothing is impossible with God, and we still hope, saying with all our hearts, 'God's will be done.' Please to accept the warmest thanks of Mrs. Spurgeon and of yours sincerely." H.

*The Memorial Hall,
Farrington Street, July 14, 1891.*

THE DIVINE LIFE IN MAN.

DR. R. W. DALE'S ADDRESS AT THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL.

We are assembled in the presence of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the ministers and representatives of Christian Churches planted in many lands—in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland; in the United States of America; in Canada; in the West Indies; in South Africa; in Madagascar; in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand; in the islands of the South Pacific; in India; in China; in Japan; and in several of the countries of Continental Europe. Most of us inherit the ecclesiastical traditions of the Separatists, who, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, revived in this country the polity of the Apostolic Churches. In their courageous fidelity to the trust which, as they believed, they had received from God, some of them suffered long and cruel confinement in the Fleet prison—on part of the site of which stands the Memorial hall in which we met yesterday. Some of them suffered death at Tyburn, not far from the place where we are meeting to-day. But the Congregational Churches of Norway and Sweden, to whose representatives I venture in your name to give a special welcome, have a different history. They have grown into sudden strength during the last thirty years as the result of a special manifestation of the power and the grace of God; and they found the Congregational Church order for themselves in the pages of the New Testament.

The Churches we represent have a common polity, and that polity has its roots in the central contents of the Christian Faith. For the theory of Congregationalism rests upon the belief that in Christ the very life of God has been given to man; and that when those who have received that life are gathered together in Christ's name, Christ who died, but is risen again, is in the midst of them. We are Congregationalists; but we rejoice in our kinship with all who recognize in Christ the Son of God and the Lord and Saviour of men. We give a hearty welcome to the representatives of other Christian communities who have honoured us with their presence this morning. We pray that in their ministry as well as in our own the great power of God may be revealed, and that their churches may, all of them, be manifestly the temples of the Holy Ghost.

The subject announced for this address is not my own choice. It was proposed to me by the English section of the committee which arranged the proceedings of this Council; and, though I was conscious that it lies far beyond the limits of my strength, and requires for its adequate treatment a far deeper and richer religious experience than my own, I felt that it was my duty to meet their wishes. In discussing it I speak for myself. Although you have done me the great and undeserved honour of placing me in this chair, you have given me no authority to speak in your name. With a common faith in Christ as Son of God, Brother, Lord, Redeemer, Judge of men, there are wide divergencies among us in our intellectual construction of the contents of the Christian Gospel. The responsibility for what I may say lies with myself, and myself alone.

The Committee did not inform me of the reasons which led them to the selection of this subject; but I can imagine that they judged it desirable that our deliberations should begin in those high and sacred regions, where all to whom the grace and power of the Christian redemption have been revealed, meet on common ground and their ecclesiastical and theological differences are forgotten. For it is the faith of all Churches and of all theologies that can be called Christian that the end for which the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world is the realization by man of the righteousness, the blessedness and the glory of the life of God. Here we are at one with great religious communities with which we and our

fathers have had grave and sometimes fierce and bitter controversies for many generations—controversies on the nature and polity of the Church and its place in the spiritual order; on the methods by which the divine grace effects the salvation of men; on the ideal and discipline of Christian perfection; on the authority which should determine the faith and practice of those who confess that Christ is their Saviour and Lord. Among the men from whom we are divided by these cruel conflicts, but from whom our hearts should never be estranged, we recognize a saintliness shining with a glory that has its fountains in God; in their very contention and argument for errors which seem to us to obscure the light and impair the power of the Christian Gospel, we catch an accent which is the sign that they, too, are children of the Eternal. If they maintain with passionate earnestness a doctrine of the priesthood and of the sacraments which appear to us to be irreconcilable with the whole spirit and substance of the Christian faith, if they regard those who reject and assail this doctrine as the worst enemies of the human race, it is because for them the sacraments, when duly administered, are the appointed means by which the grace of God first originates and then sustains the divine life in man. It is this which in their judgment makes the sacramental and sacerdotal controversy so critical, so awful. In that controversy, as they suppose, the whole power and glory of the Christian redemption are at stake. They are contending for the sacredness and efficacy of the institutions by which they believe that the eternal life of God is made the actual possession of God.

I.

Whatever may be the nearer fortunes of that great conflict which has now extended over many centuries, it is not unreasonable, I think, to hope that the Church is on its way to a deeper and richer theological conception of that supreme truth which to all serious persons gives to the conflict its infinite importance. For it is apparent that during the last thirty or forty years the mystery of the Incarnation, with all that it reveals concerning God and man, has been exerting a new power both over speculative thought and over the religious life. There is a conviction which has grown immensely in strength during the present generation that the solution of the greatest and most oppressive problems concerning God, concerning individual man, concerning human society and the history of our race, and even concerning the material universe itself, are to be found in the Person of Christ. The deeper currents of theological thought have set in that direction. But any account of the Person of Christ as He was revealed in the visible and natural order must rest upon some conception of His eternal relations both to the Father and to the whole creation; and it is in those august and sacred heights that we are to find the real interpretation of the truth concerning the divine life in man.

The Christian conception of this truth rests on the Christian conception of the divine nature itself. It is immeasurably remote from that theory of the universe which affirms the existence of an Eternal Power—or an Eternal Spirit—whose nature is absolutely one and simple, and whose presence is revealed in the order and beauty of the visible creation and in whatever is fair, noble and gracious in the life of man. Pantheism, if it appears to have some correspondence with the Christian doctrine, is in its deeper elements wholly alien from it.

The divine life in man, according to the Christian Gospel, is the life which dwells eternally in the Son of God who was in the beginning with God and who was God; by whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that was made. It is a life which, because of its eternal relations to the life of the Father, could be manifested in submission and obedience to the Father's will. Theologians have spoken of the eternal subordination of the Son, and have sometimes so spoken as to suggest that they attribute to the Son an inferior glory. I shrink from speaking of subordination. But the Incarnation is a real revelation of God—a revelation interpreted and confirmed by the most certain experiences of the Christian life in every age. A reversal of the relations between the Father and the Son illustrated in the Incarnation and in the whole movement of the divine love for human redemption is inconceivable, and these relations bear witness to eternal mysteries in the life of God.

For us the Son is no secondary Deity. He was in the beginning with God and He was God. It could never be said that He was not, or that He began to be. We attribute to Him no inferior glory. But in the Incarnation His Eternal life and perfection were revealed in obedience and submission, as the eternal life and perfection of the Father are forever revealed in Authority. Obedience, submission—these also are divine. If in the Father there is the assertion of the supreme sovereignty of the eternal Law of righteousness—if His will is the authoritative expression of that Law—if this is His characteristic glory—the free acceptance of that sovereignty is the characteristic glory of the Son. In the Spirit there is the synthesis of the two forms of perfection; and in the power of the Spirit Father and Son have a common blessedness and are eternally one. It is the life of the Son that God has made the inheritance of our race; and we know that this life reaches its complete union with the Father and its perfect blessedness through the communion and grace of the divine Spirit. Our relations to God are grounded on the eternal relations of the Son to the Father, and the life of the Son and the communion of the Holy Ghost have been made ours that we may realize our Sonship.

(To be continued.)

EMINENT LONDON PREACHERS.

MR. EDITOR,—An article in your issue of July 1 makes reference to certain distinguished ministers in the great metropolis, recalling lights and shadows of a bygone generation. Now that Mr. Spurgeon is on the confines of a world unseen it is difficult to believe that mighty London holds within itself equally great pulpit luminaries as shone there thirty-five years ago. About that time, Chas. H. Spurgeon had attained a world-wide fame as the Puritan Divine of Surrey Hall. Contemporaneously in the Episcopal Church, Archdeacon Sinclair (brother to the late Sir George Sinclair, of Edinburgh), of Kensington, was a leader among Low Church evangelicals; he twice refused a bishopric, because content with the work of a large and growing parish. His congregation sent of five shoots—in twenty-five years—which soon became strong churches. Canon Boyd, whose church was on Westbourne Terrace, was so popular that for years applications for pews could not be filled. Bishop Tait (native of Kelso, Scotland) did great things for London by getting ladies of the nobility to visit the poor. A staid duchess would take along a young countess in response to the suggestion of this practical bishop, whose love of work made him say in the House of Lords that he had been eight years a dean and was all that time trying to find out what his duties were. Rectors, deans, and canons all over the city and far beyond felt the influence of this one man as a potent stimulus in "trying to stem the tide of dissent," as Tait phrased it. At the Presbyterian Church, Covent Garden, Dr. Cumming held large audiences every Sabbath. In 1860, three new United Presbyterian congregations were formed respectively at Islington, Clapham, and Bayswater, respectively ministered to by Drs. Edmond, McFarlane, and David King (the Presbyterian statesman). The Presbyterian map of London for 1883 shows fifty-two churches within a twenty mile radius, a marvellous growth of 400 per cent. in thirty years. In the Congregational body, Dr. Fletcher, of Finsbury, Newman Hall, Dr. James Spence, of the Poultry, Cheapside; Drs. Binney and Landels, were some of their great men; among the Baptists, Hon. Baptist Noel, and William Brock commanded large audiences. Your correspondent has mentioned Dr. James Hamilton, whose eloquence was unctious even to the angelic. Dr. Edmond alone of all this galaxy of names continues to preach and wield a potent influence in his proper sphere.

Mighty London had so many eminent laymen like Earl Shaftesbury and ladies like Miss Burdett Coutts, as well as persons in humbler walks of life that a volume might be written descriptive of their great enterprises and good deeds. Perhaps nothing occurred to give such an impetus to the spread of Presbyterianism in that part of the world as the great meeting at Free-Mason's Hall in 1860, when Dr. King's eloquence was so much talked of and quoted in the public prints. His pamphlet, "A Brief Plea for Presbytery and for Presbyterianism in England," was widely circulated. One minister called it a masterpiece of dexterous handling. Some years previous his "Presbyterian Church Government" became the standard volume on that subject. Alas! how soon the great men of any generation pass away. It is to be feared that this age of realism deteriorates from that lofty idealism which in former times held sway. Possibly another of your readers could largely supplement these stray observations on so fruitful a topic.

DELTA.

SOME REFLECTIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—In a recent issue you adverted to the comparatively limited part enacted, and unimportant work done, by the ruling elders in the General Assembly, and you might have added in the Church generally.

No doubt you are aware that this is a matter which has for some time impressed the minds of the elders themselves; has indeed been the source of a certain agitation among them, apparently aimless as yet, and which has manifested itself by meetings of elders, at unoccupied hours, during the Assembly seasons, for the last year or two. One of those meetings I attended when at Kingston, and would have attended more of them had opportunity permitted.

Good may come of the agitation thus begun, but as yet it seems as if it had not been found possible to state distinctly the nature and cause of the discontent, which the meetings were called to ventilate. All on this point that can be said so far is that the ruling elders feel that their usefulness in the Assembly is not very apparent, that their time thus seems spent in vain, and that they experience no satisfaction from the reflection that their presence there is needed for no better purpose than to carry out a Church regulation which, so far as they can see, is old enough to be obsolete.

It will be a good thing if the eldership thought and wrote a little on this matter, so that definite ideas may be arrived at regarding the nature of the duties involved in the office, and of the modes by which the accomplishment of those duties can be secured. It may be needful to discuss the growing sacerdotalism of the Presbyterian Church, the widening separation between the preaching and the ruling elders and the evils arising therefrom, the division, almost recognized, into layman and another portion, which has not yet been classified by name, but which, perhaps, may be understood to be "clergy." Also the reason may be sought why it is so often difficult to get active men, acquainted with affairs, to accept the office of the eldership; Sessions being so often recruited from good old incapables, while the unauthorized boards of management are never so filled up. And lastly, to come nearer the root of the matter, to consider the rules, whether constitutional or merely customary, by which the Sessions are bound. According to those rules the men of whom the Session is composed are in a perpetual state of tutelage under the Moderator, be he an old man or a youth. It may be well to examine those old rules and customs which have grown up about the Sessions and which seem unfavourable to their usefulness, and most certainly prevent many a man of spirit from entering them.

It would be well if our Church had all the earnestness and all the force for the work before her of which her organization is capable; that if abuses are creeping in amongst us, or customs unsuited to our time are retained, the first should be corrected and the others changed. And that so her spiritual progress should not be hindered nor her people uninterested in the fulfilment of the Lord's purpose of which they themselves are chosen agents.

J. D. MACDONALD.

Hamilton, July, 1891.