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GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

A Representative and Enthusiastic Gathering.

The Retiring Moderator Delivers a Masterly Discourse—Dr. Robertson Elected to the Highest Position in the Gift of the Church—Detailed Reports of the Various Sessions—Toronto the next Meeting Place.

LONDON, June 12th, 7.30 p.m.

The twenty-first General Assembly met this evening in St. Andrew's Church. The Rev. Dr. Wardrop conducted the opening exercises and the retiring moderator, the Rev. G. L. MacKay, D.D., the well-known and successful missionary of our Church to Formosa, according to custom from time immemorial, preached the opening sermon. The enthusiasm of the Presbyterians of London filled to its utmost capacity and out into the vestibule the capacious Church with an attentive and deeply interested audience. The sermon, which we publish in full below, was delivered with the fiery ardour with which all who have heard Dr. MacKay are familiar, and a slight murmur of applause in the rear of the Church at least was heard occasionally.

OUR MARCHING ORDER.

Exodus, xiv. 15.—"Go Forward."

The circumstances under which these words were uttered are known to all. The children of Israel were on the beach with the sea in front, the foe behind and the lofty hills on either hand. It was there and then were ordered to go forward and face obstacles and difficulties insurmountable by mere human effort. There must be divine interposition or all perish.

It is not my purpose to draw a parallel between them and the Israel of the present, but reverently to lift up the command of the Lord who never changes and apply it to our own lives. God most emphatically commands Christians, as individuals and as united bodies, to go forward in the Christian life.

When we endeavor to obey this command, obstacles great and numerous, confront us, not only at the outset, but all along the journey. It is a waste of time and energy to be combating those of the past. We must look the world in the face and recognize our present perils, foes, fears, difficulties, dangers and delays. In doing this we see,—

(1.) *That the present is a Researchful Age*—Mountains are scaled, continents traversed, oceans sailed and depths explored to unravel nature's hidden stores. Books are ransacked with lancet ready for use at every page, and the book of books is on the dissecting table under the microscopic gaze of critics both higher and highest. But alas! The scurrilous and venomous attacks of some manifest their incapacity to execute with justice the self-imposed task. Time, space, mind, matter, and life are all, absorbing the eager attention of hard-wrought students of nature and ethics. Nothing is left unturned, untouched and unexplored. Side by side with the struggle for life, there is a greater struggle to know life. We hear the sound of earth delving water, dredging stone-breaking and microbe-examining; yet that wonderful potency, life, which assuredly crept into this earth in ages past, remains, without the Bible, as inscrutable and as inexplicable as the unknown and unknowable.

These researches give a sort of expectancy to human minds as if dimly foreseeing a something new to replace the old revelation and all that pertains to it.

In the midst of all, humility, and not pride, should have possession of the workers who shout aloud that a law has been discovered to account for all forms and changes in nature. Evolution is that law. We, fathers and brethren, are commanded by the Law-giver to go forward as Christians, proclaiming with unwavering and unflinching fidelity the great Law-maker at the back of life, of man, of the universe.

(2.) *It is a Speculative Age*.—Whilst researches are being made, there seems no great trouble in accounting for the mysteries whereby we are surrounded. Speculation is rife and theory rampant. They are thrown upon mankind with a coolness quite astounding, seeing that the ground is an ever-shifting one, that true workers begin to-morrow morning where they leave off to-night. We are told that there were great tides and rapid rotation of the earth during early geological eras; that sun spots are connected with magnetic disturbances; that various causes can be assigned

for the glacial period; that there is a substance or medium called either pervading the universe; that the Aryans belong to Asia, and with equal confidence that they are indigenous to Europe. We are presented with half a dozen theories regarding the movements of glaciers; we are given a theory of hunger; we are assured that there can be, and that there cannot be, thought without language; we are supplied with theories respecting the origin of meteors, and we are furnished with speculations as to the cause of light emitted by animals in the oceans; and then speculations are thrust upon us touching the body, the soul, the Creator, the Redeemer. Thus in the midst of the speculations of men, the Church of God is to advance, meeting these hindrances at every step.

(3.) *This is a Doubting Age*.—It naturally follows from the last-mentioned attitude of men's minds. There is doubt spread abroad whereby men become indifferent to everything invisible and eternal. Doubt is cast on the existence of heaven and Almighty God. Men doubt Moses, doubt David, doubt Isaiah, doubt Malachi, doubt Matthew, doubt John, doubt Jesus of Nazareth, doubt their own souls; and doubt the creative and administrative power of the eternal God. Thus its cold and withering blasts blow over the young in the Church and chill them; over the aged and stun them, over the weak and destroy them. Still the Church marches on, holding up, high as Heaven's heights, before a doubting world, the banner inscribed, "Thus saith the Lord."

(4.) *This is a Rushing Age*.—By day and by night steamers whistle, trains rumble and electric wheels roll through our streets. There is a rush in business, shops, factories, and even in domestic circles. There is a sharp, keen, even bitter, competition in every business department throughout the land. The telephone calls up, in a twinkling of an eye, some one miles distant; replies must be sent with equal haste, and thus the mind is kept in an excitable, expectant state. The nervous system of man is strained in this pre-eminently fast, rushing and hurrying age. Insane asylums are alarmingly full of inmates who were more or less deranged by this soul and body-trying rush of humanity. What is the result? That little time is left for, or, at all events, given to Christ's kingdom upon earth.

(5.) *It is a Worldly Age*.—As one meditates upon the all-absorbing tendencies of the people after pleasure, wealth and money, without any care or thought for their never-dying souls, he is awed at the weakness of our race. To attain an object, crimes are planned and perpetrated in this very Christian Canada, that are a disgrace to a nation, and show morbid minds under the tremendous grasp of this world and its perishing wealth. Name, honor, relatives, friends and eternal life are all sacrificed in the acquisition of mammon; whilst even in villages and country districts, many indulge in questionable amusements, which dampen Christian ardor, Christian zeal, and Christian love. What do people mean by playing progressive euchre in this land of Churches and gospel privileges? Social life, as it exists in far too many quarters, is deadening, demoralizing, damning, and most assuredly stands as a barrier to the onward march of the Christian Church.

We have no sympathy, however, with those would-be holy and select few who segregate themselves from Christ's army, and who endeavor to keep out this worldly spirit by artificial defences, for these tendencies are in our homes, churches and everywhere; and no standing aloof from the rest in the cause of Christ can either remove or eradicate these evils, whilst such an attitude grows into spiritual pride and pharisaical hypocrisy. We want men and women who stand on Christian principles; sensible and helpful, vigorous and hopeful, rather than the little carping of "Do not this," "Do not that."

All these obstructions must be encountered; some suggest that aid be secured from other religions, such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It does not manifest good judgment of human nature to regard these as devoid of all truth and morality, for man was made in God's image, and, wherever found, he still retains clear marks of his Creator. Canadian students are this

day studying the classics of Grecian and Roman idolaters, and Chinese literati never cease instilling into youthful minds the moral sayings of their great sage. But I listened to dissertations by aborigines in Formosa, though not so beautifully expressed, that actually embodied the substance of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments. To know these human emanations, and frankly acknowledge the good in them, is manly, noble, and Christian, but when we are asked to stoop down and borrow, as if in need of additions, we calmly, coolly, yet indignantly, refuse to compromise one chapter, one verse, one line, or one word of Holy Writ—refuse to place divinity on a level with humanity. To demand this of us reminds me of the Chinaman who brought three rusty tooth-pincers to sell. "One," said he, "is for the front, the second for the middle and the third for the back teeth." But I answered, "These three are for the lower; have you any for the upper teeth?" He started. I showed him bright, shining steel forceps for upper and lower, right and left, front and back, sound and decayed—one perfect set, nothing wanting, complete in every particular. He disappeared. Thus I regard three religions of China as the three old pincers, and the full set of American make as the Christian's Bible, which is "complete, complete, complete perfection," as Milton would say; complete, perfect to guide the eternal destinies of man. To that armory we resort for weapons, offensive and defensive.

(II.) Notwithstanding all the obstacles in the way, we must go forward.

(1.) Possessing the highest power in the universe. In my study I was examining vegetable mould with a lens, then with a student's microscope, but the examination was unsatisfactory. I had to use the highest power in the compound microscope. Then were brought into view things unseen, unknown, unrecognized before. Now the Holy Ghost is referred to from Genesis to Revelation, and that as a person equal to the Father and Son in power and glory. He is represented as living, quickening, teaching, reproving, helping and sanctifying. He revealed the Bible, and He alone can manifest its truths. "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come" (John xvi. 13). He alone can bestow the needed strength for Christians to hold on their way. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts i. 8). And, wonderful glorious truth! He dwells within His people. *Within, within!* "And I will put My spirit within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you" (1 Cor. vi. 19); "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 4); "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephes. v. 8); "Even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (John xiv. 17); "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49); "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans viii. 14); "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (Ps. li. 11, 12).

This was the Almighty power that rolled back the dark clouds of chaotic worlds, and brought order, beauty and life upon our globe—the power that upheld the saints of old from the first that scaled heavens heights, to the last one ere Jesus of Nazareth suffered on Calvary for sinners—the power that gave the Christian Church, from Pentecost till the present moment, martyrs and confessors, stalwart and vigorous men, ready to suffer, bleed and die for the faith. And it is the power that will sustain Zion's children down the ages to come, until the bursting of flames and crashing of worlds announce new heavens and new earth; and there, too, He will be the Almighty power executing all these changes. Yes! mark it well. As the Buddhist priests bears marks on his head, let us burn deep down in our hearts and announce it in every laboratory, ring it in every scientific ear, tell it around the globe, that, whatever forces of nature may yet be discovered, whatever strides may yet be made, as in the last fifty years wherein there have been unfolded and utilized steam, electric currents, compressed air and now acetylene; whatever triumphs awaits laborious researches, the highest power, the highest power, the highest power in the world and universe will continue to be, as millions of ages roll along, the power of the Holy Ghost. Let every one who speculates divest himself forever of the thought that this power can ever be dispensed with or superseded.

When Christ was on earth, He displayed His Almighty power over the realms of nature and regions of death. We should never forget, however, that there is as omnipotent and divine a

power in the Christian Church this day in this place. To be thoroughly Biblical, and thoroughly symmetrical as Christians, we are bound to appropriate in faith and practice, the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, in the salvation of sinners. There should be great vigilance lest, through habit, we allow the work of the first and second to overshadow and eclipse that of the third person. Several heresies, of which "sinless perfection" might be taken as an instance, have sprung up through failure to recognize the significance of the work of the three Persons, respectively, in the glorious Trinity.

Strange perversion that men should lean on powers that cannot support, succor and save them, that grasp ripples and miss the life-boat. The true position of the Holy Ghost is indeed recognized in creeds and addresses; still, there is cause for anxiety that in daily and practical life, His great work in the scheme of redemption is more or less ignored and relegated to ethereal realms; as notice, in the Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church in Canada there are three hundred and forty-nine hymns, and, out of these, only 19 bearing upon the word and work of the Holy Spirit.

It must be acknowledged that this Biblical and glorious doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is not sufficiently meditated and acted upon. No one can ponder over the apostolic Church without being deeply impressed with the prominence and importance of this power in Christian progress. Do we long for an awakening of the Church? Do we pray for a shaking of the dry bones? Do we thirst for times of refreshing in our land! Then let us wait on God for the Holy Ghost. Let the attitude of the Psalmist be ours—

"I wait for God, my soul doth wait,
My hope is in his word;
More than they that for morning watch,
My soul waits for the Lord."

Christ commanded his disciples that "they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me." (Acts i. 4).

Would we know his personal work? Let each individual believer have faith in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; realize that He is a temple of the Divine Person, and surrender himself to His holy influence. Nothing has such a power in producing a holy life, as the thought that this divine Spirit of God is within one. The person then says, "I dare not be indifferent, dare not revel in sin, dare not forget the eternal God and will not grieve this divine person who is illuminating and sanctifying my soul." If men would only rise to this level, piles of machinery would be stored away in the back yard. Ministers full of the Holy Ghost! Elders full of the Holy Ghost! Deacons full of the Holy Ghost! Members full of the Holy Ghost! And note this, *choirs* full of the Holy Ghost! What congregations! Why, icy hearts would melt, scoffing lips relent, and prodigals return to join the sacramental host in the march forward. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and I come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah xxxv. 10).

(2.) Thus, aided by the highest power, we should go forward developing the Christian graces. The Holy Ghost begins the work by starting a new life, and he continues it to the end the same, during quiet and soul-stirring hours. This is the divine, but we must take full account of the human side. Man must reverently co-operate with the divine and be a co-worker with God. Great care is needed, lest we distort this heavenly doctrine to our disadvantage. To us, as human beings, God gave these commands, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure," (Phil. ii. 12-13). "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58); "and let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. vi. 9); "but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter, iii. 18); "and beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter i. 5-9); "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things ye shall never fail." (2 Peter i. 10).

It is certain that man has his part to perform, and that, as indispensable as it is that the farmer should plow, harrow and sow, for the production of a crop; as it is that the sailor should unturl