

## SYNOD OF TORONTO AND KINGSTON.

## THE CONFERENCE.

While the Synod as an intermediate court between the Presbytery and the General Assembly has a distinct place and its own special work to do, it is not looked upon generally as of the same practical importance as either the primary or supreme court of the Church. Of late years it has been the purpose of those who are concerned for the fuller development of the spiritual life of the Church to enlarge the opportunity of holding conferences in connection with the annual Synodical meetings. These have not only been deeply interesting but they have been the means of imparting a fresh stimulus to the spiritual life of the Church and adding to the zeal and fervour of those who are engaged in active Christian work.

The Conference which opened in the Presbyterian Church, Orillia, Monday night, was at its first session a most enjoyable and profitable meeting.

Rev. James Middlemiss, D.D., of Elora, presided, and opened the proceedings with devotional services; the excellent choir of the congregation tuning out in full numbers and leading the service of praise with effectiveness. In a brief but comprehensive address, Dr. Middlemiss defined the work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of redemption, specifying the direct agency of this third person of the Godhead in the conviction of sin, the work of repentance, preparing the mind for the reception of Christ as a personal Saviour, and the carrying on of the work of sanctification. The personality of the Holy Spirit was not realized with sufficient distinctness. We needed a clearer apprehension of that divine personality. The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit was as old as the revelation of God's purpose of redemption. The ancient prophets foretold with distinctness the full and glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was in the New Testament dispensation that that promise was to receive its adequate fulfilment. But that fulfilment had not yet had anything like its full realization. Why was it that there was so much barrenness in the life and work of the Church to-day. There were conversions but they occurred only here and there and were comparatively few. This led to the impression on the part of some that little else was to be expected until Christ's second coming. Let us not cherish a spirit of despondency. The hindrances are in ourselves. It is unbelief that is the cause of the deadness. One thing is certain, the fulfilment of God's promises is sure, it is only delayed. Let us then enter on this conference in an earnest and hopeful spirit. Conversions are numerous among the heathen, but unbelief is strong in Christian lands. The strong man armed is in terrible earnest knowing that the time is short; it is a determined effort to resist the kingdom of God.

Rev. John Somerville, Owen Sound, introduced the first topic for consideration, "The Holy Spirit in His present office to the Church." He held that the personality should be far more distinctly emphasized than we were in the habit of doing. It was too common a thing in our preaching to speak of the Spirit as it, instead of a divine living personality, and to speak of the influence of the Holy Spirit as of something vague and undefined. It was the living power and energy of the Holy Spirit that was the need of the Church to-day in her life and work.

Rev. Alexander Jackson, Galt, in the absence of Rev. D. C. Johnston, Beaverton, introduced the next topic, "The Essential Qualification for Acceptable Work, 'being filled with the Spirit.'" He also spoke of a fuller realization of the divine personality of the Holy Spirit. The apostles had in their training under the immediate teaching of Jesus Christ advantages and privileges far beyond what were now enjoyed, yet after His ascension they were commanded to wait until they were endued with power from on high. There ought to be fuller and more complete dependence on the Holy Spirit in every sphere of Christian activity and less of that self-conscious looking for results. Success and failure could not rightly be tolerated in tangible results. God was the Judge, and faithfulness, trust and obedience were required of us.

Rev. J. McAlpine, Chatsworth, said that in the natural sphere every exercise of force was in reality accomplished by God's power. Whether men recognized this or not there was divine power at the back of it. Men could accomplish important results in the natural sphere, even though they did not recognize God's power. The difference in the spiritual sphere was that without a devout recognition of the divine power we could accomplish nothing.

Rev. Dr. Parsons, Toronto, defined acceptable work as work that God will accept. All work is dependent on personality. Satan is trying to drive out personality. He seeks to do his work by means of regenerate persons—prompting them to engage in Christian work as the natural man works. The Holy Spirit is indwelling and should prompt, animate and sustain every endeavour, every action. Only under the indwelling, controlling and directing power of the Spirit can acceptable work for Christ be done. This covers everything in the believer's life. If we are not filled with the Spirit of Christ we are filled with the Spirit of Satan. The one excludes the other. Every believer is a chosen witness of Christ.

Brief remarks were then made by Rev. Messrs. S. H. Eastman, Oshawa, J. B. Duncan, J. A. K. Dickson and others, and the meeting was brought to a close with praise and with the benediction.

The conference re-opened on Tuesday morning, Rev. John Gray, D.D., occupied the chair and conducted the devotional services.

Rev. D. McTavish, D.Sc., opened the conference with an address on the "Holy Spirit in His relation to the world." What do we mean by the world? Men so ungodly and in their heart opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and all influences, engagements and pleasures used by the wicked one to seduce the soul from Christ. The office of the Holy Spirit in relation to this world is first to produce conviction of sin. Man in his natural state does not see sin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring home to the mind the fact of regeneration an absolute necessity. Common methods of reform are not sufficient. This only produces a temporary and partial improvement. The regeneration of the soul is the only mode by which the world can be benefited. External organization may be very promising, but it is only superficial. It will not do to rest satisfied with these outward means. The agency through whom the Spirit works is regenerated men. The instrument used by regenerate men is the inspired word of God. It is sometimes said that we should preach on topics of the day. The word of God is the only instrument we are warranted to use.

Dr. Parsons stated that owing to illness in his family Rev. J. M. Cameron was unable to be present and take part in the conference. The Holy Spirit, he said, works in the world through His own selected agents. All believers have a special responsibility in relation to every service. The Holy Spirit gives every one his opportunity and all should be Christ's witnesses. The duty of all professing Christians is to take a deep interest in all the varied aspects of God's work.

Dr. J. B. Fraser, Dr. Clark and Rev. J. McAlpine made a few remarks on personal disagreement as hindrances to the Holy Spirit's work. The last named gentleman thought, however, that the conference should continue in line with the Spirit and purpose of the opening remarks. There ought to be a spirit of entire dependence on the divine Spirit, and of self-renunciation. To realize this the life must be thoroughly consecrated. Rev. Alex. Jackson thought that while there might be great diversities among brethren the Holy Spirit can bless all who seek sincerely to do the Lord's will. Dr. McTavish gave a few words in reply.

Observing distinction between regenerate and unregenerate as noted in the Epistles and needed in our congregations," was introduced by Rev. Samuel Houston, M.A., Kingston. It was not the topic that he would have at first sight selected for treatment, only it

had been assigned him. Are these terms found in the Epistles? Are the thoughts there? Whom had the writers of the Epistles in view when they were penned? They wrote to the one class not to the other. Christ addresses unbelievers. The Epistles are intended for saints, undeveloped not ideal but yet saints. They were written to help those who professed Christ. Perfection was set before them. Unbelievers are urged to accept Christ by implication. The promises are for the believers, the others here shut themselves out so long as they continue in that class. There are invitations and exhortations addressed to the unbelieving but the peace and joy are not yet for them. What is to be made of these distinctions? Are we giving sufficient attention to the edification of believers? We must aim at burning into consciences that in God's sight there are two classes and only two. There is a latent idea that there is a third class lying between these two—a large class. It is made up of good, decent, honest people. This latent theory renders all the more necessary the emphasizing of the fact that there are only two classes. The right to certain promises and comforts of Scripture is often fallaciously made.

Rev. Mr. Cameron, Cannington, thought that there was too much preaching to those who claimed to be believers and not enough to the unconverted. There are signs by which we may know whether the Spirit is with us. Dr. Parsons thought that we ought to present the truth so that each man shall judge himself and that we shall have the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits.

Rev. W. Meikle referred to the diversity of gifts which the Spirit uses. There are peculiar adaptations. Some are gifted in addressing sinners, others for the edification of believers. The same man may be differently influenced at different times.

Rev. R. D. Fraser, of Bowmanville, then introduced the next topic, "The personal apprehension of Christ connected with the efficiency of the Holy Spirit." Saul's conversion illustrates the topic assigned the speaker. How does the Spirit of God work in our hearts? It is only by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost that we can apprehend Christ at all. It is by the Spirit that we can get life, only by the Spirit that we can make progress. The apprehension of Christ is the condition on which we can have the indwelling of the Spirit of peace and power. Obedience is indispensable to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

Dr. Parsons made a few remarks on the apprehension of the risen Christ.

In the afternoon Rev. Wm. Fraser, D.D., presided at the Conference. He conducted the devotional exercises.

Rev. R. Johnston, Lindsay, spoke on "The Personality and Devices of Satan." The individuality and intelligence of Satan imply his personality. The Scriptures speak of him always as an individual existence. The same source indicates his exercise of intelligence. There are certain ends which he seeks to attain. That indicates intelligence. He always approaches a man when he is weak either in body or soul. It isn't when we are strong that he assails; he waits for the moment of weakness. He tries to persuade men to misrepresent God.

The subject was further discussed by Dr. Parsons, Rev. Alexander Jackson, W. D. Duncan, Dr. Middlemiss, Rev. W. T. Wilkins, F. Torrance, R. Gilchrist, D. Hossack, Cameron and others.

The next subject, "The Fatherhood of God," was introduced by Dr. Parsons. (Quoting from Dr. Phillips Brooks, he showed that there is an opinion spreading even in evangelical circles of the universal Fatherhood of God. This latent universalism is the offspring of this conception of the Fatherhood. God is the Father only of those in His family. There is admission into His family only by generation or adoption. The eternal Son is begotten, believers are introduced into it by adoption. He then dwelt on the privileges which the Divine Father confers on His believing children. The address led to an interesting discussion, in which a number of members took part.

The last subject on the programme, "Obedience to Christ's commands the only valid test of personal holiness," was introduced by Rev. D. C. Hossack, L.L.B., of Orangeville. Obedience is tested by acts, yet it is difficult to judge of the motives of human actions. If a man has personal holiness he will evince it by doing good. If there is an absence of all good acts in a man's life, there is no reason to conclude that there is holiness in the heart. There can be no success in life without the entire surrender of self to God. Dr. Parsons and Rev. A. Jackson made a few remarks. It was interesting, and pervaded by a fine spirit. The only regrettable thing was that the discussions were not more generally engaged in; the elders present were evidently interested, but they were all too silent. Principal Caven concluded the conference with prayer and the benediction.

## THE SYNOD.

In the evening, after preliminary devotional exercises, the Rev. Stephen Young, of Clifford, the retiring Moderator, preached the sermon as follows, from Col. i. 28-29:

In the previous verses the apostle sets forth with marked fervour the glory of the Word of God which he was called upon to proclaim, as well as the magnitude of the work involved in its proclamation. He speaks of the Gospel as a mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations, but is now to be revealed.

Paul borrows the word "mystery" from the ancient systems in which certain rituals were secretly whispered into the ears of the initiated few. Taking the word "mystery" as thus used by the false teachers of Colosse, he lifts it to a higher level and tells his hearers that the Gospel as a mystery has been long hidden, but is now to be universally proclaimed. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory." This he immediately declares to be the grand central theme of all his preaching. "Whom we preach." In the consideration of this subject let us notice the theme, the method, the purpose and the power of the apostle's preaching.

I. *The Theme.*—It is not what, but whom we preach, not a creed, but a Christ, a living, loving personality. We preach Christ, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Every truth in Scripture points to Christ and derives its full meaning from being connected with Him. It is Christ that gives significance to every sentence of the Word. He is the Sun in the firmament of Scripture and every object there shines with borrowed light. He is the centre to which prophecy and type-history and biography, precept and parable doctrine and duty point as lines to the centre of a circle. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Scripture. He is the sum of all its promises and the substance of all its blessings. You might as well attempt to take away the sun from the centre of the solar system and preserve its movements as to take Christ out of the Bible and leave it entire. Every part, both of the Old Testament and the New, has reference to Christ, so that the theme is not narrow and contracted, but comprehensive, embracing as it does the whole range of Gospel truth.

The apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians says, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." This, observe, was his deliberate purpose, the one all absorbing aim of his life, the work to which he devoted himself with untiring zeal in his conversation, in his letters, in his private studies, and in his public preaching. And the subject does certainly afford sufficient grounds for the apostle's determination.

Christ and Him crucified is an essential doctrine of the Christian religion. Deny this doctrine and you take away the stately foundation on which Christianity rests. Deny this doctrine and you take away the key-stone from the arch of human redemption; you blot out the sun from the spiritual firmament; you leave the sinner without a gleam of hope and shut him up to never-ending darkness and despair.

The most casual reader cannot fail to notice how the apostle in-

troduces Christ into every subject. He everywhere, even when discussing subjects that seem to have no reference to Christ, introduces Christ. As the late Principal Willis was wont to say to his students on preaching, "If Christ is not in your subject bring Him in."

The apostle always viewed every subject in relation to Christ. When speaking of charity he refers you to the love of Christ. When giving thanks for temporal mercies he exclaims, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." When speaking of the mysterious purpose of God he points to Christ as being both the mystery and manifestation thereof "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus."

No matter what class he addresses or what are their circumstances in life, Christ is his theme. When warning the unbeliever he makes Christ the object of alarm. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." When exhorting the believer he also makes Christ the object of attraction. "As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in Him rooted and built up in Him." When comforting those bowed down under the many trials and burdens of life, his consolation is "Look to Jesus lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds, remember His sorrows and forget your own." When desiring to raise the mind of the believer away above the sordid things of time, his language is, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." When seeking to heighten the happiness of domestic bliss and sweeten the most tender earthly ties, he says, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." When cheering on the believer to final victory he exclaims, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." When the believer has gained the victory, for the cordial consolation of the bereaved he addresses them in those words of touching tenderness, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Christ then was always his theme. "Whom we preach."

The apostle here includes all His brethren with Himself. He thus bears testimony that they are all engaged in the same great work. "Whether it were they or I so we preach." Wherever the apostles went, wherever they addressed the theme with one and all was Christ. Though the apostles differed widely in disposition and character, in mould of thought and manner of expression, yet they were all actuated by one motive, controlled by one spirit and preached the one theme. As it was Christ with all of them so may it be Christ with all of us.

"Whom we preach." All the three words are emphatic; and to preach is simply to proclaim, to tell out in a full, clear, earnest, loving manner who this Christ is and what He came to do. He is the Emanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, possessing in His person the infinite attributes of the divine and the highest qualities of the human nature. To proclaim Christ is in short to set forth all the facts of His life and death, as having satisfied divine justice, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in an everlasting righteousness.

To proclaim may imply that the person is speaking in the name and on behalf of another and that he but proclaims what he has been commissioned to do, and that he was to do so in such a way that those to whom he speaks must give heed and understand.

The apostle says, "Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." This he did with an overpowering desire to make it known and felt. He renounced all self. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord." He gloried in this and to do this he brought great natural gifts, vast learning, and burning zeal. For him "to live was Christ." His only desire was that Christ might be magnified whether by life or by death.

The apostle speaks with marked emphasis and much emotion on this subject. He says, "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God." "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He preached with intense earnestness and singleness of purpose.

Some may say it was well for Paul to preach Christ and preach Him only, and with all absorbing earnestness 1,800 years ago. At that period it was something strange and startling, but people are now more advanced and cultured, and so do not need this kind of preaching. But, we ask, are men's natures and necessities anything different now from what they were in Paul's day? Are men not just as sinful and as much in need of a Saviour now as they were then? So that if ministers would be faithful to their sacred trust they must, like Paul, preach Christ, and not self, not science, not morality, not "the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

The one all-absorbing theme of the apostle was Christ. Is this the theme of all our preaching, for if we are Christ's we will preach Him in our every act. A happy, hopeful, growing, earnest Christian is a walking sermon preaching all the week, nay, all the year round. Christ must be our "all in all." We must live in Christ. Nothing else can ever save, satisfy or sanctify a sinful soul "whom we preach."

II. *The Method*—"warning every man," etc. The method is twofold, warning or admonishing and teaching. The former appears to have a more special reference to conduct and the moral aspect of Christian truth, while the latter refers to the doctrine and to the intellectual aspect of it.

The wrong-doer must be faithfully warned, but all warning must prove of no avail unless it reaches the conscience, and the sinner be thus led to Christ. The faithful minister must warn sinners in order to arouse them to a sense of their sin and danger. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Every unawakened sinner should be warned in order to arouse him to a sense of his sad condition. To one carelessly sailing down the stream to the cataract below, unconscious of his danger, it would be useless to throw him a rope and ask him to lay hold of it and be saved. He must first be convinced of his danger. Thus Paul reasoned before Felix and Drusilla of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come to arouse them to a sense of their danger, so as to lead them to flee from the wrath to come.

Christ's own method of preaching was full of warning. He not only spoke words of love and consolation, but also words of warning and reproach. To the Pharisees and Sadducees He uttered these terrible burning words of reproof, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He would rather speak words of love than of wrath, but in order to be faithful He must speak both, and so should we.

The apostle warned, yet he always did so with the most tender emotions. "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." "I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears." "With all humility of mind and many tears." How true the classic precept, "Weep yourself if you would see others weep." To impress others we must first be impressed ourselves. This was exemplified by others as well as Paul. Isaiah exclaimed, "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." The psalmist in like manner says: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Such a consuming love for souls is surely becoming all the ambassadors of Christ. Such was the love which Christ Himself manifested as He shed tears over Jerusalem.

Besides warning every man, He taught every man. While Christ is the one theme around which every truth centres, the Christian minister must always be learning and always teaching more and