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No. 21

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

RECEPTION OF DELEGATES FROM THE BRITISH CONFERENCE.

Rev. William Arthur, upon being presented to the Conference said:—

Bishop Simpson, venerated fathers and well-beloved brethren, I can not help being touched, not only with the reception I have had, but what in that reception I have had a personal tinge. Therefore, so far as it has had a personal tinge, permit me, sir, to pass by, and to make no more allusion to it. I feel that in all that is serious and substantial in these kindnesses, respecting which I have met here, the reason is that, in God's goodness to me, I am permitted to come, not as William Arthur, but as one allowed to speak to you on behalf of the oldest conference wherein Methodist preachers have conferred one with another.

If in looking at you I see not you, but a wonderful family behind you, of whom you are but the older brother, and on the other hand I know that you, in looking at me and my colleague do not see Frederick McDonald and William Arthur, but you see the old people and the old places, and you say: "God bless the sons of our fathers!" And they in return say to you: "God bless the children of our children." And whenever the family scatter through the world, and they all scatter more and more, wherever throughout the world it spreads, (perhaps the word "scatter" will soon cease to be perfectly proper, for they spread rather than scatter)—the Methodist family-feeling continues, that we are one, and that one we must remain, and that

Mountains shall rise and oceans roll
To sever us in vain.

I really don't know, sir, that beyond the simple duty of presenting our fraternal regards, I have any work to do here. I am not commissioned to give you any counsel. I am not commissioned to undertake with you any transaction. I am not commissioned to negotiate anything. I do not know whether my Brother McDonald has any clearer light upon his mission; but, so far as I know, the only thing that my conference sent me here to do was to show myself as a token that they remember and love you, and they feel that you belong to them, and that their heart is your heart, and they feel that your work is a part of their work, and their work is a part of your work, and that they think it would be a great pity if for one moment any of us took a step that seemed to say, "We forget that we are in one fold doing one work, for one Master, and for one end!"

Now I know that there are many people who always cry out for something practical—something to do! And by something to do they always seem to mean something that the hands can handle or the feet can touch. Very well. All that is practical in its way. But permit me, sir, to say that, so far as I know, the most practical thing in this world is a thought put into a human mind, or a feeling raised in a human heart! And whatever tends to keep thought right and feeling right, or whatever tends when thought has gone wrong to bring it back again, or feeling gone wrong to raise it up to the right, is for me the most practical thing that men can do. Get right feeling and right thinking, and they will bring all the other things after them. Now I trust that, as Methodists throughout the world, we shall try to keep up the old feeling.

The Address that you have heard gives some outline, sir, to the condition of things on the other side of the world. It alludes to the development that has taken place in our body in England, whereby we have adopted a system of lay representation in the conference.

Now I don't think that was so much a development for us as it was for you, for we have had the thing for many years, not formally but really. It was only putting into a formal and legal and thoroughly considered form that which had been for a very long time in an informal condition.

Thank God, as the Address says, that was done, not without debate, not without division of opinion, not without opposition or doubt, but it was done without any division of sentiment in the long run, done without the loss of members or loss of a member, and done to the ultimate refreshment of the entire church, and so followed, as you have heard, by this

movement for a thanksgiving fund, and that thanksgiving fund in the midst of our national depression, a depression the like of which we have never known for its breadth and continuance; and in the midst of that depression that fund from a people who are by no means as numerous as you and do not claim to be wealthy.

We have none of the chief ones—the titled ones of the country with us. We have a people who enjoy religion as do you, and who are what the grace of the Lord has made them. That is all.

And yet they have contributed in this time of general depression, and through all the difficulties attending the depression, remember, something about a million and a quarter of dollars. Considerable more.

Now, allusion has also been made to the proposal that has emanated from you for an ecumenical gathering of Methodists from all the world. We should like that gathering to take place where the Methodist Society originated. We should like it to take place at City Road where John Wesley preached, and Charles Wesley and Joseph Benson preached, and where the first conferences were held, and where the cradle of Methodism will always be spoken of, and that the most profoundly. I speak now not merely of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but for a moment I think of all the other branches scattered throughout the world, and whatever name they may have adopted for themselves, they had the Methodist origin and I like the name, and we should lock them altogether, and see if by the blessing of God we can not, in such a meeting, so take council, one with another, that we shall, every man, go away, one to India, and one to Italy, and one to the Cairns of the Cape, and one to the negroes of Monrovia, and another to Hudson's Bay, and to California and Japan, and China, and so on to Rome, right around the world, telling our people everywhere we may go that being many we are one! I trust that one we shall remain, and become more and more so.

In looking at our own body in England, I am struck with one fact. If you take the twenty years between the latter part of a certain decade, say between 1829 and 1849, you would find that we had about three divisions in twenty years. It seemed a periodical phenomena of our development that we should have a division, and people began to be rather recognizing the ideas of division. I never was reconciled to it, and though, sir, we have now passed thirty years, we have seen no division. We have passed thirty years, and instead of new conferences of Methodism splitting off the existing conferences are beginning to come together, to speak well of one another, to cease holding up each others' faults. I do fear jealousies and hatred and impulses and passions.

But the tendency now is not to split off into fragments, but to gather together, to look at the things wherein we agree, to identify each particular branch with the great family, and to go on every one pushing for the common end. Now, help us in that particular. I believe you are all disposed so to do. But Methodism never was created by organization, and Methodism never will be kept up by organization. Organization was created by Methodism, and organization will continue to be sustained by Methodism; as families will not be created by a state, but the state will be created by families.

Give me the nucleus, give me that which founds a good family, a good man, and a good woman, to build up a Christian home, then I give you the foundation for municipal institutions, and State institutions, and national institutions, cosmopolitan institutions; but take away the family, and all your institutions will lack for foundation, and be liable to be shaken to pieces at any day.

Men of the world began by making new institutions in order to make new men. Christianity begins by making new men in order to make new institutions. The regeneration of the human soul, a new man means a beautiful man, for man is man, and where you have a man, a man born again, conscious that they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, strangers, not natives, they sprang from another soil, pilgrims, not settlers, they are bent to another resting-place.

The moment they are conscious that they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, here to build up for a little time the area of the kingdom that is undefiled and fade not away reserved in heaven for them if they are children, then there springs up that which may become the nucleus of a glorious society. For many years, for many ages, the Christian Church had existed as a church that was not a society.

A church wherein man did not speak to his fellow men, a church wherein the whole voice, or entire organization resided simply in the creed and authorized priest and teacher.

Methodism in its early days was often reproached by the fact that it was a society, not a church; but a society that is not a church has not the destiny of a church, and a church that is not a society has in it the destiny to die.

Out of the society, remember, of Methodism, sprang all that is now a church, and if you lost that society, sir, all the church will be lost in it. Let us keep close to the center which God gave to our fathers. It has ever had marvellous power of comprehending without compromising truths that put Methodism into the midst of the churches with a spirit and mission we shall hardly understand, but it is necessary we should understand, but that has enabled her, without sound or trumpet, without the march of marshal forces, without the endowments of any great aristocracy, without the authority of any great legislature, without the violence of any rushing mob, without any of the ordinary limits of human power to come up, quietly grow, grow, grow, and the world knew not how! A seed had been sown; and he that sowed it didn't see the body that should be, nor did he see the form or comeliness in which that body was to shine; but there it was, and all the power in it invisible, of the inward life that God gave, that life has been working, and I have seen it with my eyes in different parts of the world.

I have seen it working out in Madras, in the Nilgherry hills, and here in Ohio. I have seen it working close by the Vatican in Rome. I saw two scenes in that city which I will just mention.

In the year 1836, I found myself there with my wife. I said: "We must not leave this place without having a prayer-meeting." "We can't have one." "We must have one." "We haven't any place." "We have this bed-room." "The police will be upon you." "We must consider." So I sallied out to get some to come to our bedroom in our Hotel d'Angleterre. The first man that accepted my invitation was Thomas Henry Tarlton, the originator of the Y. M. C. A. work in Europe. The second man that accepted the invitation was Dr. Treat, of Boston, secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions. The next was Dr. Forbes, a clergyman of the Church of England, who is now for many years the English chaplain in Paris, and the only other person was Mr. Hale, an American clergyman, then officiating as chaplain at the American Embassy in Rome. Seven of us met in that bedroom in the Hotel d'Angleterre.

We spent nearly two hours in very earnest prayer. We did not know who might be overhearing us, or what might follow. But, during the meeting, there fell upon me this impression: It is very strange that here, in this little room, at such a short notice, that there should be met together the representatives of the leading missionary society in America, the representative of the largest missionary society in Protestant Europe, the representative of the Y. M. C. Associations, the representative of the clergymen of America and nearly all England. And of those seven there were two Christian women among them—those seven to offer earnest prayer.

And there are things that come into a man's mind, we don't know how, and somehow they form a part of it, and from that time I always went about praying quietly, I shall live to see the gospel freely preached in Rome.

Well, sir, I have paid other visits in the interim, to Rome. But two years ago I entered that city as one of a deputation from the Evangelical Alliance, in company with the Rev. Donald Frazier, and Rev. Mr. Bly. There was a railway platform

in Rome. It was pleasant when I reached the platform in Cincinnati to see the faces of Bishop Simpson and Brother Sargent and others; but will you pardon me if I lack politeness, and say that it was even pleasanter to see fifteen men of different Christian denominations gather to welcome a deputation of the Evangelical Alliance in Rome! And one of the first things they said to us was, We are going to give you a reception to-night in the Hotel d'Angleterre—in that very hotel in which our prayer-meeting had been held twenty years before. And there that evening, in a few yards of the very room where the prayer-meeting was held, we were welcomed by fifty men who were all employed in working for the spread of the Gospel in the city of Rome, and working in as perfect freedom and protection by the law as in the city of Cincinnati. Dr. Prime, of the New York Observer, was there, and Dr. Vernon was there, with others of your own agents.

Shall I mention, then, one scene more in connection with that country? You have all heard of the first constitutional prime minister of Italy—Cavour—and one of the most remarkable men ever produced in any country—a man, great, with one of those heads that seem as if the Great Architect had made them for the purpose of extraordinary thought. I remember one night, in the year 1860, in the midst of a dense crowd, that man strangely found time to talk to me. Naples was then still under the power of its terrible king, and I said something about it. He said that reminded him of something, but I will not quote the expression. I replied, when I was in Naples the palace of the king seemed the most emblematical building I ever saw. "What do you mean?" said he. I answered: He had the emblems of all his reign about him. On this end of this palace there was an arsenal; that represented force. Here on this other end of the palace the theatre,—the next instrument of his power, corruption. Here under the portico of the palace the public letter writer, whom I saw with my own eyes writing letters for women clothed in silk and in satin, too. The next instrument of this power—public ignorance. "Yes," he said. I hesitated for a moment before giving a final touch, but he uttered the exact sentence I was going to utter. On the other side the Jesuit Church, the final instrument of his power—superstition.

Well, sir, in the month of April last, within a pistol-shot of that place, I sat in what was called a synod that was like the meeting of Methodist districts. There were twenty-five Italian ministers, with one or two English ones; and into the midst of that meeting walks a deputation of ministers and laborers of other denominations. It was a little Ecumenical Conference in its own way, and there before that united meeting of Italians of all sorts, from Calabria and Piedmont, there came a great strong man, strong with Methodist sense in the inner man, without any flourishes, who felt called upon to tell how God had brought him up in Ireland, and sent him to school, and forced him out to preach the Gospel, and sent him to India to begin the mission in India, and had guided him to Mexico to begin a work for you and your name, and as Wm. Butler went on telling these details, so like what might be told in a good conference love-feast in any part of the world, I felt that it is a very different scene from the scenes then in Naples, when I was there first, and so I felt, "What has God wrought!"

In the name of my own conference, in the names of our mission-stations, of our brethren in France and Switzerland, of our brethren in Africa, Australia, and the islands of the sea, where the Churches spring up like the willows by the water courses, in the name of my brethren all over, I say "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces." In the name of many a little company meeting this night in class; some among the mines of Cornwall, some beneath the monuments of Rome, I say neglect not forsake not, despise not, the assembling of yourselves together. Be the people of whom it shall be recorded that they spoke often one to another. A people that leaves all the speaking to the official speakers is not the people who will be very strong. In the name, then, of those little flocks, I say speak often one to the other. In the

name of many a lonely missionary whose hands are wan and whose flock is thin, who stands in the midst of multitudes of the unbaptized, and wonders when another will come to help him, I say love the missions and work for the foreign missions.

O, with what pleasure have I looked upon your General Conference. With what intense pleasure have I looked into the eyes of your brethren, upon whom I had looked twenty-five years ago, the thought would have been, Is that a citizen or a chattel. But now, thank God, I know this is not a chattel, that is a citizen, and that is a brother.

In the name of all those people in England, I can not tell what I felt yesterday morning, as Mrs. Fisk said to me, pointing to a figure in white gliding around the Conference, "That is the Hindoo brother." For some time after that I saw neither bishop nor secretary, layman nor elder. I saw nobody but that Hindoo brother, and behind him I saw 240,000,000. If you are forty millions and more, they are two hundred and forty millions and more. I saw them all behind him thus black eyes coming up, and the eyes of their unborn children coming up in the ages to follow and laying on your heads a vast responsibility. And I pray God to grant that that man may be the fruits of a great crowd that no man can number. In the name of all these people, then I say go on working for the foreign missions. And in the name of the young men that are coming into the ministry, I say, keep up the evangelistic spirit; lead them on. In the name of the old patriarchs who, sitting on the threshold, not knowing what moment they shall pass into the better sanctuary, and join the better congregation above—in the name of many who are now in my eye, and some since have crossed the flood, I say, take up the old Methodist word, and the old Methodist spirit—

"Let us anew our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear."
(Immense and long continued applause.)

ELEVENTH DAY,
Thursday, May 13,

The principle work of the Methodist General Conference to-day was the election of editors and of missionary secretaries, and a secretary of the Church Extension Society. The only alteration made in the staff of editors of the *Advocate* was in the office of the New York Advocate, Rev. James Buckley having been elected editor, in the place of Rev. C. H. Fowler. The Revs. John M. Reid and Charles H. Fowler were elected missionary secretaries; and Dr. Kynett secretary of the Church Extension Society.

PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN ITALY.

The Protestant cause is gradually and surely advancing throughout Italy. From an "Alphabetical Guide to Protestant Churches in Italy," recently published, it appears that there are now few towns, even of secondary importance, without a Protestant Church. Let it be remembered that Italy has been freely opened to evangelization only within these last twenty years. It is to be observed, in the next place, that some of the Protestant Churches in Italy are composed of born Protestant people, who use in their worship a foreign language (such as the English, Scotch and American Churches) and some are, properly speaking, the Italian Churches—namely they use the Italian language in their worship, and are composed of Italians converted from Popery during these last twenty years. These latter churches are the result of evangelistic efforts, and with these, therefore, we shall occupy ourselves. The former (speaking foreign languages) amount to fifty—that is twenty-three English speaking, twenty French speaking, and seven German speaking. The Italian churches are more numerous; and it must be borne in mind that the Alphabetical Guide deals only with the well organized congregations, not mentioning the hundred other places where the Gospel is preached, but where for the present no church has been formed. Well, there are already one hundred and thirty-eight of these organized Italian churches. These belong to five different denominations, and here are the statistics up to 1st of January of the present year:

Methodist (Churches)	44
Vaudois	39
Free Church	21
Baptist	19
The "Brethren" Churches	15

There are about one hundred duly recognized pastors, and some fifty evangelists; all of whom are Italian, except perhaps ten, and out of whom one hundred at least are converts, and belonged most of them to the Romish clergy.