

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CONFERENCE OF COMMITTEES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND PRESBYTERIAN AND METHODIST CHURCHES
ON THE
SUBJECT OF UNITY.

The Conference began its first session on the evening of 24th April, 1889, at eight o'clock.

On motion of Rev. W. T. McMullen, D.D., moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, seconded by Rev. Dr. Williams, general superintendent of the Methodist Church, the Bishop of Toronto was called to the chair.

His Lordship the Bishop then led in prayer. Rev. Dr. Ryckman read 1 Cor. xiii., and Rev. Dr. Moore and Rev. Dr. Williams followed with prayer.

It was then decided that the Conference would be well begun by an address from a representative of each Church upon the spirit in which the Conference should meet together.

The Bishop of Huron began by saying, My lord, and brethren in Christ, I cannot but feel that in order to grasp the importance and deep value of the present gathering, we are to take it out of the human and place it in the divine sphere; not to look upon it as a gathering brought about by this body or by that; not by the accidents of life, nor even by the desires of so many earnest Christian men—but rather as a movement of the Holy Ghost, leading us in His own quiet, gentle way—leading us to the advancement of God's glory and the building up of the kingdom of His dear Son. Let us look upon it as something of God, (He is the potter and we are the clay), that He has brought us together, that it is His work, that He is the mighty mover of us all.

I would also say, in the next place, let us remember that all power, as well as all goodness, dwells in Him, and that there are no limits to His grace. We are straitened in ourselves, but we are not straitened in Him. I can kneel down and say, "Lord, Thou knowest; not I, but Thou canst make the path through the deep waters; Lord, lead us," and He will accomplish that which we desire.

I would say, in the next place, let us remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself wrapt up in this movement. His glory must be dearer to Him than it is to us. We see through a glass darkly, but His eyes do behold what is best, and I can imagine that blessed One in our midst as He was when He met the disciples after His resurrection, and said, "Peace be unto you." Now, if that dear, blessed One were corporally present, how would our dissensions go! How we would press up to Him, and say, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God." As we were drawn to Him, we would become one. We would seek at his hands the solution of every difficulty, and in His presence become one again. The secret of all unity is a growing nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the radii come nearer to the centre they are nearer each other, and it is just as we are nearest Christ that we love each other most, and bear most each other's burdens. Churches that are far from Christ can never be near each other, but just as the whole corporate body comes near the living Christ, it comes near in its integral parts to the whole and to each other.

I would say, too, let us remember that the Lord Jesus gave as His dying prayer that we all might be one. That is before us. It is before us, and has been before the Church for hundreds of weary, weary years. It is before us now. What we want to do is to become one—not in some distant or abstract sense—but really one, corporally one, one with a oneness that the world may see, that we may present our unity in Christ as a tangible, outward, actual fact, cognizable by the world which knows not our Lord.

And let us remember that it is His prayer. If it is His prayer, it is His desire. If it is His desire, it is the mode in which He will act. If it is the mode in which He will act, it must be attainable. And if it is attainable, it is clearly and evidently before us.