

Presbyterian Conference in London.

Tuesday, 20th ult., the Presbyterians of London welcomed in Regent Square Church, London, the delegates who have been appointed to attend the Conference of Presbyterian Churches, to be held in the Metropolis, to consider proposals for securing a closer intercourse and alliance among the numerous bodies of Christians who hold the Reformed faith, and are organized on a Presbyterian polity.

Dr. Oswald Dykes said,—"We are met to-night on an occasion of peculiar interest. Representing, as we do, the Presbyterian community of London, we are met to extend a brotherly welcome to such an assemblage of Presbyterians as has never before been convened. Let me remind you how various are the churches represented before me both in size and history. Brethren from a Church (the Church of the United States) which counts its congregations by the thousands, and has planted its Presbyteries right across the breadth of a continent, sit side by side with the members of tiny communities, numbering only a handful. Some churches, again, have memories that stretch back through many a hundred years, like the venerable Church of the Waldensian valleys, which Cromwell protected, and Milton sang, but whose head goes far beyond Milton or Cromwell, till it is lost in an uncertain fable. Others, like our young sister in Spain or French Canada, is a birth of yesterday. The annals of not a few have bloody pages to rehearse, but while they are national churches which have outlived persecution, and impressed themselves on the history of the State and the character of the people through all their modern history, as in the case of Geneva, of Holland, or of Scotland, we also welcome others to-night which are as brands plucked out of the fire—like the brave old Huguenot Church of France, for example—a fragment to-day which has barely survived the proscription, the exile, and the massacre of three hundred years ago. Yet, amid such conspicuous variety, we have gathered together because we are one. We all agree in this—that we are the children of the Reformation, and in the exercise of our Protestant freedom we have all gone to the Word of God to find the same glad Gospel of the sovereign grace of God, through our one Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. All of our churches, even the youngest, have all drawn from the same oracles of Holy Scripture the same system of religious truth, which we all express in confessions that, if not identical in form, are at least identical in substance. Moreover, we do all alike recognize in the church of God an organized brotherhood of the faithful in Jesus Christ, in which there are no priests and no prelates, but a simple orderly administration of word and sacrament through the hands of ordained elders. Surely it was high time for us to find out that in this perfect consent of a chief and administration of life, and worship, and confession, there lies a good ground for some close mutual alliance—for some visible and helpful bond of intercourse—for common testimony, and common counsel, and common work. It is not, as I understood it, because the promoters of this alliance desire for one moment to withdraw from any fraternal relation which may be possible between us and other bodies of Christians around us—God forbid! With the Lutheran Churches of the continent,—with the numerous Congregational Churches of English Nonconformity,—with those respected brethren who follow the rule of John Wesley,—with the powerful and wealthy Establishment of this realm, we need none of us be less brotherly because we draw close to one another and say, we are one Presbyterian family. On the contrary, I believe—I dare say you believe—that whenever any single division of Christ's army in the field heals its rents and closes its ranks it only takes a step towards more friendly understanding and harmonious action with its neighbouring divisions. Nor is it, if I rightly conceive this movement, that any existing league among true Christians of various names is to be disparaged—least of all the excellent league which has already done so much for Christian union—the Evangelical Alliance. Many of you are, I dare say (like myself) members of that useful Alliance, and we all thankfully acknowledge the value of such non-eclesiastical combinations among Christians in their individual capacity. But what our brethren have gathered in London to do is not to form an alliance of individual Christians—it is to form an alliance of Christian Churches, and that is a very different and a much greater thing. How fast and how strangely has this feeling spread itself and deepened among us all. But churches which have so very much in common as we all have, ought as Churches to know each other better, and to stand closer in the fight shoulder to shoulder for the sake of the common Master! Surely that must be a right feeling, for it is a kind one and a Christian one! Hitherto, it must be confessed, Presbyterian Churches have been little distinguished for their unity. Rather disunion has been our reproach. We have passed through a long and weary era of division and of subdivision, schisms, ruptures, disruptions, and estrangements. Alas! have they not made sad work among us till the hearts of the best of us grew very sick of it! It is within the last generation that the tide turned. It is not that men hold less firmly, or less consciously, any atom of known truth, any of those beliefs or even mere opinions which divided us. It is just now that we are beginning to discover that we may differ without dividing. The more important and the less important beliefs are retreating into their several places. Let the less important step to the rear; in these we may differ, over these we should not wrangle. Amid such a number and variety of honest thinking men as are here represented, it is inevitable that there should be endless shades of convictions on many points; and, in the exercise of our common freedom and loyalty to truth, each of us is bound to be firmly persuaded in his own mind. But why must the separate view be elevated in a schismatical division, where it is possible to live and to work on in harmony. Another thing has helped to bring us together, or at least to make concert possible—steam. We grow closer as the world gets smaller. We cannot so forget our brethren over the sea—beyond the hills. Men have long arms to-day that stretch out to clasp hands with far-off hands. Thus all things conspire to bring in an era of re-union, and the time for this movement is an auspicious one. For though this great convention has not been summoned to devise how sundered churches may be welded into one organic whole, or to wipe out one solitary feature which at present marks off church from church, yet it is convened for the purpose of union, to make us know each other more and love each other better—to see how we can help and advise each other; to quicken our activity in the common cause, and combine our efforts against the common foe. It is for these ends, I think, that you meet to-morrow; and these are the ends of all union, of all hearty unity, of all concert and co-operation. With such an object we Presbyterians of London are, I make bold to say, cordially and unanimously in sympathy. All our hearts are as one heart in this thing. We bid you welcome on your holy errand—we wish you all success in your pious endeavours. (Applause.)

The names of the delegates having been called over, they stood up, and Dr. Dykes addressed them as follows:—"Honoured and beloved brethren, gathered from many lands, now one in faith and in our Lord Jesus, most heartily do we greet you in the name of the Lord. We bid you welcome to this great capital. We assure you of our warm sympathy in the noble work which has called you together. We pray God to prosper your conference, and make your discussions fruitful in blessing. May the spirit of brotherly love and true Christian unity in the one Head and Saviour reign among you, and may He Himself, in whom we are one, preside over you, that the end of all may be the coming of His Kingdom, the salvation of men, and the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, for ever. Amen.

After the meeting had engaged in praise and prayer, several of the delegates were invited to make short addresses. The Rev. Dr. Morris, Professor of Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, then addressed the meeting. After alluding to the fact that all phases of Presbyterian thought and polity had their organized representatives in America, he said they had learned what were the things in which they agreed, as well as the things in which they differed, and they learned to push forward into the front the things on which they agreed, and to retire into the background the narrow and incidental things around which they had differed so long, and over which they had struggled so disastrously. The American Presbyterians were not yet one organic whole, though they had been made conscious that they were one in the essential elements of their belief and ideas of polity, and one in the great work which God had given them—to subdue and conquer for Christ, the new, vast, and precious continent. They were one in this hope and purpose; they were ready to lay aside everything in order to do for the Master the great work which he had so evidently, by the voice of history and Providence, been summoning them to in the new country. They were assembled to take steps, not merely expressive of the new thought and feeling, and hope of the present, but indicative of the career and history of the Presbyterianism of the Church of Christ in coming ages. There were two truths impressing themselves upon his heart. The significance of Presbyterianism, as a form of thought and as a type of polity—as an historic force, over since the time, of the Reformation—was the Headship and Kingship of Christ, whose glory they loved and sought, and its significance also lay in seeking after a communion of saints.

M. le Pasteur Charbonnier, Moderator of the Waldensian Church, spoke of the blessed results to be anticipated from this extraordinary gathering. He presented the salutation of his church to the conference. The Rev. Mr. Williams, Moderator of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists; the Rev. Dr. Porter, Belfast; M. le Pasteur Arnet, Brussels, and others, spoke a few words expressing their gratification at attending such a meeting, and their trust that it might be productive of blessed results. On the motion of the Rev. Dr. Robertson, of New Greyfriars, Edinburgh, a vote of thanks was awarded to the Committee of Arrangements for their assiduity in making preparations for this conference. The meeting closed with devotional exercises.

WEDNESDAY'S PROCEEDINGS. The conference had long private sittings during the forenoon and evening. The attendance was very large—amounting, it is understood, to nearly one hundred members, and representing upwards of twenty churches in Great Britain and Ireland, America, the colonies, and the Continent. Dr. M'Cosh, of Princeton, was appointed chairman. The first part of the meeting was occupied with devotional exercises. The constitution of the proposed body was then very fully and carefully considered, and the greater part cordially agreed to. The resolutions came to were, we believe, that there should be no confederation, but that an alliance should be formed to be called "The Alliance of Churches having a Presbyterian Constitution and Creed in accordance with the Confessions of the Reformed Confessions;" that the Council should meet every three years, and that it should consist of delegates elected by the churches in the Alliance; that these delegates should be either ministers or elders, and, whenever possible, of an equal number of each; that the Council, while it has its power to determine what churches are to be admitted into the Alliance, shall not have power to interfere with the existing creed or constitution of any church, or with its internal or external relations; that the objects of

the Council shall be mainly to consider all questions interesting to Presbyterians generally, to consult for the welfare of struggling churches, to promote the evangelization of the world, and to consider all questions relating to the practical work of the Christian Church, such as the prevailing evils of the day, and the means of lessening them through the training of the young, the use of the press, colportage, and other means of a similar kind. The meetings were very harmonious, although on some minor points there were differences of opinion expressed that are capable of easy settlement. A question arose at the close of the evening meeting of some importance—how the proceedings of the Council were to be brought under the notice of the Churches represented in it. On that point there were some differences, but these will be got over, it is expected. At ten o'clock to-day the conference reassembled, and its first business will be to settle the place of the first meeting of the Council. It is understood that if the Scottish delegates desire it the other members will give their voice for Edinburgh. In the afternoon the Conference is to adjourn to visit, on the invitation of Dean Stanley, the Jerusalem Chamber, where the Westminster Assembly was held, and the Abbey. A public meeting is to be held in Marylebone in the evening. A public dinner in connection with the meeting of Conference was held yesterday afternoon in the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen Street, London. Mr. H. Matheson (elder) occupied the chair, and was supported by the Rev. Principal M'Cosh, Princeton; Mr. J. P. Corry, M.P.; Mr. Sharman Crawford, M.P.; and Mr. Charles Dickson, M.P. There was a very large attendance, nearly all the delegates who had arrived in London being present, with many of the more influential members of the Presbyterian churches in the metropolis. After dinner, the Chairman said the time of their disposal was very short, as they had to resume the meetings for conference at five o'clock. They could not, however, separate without hearing several friends who might not have another opportunity of addressing them. Their esteemed friend, Dr. Begg, whom he was going to have called upon first, regretted very much having to leave so soon as he did, but he had a special engagement as an elder of one of the London churches. He (the Chairman) wished to state, however, how heartily they welcomed the brethren from a distance who had come amongst them on this occasion. It was singularly delightful to them to have it in their power to have such a gathering in London. A very few years ago it would have been quite impossible for the Anglo-Presbyterianism then in this great city to have dreamt of having a meeting like this. Now, blessed be God, they could invite their brethren and bid them welcome in the name of the King. He might just say, in a single sentence, that the Presbyterians in London had not been inactive during the last few years. There was no doubt they had made very considerable progress. When he came himself to London he believed there were only five ministers and five congregations in the Presbytery of London in connection with the Presbyterian Church in England. He believed there were now forty-nine or fifty. They did not wish to exalt Presbyterianism, but they wished to use the advantages which their system gave them for spreading the knowledge of the blessed Gospel far and near over England, into the dark places filled with infidelity and ritualism, and other evils, and they wished to be banded together and united in this great work. They had no doubt whatever that Presbyterians here would be greatly encouraged by seeing the countenances of their brethren from America and other colonies. He was certain very precious results would follow from this conference. He then called upon the gentleman mentioned below to say a few words.

The Rev. Dr. Schaff, Union Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, said he and his American brethren greatly rejoiced in the fact, which had just been stated by the chairman, of the progress of Presbyterianism in London; for London, they all knew, was the centre of the world, small as Americans thought England. They had no city in America to be compared with London in respect of size or gigantic progress, and they heartily rejoiced in the progress of the Gospel here, for it insured its progress to the end of the earth, which were laid tributary to the growth of this metropolis of Protestant Christendom. While Americans honour England as their mother, and felt indebted to her for all that was good and noble in their American culture and civilization, they felt very anxious to discharge at least a part of the debt of gratitude which they owed to her. It was with this feeling of gratitude that they all came over to England from time to time. One of the most remarkable facts in the history of the age was the extraordinary effect which two half-educated American laymen had been able to produce in Great Britain. It was a marvel more to the people of America than to the people here, and he thought the only way rationally to account for it was faith in the visible grace of God, which was the power behind. Such a movement the world had never seen since the days of the Wesleys and Whitfield, and in many respects it was far superior to the earlier movement. It was wider in scope and utterly unsectarian in its spirit. It was the most unselfish religious movement known in modern history. It was not for the purpose of building any party or school, but for the simple purpose of winning souls to Christ, and building up his Kingdom, and every Church might reap the benefit of the harvest if it chose to enter upon it. He was told that this religious movement had fallen providentially into Scotch Presbyterian management even here in London, and he supposed it was for this reason in part that the Presbyterian Church was really as far as he knew the most unsectarian Church in the world. He had heard it even complained about in America that the Presbyterian Church was too unselfish for its own interests. He believed this was the glory of the Presbyterian Church that it was unselfish, and he hoped the day would be distant when she would hold her hand for

her purse from supporting any good cause or institution which had for its object the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. It was the truly unselfish and catholic spirit which had promoted the Presbyterian Church to take these two American laymen by the hand and pull them through, as the American phrase is, and he was happy to see before him some of the men who had taken the lead in this movement. They were entitled to the gratitude of all Englishmen who cared about Christianity. He had been told that when Mr. Moody left America to cross the Atlantic, a professor of Chicago, who was personally acquainted with him, asked what in the world he was after. "A hundred thousand souls for Christ," was his reply, and they had been given to him, according to his faith. It was the old story of the prophet having no honour in his own country. They had no idea in Chicago that these men could produce such a commotion in England. (Applause.)

Pastor Oressel (of the Reformed Church of France), in the short address he delivered, described the unhappy and weak condition of his Church, which is suffering from unbelief, and from not having been organized for many years. It was in need, he said, of the sympathy of the Protestant Church throughout the world. They wanted to feel that they were not alone in the world, but had friends amongst all the Presbyterian Churches. He drew a lesson from the present situation of his church. Notwithstanding all their sufferings, persecutions, and struggles, they were still a church. (Hear, hear.) A church strong in its zeal, faith and love for the Saviour. This taught them the lesson that the Presbyterian polity was the best. (Hear, hear.) If there had not been a strong bond between the pastors and laymen in their church, they would never have been able to support the persecutions and struggles they had been called on to endure. He claimed for Presbyterianism the merit of antiquity, the apostles having been Presbyterians. They would remember the Presbyterian Council of Jerusalem, and that when Stephen died his successor was elected by the members of the Church. Presbyterianism had been proved by their history to be the best form of Church polity in the world. (Applause.) He would return to his native country very much strengthened by his intercourse with Presbyterian brethren here, and he trusted his Church in France would feel after this that she did not stand alone, but was a member of the Presbyterian body, and would be more faithful and firm in the profession of Christian faith. (Applause.)

Principal Snodgrass, Canada, said he had come 800 miles to attend this meeting. They would be glad to hear that this system of Church for which their brother had just claimed so great antiquity took well in the Canadian soil and flourished, having produced very abundant fruit in that land. There were some things that they could not transplant such as they would like to do it from this land. The heather, for example, they could not get to grow in Canada; the whin or the broom would not grow there. With the gowan even they had great difficulty, but Presbyterianism seemed fitted for every soil and every clime. (Laughter and applause.) He felt particular pleasure at being present at this meeting. It was a sort of letting-down from the excitement which his friend, Dr. Topp, and others of the Canadian brethren had just passed through in the good city of Montreal. He assured them it was worth living a lifetime to be present in such scenes as they had been connected with in Canada. (Applause.) In that grand consummation so long laboured for, so long prayed for, which had united together the sundered Churches from sea to sea between the Pacific shores and the Atlantic shores. (Applause.) He thought there were many lessons to be gathered from what appeared to be the signs of the times. There were many points to view in connection with the Church's work and the Church's progress in the present day which they might study with great edification indeed. He was not going to justify division. Division did in the providence of God take place, and there seemed to be a need for it at times, just as our Lord, on one occasion, commanded His disciples to say of one of the stupidest of creatures, "The Lord hath need of him." So it seemed in the history of the Church and the world, the Lord had need of divisions. The Church did not seem to be capable to stand the trials of some times, and divisions seemed to be necessary, but having fulfilled their end the time came round when in the providence of God a spirit of union animated the hearts of His people, and when they felt a desire to heal those divisions and come together as brethren united as one flock. While these divisions and healings took place, bringing their advantages and bringing their lessons, it was a happy thing for them in these days to find that they were divesting themselves by-the-by of the tattered rags of sectarianism, and they were receiving into their hearts those sympathies and sentiments which came down direct from those ancient Presbyterians, St. Peter and St. Paul. (Applause.)

The Rev. Geo. Jeffrey (Glasgow) said he regretted very much that his esteemed brother Dr. Calderwood was unable to be present on this occasion owing to the illness of one of his children. He would read a sentence from a letter he had just received from him:—"I therefore ask you to express my great regret at being absent on so interesting an occasion, which, I trust, will prove one of importance in the history of Christ's Church. My earnest desire is that God may favour us to see precious fruit gathered from this proposed alliance of Churches. May it lead to a future manifestation of Christian unity, and greatly stimulate the evangelical zeal of all our churches." Dr. Jeffrey proceeded to say that the Church to which he belonged (the United Presbyterian) had always been a Church distinguished for union, and so much was this the case that of late it had even agreed to division with a view to union. A very considerable part of it severed from the parent Church would ere long be united to the English Presbyterian Church. The Church to which he belonged was very earnest in this matter of the proposed

council, not simply because it was to be a manifestation of Presbyterian polity, which he believed to be the best in the world—the country from which he came was, of course, distinguished by its attachment to Presbyterianism—but because it would be the means of a future exhibition of the great doctrine, the Divine truth, to which the Church he belonged to had always been attached—the Headship of Christ. He referred, in conclusion, to his deep sympathy with the movement to which Dr. Schaff had referred.

The Chairman took this opportunity of expressing on behalf of Mr. David MacLagan, of Edinburgh (who is a deputy), his regret at not being present. (The state of his health prevented it. He (the chairman) had sent that morning a telegram to Mr. MacLagan, telling him how the meeting held had gone off, and he had received a reply by telegram, in which Mr. MacLagan said he was deeply grateful for the message, and he and others were remembering that day the Conference very specially in prayer. Though absent in the body they were present in the spirit.) Dr. Topp (Toronto) referred to the liberty of division which had been carried so far in Presbyterianism, and also to the work of reunion which had been begun. He urged that there had never been a time when a religious crusade against Satan and the world was more needed. Let them now put aside those temptations to division which Satan had used so boldly and successfully, and come together as Christian men seeking the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. J. S. Crawford, M.P., said that when he was appointed as a delegate to this meeting, he had some difficulty as to whether it was a judicious thing to have such a meeting together, but, having seen what he had seen on the night previous and that day, he had no want of confidence. He rejoiced to see such a meeting, and he trusted it would have the result at which they all aimed, and would lead to the extension of those Presbyterian principles. (Applause.)

The meeting shortly afterwards broke up, and the gentlemen returned to the College and resumed the conference, of which we have indicated the results above.—Daily Review.

THE tenderest heart loves best the bold and courageous one. THERE is no service like his that serves because he loves.—Sidney. THE cross of Christ is unrelenting; it is summary death to sin if it be accepted by faith. THERE can be no penury with him whose heart hath once been enriched with celestial bounty. THE door between us and heaven cannot be opened if that between us and our fellow men is shut. NEVER part without loving words to think of during your absence. It may be that you will not meet again in life. THE Christian is not ruined by living in the world, which he must needs do while he remains in it, but by the world living in him. IF martyrdom is now on the decline, it is not because martyrs are less zealous, but because martyr-mongers are more wise.—Colton. IF we look upon life as a gift 'of days, only one to be used and improved at a time, all its duties can be done, all its burdens borne. TAKE care that all is done in a sweet and easy way; make no toil or task out of the service of God. Do all freely and cheerfully, without violent effort. MAN without religion is a creature of circumstances; religion is above circumstances, and will lift him up above them. MORALITY without religion is only a kind of dead-reckoning, an endeavor to find our place on a cloudy sea by measuring the distance we have run, but without any observation of the heavenly bodies. THERE will come a time when three words, uttered with charity and meekness, shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit.—Hooker. RICHARD BAXTER used to say, speaking to himself and his fellow-preachers: "We preach to our people the *distempers of our souls*." How true! How necessary, then, that the soul of the preacher should be in a proper mood when he comes to proclaim the Gospel to his fellow-men? SORROWS sober us and make the mind genial. In sorrow we love and trust our friends more tenderly, and the dead become dearer to us. Just as the stars shine out in the night, so there are blessed facts that look at us in our grief, though before their features were fading from our recollection. O WEARY hands, that through the day, Life's heavy burden sorely bear; Another hand shall take away This load of toil, and sin, and care: Not here, but there! O WEARY, aching, throbbing brain! O heart with doubt and sorrow riven! There is no toll, no love, in vain, In that blest home that Christ has given: Not earth, but heaven.

It has been the epidemic ban of our American Christianity—this running after a few star preachers. We must think the rage in this direction promises a wholesome decline. How pernicious a thing it is to act as if only here and there a preacher who is to be heard, simply because of some peculiar gift or solidity. It is a folly confined almost exclusively to the realm of religion. No one dreams of it in the department of education. Were it to reach and be applied here, but one score or hundred of children would ever be educated. The demand here, rightly, is an ability to teach. And this is just what is required in ministers. The *qualification of a bishop is that he be able to teach*." not to amaze. —Scott.

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