

## THE PAN-PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

The first service was fittingly held in St. Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow, and a most appropriate sermon was preached by Dr. Marshall Laing of the Barony Church, on the Ideal of the Church and its ministry. The opening paragraphs were particularly striking.

On the 21st of November, 1638 said he, that famous General Assembly of the Scottish Church, to which many look back as marking the Second Reformation of religion in Scotland, was held in this ancient cathedral. Historians have described the scene, the tumult, the entrance of those ministers, nobles, burghers, who had been commissioned to take part in the proceedings; the arrangement within the hoary fane of the several constituents, The King's High Commissioner, surrounded by Privy Councillors and Court officials on the dais at the choir, opposite him Alexander Henderson, the wise and intrepid Moderator, earls and barons in the centre, and the ministers behind, and in galleries on either side the sons of peers and others. As measured by modern ideas, it was not a large convocation. There was not more than 240 members; but it comprehended almost every person of distinction in the realm. The rudeness of the times was evidenced in the swords and daggers which were worn by many; countenances were stern and rugged, and speech was often fierce and intolerant. Was it wonderful that when for the first time after a lapse of more than three decades a free and lawful Assembly was summoned, the hitherto pent-up torrent should pour itself forth with violence? There can be no question at least as to the thoroughness of the work that was done. The grave, hard-featured men who met day by day during a cold winter month braved the wrath of Royalty, put an end to the oscillations of half a century between Prelacy and Presbytery by deposing the one and re-establishing the other, and fixed for the generations to come the ecclesiastical government of the country. Truly, as has justly been said, "that Glasgow Assembly was one of the noblest, strongest, most exciting spectacles that Scotland has ever seen."

Nearly 253 years separate us who are here and now gathered together from this spectacle. During all these years no important ecclesiastical Council has been received within this most venerable of churches. This day—witnessing to the reception of delegates from many churches in many lands convened for deliberation and fellowship—connects in a special manner with 1638, but what a contrast between that date and this! What a difference in the manner and the material of the Assemblies! What vast developments from the little Scottish seedling are evidenced! I do not forget that there are representatives of Churches who for all the blessings of their Reformed Christianity are most scantily indebted to Scotland—the debt is rather on the side of Scotland to them. But at all events a large proportion of our Council consists of those who belong to communions, larger or smaller, which indicate the expenses of that sturdy Presbyterianism whose triumph was realized in this very place! Where could the first words of welcome to the city of Glasgow be more fittingly spoken; where more appropriately could we sound the notes of the consciousness which is to dominate in all conference and discussion; where could we be more penetrated with the sense of "the General Assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven," than in a fane whose stones are monuments of His glory, and where

"Above, beneath us, and around,  
The dead and living swell the sound  
Hosanna, Lord! Hosanna in the highest."

At the close he again referred to that historic scene in the following terms:

Fathers and brethren, at the close as at the beginning of my sermon the spectacle witnessed in this cathedral in 1638 seems again to connect with our convocation to-day. The essential contentions of that earlier time have still their significance; but "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns," and we need some higher mark of light to link the past to the present. Is not that higher mark indicated in the conception of the one Body of that which through all ages is being built up and compacted together? The Assembly of 1638 was the triumph of *Liberty*, for although intolerance cast its baleful shadow over deliberations, it was the vindication of the right of the individual and of the community to think. It was the assertion of a Lordship superior to human Principalities and Powers—the exclusive Lordship of God over the conscience. Now, though it might be too much to say that the rights of the individual can never more be imperilled, yet in the sphere of religion the danger is, not the loss, but the license of *liberty*. The disintegrations of Presbyterianism are a warning as to this. We need to be reminded that the individual belongs to a unity; that the true freedom is the freedom to fulfil his part as a member of that unity in whole-

hearted service for the common weal, and in recognition of the grand regulating truth of the one Body of Christ. Presbytery, too, was victorious 258 years ago; yet by that victory it became too much nationalized. The Catholicity of the Reformation, which was one of its noblest features, was obscured; and the centrifugal isolating tendency was accentuated in Scotland and elsewhere. God in His providence has brought us to feel a new centripetal force. The plantation of Ulster, the colonial expansion of Great Britain, the vast growths of the mighty American Republic, the facilities of intercourse drawing the Continent of Europe closer to the Great Protestant nations, East and West, the exchanges of scholarship as of commerce—these and other influences have been establishing intimacies which cannot but move heart to heart by sympathy. This council is the sign of a movement towards the true spiritual, and it may be said even historical, catholicity. The more we all come within the sweep of any such movement the better for us all. It is in a narrow sectarianism, a sectarianism with no wider horizon for its action than the denomination—which is always conscious of the denomination—that bitter strifes find rank luxuriance. Catholic Presbyterianism is not, indeed, the Holy Catholic Church throughout the world; but the more we realize it, the nearer and the more real will be the vision of the one Christendom. That one body of Christ which comprehends the great multitude that no man can number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, and its consciousness will

"Sweep like the sense of vastness when at night  
We hear the roll and dash of waves that break  
Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide."

### CANADA AT THE GREAT COUNCIL.

At the great meeting of the General Presbyterian Alliance at Glasgow, the Canadian Church was ably represented and recognized. Rev. Principal Grant, presided at one of the sessions, and valuable papers and reports were read by other leaders of the Canadian Church.

Speaking on the subject of praise and order of worship, Rev. Dr. Oochrane said what was desiderated in Canada was a systematic order of worship. A committee was sitting under instructions from the General Assembly to frame in part an order of worship, so that every minister in a pulpit in Canada might know how to proceed. He wished that there should be liberty of worship, but there were many anthems sung in the churches which were altogether apart from what sacred worship should be.

#### MODERN APOLOGETICS AND CRITICISM.

The first paper in one of the most interesting and important discussions at the council was entrusted to Rev. Principal MacVicar, of Montreal. He dealt with "The relation between Philosophy and Theology." Theology in an important sense, he said, was fundamentally independent of philosophy. Its subject matter came not from a human but a divine source, while philosophy was wholly the product of man's mind. Biblical theology was Christ centric. Christ was *par excellence* our theologian and philosopher. His manhood and integrity were accepted. They proceeded upon the belief that He was a historical character, and not an evolutionary creation or myth or legend, that He lived and taught at the time generally agreed upon, and that we had a sufficient, authentic account of His words and works. From this faith in His integrity as a man came the conclusion that He was Divine. This conclusion as to His person and character placed Him in a unique position infinitely above the sages of antiquity and of modern times, and warranted us in regarding His teaching as thoroughly original and independent of the dicta of the philosophers of all nations. He spoke not as a mere man but as God, and with accuracy, authority, and omniscience of knowledge, which at once vetoed the contentions of all who differed from Him. This was the impregnable foundation of theology. Passing on to consider the indebtedness of philosophy to theology the author said the history of the interpretation of mental and moral phenomena was one of endless confusions and contradictions. Systems of Biblical psychology like that of Delitzsch were few in number and little esteemed among metaphysicians. They seem to prefer Pagan wisdom to that of the witness sent from God. In spite of this folly Christ was the *facile princeps* both of philosophy and theology. "He knew what was in man." As the Creator, it was inconceivable that there should be to Him any impenetrable or perplexing mystery in the constitution of man, and the recognition of this fact should be made the alpha and omega of any philosophy which was to endure. The dependence of philosophy upon theology was specially apparent in ethics; and it was high time that this truth should be insisted upon in the schools. Heathen views of duty had held sway long enough. Noticing in closing some of the forms in which philosophy aided and also injured theology, he said the aid was chiefly in way of mental discipline, and theology