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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE,

CONVENED AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1880.

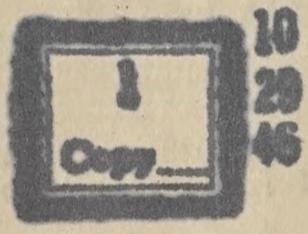
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The Rev. Henry A. Boardman, D. D., the senior Presbyterian Pastor in Philadelphia, who, as Chairman of the General Committee of Arrangements, was to deliver the Address of Welcome at the opening of the sessions, began to write that address as follows:

“BRETHREN BELOVED IN CHRIST JESUS: I am charged with the grateful office of bidding you welcome to our country and our city, our churches and our homes.

“First of all, our grateful acknowledgments are due to that benign Providence which has watched over you on the land and on the sea, shielded you from the perils of travelling, and brought you to us in this goodly convocation, as we humbly trust, in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. The occasion is one which turns back the shadows upon the great dial, not fifteen degrees, but three and a half centuries. Luther and Zwingli, Calvin and Knox, and their illustrious compeers, stand before us, God’s appointed instruments for publishing to an enslaved continent this mandate: Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. They heard and obeyed the summons. Breaking away from the ancient thralldom, their first recourse was to that inspired Book, which had for ages been withheld from them. Searching the Scriptures with patient study and earnest prayer, they found there neither pope nor prelate, but a permanent ministry of co-equal rank and authority, and that scheme of doctrine which constitutes the life and core of the evangelical theology. It is a pregnant fact that nearly all the churches of the Reformation assumed, and preserve to this day, a Presbyterian organization. In Germany, in Switzerland, in the Netherlands, in Scotland, in Italy, in France, they adopted with one accord, and still retain, the primitive Scriptural order, which the Waldensian Church, ‘neither Protestant nor Reformed,’ had maintained inviolate for centuries amidst the fastnesses of the High Alps. Even those churches which retained the prelatic element, retained it, with a single exception, not as of imperative divine obligation, but purely on grounds of expediency, their bishops being simply *primi inter pares*, not a superior order to Presbyters. And it is safe to say that England also would have taken this ground, had not the iron hand of the crown laid an arrest upon the beneficent work of her faithful and shackled reformers.”

But when he had proceeded that far, the gentle hand of death was laid upon his pen, and he was called up higher, as had

them, in a full and faithful report of its proceedings, keeps them precisely in the position in which they were uttered as individual opinions unless sanctioned by a vote of the body. At the same time, it may be noted, there was really very little to require this caveat from any side. The unity in diversity which appears in those pages is far more encouraging, than the diversity in unity is alarming.

already been the Rev. Elias R. Beadle, D. D., LL. D., his predecessor in the Chairmanship of the General Committee of Arrangements, and the Rev. William Adams, D. D., LL. D., who had been appointed to preach the opening sermon. The Council met, not under the shadow, but under the brightness of glorified death. Not a few of those who were in it may expect, before the Belfast meeting, to be translated to the General Assembly in Heaven. The membership of the earthly assemblies changes. New acquaintanceships are made ; and the old and the new circles are broken. But the work continues under Him who "liveth and was dead," and is "alive forevermore," and who, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," invests with his own immortality those who in his service are faithful unto the death. And their work, in its effects here, is also unending, unbroken, interlinked. The different generations and the different meetings have an organic connection, the one life flowing into, and out of, each, and through all, and passing at last into the great consummation. May the rich influence of the London, the Edinburgh, the Philadelphia, and the successive meetings of this Council roll on, strengthening and enlarging Presbyterianism, helping the Church of Christ in all its branches, and increasingly adding to the number of the redeemed, who, in glorified and beatific communion with Jesus, shall be heard saying: "Blessing, and honor, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen and Amen.