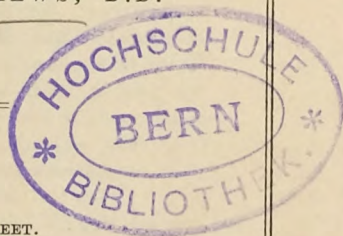


ALLIANCE
OF
THE REFORMED CHURCHES
HOLDING
THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM.

MINUTES AND PROCEEDINGS

OF
THE THIRD GENERAL COUNCIL,
BELFAST, 1884.

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both hemispheres, furnishing sustenance and comfort to the immigrant, but are also enabling him to enjoy a profitable return for his labour in the markets of the world. This prodigious and unprecedented growth is the event of a few years, and with a population doubling its numbers every ten years, how can the wants of such a growth be supplied?

With the wonderful capacity and low rate of ocean transportation, the rapidly decreasing cost of railway construction, the vast fields which invite commerce, and the vast moral, commercial, political, and military power of the Christian nations of the world, bearing on all agencies affecting the extension of the Church, who can estimate the wants of the world, and the duty of the Church? Ministers and missionaries are the great want. This want should be made known. Self-denying men and women, filled with love to the Saviour and love for perishing souls, can be encouraged to enter fields of labour anywhere. The Ministry, in home and foreign fields, should be more fully supplied with the means of procuring comfort, and increasing usefulness. This will greatly promote their efficiency, and will encourage more to prepare for the ministry and the missionary work. The Church has the means and the will to do far more than ever has been done, to extend the Kingdom of our Lord. Make known the wants, and young men and women will think of them. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest," and when the cry is heard, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"—Multitudes will answer, each personally, "Here am I, send me." So shall the harvest be gathered.

The MODERATOR, in introducing Dr. M'Cosh to the Council, said he esteemed it a very high privilege to occupy the chair during his reading of a paper.

Rev. President M'CosH, D.D., LL.D., Princeton—Mr. Moderator, ladies, and gentlemen, coming back to the place where I labored for sixteen years, my mind is filled, indeed crowded, with thoughts and feelings which I would like to express, but I have limited time and an important subject, and I therefore proceed at once. If I get through my paper in time, I would like to express my feelings.

The MODERATOR—Will the Council bear with President M'Cosh for a few minutes? (Agreed, agreed).

President M'CosH—I will occupy it at the close of my paper.

THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN COLLEGES.

I have a somewhat delicate subject. I mean to give my views with candor. I begin with laying down the two principles on which I proceed.

I. *It is not just the duty or office of a Church to manage a College.*—Christ did not give such a power to His Apostles, nor did His Apostles bestow such a prerogative on those who rule in the Church. These have higher, they have spiritual functions to

discharge. I do not believe that it is one of the offices of a Session, a Presbytery, a Synod, or of a General Assembly, to appoint a professor of Mathematics or of Natural History. I do not speak here of Theological institutions, which should be directly under the Churches. But I do not believe that Church courts are the best fitted to choose a professor of Geology or of Art. By not just fulfilling the commission of the Master, I am not sure that the blessing of the Master will rest upon them, and they might be tempted to appoint what the Scotch call a "sticket minister" instead of a master of the department. The boys would speedily detect the inefficiency of one put over them by such a mode of appointment, and would insist on going to the secular instead of the ecclesiastical Colleges, because they there find better teachers. We do not ask priest or presbyter to appoint the president of a bank, a commissioner of police, or the captain of a troop of horse, and I am not sure that a Church has any peculiar qualifications for choosing the president of a College or the curator of a scientific museum. But,

II. *The Churches should see that religion has a place where young men have their characters trained.*—They may stir up and encourage Governors and States to institute Colleges, and to secure that moral and religious truth be inculcated, tending to ennoble the mind. They may recommend the members of the Church to set up Christian Colleges, wherever the State has not provided institutions to teach higher learning; or has allowed the professors to undermine the faith and thereby endanger the morals of the young men, who are being educated. The Churches and the members of the Churches, are entitled to look into and to watch the religious state of every College supported by the money of the State, and of every College supported by private or Denominational endowment, so far at least as to determine whether they should encourage it or send their young men to it. It is the duty of the Church to see that the Gospel be preached to every creature, and that the young should be trained in the way in which they should go. The Churches cannot free themselves from this obligation. This is the special duty of the Church. It is under this aspect and this alone, that the subject in regard to Colleges comes before this Alliance of Churches. This duty may have to be performed in different ways in different circumstances. The wisdom of the Church at large and of the individual Churches is to be shown in adapting its methods of teaching religion to the young, to the various kinds of Universities and Colleges throughout the world. Europe and America join in this Alliance, and in this paper, I am to consider what the Churches should do in the Colleges of the two great continents, with their attached islands and dependencies.

First, in the European Colleges. Most of these are supported by National funds, and are under State control. The older ones were at first in subjection to the Romish Church, which took charge of the young men and trained them in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic faith. At the Reformation, the Colleges came under the sway of the State Protestant Churches, as they had been previously

under the Catholic Church. For several ages the students had the advantages of preaching and Bible instruction. But as Colleges increased in numbers, and professional courses were added, and religious sects multiplied, the superintendence has relaxed and in many Colleges has become a mere form. No doubt, the Churches long insisted on retaining some sort of official control, but in the large Colleges, they have very much abandoned the idea of giving religious instruction to the students. It is now fifty years since my mother, a widow lady ignorant of college matters, sent me to Glasgow University to pursue the usual course. I was five years in the undergraduate classes, an industrious student, and I sat under able and faithful instructors; but during these years, no professors ever spoke to me on any religious topic, and I had no interview of any kind with any minister of religion. There were about five and twenty of us who came up at that time to Glasgow University from the land of Burns, all acquainted with each other. It is one of the bitterest recollections of my past life that, with no one to care for them, about half of them contracted vicious habits at College, and fell into intemperance, or dissoluteness, or gambling, and came speedily to ruin, sinking to the lowest grades of society or carried prematurely to their graves. I mentioned their cases to one of the kindest of the professors, expecting him to be affected. He had never heard, he said, of the cases, but added coldly, that it was no business of his. Whose business was it? Some of the students, I am aware, were better situated, as having friends to look after them. But there were, at least, a thousand students in the college at the time in the same situation as I was. Whose business was it to look after these youths, and in what way?

The idea of such Universities as Edinburgh or Berlin, each with its three thousand students in medicine, in law, in art, looking after the students personally, is not thought of now. The parents, often poor and hundreds of miles away, cannot or do not watch over their boys. The ministers of the place, with large congregations, have time only to look after the few young men who are in circumstances to be introduced to them. What is to become of the remainder religiously and morally?

There has been a means adopted lately by several Colleges worthy of being considered for a moment. It is to invite attractive preachers from various Churches and localities to address the students. I believe that in this way some good may be done in creating a stimulus and giving interesting views of religion. But there is no religious instruction such as the students get in secular branches in the College, and the effect is not permanent. I wish I had influence with the Churches, endowed and unendowed, to take this whole subject into serious consideration. I do not know any more important topic for them to take up. It relates to the training of thousands and tens of thousands of young men in every civilised country likely to be the most influential men of their age. We talk of unsettled opinion among young men, and of the prevalence of Agnosticism. Is not the main cause of all the evil to be found in

the circumstance that, while our educated men are trained in secular branches, they are not instructed in the same thorough manner in the great truths of religion? The head and heart will be settled when there is truth presented to settle them. Agnosticism will disappear like a cloud when the true light shines.

I wish I could prevail on the representatives now present to press this subject on the attention of their Churches. Surely some means might be devised for meeting, or at least lessening, the evil. Let each Church feel that it has a responsibility in securing that the Colleges do not undermine the faith of their young men. Surely, the sturdy Presbyterians of Scotland, and the descendants of the Puritans of New England, will insist that their grand Universities, in giving all other knowledge to their young men, give them also a knowledge of God and of Him whom God hath revealed. If this be not done by the Universities, let it be done by the Churches taking charge each of its own youth, and appointing chaplains or certain ministers to look after them.

Second, the American Colleges. I need not dwell on these generally, for we are to have an account of them from my friend, Dr. Roberts. I confine myself to two or three special points. The older Colleges were founded in the fear of God. Three-fourths or nine-tenths of the Colleges continue to profess religion. In these, religion is made a very earnest matter. In the College over which I preside, every student joins in a devotional service every morning, in which are singing, reading of Scripture, and prayer; attends public worship in the College or in the Church of his Denomination in town on Sabbath, and receives Bible instruction every week, while the Sacrament of the Supper is dispensed from time to time. The Bible instruction is of a high kind, and is given by seven or eight professors whose heart is in the work. We have always Catholics, Jews, Heathens, and youths who have been trained in no religion, and I have no difficulty in dealing with them. I impose no test on them, and make no religious act compulsory. They commonly attend our prayers, and often our other services. A great deal of the spiritual life of the College is kept up by the religious students in their meetings for reading the Scriptures and for prayer. No student passes through our College without his being addressed from time to time, in the most loving manner, as to the state of his soul.

In 1877, Mr. Wishard, of our College, aided by some wealthy friends, set about establishing Christian Associations in the Colleges. I am able to give the result and the state of that work in June, 1884: 35,000 Students in the Colleges; 170 Associations in Colleges; 11,000 Students, Members of these Associations; 14,000 Professing Christians; 1,700 Professed Conversion during past College Year; 80 Students state that, through the influence of these meetings, they have decided to enter the Ministry; 30 of these are Converts of this year: 23 of these will go out as Foreign Missionaries.

2. But a number of Colleges scarcely profess to keep up any religion. The State institutions feel that they are not at liberty to do anything that might offend any of the young men who may

come to them. Some of the larger Colleges find that it is vain in them to attempt to give religious instruction to all the students. The result is, that a considerable number of Colleges are beginning to act very much as the European Universities do. I have observed that in these Colleges, with no instruction in religion, the Agnosticism which has so troubled Europe, is appearing in a very decided form. The question is started, Can the oversight of the religion and morals of the young men, long kept up in American Colleges, be maintained any longer? It has already taken the general form: Should the College authorities do anything more than see that the students attend lectures, recitations, and examinations, and behave themselves in doing so? I have noticed that some of our Secularists in America do not wish the question started. They would let the old American customs, the Bible and prayers first, and finally all discipline disappear, without anybody noticing it. I think it better that the question be started and discussed publicly, at this present time, ere the declension go farther. I have taken a decisive step and addressed the parents of our students, and, through them, the public, on the subject. I have put the question fairly—Is it right to invite young men, say of sixteen or eighteen years of age, to leave their home, hundreds or thousands of miles distant, and come to our eastern Colleges, and then,—take no charge of them? For the present, the feeling of the parents and the expressed opinion of even a large portion of the public Press is in my favour. But the contest is only begun. The Churches of America have a most responsible part to act at this present time, ere the rising evil goes farther.

3. I have one other very vital point to discuss—one in regard to which the Churches should be thoroughly alive. We must seek to rear a body of able Christian young men, thoroughly equipped and fitted to take the chairs in our various Colleges. I cannot find language sufficiently strong to express my feeling of the importance of this subject. The time is over, when men are to be appointed to our College chairs simply because they are pious or loud in their orthodoxy. It is not thus that they appoint our bank directors and our railway superintendents. Our students are much addicted to hero worship. They may not worship God, but they have men they worship. A weak Christian, teaching a branch of which he is not a master, will injure religion. The Churches should labor and pray that they may have young men of gifts and high principles ready to occupy the highest chairs in our Universities. In the rising science of the day, Biology, the great discoveries have been made, I am sorry to say, by men who do not believe in a Supernatural Power. It is the business of the Churches not to deny or oppose the truths which these have established, but to raise a body of young men to take up these truths and give them a religious interpretation. In this way more than any other, the Churches may promote religion in our Colleges. To avoid and counteract the Infidelity that appears in our secular institutions, Churches and private Christians in America are setting up Denominational

Colleges. But I tell them, that unless they get teachers in these equal in ability and scholarship to those in our great Universities, our eager, able, and ambitious young men will, in spite of the efforts of ministers, flock to the Secular Colleges, which will then control them, and may use the intellectual life which they possess to the worst of purposes.

The MODERATOR—I suppose the Council is willing now to hear any additional remarks by Dr. M'Cosh? ("Agreed.")

Dr. M'COSH—It would be foolish in me to expect to be able to attend any further meetings, and I trust that this Alliance is now so established that it will not need the particular aid of any one individual. I came here to express the interest I feel in this Alliance of our Churches,—which I trust will continue not only for years but for ages to come. For you may depend upon it, that if the Presbyterian Reformed Churches do not combine, they will be greatly weakened by other denominations, especially the Episcopal denomination, which surpasses us in this unity. I do trust that this good work will go on in the years to come as it has done in the past. I feel that at my age, that there is nothing left for me now but to wind up my work, and that I am now doing. I am taking farewell of my friends here. I have a remembrance of their great kindness. Will you allow me to say that in the large body of young men who were students of mine here, I ever felt a special interest, and I have not for a long time had any such feeling of intense pleasure as in shaking hands with these young men. When they came up to me, holding out their hands, I sometimes had difficulty in recognising them. They had been growing for twenty years or so, and their faces were somewhat different from what they formerly were. But when they began to speak, and tell me their names, I told them there was no pleasure I have felt for a long time, equal to that which I experienced in meeting dozens and scores of the men I formerly taught. I will go over to Scotland in a few days, to take farewell of my friends and of those places in which I had the privilege for sixteen years of preaching the Gospel, and then, it only remains for me to return to the land of my adoption, where I mean to leave my bones. I have two or three works still to discharge bearing upon the Philosophy to which I have devoted a very large portion of my life, and bearing upon that College which has so prospered, because friends have gathered round it and have given it so much support since I went there. I mean to go there and do this remaining portion of my work, and then I hope to lie beside the great Edwards—the greatest intellect that America has produced—and beside Witherspoon, perhaps the greatest actor that has appeared in either Scotland or America (for he belonged to both), and to sleep with them in the same graveyard, to rise together on the Resurrection morn.

REV. DR. J. MARSHALL LANG, Glasgow—Before the next paper is called, I think the Council would wish to give some response to