

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FIRST GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, JULY 1877.

WITH RELATIVE DOCUMENTS

BEARING ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE COUNCIL, AND THE STATE OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

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sented, the Church of God as a visible organisation had already become venerable in the age of the Apostles. They had no commission to establish a Church constitution, but simply to modify the constitution so far as to allow the Church of the one nation to become the Church of all nations, and to modify the ordinances of the Church so as to substitute the forms of worship proper to the worship of Christ as historically incarnate, for the symbols needful for the worship of Christ while his incarnation was yet future. The function of the Apostles was similar to those of the American Conventions called to modify the State constitutions so as to adopt them to the changed circumstances of the people in that rapidly growing country. Hence they had so little to say of church-government, and of the ordinance of infant baptism, and of other topics on which they must have spoken fully had the Christian Church then had its first institution.

The Rev. Dr. SAMUEL IRENÆUS PRIME read the following Paper on

PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE foundation of the Church whose General Council is now convened in this historic city was laid in the first century of the Christian era.¹ It was one of the acts of the Apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. Its track through successive ages is marked by whatever is beneficent and glorious in the progress of the gospel. Religion, learning, art, science, civilisation, and humanity have made its path illustrious, and no nation has felt its power but in the good of its people.

The work assigned to me is the presentation in the fewest possible words—it deserves a volume, and that must be large to contain the half of it—of an outline of Presbyterianism in the United States of America.

It is common to begin the history of religion in America with the story of the Puritans. Of the 22,200 emigrants who came to New England before 1640, no less than 4000 of them were Presbyterians. The early churches in Salem, Charlestown, Boston, and elsewhere, had ruling elders, while in 1646 the ministers, and an elder from each Church, met in synod at Cambridge,

Massachusetts, and adopted the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

The Reformed Churches of the Continent, and more than all that of Holland, gave to the new world the blood and brain which still form a powerful element in the Presbyterian Church. The Dutch planted, in 1619, in New York, the first strictly Presbyterian Church, and it remains to this day. From and after the British revolution of 1688, Scotland and the north of Ireland sent to our shores the men who gave distinctive form to that Presbyterian Church which has been to the religion of America what the backbone is to a man. These stalwart Presbyterians settled chiefly in Pennsylvania and Maryland. The oldest Church organised by them is that of Rehoboth, in Maryland, formed before 1690. Freehold and Woodbridge, in New Jersey, were born in 1692, and the first Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1698. As early as 1705-6, the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the mother of us all, was formed, and every minister in it but one was from Scotland or Ireland. Four Presbyteries were formed, in 1716, out of this one, and then they constituted the synod of the same name, but including ministers and churches in New Jersey and New York. After Whitefield's visit, in 1739, a division resulted in the formation of the synod of New York, but the two were re-united in 1758, forming a synod which continued to be the highest ecclesiastical authority until the separation from the government of the mother country, when the General Assembly was constituted in 1788, after the model of the Church of Scotland.

Our *Presbyterianism* helped largely to make us restless, and finally rebellious, when the country was under the British crown. If the Church of England had sent all the colonists, and the Church of Scotland had sent none, the history of the United States might never have been written separately from that of Great Britain. Bishop Horsley says: "Calvin was unquestionably in theory a republican. So wedded was he to this notion that he endeavoured to fashion the government of all the Protestant Churches upon republican principles." Hallam writes: "The school of Knox . . . had a system of local and general assemblies . . . with the forms of a republic." Lord Macaulay says of the Scottish preachers, "They inherited the republican opinions of Knox," and Isaac Taylor calls "republicanism the Presbyterian

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

principle." [Quoted by Rev. Dr. W. P. Breed.] And if I should pursue this point, the testimony would prove the statement made by our own historian, Mr. Bancroft, that "the first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came, not from the Puritans of New England, nor the Dutch of New York, nor the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians." Americans have honoured but one of our revolutionary divines with a statue: they caused to be erected last year, our centennial year, at the cost of \$25,000 (£5000), a bronze statue of Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D., a Presbyterian clergyman from Scotland, and the only clergyman among the immortal signers of our Declaration of Independence, a document that holds in our history the same place with that of "Magna Charta" in England, and the "Solemn League and Covenant" in Scotland.

Presbyterians in America have shown as great capacity for divisions and subdivisions as in Scotland or elsewhere. They are the same set of men, and set in the same way—that is, their own way: always ready to give up when convinced; but never convinced if they can help it: willing at any time to part with their best friend rather than to yield a point in dispute. We have a tradition that one of our Presbyterian fathers in Scotland, when moderator, prayed: "Grant, O Lord, that we may be right, for thou knowest we are very decided."

Some of our Presbyterian bodies are the offspring of divisions in the old country—Churches being formed by ministers and people who would preserve the usages and specific principles of their distinctive organisations in Scotland. Others have been formed by divisions in our own ecclesiastical bodies. We have at the present time ten independent Presbyterian organisations, viz. :—

- General Assembly (North),
- General Assembly (South).
- Reformed (Dutch).
- Reformed (German).
- United Presbyterian.
- Associate Reformed Synod of the South.
- Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.
- General Synod of Reformed Presbyterian Church.
- Welsh Calvinistic Methodist.
- Cumberland Presbyterian.
- The Presbyterian General Assembly (North)

has 4744 ministers, 5077 churches, with 535,210 members in communion; and last year contributed for the support of the gospel at home and abroad \$9,810,223—about ten millions of dollars, or £2,000,000. It supports about one thousand persons in its foreign mission work. It has thirteen theological seminaries, with 56 professors and 578 students.

The Presbyterian Church (South) has 1709 ministers, 1804 churches, with 112,183 members; and last year it contributed \$1,138,671 for the support of the gospel at home and abroad. Two theological seminaries have eight professors and 100 students. It sustains sixteen foreign missions, with 75 labourers, representing the Church in China, Greece, South America, and Mexico.

The United Presbyterian Church has 625 ministers, 798 churches, and 77,414 members. Its contributions to the cause of Christ in the past year, \$873,675. It has four theological seminaries, with 97 students.

The Reformed (Dutch) Church has 546 ministers, 506 churches, and 74,600 members; and its contributions amount to \$1,082,840 16. And its 200 labourers are among the heathen in China, India, and Japan.

The Welsh Presbyterian Church, usually known as the Calvinistic Methodist, is the outgrowth of the revival in England and Wales under Wesley and Whitefield. The Church is Calvinistic in doctrine, after Whitefield, and is called Methodist from Wesley. It has 119 ministers, 155 churches, with 9139 members; and gave last year \$74,531 51 for the support of the gospel.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, has 26 ministers and 47 congregations.

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod has 101 ministers, 106 congregations, with 10,250 members; and it raised last year \$190,435 45—an average of nearly \$20, or £4, to each member.

The Associate Reformed Synod of the South has 60 ministers and 54 churches, with 5680 members; and raised \$40,345 69.

The Reformed (German) Church has 447 ministers, 1099 congregations, with 87,871 communicants; and contributions, \$398,117.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church is not Calvinistic in doctrine, has 1275 ministers, 2000 congregations, with 100,000 members; and its contributions are estimated at \$350,000.

These figures show the grand total of the Pres-

byterian Church force of the United States to be 9028 ministers, 12,102 congregations, with 1,052,339 members, making in one year contributions in money for religious purposes to the sum of 14,512,198 dollars, or about 3,000,000 pounds sterling—nearly fifteen dollars or three pounds sterling to each communicant in the whole country.

Theological Schools.

Relying upon the sanctified intelligence of the ministry, the Presbyterian Church has made the instruction of its candidates for the pulpit an object of the highest importance, planting and endowing in all parts of the country institutions solely devoted to training men to be preachers of the Word. The Presbyterians have more than twenty of these divinity schools, with about seventy-five professors, and more than eight hundred students, the most of whom have had a thorough college education in the sciences and arts, and are now devoting their whole time to preparation for the gospel ministry.

In all these institutions for theological instruction large and costly libraries have been gathered with great diligence and success. Under our laws, books for all institutions of learning may be imported free of duty; and the halls of our scattered seminaries are made the repositories of the best works in all the languages of the old world, so that a student in South Carolina or Illinois may lay his hand upon almost any volume important for theological study as readily as if he were in Edinburgh or Berlin. Some of these libraries are exceedingly rich as well as extensive. The Union Seminary in New York city has 36,000 volumes, and many of them of great value. Princeton has 27,000. New Brunswick has 26,000. The Presbyterian seminaries have 200,000 volumes out of 525,000 volumes in all the divinity schools in the United States. That is to say, the Presbyterians have libraries including 200,000 volumes, while the libraries of the Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and all others united, have 325,000 volumes.

Some idea may be obtained of the value attached to theological education by American Presbyterians, from the fact that the real estate and invested funds for the support of teachers and candidates for the ministry, owned by one of the ten branches of the Presbyterian Church, amount to \$3,350,000, about £668,000.

This is for theological education only. Some of our colleges have had large benefactions. Princeton has property amounting to \$1,518,000. More than a million of dollars have been given since the accession of Dr. M'Cosh to its presidency.

For the endowment and foundation of colleges and theological schools, the laymen of the Presbyterian Church have cheerfully given millions of money, which they regard not their own but the Lord's, whose stewards they are. It is believed that in no department of the Church of Christ is the religious duty and privilege of consecrating money to the service of God more intelligently understood and conscientiously discharged and enjoyed.

The reunion of the two greatest Presbyterian bodies, in the year 1869, was marked by a freewill thank-offering to the Lord of nearly \$8,000,000, or £1,600,000.

This is a small part of what the Presbyterian Church in the United States is doing for God and man. In the *national* benevolent and religious institutions, which have no distinctively denominational character, and in those private or public charities sustained by the gifts of good people of all Christian names, Presbyterians *do* and *give* not only more than any other denomination, but in some of these union societies they give more than many other denominations together, and in a few of them they give the larger part of all that comes into the treasury.

The American Bible Society receives the nearly undivided contributions of the American churches. As its supporters are associated in *auxiliaries* and not as *churches*, it is impossible to distinguish the contributions made by Presbyterians from those of other denominations. But taking the receipts of an Auxiliary Bible Society in the city of New York for an example, we get the following figures:—

Donations in the Year	Presbyterian Churches.	All other Churches.
1870.....	\$13,941 19	\$2,686 56
1871.....	15,841 83	2,662 20
1872.....	9,396 50	1,699 80
1873.....	7,776 26	1,011 27
1874.....	11,202 51	2,062 71
1875.....	6,792 32	1,004 26
1876.....	8,190 50	421 .13
In the last fifty years	\$309,526 81	\$62,803 67
Total.....	\$372,330 48	

An analysis of the sources of contributions to

the Bible cause in any other city or part of the country, out of New England, will show that the Presbyterian Church contributes to this great national society in about the same proportion.

The American Tract Society is one of our noblest unsectarian National Institutions. Its Publication Committee is composed of six members, representing as many different denominations, any one of whom may *veto* the issue of any book, tract, or line which he considers exceptionable. Yet the Presbyterian Church, with but one-sixth of the control, has from the beginning, and through fifty years of its life, contributed *one-third* of all the donations to this Society.

The same, or similar returns would be made by tracing the receipts of the American Sunday School Union.

Every Christian institution in the land in which all denominations combine their energies, prayers, and alms for a common object, receives substantially the same proportion of its funds from the Presbyterian Church.

It is also safe to say that money is the least of the gifts of the Presbyterian Church to joint Christian work in the United States.

The Church in the State.

While we have no union of Church and State, there is substantial and intimate union of the religious principle with civil government. The framework of our social institutions and laws implies the obligations of revealed religion. Every officer of Government, from the lowest to the President himself, is bound by a religious oath; the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, is recognised by the civil law in each of our States, and by the General Government; blasphemy is a penal offence, and, to disturb public worship is a crime. Such laws cannot be made, preserved, and executed in a country where no Church establishment obtains, unless religious principle is rooted in the conscience and enthroned in the affections of the people. To cherish it from age to age, as the salt of the State, is the peculiar work of the Church of God. And that portion of the Church will be the most powerful in this conservation of saving force, which yields the greatest amount of truth, with the highest intellectual culture, and the most supreme devotion to the law of God. How far the Presbyterian element in the United States fulfils this mission, we will not undertake to affirm. She maintains that system of doctrine which recognises the

sovereignty of God, the supremacy of law, the divine right of the civil magistrate, the duty of obedience, representation in government, with this idea in the front and dominant, that God rules by the ruler who administers law as it is the will of God.

Holding with all other Christians the brotherhood of men, and the special brotherhood of believers, there can be no "lording it" over God's heritage. Holding to the parity of the clergy, it cannot have a hierarchy. Believing in the divine right of the people to share in the government of the Church, and this right to be exercised by representatives chosen for the purpose; a smaller part of the Church to be governed by the larger, the system becomes analogous to, and, indeed, almost identical with, our civil government; the Word of God being the supreme law, and Jesus Christ the Head over all.

Education.

Presbyterians, from the settlement of the country, have been earnest in the education of the people: by the support of public or free schools; by planting and fostering academies, seminaries, colleges, and universities. The number of incorporated literary institutions, besides theological, under exclusive Presbyterian control, is more than twenty-five; but that statement conveys no adequate view of the institutions under State supervision, or independent boards of trustees, whose chairs are filled by ministers and members of the Presbyterian Church.

Each branch of the Presbyterian family has its newspapers and other periodicals, devoted to the defence of the truth, the diffusion of knowledge, and the promotion of practical godliness. The Boards and Committees specially erected for the publication of religious books, tracts, and papers, are efficient in the education of the people, and, by a system of colportage, the whole Church is pervaded by the influence of a wholesome and elevating religious literature. So thoroughly is this work performed under the stimulating appreciation of the value of education, that no family in the Church is left unsupplied with the means of knowledge. And the child of a Presbyterian family unable to read would be a curiosity and a shame.

Civil Office.

In all communities, in all sections of our wide country, the members of this Church being

universally intelligent and well educated, they will necessarily attract to themselves a social and political influence somewhat in proportion to their moral and intellectual force. They are not identified as a sect with any political party; such questions as divide the people finding Presbyterians ranged on both sides, and equally ready to give a reason for the faith that is in them. And they are to be found in offices of trust and power, in every department of government, in the legislatures, in the chairs of State, in the halls of Congress, in the Cabinet, and in the chief magistracy of the United States.

The New England States have, from the settlement of the country to the present time, been the chief seat of Congregationalism, as the prevailing type of church-government. But the association of churches and ministers has always produced a modified form of Presbyterianism distinct from Independency. While it is also to be noticed that the Calvinistic system of truth has been preserved as the professed faith of the Congregational Churches from 1646 to the present day.

These New England States are the north-eastern section of the United States, with a population of 3,487,924; the State of New York, adjoining New England on the west, has a population of about 5,000,000, or one-eighth of the whole country. In the State of New York, and in most of the States outside of New England, the Presbyterian Church holds the same relative place that Congregationalism holds in New England. And the constant, unimpeded, interchange of ministers and communicants commingling the two, the colleges, and theological schools of each equally accessible to the other, the degree of intellectual culture substantially the same in both, with the same zeal and work in the cause of education, morals, and religion, it is at once just and becoming to regard the influence of the Congregational Churches as running in the same line, to the same great ends, with those of the whole Presbyterian family. The Universities of Harvard, at Cambridge, Mass., and Yale, at New Haven, Conn., are the oldest of our institutions of learning; they were both founded for Christ and the Church, and to this day are the largest universities on the Western Continent, sending forth their educated sons into every State and Territory of the Union. In estimating the moral force of our faith and order upon the body politic, in the advancement

of education and the conservation of good government, on which the progress, prosperity, and happiness of the State so largely depend, it is right to recognise, and it would be a partial and inadequate view of the subject which did not recognise, the pervasive influence of New England upon the United States.

Compared with other Churches.

The relative power of the Presbyterian element may be more distinctly shown by statistics derived from the United States Census of 1870.

Churches of all Names.

Denominations.	Organizations.	Edifices.	Sittings.	Property.
All Denominations,	72,459	63,082	21,665,062	\$354,483,581
Baptist (regular),	14,474	12,857	3,997,116	\$39,229,221
Baptist (other),	1,355	1,105	363,019	2,378,977
Christian,	3,578	2,822	865,602	6,425,137
Congregational,	2,887	2,715	1,117,212	25,069,698
Episcopal,	2,835	2,601	991,051	36,514,549
Evangelical Asso.,	815	641	193,796	2,301,650
Friends,	692	662	224,664	3,939,560
Jewish,	189	152	73,265	5,155,234
Lutheran,	3,032	2,776	977,332	14,917,747
Methodist,	25,278	21,397	6,528,209	69,854,121
Miscellaneous,	27	17	6,935	135,650
Moravian,	72	67	25,700	709,100
Mormon,	189	171	87,838	656,750
New Jerusalem,	90	61	18,755	869,700
Presbyterian,	9,394	8,539	3,315,472	68,624,571
Roman Catholic,	4,127	3,806	1,990,514	60,985,566
Second Advent,	225	140	34,555	306,240
Shaker,	18	18	8,850	86,900
Spiritualist,	95	22	6,970	100,150
Unitarian,	331	310	155,471	6,282,675
United Brethren in Christ,	1,445	937	265,025	1,819,810
Universalist,	719	602	210,884	5,692,325
Unknown (local),	26	27	11,925	687,800
Unknown (Union),	409	552	153,202	965,295

These returns were made seven years ago, and all the sums should now be largely increased. But the United States Census is taken only once in ten years.

It appears that Presbyterians hold a larger amount of church property than any denomination, with one exception, and more than the Roman Catholics by eight millions of dollars.

These Presbyterian Churches are planted in so many cities and chief towns and villages that there is no considerable section of country where there are large communities without a Presbyterian Church. The Board of Home Missions, of one branch of this Presbyterian vine, has churches under its care in all the States and Territories, except two.

Science, Art, and Letters.

To give a catalogue of names illustrious in the various departments of arts, and science, and learning, would be alike unjust to the dead and

the living. It is better to say, that philosophy, chemistry, the useful arts and the fine arts, have all and alike been illustrated and enriched by Presbyterian scholars. For some of the most important inventions and discoveries of the age, which have made the age itself remarkable, such as the electro-magnetic telegraph,¹ now the nerve of the whole world, the reaper² that gathers the harvests of the world, and the cable³ that unites the old and new world, the world is indebted to Presbyterian Americans.

In the realms of learning and letters, the position of the Church is not less important. Always on the alert in the work of education, it would be strange indeed if it had not furnished large contributions to solid learning. It is conspicuous by its absence from the departments of ephemeral and demoralising literature. Its men are masters in those regions of instruction that require patient thought, thorough scholarship, and high moral tone, such as theology, biblical criticism and exposition, mental and moral science.

Not by the number, nor by the might, of its learned and laborious men, does it reign in the world of thought. To maintain the truth, to defend the ark of the testimony against all comers, to furnish a champion whenever the armies of the Lord are defied,—this, indeed, is the duty and the joy of the Presbyterian Church. But in the *spirit* of its doctrine and polity lies its conservative and progressive power. The *Spectator*, of London, has recently uttered these intelligent and discriminating words: "Presbyterianism is a system which combines freedom and precision with a rare success, uniting a large measure of local liberty with a strict and authoritative supervision of its exercise. No more admirable method of rule was ever contrived. It is at once strong and free, energetic and popular, having force and vigilance enough to be promptly directive, while it has likewise the recommendation of so attracting the regards of those subject to it that each member of the body feels himself wedded to, and mingled with it, and all are bound up in a salutary unity."

Revivals of Religion.

The history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States has been marked by steady, solid growth, drawing to itself the elements of stability, progress, and usefulness; having the energy of

vital forces, the traditions of a godly and learned ancestry, and the impelling might of an intelligent apprehension of a divine call to subdue the land and the whole earth for the crown of Him who bought it with his blood. To do the will of God is the limit of the Presbyterian's idea of obligation, to "go forward" his only duty, the result being easily and safely left in Almighty hands. Always clad in the panoply of the gospel, there are frequent periods of special revival, when the Church hears the voice of God, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come." In such days of her refreshing, she puts on her beautiful garments, and goes forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." The first and only century of her life is all ablaze with these revival fires: the South and the North, the East and the wide prairies of the West, have received these baptisms of the Spirit in the early and latter rains; and this year, signalised by the convocation of this assembly of Presbyterians of all lands, is a year of the right hand of the Most High.

Conclusion.

We, the Presbyterian Churches of the United States, are arranged in households, according to our several views of usefulness and duty, and as we have been guided by the Providence and the Spirit of God. There is room enough for each and all to revolve and shine in our great and wide world of the West, as there is for the stars in their orbits. If God has work for us to do in closer union, we will obey his voice; but now we are one in him; in the same service; with the same tools and the same wages. By and by, the branches of this great Presbyterian family, from the distant islands of the sea, and the lands of the rising sun, from the old world and the new, and all other Churches holding to Christ the Head, redeemed by his blood, and gathered out of many lands, will be one army of the living God! a multitude whom no man can number! and out of the excellent glory shall come a voice, saying: "Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved? It is the church! the bride! the Lamb's wife; thou art fair, my love, my dove, my undefiled; beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem; the King shall greatly desire thy beauty, and thou shalt stand before him, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee."

¹ S. F. B. Morse. ² Cyrus M'Cormick. ³ Cyrus W. Field.