

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

DR. MCGIFFERT'S HISTORICAL METHODS.

PROFESSOR MCGIFFERT'S *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* came before the world with more than ordinary claims to attention. It had the novelty of being an original contribution to the literature of the subject by an American scholar, and the further novelty of reaching its results by methods hitherto more familiar to the German than to the English reader. It was issued as a volume of the "International Theological Library" and deemed worthy to be associated with the other works of that series emanating from well-known theologians and designed for the use of theological students on either side of the Atlantic. As such, it was ushered into the world with the apparent sanction of those who, as editors of the series, are presumably responsible for the selection of the writers, if not for the indorsement of their general views. And it was sent forth under the imprint of an eminent publishing firm long and honorably known for its services in introducing to the English public translations of Continental theology and not less enterprising of late in the publication of new works, English or American, in that domain.* It is a book, moreover, marked by freshness, vigor and adequate scholarship as well as by readiness of resource, power of ingenious combination, and ample license of conjecture, discarding commonly received opinions and advancing others with singular freedom and self-confidence.

* [Dr. Dickson's allusion is to the well-known publishing house of Messrs. T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, by which the work was issued in Great Britain. His words of praise would, however, apply equally well, *mutatis mutandis*, to the American publishers, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons.—EDITORS.]

VI.

ECCLESIASTICAL NOTES.

THE WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF THE ALLIANCE OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES.

THE Seventh General Council of "The Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System," met in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., on September 27, and continued in session until October 6, 1899. The officers of the Council were the Rev. J. Marshall Lang, D.D., pastor of the Barony Church, Glasgow, Scotland, *President*; the Rev. George D. Mathews, D.D., *General Secretary*; the Rev. William Henry Roberts, D.D., *American Secretary*; and the Rev. Prof. J. M. Hubbert, Lebanon, Tenn., and the Rev. John Steele, D.D., Glasgow, Scotland, as *Temporary Clerks*.

It was eminently fitting that the Seventh Council should assemble in the capital of the United States of America. No influence has been more potent than that of Calvinism in building up the great American republic. A vast majority of the early settlers in the Middle and New England colonies professed that form of Christian faith, and also constituted a considerable element in the Southern provinces. Further, the distinctive natural trend away from prelacy given by the colonists still continues as a force in the religious life of the republic, as shown by the fact that the Protestant Episcopal Church, which in the United States represents the English Establishment, has only 680,000 communicants, or a total constituency of about 2,500,000 in a Protestant population of 62,000,000.

The opening service was held at 10.30 A.M., in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, the following Moderators and ex-Moderators leading in the devotions of the Council: Rev. J. Marshall Lang, D.D., of the Church of Scotland; Rev. William Hutton, of the Presbyterian Church of England; Rev. James Stewart, D.D., of the Free Church of Scotland; Rev. John Robson, D.D., of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and Rev. Robert F. Sample, D.D., of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Prof. John De Witt, D.D., LL.D., of Princeton Theological Seminary, from 1 Pet. i. 23, "Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

The topic of the preacher was "The Reformed Churches and the Bible." The constitutive idea of the Churches was announced to be their attitude toward the Holy Bible, as embodied in the phrase, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." The preacher declared that the Holy Scriptures had produced in the Reformed Churches the "intellectual type" of Christian character, and as a result had widely separated them from Churches characterized by religious mysticism, traditionalism or sacerdotalism; that these Churches in all their history had been true to the Bible, giving it the foremost place in their confessions and worship; that as a result they had been among the most potent and beneficent forces in the life of Europe and America since the Reformation of the sixteenth century; that a crisis was upon them in the present, owing to the attitude of the new criticism toward the Holy Scriptures; and that if the Bible were discredited, there would be left to the Reformed "but the platitudes of natural ethics, and the half-starved and hunger-bitten dogmas of natural religion." Prof. De Witt then asked what, on the acceptance of the conclusions of the new criticism, would be made of the Bible's unity, truth, inspiration and self-evidencing quality. This part of the sermon was objected to in some quarters on the ground that it was inappropriate to an assembly of an ecumenical character. It was acceptable, however, to the great majority of the delegates, and its spirit was in full accord with the dictates of Christian charity. To have passed by the subject in silence would have been, in the words of the preacher, "unintellectual optimism or sinful obscurantism." Before the close of the Council, the sermon appeared in pamphlet form, and ten thousand copies have been distributed throughout Europe and America, by the enterprise and generosity of certain ruling elders.

At the afternoon session, Dr. Lang, the President of the Council, delivered an address on the topic, "The Permanent and Progressive in Christian Doctrine and Ministry." He said among other things that the Alliance was constituted to discuss and make room for the trend of thought in this age. The permanent and the progressive are always present in the Church. We must not ignore the changes which are going forward, and we must not let go of truth. We all wish to progress, but do not wish to run down steep places into destruction. The Reformed creeds have been barriers against license. Those who believe can afford to wait, and make allowance for latitude of Christian thought, sure that when all has been said, those who are loyal to the truth will not go astray. The Presbyterian system offers a happy medium between the permanent and the progressive; it upholds the divine authority of a special ministry; recognizes the body of believers as a royal priesthood; provides for the work of the laity in the Church; and secures the representation of the mind of the Church in its courts. The result is that a magnificent army is gathered for service. But while all this is true, Christ alone can fully interpret the age, for He alone is

the way, the truth and life; in Him the progressive and the permanent can be reconciled.

The address of President Lang was followed by an address of welcome by Dr. Radcliffe. The host of the Council is an expert in the art of pleasant speech, and also in that of hospitality. Dr. Radcliffe and Mrs. Radcliffe won warm regard for the admirable manner in which the Council was entertained. While the Local Committee of Arrangements, as a whole, performed well its delicate duties, yet the pressure of responsibility naturally fell most heavily upon the brilliant pastor of the New York Avenue Church and his "winsome consort."

The delegates from the Continent of Europe were only two in number, the Rev. Dr. Teophile Gay, representing the Waldensian Church, Italy, and the Rev. J. E. Knatz, representing the Reformed Church of France. It is much to be regretted that the Churches of the Continent were not more in evidence. At the time when delegates should have been appointed, however, the Dreyfus affair was troubling not only France but other European countries, and ministers from the Continent were loath to leave their homes and cross the Atlantic. It is also possible that the time has come for the Western Section of the Executive Commission to render yet more effective service than in the past to the interests of the Alliance in France and Germany. National characteristics have a bearing upon ecclesiastical affairs. The only delegate from Australasia was the venerable John G. Paton, who interested the community in Washington more than any other person, and whose fame is in all the Churches. From England and Wales, 9 delegates were present; from Ireland, 16; from Scotland, 68; from Canada, 26; from China, 2; from the Transvaal, 2; and from the United States, 182. The predominance in numbers of the American delegates at the Council is owing to the great strength of the Churches of the Alliance in the United States.

The Statistics of the Communion represented by the Council show that the Churches had, in May, 1899, 26,467 ministers, 136,509 elders, 4,842,534 communicants and 3,473,764 Sabbath-school scholars. The number of communicants in 1888 was 3,721,680, so that the increase since that year has been 1,120,854. The total of members and adherents is now about 25,900,000.

The second day of session was devoted to the History of the Alliance, the consideration of the Presbyterian system, the duties of the office-bearers in the churches, and addresses on "Calvinistic Forces in the Formation of National Life." The readers and speakers were the General Secretary, Rev. Dr. George B. Strickler, of Richmond, Va.; Rev. Dr. Ross, of Newcastle, England; R. R. Simpson, Esq., of Edinburgh, Scotland; the Rev. Prin. Salmond, of Aberdeen, Scotland, and the American Secretary. An address was also delivered by Samuel Smith, Esq., M.P., on "The Growth of Sacramentarianism in England." That one day out of eight should be given to the consideration

of such topics was declared by some persons to be "the threshing over of old straw." The great majority of the delegates, however, had no sympathy with objectors who would relegate to the shelf the discussion of the fundamentals of the Presbyterian system, or of the great features in the history of Calvinism.

Friday, September 29, was given over entirely to Foreign Missions. The morning session opened with the presentation of the reports of the Committees on Coöperation in Foreign Missions of the Eastern and Western Sections, by Rev. James Renuie, of Glasgow, and Rev. F. F. Ellinwood, D.D., of New York City, respectively. Among other interesting facts in the reports it was stated that the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches raised about one-fourth of the ten millions of dollars contributed annually for the proclamation of the Gospel in heathen lands. Papers were read on topics connected with missions by Rev. Dr. W. W. Barr, of Philadelphia, Pa.; Rev. Robert Buchanan, B.D., of Edinburgh, Scotland; Rev. Dr. Alexander, of New Orleans, La.; Rev. Dr. J. M. Howard, of Waynesville, Pa., and Rev. Dr. Beatty, of Belfast, Ireland. At the evening session interesting addresses were delivered by Rev. William Jessup, for Syria; Rev. Dr. James Stewart and Rev. Dr. Bosman, for South Africa; Rev. Dr. Riddle, for China; and Rev. Drs. Kyle and Chamberlain, for Brazil.

Monday was taken up by papers on "Recent Apologetic Methods and Tendencies," by Prof. J. W. Beardslee, of Holland, Mich.; "The Bible and Recent Archæological Discoveries," by Rev. Prin. Stewart, of St. Andrews, Scotland; and "The Apologetic Value of the Study of Comparative Religion," by Rev. Dr. John Robson, of Aberdeen, Scotland. At the afternoon session, the reports of the Committees on Sabbath-schools for the Western and Eastern Sections were presented, and papers on "Improvements in Sabbath-school Methods" were read by Rev. Dr. James A. Worden, of Philadelphia, and Rev. Alexander Smellie, of Thurso, Scotland. The evening session was omitted owing to the Dewey celebration, as was also the morning session of Tuesday. These omissions were the only real basis for the criticism that the Program Committee failed to provide time for discussion. Ample provision was made, but the omission of two sessions compelled a readjustment of the program and a crowding of topics. Further, in this matter of discussion *vs.* papers, as Dr. Mathews, the General Secretary has well said, "meetings such as those of our Council may have to choose between the two systems of numerous and lengthy papers with little discussion, or short papers with possibly unhelpful talking." The writer believes that the best meeting of Council would be one where papers of moderate length might be presented, and in addition a number of competent persons might be previously requested to take part in the discussions following, or might beforehand send in their names for the purpose.

The session of Tuesday afternoon began with the reports of the Committee on the Desiderata of Presbyterian History, given for the Eastern

Section by Prof. Salmond, and for the Western Section by the Rev. Dr. M. H. Hutton, of New Brunswick, N. J. The latter recommended earnest and persistent effort to preserve historical memorials, and drew particular attention to the Presbyterian Historical Society of Philadelphia. Papers upon methods for increasing the usefulness of the Alliance were then read by the General Secretary, and by Rev. Dr. William F. Junkin, of Montclair, N. J. The suggestions made by Dr. Mathews dealt mainly with the issuing of pastoral letters, the giving of advice, the possibilities of the Council's engaging in the work of Church extension on a grand scale, and the discussion of Biblical and dogmatic questions in a fraternal manner. Dr. Junkin suggested that the Alliance keep within the lines of its Constitution, give a growing testimony to the value of the denominational doctrines and creeds, accord a larger time to the subject of missions, and appoint a Committee to raise funds for missionary work. In the discussion upon these papers, which was engaged in on Thursday morning, October 5, very little attention was given to the points of either paper, but criticisms upon the Council were made which were superficial in their nature, and arose in part out of ignorance of the facts involved, and in part out of forgetfulness of the Constitution of the Alliance. The statement, for instance, was made that greater publicity would be helpful to such a gathering. Inasmuch as due notice of the meeting of the Council was given officially to all the Churches in the Alliance early in 1898, and was repeated in the religious newspapers and by articles in the public press, two months prior to the Council, this particular objection is refuted by the facts.

Another criticism, and in the way of a demand, was that the Council should be up-to-date. This seemed to mean that every "ism" which might happen to be prominent in the public mind for the time being should be discussed at length, to the exclusion of distinctively Presbyterian topics. Sensationalism is a questionable quality, even in a secular newspaper, and is out of place in such a serious and dignified body as a Council of the Alliance. It is to be emphasized that the main purpose of the Alliance is the inculcation of a fraternal spirit between the Reformed Churches scattered over the world. As the *Cumberland Presbyterian* says, "The Alliance fosters fraternity. It is valuable as a means of friendly communication among Presbyterians, and it is useful in that it provides for the free association of representatives of the numerous Presbyterian communions. Such communication and association are of great value in many ways, and no injury can thus be done to any church that does not deserve to be injured. The denominationalism that fears interdenominational fellowship is mere ignorant sectarianism." It is also to be noted, in this connection, that the Program Committee of the Washington Council, of which the Rev. William Caven, D.D., of Toronto, Canada, was chairman, was simply called upon to endure with fraternal patience treatment similar to that which has been accorded to all other Program Committees.

The meeting on Tuesday evening was devoted to Home Missions. The report of the Committee of the Western Section on Coöperation in Home Missions was presented by the American Secretary as chairman. The Rev. B. S. Stern, of New Bremen, O., read a paper upon "Work among the American Indians." The Rev. Dr. Charles L. Thompson, of New York, delivered an address upon "Home Missions in the United States," and the Rev. Dr. Robert Johnston, of London, Ontario, spoke upon "Home Missions in Canada."

Wednesday morning the report of the Committee on the European Continent was presented, for the Eastern Section by the Rev. Dr. Mathews in place of Dr. Blaikie, deceased, and for the Western Section by the Rev. Dr. James I. Good. The "Claims of the English-speaking People of the Continent upon the British and American Churches" were presented by the Rev. Dr. Bannerman, of Perth, Scotland, and by the Rev. James D. Paxton, D.D., of St. Paul, Minn. These brethren were followed by the Rev. A. Kalassay, for the Hungarian Reformed Church; the Rev. Dr. Gay, of Naples, Italy, for the Waldensian Church, and the Rev. John E. Knatz, of Paris, for the Reformed Church of France. These addresses gave vivid pictures of the condition of affairs in Europe, and Mr. Knatz occasioned considerable applause by the statement that they had no place for the new criticism in France,— "for when we are in a fight it is no time to take one's gun to pieces and examine how it is made, it is the time to use it."

At the afternoon session a resolution was adopted expressing the earnest hope and prayer of the Council, that a peaceable solution of the difficulties between Great Britain and the Transvaal might be reached. This resolution was a substitute for one which virtually threw into the Council, as a political matter, the South African controversy. The Rev. Dr. Sanders, of Biddle University, spoke upon the "Educational Condition of the Colored People in the United States." He was followed by Charles J. Guthrie, Esq., of Edinburgh, a son of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Guthrie, who read a paper on "Christian Morality in Its Application to Business." The Rev. Dr. Edward B. Coe, of New York, presented a paper on "The Church and Social Questions," and the Rev. Dr. Cunningham, of Edinburgh, spoke upon "Recent Continental Movements in Favor of the Sabbath." The evening of Wednesday was devoted to two historical addresses. The first on "The Founding of the German Reformed Church in the United States," by the Rev. Dr. H. M. Kieffer, of Easton, Pa., and the second on "The Westminster Assembly," by Prof. T. M. Hamill, of Belfast, Ireland.

Thursday morning, Rev. Dr. James Stewart, of Lovedale, Africa, read a paper on "Yesterday and To-day in Africa," and in the afternoon, Rev. Dr. P. G. J. Meiring, of the Transvaal, gave an account of the religious condition of his country. Dr. Meiring was followed by the Rev. Prof. Paterson, of Edinburgh, on "International Arbitration in the Light of Christianity;" by the General Secretary with a report

on "Marriage Laws in the U. S.," and by Rev. Dr. McClenahan, of Pittsburg, Pa., with a paper on "Marriage and Divorce." The evening of Thursday was devoted to three addresses, one on "Young People's Work," by the Rev. Dr. B. P. Fullerton, of St. Louis, Mo.; one on "Men's Work in the Churches," by the Rev. Johu Pugh, Cardiff, Wales, and the last by the Rev. Johu Steel, D.D., of Glasgow, Scotland, on "The Edict of Nantes and the Huguenots."

On Friday, at the morning session, a paper was read by the American Secretary on "The History and Work of the Alliance, American Section, for the First Quarter Century;" the Rev. George W. Chamberlain spoke on "Missionary Work in Brazil," and the Rev. Dr. Howard Duffield, D.D., delivered an address on "Christian Progress During the Nineteenth Century."

The addresses before the Council were all of a high order, and, as several delegates of experience said to the writer, were on an equality of scholarship and power with those of previous Councils. The Council closed on Friday evening with fraternal addresses by Rev. Drs. Lang, Sunderland, Banuerman, Sample, Kerr, of Richmond, Va., Scrimger, Young, Judge Watson, and Dr. Radcliffe.

The social events of the Council were three in number. First, came on Wednesday evening, September 27, an evening reception by the President of the United States and Mrs. McKinley, restricted to the Council and the Presbyterian ministers of Washington City. The Cabinet received with the President, and the evening was passed in a manner to set forth admirably the mingled simplicity, dignity and geniality of a republican court. In addition, a reception was given by the Presbyterians of Washington City, at the Corcoran Art Gallery, on Saturday evening, September 30. There were fully three thousand persons in attendance, and the local Committee of Arrangements are to be congratulated on their success. The Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage also gave the Council a highly enjoyable reception at his residence, on Tuesday evening, October 3.

On Saturday, September 30, the Council went on an excursion to Mt. Vernon, an event all the more enjoyed by the delegates from Great Britain, because the weather was cool and the wind northwest. Two of the agreeable features of the Council, both to hosts and guests, were the unexpected absence of heat and mosquitoes. More pleasant weather could not have been provided for any assembly.

The business transacted at the Alliance covered a variety of topics, such as resolutions on divorce, intemperance, the illicit traffic in the Pacific islands, the referee of the organization of a Church in Portugal to the Eastern Section, and the reception into the Alliance of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

A fitting tribute was paid by the Council to the memory of the Rev. William Garden Blaikie, D.D., LL.D., one of the chief founders of the Alliance, its first President, and of late years its Honorary Secre-

tary. He was present at all the Councils, as well as at the meetings preliminary to organization in Edinburgh and London. Dr. Blaikie's services have been eminent to literature, philanthropy and Christian fraternity. The Alliance is one of his monuments.

As to the future of the Council, there seem to be a variety of opinions. It has been intimated by some that "the Council will very soon come to be more of a Committee meeting, rather than a mere popular assembly." With this view many are in disagreement. The Executive Commission is the Committee of the Alliance, and the Councils will become more potent for good as they become increasingly popular gatherings. Presbyterianism is powerful because it is of the people, and must cling to the people in order to continue powerful.

For the Alliance, in closing, it is to be said, that it stands for a definite and positive form of the Christian faith and for the representative type of ecclesiastical government. Its value as a vigorous and aggressive form of Christianity cannot be overestimated. The Churches which compose it, to a large extent, during their past history, in Europe as well as in America, have been chief factors in promoting civil and religious liberty, and in securing true human progress. They are potent forces in the religious life of the present generation. They will continue to be such in the future only as they remain true to their own character and distinctive mission. It is certain that under the lead of the new President, the able and distinguished principal of Knox College, Toronto, the Rev. William Caven, D.D., LL.D., all that is vital to Presbyterianism will be both cherished and developed; and that his service in this high office, will prove as helpful to the Alliance as that of his admirable predecessor, Dr. J. Marshall Lang.

PHILADELPHIA.

WM. HENRY ROBERTS.