

CHURCH FEDERATION

INTER-CHURCH CONFERENCE
ON FEDERATION

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 15-21

1905



EDITED BY

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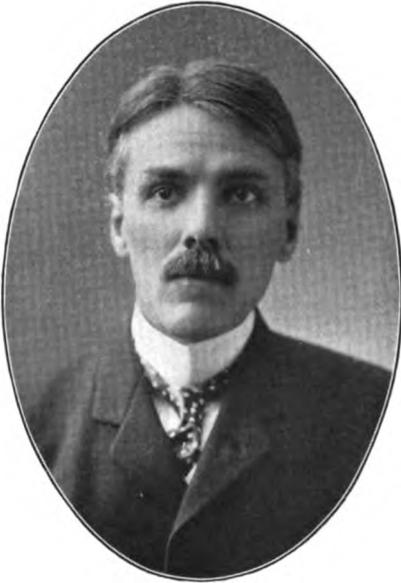
NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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ADDRESS

THE REV. CHARLES A. DICKEY, D.D., LL.D.

During the entire progress of this Conference the growing enthusiasm and hope has continually anticipated the subject presented for discussion this morning, namely, What Practical Results May Be Expected? I think, brethren, that we should, first of all, caution ourselves not to set our hopes too high at the start and not to permit larger expectations than we may possibly meet. I am fully assured that if we are satisfied with some good things that are possible we will more surely find the ultimate mark and goal, this complete and perfect unity of which we have heard in the able address just given. But I fear, brethren, that if we adopt organic union at the beginning we will fail to find the practical results of the Federation which by experience will bring us before we know, and to our astonishment, to this complete and perfect union.

I would like, in the few minutes allowed me, to try to look at this question from a Presbyterian standpoint, simply because it seems to me that we are each most likely to see, if we view from the standpoint with which we are most familiar. But before making a few statements from this standpoint I want to say as my conviction that this Conference is itself a practical result of things that have been transpiring, and if we separate with nothing else in view, and only to look back upon the memories of this Conference, we have enough of result to thank God and to take courage and to go back to our individual work in our individual places.

This Conference is the first great positive expression of the unity that is to convince a doubting world and to encourage a doubting Church. This Conference represents actually twenty millions of the population of this country.

I propose to treat the subject suggested for discussion this morning chiefly from the standpoint of the Presbyterian Churches. I am to speak of the practical results to be expected from this Conference.

The Conference is its own justification. It is a success, even if results hoped for should not soon appear. It may be best not to set our expectations too high—not to court disappointment by expecting too much.

The Conference itself is the expression of an existing unity, which shows a doubting Church and a doubting world that fully one-fourth of the population of our country is a unit regarding essential and revealed truth—a unit regarding the Headship of Christ, and the redemption of the world by His gracious atonement; a unit regarding the necessity of a higher Christian education and of a deeper Christian purpose, to destroy error and to make the truth a power; a unit in the determination to help the whole world to attain righteous liberty and Gospel rights; a unit in the purpose to uphold law and to put down lawlessness; in a word, a unit in a sincere and earnest purpose to glorify the Master with the deliverance of men from the distress of sin. Is this not enough of practical result to emphasize the significance and far-reaching influence of this remarkable gathering of the forces of Christendom?

The Presbyterian trend has been, increasingly, toward closer union with Reformation Churches, and we expect to receive new impetus and new encouragement from this Conference.

Thirty-five years ago we healed a breach, and the results in our own communion have been incalculable. Our increase of strength, the marvellous development of our resources and the reach and influence of the power of the Church have more than justified the union of 1869, and have more than fulfilled our hopes.

No agitation since this union has caused us to question the wisdom that consummated it, and no differences have changed the spirit that made the union possible a generation ago.

With this union began the discussion of confessional revision in the reunited Presbyterian Church. There were differences of interpretation among ourselves, which suggested revision, as a promise of less friction and of more confidence. Many believed that our machinery would run more smoothly and more effectively if we should apply the oil of revision.

But the chief consideration that suggested revision was a strong desire to remove misapprehensions that made those outside seem a little shy of us. Constructions put upon our confession by some within, but chiefly by those without, created barriers to union and federation and prevented coöperation and comity.

In the midst of our revision discussion some serious questions arose which disturbed our own peace, and it was thought wise to

attend to home repairs and to make sure of our own foundations before we began to alter the structure.

Revision was dormant for ten years, but with the dawn of the new century the discussion was resumed, and with a unanimity which surprised its advocates a satisfactory revision was adopted in 1903, and the Church commended a brief Statement of Doctrine, which this Conference might possibly accept as a basis of union, or at least as a basis for close federation.

The results of this revision action have been, prominently, two. First, the proposal of seven closely allied Churches to organize a Presbyterian Federation, and, second, the proposal of two of these Churches to come with us into organic union. I am not at liberty to discuss either of these propositions here. I only allude to them to show that the trend and drift in the Presbyterian family are strongly toward the mark of evangelical unity and co-operation.

With such a manifest trend, in the most conservative Churches, may we not expect that the action of this Conference, which embodies the representatives of all these Churches which are already alive and active, and which are fully committed to the desirableness and to the practicability of Federation, will result in practical findings and in practical determinations, which will revive the hopes and fire the zeal of all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity"?

An influence potent enough to move this busy metropolis to throw open its gates and to give such a generous welcome for a week to nearly a thousand Christian workmen, representing more than twenty millions of believers; potent enough to rivet the attention of the world, and to enlist the deep interest of our own country; potent enough to formulate and to execute the splendid work of this week of Conference, and potent enough to inspire such enthusiasm in the cause of Christian unity, such an influence, we may well be assured, will not spend itself in the accomplishments and passing pleasures of this week of Christian communion.

From this spring must flow a river which will make glad the City of our God. Those who have gathered about this fire will light their torches and carry them to every camp. Having tasted, and having seen how good such fellowship of believers is, every lover of the Kingdom, every man whose hope is set upon the quickest possible cleansing and complete redemption of the

world, will feel the force of the federated power and the gain for Christ in the oneness for which He prayed, that the world might know that the Father had sent Him.

We will go back to work, wherever God has appointed our work, with a fixed resolve to study the things that make for peace, and the things whereby we may build one another up, and build ourselves together.

We are encouraged to believe that this Conference will create a mutual confidence, which will insure comity and close relationship in the defence of essential truth.

Discovering how much truth we hold in common, and at what few points there is variance, may we not expect, as a practical result of the Conference, that the unredeemed world will recognize the unity that we have recognized, which will incline us to emphasize our agreements rather than our differences.

No fault should be found with those who may frankly and forcibly present peculiar convictions, but is it not reasonable to expect that this mighty phalanx will move with one accord upon a resisting and imperiled world to convince the world of the sins which we condemn in common, and of the righteousness which, in common, we count essential for salvation.

We stand together in the defence of religious liberty and for a definite separation of Church and State. But I trust that one of the practical results of this Conference will be the organization of a force that lawbreakers and lawmakers will respect and heed when great questions of morals are involved.

Our Gospel is the fulfilment of the law. It is our province in the name of the Supreme King, and seeking the good of mankind, to ask rulers to respect the code of our Kingdom. Rulers may ignore sects, but they will respect the Church. This Federation will compel an audience, and it will speak with power if it will put aside its differences and make its agreement its argument.

Just now, when the nation is awake and conscious of the perils that threaten the home, when the very foundations are being destroyed by Mormonism, and reckless divorce, the representatives of a third of our citizenship will surely resolve to stand and speak for the Scriptural defences of our homes and plead for the purity of the family, which is the hope of our nation and the hope of the Church.

Providence is showing us an open door, and there is great encouragement for effort. The great cities, whose throbbing life

will determine the destiny of our country, are aroused as never before and agitated by moral issues and movements of reform.

Great masses, feeling for their rights, and mistaking license for liberty, are ready to resort to extreme and evil methods to break their yokes and to satisfy their passions.

Wise and righteous leadership is needed in the crisis that confronts us. Will this Federation supply the leadership? It is competent. Will we be consecrated?

As the outlook is revealed it seems undeniable that we will fall far short of a realization of our responsibility and of our power if we fail to take advantage of the inspiration of this Conference and resolve before we part to provide ways and means to make the force of this possible Federation effective in the settlement of grave moral questions.

Let us go forth like an army with banners, loyal to our King, "holding fast the form of sound words," "holding forth the word of life," and holding high, above every symbol of difference, the symbols of our unity, the Cross and Crown of Christ, the signs by which righteousness will conquer wrong and the kingdom of this world become the Kingdom of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ADDRESS

THE REV. JOHN BALTZER, D.D.

To speak of the practical results of a movement as great and important as that of this gathering, composed of honorable and distinguished representatives of so many Churches in the Republic, may seem premature and prophetic to-day. Wait until the waves resulting from this movement reach the shore, and then add a new chapter to Church History. Nevertheless, the movement has begun. Let it be like the winds stirred by the Spirit of God, no man telling whence they come and whither they go. We are aware of the fact that this movement is born out of the love of Christ and His Church and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

As a representative of the German Evangelical Synod of North America, I may state that the object and aim of this movement has met with the heartiest sympathy on the part of the members of my denomination. We are governed by the motto (Ephes.

4 : 3-6) : "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." We stand a union of men in the faith of our fathers, with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, preaching in the tongue of our mothers, and the language of our beloved country. Our creed bases itself upon the fundamental truths established by the enlightened leaders and chosen vessels of the Reformation. We overlook their difference in opinion upon dogmatical questions, but preserve the liberty of conscience governed by Scripture. The established union of these two branches of the German Church of the Reformation, the Lutheran and the Reformed, proclaimed by King Frederick William III. of Prussia in 1817, is by our fathers transplanted to this glorious country, and with a strong belief in its final cause upheld by us, their sons. How could we but greet with heart and soul any movement toward the establishment of a universal evangelical Protestant Church? We well understand that this body is not moving for unity in creed or government, but for coöperative work and effort.

First in the important results to be expected from this Federation is fellowship, not between individuals, but between the Protestant Churches of the country, as such. Our hearts awakened to grateful and sympathetic response when at the opening session the queen of musical instruments, the great organ yonder, at the masterful bidding of Mr. Gibson, burst forth in the majestic strains of "Ein Feste Burg," etc.

It is the birthday song of the Protestant, the Evangelical Church, whose children and grandchildren are assembled here to-day. It reminded me of those great historical days when the restoration of the Apostolic Church took place under the war cry and peace-melody of *Salvation in Christ only*, and when the opening Scripture Lesson, Eph. 4 : 1-6, happened to be the very motto of the German Evangelical Synod, we, the representatives of that Church, felt and knew with you, our English speaking brethren, that we are one in Jesus Christ.

The practical result therefore to the members of the German Evangelical Synod of North America shall be that we go home and proclaim with conviction in our pulpits and our press: The unity in Christ of the Evangelical Churches of this Republic is not a fiction but a fact.

We will tell our good, honest, church loving, Christian Germans that the church loving, big-hearted, broad-minded *Brother Jonathan* is our brother.

The flock of Christ is one under the great Chief Shepherd, Christ. The flock is fed on the one food, the truth of Redemption in Christ Jesus, and this food is *taken* out of the Gospel of Jesus. We are becoming fully conscious of our *consanguinity* in the blood of Christ. This means to us at the present time a great step forward to fellowship. And this fellowship paves the way for coöperation, far-reaching in its efforts, along the lines of mutual interests. At present this movement has drawn into its circle a number of Protestant denominations, who follow every step with the greatest interest. Questions of world-wide importance have been and are being discussed before this body. Men of very different dogmatic standing prove, perhaps along different lines, that the essentials of a Christian community or State are to be found in Christian education in the nursery, at home, in Sunday and week-day schools, in seminaries and colleges. Christ, His teachings, and the teachings of the Apostles with regard to the Father and the Spirit, *are the foundation rock upon which we are to build the edifice of education, without fear of structural weakness.* The practical result of this universally acknowledged truth would be to open channels for an everyday religious instruction, accessible to every child and youth of the country. If every Church in its foreign mission effort finds itself in duty bound to educate its adherents, both old and young, in schools of Christian religious instruction, is the home Church justified in neglecting her own children and depriving them of a thorough, systematic religious instruction? I think not! The statement of the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney of the State of Missouri, made at a Sunday School Convention in my Church this past summer, to the effect that the percentage of crime committing persons of both sexes who knew nothing of the Decalogue, and even nothing of the Living God, was astonishingly large, rings in my ears to this day. *More and better religious instruction is necessary.* That such religious instruction cannot and should not be included in the course of studies offered in our grammar schools, I admit. But would a *strong, persistent agitation* to grant an hour a day for this cause not find the support of the most influential and best class of our citizens? A morning hour deducted from the public school time, utilized for religious instruction, will bear a greater interest to family, Church and State than hours to the pursuit of studies

of questionable practical value. A practical result of this Conference would therefore be to set a movement on foot, treating religious education, not as an "ars libera," but as an "ars necessaria." The indispensable feeling of duty toward the neighbor, and the knowledge of accountableness to the Judge of Judges are the only solution for questions arising between capital and labor, in war and peace, family life and citizenship. A practical result of this conference concerning these questions would be a pledge to coöperative work along the lines of religious instruction in school, home, pulpit, periodicals and press.

Why do all Protestant Churches endeavor to unite? We all know that the enemies of Protestant Churches are well organized units of unbelievers, superstitious and heterodox. We recognize their aim in the destruction of the Church, and therewith imperiling the foundations of the State. A practical result of this Conference would therefore be an expression, as never before, of the substantial unity of the Protestant Churches of the country. This visible expression of unity will emphasize the need and opportunity for coöperation in securing the moral and spiritual welfare of the entire nation. United we stand alone, and divided we strand. Shall we wait until those dark forces drive the scattered troops of the Protestant Church into one army? It is far more practical to heed the spirit bidding us join hands, and to collect the rank and file of all Protestant denominations into one unconquerable army of outspoken followers, under the generalship of Christ Jesus, in unity of spirit and peace.

Two great evils confronting us daily, undermining family and State, are the laxity in administering and making oath and in regard to laws concerning marriage and divorce. A united appeal of this assembly to the respective legislative bodies of the States, calling for a greater respect toward the oath in the courtroom and elsewhere, and demanding more common and stringent marriage laws, guarding both the contracting and dissolving of marriage, would meet with the approval of every respectable citizen, and would be looked upon as a tangible result of this Conference. The Church has reasons to lament the carelessness with which the administering and making of an oath is practiced. Let it be the required duty of judges to explain the meaning of an oath before taking testimony. National and rigid marriage laws would *diminish* the *abnormal* number of *shameful divorce cases* daily brought to our notice by the press.

In the field of missionary and evangelistic work we may look for practical results. Every true Christian must be a friend of mission work, and feel in duty bound to support it to the best of his ability. Likewise every denomination recognizes the necessity of obedience to the Master's command: "Go ye therefore and preach the Gospel to all nations." At the same time the desire to preserve itself and expand and grow is a motive which is legitimate and must be respected among all denominations. In small and thinly settled communities especially it is of far greater advantage that the number of denominations engaged in missionary work be limited. This would make the speedy organization of self-supporting congregations possible and would do away with having, as is often the case, small Churches of various denominations, one trying to outstrip the other, and neither of them strong enough to be of actual service to the community in which they are located. The elimination of this obvious hindrance to effective mission work would greatly benefit the cause of evangelization, and would remove one of the greatest sources of secret and open reproach among the opponents of a united Protestant Church. Likewise, articles appearing in religious periodicals criticising other denominations, sometimes even ridiculing certain devotional practices which may be characteristic of a particular denomination, remarks made by pastors in and outside of their pulpits, calculated to bring public opinion to the point of criticism, are exceedingly harmful to the welfare of the Protestant Church, and must give offense to well-meaning Christian lay members. The treatment of creed and dogma by professors of theology should not be polemical in character, but should be impartial and characterized by a feeling of tolerance and respect for the brother's opinion.

It is well to remember that we are now gathered in council to deliberate whether we may meet with an army of ten thousand, the enemy, who is prepared to strike with twenty thousand. Let us consider whether we are ready and have the means to build that tower upon the one "Rock of Ages." As long as there are in God's City a number of unfinished towers and heaps of rubbish, so long will her enemies remain unconvinced that this City is an impregnable fortress. Our opponents are perfectly justified in openly or secretly sneering at us if we, on the one hand, strive to unite in work and principle on the Apostolic motto, "Have unity in the Spirit and peace," but on the other hand spend our best energies in maintaining strife and dissension.

ADDRESS

THE REV. AMORY H. BRADFORD, D.D.

"It is the business of philosophy," among other things, "to answer the question—for what may we hope?"—was a saying of Immanuel Kant. But hope is one thing and expectation is another. It would be far easier for me to state my hopes as to the results of this Convention than my expectations. Disguise the fact as we may, the movement toward Federation has made comparatively little progress. A few persons have risen high enough really to desire its success, but the majority in the Churches are in a state worse than active opposition, because they are lethargic. Sentimentally they favor Federation; practically they care not a button about it. The masses even of Church members are not easily inspired about anything except business and politics.

My first remark is this: The value of this Congress ought to be judged by its remote rather than its immediate results. Its immediate results will, probably, be disappointing. It will be followed by a reaction, as such reforms usually are. In all progress there is an ebb and flow like that of the tides. Emerson once said that the test of a leader is his ability to bring men to his way of thinking twenty years later. Next year, or the next five years, may offer few signs of encouragement; but after twenty years the harvest of the seed here sown will be visible. The analogy of similar efforts does not prophesy immediate results.

My second remark is that the experiment in Great Britain can teach us little except the fact that Federation is possible. The Welsh revival would be an impossibility in most parts of the United States, and so would the Federation of Evangelical Free Churches. The territory there is small; ours is vast. They have in the State-Church a near and imperative issue which makes their cause both political and religious. The struggle for existence compels them to be vigilant as well as vigorous. Our issues are spiritual.

Our distances and diverse circumstances have caused some even to raise the inquiry whether a National Federation which should be the outgrowth of previously existing State Federations which had already succeeded would not give more promise of immediate victory than the one which is represented in this Conference which is attempting maturity almost without any youth. The British Federation is national in a limited territory; it faces

the Establishment; a hostile party, with its iniquitous education acts, opposes it at every step. Nothing unites like opposition. We have to meet lethargy, but no opposition. The splendid experiment across the water, which is no longer an experiment, teaches us that Federation under certain circumstances is a possibility; in other respects it will help us but little here. American problems cannot be solved by English methods.

I will now indicate a few results which may be expected to follow from this Congress:

I. Denominationalists will be placed in an attitude of apology. They will be ashamed of themselves. They may continue to assume an air of bravado, but it will be like a mask which is too small for the wearer. Sectarianism will appear all around it in spite of efforts at concealment. When a man has to apologize for his cause, he works with little enthusiasm, and less efficiency. These meetings will be a tangible example of the possibility of coöperation among the Churches. "United efforts are impossible in our community, we are so peculiar," Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians will insist, but when Christians of a larger type point to this Convention and say, "All these varieties of people worked and worshipped together there," our militant denominationalists will be sadly disturbed to find an answer. Sectarianism in the future will have to justify its existence.

II. While the growth of Federation will be slow, it will be sure. It will be sure because no reasonable argument can be offered against it. It recognizes and honors differences while it unites those who differ on the needs of our common humanity, and the call of the Kingdom of God. A movement for organic union would fail because it would ask subscription to a common creed, worship according to common rubrics and require obedience to a central authority. The days of authority in the Church are gone forever by. The spirit of man has at last won its freedom. It will never again submit to any kind of human dictation. Men will think and act as they believe themselves to be divinely led. They will differ in the future more than in the past, for they will think more universally, and, as a whole, more profoundly. This movement will grow because it recognizes the inevitability of this liberty. We shall not think alike, we shall not worship in the same liturgy, but we shall all work together for the Kingdom of God according to our individualities. If there ever should be an effort to force

upon these various bodies of Christians a common creed or form of worship, it would be divisive; but he who may open a new opportunity for mutual helpfulness will bind them more closely together. The service of man is the worship of God. This cause will grow because it guards individual and denominational liberty, and because its members are united in the bonds of a common service.

III. This Congress will put a new emphasis upon the weakness of organization and the mightiness of spirit. The whole Church has not yet learned that its progress will never be by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God. Most of us have more faith in the wheels than in the Spirit within the wheels—in the Church than in inspiration. Many have come to this Federation meeting with a secret feeling that at the end the superiority of their puny denomination will be increasingly evident. There is, even yet, little that is universal and elemental in our visions or our plans. Most of us are still provincial in our religious beliefs and practices.

In Frederick Robertson's church in Brighton is a window describing Jesus disputing with the doctors in the Temple. This inscription is on, or near, the window: "They were thinking of theology: He was thinking of God." And we have come up to these spiritual heights thinking of theology and of Churches, and planning to tinker ecclesiastical machinery, while outside and beyond sweep the cosmic tides of the Divine purpose.

The greatest blessing of this Congress will probably be its comparative failure. We have sung the same hymns and some of the best have been by authors whom we would not allow to sit in this Conference; we have studied the same high themes, but our theological convictions are unchanged; we have prayed together, and felt the joy of fellowship; at the end we may pass some very earnest resolutions. What then? We shall have stimulated a little the growth of a good cause, but what will such results be when compared with what ought to have been achieved? Five years from now the world will not be very different from what it would have been if this Congress had never been held. And yet it will not have been in vain, for it will have made the sin of a divided Christendom to appear more appalling, and the importance of unity that shall be vital, pervasive, and enduring, more imperative.

It will adjourn without having brought the masses of American

Christians much nearer together, and thereby it will show that what divides is mechanical and ephemeral, like the mud fences in India which disappear when the harvest has grown. Its apparent failure will show that vital and lasting unity is to be found only as we attain unto harmony with Him who has a place in His providence for all classes, all colors, all races, all creeds, all phases of religion, all eccentricities of belief and worship, all gifts of speech and service; and who by the use of them all, in no narrow and provincial way, but in accordance with laws wide as the universe and enduring as eternity, is bringing the Kingdom of God.