

Quarterly Register

OF

THE ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

HOLDING THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM.

NO. 4.—OCTOBER 1886.

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PROGRESS OF THE WORK OF THE PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE.

It is with great pleasure that we direct attention to the contents of the present number of our *Quarterly Register*, indicating progress in several directions in the important practical objects for the promotion of which our Alliance was instituted.

The letter on the Waldensian Synod shows that after the most full and sifting discussion, the project of union with the Free Church of Italy has been approved, and an adjustment has been made of the points of difficulty that stood in the way; and if the Free Church accepts the conclusion of the Synod of La Tour, there seems no reason why the union should not be consummated at a very early period.

From Australia we have information that the movement for the federation of the various sections of the Presbyterian Church in Australia had made such progress that the first meeting of the Federal Assembly was held at Sydney in the middle of July.

The Report of the Glasgow Home Mission Union shows an interesting work of co-operations in the endeavour to reclaim those who have fallen from church attendance in that city.

In more direct and immediate connection with the proceedings of our Alliance is the movement now in progress towards co-operation in Foreign Missions, and, as one result of that, the union of Mission Presbyterian

Churches. The resolutions of many of the Foreign Mission Committees, whose advice has been asked on the subject, indicate the interest that has been taken by them in the matter. We are bound, however, to say that the American Churches have been more painstaking in the matter than the European. The American Branch of the Committee of the Alliance on this subject has issued a print containing the deliverance of the Committees or Boards of the United Presbyterian, the Cumberland Presbyterian, the Southern Presbyterian, and the Northern Presbyterian Churches. A separate print has just been issued containing the view of the (Dutch) Reformed Church. In the present number of this paper will be found a report of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, containing an elaborate deliverance on the subject; and as indicating that the matter has an interest for other Churches, and, indeed, that the settlement of the Presbyterian problem would be but a step towards the settlement of the whole problem, the resolutions of the International Union of America, at page 64, will be read by all friends of the cause with deep interest.

But there is a growing interest in the subject among the European Churches likewise. The Committee on this side have arranged for a Conference on the subject, consisting of members of the Committees of the various European Churches having charge

any great success. They also recommended the Assembly to appoint an influential brother to visit the Colleges, and address the students with the view of stirring up a Missionary spirit.

On the subject of Temperance, strong resolutions were cordially and unanimously passed in favour of Local Option and Sunday Closing, especially in Wales and in Monmouthshire.

The condition of the Church externally was reported to be as follows:—Churches, 1224; chapels and preaching rooms, 1389; schoolrooms, 419; ministers, 619; preachers, 370; elders, 4505; communicants, 129,401; candidates for church membership, 3665; children in the church, 60,990; received into communion during the year, 7723; expelled, 2017; died, 2484; Sunday-schools, 1483; officers, 23,898; members, 186,740; hearers, 278,039; pew rents, £24,473; collections towards the ministry, £73,595; Missionary Societies, £7071; English causes, £912; towards weak churches, £1899; for the poor, £2618; liquidation of debts on chapels, £33,667; other causes, £25,773. Total amount collected, £172,013. Present debt on chapels, £323,097.

THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, UNITED STATES.

This body met this year at Rochester, New York. Rev. Samuel Carlisle of Newburg, New York, was chosen Moderator by a unanimous vote.

Suitable minutes were adopted on the death of Rev. Dr. J. R. W. Sloane, lately Professor of Theology at Allegheny, Pa., and previously pastor in New York; also on the death of Dr. Archibald J. Dodds, a medical missionary at Latakiah, Syria, who was lost at sea last October in the wreck of the Cunard steamer *Sidon* off the coast of Spain, on her outward voyage from Liverpool to Smyrna.

It was decided to reinforce the Syrian Mission by a lady teacher, a medical missionary, and a minister, and a commission from the members of the Board of Foreign Missions is to visit the foreign field.

The College at Beaver Falls, Pa., reported a graduating class of fifteen, and an endowment fund of nearly \$150,000.

The Theological Seminary reported twenty-one students, seven of whom completed their

course last spring. Rev. James Kennedy, long pastor at Newtownlimavady, near Londonderry, but for the last fifteen years pastor of the Fourth Church, New York City, was chosen Professor of Theology, but has declined.

Strong papers were adopted on the subjects of National Reform, Temperance, and Secret Societies.

At the invitation of the Associate Reformed Synod of the South, delegates were appointed to a Pan-Psalmody Council, to meet in Kampen, Holland, October 15th.

On the subject of the General Presbyterian Alliance, a letter was read from Rev. Dr. Mathews, addressed to the Stated Clerk of Synod, as follows:—

“DEAR BROTHER,—Your letter of June 11, 1885, has been laid before the American Section of the Executive Committee of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system.

“In that letter you enclosed a resolution adopted by your Synod on May 27, 1885, in which the Synod gives notice that it ‘intends to withdraw from the Alliance unless the Scripture Psalms are made, as previous to this year (1884, I presume), the exclusive matter of praise.’

“At the meeting of the American Section on 21st ult., your letter was carefully considered, and while both sections of the Commission should have considered the matter, still the American Section felt it to be due to the Alliance, and due to your Church, that the views of its members should be known to you without delay. A resolution on the subject was therefore adopted, which I have now the honour of enclosing.¹

“In this connection I may be allowed to state that surely the resolution of your Synod was adopted under some misinformation as to the facts.

“The question of a Psalmody or Hymnology was considered at the Conference in London in 1875, at which the late Dr. Sloane was present, and it was there judged the more desirable course, in view of diversity of conviction, not to discuss the question further than had been done. At the same time, out of regard to the deep convictions of many brethren, nothing but the Psalms of David were then used in praise, and at no meeting of the Alliance, whether held in Edinburgh, Philadelphia, or Belfast, has the Committee in charge proposed or provided for the ser-

¹ The resolution that was enclosed is as follows:—“That the Secretary be instructed to acknowledge the receipt of this letter, and in reply to state that, so far as this Section is aware, no formal sanction has ever been given by the Alliance to any special Hymnology, while, as a matter of fact, nothing but the Scripture Psalms have ever been officially employed in praise at the meetings of any of the Councils.”

vice of praise otherwise than by the using of the Psalms. At Belfast the Local Committee purchased 500 Psalm books for the use of the Council. These were distributed in the pews of St. Enoch's Church, and were used in the services—these and these alone—by the arrangements of the Committee. For any violations of such arrangements by any individual delegate, neither the Local Committee nor the Alliance as a whole should be held responsible.

“The Section therefore venture to hope that your Synod will credit them with the most sincere desire to gratify the preference and to protect the convictions of their brethren, and so maintain that testimony respecting the unity of the Church of the Lord Jesus which has been borne to the world by the existence of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches. They also venture to hope that, in view of the facts now stated, your Synod will be satisfied that there has been no change of base on the part of the Alliance, and that, since it stands to-day where it stood eleven years ago, so your Synod will continue to assist in furthering those ends that the Alliance was organised to secure.

“The Section pray for a blessing on your approaching Synod, and trust that the spirit of wisdom may guide you in all your deliberations.—Yours very truly,

“G. D. MATHEWS, *Secretary.*”

The Synod resolved that the reply is satisfactory, in the assurance that this section of the Executive Commission desires to protect the convictions of this Church on the question of Psalmody, and that any violation of the previous order should not be imputed to the local committee at Belfast, nor to the Alliance as a whole.

The Synod subsequently appointed Rev. D. M'Allister, LL.D., of Geneva College; Rev. David Gregg, New York; and Elders Andrew Alexander, New York, and John Hunter, Sterling Valley, New York, delegates to attend the London Council in 1888.

D. B. W.

[A word of explanation as to this correspondence may be given by one of the Clerks of the London Conference of 1875, and of the Alliance.

In reference to the question of the Psalmody to be used at the meetings of Council, the Alliance has never yet taken any formal action. It has never decided for or against any particular Book of Praise. In view of the diversity of conviction that prevails among the Churches of the Alliance, no

other course was possible if there was to be a general Alliance at all.

At the London Conference of 1875, the Rev. Dr. Sloane was instructed both by his own Church—the Reformed Presbyterian Synod—and by the United Presbyterian Church of North America, to ask that “the consensus of the Reformed Churches be respected by the confederation in its devotional exercises, and that a specific guarantee to this effect be incorporated in the constitution which may be adopted.” With great ability and earnestness of conviction, Dr. Sloane, who was a firm believer in the obligation of using only the Scripture Psalms in praise, pressed his instructions, but failed to persuade the Conference.

Now, the positions that the Book of Psalms is of inspired origin—that it was used in praise in Old Testament and in New Testament times, that it is full of rich consolation and instruction for the Church in all ages, and may therefore be ever used with edification—were held by every one present; but the position that “the consensus of the Reformed Churches”—meaning the belief and practice of *all* the Reformed Churches, or of even a *majority* of them—is in favour of the use of the Psalms exclusively in the praise of God was not held as historically established.

The “consensus of the Reformed Churches” must mean, it was shown, either that view which is held in *all* the Churches, or in a *majority*, or in a *minority* of them.

The Conference, however, was unwilling to take any vote on a matter of this kind, and “*sisted procedure*” at this point, Dr. Sloane believing that the object aimed at by his Church was *practically* secured when he found that nothing but the Psalms were used at the several meetings. No resolution confining the praise to the Psalms was ever adopted; but the brethren present stated their intention of not doing any violence to the convictions of those who thought that only the Psalms should be employed.]

QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA.

We have to thank our zealous friend and correspondent, Dr. Hay of Rockhampton, for an account of the Assembly held at Brisbane from 3d to 6th May last, of which the following is the sum and substance:—

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian