

# 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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ordained, shall not be divested of the office when not re-elected, but shall be entitled to represent that particular Church in the higher judicatories, when appointed by the Session or the Presbytery."

This accords with the action of the Dutch Church, whose elders not in active service are members of the Great Consistory. It secures in the higher courts of the Church the services of men eminent for their wisdom and experience, who may have retired from the active duties of the eldership for reasons satisfactory to all.

The election for a term of years, as to actual service, was declared by the Assembly 1872, Minutes, p. 85, to be "in full accordance with our Standards, liberally and historically interpreted." It is obviously a return to the universal usage of the Churches of Presbyterian polity for many years after the Reformation. It is in full accordance with the fundamental principle of the office in all the Reformed Churches, that it represents the people. The polity of Presbyterianism is republican, not prelatic, nor democratic. At the base of its government lies the "congregational assembly" exercising local government through its chosen representatives. It is not in accordance with republican institutions that "the representatives of the people" should hold their governmental functions by a tenure which virtually does away with all direct responsibility to those in whose name they govern; and in the event of their becoming "unacceptable in their official character to a majority of the congregation," leaves no redress, save by a process always difficult, and often disastrous.

The plan of frequent elections works well. It assures the elder of his acceptability. In perhaps every case, if useful and willing, he is re-elected, as long as he wishes to serve, and retires not by compulsion, but the ordinary operation of law. The annual recurrence of elections gives the opportunity of electing to the eldership any in the congregation who may be found specially fitted for it.

The perpetuity of the office is provided for, as in the Scottish Church, which contemplated rotation of duties after the Levitical institutions, by limiting the application of the law to the function of ruling.

If, as is sometimes said, this leaves nothing of the office but the name, this can be true only where, contrary to the Apostolic model, and the

theory of the Reformed, and especially the Scottish Church, the elder, who is *ex officio* a teacher and a pastor, an ordained evangelist, has limited his office to the one function of ruling in the Church.

In the eldership our Church has an agency, orderly, powerful, numerous, and ordained of God, peculiarly fitting it to meet the exigencies of times like ours, when the demand for Christian guidance, instruction, and nurture outruns the ability of the ministry, however zealous, and opens fields white already unto the harvest, in which the Church may reap a glorious harvest for her Divine Master!

The following Paper on the same subject, prepared by Dr. HARPER of Alleghany, was read in his absence by Dr. Kerr of Alleghany:—

GUIDED by mere etymology, we should in general terms define Presbyterianism to be a form of Church polity which assigns a place of prominence to certain functionaries called presbyters or elders. But the scanty information thus obtained must be supplemented from other sources, in order that a correct, or at least a complete view of Presbyterianism, distinctively so called, may be gained.

In all Presbyterian Churches there are at least these family features traceable, though not in all cases equally visible, namely, government by elders in a conjoint capacity; a distinction of the eldership into two sub-divisions, to both of which the ruling prerogative belongs, the teaching function to one of them only; and a grouping of several congregations or local Churches under the control, more or less direct, of the entire eldership of the same.

I do not count it my business at present to show the Scriptural grounds of the form of church-government which has thus, in its chief outlines, been sketched. Neither do I reckon the theme assigned to me, although couched in somewhat unrestricted terms, to relate to the ministerial section of the eldership. On the contrary, I shall take the term "eldership" to mean, according to popular usage, the ruling elders as distinguished from those who also teach; and, by the "theory and practice" of the eldership, I shall understand the ideal or normal and the actual aspect of their character, or, in other words, ruling elders as delineated in the Scriptures, and as in point of fact they are found to be. Studying the brevity enjoined,

I shall address myself to the task now foreshadowed.

To the eldership, theoretically contemplated, the following characteristics pertain, namely :—

1. They are officers. An office has been defined by an eminent authority to be "a station, the incumbent of which is appointed to it, which has certain prerogatives attached, and a title to recognition by those concerned." Now, elders are officers not acting for themselves and on their own impulse or authority simply, but having in all ordinary cases an external call and appointment to exercise certain functions which concern others, and being entitled to due acknowledgment by those so concerned.

2. They are officers of the Church, not of the State. The ruling elder may hold office in the State, but his title to such position rests not on his call to the eldership; nor, on the other hand, does his rank in the State form the ground of either his eldership or membership in the Church. The distinction now indicated may seem too obvious to require specific enunciation, but mention has been made of it, because the Cardinal system of Rome, which appears to be at once a relic and a perversion of the ancient eldership, rests, seemingly, on a contrary assumption; while the title of bishops of the Church of England to seats in the Legislature of their country may be traced ultimately to the notion that official rank in the Church entitles to official rank in the State.

3. The office of the elder is not only ecclesiastical, but also emphatically spiritual. Deacons are ecclesiastical functionaries, and, in respect to its ultimate aim and tendency, their office may be called spiritual; but it has more immediately to do with temporal matters. On the other hand, the office of the elder relates primarily, as well as ultimately, to men's spiritual interests, and so deserves, in a strong sense, to be characterised as spiritual.

4. The specific feature of the elder is that of a ruler in the spiritual sphere. This is the aspect in which he is presented in Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." Notably too is this view of the office given in 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour."

This ruling prerogative comprises as its elements or adjuncts a variety of functions, the chief of which I proceed to indicate.

(1.) The legislative function. I am aware that in ascribing to elders a "legislative" function, I employ language which may be misunderstood, and to which, if unattended by an explanation, just objection might be made. I mean by it, however, an authority derived from Christ himself to interpret and enjoin in an official, yet only ministerial capacity, the principles and laws which he, the sole Head of the Church, has embodied in his Word, for the government and edification of the spiritual community. "The Lord is our lawgiver." Christ has legislated for his Church, and it is the business of the officers to seek out, recognise, and apply the laws which he has enacted. Even the large and liberal commission of Apostles did not transcend this limit; for they were instructed to teach the observance of all things, whatsoever Christ had commanded them. Strictly speaking, therefore, no legislative authority is vested in the Church. She is to take, not make, laws. The power of her officers, so far as the point now in view is concerned, is ministerial, or interpretative and formulising. The regulations adopted by them must derive their authority over the conscience from him who alone is Lord of the conscience. Hence the Word, which is God's voice to men, is to be the rule of action to those who are set as rulers in the Church, and the touchstone by which the validity of all their decisions is to be tested. Even in those cases, such as the determination of the hours of public worship, where the nearest approach to the exercise of an original legislative power may be made, the general rules and principles of the Word are to control any decision given.

It is hoped that the explanation now made will suffice to guard against any misunderstanding of the import of the word "legislative," which, for sake of convenience, has been employed. It pertains to the officers of the Church to determine and set forth both in abstract form and in practical application the doctrines and duties enjoined by Christ; and this function may be called in a subordinate sense—and in that sense I use the phrase—a legislative function.

Now the officers in whom is vested, for the government of the Church, this authority—call it legislative, or by whatever epithet we may—are the elders, whose decisions are to be received as authoritative only when in consonance with Scripture, but, when thus harmonious with Scripture, as additionally binding, because pronounced

by functionaries acting in their legitimate sphere. For, in the case supposed, there is in some sense a double bond of obligation laid upon the conscience, one arising from the direct testimony of God touching the matter in question, the other proceeding indirectly from him through the declaration of men set by him to judge officially as to the import of his Word. Hence to reject any principle or precept of the Scriptures when it has been set forth by men empowered by God to declare and urge his truth is an offence more aggravated than to reject the same principle or precept before its promulgation by the agency in question. This is the doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith, when, in reference to the decrees of councils and synods, it says that "if consonant to the Word of God," they "are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word."

The authority now treated of, which is called by the old writers "*Potestas jurisdictionis*," is to be exercised by the elders, not in their individual capacity, but jointly and as formally constituted into courts of various grades. In these courts the elders who only rule are united with those who also teach, and are, so far as ruling is concerned, their peers. By some high authorities on Presbyterianism it is asserted or assumed that ruling elders are not as really and directly as ministers the representatives of Christ in the matter of ruling; that, on the contrary, they are the representatives of the people, while ministers are in a higher sense the representatives of Christ. For my part, I can discover no authority in the Bible for this discrimination against ruling elders, and I am disposed to regard it as the product of a strong and, no doubt, amiable desire to conciliate Congregationalists. It is admitted that as public teachers those elders who labour in the Word and doctrine do represent Christ in a peculiar sense; but within the sphere of the ruling function, they are no more really, and, in my view, no more directly, the representatives of Christ than are the ruling elders. Both may, in a loose sense, be said to represent the people, inasmuch as both are ordained for the benefit of the people, and, in ordinary circumstances, with their consent, and in pursuance of their call. Both are equally given to the Church for its edification, but given by Christ, and alike amen-

able to his authority, and responsible to him. If the theory that ruling elders represent the people, in the stricter sense of the language, be correct, they should, from time to time, make reports of their action to the people, as well as receive instructions from them, and the people should deal with them as their agents, commending, admonishing, rebuking, or suspending them at will.

Closely allied to the point now touched upon is another which has given rise to much discussion; and, although it bears no more upon the relation of the ruling elder to the Church than upon that of the teaching elder, it may not be unadvisable to advert to it here, especially as we are treating now of power and rule. The question is this: "What is the first receptacle or depository of Church power?" In the seventeenth century, after the rise of Independency, this question, though not then a new one, was much debated, being deemed a sort of test question between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The reply given by the latter in general was that the Church as a whole is the first receptacle of all Church power; while the former were inclined to qualify this statement by maintaining that office power is directly bestowed by Christ on those set apart to lawful office in the Church, and does not reach them indirectly through the body of the Church. I am disposed to think that there was a truth emphasised on either side in this controversy, and that neither party made the necessary distinctions. The controversy being not yet dead, and practical inferences of very diverse character having been drawn by the disputants from their respective answers to the question in debate, I venture to suggest what I deem the proper solution of the problem,—a solution hinted, I think, though not clearly brought out by John Owen, in his valuable treatise on "Church Government."

Officers are given by Christ to the Church for its edification.

The officers thus given form a part of the Church, being members of it. On these grounds it may be proper to say that the Church is the first seat or receptacle under Christ of all Church power.

But the phrase "Church power" is ambiguous, for it may mean at once certain rights, immunities, or privileges vouchsafed by Christ to the members of the Church in general, as for instance the right of electing to office some of their num-

ber, or it may mean the authority which attaches to officers according to Christ's institution. In the first sense the whole Church is the first subject or depository of Church power. In the second sense, those duly invested with office according to Christ's appointment are the immediate or first receptacle of Church power. Presbyterians, in maintaining that *office* power (for that was their favourite form of expression) is directly conferred by Christ on those lawfully chosen to office in the Church, were, we believe, right; but they do not seem to have admitted as frankly, as none could do more consistently than they, that there is a certain kind of power of which the Church in general is the immediate depository. The drift of our remarks, in regard to office power, may, perhaps, be set in a clearer light by means of an analogy. God has given to man the power of vision. This power belongs to the man as a whole, being not only meant for the benefit of the entire man, but also residing peculiarly in an organ, which is a constituent part of the complete man. Yet who will say that therefore the power of vision is as much granted to the ear or the hand as to the eye? To use a scholastic quaintness, we may say that the power of vision belongs to the whole man, but not to the whole of the man. So in a certain lax sense, office power is given to the whole Church, being designed to subserve the interests of the Church and to be exercised by persons who are members of it; but in stricter sense it attaches to the officers, and comes to them directly from Christ, immediately on their investiture with office in a lawful way.

If elders then are rulers in the house of God, clothed with authority by Christ himself and appointed to act under the instructions of the Word, it is obvious that they should be men not only of piety, but also of discernment, conversant with the great statute-book, at once clear of head and resolute of heart to set forth and maintain the law as given by God. The elder is called to deal officially with questions of more than imperial magnitude, to grapple with problems more subtle and momentous than those which vex the brains of statesmen. How incongruous then the spectacle presented by an elder who is destitute of mental capacity, or of intelligence, not to say spirituality of mind, to fit him for his position! An incompetent pilot, or general, or senator, is not so unseemly and pitiable an object.

(2.) A judicial function pertains to the prerogative of the elder. It is not easy to discriminate clearly, in the case of the elder, between the so-called legislative and the judicial function, for in determining what are the doctrines and duties of Christianity, there is necessarily an exercise of judgment as to the import of the sacred volume. But we signalise as judicial action whatever relates to the sphere of discipline in its wider sense, wherein elders are called on to decide touching the character of men, whether candidates for membership or for office in the Church, or already enjoying the position of members or officers therein. What for lack of a fitter word we have called the legislative function is concerned rather with abstract principles and general rules, while the judicial function has to do rather with concrete cases and with men. The duties connected with this function are often of a very delicate and difficult nature, demanding in those who would faithfully discharge them an exquisite combination of qualities, a blending of apparent opposites, such as firmness and tenderness, breadth and yet minuteness of perception.

(3.) Under the head of rule is embraced, moreover, the executive function.

The legislative function is occupied with the discovery and declaration of law; the judicial function with the decision of individual cases in accordance with law; the executive function with the practical out-carrying of the decisions thus reached and given. According to the hints afforded in the New Testament on Church polity, it belongs to the office of the elder, not merely to define the laws of the house of God, and judge in particular cases as to the conformity of individuals to them, but also to put in force or execute the laws recognised and the decisions pronounced.

The elders are to watch for souls, to act as shepherds of the flock, to serve as bishops or overseers, and are therefore empowered to institute legal inquiry and process, and, when a decision has been given, to see that it shall not prove nugatory or be disregarded. Failure in this department of duty may be attended with baneful results, and every one who accepts the office of elder should be prepared for all the sacrifice of feeling and tax of manhood which the faithful administration of ecclesiastical discipline demands.

(4.) A teaching function, in a restricted sense, belongs to the elder's office.

In Titus i. 5-9 it is intimated that the bishop must be a man "holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince gainsayers." What is here said of the bishop is affirmed beyond reasonable doubt of the presbyter or elder, as a comparison of verse 5 with verse 7 makes clear. But the elder is thus spoken of by the Apostle without any limitation or distinction, and hence we conclude that the ruling elder as well as the teaching elder is meant. Besides, aptness to teach is declared in 1 Timothy iii. 2 to be one of the requisite qualifications of a bishop, and if by "bishop" we are to understand the elder, whether him who teaches as well as rules, or him who only rules, as I think we should, it follows that all elders must in some degree, if not all equally or in the same sense, possess and be under obligation to exercise a teaching function. And should it be alleged that this position is at variance with the distinction already admitted to exist between the minister and the mere ruling elder, our answer would be that to the minister the function of teaching pertains in addition to that of ruling, and that to him it belongs to teach publicly and statedly as well as authoritatively; whereas in the case of the mere ruling elder teaching is an element involved in, or subsidiary to, his ruling prerogative, while he is not constituted a public stated expounder of the Word. He is to teach, for instance, by his life. From his lips should drop on fit occasions words of counsel, of exhortation, of warning, and of encouragement, not simply as he is a Christian, but also as he is a ruler in the house of God. He should be able to explain in a private way, and defend the laws which he helps to administer, thus commending himself to every man's conscience; his rule being not that of a military chieftain or of a lord over God's heritage, sustained by physical force, but spiritual, making its appeal to and asserting its sway through the consciences of men.

It has now been shown that the ruling elder is, according to the common Presbyterian theory, clothed with judicial and executive, and, in a limited sense, with legislative and teaching authority. We are aware that to many, especially to those who are professionally occupied with the study of civil jurisprudence or polity, this concentration of functions in a single body of men is apt to be distasteful, and from the quarter indicated protests have been issued more than once

against the alleged impropriety and danger of vesting in the same persons powers so various and so capable of being employed concurrently in the interests of injustice and oppression.

It may be sufficient to reply to these assertions or insinuations, that the same reasons which render a division of the functions specified desirable in civil polity, do not exist in relation to ecclesiastical government. For, according to the proper idea of the latter polity, the laws, strictly speaking, are made not by men but by God, men being but the interpreters and expounders of the infallible and sufficient statute-book, the inspired volume. Hence the risk arising from the combination of an arbitrary law-making power with the judicial and executive prerogatives does not exist in the case supposed. Then as to the concentration of the judicial and executive powers in the hands of the same officers, it may be said that, viewed in connection with the system of graduated courts characteristic of Presbyterianism, there does not appear to be ground for the apprehensions expressed by some that the arrangement in question would prove either inefficient or despotic. Certainly the Scriptures do not appear to provide for such a division of functions as some demand. Moreover, we are not aware that either Prelacy, or Congregationalism, or any of their modifications, affords a better guarantee against the evils dreaded or deplored than does Presbyterianism. Besides, in estimating the danger of concentration, it is well to remember that the ruling body recognised in our system is composed of two divisions of elders, and is therefore not entirely homogeneous or one-sided. The two sections of the eldership act thus at once as mutual checks and stimulants, and, in this feature of our polity, we possess in a large degree the advantage sought in civil governments by a separation of functions. The utility of this internal diversity in the eldership has been pointed out by that elaborate expounder of the principles of ecclesiastical government, Voetius, and reluctantly admitted by the learned jurist, Grotius.

Having glanced at the eldership in a theoretical light, I turn now to notice how far the actual eldership accords with the theoretical sketch which has been given. In dealing with this branch of our theme, we must deal considerably in generalities, remembering that the description of the elders of one congregation, or even of one section of the Church, might in sundry par-

ticulars be inapplicable to the elders of another congregation or denomination.

Looking at the matter in this broad aspect, I would remark—

1. That the actual eldership falls short of the ideal eldership I have been delineating. While here and there an elder may be found, who, by his intellectual and spiritual qualifications, commands our respect and admiration, and realises with charming exactness the portraiture of the bishop which Paul has furnished, it must be confessed that such instances are comparatively rare, and that in too many cases the elders are painfully deficient in aptitude for their specific work. Too often they are seen to be torpid, dull of apprehension, lacking in enthusiasm, devoid of fixed and intelligent convictions, and insensible of the grandeur and responsibility of their office. Hence a mere perfunctory service is rendered by some—attendance in a mechanical way on meetings of session, and occasionally of other Church courts, and assistance in the dispensation of the Lord's Supper being apparently deemed by them an adequate discharge of their official duties.

Perceiving and lamenting this state of matters, some have concluded that a resort to the method of rotation in service would tend to infuse a spirit of activity and healthy emulation into the elders, and dissipate the drowsiness supposed to hold possession of many of them. Without entering into any formal discussion of this expedient, I would incidentally remark that I see no authority for it in the New Testament; that I am not convinced that the elders who have officiated under this plan are more noted for their energy than those who have been chosen to serve for life; that experience and independence of action—qualifications not less important than energy—are more likely to be secured on the plan of life-service than on that of periodical service dictated by recurring elections; while a logical following of the proposed method to its legitimate results would probably issue in a similar rotation of the ministry.

We have expressed the opinion that the elders come short, and in some instances very palpably, of the ideal standard, and have not scrupled to utter words of censure accordingly; and yet I have no sympathy with that spirit of impatience, not to say contempt, toward elders which ministers sometimes betray in public, but still more in private. Hence I am prompted to remark—

2. That, taken in the aggregate, the elders approach, perhaps, as nearly to the Scriptural ideal of their office as do the ministers to that of their office. The establishment of this position would not prove elders to be undeserving of censure, but it would prove that ministers should not be supercilious toward them, and indulge in sneers at their expense. I venture to say that there are few Presbyterian congregations which do not enjoy the example and supervision of at least one ruling elder who is fitted to command respect by his good sense, his genuine piety, and his earnest discharge of his various duties. That some congregations are favoured with several such elders, I am in a position to assert. Who can safely deny that, considered as a body, the elders are conspicuous in our Churches for Christian hospitality, for liberality in contributions to the cause of Christ, for intelligent interest and efforts in every good work? It is impossible to estimate adequately the amount of quiet, unobtrusive, and often thankless service performed yearly by this body of men. It should not be overlooked that, as matters now are, the elders hold office without emolument; and obliged as most of them are to obtain a livelihood by ordinary industry, no small measure of self-denial must be practised in the discharge of duties, often onerous and trying, which devolve upon them.

The utility of the eldership appears to consist to a considerable degree in the fact that they form by their intermediate position a link between the ministry and the people, not a source of alienation between them and the people, as some ministers may be disposed to believe. This point might, perhaps, more properly have been advanced in our theoretical sketch, but may not be out of place here. In certain branches of the Christian Church, as for instance in the Established Church of England, there is felt to be a tendency toward an undue separation between the so-called clergy and laity, inasmuch that in high quarters the proposition has been made to provide a quasi-ministry in the form of licensed Scripture-readers and exhorters, between whom and the common people there should be a greater community of feeling and tastes and even language, than exists between the regular ministry and the masses. Among the Methodists, both of England and America, the necessity for the infusion of a lay element into their councils and boards has been imperiously felt. In the institu-

tion of the ruling eldership, however, divine wisdom seems to have anticipated, and divine authority to have provided for this want. Mingling as they do with the community at large, sharing in the cares, the toils, the sentiments, and even the temptations of the common people, the elders contribute to the councils of the Church a practical knowledge which forms a salutary complement of that more theoretical knowledge which may be gained by sequestered study. Their influence serves as an antidote to the spirit of cloister-pietism and of class-legislation, a curb on ministerial ambition, a check to the temper of innovation and headlong change. And even in cases in which they may prove an obstruction to desirable progress, their very stolidity and immobility may compel the enthusiasts for change to pause, discuss, reflect, modify, and through this process, perhaps, to purge their proposed measures of crudities and extravagances. The possession of unquestioned and unobstructed power is in most cases a perilous monopoly.

I shall close this paper with one or two suggestions, or rather queries, looking toward the more thorough development of that branch of our Presbyterian system which we have been surveying.

*First.* Would it not be wise to found institutes for the training of elders for their specific work, or so to modify existing educational establishments as to afford facilities to this end? The maxim, "*Fit fabricando faber,*" is a wise one, but it has its limits. There has hitherto, so far as known to us, been no attempt made to give to ruling elders what might be called a professional training for their work; yet would it not be advantageous to provide for such as might desire it, facilities for special training, less protracted and extensive, indeed, than that through which candidates for the ministry are required to pass, yet wide enough to prepare them for a much more efficient performance of their duties as elders? May we not have been directing our attention too exclusively to the training of the ministry? Why not have a course of "Presbyterial" theology for the elders? Some of them, as it is, may be the peers or superiors of ministers in general culture, and their rivals even in theological lore; but generally this is not so. A session of a few weeks yearly might be arranged in connection with existing theological colleges or seminaries which would afford signal means of improvement to elders. Presbyteries even might devise an optional course of

study for elders, and superintend their studies, holding at fixed times public examinations of all who should present themselves for examination. The Presbyterian system is compatible with intelligence. It repudiates the idea that ignorance is the mother of devotion. A higher standard of education among the elders would spur the ministers to higher attainments.

*Second.* Would it be unscriptural or unwise to allow all the elders to deliberate and vote in every *aggregate* court under whose jurisdiction they are included, and in delegated courts in the same ratio as the ministry? Why provide that in the courts referred to there shall be a numerical equality maintained between the two divisions of the eldership? What ground is there in Scripture for this rule to secure a balance of power? Guizot alleges that in Geneva during Calvin's life it was the custom to allow all the elders to sit in *classis* or presbytery as well as in session.

The subject thus brought before the Council was taken up by the following speakers:—

DR. KERR said that the paper just read embodied a very high-toned Presbyterianism, and for his part that was no fault. He would be very far from saying that persons in other organisations or denominations under other forms of government were not in the Church of Christ; he would not say that they had no Scripture for their order of government, but this much he would say for their own, that it was so Scriptural that it ran through all the Old Testament and the New—coming down to them through all the dispensations of the Church and given to them by the Apostles, acting under the inspiration of the spirit of the Master. Believing that, he was unable to understand why Presbyterians would sometimes be so shy of a distinct avowal of their order of government. He really thought from the opening exercises of the Council that, although they were there as a great Presbyterian Council, they were to act as if ashamed of their name. He did not know what might be the difficulty of the brethren of this country and of the Continent. It might be expedient for them to run their order of government on a lower plane, but in his country it was different. They had difficulties there which people here did not know, and could not fully appreciate. The influence operating against them did not come in a sacerdotal form, high-toned Episcopacy or Popery, but from the very opposite extreme—unlicensed liberty in the affairs of the Church and of religion. He was sorry to confess it, that Congregationalism was to an extent creeping into congregations of all denominations, and what was needed was a stiffening rather than a relaxing of the reins. He hoped the tone of the Council would be such that all the world would know that they were a Council of Presbyterians, and that nothing would go forth from them to indicate that they had, or appeared to have, an idea that they should now lower their flag, but rather that they were prepared to elevate it higher than ever.