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OF THE
SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE,

CONVENED AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1880.

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of the Spirit, most implicitly should we believe, and act upon, the inspired testimony, that if we, "being evil," know how to give good gifts to our "children," "much more shall" our "Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The one great need of the Church is the outpouring of the Spirit upon all people. The one great need of this Presbyterian Council, and the most blessed consummation possible of its deliberations, is such a baptism of the Holy Ghost as came upon the first Christian Council, at Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost after the blood of Jesus, our divine Lord, was shed for the remission of sins. Most memorable in the annals of the Church would this Council be, if, thus baptized anew with the Holy Ghost, its members should return to their respective homes, so burdened with the heavenly gift, as to kindle, everywhere, among the particular churches of their several communions, a burning desire and an intense zeal for the revival of God's work among them. Even now we may hear a voice from the inner temple, crying, in the fullness of Almighty love, to all these servants of Christ, and the churches that they represent: "Awake! awake! put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments." "Arise! shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

The great and glorious day of the Lord is at hand—the day of the Redeemer's triumph, and coronation as "King of kings," and "Lord of lords." Prophecies and wonderful providences have ushered it in. The age of revivals is upon us. God is giving us the mightiest means of grace ever instituted and given to the Church of Christ. Our great cities are to be saved thereby. The world can be saved only thus. More and more these divine manifestations are to be sought in prayer—to be the burden of every prayer for the Church. The ministry are to be taught, in their theological training, how to preach, how to labor, and how to pray for them. The whole Church are to look and long for them, with unwavering faith, and intense expectation.

A voice from the throne—a voice of infinite love—is continually saying to ministers and people, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," "and prove me now herewith," "if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

THE REV. PROF. DAVID STEELE, D. D., of Philadelphia, read the following on

PERSONAL RELIGION.

The age in which we live is one of great activity. Willing hands and enterprising minds are at work, striving after something higher, better, nobler, and more worthy of our race, than anything that has yet been reached. In art, in science, in philosophy, in literature, and in discovery, this is true. This activity gives existence and form to plans, systems and operations, distinguished by principles conservative of

individual and social comfort and amelioration. Surprising and startling as may be the motions of our earth in its orbit and upon its axis, the world moves in a higher and grander sense. In its aggressive power and influences, the civilization of to-day is extraordinary. The sleep of ages has been thrown off, and thought, winged with lightning and daring as the elements, which have given it scope, traverses sea and land, linking together oceans, continents, races and nationalities. The incrustations of habit, prejudice, tradition, predominant character and of false systems of religion are being broken up; and the signs of a reconstruction, adequate to the wants of humanity, are daily multiplying. "Behold," says God, "I make all things new." A new era is expected. The halcyon days of a world's sublimation steadily draw near. And if there is one thing more than another, that shall mark the period of the world's highest civilization, it shall be the prevalence of personal religion, individual consecration to God, and voluntary subjection to the Lord and his Christ. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel."

With these introductory remarks, we are brought to consider the subject before us—PERSONAL RELIGION.

I. WHAT IS IT?—In its derivation from *re* and *ligo*, *religion* means the reattachment or rebinding to God of the being who had departed from him. By the radical import of this term, we are reminded of our apostasy from God, and of that amazing provision in the divine economy, by which guilt is pardoned, reconciliation to an offended majesty is effected, prodigals brought back to their father's house—and the entire nature of men—understanding, will, affections and conscience—renovated and readjusted.

In its most comprehensive sense, religion is both objective and subjective. Contemplated *objectively*, it includes a belief in the being and perfections of God, in the revelation of his will to man, in man's obligation to obey the divine commands, and in his accountability to his Maker. Viewed *subjectively*, religion comprehends the recognition and practice of that experimental and scriptural godliness, which is the life of the soul. The religion of Jesus Christ has both its *credenda*, or things to be believed, and its *agenda*, or things to be done.

In its more restricted sense religion differs from theology, inasmuch as religion is practical, while theology is scientific. A religious person is a theologian just in so far as his knowledge is scriptural and comprehensive; a theologian is religious in so far as his knowledge is experimental and practical. Personal religion is the personal possession of those qualities and acquisitions of mind and heart, which demonstrate that the individual has been reinstated in the divine favor, and that he has been brought into a saving relation to that sovereign from whom he had deeply revolted. From all this it is obvious that personal religion is not a myth. In its origin, relations, influences, and destiny it is real. It is not an imaginary something after

which individuals may long, but of which they can never lay hold. It has its seat in the soul.

And if it is then as water, there that water is not stagnant, but springing up into everlasting life. If it is in the soul as fire, then it is as coals which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench this flame, neither can the floods drown it.

Nor does personal religion consist in an ardent attachment to ceremony and forms. True, the form is not without its appropriate place in religion. "Hold fast the form of sound words," is an apostolic injunction. And significant symbols occupy an important, though a subordinate place in the Christian system. If we might illustrate—what the shell is to the contents within, in the case of an egg, or what the external covering is to the kernel, in the case of the nut, in many respects the form in religion is to the inward power. In either case, let the outside be broken, and the contents will suffer. And so, fling to the winds creeds, confessions, signs, and significant ceremonies—discard all forms in religion, and the new creature, the spiritual life in the soul, will be more or less unfavorably affected.

In the present day, the pendulum of human thought seems to vibrate between two extremes—the extreme of radicalism, in subverting all forms; and the extreme of ritualism, in largely substituting imposing shows and ceremonies for that personal religion and practical godliness, which are the normal outcome of the "new heart." In regard to this latter tendency, the past should be admonitory. It was the formalism of the Pharisees, and their punctilious adherence to rites and ceremonies, which called forth from our Lord those withering rebukes administered by him to these hypocrites in the days of his flesh. The decoration of churches, and the introduction of a showy and sensuous worship, together with all the adventitious and fascinating performances of the priesthood in the fourth and fifth centuries, paved the way for the full development of "the Antichrist." This was succeeded by the "dark ages." Israel forgot his Maker, even when building temples. Men may admire the æsthetic in religion, and may revel in the pleasure of contemplating the splendid ritual, and yet be destitute of the power of godliness. A man may possess the most illustrious and brilliant talents that ever excited the admiration or dazzled the eye of mortals; he may, were it possible, descant with the intelligence and power of an angel upon the sublime character, eventful life, and triumphant death of Jesus of Nazareth, and yet be a stranger to personal religion. He might climb in thought and in discovery the temple of the created universe, and having planted his feet upon the loftiest point, and in one comprehensive survey having taken in the myriads of systems which people the vastness of space, claim all as the product of him by whom all things were created, and yet be destitute of personal religion. How shall it be described? It is to experience the invincible and omnipotent might of the Divine Spirit, quickening the individual soul into spiritual life; it is to apprehend the transcendent disclosures of that love which

passeth knowledge in the pardoning of sin, and in the raising up of the individual to sit with Christ in heavenly places; it is to discover by their effects the marks of the blood of sprinkling upon the conscience; it is to feel the soul held in the everlasting embrace of those arms which bear up the pillars of the moral and the material universe, and nestling in the cleft of that rock, which shall stand unshaken amid the desolations of time and the ravages of blighting and destructive change; it is to swim in that ocean of love, the waters of which at once lave the shores of eternity and pour their cascades on earth, the dwelling-place of mortals. It is more. It is for the individual to be a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men; it is to have the soul transformed into a temple of the Holy Ghost, yea, a holy of holies, where shall dwell the incomprehensible Shechinah; it is to have the immortal nature converted into a perennial fountain of joy, from which shall well up to eternal life those gracious affections, holy desires, and God-ward aspirations which make to the person himself a little heaven on earth, and change the world into the vestibule of the upper sanctuary.

II. SOURCES.—The origin of personal religion is divine. It is the outcome or resultant of a principle of spiritual life implanted in the soul, as mysterious as it is real, and as instantaneous in its beginning as it is spiritual in its nature and revolutionary in its tendencies. Regenerated "men are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The beginning of personal religion is variously designated in Scripture. By the prophet Jeremiah, it is called a "new heart;" by the evangelist John, it is spoken of as a new birth; by the apostle Paul, it is characterized as a new creation, and as a resurrection from the dead.

The truth is alarming, but it is not the less certain, that the condition of all men by nature is a condition of spiritual death. As the offspring of fallen Adam, the representative of the human race in the covenant of works, men in their natural state are under a sentence of condemnation; justly exposed to the wrath of God, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil. The change that takes place in the soul of man when the Spirit of God takes possession of it, is a change from darkness to light, from death to life, from sin to holiness, from nature to grace. Understanding, will, conscience, and sensibilities are affected. The mind is illuminated, the heart is renewed, the will is conquered; or, in the language of Scripture, the individual is made willing in the day of Jehovah's power. The brand of sin is wiped from the brow; the poison of sin is extracted from the heart; the title-deeds to a heavenly inheritance are placed in the person's hands, and the soul begins its march to glory. The tree being made good, the fruit is also good. Henceforth the affections are set on things that are above; the life is hid with Christ in God; the conversation is in heaven; the world is under the feet; and to the individual thus changed, and in process of a spiritual renewal, heaven and earth stand in new relations. This

thought has been beautifully expressed as follows: "As the sun gleams over the palace and into the cottage, flushing alike with its splendor the council chamber of the monarch and the kitchen of the peasant; as the all-pervasive light fills the vast dome of the sky and the tiny cup of the flower, so religion at once illumines the heaven of our hopes and the earth of our cares. Secularities become hallowed; toil brightens with the smile of God; business becomes crystalline—light from God comes through it to us, glances from us go through it to God."

An important fontal element in personal religion is *union to Christ*. "I am come," says Christ, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." "In him was life." In his own emphatic as well as paradoxical style, the apostle Paul presents this thought: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, . . . and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Here the apostle traces his whole life of pardon, peace, holiness, and hope of glory to union with Christ. From eternity a federal or representative relationship of Christ to his people yet unborn was established. More than this, however, was required, in order that sinners might come into the possession of that inheritance of spiritual life here and glory hereafter, procured by the death of the Mediator. In this federal relationship, a foundation was laid for that subsequent vital union or reciprocal inbeing of Christ and his people, which is the result of a regenerated soul's taking hold of the Saviour by faith, and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel. This faith which unites to Christ, strengthens by exercise, works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and in its stupendous outgoings and embraces, takes into the soul the fulness of God. All its supplies for life and for godliness it finds in Christ; and in its actings and manifestations in connection with practical piety, its possessor lives and labors, obeys and sacrifices for the Redeemer. Personal religion has had some of its finest exemplifications in the discovery and actings of faith. Under the influence of this principle, Enoch walked with God. The efficacy of this same grace appears in Noah's being prompted to build an ark for the saving of himself and his household. The faith of this patriarch was sublime. He was a preacher of righteousness. But he was more. He was a personal and active embodiment of that piety which is the outgrowth of spiritual life nourished by union to Christ, and having its most impressive development in prompt, sincere, and universal obedience.

Perhaps the most remarkable example of active faith and consequent practical religion, is Abraham. The command of God to this patriarch is, "Take now thy son, thine only son . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt-offering." The very thought seems revolting. What! shall I take my only son, the child in whom centre all the promises, the son of my old age, and offer him as a sacrifice? Shall I quench the light of coming ages, and strike down the Church with

one blow? These and many other questions might have risen in the mind of this man of God. But his faith was equal to the occasion, and as he raised his hand to inflict the fatal stroke, "the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven. . . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." Elsewhere, of this same person, God declares, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." These and other like examples of personal religion, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, show that the faith which unites to Christ is a practical as well as a saving principle, which surmounts obstacles, ranges on its side the God of battles—and in its exercise and growth brings into play a stalwart piety, a heroic devotion to God, and a personal up-taking and appropriation of Christ and the promises, which triumph over all opposition and bind to duty and to God.

III. ACCESSORIES.—Personal religion has its beginning in spiritual life, its growth in progressive holiness, and its perfection in a completed sanctification. A special, if not the chief characteristic of personal holiness, is growth. Had it pleased God, the order of grace might have been, that so soon as an individual should be quickened into spiritual life, he would be immediately introduced into glory. The divine arrangement is ordinarily otherwise. As in nature there is growth, so also there is progress in the religious life. In the natural world there is "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Or, as it is in the lighting up of our earth; there is in the beginning, the aurora or dawn, then the sun rising in glory above the horizon, and ultimately the king of day standing in the zenith, and pouring down his life-giving rays upon the world. Thus it is with the Christian. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The word of God, read and expounded, is an effective means of promoting personal religion. History, experience, and the Bible itself, unite in exhibiting the truth of God, as the grand agency in advancing practical godliness. You might as well expect light and heat, verdure and fruit, when the sun is absent, as expect individual piety where the Scriptures are unknown. Christianity flourishes in proportion to the degree in which the "book of books" is understood, and its blessed truths are diffused among the people. During the first ages of Christianity, when the apostles went everywhere preaching the word, religion triumphed in the hearts and lives, sacrifices and deaths of noble men and women. Subsequently, when truth became corrupted by false interpretations, and the Bible was consigned to the cloister, darkness covered the earth, and practical piety proportionately waned. When, again, the Bible was exhumed from the cell of the monk, and was given to the people, personal religion took root anew, and under the sun, and smile, and influence of truth, it bloomed and bore the fruit; which is seen to-day in the civilizations of the old and new

worlds, and in those widespread and Christ-like missionary labors, peculiar to the period of the world's history in which we live.

Nor should we thoughtlessly ascribe that power to the word, which belongs to the Spirit. If the word is a sword, quick and powerful, capable of inflicting fearful wounds in the conscience and in the heart, it is the Spirit of God that wields this weapon. If the word is a hammer that breaks in pieces the flinty heart, it is the same Spirit that employs it. If the word is a fire, it is the Spirit that gives life to its coals and vehemence to its flame.

Another aid to personal religion is prayer, public, private and social. "What the key is to the watch," says Swinnoek, "that prayer is to religion; it winds it up, and sets it going." In prayer the soul takes its flight to the bosom of God, and claiming nativity beyond the stars, it seeks to escape to a broader and purer sphere.

The strength which has nerved individuals for great spiritual conflicts has been received in answer to prayer. The communion with God which is enjoyed at a throne of grace imparts consistency to character, fits for holy living, and throws a halo of glory around the suppliant himself. The face of Moses shone, when he came down from the mount, where he had been with God. And the individual who practises holy wrestling with the hearer of prayer, will shine in all the beauties of personal holiness, in the closet, in the family, in the church, and in the world. How was it with Daniel? Providence ordered it so, that for a time, his place was at a heathen court. In a brief period the atmosphere of prayer in which he had lived and moved gave him a force of character, which even heathen courtiers were compelled to acknowledge. Neither could the wrath of a king, nor the prospect of being thrown into the lion's den compel him to renounce his intercourse with God. "Three times a day he kneeled upon his knees, and prayed and gave thanks before his God." Never, perhaps, did the apostle Paul's piety rise to a more sublime pitch, than when he bowed his knees before God, and prayed that of the riches of his grace, he would grant that the Ephesian brethren might be able to comprehend with all saints. "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Upon the background of a fortitude and faith as invincible as the rock, Luther's personal piety projected itself in marvellous outline, when he declares in substance. the Protestant interest is so low, and my work is so vast, that I cannot get along, without three hours a day in prayer.

If ever there was an hour in the world's history when a mere man appeared like the God-man himself, when celestial glory seemed to beam upon the brow of a mortal, and personal piety was wrought up into a self-abnegation, a devotion to the cause of Christ, and conscious dependence on God, which have challenged the admiration of generations, it was when John Knox, with the faith of a prince having power with God, and a fervor rivalling the seraph, prayed: "Give me Scotland, or I die." And if ever the personal piety of united and com-

prehensive Presbyterianism throughout the world shall rise to the climax of development and perfection, outlined and commended in the word of God and in the lives of men of whom the world was not worthy; it will be when, under a Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit of God, all the churches organized on Presbyterian principles, including ministers, ruling elders, deacons and people, shall be brought to their knees; and, taking hold of the everlasting covenant and of the angel of that covenant, they shall refuse to let the God of Bethel go, except he bless them.

A valuable help to personal religion is the Christian Sabbath, or the Lord's day. The Sabbath is a primitive institution, and the rest which it affords was designed for the entire race of men. "The Sabbath was made for man." If it was needed when our first parents were innocent, much more is its rest required now. Every Christian knows how difficult it is to shake from his feet the dust of earth, as well as to free himself from that secularization which in these days of sharp competition is everywhere incident to business. The Sabbath, with its solemn pause, its hallowed rest, its sacred memories and its foretastes of heaven, comes periodically to the Christian's aid, and supplies him with a leverage by which he can poise his soul above the world, and give scope and energy to his spiritual nature in holding converse with God.

"Hail to the day!

The Lord's own day—to man's Creator owed,

And man's Redeemer; for the soul's increase

In sanctity, and sweet repose bestowed:

Type of the rest, when sin and care shall cease,

The rest remaining for the loved of God!"

The United States owe much to the continent of Europe. But it is to Scotland particularly that they are indebted for their ideas of Sabbath observance. And if the Puritans of England and the Covenanters of Scotland had left no other legacy to their descendants in America than those ideas which they cherished respecting the Sabbath, they would have furnished a grand emporium for the replenishment of personal piety, and they would have deserved a high place in that roll of honor, to which the names of prophets and apostles have been transferred.

Wherever to-day throughout the world you find an individual distinguished for personal piety, there you will find a person scrupulously careful in observing the Sabbath. And if, as the dying Guthrie declared, "The covenants, the covenants shall be the reviving of Scotland," surely the universal love and observance of the Christian Sabbath will be the revival of true religion throughout the earth.

An intense and intelligent longing after conformity to Christ is promotive of personal religion. The model of the Christian believer is his Saviour. The aspiration of a religious life and the acme of a believer's hope are to know Christ, and "the power of his resurrection and the fel-

lowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death." The Saviour is to be contemplated in a two-fold light, both as an atonement and as an example. In the one character he has effected peace between us and our sovereign. In the other, he has disclosed to us what our Maker is in respect of his moral attributes, and what he requires men to be. That Christ is the model after which men are to be patterned, is evident from his own command, "Follow me;" from the purpose of God that all the members of his family are to be conformed to the image of his Son; and from the effect of the gospel upon believers who, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. What a sublime idea of personal religion—likeness to the Son of God in our nature, to him who is the sum of all excellence, the living, personal and divine embodiment of all that is estimable in man and glorious in God! "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Other aids to personal religion might be adduced, as those noted above are by no means exhaustive—such as the sacraments, meditation, and active benevolence, etc.

IV. RESULTS.—These are glorious. They respect the individual himself. Godliness is profitable unto all things. The whole plan of God respecting duty and salvation is to individualize men. Religion is the one thing needful, and it is a personal matter. Among the faithless, men must learn to stand faithful. Every one of us must give account of himself to God. Men are not saved in troops. One is taken and another is left. The author of the good work which is begun in the believer's heart is God, and he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. What is it alone that can inspire a man with a hope blooming with immortality? What is it alone that can give a man peace in a dying hour? What is it alone that can prepare an individual for companionship with the inhabitants of the world of life, and for the exercises of the land of glory? We answer, personal religion—a personal interest in Christ, with all its subordinate, collateral and God-glorifying attendants.

In its effects personal religion is diffusive. It does not terminate upon the individual who is its possessor. The theatre of its influence is the world. It is a centre, the circumference of which is ever widening, until the outmost circle of its grand achievements shall reach the closing epochs of time, and shall even touch the shores of eternity. Revelation has pictured its destiny. In its light, power, fulness, and growth, and wrought up into those marvellous associations of men and means that shall mark the millennial day, it shall control the world for Christ.

The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. "A little one shall become a thousand." "Thy people also *shall be* all righteous." HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD shall be upon the bells of the horses, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

Associated with a morality which has its basis in revealed truth, and its obligations and accountability growing out of the recognition of a personal and covenant God, round and round our globe personal religion shall take its circuit, until the masses and majorities of our race shall find the highest point of their elevation, their centre, and their fount of personal and spiritual supply in God. And Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—shall have all the glory.

And now, when creation is groaning, when the powers of darkness are active, when the hosts of Armageddon are marshalling for the conflict, when we are surrounded with a crowd of witnesses, and almost sixty centuries look down upon us, let us raise aloft the standard of Protestant Presbyterianism, and emblazoning upon it the time-honored motto, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant," with every letter undimmed; and in the name of the struggles and victories, the testimonies, contendings, and covenants of our fathers, let us signal to the ends of the earth that the lineal and ecclesiastical descendants of the children of the Alps, of the reformers of the continent of Europe, and of John Knox, in council assembled, expect every man bearing the Presbyterian name to do his duty.

And in these days, when the question of nativity is frequently mooted, and the cry is often heard, England for the Angle, Germany for the Teuton, Russia for the Slav, Asia for the Asiatic, Africa for the negro, and America for the American; for all such utterances, with the voice of the ages sounding in our ears, and the anticipations of the future beckoning on to an enlarged philanthropy, let us substitute the watchword, Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and the islands of the sea for the Church of God, and the world and the fullness thereof for Jesus Christ.

The Council was adjourned, after the singing of the Doxology, and the pronouncing of the benediction by the chairman.

October 1st, 7.30 P. M.

The Council was called to order in the Academy of Music by JACOB RADER, ESQ., of Easton, Pa., President.

After devotional services, the REV. JUSTUS E. SZALATNAY, of Velim, Bohemia, read the following paper on

THE CHURCH IN BOHEMIA.

"When the tempest of the wrath of God shall have passed away, the management of thine own affairs will return to thee again, people of Bohemia." With these words the last senior of the dying "Unitas Fratrum Bohemorum," John Amos Comenius, had prophesied in sad times of cruel destruction, not only of the glorious Church of the "Book and Cup," but also of the kingdom and nation of Bohemia.