

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.

Printed by Direction of the Council.

EDITED BY REV. J. THOMSON, A.M.

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1877.

	China.	India.	Japan.	Total.
Bible-Readers, .	...	29	...	29
Schoolmasters, .	5	13	...	18
Schoolmistresses, .	9	...	3	12
Colporteurs, .	...	2	...	2
Churches, .	7	19	3	29
Communicants, .	591	778	190	1559
Academies, .	...	2	1	3
„ Scholars in, .	...	71	34	105
Day Schools, .	6	38	...	44
„ Scholars in, .	102	1335	...	1437
Theological Students, .	5	†	14	19
Dispensaries with Beds, .	...	1	...	1
No. of Patients treated, .	...	7508	...	7508

† Nearly the entire body of Native Helpers.

Financial.—The Reformed Church until 1858 contributed to the treasury of the American Board; since that year it has had its own independent Board of Foreign Missions. The receipts during this period of independent action have averaged \$65,000 a year, and the average of membership during the same time has been about 65,000 persons.

The receipts have varied from about \$30,000 to \$119,000 a year. The last year brought in from all sources \$58,152.53. It was a year of unusual pecuniary trial throughout the United States.

WM. ORMISTON, Minister,	} <i>Delegates to Council.</i>
DAVID INGLIS, „	
PHILIP PELTZ, „	
CHARLES E. HART, „	
WILLIAM BOGARDUS, Elder,	

VIII.

THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE AT TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA.

By REV. DR. STILLMAN.

To the Presiding Officer and Members of the "Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World, according to the Presbyterian system," to be held in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, in July 1877.

DEAR BRETHREN,—I enclose my credentials as a delegate to represent the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in your venerable body. Being unable to attend in person, I nevertheless desire to appear by this written communication, and to call your attention to an object in which I have no hesitation in assuming your profound interest. Amongst the many grand topics which will engage your thoughts and elicit your discussions, I have no fear that the spiritual welfare of the four millions of coloured people in the Southern States of America will be considered an intrusive theme. Our branch of the Church is situated in the very midst of this people. They were born in our

houses, and have for generations formed, in one capacity or another, an integral part of our social organism. Their families and ours were reared side by side, and large numbers of them have been members of our Churches and Sabbath-schools. We know them well; and it would be very strange, not to say unchristian, if we did not cherish a deep interest in their welfare. To admit that we do not care for their souls would be to confess that we care nothing for our own. If it would serve any practical purpose we could recite a thousand facts to show that our people never forget the claims of this dependent class upon our Christian sympathies and efforts. We did not discharge our whole duty; but our delinquency in this case was no greater than in the case of other duties to the Divine Master and to our fellow-men. They always had a full share in the instructions of our ministers, and in the privileges of our Churches. It was common to see them in our congregations, at our communion tables, at our family altars, and sitting under the teachings of domestic piety; and many were the precious fruits of these opportunities.

A few years ago their political and social relations to us were suddenly and entirely changed. They acquired freedom and the franchise, and were allowed to choose all their surroundings. It was impossible for them to undergo such changes without more or less disturbance of their ecclesiastical and spiritual relations. Under the new and peculiar influences surrounding them they naturally forsook our Churches and renounced our instructions. We lamented this most sincerely. We desired to retain them in our Churches and to teach them the Word of God; and it was with sorrow we saw them casting off what we felt to be good influences, and giving themselves up to ignorance, error, and superstition. We still offered them our ministrations, and endeavoured kindly to restrain them from relapsing into virtual heathenism. Long and anxious were our deliberations in our presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, and most sincerely did we seek the true and safe solution of the perplexing problem.

We determined to accept the inevitable facts, and shape our efforts accordingly. *First*, We resolved to encourage and aid the formation of an African Presbyterian Church, so that they could have their own courts, officers, and discipline, and enjoy what they so much desired—an ecclesiastical organisation of their own. We were, and are still, very anxious for the success of this effort. We could not be consistent Presbyterians if we did not believe that the very best boon we can confer on this people is to bring as many of them as possible under the influence of a pure and sound Presbyterianism. We say this in no spirit of denominational pride or bigotry. While we recognise the right of this people to choose their own branch of the Church, and are fully aware that the large majority of them prefer other communions, we firmly believe that our Presbyterian system is not only the best for men in general, but that it is peculiarly adapted to remedy or modify the peculiar weaknesses of this people, and to secure for them the truest and highest development. They are, in general, extremely ignorant; they need restraint and control, kind but regular and firm; they are intensely emotional, and inclined to extravagance; they are much given to formalism; they are in no small degree superstitious

and fanatical; they are strongly inclined to laxity of moral life. Presbyterianism means light, law, and order; a high standard and a faithful discipline; intelligent feeling wisely directed and properly restrained; a spiritual worship under simple forms; and the administration of Church power by chosen rulers—in every particular, precisely the system which the peculiarities of this people demand. We could point to many a noble illustration of this position, showing that it is not a mere theory.

Another fact we accept is the necessity for an educated coloured ministry. There is no lack of African preachers in our Southern land, and with slight encouragement we could soon raise a host of coloured Presbyterian preachers. But they would be ignorant and untrained—grossly deficient in general learning, and entirely unable to expound the Word of God. Such men could never elevate their race—they could not guide them to salvation, they could not train them to piety—least of all could they build up a real Presbyterian Church. Under such blind guides the whole coloured race would inevitably fall into the ditch; and yet they all prefer a ministry of their own colour. It is only in a few instances that white preachers, of any denomination, can gain access to them. We accept this fact also, and now we are honestly and earnestly trying to meet it. We are anxious to see a fully organised and large African Presbyterian Church, and we are anxious to see a coloured Presbyterian ministry adequate, in *all respects*, to the wants of this people. To this end our General Assembly has established an institute for the especial purpose of educating and training coloured candidates for the ministry, especially Presbyterians, but by no means excluding others, who come recommended for capacity and character. This institute is located at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in the very midst of this people. It is placed under the superintendence of the undersigned, who has called to his aid, as professor, the Rev. Andrew Flinn Dickson, a man eminently qualified for the position by birth, education, general and ripe scholarship, aptness to teach, a thorough acquaintance with this people, a life-long interest and experience in instructing them. It has been in operation about eight months, and has already done a good work. I refer you to a paper in the hands of Rev. Dr. M. D. Hoge, a delegate to your body from our Assembly, prepared by Professor Dickson, for a detailed account of the institute, its pupils, methods of instruction, and terms of admission.

Our experience confirms our previous conviction of the practicability and great value of this movement. Coloured men can be made intelligent and efficient ministers of the gospel. We need to use caution, as in other cases, in the reception of candidates; and the work of training men for such a calling, who have had a very deficient early education, in every respect, is one of *extreme difficulty*. The office of teacher in this institute is no sinecure, and would not be with the largest salary and the most ample helps and facilities. It demands a patience, a toil, a painstaking that would try the most faithful man. But deeply impressed with the conviction that this is *the instrumentality* for elevating, Christianising, and developing this people; and, loving their precious

souls as those for whom Christ died, we are willing and resolved to go forward in this undertaking. We ask the sympathies and prayers of all good men.

There are other institutions having the same object under the control of the Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and Episcopal Churches; and there are several under the care of the Northern Presbyterian Church. We wish them God-speed, and shall rejoice in all their success for the good of this people and the glory of our Saviour. We would, however, be recreant to our trust, if we, a Presbyterian Church, planted in the very midst of this people, should keep back our hand from this work. We must and will do our part, even if, through our poverty, it be a small one.

But, without disparaging others, we feel that God has intrusted to us a peculiar measure of fitness for this work. We know this people better than others can who have not been reared amongst them. We know their general condition, their peculiar weaknesses and vices, their mental and moral habitudes, their temptations, and the methods that have proved most effectual in reforming and elevating them. We long to do a good work for them, and if the Church will help us to train a body of intelligent, pious, and devoted ministers to teach them a pure gospel, to gather them into scriptural Churches, to conduct for them a spiritual and edifying worship, to administer the law of Christ's house over them, in the spirit of Christ,—and as pastors after God's own heart protect and feed and guide them, then shall our toil be amply rewarded, and all who aid us will see that they have acted as wise and faithful stewards of God.

We are endeavouring to conduct this enterprise on the most economical scale possible compatible with a true success. Our Church is poor, but in its poverty it is giving a helping hand to this work. Our late General Assembly has placed this on the same footing with its other great schemes, having established an executive committee for its management and support, and appointing a day for contributions from the Churches. We are, as a Church, fully committed to the scheme, and, God helping us, we shall make it an ultimate success.

Our great want is means to support students. Were these furnished our walls would be full. Presbyteries sending students are expected to indorse their fitness and to provide for them; but with so many other enterprises on hand, their ability is not equal to this demand. We trust good men, in the great Presbyterian family, will remember our cause and help us to carry it forward. It is a great missionary undertaking. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God and his people, and here in our Christian south we feel these hands literally touching our own, and we feel the thrill of sympathy for the myriads who are perishing for lack of vision.

Trusting that the great Head of the whole Church may be present and preside over your deliberations,—I subscribe myself, in Christian love, your brother and co-labourer,

C. A. STILLMAN.

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA,
June 5th, 1877.