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THE DEBT OF THE PRESENT TO THE PAST: ITS PAYMENT.

THE ANNUAL ADDRESS

BY THE PRESIDENT,
HENRY C. MCCOOK, D. D., Sc. D.,
January 10, 1901.

Can the Presbyterian Historical Society be commended to the serious consideration of those who have money, time and influence to give for the advancement of the cause of Christ, and the perpetuation of that testimony for which the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches have always stood? We may answer unhesitatingly, "Yes."

I.

OUR OBJECTS.

1. The Presbyterian Historical Society stands for the *Justice of God*, and for the attribute of justice in man as communicated to him by his Creator. It is an act of justice to the worthy that their memory be kept green. Not, indeed, that they asked or had even thought that posterity would do them that justice. The pioneers, men and women, those noble and most beneficent servants of God's Church in America, were unconscious, for the most part,

The
Society
Stands
for
Justice.

CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in the United States
of America.

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A Paper read before The Presbyterian Historical Society, March 20, 1899.

Sir Francis Bacon, in the *Advancement of Learning*, tells us that "it was well said by Democritus that 'the truth of nature lies hid in certain deep mines and caves.' It was not ill said by the alchemists, 'that Vulcan is a second nature and imitates dexterously and compendiously that which nature works circuitously and in length of time.' Why, therefore, should we not divide Natural Philosophy into two parts, the mine and the furnace; and make two professions or occupations of Natural Philosophers, some to be miners and some smiths?"* History yields itself quite as readily as Natural Philosophy to this division of labor. It is the function of the historian, at one time, to give himself to the exploration of historical sources; and at another, with his materials before him, to form and to formulate historical judgments. It is a work of the latter class which has been devolved on me by the Society, in their invitation to prepare for this literary session a paper on the characteristics of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The materials of Presbyterian History in this country, speaking roughly, lie open to the general view. Certainly, this is

* Adv. Learn. Book II, chap. 3.

true of the great bulk of them; and in this great bulk are to be found those which must be rated as of highest value, considered as the basis of historical generalizations. I should do you an injustice if I permitted you to believe that I shall bring to you the news of any "new find" which ought to be studied with a view to a reconsideration of the subject on which I am to speak to-day. The sources have been investigated and criticised by competent and enthusiastic workers, like Hodge, and Hill, and Foote, and Gillett, and Briggs, and McCook and others; and, so far as investigation and criticism are concerned, we are warranted in proceeding on the basis of them to historical judgment.

But when we say historical judgment, we are speaking of a judgment which it is not an easy task either fairly to form within the mind or properly to formulate outside of it. For it will be noted that a historical judgment is the judgment pronounced on an entity as existing and (if it acts at all) energizing under the complex conditions of time and space and circumstance. It is not a judgment pronounced on an object according to its idea, but on the object as its idea is more or less modified through its endeavor after realization; now helped and now hindered by its environment, now developed by favoring sun and wind and shower, now dwarfed by rigors of heat and cold and by the warring elements. It would be an easy task comparatively to describe this particular Presbyterian Church in its idea; and to classify and catalogue under this idea the characteristics which constitute what the logicians call its specific difference. But I am confident that, being called to speak, not before a theological but before a historical society, this is not the task you have set before me. It is the Presbyterian Church as it appears in its history, in its large, abounding and dramatic life, that I am asked to delineate at least in outline and in its bold, outstanding features.

And this is a hard thing to do. For there is always a difference between an object in its idea and the same object as actually existing and operating under historical conditions. Janet, in his able volume on Final Causes, has pointed out that every object produced by design, every object, that is,

which has at its centre an idea, is a compromise between its efficient cause and its final cause. Its idea is never precisely realized. We all know how true this is in the case of our own literary products. Before the mind of the preacher, when the secular week begins, floats the idea of the discourse he is to deliver on the ensuing Lord's day; and it woos him to composition by its nobility and its power. I need not ask whether, as the week passes to its close, the ideal is realized. I am confident that all of us who are clergymen will confess that it always happens that the actual sermon falls below the ideal; that, to quote again the striking words of Janet, the sermon is always a compromise between its final and its efficient cause.

Just this is the case with a great historical object like this continental Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. It has not fully actualized the idea which constitutes and organizes it. Its historical evolution, though in a sense and in a measure determined by its idea, has been modified by its historical conditions. To revert again to the formula I have quoted, there has been a compromise—indeed there has been a series of compromises—between the final cause and the efficient causes.

This being true, you will readily grant that if I am to be true to my subject as a subject in history and not a subject in theological and ecclesiastical ideals, I cannot be expected to speak with the precision I could attain if I were writing in the other departments. For we are not now in a department in which we can speak positively. We must speak comparatively. The speech here is not yea, yea, and nay, nay: but is the speech of more and less; and analysis is quantitative as well as qualitative. History does not exhibit itself in sharp divisions, nor does its great current flow in a right line. Deflection and disturbance are everywhere, and the judgments of the historian, like his portrayals and narrative, will inevitably take character from this fact.

Nevertheless, the historian in portraying, in narrating, and in forming judgments, must never lose sight of the idea of the historical object before him. We must not forget that it is the characteristics of a Presbyterian church that we are seeking in

its history—a church therefore, in its idea at least, dominated by its faith in the Holy Scriptures as the record of God's special revelation, by its distinctive theology organized by the fundamental doctrine of the sovereignty of the holy and merciful God, and by its distinctive polity characterized by the parity of the clergy, the representation of the laity in the church judicatories, and by local, provincial and general assemblies in which the will of the whole body is ascertained and prescribed.

Let us remind ourselves of the broad facts of the origin and development of this Presbyterian Church, that we may bring clearly before us the great periods into which its history naturally distributes itself.

Scattered elements of Presbyterian church life existed within the territory now belonging to the United States long before the beginning of the eighteenth century. Indeed, we may say that a Presbyterian church was here, in the affiliated congregations of the Dutch settlers of New Netherlands, though the organization in which they were united was not in America, but beyond the sea. Then there were the individual congregations of the Huguenots; and, more important for us to consider, there were the large Presbyterian elements in the church order and church life of the congregations of Massachusetts Bay, and of the Connecticut colonies. Dr. Briggs calls the colony at Salem a Presbyterian colony. Probably the ecclesiastical development of the colony would have been on distinctively Presbyterian lines, had not the desire for union with their brethren of the Plymouth colony led to its modification. As it was, Dr. Henry M. Dexter calls the church form which followed "a Congregationalized Presbyterianism, or a Presbyterianized Congregationalism." In New England the Presbyterian elements finally died; but whenever New England life was transplanted as in Long Island and East Jersey, the result was the reverse, the Congregational traits yielded to those that were distinctly Presbyterian. Meanwhile, before the seventeenth century closed there had begun the emigrations of the Scottish people from the north of Ireland which, in the next century, assumed such large proportions, and did so much to determine the political, social and ecclesiastical life of the middle and southern colonies, and at last to secure their political independence.

The Presbyterian Church began its organized life not long after the beginning of the eighteenth century. Its official records go no further back than 1706; but there is not wanting in the records themselves evidence that justifies the belief that the Presbytery was organized one year, perhaps two or three years, earlier. Its growth was so rapid that it distributed itself into three Presbyteries in 1716; and the Synod met for the first time in the following year. In 1729 the Synod, by the Adopting Act and the law of subscription which that Act embodied, placed itself officially in a new relation to the Westminster symbols. The Church had suffered no little strain in the conflict which was terminated by the Act of 1729, and it had scarcely begun to enjoy the peace which followed when a new subject of controversy appeared and led to the division which lasted from 1741 to 1758. This was the introduction of measures born of the evangelical revival in England and the contemporary awakening in America. So familiar is the subject that I stop only to say, that although at first it seemed that the division must be perpetual, yet three or four years did not pass before a public opinion appeared, demanding a reunion. This opinion gathered strength continuously, and by 1758 the Church was one again. The years following that date were years of great political excitement. If there were discordant parties within the Church, their disagreements made no impression on the Church's general life. All hearts were deeply interested in the political union of the Colonies; and there was a growing feeling among the members of the Presbyterian Church that a conflict between the Colonies and Great Britain could not be long delayed. Of the attitude of those who formed the Presbyterian Church in that conflict there is no need now to speak. Clergy and laity were united first in ardent protest against the conduct of the British government and the legislation of the Parliament, and afterwards in the support of the Continental government which directed the war for independence. No Church reaped greater benefit from the success of the Colonies in the struggle, or from their consolidation under the Constitution. The period of constitutional construction in the state and the same period in the Church were synchronous;

and the year which witnessed the first inauguration of President Washington witnessed the inauguration of the Presbyterian General Assembly. The period which immediately followed was for the Church one of assimilation of new elements and of aggressive missionary work. This period continued until the next division in 1837.

Toward the close of the period, the variations in theological beliefs, in ecclesiastical practice, and in the attitudes within the church toward politico-moral questions became more impressive than the benefits of union; and divergence was soon followed by the crystallization of separated forces in two separate camps. Thus began the lives of the two Churches, called, popularly, the Old School and the New School. The division was far more radical than that between the Old Side and the New Side in the previous century. It lasted longer, and there was needed, what was not needed in the former division, a great secular movement to start the agitation for reunion. This secular movement was the Civil War. It was during its progress that public opinion in behalf of reunion began to assert itself; and it was just five years after the close of the war that the first reunited Assembly met in this city. For a score of years after the reunion the Church's life in all its departments and throughout its area, was marked by a vigor and union of effort beyond any that it had enjoyed during any previous period of its history. But since that score of years has closed, debates have been carried forward which have compelled the attention of the Church largely to themselves, and co-operating with other causes, have diminished the Church's activity in missions at home and abroad. It would be out of place here to intimate the probable outcome in the life of the Presbyterian Church of current discussions. To say whether or not the centrifugal force which has been evolved by them will prove stronger than the centripetal force which inheres in the organization, would be to introduce prophecy into a paper professedly historical; and at any rate we have no right to disturb the still air of delightful historical studies with the harsh sounds of current discussions.

Closing this synoptical view of the Church's history at the

point where current discussions began to affect the life of the Church, we may, I think, say that the Presbyterian History distributes itself into the following periods:

- I. The period of the separated elements, 1630-1700.
- II. The period of organization, 1700-1729.
- III. The period of conflict, 1729-1758.
- IV. The period of reorganization, 1758-1789.
- V. The period of missionary activity, 1789-1837.
- VI. The period of theological division, 1837-1869.
- VII. The period of reunion and progress, 1869-1890.

What the future has in store for the Church, we cannot say, of course; but we may be sure that under some such rubrics the future historian will organize his narrative of the past that is secure.

How shall I go about presenting the characteristics of this Church as they discover themselves in its history? Of course, in the brief time allowed me, I can do nothing adequate, I can simply suggest what you must develop for yourselves. It seems to me that we shall find these characteristic features, if we consider the attitude of the Church as revealed by its history to the country, to the world, to other Churches, to theological thought, and to Christian life. For these are the elements and objects to which as an organization its life has been most closely related. They have furnished both the impulse to and the objects of its most vital and energetic activity. Just as the characteristic traits of an individual emerge into view in the relations by which he is impelled to conduct and which yield to him the ends of action, so this Church's characteristics, originating in its formative idea, leap into sight and become its bold, outstanding features, as it is compelled to activity by its reflection on the state and country in which it has its home and special field, on the world to which like St. Paul it is debtor, on the organizations from which it is separated but to which as a Christian Church it is allied, on the theological thinking by which it is ever seeking to penetrate more deeply into the mind of the Church's Lord and Head, and on the distinctive life which it is the function of the Church to legitimate, to safeguard and to

develop. We shall economize time if we limit our view to these objects and relations.

But, before considering them, it seems proper to call your attention to what, perhaps, we may call the trait which underlies all the others, I mean this Church's abounding vitality. From the day of its planting to the present hour this ecclesiastical organism has had a strong and healthy life. The heart has wrought with vigor. The tissues have been nourished with good red blood. There have never been symptoms of anemia or of marasmus. The senses have been alert. The movements have been lithe and graceful. Work has not unduly fatigued the system. Self-sacrifice at crises has not robbed it of energy. Even its internal strifes, though they may have weakened, have not been able to exhaust it. It is this vitality among other things which makes it a worthy unit of large historical study. Of course, life considered in itself or in the impulse to action it communicates to specific powers, has no moral quality. But abounding vitality always attracts the eye, always calls out the sympathies. For it reveals itself as energy; and we praise it as the necessary condition of greatness.

Now, I think we must say of this Presbyterian Church that, speaking of it as a Church among Churches in this active country, its history abounds in exhibitions of an unusual measure of vital energy. Whatever else it has been, it has always been dynamic. It has never had a moment of stagnation, such as has characterized the Greek Church and the Oriental Schismatic Churches for centuries. How strikingly this vitality showed itself in the beginning of its history, by the rapid assimilation of Presbyterian elements! In 1706 there was a Presbytery. In 1716 there was a Synod. Like a healthy lad who outgrows his garments more rapidly than they can be furnished and whose blushing knees and elbows thrust themselves out into the open air at illegal rents, so the buoyant life of this young Church broke its bounds again and again. It took in elements as diverse as English and Welsh and Scottish and Scots-Irish and Dutch and German and French; digesting all with absolute ease. Because of this vitality its interests soon began to be diversified. Politics, education, the

growing social necessities of the new communities claimed and secured its regard and labors. Even its divisions, with parties and campaigns and discussions and trials and disciplines, are all marked by this sincere energizing which we call life. Indeed, much as we may deplore some of the incidents and features of the present discussions about the Old Testament Literature and History, and the coming discussions about New Testament Literature and History, this certainly is true; that they betray no evidence of an abatement of intellectual vigor, or of intelligent interest in the Bible as the Word of God; no evidence, in other words, of a lack of vital energy. And we may be confident that whatever the future has in store for it, this Church, if it shall continue to exist, will show no diminution of the vigorous life which has characterized it in debates and divisions as well as in its periods of genial and united activity.

I have said that the characteristics of a Church appear in its activities in relation to other great objects and interests. The first of these I named was the Country, including both the land which is its home and the government which makes the country a political unit. I shall carry all with me when I say, that its whole history reveals the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to have been and to be by eminence a loyal and patriotic Church, loving the land, the people and their political institutions. It is unnecessary to go into detail to confirm and illustrate this statement. But there are two or three things you will permit me to remark. It is worthy of note, for example, that few in numbers as the members of the Presbyterian Church were at its beginning, they represented four elements of the Colonial population and united from the start inhabitants of four or five of the colonies. So that we may say that both socially and geographically the Church started as a National Church. In this respect, its origin was different from that of the Puritan Churches of New England, the Dutch Church of New York, and the Episcopal Church of Virginia. It is to be noted, also, that the circumstances of their immigration led the Presbyterian immigrants at once to fix their affections on the country to which they came. Moreover,

not having a colony given to them, they spread themselves over many colonies from New York to Georgia; and because of their union as Presbyterians did no little to fix the interest of the other colonists on America as their country, and to bring about the earliest union of the Colonies. In this particular the Presbyterian Church's services can scarcely be exaggerated. Its efficiency in effecting such solidarity of the colonies as was possible during the period when their only political union was in the common sovereignty of Great Britain, whose government was across the ocean, is strikingly illustrated in the early history of the first college founded by Presbyterians. It was the fourth college planted in the United States; Harvard, William and Mary and Yale being older. Each of these older institutions was the College of a single colony; each was the College of an established Church; each came into existence years before the colonists began to realize their unity as Americans. "Now," if you will allow me to quote what I have written in another connection, "the conditions under which Princeton College was born, gave to it in important respects a different character. It was not the College of an established Church, or of a single colony, or of a people sprung from a single nationality. It sprang out of the life of a voluntary religious communion which had spread itself over several colonies, and which united a large portion of their people in common aims and activities; and it sprang into being at a time when Americans were beginning to be conscious of their unity as Americans, and when the sentiment of unity was beginning to energize in united political action."* What I have thus said of Princeton College may be said of the Presbyterian Church to which in the main the College owed its existence. I am not dwelling on this trait of pre-revolutionary patriotism in any spirit of boasting, I only wish to point out how early and under what circumstances this trait began to show itself. As for its later history I need not speak of the Presbyterian Church in the Revolution. The tribute paid by Dr. Inglis, the Episcopalian, that all the Presbyterian ministers were on

* Pres. and Ref. Review, April, 1897, p. 178.

the side of the rebels, was uttered by him as the complaint of a loyalist; and it did not exaggerate the situation. The reason for this patriotic attitude is not to be found solely in the memories of the hardships suffered under the Stuarts in England and Scotland and under the early Hanoverian Kings in Ireland. It had its chief source in the congruity between Presbyterian Church order and Republican Government; a congruity so often pointed out that it is not necessary to dwell upon it. That great home missionary work, the evangelization of the nation, in which this Church has taken a prominent, indeed, an eminent part, has always been commended by it as a patriotic as well as a religious work. It would be invidious to make comparisons between this Church and other Churches in the particular of which I am speaking; but it is only right to say that while we may not institute them, we shall not shun comparisons of patriotism.

Passing to the attitude of the Church to the world, we may claim for the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as one of its characteristics, the missionary spirit. It has felt deeply its indebtedness to the world. This trait revealed itself at an early day. The records show that as soon as the Church had established itself in any colony it sought to preach the Gospel to the Indian. And there are no more moving stories of missionary labor than those of the Brainerds in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. When the Evangelical Revival impressed upon the Churches of England and America with new power the duty of carrying the Gospel to the heathen, the Presbyterian Church of the United States was moved as profoundly as any of the religious communions. And its work abroad has been proportionately as large as that of any Church in America, except the Moravian. This foreign missionary work has been supported most of all by the Church's profound belief in the responsible sinfulness and lost state of man, and in Christianity as the one supernatural, exclusive and absolute religion. During the periods dealt with in this paper, this belief was profound and unwavering. As a consequence, though the Church's missionary work fell far below the Christian ideal, yet comparing it with the missionary labors of

sister Churches, it justifies the statement that the missionary spirit has given to it one of its striking traits. It is a question, which it becomes all of us who love this Church and who are interested in Foreign Missions seriously to ponder, whether the period in which we are living is marked by a weakening of this spirit and by a change in the Missionary motive? I shall not undertake to answer the question. Careful observers are at least wondering, whether a diminished belief in the supernatural and the substitution of sociological for evangelical appeals in behalf of the Missions of the Church, may not progressively lessen the Church's gifts and contract the Church's work. What will the essayist say, who, a half century hence, shall exhibit to the Historical Society the attitude of the Presbyterian Church toward the world's evangelization during the period on which we are entering? I shall not try to prophesy. Only the past is secure.

The fathers of the third and fourth centuries called the Church of Christ the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The notes of Sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity were the tests by which they tried the claims of any body claiming to be a substantive part of the visible Church of our Lord. Of these indicia, that of Catholicity has made the most profound impression. But Catholicity itself has been variously understood. The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. claims this as one of her traits: a trait which reveals itself in her attitude toward her sister Churches, and in her large conception of the visible Church. This Church in her view is no narrow body. It is composed of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. Laying the emphasis on "profession," as distinguished from rites and successions and organizations, she has looked to belief rather than to form for the bond of unity between all who call themselves Christians. In giving effect to this view of the Visible Church, her attitude toward her sister Protestant Communion has, she thinks, been in the highest degree generous. Even when they feel bound in conscience to deny to her fellowship in one way she has persistently sought to cultivate their Christian affection in whatever way was open. Those who disagree with her

on principles of visible organization, she has cherished as within the household of saints, and as holding like precious faith with her. Perhaps in nothing else has this inward and spiritual, as distinguished from outward and visible, Catholicity been so marked as in the outflow of her beneficence beyond her own boundaries.

And yet, whether we regret it or glory in it, it is due to historical truth to say that her attitude toward those great Churches which she describes as unreformed, has been prevailingly militant. The geographical interval between herself and the Greek Church has prevented her militant attitude from being more than academic. But toward the Latin Church, which perpetuates mediæval Christianity in the modern and western world, her attitude has been positively hostile. This hostility, profound as it has been and often bitter, has not been undignified. It has proceeded from contrasted conceptions of the Church, its rule of faith, its ministry and sacraments, and from the deep conviction that the conception which it opposes has issued and must, unless opposed, continue to issue in spiritual servitude and in a low state of morals. Opposition on this ground to the Latin Church may be of the very essence of Catholicity. Certainly, as I have said, the Presbyterian polemic against Rome, grounded on principle, at least has dignity. I am inclined to believe, however, that righteous as is our protest, there have been times when we have, through its urgency, lost not a little. The Mediæval Church, which gave birth to Anselm and Aquinas and a Kempis, which built the cathedrals and out of whose life sprang many of the great hymns of the Church, has something valuable to teach us about faith, and self-sacrifice, and worship. And without abating at all our protest and polemic, it will be possible for us to enrich not only our public worship, but our spiritual life by a charitable study of its history.

But I must go on to speak of the characteristic of the Presbyterian Church which emerges into view as we observe its attitude toward theological thought. I am sure that we can call it eminently intellectual in its construction of Christianity; and I am not sure that we shall be altogether wrong if we shall

say that its construction of Christianity is too predominantly intellectual. Perhaps the praises which we hear and read from time to time even in Presbyterian quarters of the Ritschlianism which says that metaphysical reflection should be banished from the sphere of religion, is the evidence rather of a natural reaction from this intellectualizing habit than of sympathy with Ritschl's profound agnosticism and his specific teaching that the most we can hope to reach in the way of knowledge of God is value-judgments. Now if I were speaking of Presbyterianism in its idea instead of Presbyterianism as it reveals itself historically, I should have ready an answer to this charge of over-intellectualism. I should be glad to point out as I could by quotations from its standards and from its great writers, that the Church which has absolutely divorced metaphysical reflection and religion is the Presbyterian Church. Against it, judged by its constitutive idea, the charge is baseless that it has ever confounded reflected knowledge, the system of theology as a whole or in its parts with spiritual Christianity. The knowledge and assent which it calls Christian is distinctly spiritual in its content and mode. It is the immediate vision of the regenerate, of the pure in heart who see God. It is the direct knowledge which has its root in the renewed will to do the will of God. It is the apprehension which is produced by the habit of faith wrought by the Holy Spirit. This is the knowledge, and not metaphysical reflection, which the Church of which I am speaking makes a substantive part of religion.

Nevertheless, it has construed Christianity intellectually as no other Church has done. Its creed is the most systematic. Its sermons have followed the creed. Its influence on its congregations has got distinction from this trait. On the whole, this has been of unquestionable advantage to Church and State alike. But sometimes I think that theology—I mean dogmatic and apologetic theology—has too exclusively determined the culture of the Presbyterian. At least, here where without danger we may speak of our own defects, it may be a good thing to say, that a larger historical and linguistic culture issuing in distinctively Biblical study, might have made the history of Presbyterian influence a nobler history even than it is. Undoubt-

edly, there has been within the last half century a beneficent change. In this country, certainly, the Presbyterian Church of which we are speaking has shared as much as any Church in the land in the revival of linguistic and historical studies in the interest of Biblical interpretation. Still, looking back over the Church's whole history, we must note its tendency to construe Christianity by means of systematic forms, and call it by eminence a theological Church.

Finally, we need to note the attitude of this Church to life. What is its distinctive type of Christian character? Here I can say but a word. The Presbyterian Church is one of the Puritan Churches, and its type of life is the Puritan type. I shall not attempt in the few moments left me to describe it. But I may say, that, starting with the conception of the immediate communion between man and God, and the absolute supremacy of conscience, it wrought out a programme of life whose pervading quality was spirituality. Whenever this programme has been given effect in Church and society, whether in the Mediæval monastery under the eye of Bernard of Clairvaux, in Florence under the preaching of Savonarola, or in Scotland, or, in Puritan England, the result has been to make men measure conduct by lofty and spiritual standards, and to induce thought on the highest subjects. That it has issued in strong characters, able to do and bear, to undergo and overcome, to sacrifice self in the interest of great ideals, even the most inimical critic of Puritanism has never denied. Criticism has fastened mainly on two features which it has held up as its defects; first, the lack of appreciation of beauty in fine art, and, secondly, the destruction of individual liberty in the subjection of the unit in society to the conscience of others, so that indifferent habits and recreations came under the ban, and the legitimate demand of human nature for play or amusement was denied. As to the first of these criticisms, it is to be said that, measurably true as it is, it is truest in respect of beauty in the lower or the plastic arts. In the intellectual arts of poetry and of oratory, Puritanism has not been wanting, as it has never been wanting in intellectual vigor. As to the other criticism, it must be confessed that there have been periods in Puritan history when things properly placed

among the *adiaphora* have ranked as sins; but even this excess was better for sinful human nature than the excesses on the other side in England both before and after the Puritan commonwealth. But I do not think that the life of the Presbyterian Church can be described as unduly Puritanic. Considering the dangers in new societies of habits which become innocuous when life becomes more highly specialized, the social demand of the Presbyterian life to refrain from certain customs and amusements indifferent in themselves must, taking its history as a whole, be regarded as in the circumstances necessary to preserve the high and spiritual type of Christian living legitimated by its noble theology.

I have tried to bring out fairly and clearly the characteristics of the Presbyterian Church, as they have emerged in history, all the while comparing it with the Churches surrounding it. It has been in this country notably a patriotic Church. In its relation to the world it has been missionary. Its attitude toward Protestant Churches has revealed a noble catholicity. In its construction of Christianity, it has been intellectual and scholastic. Within the later periods of its history its scholasticism, however, has yielded to Biblical and Historical study. And the Christian type of living which it has promoted has been strong, spiritual and lofty. I do not know that it would be possible to make this delineation more definite without exhausting your patience. Many are saying, nowadays, that the Presbyterian Church is on the eve of a revolution, the result of which will be either to shatter it into fragments or to efface these bold, outstanding features. I confess to fears that it is undergoing most serious changes. And I close with the remark, that should the changes be such as to efface these features or to alter them beyond the point of recognition, the loss to the Church, to Christianity, to Christian truth and life, to civilization and to the world—the loss I say would, according to human standards of computation, be simply incalculable.