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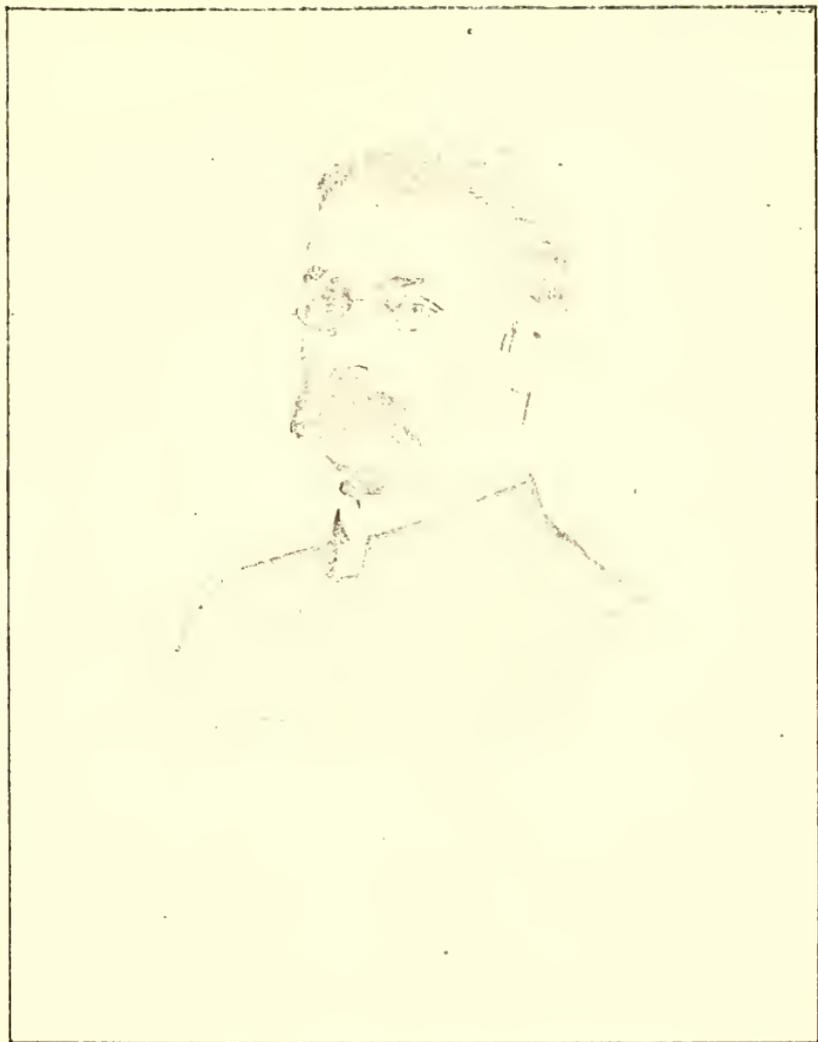
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PRESBYTERIANISM AND THE FUTURE,

BY REV. FRYTON H. HOGG, D. D., WILMINGTON, N. C.

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”—Acts ii. 39.

THE Old Testament is naturally a book of promise. In the earliest dawn of the gospel we have the seed of promise. To the church delivered from the flood God gave the bow of promise. To Abraham in his old age was born the child of promise, and in due time his seed inherited the land of promise. So, too, all the symbols of the priestly law, all the developments of the civil government, the song of psalmist, the vision of seer, the exhortation of prophet, were all fainter adumbrations or more distinct pledges of that which the future held, and the fulness of time should unfold. But when that fulness of time had come, and all the promises of God were made Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, it might have been supposed that the period of promise was over, and that the era of perfect and complete fulfilment was at hand. So thought the disciples during the days of our Lord's flesh. So thought they with fuller assurance after his triumphant resurrection, as with eager hearts they came to him with the question, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom unto Israel?” But gently and gravely, as of yore, he puts them off: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” And when in a moment he is parted from them, the last word that falls from his lips as he is received up into glory is a word of promise—the promise of



Very truly yours,
Deyton H. Hoge.

power, the power of the Holy Ghost, that they might bear witness for him to the uttermost part of the earth.

Again the disciples wait upon the Lord until promise is crowned with fulfilment, and on Pentecost the Spirit descends, and they are filled, and clothed, and transformed with power. But when Peter, standing forth that day in the fulness of that new-found power, upon the threshold of that new dispensation it had ushered in, speaks the creative words of the Christian Church, they are still words of promise—"the promise is unto you." And lest any one should limit that promise to the present, and its immediate fulfilment, we see it glancing along to future ages, and bursting abroad to distant lands: "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." Promise is still to be the forming principle of the church's life, and the inspiration of the church's activities. Nor is it only at the beginning of the Christian life of those who in successive generations compose the Christian Church, that promise is to play its part. When the Holy Spirit enters the soul, its full measure is not reached at a bound, and the very highest development of his power and glory here is still only an earnest of that which is beyond. Hear the aged apostle, who surpassed even Peter in the "abundance of revelations," when far on his earthly course: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And when he unveils the trinity of Christian graces that are to "abide" with the Christian throughout this life, and with the church throughout this dispensation, there is not only a Faith to look up, and a Love to look out, but a Hope to look forward.

To-day we stand as did the Apostle Peter, though to an humbler degree, at one of those points where fruition has

followed promise. But let us learn, like him, at such a time to fix our gaze not only upon the past, but also upon the future. As we think of the little, struggling vine planted in faith and hope three quarters of a century ago, and then cast our eyes around at the vigorous churches that stand where once it stood; when we look out farther and see the more distant shoots that have sprung into life and activity from its side; and when we think of the rich fruitage that from these vines is now ripening here for heaven, and the still larger vintage that has already been gathered into the garner above, our hearts may well swell with gratitude to God for the blessings of the past. But when we remember that the harvest of the present is the seed of the future, when we think how that seed is being scattered broadcast throughout our land, and has already been borne to other shores, we may well pause before we exclaim, "The former days were better than these." This church has had noble pastors. Some of them, after an absence of years, are with us again. To see their faces, to hear their voices, to receive their greetings of love, and to listen to the dear old gospel from their lips, has been the unique and blessed experience of this joyful re-union; but these men have labored, and others, coming after them, will enter into their labors, who will see greater things than they. It has had devoted members in the past—men who have put their lives in jeopardy for the sake of the gospel, men who have never flinched in the times that tried men's souls: but no one can know the heights of Christian heroism to which God may call some of these little ones that sit before us to-day. It has set in motion many beneficent activities, that have brought light and gladness and blessing into countless hearts and homes, but only eternity can reveal how far will reach the widening circle of its beneficence in the ages that are yet unborn.

The same principle holds true when we take a wider survey,

and consider that great family of Christian churches to which this congregation belongs. There is no more fascinating pursuit than the study of those causes, small and great, that brought into being the great Reformation movement. And as in this year of grace we celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of that discovery which added a new world to the arena of human effort and progress, we look on with adoring wonder at the silent moving of the divine hand by which Lollard and Bohemian, Huguenot and Hollander, English Puritan and Scotch Presbyterian, were, through toil and sacrifice, persecution, shame and death, working out those principles, and shaping those institutions, that should not only form the fabric of our ecclesiastical structures, but should lay the foundations of our civil and religious liberties. But while the memory of these mighty dead shall last as long as history, while their devotion to truth and duty must ever nerve our hearts to like endeavor, while they have bequeathed to us much that we can never forsake without being recreant to every duty both to God and man, yet we cannot rest in their attainments. The faithful study of the past will do much to direct us for the future. It has lessons of warning and lessons of encouragement. It can save from much error and lead into much truth. But he who would shape the future altogether by the past, is like the mariner who should steer his ship by the track it has left in its wake, instead of by the changeless stars of heaven, or the needle ever constant to the pole.

History has precious lessons indeed, but its truest and best is this: that the best is yet beyond, and that fruition in the past is the pledge and promise of a richer fulfilment in the future. It is these considerations that have led me to ask you, on this day freighted with the memories of the past, to take a glance with me at the subject I have selected, "Presbyterianism and the Future."

When we look a little more narrowly into the text we see that it outlines certain elements or conditions that are essential to the success of the church, or of any part of the church. These elements of success are revival, perpetuation, enlargement, and all in accordance with a sovereign, eternal and gracious purpose: *revival*, because the "promise" is the promise of the Holy Ghost; *perpetuation*, because the promise is not only unto you, but "to your children"; *enlargement*, because it is also "to all that are afar off"; and in its application among all these, by a purpose that must be sovereign, and must be eternal, and must be gracious, because it is divine, it is limited to "as many as the Lord our God shall call."

I would miss my purpose very far if any one were to understand from anything that I shall say that I claim for Presbyterianism and the Presbyterian Churches a monopoly of any or all of these elements of success and blessing that are promised in the text. But with the fullest catholicity of spirit, it is surely our right to point out that Presbyterian principles require us to seek for, and strive after, each one of them; that Presbyterian doctrines reveal the true method of their attainment; and that Presbyterian organization presents a most favorable channel for their exercise and development. If these positions can be maintained, Presbyterianism has nothing to fear from the future, but will be found to meet the scriptural conditions of a church for all times, and a church for all peoples.

I ask you, then, first, to observe with me that the conditions of the divine promise given in the text, upon which all these elements of blessing depend, is the cardinal principle of that theology of which our church is the avowed and recognized exponent. "The promise," with all that it includes, is "to as many as the Lord our God shall call." That God has a people chosen in love from all eternity, whom

he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son: that upon them he bestows, each in his own time, the effectual call of his Holy Spirit: that by that call being made partakers of the divine nature, they turn from sin in faith and repentance unto God, and that without that call and the kindling of the divine life within them, they are certain to continue in sin because of the deadness of their moral nature: and that the bestowment of that call includes every gift that pertains unto life and godliness, and every grace that is necessary to keep them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy—this, as I understand it, is the system called Calvinism: and this, as I understand it, is the creed that we confess; and this, as we have seen, is the doctrine of the text. Now it is not essential for receiving the blessings of the text that we understand and receive the doctrine of the text. The sovereign grace of God is not limited to our finite and fallible understanding.

“The love of God is broader than the measure of man’s mind,”

and many a man who has spent his life in the vehement denial of the sovereignty of grace, has been himself a most conspicuous monument of that sovereign grace. But assuredly those who recognize the divine condition of blessing are in the most favorable attitude for receiving blessing; and those who have recognized God as the sole and sufficient source of salvation, and all that leads to it, are on the only sure road for finding it. “Them that honor me, I will honor,” saith the Lord; and honoring God, we need not fear what man can do unto us, or say of us.

It has been said that every Christian is a Calvinist upon his knees. If this is true, and no one who carefully observes the prayers of devout men of whatever shade of belief can well doubt it, it in great part accounts for the large measure

of blessing bestowed upon churches whose formal creed denies the distinctive doctrines of grace. But the church that professes and teaches these great doctrines has an overwhelming argument in her mouth to *bring men to their knees*, pointing them to the only source of help and blessing, lest seeking to climb up some other way they be cast out as thieves and robbers, or, at least, come short of the glory of God. And what the church of the future needs that she may have a larger measure of blessing is not that she should cast aside, or curtail, or soften her creed, but that her creed should get down into her heart, and bring her down upon her knees, waiting upon the Lord for his blessing, until his grace shines forth in her life, and all men are pointed to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—until all shall hear the voice, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”

When, in the second place, we look at the elements of the promise in detail, these thoughts find illustration and emphasis. I have used the term “revival” as including all that is involved in the promise of the Holy Spirit. It is a term that implies *Uſe*. There is no blessing for a dead church. Its creed may be unexceptionable in its orthodoxy, its worship may be faultless in its beauty, its ministry profound in their learning, their conduct above reproach and their orders beyond suspicion; but if life be not there, if the Spirit of God be not there, orders and dignity and learning, æsthetic worship and orthodox creed, will not save it from the blight and corruption of death. A dead church is not bringing men to Christ: a dead church is not seeking and saving the lost: a dead church is not doing the only work that gives her a right to be. But if the Spirit of God breathes upon these slain, instead of bleaching bones, we will have a living army to do the work and fight the battles of the living God.

Again, the term revival implies a *renewal of life*. Some may object to the term on this ground, and say that intervening periods of depression and death are implied in its use, and that this is not a normal state of the church, but one to be regretted and deplored. But renewal of life does not necessarily imply that the previous state was one of depression; it means the heightening or quickening of the previous state, whatever it may be. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." If we undertake to cross the mountain ranges that traverse the eastern slope of our continent, we ascend one ridge only to descend into the valley on the other side: we cross the valley, ascend another ridge and again descend, and so until the whole system has been crossed. But if we go to Siberia and ascend from the eastern coast we have a very different experience. By and by we come to the mountains, but when we have ascended, instead of a descent into a valley beyond, we have a broad table-land, gently rising upward from the summit of one range to the base of another; we climb that and continue to repeat the same experience, always ascending and never descending; at times more rapidly than at others, but still always upward. From the weakness of our human nature our revivals are too apt to be like our own mountains, with valleys of depression between, but they need not be so. Every true revival should bring the church up to a higher plane of Christian life and experience from which there need be no descent, but a steady march onward and upward from the height attained, until a new influx of spiritual life and energy fits us for ascending to yet greater heights. Revival, thus understood, is the true and normal state of the church and of the Christian, and not an occasional spasmodic effort that spends its force and leaves no lasting benefit. It is God's law of the church's growth, and with-

out growth there will be, by a law that can be ignored in the spiritual no more than in the natural world, retrogression, decay and death. Let us look then at some of the effects or manifestations of revival.

There is first the spiritual quickening of the children of God. As rain refreshes the parched earth, so the Divine Spirit poured out upon the souls of believers causes every grace to spring and grow afresh. On every side there is verdure and bloom and ripening fruit. God's word is studied with a fresher interest; prayer has new power and fervor; praise has a higher note of joy; God's house is thronged with eager worshippers. Love flows upward to God and outward to man. Broken friendships are renewed, neglected duties are performed, and slumbering consciences are aroused.

With the renewal of other duties comes the renewal of Christian testimony. If neglected before, the duty is now performed; if performed before, it is now done with new power. Christians speak often one to another and often to those that are without. The power of the Holy Ghost is upon them to witness for Christ, and so with the growth in grace comes the increase of numbers, and the Lord adds daily to the church of such as shall be saved.

But more than that: out of every great revival arise those new teachings of truth, and those new movements in behalf of the truth, that lead the church on to higher and better things. The Reformation was the fruit of revival. The modern evangelistic movement was the fruit of revival. The great movements in the interest of the young people of the church are all the result of revival. And no individual church enjoys a true revival that some more practical view of its duties, and some more active prosecution of its work, is not the result.

Revival, then, in whatever aspect it is considered, is essen-

tial to the church's life and growth. Nay, it *is* the church's life. How, then, and whence shall we look for revival? Human nature in its short-sightedness, human nature in its impatience, human nature in its pride, often suggests various human methods and instrumentalities by which revivals may be "gotten up," as the vulgar phrase goes: forgetting that a revival, like water, can rise no higher than its source, and that a revival of human origin can give no more than a human blessing. The Calvinistic theology comes in as the true and only correction of human ignorance, impatience, and pride. Keeping its eye fixed upon God as the only source of revival, since he gives the promise, and the promise is unto as many as he shall call, it cautions us to use just those means that he has commanded, and to wait upon him for the life-giving power, without which all our efforts must be vain.

To this same conclusion, not only its doctrine, but everything in its worship and order tends. Neither condemning, nor dependent upon, fixed forms, its worship has always been simple and free from adventitious ornament. With the Spirit of God in it, it is fresh, satisfying, inspiring; without his presence it is lifeless and bald; thus making us feel the constant need of his life and power. Its main strength and reliance is upon the "foolishness of preaching," which God's word and all experience teach to be powerless to save without the Spirit of God. Insisting upon an orderly entrance into its ministry and other offices, it at the same time claims for them no "indelible character," no power of salvation by manipulation, no official grace or virtue, but solemnly charges all that only as they personally seek and find the grace and power of the Holy Spirit can their ministry be effectual in bringing revival blessings to his church. For this reason it has no temporary or "expediency" officers in its organization, but solemnly sets apart those officers

that it finds in the word of God, recommending them to the grace of God. If the Presbyterian Church is not a revival church, it is nothing. And the more thoroughly it masters its own principles, the more continuously and increasingly will it be a revival church, and the brighter will shine for it this promise of our Lord: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

The next element of promise in the text is *perpetuation*: "The promise is unto you, and to your children." This manifestly has to do with the future. The church that would take hold of the future must lay its hand upon the hearts of the young. Here, again, we only need a more thorough application of our own principles. Denying on the one hand the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and on the other, repudiating the exclusion of infants from the church, the Presbyterian Church has always taken its stand on God's unrepealed covenant, and said to its little ones, "Ye are the children of the covenant." Admitting them to the privileges of the church on the basis of God's covenant promises, it has always insisted that God's little ones should be trained for him. Long before the modern Sunday-school was dreamed of, the Presbyterian Church in her parish schools, in her parental training, and in her pastoral catechisings, was instructing her children in the word of God and the doctrines of that word, with a thoroughness that modern methods have rarely equalled and never surpassed. Seizing hold of the new instrumentality because of its wider scope and better opportunities for reaching those that are without, she has incorporated it into her system, and devoted to its development her highest and noblest energies. And if she has relaxed in any degree her former instrumentalities, there are not lacking indications of a wise return to the

parish school, while parental training will always revive with a revived church.

But in our own days a new demand is made upon the church. The church is realizing its call to personal service as never before, and with that call comes the call to train its children not only to know Christ, but to serve him. Innumerable forms of organization for accomplishing this work have sprung into being, some within church lines and some without, some wise and some otherwise. It is gratifying to note that the venerable Synod of Virginia has appointed a committee to inquire into the best method of organizing and developing the energies of its young people. One thing is certain: the church cannot restrain these movements if it would; and it ought not if it could. God is in them, his word is behind them, and what the church needs to do is heartily to encourage, and wisely to direct, the efforts of its young people in channels most conformable to its own life, and most conducive to their spiritual growth. But these movements considered in themselves, and apart from any question of particular form or method, are evidences that the revival promise is reaching unto our children, promising to us and to all who encourage them, the perpetuation of the blessings of the present, and the more abundant manifestation of those blessings in the future.

The Presbyterian Church has peculiar advantages from its form of government for the instruction and guidance of its children and youth. It alone has an order of men regularly set apart for the direction of God's house, whose very name is derived from the family. The elders are ordained to be the spiritual fathers of the congregation, and shepherds of the flock. As fathers, they cannot neglect the children; as shepherds, they cannot forsake the lambs. As the fountain of government in the congregation, it is theirs to direct and organize the church until "the whole body,

fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." As the years go on, this office becomes not less, but more, important. And as elders more fully realize the nature and responsibility of their office, they will more effectively discharge this work of developing and organizing the Christian activities of the congregations under their care. In such organization children and young people must have a large and important part, and in their wisely directed zeal, consecrated in their youth to the Master's use, the church will not be slow to see its best and brightest promise for the future.

But we must now turn to look at the last element of promise—the promise of *enlargement*; for the promise is not only unto you and to your children, it is "to all that are afar off." When we contemplate this promise, as the events of these last days have given it meaning, we are tempted to exclaim with the prophet: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" "Behold, these shall come from far: and lo, these from the north and west, and these from the land of Sinim."

While we cheerfully award to another denomination the palm for the inauguration of the modern missionary movement that has just completed its first century, it should not be forgotten that as early as 1620 a Presbyterian professor in the University of Leyden, founded a missionary college, whose graduates went forth to the Dutch East Indies, and did work which anticipates all that is best in modern missions. And if in the missionary revival led by Carey, a Scotch General Assembly at first turned a cold shoulder upon the enterprise, it is none the less true that a member of that Assembly pointed to the Great Commission as the final and sufficient argument for missions, the answer

to all objections, and the end of controversy. But whatever the original attitude of the Presbyterian Church, no one will deny that it has assumed its full share of the work now. No one who, at the recent great Council of Presbyterian Churches, heard upon one platform Presbyterian missionaries from India, China, Africa, Korea, the New Hebrides, and the wilds of Northwest America, and who saw two great churches packed at the same hour with Presbyterian congregations to hear the messages they brought of the progress of the gospel in all lands, could have any doubt of the present attitude of the Presbyterian Church towards missions.

And how could it be otherwise? More than ten years ago, when just licensed by my Presbytery, I preached my first missionary sermon from this text: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." And to this day there is to my mind no stronger missionary appeal than that. The man who has taken down into his heart the belief that God has an elect people scattered throughout this world, whom he calls upon his church to find out with the message of life, can have no rest day or night while anything remains undone that he can do to carry out Christ's purposes of grace, and bring to the Lord his own. The encouragement to Paul to stay in Corinth was that the Lord had much people in that city: and the knowledge that the Lord has chosen ones in all lands is the best encouragement to the church to go everywhere preaching the word. And while we have in our doctrines the strongest possible motive for missionary effort, we have in our polity a system that is capable of world-wide expansion. Like the banyan tree, wherever a branch touches the ground it takes root. With all the elements drawn direct from the people, it develops a native organized church on any soil in

which it is planted. It commends itself to the judgment of the intellectual Brahmin, and is comprehensible to the mind of the simple Papuan. It is complete in all its elements on the tiniest islet, and is elastic enough to cover the broadest continent. It is capable of realizing a world-wide organic unity, but in the equality of all its rulers, and the freedom of all its integral parts, it is more solicitous of maintaining the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

The Presbyterian Church is then peculiarly adapted to be a missionary church. And it has come to recognize missionary activity not only as a duty to the heathen, but as an essential part of the church's life. Enlargement is as necessary to the church as perpetuation. The outgoing of the church's energies is as necessary to its life as is exercise to the body. The more it puts forth, the more is its strength increased, and the fuller the pulsations of life and grace that flow through its members from the great heart of Christ.

To live, to endure, to expand. These are the elements necessary to a church for all times and for all peoples. And these, from the promise of the text, we may, in humble dependence upon God, claim as ours.

We do not claim that our church, just as it stands, is the church of the future. God doubtless has many lessons yet to teach us, and some of them we might well be learning now. I believe that every great church has some deposit of truth that it is her mission to contribute to the church of the future. Some may contribute a more varied and responsive form of worship, yet without reducing everything to set forms. From the same source there may come the effective administration of the diocesan bishop without the diocesan's rank; from another source there may come the power derived from freer personal testimony for Christ; from others, something yet different, that God now sees but that we do not. But of one thing I am persuaded. That

which the Presbyterian family will contribute is that which makes it Calvinistic and which makes it Presbyterian, a doctrine that gives glory to God and a polity that gives liberty to the people. For this it is that insures to us the promise of revival, perpetuation and enlargement, until the multitude of the redeemed have all been gathered in, and the Lord shall be king over all the earth.