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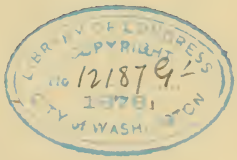
BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1876.



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THE PRESENT CONDITION,

PROSPECTS, BENEFICENT WORK, NEEDS AND OBLIGATIONS

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BY THE

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THE

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OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

IN our act of commemoration we are now brought to an inquiry into the present condition, prospects, beneficent work, needs and obligations of the Presbyterian Church. In the prosecution of this inquiry it will be convenient to give the largest place to the present condition of the Church. From that the transition will be easy to the other topics.

I. The strictly evangelical character of the Church is the most obvious sign of its present condition. Our Confession and Catechisms express gospel truths in the plainest terms. The Church is evangelical in its accepted doctrine not only, but in its aims and spirit as well. No ministry in Christendom is more thorough and urgent than ours in expounding the plan of sal-

vation. No body of believers is more importunate in prayer for revivals of religion, and none labors more diligently to secure the best fruits of revivals in the life of God's people and the conversion of sinners.

Our evangelizing has continually widened the sphere of its activity. From the beginning this Church has been a missionary society. In the year 1707 our first presbytery, then in the second year of its existence, ordered its ministers "to supply neighboring destitute places." In 1756 the synod of New York established missions among the Indians. The twelfth General Assembly, met in the year 1800, marked out for the Church its permanent plans for the spread of the gospel. That assembly, to use its own language, "agreed that the following objects deserve consideration:" first, "the gospelizing" of the Indians; second, "the instruction of the negroes, the poor and those who are destitute of the means of grace in various parts of this extensive country;" third, the distribution of the Bible and religious books; fourth, the support of candidates for the ministry; fifth, the theological instruction of the candidates by "professors of theology;" these professors to be provided with "a suitable library" and "to receive a small salary." Perhaps the brethren who were met in that assembly seventy-six years

ago built better than they knew, but the remarkable fact is that we can distinctly trace in that minute the foundation of our present Boards of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Publication and Education, and of our theological seminaries. And another fact is not less noteworthy: the Church, after having multiplied its boards and committees beyond the number of four, proposed in 1800, is now inquiring whether it would not be wise to return to that original plan. Nor have we, in the organization of our theological seminaries, exceeded unreasonably the rule of a "suitable library" and "a small salary" for the professors.

These institutions were intended to be, and now are, simply agencies and organs of evangelism. We close this period with all in complete working order, every one of them controlled by the authority of the Church, invigorated by its life, directed always and altogether and unalterably to this one end, the "gospelizing" of the world. Whatever enters into the idea of an evangelizing Church plainly appears in our present condition.

This Church is moreover a witness-bearer. If it be allowable to reduce the highest offices of the gospel Church to the number of two or three only, one of them would be its office as a witness to the truth. Our Lord said to Pilate, "For this cause

was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth." He required his disciples to be witnesses unto him unto the uttermost parts of the earth. On the day of Pentecost and afterward they declared that Christ had risen from the dead, whereof, they added, "we all are witnesses." The holy men and women who laid down their lives for Christ's sake and the gospel's are called μαρτυρες (*martyres*), the martyr being simply a witness who uttered his testimony amidst the torments of a violent death. In the awful vision of the fifth seal, John saw under the altar the souls, and heard the loud cry, of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held. Now, this Church is not only an evangelizing but a witnessing brotherhood.

Let us then look into the form and substance of our testimony.

First, it takes on the creed form. Our system of doctrine is set forth in a Confession of Faith and in two separate Catechisms. Every part of these documents having been reduced to writing and printed, nothing is left to be settled by any gloss or tradition written or unwritten, and nothing is to be received as of ecclesiastical authority, neither explanation nor caveat, except it be found in the text.

Further, this testimony covers the whole field

of Christian doctrine. The Confession is drawn out into thirty-three chapters, subdivided into about one hundred and seventy sections. The Larger Catechism contains extended answers to one hundred and ninety-six questions. The Shorter Catechism, though striving after brevity, is not content until it has proposed one hundred and seven definitions. It would be difficult for an inquirer, even the most thorough and searching, to ask a fair question in Christian doctrine which is not fairly met in these formularies.

In regard to the system of doctrine set out in our standards, we may adopt a well-known classification, suggested, perhaps, by Dr. Hodge. (*Princeton Review*, 1858, p. 689.)

We begin with the body of truth which we hold in common with all the great historical Churches bearing the Christian name, including the Greek and Roman communions. With them we testify to the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, of the person of Christ, and to some of the vital points in the mediatorial work of the Son of God. Next, bearing with us these testimonies, we leave the communions of the Greek and Roman Churches, and pass into the company of the evangelical Protestants, whether they be Lutherans or Arminians or German Reformed. We unite with them in constantly maintaining the truths which we must know in order to be saved

—truths broader than the borders of any one denomination, truths which stand the old test of catholicity, being received everywhere and always and by all.

Bearing with us these sacred treasures, we pass over into a narrower fellowship, even unto the believers who accept the Calvinistic theology. This form of doctrine is held within compass of the five points, and they project so sharply from our standards that nobody can doubt their presence. They are the distinctive peculiarities of our written testimony.

With this agrees the constant witness-bearing of the living Church. This system of doctrine is diligently taught in our families and Sabbath-schools and pulpits. It is the outstanding sum and substance of our most approved treatises on theology. Very few men come into the ministry except through the lecture-rooms of our theological seminaries; and in every one of them the teachers have solemnly adopted, as the confession of their personal faith, this system of doctrine. We require every man who bears office in the Church to receive and adopt it as his own by a public subscription. No man can become a minister or ruling elder or deacon, nor can he be admitted to a seat in the church court, in any other way; and every man is subject to be deprived of office so soon as he renounces this be-

lief. It may be confidently asserted that the testimony of the living Church is at one with the testimony of the written formularies.

And to make all things sure, the doctrinal matter printed in the symbolical books and preached and taught by the living Church takes a double form—the form at once of a testimony and a protest. Standing in certain vital doctrines with the Greek and Roman Churches, we protest against Atheism and Pantheism and Materialism, with their swarming and pestilent heresies. With all our Protestant brethren we protest against Romanism and Rationalism; and with the Reformed Churches we remonstrate with the "Remonstrants." Our doctrinal position is first didactic, then polemic, very faintly irenic. Calvinism is the distinctive peculiarity of our system. If that were eliminated or suppressed or abandoned, either in the written standards or in the inward convictions of the people, this Church would have no right to an existence on earth. In that event it would be a schism, not a necessity, in the kingdom. Over and above what truths are well set forth by other communions, our Church, Calvinism being eliminated from the creed, would represent nothing imperial either in divine revelation or in the forms of human thought.

Let it not be thought, however, that the Con-

fession is our rule of faith. Neither is it the judge by which controversies are to be determined, nor the infallible interpreter of God's written word. The rule of faith is the Holy Scripture alone. The supreme judge of controversies, in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures; and the infallible interpreter of Scripture is the Scripture itself. We acknowledge always the supreme authority of the written word. That word is the touchstone of all that we preach and all that we print, the rule by which we judge our catechisms and confessions, and with which we require our prayers and hymns, our sermons and treatises in theology, to be conformed. Our creed is simply a human covenant wherein we declare that, to the best of our knowledge, the doctrinal matter therein contained is the system set forth in the rule of faith, and that the language is sufficient in which the doctrine is expressed. It will easily be admitted that the compilers of the creed may have erred in some things through the frailty inseparable from humanity; but we profess and say that we are not able to detect the possible error.

The full assurance with which we rest upon our standards is strengthened by the known processes of their formation. The history of the

Westminster books is the history of theology, and theology is the growth of ages. Many centuries following the ministry of the apostles were required in order to gather from the Scriptures the true doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ, and to select the words and to frame the definitions which should express the mind of the Spirit. After that was done, the truths concerning man and the way of salvation were slowly and painfully ascertained. In the period of the Reformation the Protestant Churches combined all these separate truths into a multitude of creed-forms. But they were tentative only, not final. At last the Westminster Assembly, profiting by the labors of those that had gone before, gave to the Church the latest and most complete confession of its faith. This document not only summed up all the existing knowledge of God's word, but it was the consummate product of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Protestant Reformation, the second Pentecost of the Gentiles, and up to our own day the last of all. We judge that if the prophets and teachers at Antioch at the end of the first century had read the text of Scripture aright, they would have done the work that was reserved for the divines at Westminster in the middle of the seventeenth century. Even so if Ptolemy had been able to follow the paths of the planets,

rightly dividing between their true and their apparent motions, he would have set forth the astronomy of to-day. The ordinances of the heavens are not more unchangeable than the word of God. The Bible, no less than the heavens, reveals the thoughts of God. Both waited for their interpreters. The interpreters came at last, and a true astronomy and a true theology stood revealed.

In the formation of these formularies, first of all the Holy Scripture was received as undoubtedly a supernatural revelation, both in the substance and in the written record thereof—an infallible record of an infallible revelation. The truths contained in the record were gathered, one by one, out of the obvious and historical sense of the inspired text. Next, the truths so ascertained were embodied in language chosen by the living Church to express its own best understanding of the written word. The most important words were weighed, word by word; one taken, another left. Many of them had been coined in the heat of early controversies with unbelievers, and are current through every province of Christ's kingdom on earth. Of these, the terms used in the Confession to describe the person of Christ are fine examples. Extraordinary precision was given to its clauses and terms. Many words were keenly set to detect or to defy

latent error. Of these the phrase "elect infants" may serve as an example. Further still, these definitions were pursued to their unavoidable conclusions, and the conclusions were tried by the word of God. Then, again, they were laid side by side for the detection of incompatibilities, if any lurked among them. To what extent they appeared to contradict or modify one another was carefully considered. Finally, the statements so wrought out one by one, tested by the written word one by one, compared every one with every other one, were combined into coherent and logical formularies. In all their labors the compilers gave themselves continually to prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And if the history and traditions which have come down to us of many remarkable answers to prayer may be accepted, they received special divine illumination in some of their most important conferences.

These documents have been in the hands of Christian scholars, and of the skeptical critics and philosophers as well, unto this day. They have passed under the scrutiny of men skilled in the interpretation of the Scriptures; linguists most facile in the use of verbal signs, keen in the detection of fallacies and contradictions; scientific observers able to grasp and weigh truth in the system of doctrine. They have endured

every ordeal proposed by doubters and debaters. They have encountered the merciless hostility which time and talents wage upon every human composition, and they have held their own more than two hundred years. Never before was the number of their disciples so great as it is in our own time; and believers in them are multiplied daily.

Since the formation of the General Assembly in 1789, these symbols have been preserved unchanged. They have suffered no loss in the emergencies of our church-life. In the memorable division of 1837 both parties avowed their loyalty to our common standards. Through the thirty-three years which followed, both branches of the Church preserved these standards in the *ipsissimis verbis* thereof. At the reunion both branches agreed to give no sanction to the "various modes of viewing, stating, explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession," and the Church bound itself anew to the standards, "pure and simple." We are entitled to say that there is in the reunited Church an extraordinary unanimity in upholding our system of doctrine. The Church which now is commits to the Church of the future its ancient covenanted creed in its original integrity, with the judgment, well nigh unanimous, that it ought *not to be abandoned or revised, or even reconsidered.*

It should be distinctly borne in mind that this Church does not make the adoption of the Confession of Faith a condition of church membership. It is imposed only on those who are ordained to bear office in the Church, according to the plain distinction between the communion of saints and the position of the teacher and ruler.

Still further, it should not be forgotten that over and above "the system of doctrine," strictly so called, our standards contain certain definitions which are not integral parts of that system. In our ordination vows as office-bearers we do not make ourselves responsible for these outside deliverances. Hugh Miller expressed to Dr. Candlish the opinion that "the Confessions and Catechisms of the Westminster divines, in treating of the subject of the creation, use language which cannot in any way be harmonized with the teachings of science." He then pointed out, in contrast, the narrative of the creation in the book of Genesis, the inspired text of which is fairly susceptible of an interpretation consistent with the geological discoveries. The definitions of our standards on this subject, whether they be true or erroneous, have nothing to do with the "system of doctrine" to which we subscribe. In like manner, we may not be able to adopt, as of clear scriptural warrant, every clause in the chapters of the Confession "of the civil magistrate" and

"of marriage and divorce." We do not question any point in the Calvinistic theology if we doubt whether the inspired text of Paul to Timothy respecting "that man of sin, that son of perdition," is rightly interpreted when applied to the pope of Rome. None of these propositions are parts of our system of doctrine. They are not imposed upon our consciences in the act of ordination. If it be said that this rule of subscription opens the door to the rejection of essential truth, the answer is that it belongs to the living Church, through its tribunals, to determine for itself, and for us all, what definitions are integral parts of the system of doctrine; and that determination is final and binding on everybody.

Another prominent feature in the condition of this Church is to be recognized in its well-tried and thoroughly settled way of government, discipline and worship. That our Church polity carries with it the warrant of Scripture ought not to be doubted. The Westminster Assembly began its labors with these propositions: "Christ hath appointed a definite form of government for his Church, and has not left it to the wisdom and caprice of men;" and "the doctrine, worship and government of the house of God are to be taken from God's word alone." The divines, having ascertained that the pattern of church order is shown in the Scriptures, gave the same diligence

in deducing the divinely-appointed polity that they gave in deducing the divinely-revealed doctrine. They expressed their sense of the mind of the Spirit in the Presbyterian system of government and worship. That is the sense of the living Church as well. Many of us subscribe to the opinion of the "London ministers" that "Presbyterianism may lay the only lawful claim to a divine right according to the Scriptures." Very few among us are in any doubt whether the fundamental principles of this polity are laid in the Scriptures, even though some would say that the minuter details are left to the discretion of the Church.

The lapse of a century has added nothing to the divine authority of our church order. But the history of this period has enriched us with the experience of its practical wisdom. We have before us the actual workings of the system in conditions very peculiar. On the third Thursday of May, 1789, the whole Church met for the first time in General Assembly, making complete its organization. Since that time the population of the country has risen from four millions to more than forty millions. The inhabited territory, then "a mere patch on the earth's surface," has expanded to continental dimensions. The ministers of this Church, then one hundred and seventy-seven in number, now exceed

four thousand seven hundred; the four hundred and twenty congregations have multiplied to five thousand. As late as the year 1810 our communicants numbered less than twenty-nine thousand; now they exceed five hundred and thirty-five thousand. And if we may take the Southern Presbyterian Church into this account, we must add to these numbers nearly one thousand ministers, eighteen hundred and twenty churches, and one hundred and twelve thousand one hundred and eighty-three communicants.

In the course of this numerical and territorial expansion several problems of Church policy have been well solved.

For the first of these, it has been demonstrated that Presbyterianism best fulfills all its offices as a gospel Church when wholly separated from the State, indebted for no patronage and owing no organic or even formal allegiance to the civil power. This Church began its bold experiment of self-support and self-government by removing from the Westminster Confession all the definitions which gave the civil magistrate any authority over the Church in matters purely ecclesiastical. Having thus settled the true sense of God's word in that particular, it cast the whole support of the gospel, with the duty of spreading the same, upon the voluntary contributions of the people. Touching the success of these measures, this only need

be said: Our example is one of the forces which is likely to disestablish and disendow the mother-Kirk itself.

Another and more complicated problem has been solved. It is now an assured fact that Presbyterianism has the adaptability and strength to grapple with difficulties unknown to its older home in the British islands. These difficulties arose from the vastness of our territory; from the contact of the white and black races; from African slavery; from the endless migrations of our people toward the West and the South; from the swarms of emigrants, distracting our modes of life with their discordant tongues and religions and customs and prejudices; from the alienations which grow out of diverse climates and soils and labor systems; from an intense sectionalism and sectarianism. The sufficiency of Presbyterianism in the midst of these complications is assured. And its sufficiency is not accidental; it resides in the integral elements of its polity. Let us trace its actual workings.

Our form of government recognizes the office of the evangelist. He is a minister "ordained to preach the gospel, administer sealing ordinances and organize churches in frontier or destitute settlements." He takes with him those sacred functions to Nevada, let us say, or to Idaho or to the regions beyond, to us known or unknown.

So soon as a congregation is gathered—and for a gospel church three make a quorum—and so soon as ruling elders are ordained, a church-court springs into being, clothed with the power of the whole Presbyterian Church in the admission of the believer to sealing ordinances. The power of the kingdom to bind and to loose is there in the keeping of that church-session. Other congregations, let us say, are formed in those regions, and then a presbytery is created, with the whole power of the Church in ordaining ministers and ordering the affairs of the several congregations. In whatever far-off region there are in existence the two primary judicatories, the session and the presbytery, the lowest in supremacy, but the highest, perhaps, in sacred functions, there is the Presbyterian Church. The congregation at Deer Lodge, in the Rocky Mountains, reports only fifteen members. The Presbytery of Montana, to which it belongs, reports three ministers, four churches and one hundred and one communicants, all told. But that congregation and its presbytery are, in respect to the power of the keys, the equal, each to each, of the most important congregation and of the largest presbytery in the land. And if a pastor is an "angel," in the sense of the Epistles to the seven churches in Asia, the minister of Deer Lodge is the peer of any angel of the Church in Philadelphia. And

finally, the organic union of all the churches, near and far away, in one General Assembly completes for us a way of government which unites indefinite expansion with undiminished strength. The church-life that is in us is no less vital in the compass of a continent than within the limits of a single city; even as the Atlantic cable carries its messages from end to end not less faithfully whether it be coiled up in the hold of the Great Eastern or whether it be stretched from the Old World to the New.

A third problem which has been solved relates to the development in the body of the Church of its organs for spreading the gospel. The first General Assembly found the Church without actual equipment. The congregations were there, so were the ministries of teaching, of rule and of distribution. The standards of doctrine and government and worship were set up, and the four spiritual courts were organized under a wise distribution of spiritual powers. Gradually, step by step, the various boards and committees were raised by the General Assembly through which the Church might do its work. The remarkable fact is that the Church was able to endure, or at least to recover from, the strain that was put upon it by this remarkable growth and expansion from within. We have now reached undivided convictions in respect to this

whole subject. We are unanimously and heartily agreed in the opinion that to the Church, as such, and to its tribunals, Christ has committed the whole work of evangelizing the world. It needs for this purpose no new class of office-bearers, no new agencies for the raising of funds, no new societies for the control or oversight of missions, home and foreign, of education, of church-erection, of sustentation, of publication, or of any other department. It is one of the assured facts in our condition—most cheering as well—that we go forth to our future labors with united counsels, and with perfect confidence that we are doing the Lord's work in the Lord's own way. That way was laid in the organic law of the Church, not by any human prescience or half foreknowledge, but by the Master himself. And the Master has led us all to walk in that path hand in hand, together, with footsteps not unequal. And now we transmit to those who come after us the form of government substantially unchanged, even as we received the same from the Fathers. Its features have been preserved. The parity of ministry; the office of the ruling elder and deacon; the election of all office-bearers by the free vote of the people; the sole power of the ministry in the administration of sealing ordinances; the joint and equal power of the keys invested in the ministry and the

eldership; the government of the Church by tribunals, every one of them—session, presbytery, synod, general assembly—composed of two classes of office-bearers, the minister and the ruling elder—the same in every court and none others in any; spiritual power everywhere asserted, but everywhere limited by a written constitution; popular rights judicially guarded—the greatest among us amenable to his brethren and the humblest protected by the whole power of the Church; the complete independence of the Church on the State—these principles of church-order are rooted in the way of government now transmitted from centennial to centennial.

II. From the present condition of the Church the transition is natural to its prospects. In respect to these we may apply to ourselves the remarkable saying of Paul: "A wide and effectual door is opened unto us, and there are many adversaries." The apostle appears to have gathered courage from the presence of his adversaries, as well as hope from the opening of the wide and effectual door. Let us stand face to face with the obstacles which may oppose themselves to the work set before us.

The most formidable of these obstacles stand in the way, not of our own denomination alone, but of the whole Church of God. They do not

arise from controversies among the various evangelical denominations which dwell side by side. The doctrinal position of every leading Church is settled; its way of order and worship is settled; its methods of Christian work are settled. Much controversy on these subjects is seen to be superfluous. Meanwhile, a zeal for church extension has taken possession of us all. By a common impulse, if not a common agreement, the strength of all true believers is expended upon the unsaved people at home and in the heathen lands. Our contention now is for the foremost place and severest labors in the "gospelizing" of the nations.

The difficulties with which we must grapple are partly from without—from the unbelieving world—and they are of modern origin. The gospel is in no peril from Jewish legalism—that was finished with the age of the apostles; nor from a persecuting idolatry—that ceased at the accession of Constantine; nor from the deadly embrace of imperialism—that was gradually loosened among the successors of Constantine; nor from the apostasies of the Middle Ages—these were renounced at the Reformation; nor from the encroachments of the civil power and prelatical authority—these have been repelled. But the enemy which we are now to confront is en-

trenched in the bosom of a splendid material civilization. The instruments and forces of this new life of Christendom are now gathered together in Philadelphia. They are wonderful in number and variety in every department of industry; in machinery, agriculture, commerce, mining, handicraft, and in the arts, useful and ornamental. No one man's understanding is broad enough to comprehend this exhibition. Eye, ear, brain and limb are fatigued with the brilliant, noisy, various, vast display.

Now, in the accumulation of wealth and the growth of culture under the influence of this superb material civilization, our people are finding satisfaction in the things that are seen. The realities of the world to come are intended to awaken our sense of wonder, but the wonders of this world shut out those unseen wonders. The inward thought is that the invisible and supernatural can have nothing to reveal equal to the visible and the natural. A sort of positivism in its most hurtful form is taking root among us. It is the religion of the five senses and of the intellect and of the natural sensibilities. The cultivated men and women are finding a religion satisfactory to themselves in natural science and its brilliant discoveries, in music, painting and architecture. They prefer the lecture-room, the industrial exhibition, experimental chemistry,

astronomy, microscopy, and the spectrum analysis to the house of worship.

Still further, this material civilization falls in with the latest form of materialistic unbelief. The Corliss engine furnishes the positivist with a fresh illustration of force. "Here," he exclaims, "is force indeed—force all but irresistible. This at last solves the problem of the great first cause: Force is God." Or he examines the motion expressed by the engine, its revolutions, almost astronomical in their majesty and energy, its forces, projected into every conceivable direction, upward, downward, transverse, forward, reversed, circular, eccentric, here swift, there slow. He is quick to say that Motion, added to Force, is God. Or having studied out the plan and power of the machinery around him, and seen the skill with which it moulds the masses of iron and weaves the gossamer, he is ready to suggest that Thought is the master of Force and Motion; and now, let us say, Thought is God. Another positivist cuts short the debate by declaring that God is an insoluble mystery, an inscrutable problem; and another still contents himself with the dogma that the idea of a God is unthinkable.

Now, a more thorough examination of the Exhibition will show that Christianity is the parent of the forces which are changing the face of the

world. The exhibits of China and Japan, the lacquer-work and porcelain, the carving in wood and ivory, the bronzes, are wonderful, but they are the products of handicraft alone. The steam-engine, the steamship, the locomotive, the railway, the magnetic telegraph, are products of Christendom. What piece of machinery of substantial value owes its existence to the heathen mind? When the agencies of our splendid civilization are turned against the religion of the Bible, we have a repetition of the old transgression—the creature denying the creator.

This form of worldliness will beset the Church of the future. A difficulty of another kind, and arising from within, must be anticipated. Our history does not assure us that the future Church will be able to escape internal strife, leading to organic divisions. The sense of visible unity is weaker among us than the sense of individual freedom, of the liberty of private judgment, of the supremacy of conscience, and the duty of resisting what appear to be ecclesiastical misrule and oppression. From the ways of our mother-Kirk in Scotland we take a conviction of the right to go out from the Church if, in the last extremity, we find no other means of asserting sound doctrine, or scriptural church-order, or popular rights, or the supremacy of Christ's crown. The Presbyterians that come after us are not likely to be less

set in their ways than the fathers who divided the old synod of Philadelphia, than the brethren of the Cumberland Presbytery in 1808, than the Presbyterians of 1837 and 1861. To borrow an illustration from the recent controversy respecting sin and free-agency, schism seems to be incidental, like friction in machinery, to the best possible form of Presbyterianism. But, still further, it is an assured fact of the future Church, if it follows the old paths, that its schisms will be healed one by one, except in cases where a certain diversity in doctrine or church-order has been established. The rule of healing, making the divided Church every whit whole, appears in the reunions of 1758 and of 1870. The exception appears in the separate existence of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church through a period of now nearly seventy years. But another lesson from the past teaches us that the healing has not been effected in the immediate generation that received the wound. The division of 1741 continued seventeen years, that of 1837 continued thirty-two years, that of 1861 continues to this day. So long as our ancient liberties of thought and speech are preserved there is likely to arise diversity of opinion, to be followed in extreme cases by discussion, then debate, then eager controversy, then conflicting protests and testimonies, then organic division. So long as the standards

of the Church are upheld by the sundered portions, the question of the ultimate healing of the breach need awaken no anxiety. History, in the long run, is likely to repeat itself.

III. Another topic assigned to this discourse is the beneficent work of the Church. Here we come upon the legacy which we bequeath to our children. We transfer to them a gospel Church—a Church whose aim it is to evangelize the world. The plans of the work at home and abroad have been laid. At home we are endeavoring, with our brethren of other communions, to possess the whole land. Our simple plan for the work abroad is to plant the Church, just as it is, in the bosom of the outlying nations. We propose to preach the pure gospel to the heathen; to translate into their languages the Holy Scripture as the rule of faith, and our standards as a sound exposition of that rule; to establish for their children schools of godly learning; to set up the printing press, and, if we may so say, bestow upon it the gift of tongues; to gather the converts into Presbyterian congregations and the congregations into presbyteries and synods, taking care that they and we shall all be compacted in one General Assembly: many peoples, one communion; many languages, one testimony; many kindred, one household of faith,—multiplying the people and increasing the joy. This great

work and its appointments and instruments are now turned over to the future Church.

In defining our beneficent work we should not overlook our duties to the poor and the diseased and the suffering.

In all the world before the Christian era there was no hospital for the sick or the deaf or the blind or the insane. There is no trace whatever of such institutions either in the history, or in the monuments, or in the ruins of any rude or classic pagan empire. The most copious language of antiquity contains no word or phrase equivalent to the word "hospital." In Bethlehem of Judea in the fourth century, under the pastoral care of Jerome, a noble lady of the Fabian family instituted the first hospital, and Jerome coined a Greek work to designate the charity. The suggestive combinations here are the place, Bethlehem; the founder, a christian woman; and the patron, the translator of the Scriptures,—all associated in the original evolution of the gospel idea of relief for the suffering. That is undoubtedly an integral part of the gospel. Christ healed all that were sick of divers diseases. That is not all: he healed the sick on the Sabbath day. More than that, he healed them in the midst of the worship of the synagogue. More than that, even: after he had cleansed the temple, vindicating the sacredness of the place,

immediately "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them."

In these works the Master plainly pointed out the connection between the relief of human suffering and his own divine mission, his own holy day and the holiest habitation on earth, even the temple first purified from the defilement of the world, and then consecrated anew by his healing mercies.

Here is an example with a duty set before our Church, to the fullness of which we have not yet attained. Nobody is insensible to the advantages which the Church of Rome has gained by combining its almost boundless charities with its creed and worship. In spite of its errors and corruption and spiritual despotism, its churches still grow and prosper, even in this Protestant country, largely through its hospitals and asylums and nursing fathers and sisters of charity.

It takes care to identify its beneficence with its worship and spiritual authority. In one of the largest hospitals in Europe the wards radiate from a common centre, like the spokes of a wheel. In the centre stands the altar with its sacred furniture and officiating priest. You shall see the sick in all directions lifting up their heads wearily from their pillows to gaze upon the altar, according to the analogy of the brazen serpent, and the convalescents drawing near as

best they can to kneel and worship. Rome everywhere connects healing with her faith and priesthood. It will be a memorable day for this Church when we shall take the hint from Rome, or rather from the example of Christ. The work is nobly begun in the Presbyterian hospitals of Philadelphia and New York, and in orphan asylums and infirmaries greatly multiplied in our larger congregations. And what is not less cheering, our missionary physicians in heathen lands are following the example of Philip in his first visit to Samaria. He went down thither and preached Christ. "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, seeing and hearing the miracles which he did. For unseen spirits, crying with loud voices, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed. *And there was great joy in that city.*" It is reserved for the future Church to fill up the compassions of Christ, to build infirmaries for the sick, homes for the aged, to set up the house of mercy—the *Hotel Dieu*—side by side with the house of prayer, to lay the corner stones of both in the name of the blessed Trinity, blending the office of charity with the office of salvation.

IV. One word in regard to the needs and obligations of the Church. These connect them-

selves with its external prosperity. If there be strength in a divinely-ordained and well-settled creed and way of government, in territorial expansion, in swelling numbers, in growing wealth, in knowledge and culture, in schools of both common and higher learning, secular and sacred, in the tried instruments of our work,—then this is a strong Church. If there be strength in the relations which our history sustains to the history and best traditions of the nation in the great emergencies of its colonial and revolutionary and constitutional periods, then we are strong. If strength abides, always unbroken and invincible, in the millions of the middle classes, from which, by the favor of God, our congregations are mainly gathered, then again we are strong. If there be strength in a high vantage-ground amidst the historical Churches around us, sparing much treasure in men and money to them, and yet ourselves not impoverished by what we give, then again we are strong —in all these conditions stronger than any Presbyterian communion on earth.

But, brethren, we will not forget that the abiding strength of a gospel Church flows from the person of Christ. Self-denial is power, zeal for the truth is power, love for souls is power. The exclusion of boasting, the crucifixion of self-seeking, the stamping out of church-pride, are

elements of power. From the presence of Christ proceed these gifts and graces. He will teach us our obligations, he will supply our needs. His is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever.