

# ADDRESSES

AT THE

CELEBRATION OF THE

Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary

OF THE

WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

BY THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.

EDITED BY THE

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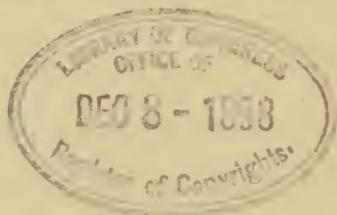


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THE SERMON AT THE OPENING OF  
THE ASSEMBLY.

BY THE

REV. SHELDON JACKSON, D. D., LL. D.,

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“Begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.”—DEUT.  
2 : 31.

It is not without significance that America should have remained hidden from the civilized world until the close of the 15th century. For ages history had recorded in brick and stone, on papyrus and parchment, the rise and growth, the decay and fall of nations in Asia, Africa, and Europe; but the story of America remained a blank; its very existence unknown.

The Church of God which in patriarchal days was established in the family of Abraham, and during the Old Testament dispensation was confined to his seed, with the coming of Christ was thrown open to “every kindred and tongue and people and nation.” At first creeping along the shore of the Mediterranean to Rome, it spread over all Europe. But everywhere it was complicated with and trammelled by the State, and occasionally used by the State for the oppression

of the people. Even the great Reformation of the 16th century was more or less political in its aims and methods. Heathen or Christian, there had always been in the religions of the world a connection between Church and State. The custom of ages had so intrenched itself in men's minds that it did not occur to them there could be a better way. And yet while this connection existed it was impossible for the Church to secure an environment suitable to its highest development; an environment that would give it the widest freedom and make possible a "free Church in a free State." To secure this it was necessary to get out from under the influence of the past; to find a new land, where ancient customs were not intrenched; where entangling alliances with the State could be thrown off—a new land, where the Church could go back to the Spirit of Christ and start anew in the conquest of the world. Such a land had God reserved for such a time. He had also prepared a Church to take possession of it.

Even before the Reformation God was preparing the way for it. The new learning passed over Europe like the breath of God. The discovery of printing had so multiplied Bibles, that increasing numbers could have and study the Word of God in their own homes. This developed intelligent and independent thinkers. Then came the Reformation (1517) to quicken the seed, warm the heart, and convert the soul; to prepare a special people for a new land and a new de-

parture in Church life. Then as persecutions arose that the early Church might be scattered abroad preaching the Word, so there arose the persecutions of Charles IX. and Louis XIV. in France, Philip II. and his cruel agent the Duke of Alva in Holland, Henry VIII. and bloody Mary in England, and later Charles I. and Archbishop Laud in England, Scotland, and Ireland, to prepare and make ready the people whom God had chosen to abandon home and country and journey to a new land, where they could worship God with none to molest or make them afraid. Contemporaneous with these movements was the discovery of Columbus. There beyond the "pillars of Hercules," beyond the "Ultima Thule" of history, beyond even the "Fortunate Islands" of antiquity, across the unknown waters, stood the land which God had hidden for ages, waiting for the fulness of time when a people should be especially prepared to occupy it.

#### CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS.

Then was born a nation in righteousness. The nations of Europe and Asia; the nations of antiquity (except Israel), were born in war and conquest, in blood and ambition; but these United States were founded by those who sought first and foremost a land where they could worship God untrammelled by kings and governments. They came not for conquest, but for civil and religious liberty. As the first

official act of Columbus was the erection of the cross of Christ upon the new world, so the first voices heard by the native races on the shores of America were those of prayer and praise.

“And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang  
With the anthems of the free.”

It is of interest to note in this connection that the first Protestant worship on the shores of America was by the French Presbyterians, the Huguenots, in 1562, fifty-eight years before the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth Rock. Many and divers were the nationalities that sought homes in this new land. But those who principally moulded and shaped affairs—the pilgrims of destiny and builders of empire, who laid foundations broad and deep for Christ and His Church, foundations which would support the temple of freedom, and through all coming time bless the generations—the men above all others, in that epoch-making age, who, gathering up the lessons of the past, worked out plans, and laid enduring foundations for civil and religious liberty, were the Scotch, the Hollanders, the Huguenots, and the Puritans.

At the breaking out of the Revolutionary War the Scotch and Scotch-Irish were the most numerous race in the colonies, numbering about 900,000, or nearly one-third of the entire population, while the Puritans numbered 600,000, and the Cavaliers, 400,000. It is estimated there were 60,000 of them in New England

alone; and at the time they were the dominant influence in the United States.

For centuries in Scotland and Ireland they had stood as firm as their eternal hills against kingcraft and priestcraft; against absolutism in State and Church. They endured the rack and thumbscrew in the old castle at Edinburgh; they were hunted like wild beasts on their mountains; mutilated and branded in their persons, butchered, drowned and burned at the stake; but in this fiery furnace of affliction they were learning lessons in political economy that gave Great Britain the habeas corpus act, a free parliament, and constitutional liberty. They were in training to found a free republic. And when the time came to establish the foundation of that republic with the sword, no wonder that twelve of the twenty-four major-generals of the American army, and one-half of the troops should have been Scotch and Scotch-Irish.

True yoke-fellows with them were the Hollanders, whose sturdy faith had been wrought out and manhood developed during those desperate years when they stood as a wall between Protestantism and its overthrow. A race who could conquer the sea and successfully withstand the onslaught of a united papal Europe, was surely good material for the foundation stones in free America.

Then there were the Huguenots, refined and purified and made meet for their high calling, to help in

laying the foundations of the Church in this goodly land. By their baptism of suffering, in those days when the streets of Paris ran red with the blood of her best citizens, they had been made the apostles of God to other lands. The Huguenots who came to America were the flower of France, from the loss of whom she did not recover for a century. And brothers with the Huguenots and Hollanders and Scotch were the Puritans, who, driven from their homes by the persecutions of Henry VIII., Queen Mary, and the Stuarts, had sought and found shelter in Holland, Germany and Switzerland, where they sat at the feet of the ablest scholars and most advanced thinkers of their age. There they learned those lessons and received that special training which prepared them for their great mission in America.

Thus God sifted out of the three kingdoms of Great Britain, and out of Holland and France, the choicest materials for the new republic on the shores of America; and through them brought into American life and character the best and highest results of the past.

It is also worthy of note that of these four prominent factors in our early American history, three—the Hollanders, Huguenots and Scotch and Scotch-Irish—were Presbyterians. The fourth, the Pilgrim Fathers, held in common with Presbyterians the Calvinistic creed, and many of their churches had ruling elders over them, of whom elder Brewster is an illustrious example. These and kindred spirits

from other lands, only in smaller numbers, were those whom God in his providence had called out from the ripest civilizations of Europe; men of the highest ability, learning, character and religious consecration. And to whatever causes the historian or philosopher may ascribe the wonderful migration at an early date of Christian people to America, we must see in it over and above all, the hand of God. It was his almighty hand that brought to this land the brave old Hollanders, the Scotch Presbyterians, the English Dissenters, the Irish Calvinists, the quiet Quakers, the glorious Huguenots, the hymn-loving Lutherans—the chosen ones of God called out from all lands to take possession of and develop this land for Christ. As the angels looked down on that historic age they heard

“The tread of pioneers  
Of nations yet to be—  
The first low wash of waves  
Where soon shall roll a human sea.”

Gaining a foothold upon the Atlantic seaboard, they gradually extended their settlements into the interior, and as they advanced the wild forests, and still wilder beasts and men, gave way before them. They overflowed into central and western New York and the Western Reserve: over the Alleghenies into the fertile valley of the Ohio; across the Blue Ridge into Tennessee and Kentucky; across the prairies of Indiana and Illinois into Michigan and Wis-

consin; and wherever they went the log church and the log school-house were erected among the rude log homes of the settlers.

As the churches become strengthened, God, by means of the Louisiana purchase (1803), took that mighty empire extending from the Gulf of Mexico, diagonally across the continent two thousand miles to Puget Sound, out from under French Romanism, and called upon this Church to "enter and possess." Hitherto emigration had been homogeneous; a number of families going from one section to another, and taking with them their minister and schoolmaster. But with the doubling of our area at one bound the Church felt that former methods were inadequate for such an emergency. In anticipation of this increase of territory the General Assembly of 1802 created a Standing Committee of Missions, which in 1816 was made The Board of Missions.

Scarce had the Church time to grasp the magnitude of the added work before the annexation of Texas and the close of the Mexican War, took out from the blighting influence of Spanish Catholicism and gave to Protestant control, a region over 45,000 square miles larger than the thirteen States. Once securely under the American flag the marvelous stores of gold and silver in California, Nevada, Utah, Montana, and Colorado were uncovered to an astonished world. Then in 1867 Alaska, whose western limit places

San Francisco east of the center of the United States, was taken from the control of Greek Catholicism and laid upon the American Church, and lo! our "Ice-berg" astonishes the world by the extent and richness of its gold deposits, and to-day representatives from many lands are flocking into Alaska by the tens of thousands.

This is the continent that God had reserved for his Church. A land magnificent in its extent and resources, and in its wide range of climate and productions; with skies as brilliant as those of Italy; winter resorts the peer of Cannes, the Riviera and Mentone; waters as healing as those of Carlsbad and Baden-Baden; air as health-giving as Algiers and Egypt; plains as productive of breadstuffs as the valley of the Nile and the land of Goshen in their palmiest days; mines as rich as ancient Golconda and Ophir; a land whose possibilities are so great that the wildest visionary has not begun to comprehend the outcome.

"A glorious land,  
With broad arms stretched from shore to shore;  
The proud Pacific chafes her strand;  
She hears the loud Atlantic's roar."

And this is the land that God has given his Church to possess—to take and to hold as a base of operations for the conquest of the world. Hear his voice saying to the American Churches: "I give you from ocean to ocean, from tropical gulf to frozen

north. 'Begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.'" How goodly for situation, throned in the midst of the ocean! Not "a city," but "a continent" "set on a hill." From its heights the Church of the United States sends out its beacon light eastward to the sacerdotalism and formalism of Europe and the heathenism of Africa, westward to the dead conservatism of Asia, and southward to the benighted millions of the "neglected church." Was there ever a better base of operations? Was there ever a stronger leverage for uplifting the race? Was there ever a grander theater for action? And on this vantage ground God has placed the American Christian, the resultant combination of English tenacity, Scotch shrewdness, German steadiness, Irish vivacity, Welsh frankness, Dutch sturdiness, Huguenot seriousness, and Scandinavian thrift—the very best and highest type of character—a character that, brought under the sway of powerful religious motives, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," becomes invincible in the conversion of the world.

#### THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

From the consideration of the American Churches in general let us turn our attention to our own denomination. While we recognize and admire the dash of the Methodists, the zeal of the Baptists, the energy of the Congregationalists, the loyalty of the Lutherans, and the stateliness of the Episco-

palians; while we recognize most fully all branches of the Church of Christ as our brethren, as different corps of the same grand army; as fighting under the same flag and obedient to the command of the same leader; yet in this year, during which we are celebrating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of our Westminster standards, upon an occasion like this and in such presence it will not be improper or invidious to give special prominence to our own division of the army of the Lord.

As American Presbyterians we can thank God and take courage. Ours is not a Scotch, Dutch, Irish, English, Welsh, French, Swiss or German Presbyterian Church, but a union of all of them; as with our American character, so with it, a resultant of the very best of the several constituents from which it was originally formed. It has appropriated all that is best in the teachings of the Swiss Reformed Church, from Ulrich Zwingle to Philip Schaff; in the Huguenot Church from John Calvin to Robert Baird; in the Scotch Church from John Knox to John Witherspoon; in English and Welsh Presbyterianism from John Wyckliffe to Jonathan Edwards; all the best from Saint Patrick, father of Presbyterianism in Ireland, to Francis Makemie, one of the fathers of Presbyterianism in America. "The soil of Switzerland is in the roots, the blood of Holland is in the veins, and the free breath of Scotland in the leaves" of the Presbyterianism that shadows a continent and

offers gospel shelter beneath its branches for the world's humanity. All lines of progress in civilization, civil liberty, and human betterment in the old world led to and brought forth their richest fruitage in the new. Seeds from the old world planted in a new soil have grown the largest body of Presbyterians on the globe. There are eighty-six affiliated branches of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian system. The thirteen branches in the United States constitute nearly one-half and our own church one-fifth of the world's Presbyterianism.

#### IN THE REVOLUTION.

The Presbyterian Church of America gave to the world the American republic; it was the predominant Church of the Revolution. The Baptist Church at that period was few in numbers; the Methodist Church was in its infancy and weak; the Quakers and some of the German Churches were non-combatants; and the Established Church of England in the colonies sided with the mother country. The Churches that then controlled public sentiment and shaped the affairs of State, were the Congregationalists of New England and the Presbyterians of the New England, Middle, and Southern States. The Presbyterians greatly outnumbered the Congregationalists; accordingly more than one-half of the officers and soldiers of the American army were Presbyterians.

The Hon. Richard Wright, Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, himself an Episcopalian, declared that "the American War of Independence was a Presbyterian and Scotch-Irish war." Horace Walpole, addressing the English Parliament during the Revolution, said: "There is no use crying about it. Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson, and that is the end of it." Our historian, Bancroft, writes: "The first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came not from the Puritans of New England, nor the Dutch of New York, nor the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians." In some of the presbyteries of that day "it was deemed an offense worthy of discipline for any minister to exhibit British sympathies." Indeed so prominent were Presbyterian influences that both in Europe and America it was popularly spoken of as the "Presbyterian rebellion."

As in colonial and revolutionary times, so ever since the Presbyterian Church has been among the foremost in support of reform and good government. The tendency of its doctrines being to make brainy, whole-souled, and resolute men—men of affairs—it is not strange that its members are found in the uppermost seats of scientific, professional, commercial, and political life; that it forms the judicial character sought for the supreme and other high courts of the land; that ten times the nation has turned to its

Presbyterian elements for its President—Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Cleveland, and Harrison.

The Presbyterian Church is also a leading Church in liberality. According to the census of 1890, it contributed for missions a larger sum than any other denomination.

#### ORGANIZATION.

Not only have we been brought into the kingdom for such a time as this, placed in this favored land, and connected with a Church that is one of the leading factors in moulding and controlling public sentiment, but we have a Church adequately organized for the work before it. Our system of Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly gives true representation to the voice of the whole Church. It combines strength with elasticity and liberty with law; it secures the advantages of federal control, while providing for the full development of the individual member.

Our system of boards organizes us for active work. The Board of Publication and Sabbath-school Work provides instruction and literature for the children of the Church. As they advance in years the Board of Aid for Colleges and Academies provides them with higher instruction, and, if they need it, the Board of Education assists in defraying the expenses of those who are preparing to become ministers.

And when the young men are prepared for the active work of the ministry, the Board of Home Missions stands ready to send them to the weaker churches of the older States, or into the newer regions of the land. To those who are called of God to engage in work among the negroes, the Board of Freedmen extends a helping hand. For the maintenance of religious school work among mountain whites, Negroes, Mormons, Mexicans, Indians, and Alaskans, the Women's Board of Home Missions is an efficient organization. That the strong churches may help the weak, and the feeble congregations secure a sanctuary of their own, is the work of the Board of Church Erection. Home Missions, Freedmen, and Church Erection combine to give Gospel privileges to every section of this great land.

And while the Church remembers the divine command of "beginning at Jerusalem," it is equally loyal to the additional command of sending the Gospel message "into all the world." For this purpose the Church has the Board of Foreign Missions, with its active auxiliaries, The Women's Boards of Foreign Missions. And last, but not least, when the workers have given their strength to the service of the Church, and through failing health or the infirmities of increasing years the veterans are compelled to retire from active work, the Board of Relief for Disabled Ministers, and the Widows and Orphans of Deceased Ministers, lovingly cares for

them. The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. has the most complete, efficient, and perfect system of organized church work in existence. With the inspiration of its past successes, its present influential and wealthy membership, and its thorough organization, it stands to-day the leading Church in the evangelization of America and the world.

#### NEED OF A NEW BAPTISM.

In the neighboring city of Omaha stands Machinery Hall, Trans-Missouri Exposition, with wheels innumerable, shafting by the mile, and machines bewildering in their complexity, but all is motionless. They wait the touch of the electric button that communicates power and starts life. Thus the "Boards," the machinery through which the Church works, are in splendid order, fully equipped, and competent to conquer this land and the world for Christ, but they are not doing it: they wait the application of divine power—the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Not only is the Church not advancing all along the line, but it is not even holding its own. In places it is retreating; needed reinforcements are not furnished; consecrated men and women separated by the Holy Ghost for mission work are not and cannot be sent for want of funds. Missionaries who through heroic self-denial have pushed forward the work have been compelled to fall back for want of supplies. Some churches have been closed; some young converts remanded

back to heathenism ; some native catechists, won and trained through years of patience and expense, turned adrift ; some of the covenant children of the Church in the newer settlements denied Gospel privileges, are making shipwreck of their souls ; some new and growing centers of influence left without the moulding and restraining influences of the Gospel and a "remembered Sabbath," are laying the foundations of future socialism and anarchy. Many talents are hid in napkins and buried ; many stewardships are unrecognized, and many Christians are robbing God, by withholding a portion of the offerings that are his due. The Church, through her Boards, is in debt, and the cry of the missionaries suffering from deferred payments and reduced salaries ascends before the Most High God. The cries of Church members, scattered as sheep without a shepherd—the cries of your children going down to destruction, are heard all over the land. They reach to Heaven ; they are as solemn as eternity.

To your knees, O Church of the Living God ! The great and overwhelming need of the hour—the great and overwhelming need of our country and Church—the great and overwhelming need of our own souls, is the fresh and immediate baptism of the Holy Spirit—a baptism which shall set every heart on fire of God to possess this land for Christ. At the close of this century we face a future of great unrest ; of reconstruction ; of marvelous and rapid changes.

And the Church must lead and control these changes, or be overwhelmed by them.

“ We are living, we are dwelling  
In a grand and awful time ;  
In an age on ages telling,  
To be living is sublime.”

We are living in one of the great crises of the world's history. The age demands consecrated men and women, consecrated time, consecrated energies, and consecrated wealth. Shall it have them? “Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

“Begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.”