

1790

1890

THE
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY
OF THE CITY OF
GALLIPOLIS
OHIO

OCTOBER 16-19, 1890

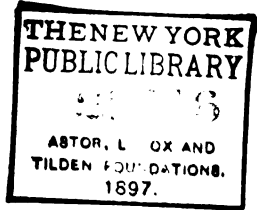


PUBLICATIONS

VOLUME 3

ILLUSTRATED

G. D. C. C.



PUBLICATIONS
OF THE
OHIO
ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

VOLUME III
SECOND EDITION.

Printed for the Society by
J. L. TRAUGER
Columbus Ohio—1895

ABSTRACT OF THE SERMON ON "THE PRESBYTERIANS OF OHIO."

BY REV. SYLVESTER F. SCOVEL, PRESIDENT OF WOOSTER UNIVERSITY,
WOOSTER, OHIO, PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The Christian is a cosmopolitan. Every land is his fatherland since God is his father. So every Christian is brother to all other Christians. Yet we may have a just concern which shall be special for our country and our church.

We have a century of Presbyterian experience behind us, and each one of the Centennial occasions which have been occurring since 1776 (and all have been useful in many ways), invites us to consider the facts and lessons of that experience.

The Centennial record of any religious body cannot be represented by processions and pageantry however elaborate. Not to the eye but to the heart must we appeal. We go deeper even than the references to ancient places of worship or their forgotten customs. We must find the teacher and the truth, the communicant and his conduct, the home life and the school of the Sabbath and of the week day. We must linger beside the couch of the sick and beside the open tomb and the shadowed homes. We must go out from these centers to the sure but often silent influences which have told upon manners, and standard of conduct and social life, and upon law and order, and even upon legislation and administration. We must trace footfalls that are not heard primarily on the hurried streets, and search out the hidden causes in thought and feeling of much that we admire externally.

The motives for Centennial review are potent and dignified. The present reaps the fruit of the past, and is the product of the past to be understood fully only in its procuring causes. The noble men of other days were the friends of many, the kindred of some. The heritage of Christian life and character which any long record brings to view is the Church's true glory, the proof of the presence and power of Christ, her divine head, and of the spirit her divine heart. Moreover, the complex elements of our life of to-day need to look steadily at the simpler life of

the past, the condition of its heroic virtues. In such records we honor God by noting what he has wrought.

And while we concentrate for a little our attention upon our predecessors in this commonwealth, we must remember what and who preceded them. Away in the dim distance and across the seas we discover names whose influence lived in our pioneers and still survives. These may be names not often mentioned, but they came bringing the principles we revere into the life of their own age, disturbing the apparently external uniformity of the Papacy.

Then well known conflicts show us the head of the emerging column, compacted and partly created by these conflicts themselves. At and in and after the Reformation we hear stronger voices and see more guiding rods in the hands of leaders. Presently the column crosses to our own shores and buries itself in the din and battle of our own Revolution, and then is seen later in the nearer coasts of our neighboring States, and finally reaches our own streams and forests.

We cannot possibly isolate any band of Presbyterians. Our church in our locality is surrounded by concentric circles and becomes our church in our commonwealth, in our country, in the world, and in the church universal and militant, which is itself encircled again by the white-robed throngs of the church invisible and triumphant. It is a blessed thing that we cannot localize too much. The vista and outlook must be kept clear. This is what *intensifies* and *expands* at the same time. It enlarges both *intent* and *content*, contrary to the rules of formal logic. The genesis of each Christian goes back to the forces which build and sustain the universal church. All the way down the chain is vital in its continuity. If we put a finger upon any one link of the chain for some special purpose, we are never to detach it. Looking upon our church in our commonwealth we stand half way between our universal and our local attachments. Such distinction for thought or study will not put us out of touch with any others who love our common Master, but the contrary. Other churches and other countries shall become dearer to us by the privileges of our own.

If we ask for the influences which prepared the Presby-

terians who came to Ohio, we must turn our faces to the past. We must hover over the advancing column and mark its constitution and character. It is a long column and a noble one. Its ranks are starred with heroes. Truth floats from all its banners. Its inscriptions are condensed principles of almost Omnipotent force. Its uniform is often dyed like His from Bozrah, for with Him and for Him they suffered. It is grand review even for a glance of the eye. Mark the Bible, held up aloft as Beza's statue bears it up over the borders of the lovely Lake Neuchatel. See the broken fetters lifted ready to strike tyrants! See the compact organization which proves that an integument is necessary to a vigorous body, from the enclosure of a blood-corpuscle to the retaining walls of a vast civilization! See the step they keep in the witness against a false individualism, and even against an independent and disintegrating ecclesiasticism! See the rugged faces and the fair ones—Coligny side by side awhile with Margaret d'Angouleme. Break up the picture, study any of its divisions, and each will be found to have contributed something of permanent value to the whole Presbyterian tone and temper, and something important to our common Christianity and our advancing civilization. As we pass from Continental to Scotch Presbyterianism the truth becomes clearer, the tread firmer, and the struggles terminate more decisively in victory. As we pass over into the New World little seems to remain but the legitimate sequences of (1) dissolution of the bond between Church and State; (2) the office of securing American liberties; (3) the consolidation and organization of the scattered churches, and (4) the great revivals. These came in their turn, and the church of our fathers was fully ready for the newer and yet larger work on our frontiers and beyond, until the advancing influence reached the western limit of this great land. And there it was ready again to make a league with the modern giant, steam, and pass onward with the Gospel into the far East just in time to reach its hitherto immobile masses as they began to be stirred with the breath of a new life.

[After this introduction the speaker traced some of the lines by which Presbyterians came into Ohio.]

Like other immigrants they came rather drawn than either

drifting or driven. The Ohio Land Company, formed by King in 1750-51, proved attractive. The codfish brought many a Puritan to our shores, and good soil brought many a Presbyterian to Ohio. The movement into Ohio was part of the greater Western movement. Some went farther North and some away to the South. The centre of population began soon to go West, and certainly it grew up with the country. Great trade-winds blew over the lands with steadiness, and any vessel could go by them from a shallop to a frigate. So Presbyterians came into Ohio. Nor had they far to be blown. The drift into western Pennsylvania had been equally mercenary, but equally moral in its outcome. Those who came were just in time to settle the question as to France and Roman Catholicism, or England and Protestantism. The drift into Virginia thought about tobacco lands probably; but its constituents were just in time to help settle the question of State and Church, and that of freedom to preach the gospel and build churches unmolested. It was now time that the Pilgrims should move on into our borders, in order to help in settling the northwest for liberty, and to carry out the true spirit of the Declaration, that "morality, religion and knowledge being necessary to good government, schools and the means for education shall forever be encouraged." Here, too, they came just in time.

The immigration had a moral end as well as a material impulse; and it surely had a magnificent opportunity. The question *whence* they came who entered Ohio as Presbyterians a number of years ago, must bring our glass down to the distant horizon half around the circle of the compass. Waldensian bravery, Huguenot skill, Holland simplicity and heroic patience, Scotch valor and stubbornness, all mingled with German fervor and conviction. Some of these stumbling one over the other in Pennsylvania, reached Ohio; but most of all there and here the mark of the Scotch-Irish immigrant is most plainly discerned. Some of their best and noblest leaders set sail in 1636 to form a colony in New England. Driven back by the sea, they returned and fought in Scotland. Two-thirds of a century later, after 1720, the emigrants left in swarms, penetrating New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the Carolinas. Lord Montjoy

said: "America was lost by Irish emigration." What mark they left on the Revolutionary time, I need not indicate; nor that they came from John Calvin, so cordially hated by the Romanists, or from John Knox, the rush of whose impetuous speech for the crown-rights of Jesus brought tears and trembling to the scheming Queen. Rugged was he as his own mountain, but fair as the shining of an eternal, because supernal, light upon the summit of his fame. There were great men all along the line: Makemie in Maryland, Davies in Virginia, McMillen and his coadjutors in Western Pennsylvania, Rice in Kentucky, and hundreds of others.

Presbyterians came from New England, and our heritage in Puritan blood must not be forgotten. They came from Eastern Pennsylvania, they came from Kentucky. Kentucky's churches are daughters of Virginia; but Virginia had been largely peopled by Scotch-Irish. "In obscurity and neglect Presbyterianism, in spite of Virginia laws, planted itself unmolested west of the Blue Ridge. Frederick county was leavened, Augusta county was nearly filled; McDowell's, Alexanders, Lyles, Stuarts, and even the Campbells kept coming, and Moore came and Brown, and the list closes with the Makemie as it began." (Gillett, Vol. I.) As late as 1794 the Synod of Virginia included the Presbyteries of Red Stone and Ohio; and as early as 1791, the General Assembly approved and commended the plans of the Synod of Virginia "for the multitudes who are ready to perish on the frontiers."

Currents drew into Ohio from all around the horizon. Maryland had been singularly prepared to feed Ohio. But most came, of course, from Western Pennsylvania. In 1831 the Synod of Pittsburgh calls for appreciation of the task "now opening in the great Western Valley." Pittsburg is pronounced "the commercial center of more than eight thousand miles of steamboat navigation." God in His providence, says the Synod, "seems almost to have annihilated distance. The member of this Synod is still living who first sounded the silver trumpet of the gospel and broke the first loaf of the Bread of Life (with a handful convened in a log barn) *west of the Ohio*. Population has more than doubled every ten years; at this rate there will be

a population west of the Alleghany Mountains in twenty-five years of twenty millions. Can we close our eyes? Brethren, keep the sacred fire ever burning upon our altars, and send down this immense valley *one thousand torch-bearers.*"

But I cannot stay for further particulars. Though many of the world's people misunderstood, or doubted, or denied, the work went steadily forward. The most intimate sympathy has always existed between the Presbyterianism of Ohio and that of Western Pennsylvania. The larger religious movements made visible in the Pittsburgh conventions of 1842 and 1857, were shared alike. And many of the baptisms and gracious revivals were alike pervasive. The movement was of the kind to produce this. It was not *en masse* nor by colonies; it was by families and by ministers. It was by transfusion rather than deportation and immigration.

Enough has been said to show what mingling of currents from the far Northeast, the East and South, came in upon Ohio. Conflicts of jurisdiction were brought to a close. Those who were entering saw eye to eye, and flowed together. Everything seemed favorable to the inclusion of the best possible elements in the stimulative immigration.

Moreover, it was a singularly important time—a blossoming for which there were long preparations. Yet we must remember the discouragements and difficulties through which they must yet pass; the stubborn character of the many foes they met and the exacting conditions under which they labored. The work was only begun, though well begun. We may turn from any study of its details to ask for the main influences by which these who came from so many of the four winds of heaven had been trained for all they were to do and suffer.

I. The first influence was, definiteness of conviction. This appeared in their estimate of the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice, in accurate expressions of their faith by formulæ, and in their developed and systematic schemes of church order. In all these things, they were staunch and firm. They, like Francis Makemie, when arraigned by the High Church government in New York in 1707, were able to say: "As to our doctrines, we have our Confession of Faith, which is known to the

Christian world." No one can over-estimate the values of the positiveness of Presbyterianism in shaping the religious life of our State. "Presbyterianism did not come into the New World passive and plastic, to be determined in its character and history by force of circumstances or by the accident of its environment, but came with positive opinion, deep and strong convictions of truth and duty, with clear conceptions of its mission to mold and determine the character of the New World. An acorn planted at the foot of the Alleghanies, is not in doubt as to the form it is to assume. In Druidical groves and in American forests, oaks grow according to inner life. The seed of Presbyterianism here was the same as in Geneva and Edinburg. Indefiniteness is reduced to a minimum in Presbyterianism. The indefinite man is evasive and deliquescing and evaporative. The definite man will be a rallying point in the community. Such was the first influence, and this became characteristic. Presbyterians came to be known in Ohio as being able to say not only, "I know *whom* I have believed," but also to add, "I know *what* I believe, and can give a Scriptural reason why."

II. The second characteristic discloses independence of man and love of liberty. This especially fitted Ohio Presbyterians to live under and carry out the spirit of the great Ordinance of 1787. Nothing could be finer than the exact adjustment of that ordinance, which recognized nothing but free men, and the inner spirit of Presbyterianism as it had come to be developed by the Assembly, 1788-9.

Presbyterian love of liberty is founded on an appreciation of man as man. Upon that recognition of the *soul* in man which makes a "Common," a great middle class, self-respecting and attracting the respect of others. Presbyterian love of liberty grows out of the Kingship, the Priesthood, and the Prophetic commission of all believers.

III. But an equally strong influence was exerted upon the Presbyterians who settled Ohio, and through them, in the conservative direction. They always believed in good and strong government, and were ready to say with Washington, "Influence, sir, is not government." They strongly held government to be *from* God, and therefore held the Government *to*

God. Conscience was for them the source of power in securing obedience to law. Law and order and the limitations of liberty were their household words. They were inclined to this direction both by doctrine and order. Publicists, like Gladstone, discerned this trait. Our faith has some very persevering saints. It can stand by the difficult and the old, and even the inexplicable (when that is divine), with only a patient smile for all gain-sayers; and after awhile the gain-saying ceases, and the admiration of what the world calls "*Staying qualities*" begins. This conservatism it was which fitted them for the following change of correspondence with the father of his country. "We shall consider ourselves doing an acceptable service to God in our profession, when we contribute to render men sober, honest, and industrious citizens and the obedient subjects of a lawful government." To which, George Washington replied that, "The general prevalence of philanthropy, honesty, industry and economy, seems in the ordinary course of human affairs particularly necessary for advancing and confirming the happiness of our country." Calvinism's sense of accountability is a friend to strong government. Presbyterianism gives a rational conservatism. It is not fatalistic. Presbyterians went about arranging for government as naturally as they began felling trees and planting crops. They had no hesitation and no squeamishness, either in theory or practice. They had little use either for vigilance committees or white caps.

The speaker then simply enumerated other characteristics of which time forbade the discussion:

- IV. The Intellectual.
- V. The Ethical.
- VI. The Evangelical.
- VII. The Catholic.
- VIII. The Disciplinary.

Some of the closing words were as follows:

Here, then, we rest the case. The decision and convincing and definite element fulfilled the first condition and adaption to the work before them.

The liberating element brought freedom for movement, with all the sacred passion of patriotism and all its honorable record, growing more distinguished as the years go on.

The conservative element established as other work progressed.

The intellectual element quickened all the faculties of all with whom they came in contact, and by press and school and fireside and pulpit they kindled such general ardor for mental power and furniture as has made Ohio a new mother of Presidents.

The ethical element aided to break the dominion of border savagism, and cleft the way for sound morals in law and practice, in society and business.

The evangelical and spiritual element kept descending the dews of the Holy Spirit's presence, and kept ever visible the radiant face of the Savior of men, and kept ever open the shining way to the celestial city — how many thousands have already trod it?

The Catholic element came on, in its own time, like the color on perfect and mellow fruit. *burst more like*

And ever and always to awaken and help us stands the disciplinary element in this great preparation. *more*

What a series of marvelous combinations might be here enlarged upon. Stability and freedom; adaptation to common people, yet demanding the highest intelligence; doctrinal strictness, and yet liberality in the matter of non-official membership and in co-operation with other churches; devotional fervor, yet joined with marked ethical force; independence of the state, yet demand for state allegiance to God, intense conservatism and rapid progress.

But I forbear. I will not even attempt to voice the appeal which so noble an ancestry awakens; nor will I ask whether we who have known and enjoyed will prove as heroic in transmitting the sacred content of our blessings to those who come after us. It is certainly our duty to maintain, to restrain, to educate, to evangelize. When the churches had "*rest*" at the beginning, then they were "edified." Then also they walked "in the fear

of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and were multiplied."

What better can we do with our exemptions and advantages than to imitate them by growth in grace, and unsparing efforts to multiply the number of the saved? What deep gratitude should characterize the tone and temper of the Presbyterian hosts at every review of the century. In His name who gave us such a cloud of witnesses, we set up our banners. Let confidence, born of our past, and willingness, born of our gratitude, and hope, born of the promises, and energy, born of love and loyalty, be enough to compact us and drive us forward, as the sandblast drives its granite atoms into the hard, crystal surface.

