

BX
8905
YG
A3

Tenth Anniversary Memorial

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHRISTIAN UNION

OF THE

United Presbyterian and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches

OF NORTH AMERICA

1889 - 1899

“ Whose I Am and Whom I Serve ”

PITTSBURGH, PENN
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
209 NINTH STREET

Tenth Anniversary Convention Addresses,



DELIVERED IN DUQUESNE GARDEN AND
OTHER HALLS OR CHURCHES,
PITTSBURGH, PENN.,

AUGUST 2-7, 1899.

CHAPTER XIV.

Civic Righteousness.

BY PRESIDENT SYLVESTER F. SCOVEL, D.D., LL.D., WOOSTER, OHIO.

Young Gentlemen and Ladies of the Young People's Christian Union:—

You represent a Church toward which the heart of the Universal Church goes with unwavering confidence and trust. In years of ministry here at the center of your power I learned to know your characteristics of deep devotion and typical faithfulness. I know some of your leaders whose bows yet abide in strength, and knew most of those who are gone to their well-earned reward. And it is this matter of succeeding generations in the work of building God's kingdom that makes me happy in the privilege of standing to represent the generation going in delivering over to the generation coming the whole trust of that which we have provided for the work you will be called to do.

Civic righteousness must be taken in a large way. It means right conduct on right principles in all our civic relations. It is the reign of conscience in public affairs. It is the advent of the Christian in politics. It means the push in moral reform of men like those who originally started out to "turn the world upside down"—i. e., right side up.

Civic righteousness must be as broad as it is deep, and must cover our whole social as well as our political life. Approached from whatever side "Civic Righteousness" is seen to be the demand which characterizes your future. All scientific views of public relationships call for it with intensity. Ethics, Economics, Politics, Sociologics, and even that which I have sometimes called Orbics, all tell us that the world has come to the point when righteousness must reign in public as well as in private affairs. The sphere of Christian duty can no longer be considered as coterminous with the graces of spirituality or the decencies of morality. The world must be taken for Christ in that section in which it is most distinctly worldly. Evil must be overcome of good where evil seems most massive and most aggressive. Satan must be fought where "Satan's Seat" is, even if that should be in a Mayor's chair, or in a Common Council, or in a New York or Chicago Board of Aldermen.

Now, to arrive at a somewhat systematic presentation of the work which lies before you, let me recall the fine Old Testament picture you are all familiar with (for all United Presbyterian young people I have ever met know their Bibles). David the King has diligently prepared for the great building—the house of the Lord. He may not complete his plans (and no generation can). He is filled with the natural and noble anxieties of transmission of all his accumulations for the one grand purpose. In full faith in God and in those who should follow him he

risers to say: "Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel and the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God, that ye may possess this good land and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you forever.

"And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee, but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.

"Take heed now, for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary. Be strong and do it." (1 Chron. 28:8-10.)

Nobler, more inspiring, more suggestive or more discriminating charge was never delivered by man. Washington's "Farewell Address" is the only extra-Scriptural parallel. We bring it to you to-day to express our transmission anxieties, our confidence in you, and as outlining your work. We have been centennializing for nearly a quarter of a century, and that has given us all fresher and larger conceptions of what we have to transmit. You have been growing up during this centennializing period of our national history, and should be the more ready to carry on to ever larger development and richer success the tremendous trust which we pass over to you. There is so much to be handed over to the young men and women of the twentieth century that you will not blame us for seeking the most impressive Scriptures in order to arouse your attention and interest.

Civic America! who can interpret it to you! Our very massiveness and multitudinality, our astonishing opulence, our half-developed yet gigantic resources, our glorious liberties (so susceptible of grander uses or debasing abuses), this great aggregate of powers which we call America and representatively make over to you, surpasses description.

In the form of the incident you have:

I. Providential designation.

II. The work to be done.

III. The sense of responsibility under which it must be done.

IV. The conditions of success.

I will speak to these things as time may serve.

I. Providential designation occurs when there is a work to be done and no one else to do it, and when the special qualifications for the work are clearly bestowed. Both these things are true of you.

Menenius says to Coriolanus:

"If I could shake off but one seven years
From these old arms and legs, by the good gods
I'd with thee every foot."

But we cannot. You must go alone. Little by little you will find yourselves alone. Garfield said: "The only successors to political power in this country must be the coming generation of voters. If they come to their heritage blinded by ignorance or stultified by vice the fall of the Republic is sure and remediless." The more certainly these things are

to be yours the more surely are you to build with them. Otherwise you would but prove the truth of the still-current, pungent saying of the witty Scotchman, Dr. Bishop, of Miami University: "Man is a la-a-zy as well as a ve-e-cious animal."

And your clear adaptation to the work of building civic America is not to be denied for an instant. You have the adaptation of heredity with that of culture added. Never had a generation such an opportunity to be awakened to its task and fired by its dignity. You have all the knowledge of our past in history and poetry, law and practice, which is needful. You have the knowledge of the God of your fathers, and of His marvelous dispensations with his people. Young men and young women are more nearly equally possessed of these things than is true elsewhere—and that means much. There is no generation in the world as exactly and fully prepared for its work as you are. If some say that more is done than ever to ensnare, and hinder, and destroy young people, I answer that more is being done than ever to uplift and upbuild and strengthen them for grander work than the world has ever witnessed. Particulars on both sides may well be studied, but there can be no question on which side the great balance lies. From those to whom much has been given much may well be required. And therefore, with entire confidence that you will see it to be your work, we go on to outline it.

II. Let me state in seven comprehensive propositions what you will have to do in building Civic America. (i. e., building all the material transmitted to you into a veritable house of God—a kingdom within Christ's Universal Kingdom.)

1. The land is to be held and fully possessed and its resources developed for the greatest good of the population.

2. Our free institutions are to be maintained and perfected; our special liberties to be appreciated, defined and safely limited.

3. Homogeneity is to be attained, and a specific national character to be thoroughly realized, perpetuating the Christian traits of our origin and combining all the good elements which may be found in our heterogeneity and approved by experience.

4. Education, in its broadest and best sense, and to the most pervasive extent, and to the highest possible degree, is to be made a national characteristic, to the end that wisdom and knowledge may be the stability of your times.

5. The moral problems bequeathed by our defective past, or arising from our nobler past, or starting up anew along the lines of progress, are to be met and settled, and settled, too, on the one and only basis of morals.

6. To this end, and for many other ends, our national religious position on the relation of religion and State is to be more fully understood, more distinctly confessed, and more fully conformed to in our national life.

7. Our international relations are to be conducted upon the basis of the already recognized Christian international morality, and our influence for peace on earth (and resulting glory to God) carefully extended without unnecessary or enfeebling complications.

Grander field than this none could ask. For some part in this great wide-spreading work there must be room for every devoted young Christian. In the magnificent result of the whole all may find inspiration and strength. Nobler opportunities never opened before generous minds and just ambitions.

(1) Think of the land. Compare its bulk and climate and productiveness, its prairies and mountain ranges, its mines and metals, its interstate and international commerce, its almost unpenetrated wilderness, and the unsurveyed portions of its States, with any other land. Think what is yet to be done in binding it together with the shining ribbons of steel for ever-increasing traffic. Just go over the more than six thousand miles which I have traversed during the past month, and, at once, imagination itself fails to realize the possibilities to be developed. You will need all engineering skill to subdue this land; all agricultural skill to reduce the wealth of its surface; all commercial acumen discerning how trade follows, not the flag, but "the lowest price current."

Moreover, the land must be so developed as to increase not only the producers but the consumers, and so distributed as to secure that only stable and satisfied population which owns its homes and is interested by every consideration in all that is conservative and helpful to society.

There is nothing in which civic righteousness needs more fully to be studied than in the development and final disposal of our extended territory. Righteous care now will prevent intolerable evils from which other nations are suffering.

(2) Representative government will be in your hands, with all the responsibility of proving that democracy is divine. Our institutions are both free and Christian, as our greater documents declare.

They have endured the test of experience, of critical study, and even of hostile criticism, and are yet triumphant at the main object of all civic arrangements—the combination of the greatest governmental efficiency with the largest individual freedom. Intelligent patriotism will maintain them not only as evidencing the constructive genius of the Anglo-Saxon added to the liberty-loving impulse of the Teuton, but as born of our vital constitution and saturated with the Scripture doctrine of the exalted nature and relations of the individual man. Real democracy is real philanthropy and demands the utmost from the people as well as for them.

And these institutions are to be developed by paring away excrescences, by just enlargement of the powers of the State, through evolution rather than revolution. The sacredness of the ballot must be guaranteed to all—that weapon "Better yet and stronger than the bayonet." Equal rights must be actually enjoyed by all the races. To equality before the law must be added an equality of opportunity, so far as just and wise legislation can accomplish this; political corruption must be made impossible, not only by education to honesty, but by lessened party spirit and complete excision of the spoils system and by the securing of a spotless and skillful civil service—more necessary now than ever because of our colonial policy. Direct legislation must be resorted to whenever necessary to remedy the incompetency or venality of representatives or

to secure great moral ends. This work will demand your amplest preparation and most devoted endeavor.

Progress in government, by giving highest efficiency to the best State in the interest of the best individual, is the true antidote to Socialism. Every free institution can be made equally beneficent for every class. This is development along the trend of the world as well as along the line of our national experience.

And our liberties must be defined as well as developed. The right theory of the State is of the utmost importance since "the end of government is the good of man."—(Locke.) Two limitations are especially indispensable. The one is at the supremacy of law, the other at the supremacy of morals. The danger to our liberties is neither intellectual nor material nor military, but moral. Our defense must be moral. Let the fluctuations of liberty and the convulsions of free peoples be your warnings. Well-poised liberties are hard to attain, but that struggle is potentially over. The coming conflict must be to maintain them by accurate definition and just limitation.

The more democracies become conscious of their power the more they need reverence and self-control. Freedom must not be left "free to slay herself; and dying while they shout acclaim."—(Tennyson.) Here is a field for all who love civic righteousness. It will demand and repay your utmost faithfulness.

(3) Our heterogeneity must be overcome, homogeneity attained and a specific American character thoroughly realized. Interest in man is the central interest and man social can only be constructed through the dominance of common ideas in the individual. This is the basis of Christian civilization. Do not despair of attaining it despite the most pronounced heterogeneity in the world, rendered a more difficult problem by special colonies, by congested city districts, by a separate press for each foreign language, by foreign education in parochial schools, by abounding ignorance and miserable race antipathies. Homogeneity must come through final unity in language, government, education, commerce and religion. It is coming now. Christ has made "of twain one new man, so making peace." The Christian's ear over the heart of whatever race, hears the same mystic murmur of life. My recent journey has convinced me that our unity is nearer than I have hitherto dared to hope. The Pacific slope from California to Alaska presents both the problem and its solution to the attentive student. When heterogeneity yields the noblest result may be confidently anticipated. Do not lose a single constituent in the American character you are to bring to completeness. Do not omit German thoughtfulness and industry any more than Anglo-Saxon energy and tenacity. Blend the Irish heartiness and wit with Scotch sturdiness and economy. Build in the French vivacity and logic with the Scandinavian contentedness and frugality. Find use for the Indian's sagacity and nature-knowledge, for Chinese ingenuity and patience, for Japanese quickness and flexibility, and for African emotional warmth and good nature. The American character exists already and is coming to be more and more a world-force. Care for it in your great future, for

moral unity of the highest type is the end and aim of all institutions and constitutions.

(4) What was said of education is here reduced to the word of caution against the Roman Catholic plea which would banish all religion from our schools under the charge of an utterly secular State which cannot even teach the Christian sanctions of the Christian morality in our laws; and against the secularistic theory of State and education which reaches the same desperate conclusion. The true position is that a Christian State may and must teach the true grounds of good citizenship.

(5) Entering upon the meeting of moral problems the speaker could not give even the catalogue of the seventeen particulars in which they appear; but urged that the moral conflicts here to be found would replace the physical-force conflicts of the passing century and would demand all the gifts and graces of young Christians in the coming one. Personal character of the highest grade would be imperatively needed, self-abnegation must be persisted in, while study and preparation and experiment would be indispensable. But the supply would be equal to the demand. As it was at the Continental Congress, at the Conquest of the West, at the suppression of the rebellion, so will it be in the moral struggles of your century.

Here is the special place and power of civic righteousness. Every young Christian stands for the supremacy of the moral over the material. He protests against the mistaken idea, now so widely disseminated, that the economic interest is supreme, as superficial and unworthy the true nature and destiny of man. He knows that man's central need is righteousness. He is sure that the moral conditions the material. In seeking "first the kingdom of God" he becomes by nature and commission the typical moral reformer. This way only can we have power and hope. Here municipalities may be ruled for their own good as Glasgow is, which is such a contrast to our American cities. It is worth remembering that one well-informed assured me (in 1896) that the Baillies who constitute the cleanest and the cleverest civic body on earth are not only men of good reputation in business and social life, but "the most of them, sir, would be Presbyterian elders!" It is my confident hope from the advent of the consecrated Christian young manhood of all the Churches into the management of moral issues in public affairs that some of our own cities may soon be as well governed. Whence can we expect incorruptibility, philanthropy, unselfishness and the resolution which will penetrate the deceptive pleas and resist gigantic confederations of the immoral, if not from the disciples of the Master who wielded the whip of small cords in cleansing the temple? Here is a limitless field for the heroes of civic righteousness.

(6) But conditioning all we may plan and hope for in improving the moral conditions of the future stands our national position as a Christian nation to be more fully understood, more distinctly confessed, and more thoroughly expressed in our national life.

To do all this means that you shall possess yourselves of all the facts in the case, as alas, we cannot believe the majority of even our young

Christian people to be possessed. It means to stand firmly whenever any question the right to moral legislation or moral teaching in our schools. It means to maintain that the national religion sanctions the careful execution of every repressive and therefore defensive statute. It means that every issue, either in law-making or in law-enforcement, must be settled by the only supreme moral authority—the will and word of God. You will need all the force of this true position to maintain the fundamental Christian features of our national life. Our liberties were born of that “general, tolerant Christianity” (Webster’s phrase) which is just as plainly essential for their maintenance, definition and defense. Person and property are secure as long as these precepts really prevail in the life of our communities. They will be insecure when anything else replaces them. The Sabbath-breaking railroads trained the mob which burned the railroad property on “Black Sunday” of 1877—as I said at the time. This national position as to the religion you must cherish as the basis of just relations between the Church and State, the home and all great social institutions and interests. Only in asserting this can you be true to our past (see the decision of the United States Supreme Court by Justice Brewer in 1892). With this only can you meet the organized and powerful opposition of the present or the stubborn conflicts of the future. The signs of the times do not betoken any large growth of reverence for God in national affairs or in municipal government. Rather the reverse. We need to sing Kipling’s *Recessional* as thoroughly as England—and the more the farther flung our battle line comes to be. Stand fast in this Christian liberty! There is no bondage like that of utter ungodliness! There are no dangers more dangerous than those that deny the God to whom your fathers appealed when they won the very liberties with which you are entrusted—to enjoy, develop, define and defend them. Here is the closest and deepest demand of the civic righteousness which is to be. Only those who believe in God as the Creator and Christ as the Ruler of nations, and God’s law as the guide of all public affairs can be, by any possibility, adequate to the duties and dangers of citizenship in America at the opening of the twentieth century.

(7) Nor will civic righteousness be content to leave out our international relations. They must be conducted upon the basis of the already recognized Christian international morality, and our influence for peace on earth (and resulting glory to God) carefully extended without unnecessary or enfeebling complications.

What grander office than this! The Christian citizen must be cosmopolitan as well as patriotic. By preserving our traditional non-interference with other nations (large or small); in following the precepts of the “Farewell Address” (almost prophetic in spirit and accuracy); by keeping beyond question the Presidential pledge against all “criminal aggression”; by limiting our wars to purest humanity with no touch of conquest policy or so-called war-indemnity; by doing always and fully what we have just done ably and partly at the grand Peace Conference at The Hague; by opening everything to arbitration and giving up generously to meet neighborly concessions; by doing to others as we would

be done by, rather than as we are done by; by carrying the Christian morality of our national life clear out to the world-boundaries in our international life; thus, and thus only, shall we fulfill our national mission to teach the world the value of institutions as Christian as they are free. Thus shall we continue to be what the Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, said we had begun to be—"a new mountain of law to the nations."

See to it, young Christians of the United Presbyterian Church, that we do not fall from our high estate for any apparent advantage, and become involved in the schemes for carving the weaker nations into slices when we should bind up their wounds and pour in the oil and wine of Christian life and care. See to it that we take no home vineyard or ewe-lamb of the poorer nations because we have the imperial strength to do it—and thus bring upon us the curse of Naboth's defending God. See to it that what territory we hold abroad shall be (just like that we hold at home) held always for, and only so long as we can secure, the supreme good of the people who inhabit it—not for any commercial exploitation.

III. With a deep sense of responsibility should this work be taken up. Such a sense of responsibility might grow to awe such as was expressed in the prayer of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette: "Protect us, O Lord; we reign too young." It would awaken to larger inspirations and make ashamed of any disposition to begin at the top and for love of ease "slide down." "To be young and to be indifferent must be no longer synonymous" (Beaconsfield). This responsibility would be assumed not in the presence of "all Israel," but of the whole world. Now and then it should be accepted "in the audience of God." A just sense of responsibility is to be welcomed. It will not depress but develop the powers. Only superficial vanity is satisfied with mere possession of anything. The difficulties and possibilities of the work combine to demand a seriousness commensurate with the dignity of the trust.

The spirit of the work must be that of the sacredness which God has attached to public duty, to public office and to the public officer while he obeys God's voice. Public duty must be cheerfully undertaken as one of life's highest privileges, because of its usefulness to thousands. The conditions of popular government are as difficult as its advantages are great. He must be intensely selfish who is willing to enjoy the latter and shirk any encounter with the former. The typical American Christian citizen must be willing to suffer and "endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ." The work demands promptness and heartiness and helpfulness: "Heart within and God overhead" must be its motto. If resolute courage be demanded you have the best possible ground for it. The struggle for civic righteousness with its untold blessings to great masses of our fellowmen is inspiring enough to make heroes.

Do not fear the removal of the fathers. They have always been taken away as Nestor from the Greeks and David from Solomon and Washington from America. Your father's God remains. Only be ready when He calls to civic duty. It is as noble to live for one's country as to die for it, and it is more difficult and rarer.

IV. "Be strong now and do it." There is no such demand as this

for the strenuous life. It is written to you, young people, "because ye are strong." It will demand yet greater strength. "Put on the whole armor." The Christian never needs to be so thoroughly Christian as when he is working for God and man in the direction of civic righteousness. Strengthen your courage. Intensify your application. Enlarge your intelligence. Let nothing escape you which can tend to overcome evil with good and bring the reign of righteousness in public affairs. Bring to the conflicts of your future the strength of educated political judgment, refined and elevated by positive religious principle. "Ye that are men, now serve Him." Dudes and dandies are mere freaks of nature and are of no more account than the unusual markings on a butterfly's wing. Develop strength to purify political methods, and to abide loyal to the higher law, and to adventure into new fields where you see its guidance. Believe in human progress and in a righteous America because you believe in God. Wait for your ideals but work incessantly toward them. Faith is ever stronger and more fruitful than unbelief. Even Goethe saw that.

Be watchful for new and stronger methods. Know the history and meaning of our institutions thoroughly. Pay close attention to the machinery of government and fear no contacts into which actual endeavors to discover and destroy wrong will lead you. Just there has been the want of the past.

Let the press command your most assiduous attention. Use it more for righteous ends, then improve it, and finally own a large place in it at the metropolitan centers, so that righteousness can be preached daily in the market-places.

Remember that he gives best and most who "gives a character, erect and firm."—(Lowell.) You will not disappoint at this most important point those who hand over to you representatively the rich endowments of the present, and welcome with joy your entering into possession and follow you with benediction as you go on weaving into the very tissue of our national and municipal life the righteousness which alone exalteth a people. The blessing of the God of your fathers be upon you.