

1802

✓
CENTENNIAL

1902

OF

HOME MISSIONS

IN CONNECTION WITH THE ONE HUNDRED
AND FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEW YORK CITY, MAY 16-20, 1902



PHILADELPHIA

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
AND SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK

1902

Copyright, 1902, by the Trustees of
The Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-
School Work

Published November, 1902.

BOARD OF DOMESTIC MISSIONS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

BY THE

REV. JAMES I. VANCE, D. D.

NEWARK, N. J.

Mr. Moderator, Fathers, and Brethren :—

FROM a Church whose numbers are small, but whose sympathies are large, and whose annals are honorable, and whose spirit is catholic, and whose faith is sufficiently sound, I come into this fellowship meeting representing 112,000 American Dutchmen, many of whom, like myself, are of plain Scotch or, plainer, Scotch-Irish birth, but all of whom are loyal to the cross and to the flag. Representing such a constituency, I bring the warmest fraternal greetings to all those who are concerned with making and keeping America a Christian nation. I bring the hearty congratulations of my church to the Home Missionary Board of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for the peerless contribution it has made to this supreme enterprise. The Reformed Church in America, or, as it is more affectionately known, the Dutch Reformed Church, is, with a single exception, the oldest Protestant organization in America, and was the first such church to set

foot on American soil. The question is sometimes asked why, with such a starter, we have not gotten more territory under our feet. A Dutchman has never required much territory for his feet. Holland is a little land, a little, little land of sturdy dykes and busy towns, and industrious honest people, but Holland has fought the battles of the world for civil and religious liberty. The Reformed Church in America has done more for other churches than it has for itself, and that is the reason why our numbers are not as large as our sympathies. We believe in helping out our sister churches in distress. The distinguished moderator of this assembly is not a member of our immediate communion, to be sure, but "van Dyke" is a most savory Dutch name, and a few centuries ago we gave you your present moderator.

On this occasion also we are giving a principal speaker for the Home Mission Centennial Anniversary, and we are very glad to lend—yes, we are very glad to lend—our Presbyterian friends that valiant and strenuous son of the Reformed Church, Theodore Roosevelt, for we are quite sure that he will have the meeting well in hand. I think you will agree with me that it is not very often a church manifests the spirit of ecclesiastical comity by lending a sister denomination in distress a President of the United States in order that her cup of joy may be full. But that is only an incident with us in our lavish and generous treatment of our larger but less fortunate and more solicitous sisters. We do not give the nation a President very often; but when we do, we give a good one. We make up in quality what we lack in

quantity. We give a four-square American citizen whom all the nation respects—North, South, East, West—a President who was a man before ever he was a President, and who is a vigorous, positive Christian man all the time he is President. It is sometimes intimated that the Dutch Reformed Church has more pride of ancestry than hope of posterity, but that is only one of the mistakes of the higher critics. We have the ancestry, to be sure, and we are very proud of our present pedigree, but our face is toward the morning, and, in comparison with our numbers, the Reformed Church is conducting a missionary work at home and abroad which is unexcelled, and whose praise is in all the churches.

So I believe that we have a right to a place on this platform. From a church whose heart beats loyal to the cause of home missions, I come to place one sprig of orange in the Presbyterian bouquet. Or, if you please, to weave one thread of old gold in the blue banner we all love so well. If there be one cause in whose radiant presence the shadows of denominational difference should lift and vanish, it is that cause which speaks from this pulpit to-day, and whose lustrous and inspiring goal is America for Christ. Here the things which divide us are lost sight of, and the things which unite us are foremost. The things which unite us are not the propagation of a dogma or the glorification of a saint. The sectarian is a religious provincial. He makes the mistake of imagining that one is a better or worse Christian according to his brand, and that the

cause of Christ locates itself chiefly in his own denominational degrees of latitude and longitude. But the cause of home missions bursts such narrow boundaries, and has for its goal the Christianization of America. Its effort is to plant the cross, and all for which the cross stands, in the remotest mountain fastnesses; to plant the light of the gospel in the darkest slums; to send small companies of militant Christians to man the outposts, to preach the gospel of the Son of God so lovingly, so convincingly, so thoroughly throughout the length and breadth of this United States that America shall become a delightful land to her own and a blessing to all mankind. The destiny of the race is in our keeping as never before. It is no bit of Yankee bluster which says, "As goes America, so goes the world." How shall man regard his fellow? How and when is war to be waged? How are weaker peoples to be treated? How is commerce to be conducted? What of labor as well as what of trade? How are gigantic wrongs to be righted? America's attitude on all these questions is of supreme importance, and the American citizen to-day is vested not only with municipal and State and national, but with racial suffrage. The movement is a world campaign. It is something for the human race that America be Christian. If America is to be great, she must be Christian. And if she would be Christian abroad, she must not be pagan at home. And whoever lifts America closer to the heart of Christ is, with the same gracious heft, lifting China and India and Africa and the islands of the sea nearer to God.

He is pressing the crusade of a world emancipation. If there be one man more than any other to-day whose heart should be fired with a mighty enthusiasm, it is he who flies the banner of the cross and the Stars and Stripes from the same flagstaff, and whose battle cry is, "America for Christ."

Some months ago, off the coast of Malaga, a German training-ship went down with the loss of over 100 lives. The people on the land could see the wreck, but they could do nothing to relieve its distress. They saw waves of mountainous height sweep over the deck. Some of the cadets were swept overboard. Many climbed into the rigging. The people from the land saw those German lads in the rigging wave their caps, and then, above the shriek of the storm, they heard cheer after cheer come from the German cadets on the sinking ship. Those boys were drowning, but with their dying breath they were cheering the Kaiser and the Fatherland. It seems to me it is some such mighty enthusiasm as that which should stir the heart of the Church as we confront this cause of home missions. To be the citizen of such a country as this, to live in such a time as this, to stand in the morning hour of this matchless century, in the center of its marvelous triumphs, in the thick of its splendid opportunities, with America for a pulpit and the world for an audience, and to speak the message and to share in doing the work which is to make and keep America a Christian nation, and God's servant to all peoples, is to confront a chance besides which that of Adam dwarfs and that of Moses pales. It is enough to

stir the pulses in the veins of death, and tongue the dumb with eloquence.

Mr. Moderator, the church which I have the honor to represent thanks God that America has had, and still has, a Presbyterian Church, and that the Presbyterian Church has been and still is a home missionary church, whose courageous consecrated sons and devoted daughters have not hesitated to go to the hottest mark of the firing line on the far frontier, flying the flag, and living and preaching the cross, that America may be Christ's.