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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



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TUESDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 20, 1902

FELLOWSHIP MEETING

GREETINGS FROM SISTER BOARDS

FROM BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

BY THE

REV. JOHN D. WELLS, D. D.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

(Paper presented by the REV. DAVID GREGG, D. D., in Dr. Wells' absence.)

Mr. Moderator, Fathers, and Brethren:—

TEN minutes only are allowed me for an important and pleasant service. As freedom of speech with an inviting theme is a dangerous commodity, I therefore shield you and myself with these bits of paper.

If I were performing a marriage ceremony here and now, I am very sure that the parties most nearly concerned would not be pleased if I made the ceremony an address to this large audience. I am equally sure that the Board of Home Missions with its officers, to whom the Board of Foreign Missions and its officers have charged me to speak a few words on this centennial occasion, will expect me to address them and not all within the sound of my voice, though all, I trust, may be able to hear.

The two Boards are very near neighbors. In our meetings from month to month we occupy parts of the same building belonging to the Church we serve. There

the secretaries and treasurers and good women coöperating with the Boards have their permanent and commodious quarters. We have many interests in common. We serve the same divine Master. We are under the same great commission left us by our risen Lord. It is our call to service till he come. We are responsible to the Church that appoints us, and to this Church we report yearly. Therefore may I not say, in the name of the Lord, "The Board of Foreign Missions and its officers affectionately greet the Board of Home Missions and its officers on this their hundredth anniversary?"

Younger as an organized body than you, we share with you your joy of one hundred years ; and we join the churches of Christendom in extending to you our hearty greeting. We are glad that as you begin your second century of service you carry no debt. We congratulate you, brethren, because you have lived so long, and, by the grace of God, have lived so well. For though the *personnel* of the Board has changed, the organized body has retained its life, its name, its character, and its high calling. We have in mind and heart the names of men who have wrought well and now rest from their labors. The Board of Foreign Missions in its shorter life has had a like experience. You and we feel the influence of those who have gone before, who have served our Boards as officers and as missionaries and as martyrs ; for some have sealed their testimony with their blood. May we all be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises !

We congratulate you because through the successive

decades of the century the Church you serve, with the Christian Church at large, has been growing to her present proportions, and that you have helped her growth. We hope she is coming to a deeper and more sacred consciousness of responsibility for the evangelization of the peoples of the home land and of all lands. I say "peoples" because representatives have come hither from almost every land under heaven. Among those for whom you care you can more than match the Pentecostal enumeration, beginning with the "Parthians and Medes" and ending with the "Cretes and Arabians"—sixteen in all. You go beyond the teens. Under the one commission you and the representatives of sister denominations are bound to reach the ever-increasing but ever-dying multitudes as soon as possible.

In his *Imago Christi*, Dr. Stalker has these soul-stirring words :

"All who take part in this work ought to build with his (Christ's) holy ardor. He thought it worth while to die for the sake of redeeming the souls of men ; what sacrifice are we prepared to make in contributing to the same end ? He gave his life : will we give up our ease, our effort, our money ? It was because he believed each single soul was more precious than a world that he died to save the souls of men. Are they precious in our eyes ? Does their fate haunt us ? Does their sin grieve us ? Would their salvation fill us with aught of the joy that thrills the angels in heaven when one sinner is converted ? "

We congratulate you because you have had and now

have the privilege of nurturing the lives of so many churches in the older and the newer States and Territories of this great Republic. But for your living agents and sacred agencies, whole States and Territories would have no Presbyterian churches, schools, academies, or colleges. In this great work you have coöperated with other Boards of the Church, and in some instances you have established the gospel among people for whom no others have cared.

We congratulate you because, as fully as possible with the means at your command, you have kept pace with the phenomenal extension of our national territory and the growth of the nation itself. You have made it comparatively safe for people of enterprise to seek homes for themselves in advance of the sure protection of civil government; and at last you have the joy, with all loyal American citizens, of seeing our nation a power and a benediction among the great nations of the world, and the richest of them all. To this result you have ministered, unwittingly perhaps, while seeking one still higher, according to the mind of God.

We congratulate you because you are doing a blessed work among the remnants of the Indian tribes of our land, having accepted this work largely from the Foreign Board, and hastening the day, we may hope, when they all will prize full citizenship, the possession and cultivation of farms in severalty, and what is still more important, the sharing with all Christian people in "the durable riches of righteousness" and "the kingdom of the heavens."

We congratulate you because of the character and gracious efficiency of your missionaries. I may not mention names. I barely refer to some communities in out-of-the-way places, especially in mountain regions difficult of access, where human deterioration had reached its lowest depths, but where now transformations of character and destiny are the glory of the land and the joy of heaven. If we could even glance at your work in Alaska, Porto Rico, and Cuba—Cuba, whose name this very day, under American leadership, is for the first time written in the annals of history as a nation and a republic and a free people—we might possibly make our congratulations more emphatic, if we cannot make them more sincere.

You are to be strongly congratulated, as we of the Board of Foreign Missions and the whole Church are, because of the wise and earnest and gracious coöperation of our Christian women in the practical, administrative, and editorial work of missions. What should or could we now do without them? How did the Church and her Boards accomplish their parts of evangelistic work among the peoples of the world before they were organized for efficient service? Not less than in our homes and separate churches, they are a lovely necessity in all mission work at home and abroad.

As I am called to speak for the Board of Foreign Missions, all of whose members and officers I know, it is my regret that I do not know all the members of the Board of Home Missions, though I have the pleasure of knowing its officers. May I not say at least, from in-

formation and partial knowledge, that you are the worthy successors of those who have gone before? You have entered into their labors. You have come to the kingdom for such a day as this. We are glad to be under the same roof with you. We cannot forget that with you we have our Lord's promise in its broadest and most specific terms: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It was an apostolic promise at first, but it is a promise now for the churches of all times and all lands.

A word about the future. In some respects it will be as the past. The *personnel* of the Boards and of their officers will change. But why regret this? The Lord of life who loves us will order the changes. He will so order them that the work will go on until he come. These changes will hasten his appearing. Brethren, the work will grow upon your hands. We hope that this centennial celebration may help it financially; and if financially, then also in its scope and power. We hopefully look forward to the winning of more souls, the multiplying of Christian institutions, the exalting of our nation by righteousness, and the bringing of more glory to the God of our salvation.

The report of this centennial observance will be carried by members of the Assembly to the presbyteries of the Church. It will reach all pastors and stated supplies and churches without pastors. May we not hope that more of our ministers will sound the tidings of your

age, your vigor, and your work for Christ and souls and country from their pulpits? Your periodicals and leaflets will publish the good news. You stand on the threshold of the new century with glad hearts, eager to finish the work given you to do. Never forget that this is the pentecostal era. Seek and expect and receive the divine benediction.

May you and we, with all the members of missionary boards and societies, and all Christian people, "be filled with the Spirit" for efficient service, and so hasten the coming of the Lord and the kingdom of glory! Amen!