

# 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.

*William*  
EDITED BY THE

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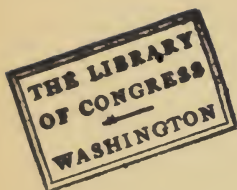


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THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH AND THE ADOPTING  
ACTS OF 1729 AND 1788.

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN L. AGNEW, D. D.

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IN our magnificent Church we possess an ecclesiastical polity which may be denominated specific, American Presbyterianism, whilst our doctrinal creed is generic, world-wide Paulinism. Our Church is not called in denominational nomenclature The Calvinistic Church, but The Presbyterian Church.

I. In considering the theme before us we shall first treat of Colonial Presbyterianism.

The first classical assembly organized in this country was organized under the name of "The Presbytery," March 22, 1706. The first leaf of the minute book has been irrecoverably lost, and we have no evidence that the Presbytery formally adopted any written constitution. Mr. John Thompson, in 1728, advocated in Synod the adoption of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly as the Creed of the Church, the Synod, as he said, "Having never, by a conjunct act of the representatives of our Church,

made it our Confession, as we are a united body politic." And yet at a meeting of the Presbytery held in Philadelphia in 1712 there was an overture presented concerning difficulties between Rev. Mr. Wade and the people of Woodbridge, which read in part as follows: "It is overtured, that whereas, for these several years, we have endeavored to accommodate the differences between Mr. Wade and the people of Woodbridge, after some time, at his own proposal, we admitted him as a member of our Presbytery and he submitted himself willingly to our Constitution" (*Records*, p. 27). Thus six years after The Presbytery was organized they had something which The Presbytery regarded as a "Constitution," to which Mr. Wade submitted.

"The General Presbytery," as the classical assembly was sometimes called, resolved in 1716 to meet the next year as a Synod, and the body so met in Philadelphia in 1717. In 1721, the Synod said, "As we have been many years in the exercise of Presbyterian government and Church discipline, as exercised by the Presbyterians in the best Reformed Churches, as far as the nature and constitution of this country will allow, our opinion is, that if any brother have any overture to offer to be formed into an act by Synod, for the better carrying on in the matter of our government and discipline, that he may bring it in against next Synod" (*Records*, p. 68). In 1727, there is another reference (p. 86 of the *Records*) as

follows: "And as to the call and settlement of the Rev. Mr. Pemberton at New York, the Synod does declare that the rules of our Presbyterian Constitution were not observed in several respects by that congregation in the matter."

The fair presumption, therefore, is that the Westminster Standards were for several years recognized as the law governing the actions of the Presbytery and afterward of the Synod, without any formal adoption of them as the Constitution of the Colonial Church.

At that early day there was no formal subscription to the Confession of Faith required of those who were ministers in the Church. In 1728, the Synod, at a meeting held in Philadelphia, took the following action (*Records*, p. 94): "There being an overture presented to Synod in writing, having reference to the Subscribing of the Confession of Faith, etc., the Synod judging this to be a very important affair, unanimously concluded to defer the consideration of it till the next Synod; withal recommending it to the members of each Presbytery present to give timeous notice thereof to the absent members, and it is agreed that the next be a full meeting of Synod."

The next year this matter was taken up at Philadelphia, and on the 19th of September, 1729, the Adopting Act was unanimously passed by the Synod (*Records*, p. 94). After its passage we find this deliverance: "The Synod, observing that unanimity,

peace, and unity, which appeared in all their consultations and determinations relating to the affair of the Confession, did unanimously agree in giving thanks to God in solemn prayer and praises." Action was at the same time taken in regard to the Directory, which then included the Form of Government and what we now call the Directory for Worship. The Synod declared "that they judge the directory for worship, discipline, and government of the Church, commonly annexed to the Westminster Confession, to be agreeable in substance to the Word of God, and founded thereupon, and therefore do earnestly recommend the same to all their members, to be by them observed as near as circumstances will allow, and Christian prudence direct" (*Records*, p. 95).

There were Established Churches in all the Colonies except Pennsylvania, and the Synod could not adopt a polity for the Church that could be universally enforced, for Makemie was imprisoned in New York for two months for daring as a Presbyterian to preach the gospel in a Colony where there was an Established Church.

After the Adopting Act of 1729, subscription to the Standards of the Church was required of all ministers. In 1730 (*Records*, p. 98.) we find intrants were obliged "to receive and adopt the Confession and Catechisms at their admission, in the same manner and as fully as the members of the Synod did that were present" at the time of passing the Adopt-

ing Act, and this action was unanimously taken. In 1734, the Synod ordered that inquiry be made every year whether ministers received were required "to adopt the Westminster Confession and Catechisms with the Directory." This is either to be regarded as an explanation of the act recommending the Directory, or else it is a new adopting act formally requiring all ministers to adopt the Standards. The same year this action was taken: "Pursuant to act of Synod, found upon inquiry that Mr. William Tennent, junior, Mr. Andrew Archbold ordained, and Mr. Samuel Blair, licensed, did each and every one of them declare their assent and consent to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and Directory annexed, according to the intent of the act of Synod in that case made and provided." In 1736, the Synod made this clear and positive declaration: "That the Synod have adopted and still do adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory, without the least variation or alteration;" except only some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, concerning the civil magistrate; and this action was unanimously adopted.

In 1745, the Synod was unfortunately divided. The division took place from differences about matters of policy, methods, and measures, rather than about doctrines, and when the Synods of Philadelphia and New York were again happily reunited, it was



on the simple basis of the Standards of the Church as they had been previously adopted.

In 1751, the Synod of Philadelphia ordered that the proposals of the Synod of New York, presented by that body in the year 1749, for a union with the Synod of Philadelphia, be recorded. In those proposals the Synod of New York says, "we all profess the same Confession of Faith and Directory of Worship." "And to preserve the common peace we would desire that all names of distinction which have been made use of in late times, be forever abolished; that every member give his consent to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Directory, according to the plan formerly agreed to by the Synod of Philadelphia, in the year 1729. Further, that every member promise that after any question has been determined by a major vote, he will actively concur, or passively submit, to the judgment of the body, but if his conscience permit him to comply with neither of these, then he shall be obliged peaceably to withdraw from Synodical communion, without any attempt to make a schism or division among us" (*Records*, p. 202). The Synod of Philadelphia the same year gave a similar deliverance so that there was a perfect understanding between the two Synods (*Records*, p. 204).

In 1758, the Reunion of the Synods took place, and they formed and united upon a basis in which they declared that "Both Synods continue to profess

the same principles of faith, and adhere to the same form of worship, government, and discipline" (*Records*, p. 286). In the first article of the Basis of Union they declared that both Synods had "always approved and received the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as an orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine." And in order that there might be peace and harmony in the Church the second article in the Basis of Union was adopted as follows:

"II. That when any matter is determined by a major vote, every member shall either actively concur with, or passively submit to, such determination; or, if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceably withdraw from our communion, without attempting to make any schism. Provided always, that this shall be understood to extend to such determinations as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government (*Records* of 1758, p. 286).

In 1763, when "a Presbytery in New York government" asked to be received into the Synod, the Synod agreed to receive them on the condition "that they agree to adopt our Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and engage to observe the Directory as a plan of worship, discipline, and government, according to the agreement of this Synod" (*Records*, p. 331).

In 1770, when the Presbytery of South Carolina asked to be received into the Synod, it was informed that it could be received on the following terms:

“The conditions which we require, are only what we suppose you are already agreed in, viz., that all your ministers acknowledge and adopt as the standard of doctrine the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the Directory as the plan of your worship and discipline.”

By requiring this subscription to its Standards the Presbyterian Church in Colonial days grew into a strong, united, harmonious ecclesiastical organization.

II. Let us now turn our attention to the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

After the War of the Revolution had closed it was deemed advisable to adopt a new and more complete Constitution for the Church, and the Adopting Act of 1788 was passed by Synod with wonderful unanimity.

This Adopting Act of 1788 is a more comprehensive and specific act than that of 1729. It divided the Synod into four Synods; constituted the General Assembly; and also adopted the Constitution of the Church with its System of Doctrine, of Ecclesiastical Polity, its Book of Discipline, and its Directory for Worship.

Let us now notice more closely what is comprehended in our Church Constitution.

1. It includes "The System of Doctrine" of the American Presbyterian Church.

In the old records we find various expressions used to denote the Creed of the Church, such as "The Systems of Doctrine," "The System of Doctrines," and "The System of Doctrine." In the Constitution of the Colonial Church there were no questions embodied which were asked of licentiates, or ministers seeking admission to Presbytery, but a general subscription to the Standards was required of ministers; but when the new Constitution of 1788 was adopted a series of questions was introduced, which are required to be asked of all persons entering the ministry—namely: "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" and "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture?" etc.

It is a greatly mistaken notion to suppose that "The System of Doctrine" in the Standards of the American Presbyterian Church is simply a statement of the Five Points of Calvinism as opposed to Arminianism. The Five Points occupy a very small space in the Confession.

You must go back to the days of the Westminster Assembly and consider what "The System of Doctrine" meant at that time. Who constituted the combined forces against which the Assembly lined

up "The System of Doctrine" which they believed to be "taught in the Holy Scriptures?" The attempt made at that time was thoroughly to reform the Church of England, and in particular to make a clear statement to the world of what the members of the Assembly believed the Word of God distinctly taught as against Romanism. They also protested against Deism, Tritheism, Polytheism, Antinomianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism, Arianism, and Pelagianism, as well as against Arminianism.

"The System of Doctrine" starts out by a protest against Deism, which claims that the light of Nature is a sufficient guide to man, and asserts the necessity of a revelation from God. Then "The System of Doctrine" is differentiated from Roman Catholicism by claiming that the Word of God is of itself the only and infallible rule of faith and practice independent of tradition, and it here opposes tradition which had largely supplanted the authority of the divine Word.

The next chapter on the Trinity states our faith in opposition to Polytheism, Unitarianism, and Antitrinitarianism. Further, in the 3d chapter it teaches the doctrine of the divine decrees as against the views of the Arminians. Then, after speaking of Creation, it proclaims a belief in the direct Providence of God over his creation as opposed to Fatalism.

But this is enough to show that "The System of Doctrine" is not simply the Calvinistic system of doctrine as opposed to Arminianism. The Calvinis-

tic system is only a part of the broad, comprehensive system which the Westminster Assembly believed the Word of God explicitly taught as antagonistic to the multiplied forms of error prevalent in that age.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a Protestant, evangelical system of Christian doctrine formulated by Reformed Calvinistic theologians, which the Presbyterian Church in America has always held to be "an orthodox and excellent system."

The very foundation of this comprehensive system is that the Bible is inspired of God and is the infallible rule of faith and practice for all men as distinguished from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Look at the teachings of the Confession of Faith on this fundamental doctrine. The Confession explicitly makes the following declaration:

"Under the name of *Holy Scripture*, or *the Word of God written*, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these": And then it names the entire sixty-six books of the Bible, and adds, "all which are given by inspiration, to be the rule of faith and life."

The Confession then asserts that "the Holy Scripture" . . . "is the Word of God." It proceeds to give the arguments including "the entire perfection thereof," "whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and



divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word to our hearts." It further declares that "The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the Scripture itself," and that "The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."

This latter is aimed at all *ex cathedra* utterances of the supreme pontiff and the authority of unreliable tradition, and declares to the world that we are to be guided in all matters of faith and practice by the infallible Word of God as contained in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, and the American Presbyterian Church has never swerved a hair's-breadth from these declarations of its immortal Constitution.

The Word of God then becomes the divine Charter of the three divine institutions which we have upon earth: the Family, the Church, and the State, and it is the infallible guide for all these institutions.

Starting with this divine Charter, our whole creed is settled by the allwise and loving Sovereignty of God.

Some do not like creeds; but our Church has always thought it fair and honorable to state explic-

itly what it understands the Word of God to teach. Our Creed then is our witness-bearer to the whole world. Indeed, no man can write or preach a sermon without stating in part his creed, and we are bound to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. At the same time our Creed is pre-eminently an irenical document, and we believe the clear, definite statement by the Christian denominations of what they believe, is the very best road to an ultimate agreement of the churches on the fundamental and essential doctrines of our holy religion.

We reject, as if by anticipation, in this old creed the popular new doctrine that we are to be guided by our Christian consciousness. The various creeds of the religious world are a positive demonstration that Christian consciousness is utterly unreliable. Christian consciousness is not law, but the Word of God is infallible law in all matters of faith and practice.

There has always been some liberty allowed in the subscription to our Standards which our Constitution requires, and the right of private judgment has always been recognized.

(1) There is liberty in the Constitution itself about many doctrines. There is nothing said in the Constitution about supra-Lapsarianism or sub-Lapsarianism; nothing about Creationism and Traducianism; no specific theory of inspiration is there formulated; nothing is said about human composition in the



psalmody of the church, or about the use of instrumental music in the worship of God. No positive theory is laid down about the orders and classes in the eldership, although our denomination is expressly called the Presbyterian Church. Some say we have two orders in the eldership: teachers and rulers. Others say there is but one order: the preacher. Others say we have one order with two classes: teachers and rulers, as Calvin, Breckinridge, Miller, etc. Others say presbyters or bishops are of one order and one class, and that they are both teachers and rulers, as Hitchcock and Thompson; and others hold they are all of one order and one class constituting the rulers of the church, as Adger, Hatfield, and Thornwell.

There is also great liberty allowed in regard to following our Directory for Worship.

(2) There is liberty allowed in the subscription itself required by the Form of Government.

The Constitution requires that all ordained officers of the Presbyterian Church shall "Sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures."

This subscription includes the adoption of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as parts of "The System of Doctrine" of the Presbyterian Church as "an orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine."

This is not an *ipsissima verba* subscription, nor a "substance of doctrine" subscription, but "The System of Doctrine," the Protestant, Calvinistic system of Christian doctrine subscription.

Private church members are not required to make this subscription, but all ordained officers are required to make it. A man of his own free will accepts this system of doctrine and adopts it, or he does not adopt it at all. Therefore, it is no hardship to a man to make this subscription. Men, in becoming members of a civil government, surrender certain natural rights for the benefit to be derived from the compact of government, and they are required to be subject to the laws of the government they thus enter. So men who join the Presbyterian Church become subject to the laws of the Church, and if they find after entering this organization that they can no longer believe and preach its doctrines, what then? From the very earliest days of our American Church a minister was required to state his scruples to his Presbytery, and the Presbytery was to decide whether his scruples were about "articles and points of doctrine" that were regarded "essential" to the gospel as we understand the teachings of the Word of God, and if a minister could not agree with his brethren of the Presbytery in the Colonial Church, he was required peaceably to withdraw from the body. This was the law of the Church, and it was largely drawn from the custom of the Reformed Dutch Church, for

the language, "articles and points of doctrine" here used, is taken from the Constitution of that Church.

In that Constitution, edition of 1793, we find that a candidate for the ministry before his admission had to subscribe to a most solemn promise, part of which reads as follows:

"We heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, etc., do fully agree with the Word of God." "And if hereafter any difficulties, or different sentiments respecting the afore-said doctrine should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and Synod, that the same may be examined; being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, to be *ipso facto* suspended from the office."

The law of our Church was more liberal, and only required a man to peaceably withdraw from the denomination if he could not agree with its doctrines. It did not suspend him from his ministerial office.

The Adopting Act of 1729 prohibited any Presbytery from receiving any minister or any candidate for the ministry "but what declared his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession and Catechisms;" and if any one had any scruples about any article he was bound

to declare them to the Presbytery, and the Presbytery would determine whether the article was or was "not essential and necessary, in doctrine, worship, or government."

(3) There has been liberty allowed in the practice of the Church.

In the discussion which accompanied the effort to revise the Confession of Faith a few years ago, there were many divergent views expressed in regard to preterition, and the subject of elect infants, the pope as Anti-Christ, etc., but no trial for heresy arose out of those discussions. The New and Old School branches of the Church differed in their interpretation of our Standards, but they separated more on questions of Church methods, as did the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in earlier days, than upon questions of doctrine; and in the Reunion in both cases the bodies came together upon the Standards pure and simple. If the churches North and South are ever united, it will be upon the simple basis of our common Standards.

When the Constitution of 1788 was adopted the Presbyterian Church eliminated from the Confession of Faith every trace of Erastianism, and declared itself unequivocally in favor of civil and religious liberty. When the great struggle for liberty came the old Calvinistic Colonists declared that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and their belief in the sovereignty of God made them fearless unto death in

demanding for themselves and others the liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. They demanded a complete severance between Church and State. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia was the first organic body of men to declare in favor of open resistance to the oppressive power of Great Britain. When the war raged and Washington was once compelled to retreat and he was asked where he would make his last stand, "He replied," says Prof. Mears, "that, if he were obliged to cross every river and mountain to the limits of civilization he would make his last stand with the Scotch-Irishmen of the frontiers, there plant his banner, and still fight for freedom." Bancroft says, "A coward and a Puritan never went together," and Froude says, "Calvinism, in one or other of its many forms, has borne ever an inflexible front to illusion and mendacity, and has preferred to be ground to powder like flint, rather than bend before violence, or melt under enervating temptation." It is not surprising, therefore, that Washington put such implicit confidence in the courage and heroism of the Presbyterians who composed the largest part of his unconquerable army. When Calvinists undertake a revolution, they seize hold of it with a grand grip, and they never let go until they have carried it through all the convulsions of war to a glorious success.

No wonder Presbyterians are proud of the bright

banner that floats in beauty over this broad land of freedom. A member of the Continental Congress said that the blue in our banner was taken from the blue banner of the Old Covenanters, and it has to us, therefore, a precious and peculiar significance.

Let me here express in rhyme the thought that burns within my soul:

Flag of freedom, flag of blessing,  
 Flag of splendor, floating high,  
 Best of banners, boon of heaven,  
 Gem of all beneath the sky!  
 Flag of beauty, flag of duty,  
 Banner of the rights of man,  
 In the march of mighty nations  
 Thou dost ever lead the van.

Flag of brave men, dearly paid for,  
 How we love thy Stripes and Stars!  
 Thou didst guide our dauntless heroes  
 Through our long and bloody wars.  
 Flag of grandeur, flag of brightness,  
 Glowing o'er the land and sea,  
 Shine forever in thy glory  
 O'er the brave and o'er the free.

2. The Constitution of our Church includes a definite, specific ecclesiastical polity.

As the sovereignty of God settles our creed, so it settles our polity. As the Westminster Assembly, composed as it was largely of members of the Church of England, determined to have nothing in their work which could not be substantiated by the Word



of God, it could not but reach the conclusion that the Presbyterian Form of Government was revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Before the days of Laud the Church of England received without reordination Presbyterian ministers from all the Reformed Churches of Europe. The ever-to-be-despised prelate, however, could not devise means cruel enough to drive Presbyterians from the face of the earth, but he did drive thousands of them from the face of England, only to establish the strongest and best government on the surface of the globe, where all men may enjoy the fullest and the sweetest liberty noble souls ever enjoy—the liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their own enlightened consciences.

3. The Constitution includes a complete System of Discipline. There was no Book of Discipline adopted by the Westminster Assembly. The Synod of 1788 made a little book of only seven pages, which it called "Forms of Process." This has since been greatly enlarged under the title, "Book of Discipline."

Discipline is intended to safe-guard the Church and the religious lives of its individual members. Sometimes it is said our Calvinistic theology has a tendency to make men indifferent as to the lives they live, but there never was a graver blunder. Dr. Chalmers said, "Wherever there has been most Calvinism, men have been most moral;" and Froude

says, "The practical effect of a belief is the real test of its soundness."

Look at the fruits of the Calvinistic system and you will discover that its doctrinal belief and its disciplinary government have had a most happy effect upon the lives of its adherents. The sovereignty of God settles the discipline of the Church and governs the lives of its members, for God is the Lord of the conscience.

4. The Constitution includes a Directory for Worship. The Westminster Assembly could not make a Prayer Book that would suit both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, and the members compromised on the Directory for Worship. Here, too, the sovereignty of God ruled their pronouncement, and they would require nothing of men's consciences which was not positively required by the Great Charter of their authority, the infallible Word of God.

Here, then, we have our ecclesiastical Constitution adopted by the General Synod the same year our National Constitution was adopted by the United States.

The American Presbyterian Church under its Constitution of 1788, which has from time to time been modified and amended, has had a most successful career. Sometimes the question is asked, Is our Presbyterian Church adapted to the conversion of the world? Look at its complete organization, with



its "orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine," its representative government, its admirable discipline, and its simple and dignified mode of worship, and what can be added to its Constitution to make it better adapted to the great purposes of spreading the gospel to the uttermost bounds of the world?

The American Presbyterian Church is an orthodox Church, holding only such doctrines as are clearly taught in the Word of God. It is an evangelical Church, holding the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be "the very Word of God," the only and infallible rule of faith and practice.

We hear the cry on every hand to-day, "Back to Christ! Back to Christ!" What does it mean? How do you get "back to Christ" but through the gateway of the inspired Word and the guiding Spirit of the living God? To get back to him we must get back to his very words as they have been written by his inspired apostles, study his ethical teachings, drink in of his spirit, meditate upon his matchless model of manhood, and be aroused to the grandeur of his atoning sacrifice for sin. Then in his name, by his authority, in his place, by his help, by love to him, by hope in him, and for his glory, preach and teach the everlasting gospel by word and by life; becoming living epistles of his sovereign grace known and read of all men.

Our Church, it may here be appropriately said, has always placed great value upon catechetical instruction. The early Church spread the truths of salvation very largely through catechetical instruction, and the Roman empire was Christianized in three centuries by this method. The Reformers, Luther, Knox, Zwingli, Cranmer, Ridley, the old Waldensian church, exalted this mode of instruction, and the Westminster Assembly spent five years in preparing the Catechisms, and woe be the day to the Presbyterian Church when she ceases to teach the children of the covenant the great fundamental doctrines on which she has built her splendid ecclesiastical structure. Next to the Bible the world can spare any other book better than the Shorter Catechism.

Again the American Presbyterian Church is a magnanimous Church. Our form of government and our system of doctrine both tend to develop an unflinching independence of character and an ardent love of religious liberty, and whilst our idea of the sovereignty of God and his lordship over men's consciences compels us to demand liberty of conscience for ourselves, it also compels us to demand equal rights and privileges for all mankind.

The American Presbyterian Church is also a benevolent Church, and it is doing more for the world's evangelization than all other churches in the United States. It is further a progressive Church, immov-

ably determined to conquer the world for King Jesus. Archbishop Hughes says of our General Assembly: "It acts on the principle of a radiating centre, and is without equal or rival among the other denominations of the country;" and we may add that the General Assembly is to-day the greatest missionary organization upon the face of the globe.

Again, with a creed and polity adapted to the conversion of the world to Christ, and to the consolidation of the churches of the world in one grand representative organism, our Church is bent on the gathering of all the friends of Christ into a glorious Solidarity—the Kingdom of God—embracing all the true followers of the King of kings; for it believes that this consummated fact and this unparalleled glory of the Church of Christ are foreordained of God, and that his plan shall not be frustrated by the powers of darkness.

We do not stand in idleness or despair by the grave of the past glory of the Kingdom. Nearly 10,000,000 of people to-day receive and adopt the Westminster Standards, and with optimistic hopes they move forward on their world-wide mission.

When Adoniram Judson was asked what are the prospects for foreign missions, his reply was given in words that ring like silver chimes:

"BRIGHT AS THE PROMISES OF GOD!"

The world is open for the sacramental host of God to move forward in solid and unflinching columns to

take possession of the nations; and we are moving onward with cheerful hopefulness, believing that it has been foreordained that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our glorious Lord and his all-conquering Christ.