



James A. Christy

GROVER CLEVELAND

ADDRESSES, STATE PAPERS AND LETTERS

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ADDRESSES AND PAPERS

*[Address before the Northern and Southern
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I am very much gratified by the opportunity here afforded me to meet the representatives of the Presbyterian Church.

Surely a man never should lose his interest in the welfare of the Church in which he was reared; and yet I will not find fault with any of you who deem it a sad confession made when I acknowledge that I must recall the days now long past, to find my closest relation to the grand and noble denomination which you represent. I say this because those of us who inherit fealty to our Church, as I did, begin early to learn those things which make us Presbyterians all the days of our lives; and thus it is that the rigors of our early teaching, by which we are grounded in our lasting allegiance, are especially vivid, and perhaps the best remembered. The attendance upon church service three times each Sunday, and upon Sabbath school during the noon intermission, may be irksome enough to a boy of ten or twelve years of age to be well fixed in his memory; but I have never known a man who regretted these things in the years of his maturity. The Shorter Catechism, though thoroughly studied and learned, was not, perhaps, at the time perfectly understood, and yet, in the stern labors and duties of after life, those are not apt to be the worst citizens who were early taught: "What is the chief end of man?"

Speaking of these things and in the presence of those here assembled, the most tender thoughts crowd upon my mind—all connected with Presbyterianism and its teachings. There are present with me now memories of a kind and affectionate father, consecrated to the cause, and called to his rest and his reward in the midday of his usefulness; a

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sacred recollection of the prayers and pious love of a sainted mother, and a family circle hallowed and sanctified by the spirit of Presbyterianism.

I certainly cannot but express the wish and hope that the Presbyterian Church will always be at the front in every movement which promises the temporal as well as the spiritual advancement of mankind. In the turmoil and the bustle of everyday life few men are foolish enough to ignore the practical value to our people and our country of the Church organizations established among us, and the advantage of Christian example and teachings.

The field is vast, and the work sufficient to engage the efforts of every sect and denomination; but I am inclined to believe that the Church which is most tolerant and conservative, without loss of spiritual strength, will soonest find the way to the hearts and affections of the people. While we may be pardoned for insisting that our denomination is the best, we may, I think, safely concede much that is good to all other Churches that seek to make men better.

I am here to greet the delegates of two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church. One is called "North" and the other "South." The subject is too deep and intricate for me; but I cannot help wondering why this should be. These words, so far as they denote separation and estrangement, should be obsolete. In the councils of the nation, and in the business of the country, they no longer mean reproach and antagonism. Even the soldiers who fought for the North and for the South are restored to fraternity and unity. This fraternity and unity are taught and enjoined by our Church. When shall she herself be united, with all the added strength and usefulness that harmony and union insure?