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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



PHILADELPHIA

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ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

BY THE

REV. WM. H. ROBERTS, D. D., LL. D.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

(American Secretary.)

Officers of the Home Board, Fathers, and Brethren:—

It was expected that Dr. William Caven, of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the President of the Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian system, would offer to the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions of this church the congratulations of the Alliance upon this auspicious occasion. Dr. Caven, however, is unavoidably absent, and the pleasant duty falls to my lot to speak a few words in connection with the work of home missions as it is viewed, not simply by one denomination, but by all the denominations throughout the world who hold the Calvinistic theology and the Presbyterian government. Let me emphasize, as I perform this duty, the fact that as a denomination this church of ours belongs to a great Christian communion ; that there is but one other communion bearing the name of Christian which is as widespread and takes in as many families of the human

race. There are geographically but two ecumenical or universal Christian Churches, the Roman Catholic and the Reformed or Presbyterian. The Reformed and Presbyterian Churches are found in every land, worship God in all civilized tongues, and stand amid all nations to emphasize the brotherhood of man, the fatherhood of God, and the hopes which center in the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. As I speak on the subject of home missions, it is proper that I should emphasize yet another fact, that these Reformed Churches, found in all civilized countries, have, throughout their history, emphasized in a peculiar manner the word of God as the supreme rule of faith and conduct, and the teaching and the preaching of that word, under the blessing of the Spirit of God, as the one great instrument for the conversion of souls and for the advancement of the welfare of mankind. We are not sacramentarian churches, but are the churches of the gospel, seeking in every way possible to render obedience to the command of Christ, to preach his gospel to all nations. It is eminently proper, therefore, that on this occasion the "Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the world" should tender to the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, to which that Church has entrusted the missionary teaching and preaching of the gospel in this great land, congratulations upon the Board's one hundredth anniversary.

There has been much reference here made to the work of this Home Mission Board, and the opportunity given for the work of that Board in this country. With the

eloquent utterances of the last speaker we all can most heartily concur, and unite with him in prayer to God, for yet further blessing upon the interests of the Church in connection with home missions, as they have relation to the future of America. It is well for the Board of Home Missions to be guided in all its work by the fact that in this land, above every other land, God is making possible strict and literal obedience to the command of Christ, "Go preach my gospel to all nations." The nations are being gathered, by the providence of God, in this city of New York, in the city of Chicago, in the other great centers of population, and also throughout the rural districts. Where is the city in the United States in which you will not find men of well nigh every color, every race, and every speech? The peoples who separated in the long past at the tower of Babel are assembling once more within these lands west of the Atlantic. God has opened to the Board of Home Missions of this church, and of every American Protestant church, a vast field for abounding labor.

The Alliance of the Reformed Churches has an American section, and that section holds stated semi-annual meetings. There was a special report upon the work of home missions made at the meeting held in Pittsburg on the 16th and 17th days of April, in the present year. That report showed that the work of home missions was being carried on by every one of the churches connected with the Alliance: The Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church South, the United Presbyterian Church, the Synod and the General Synod of the Re-

formed Presbyterian Church, the Associate Synod of the South, the Reformed (German) Church in the United States (the church with which President Roosevelt worships), the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America, the Welsh Presbyterian Church, and last, but not least, the Presbyterian Church in Canada. These ten churches, representing together 1,150,000 communicants and 4,000,000 adherents, stand with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and its 1,000,000 communicants and 3,500,000 adherents, for Christ and a pure gospel on this continent.

One remark made by a representative of the Canadian Church at Pittsburg will bear repeating. There is in it that which should occasion sorrow to every true American heart. The Canadian Church has an immense home mission work, as this Church has, and the testimony of the Canadian clergyman, speaking for his church, was this, that the element most difficult in Canada, in particular in the northwest provinces, to influence for religion, and the element most indifferent to religion, was the element that had come into Canada from the United States. We have in this nation, to our sorrow, an immense number of persons, in particular, men, who are not connected with any church of Jesus Christ, Protestant or Roman Catholic, and whose attitude toward religion is one of absolute indifference. Some years back the Home Mission Board published a pamphlet, which they gave me the privilege of writing, the gist of which was this, that two out of every three of the adult males in this land were not connected with

any Christian church. And this sad state of affairs was most evident west of the Missouri. Is there need for home missions? Yes! abounding need! and these sister churches come here to-day and tender through me, as the American Secretary of the Alliance, to the Board of Home Missions of the greatest of the Presbyterian Churches of the world, this above all other messages: Brethren, a great field is open to you, a field which is increasingly great in the providence of God. America is but another name for "gospel opportunity." See to it that in the century now opening, and through each year of that century, your Home Mission Board, as in all the past, shall be at the front, shall lead onward the hosts of God, until at last this land shall be made, from ocean to ocean, and from North to South, in truth Emanuel's land.