

OUR BANNER.

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FIFTY YEARS OF COVENANTER HISTORY.

AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA.*

BY THE PASTOR, REV. T. P. STEVENSON.

TEXT: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts."—Ps. cxlv. 4.

These words are not only a prediction, but a command. They declare God's will that each generation shall instruct the next concerning his being, his perfections and his works. This principle rules in many other departments of human life as well as in religion. About three times in a century the accumulated wealth of the world, its governments and all social institutions, its schools and literature, its stately edifices, its storied monuments, its cherished archives, are transferred to the care and possession of other hands. Every generation stands, therefore, as a mediator between the generation past and that which is to come, and its office is to receive, to improve, and to transmit to its successor, the accumulated results of all the past labors and achievements of the human race, like a well-tilled farm which descends from father to son, and increases in value and beauty through successive generations.

Among the treasures thus to be preserved and handed down, unspeakably the most important is the knowledge of the true religion. If no provision had been made for the transmission of this trust, the knowledge of God and of the way of life would die with those who possess it, and would require to be revealed anew to each generation. But God never repeats his revelations. Successive revelations, indeed, there have been, but each was the complement, not the repetition, of those which went before, and each one, once made, was to suffice forever. The law was given at Sinai for all humanity through all

*The Second and Third congregations, Philadelphia, united with the First in the services of this occasion.

time. The story of the cross, embalmed in the gospels, was never to be re-written. It is to be translated into language after language, and told by man to man, until the sun ceases to shine. Unless, according to these words, "one generation praise God's works to another, and declare his mighty acts," the knowledge of the true religion would speedily perish from among men. No such function exists, so far as we understand their nature, among the angels. The personal recollection of every angelic spirit reaches back to the morning of their creation, and includes all events in the history of the world to which they belong. The contrast helps us to perceive the supreme importance of this function among men. To facilitate this work, the church has been organized, with her offices of instruction and her commemorative ordinances; the Word of God has been committed to writing; inspired songs have been put into our lips, for few things live in human memory like a well-wordsed song; and the injunction has been laid upon the people of God, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." It is in harmony with this principle and in fulfillment of this duty, that our three congregations in this city are gathered here together to recount a history and to commemorate events which have a permanent interest for us all.

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY.

The earliest account we have of Covenanters residing in Philadelphia, is of a family named Boyd, who migrated hither about the year 1740. Mr. Boyd died soon after their arrival, and all trace of the family is soon afterward lost. In one important result, however, the influence and the memory of his widow still survive. After her husband's death, Mrs. Boyd took rooms in the same house with another emigrant from Ireland, Mr. James Rainey, and his family. To this neighbor she gave books to read which, together with her conversations, led him to embrace the testimony of the Covenanters. Not long after, Mr. Rainey removed to Orange county, in the State of New York, where, thirteen years later, himself and two others of like faith and spirit, organized a praying society which continued to exist and flourish for twenty-nine years. A son, David Rainey, and one other adherent to the covenanted cause, were organized into a society by the Rev. James McKinney in the year 1793, and this society was the foundation of the Coldenham congregation, which, with various vicissitudes, continues to the present day. Little did Mrs. Boyd imagine, when pleading in her humble station for the faith of her fathers, that her labors would yield such enduring fruit, or that, after one hundred and forty years, in this same city where she lived alone, this great as-

sembly, pledged to that same faith, would listen with approbation to the story of her work.*

The first Covenanter who made a permanent settlement in Philadelphia, so far as now known, was Mr. Thomas Thompson, who came from Ireland about the beginning of the Revolutionary war. For many years—one account says fourteen—he remained alone, without the enjoyment even of social ordinances. Some time after the Revolution, probably in the year 1733 or 1739, he was joined by Mr. John Wallace, and a society was constituted which was never discontinued, a congregation being, in due time, organized as its fruit. The first Covenanter sermon in this city was delivered in the year 1791 by the Rev. James Reid, then on a visit to this country from the Scottish church. Some accessions were soon afterwards received, and in 1793, notwithstanding the fewness of their numbers, steps were taken to erect a house of worship; the lot was in their possession in the year 1796, and the work was begun. It progressed slowly, however, and so late as the year 1802 the church was still in an unfinished state. An organization was effected in the year 1798. The Rev. William Gibson presided on that occasion, with the assistance of two elders from the church in New York, and Thomas Thompson and Stephen Young were chosen and ordained as ruling elders. Their ordination took place on Sabbath, January 28th, 1798, and marks the beginning of the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. The Lord's Supper was administered for the first time on the first Sabbath of June, 1802.

In the year 1797 a young man who had just graduated in the University of Glasgow sailed for the United States. Landing at New Castle, Delaware, with a single companion, he journeyed on foot to Philadelphia. When they arrived at the spot where our Public Buildings now stand, at Broad and Market streets, they inquired for the city of Philadelphia, which was not yet in view, and were told that it lay half a mile distant toward the Delaware river! This young man was Samuel B. Wylie, and among his companions on the voyage had been the Rev. William Gibson, already referred to, and Mr. John Black. A Presbytery was constituted by the Rev. James McKinney and the Rev. William Gibson in the following spring, 1798, and at its first meeting Mr. Wylie, Mr. Black, afterward the Rev. John Black, D.D., of Pittsburgh, and Alexander McLeod, subsequently the Rev. Dr. McLeod, of New York, were recognized by Presbytery as students of theology. Mr. Wylie, with these companions, was licensed at Col denham, New York, on the 25th of June, 1799, and, a little more than four years afterward, in the fall of 1803, was installed as pastor of the joint congregations of Philadelphia and Baltimore. The congregation in this city was very small—about thirty-five members—with an

* The "Covenanter," volume I, pp. 283, 314.

uncomfortable, poorly furnished and poorly situated church, and with little encouragement in its prospects. Under the ministry of Dr. Wylie, it rapidly and largely increased, until at the time of the division in 1833, the next notable event in its history, it was strong in numbers, in influence and in wealth. Dr. Wylie was a ripe scholar, an able preacher, and a man of great and deserved influence in the community. He was long principal of the most celebrated classical school in this city, and afterwards for many years Professor of Ancient Languages, and Vice Provost, of the University of Pennsylvania. Our strong disapproval of his course in the crisis of our church history fifty years ago, need not hinder this just tribute to his personal worth, his distinguished scholarship and his eminent abilities.

THE RE ORGANIZATION IN 1833.

I pass to a consideration of the re organization, A. D. 1833, and the facts which made it necessary. During the war of the Revolution, Covenanters in America had espoused ardently the cause of the struggling colonies. Schooled in a long conflict for civil and religious liberty in their native land, they were quick to discern and to heed the voice of justice appealing against arbitrary power. It was Covenanters, or their immediate descendants, who renounced their allegiance to Great Britain, and declared Mecklenburg county, North Carolina, independent of Great Britain, two years before the declaration of our national independence. Many of them fought during the war in the ranks of the Continental army, and none hailed more gladly the final triumph of the colonies and the recognition of their independence by the other nations of the earth. In fact it was their ardent patriotism, and a conviction that here at last a nation was to be founded free from the evils against which they had so long testified in the British Isles, which led a large part of their number, considering their testimony no longer necessary, to unite with a part of the Associate Presbyterian Church, and so to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, in the year 1782, while the Revolution struggle was still in progress. They had heard New Hampshire and Rhode Island acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and King in their fundamental political compacts. They knew that not one of the thirteen colonies had failed to acknowledge God in their great instruments of legislation. It was natural for them to expect that the nation struggling into birth would bear the same character. It was not to be expected that those who were contending for their own freedom would take measures to perpetuate, on soil hallowed by patriot blood and tears, the crime of Negro slavery. The event soon showed how ill-founded were these expectations. When the Constitution of the United States was framed in 1787, the Covenanters at once refused to accept it as a proper basis for a national government. They had no ecclesiastical organization, and only irregular and occasional supplies of preaching,

from the year 1782, the date of the union referred to, until the year 1798—a period of sixteen years. No public testimony, therefore, was issued; no representative assembly gave voice to their convictions. In the absence of church discipline, moreover, many individual adherents to their cause became involved in the evils of the times. But we can judge of the prevailing spirit of the people, by their first organic utterances and acts. In the year 1800, two years after the organization of the Presbytery, Alexander McLeod, licentiate, received, from the congregation of Walkill, New York, a call which bore the names of some subscribers who were holders of slaves. Mr. McLeod was unwilling to enter into pastoral relations with any who were involved in the sin of slave-holding, and brought the subject to the attention of Presbytery. That court decided that no slave-holder should remain in the communion of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; and, inasmuch as some members of the church in the Southern states were known to be involved in this sin, a commission was appointed to visit them, and require the manumission of their slaves. This was accomplished without loss to the church, all her members relinquishing at her call their claim to property in their fellow-men. The “Declaration and Testimony” was drawn up, adopted, and published in the year 1806. This instrument, still included in our standards, and the action respecting slavery just recited, enable us to understand the precise attitude of the early Covenanters toward the Constitution of the United States.

A distinguished professor of Political Science in a leading American college once asked me: “How did your church ever get hold of the principles of government which you are diffusing so earnestly and with so much success?” I was glad to be able to say that we learned them in the fifty years’ conflict for civil and religious liberty in Scotland. Those who died on the scaffold and at the stake for the rights of Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of his church, were naturally quick to discern and loyal to maintain his rights as King of nations. If civil government has no right to usurp authority over the Church, because Christ’s law forbids it, then civil government must itself be subject to that law. If the magistrate may not transgress the law of Christ, neither may he ignore that law. Covenanters, in America, therefore, so far as they were true to their principles, were not only ardent patriots, but loyal witnesses for the rights of the Lord Jesus. While their feelings prompted them to overlook the faults of the government which had been established, their consciences forbade them to do so at the expense of their loyalty to Christ. In the newly framed Constitution they discovered two grave faults: It contained no acknowledgment of the rights of God, and it trampled under foot, by express provision, the rights of man. As to the first, unlike any similar instrument ever before framed on American soil, the Constitution made no allusion even to the existence of God; excluded from

the oath which it prescribed that name which gives an oath its efficacy; contained no reference to the authority of Christ or the relation of the Bible to human legislation; made no provision for the observance of the Sabbath by the government,* and decreed that atheists and unbelievers should be equally eligible with the fearers of God to even the highest offices in the gift of the people.† A constitution possessing these features, was, in their judgment, a virtual agreement to administer the government without reference to the Christian religion.

Touching the rights of man, they found four express pro-slavery provisions in that fundamental instrument. 1. Slaves, escaping from their masters into another state, were to be returned, the free states bargaining away their natural right to proclaim liberty to every man upon their soil. 2. The Southern states were granted increased representation in Congress on account of their slaves, five slaves being counted for this purpose as three freemen. The slave could cast no vote; but the master of five slaves had the same representation in the national councils as any four freemen; the owner of a hundred slaves had the political power of sixty one freemen. 3. The African slave-trade was not to be interfered with by Congress for a period of twenty years. The civilized world long since branded the slave-trade as piracy, and made it punishable with death. Abraham Lincoln, twenty years ago, hung a slave-trader who had been captured and brought to New York, and the world applauded the deed. But the nation, in adopting the Constitution, consented to take legal fetters on her hands, so that she could not strike a blow at this inhuman traffic for twenty years. 4. The provision, unobjectionable in itself, which pledged the power of the nation to suppress domestic insurrection, bound the nation, while slavery existed, to suppress by force any attempt of the slaves

* The clause which provides that the President shall have ten days, "Sundays excepted," for the consideration of a bill, recognizes the fact that the Chief Magistrate of the nation *may* be a Christian man, who will not employ the Sabbath for public business; but it does not require him so to regard it, and it has no application to other departments of the government. There is, therefore, in these words, no recognition of the authority of the Sabbath. Nothing in the fundamental law of the nation restrains Congress from holding its sessions, as it sometimes does, on the Sabbath, or forbids the carrying of the mails; and nothing gives us Sabbath quiet in arsenals, navy-yards, and other workshops and offices of the government, except the will of the heads of the departments to which they belong. In this way, the nation which enacts the Constitution, becomes responsible for the Sabbath-breaking which it tolerates and sanctions.

† This is the effect of the clause which provides that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." If this meant no sectarian or denominational test, it would not be objected to by the friends of Christian government. But the silence of the Constitution elsewhere on this subject, the specific use of the word "religious," the omission of the name of God from the president's oath, and the consistent interpretation of almost a century, make it plain that it was intended to open the door for even atheists to the seats of power. This is further confirmed by the testimony of Luther Martin, delegate from Maryland to the convention which framed the Constitution, who, in reporting to the legislature of his state, declared: "There were some members of the convention [of whom he himself was one] so unfashionable as to think the belief in the existence of God, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, would be some security for the good conduct of our rulers."

to gain their freedom. Could more effectual provision have been devised for the fostering and perpetuation of human bondage? The nation—the power which God has ordained on the earth to maintain justice and protect the weak against the strong; that power which wields fleets and armies as the instruments of its will; that power which would not hesitate to make war with the haughtiest of earth's kingdoms if the humblest of its citizens suffered wrong at their hands—consented that half a million of its own subjects should be owned and sold like cattle in the fields, subject as property to the caprice and the passions of whoever might buy them, and that the nation would not interfere. If they should escape, the whole national domain should be a hunting ground where the trembling fugitive should find no asylum, and the law would enforce his return. The power of the slave holder in the national councils was multiplied three times for every five slaves he acquired; and the slave-trade, which replenished and increased the slave population of the country, was not to be arrested for the fifth part of a century. It is not strange that slavery, which it was thought before would soon die a natural death under the growing influence of freedom, took a new lease of life when thus received under the protecting ægis of the Constitution, and developed into a monster which well nigh destroyed the nation, and was itself destroyed at last only with the loss of untold treasure and five hundred thousand lives. When the nation ratified that compact, the Covenanters looked on the one hand, and saw their fellow-citizens thronging through the gates of the new political temple which they had reared, pressing into the avenues of political influence and promotion, and attaining places of emolument and seats of authority. They looked on the other hand, and saw the thousands of African slaves with no share in these political privileges, no representation in the national councils, no law for their protection, no voice heard in their behalf. Like Moses when he renounced the court of Pharaoh and the prospect of Egypt's throne, Covenanters clasped hands with the slave and said: We will not hold a sceptre which is a rod of iron to strike down these our bowed and bleeding brothers. They remembered the covenants of their fathers, and looking up to the throne of Immanuel they said: We will wear no crown which is not first cast loyally at the feet of Jesus. Even those who disapprove our dissent from the United States Constitution will not grudge us to-day the privilege of paying our tribute to the noble and far sighted men who were capable of this act of political self-sacrifice, and whose testimony has been so abundantly justified by the event. After the throes of civil war, through which the nation battled for its life with the giant monster which American slavery afterwards became, the Constitution was so amended as to make human servitude forever impossible in the United States. And at that very time arose a movement to correct its irreligious character by inserting a suitable acknowledg-

ment of Almighty God, of Christ the ruler of nations, and of the supreme authority of the law of God. Abraham Lincoln said, not long before his assassination: "I know these Covenanters well. They have made two demands of this nation, submission to God and freedom for the slave. One of their demands has been granted during my first administration, and perhaps, during my second, they will obtain the other."*

On these two grounds the dissent of the Covenanters from the Constitution of the United States was consistently maintained for more than thirty years after the re-organization of the Presbytery. In the testimony approved and published in the year 1806, one chapter was devoted to the subject of "Civil Government," and another to "The Right of Dissent from a Constitution of Civil Government." In the latter of these, it was declared that it is the duty of Christians "to profess allegiance to no constitution of government which is in hostility to the kingdom of Christ," and in the former that "no power which deprives the subject of civil liberty, which wantonly squanders his property and sports with his life, is approved or sanctioned by God, or ought to be esteemed or supported by man as a moral institution." These were careful statements of what seemed to them the moral character of the government of the United States. In consistency with these declarations, they required all their members to abstain from incorporation with the government by voting or holding such offices as involved them in complicity with the Constitution. They refused, however, none of the duties of subjects. They obeyed, and aided in enforcing, righteous laws, paid taxes honestly and cheerfully, and rendered their full proportion of military service in case of lawful war. During the war of 1812, the Synod appointed a committee to repair to the seat of the general government, to explain the nature of our dissent from the Constitution and to submit a form of oath, to be taken, when necessary, by members of the Church, declaring that they renounced all foreign allegiance, and would defend the integrity of the country against all enemies. But they declined to participate in the functions of sovereignty, when these could only be exercised on the basis of the written Constitution of the United States.

For some years previous to the division of 1833, there became manifest an increasing desire on the part of leading ministers and lay members to modify, at this point, the testimony, and relax the discipline of the Church. It would be aside from my purpose, and impossible within the limits of this discourse, to recount the various steps on either side which culminated in that unhappy separation. I will not maintain that no mistakes were made and no errors committed by those whose successors we are to-day, and whose general course we ap-

* This remark was made to a personal acquaintance of the Rev. Prof. J. R. W. Sloane, D.D., then of New York, now of Allegheny, Pa.

prove. I enter into no debate as to the regularity of all their proceedings. On that point, now, I neither deny nor affirm. I concede nothing to those who have assailed them, but to defend them is not necessary to my argument. Brushing aside all these questions as to external forms of procedure, I affirm that when a division takes place in an ecclesiastical body, the claim of historic identity must be conceded to those who maintain the principles and adhere to the cause which characterized the church before the division took place. After thirty years of practical dissent from the political compact adopted by the nation, a large part of the church saw fit to abandon this testimony, seeing no obstacle to prevent them longer from incorporating with the government. Was it because the ends of their testimony had been accomplished? Had the slave received his freedom? Had the sinful complicity of the nation with oppression been renounced? Had the nation submitted itself to Christ as its King? On the contrary, the system of slavery, protected and nourished by the nation's fundamental law, like a noxious but thrifty weed in congenial soil, had been growing apace and threatened to overshadow the land, while a still clearer light had been thrown, in some respects, upon the irreligion of the Constitution. In the year 1830, both houses of Congress refused the prayer of a multitude of citizens asking the discontinuance of mail service on the Sabbath, and justified their action in elaborate reports on the ground which had previously been taken in two treaties with Mohammedan powers, that "the government of the United States is not in any sense founded in the Christian religion." Thus at the very time when the government was taking pains to disavow any Christian character, the sons of witnessing ancestors felt impelled to draw into closer relations to it. I have no time to trace the causes which led to this change, but a change it assuredly was. And it is because there were some in this city, and in the church at large, who had not changed, and who deemed the change serious enough to justify them in adhering to their former position even at the cost of separation from their brethren, that these churches have an existence here to day, and that a practical testimony for this truth has been maintained till this hour of our national history. To commemorate the faithfulness and courage of those men and women of 1833, we are engaged in this service this afternoon.*

* The names of the ministers and elders forming the Synod which adhered to the Church's former position deserve to be once more recorded here, as follows:

MINISTERS.		RULING ELDERS.	
OHIO PRESBYTERY.			
Charles B. M'Kee,	David Steele,	Samuel Henderson,	N. Kirkpatrick,
	John Wallace.		
PITTSBURGH PRESBYTERY.			
Robert Wallace,	J. Cannon,	Thomas Willson,	Joseph McElroy,
William Sloane,	J. Blackwood,	Robert Gray,	Nathan Johnston,
John Crozier,	Thomas Sproull,	Robert Brown,	James Cook,
		Samuel Wylie.	

[Note concluded on next page.]

In that division the pastor and all the elders stood with those who had adopted the new views as to the moral character of the government and the sinfulness of incorporation with it. This made necessary a re-organization of the congregation. A portion of its members foreseeing the inevitable result, and unable to approve the course of their officers, had already taken action looking to this end, and were finally organized by a commission of Synod, on the 13th day of August, 1833, by the ordination of Wm. Caldwell, Joseph Frazer and Walter Bradford as ruling elders. The Rev. James Milligan moderated in the commission and preached the sermon from I Thess. v : 12 : " We beseech you brethren to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves"—an exhortation the latter part of which at least was not always observed. The Lord's Supper was administered on the first Sabbath of December, to one hundred and forty-five communicants.

THE NEXT PASTOR, THE REV. PROF. JAMES M WILLSON, D.D.

On the 28th of October, 1824, an election for pastor was held in pursuance of an appointment by Presbytery. The Rev. Moses Roney was moderator of the session, and preached a sermon from Jeremiah iii. 15 : " I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." The election resulted in the choice of James M. Willson, and on the 27th of November, 1834, he was ordained and installed to the pastoral charge of this people.

I rejoice in the opportunity afforded me to-day to recall the memory, and bear testimony to the intellectual gifts, the scholarly attainments, and the eminent virtues and graces of him who for nearly thirty years had spiritual oversight of this church. Turning from other pursuits in which he could have gathered distinction and wealth

SOUTHERN PRESEYTERY.

James Christy, M. Roney,	Robert Gibson, David Scott,	William Acheson, David T. Cavan,	John Houston, David M'Burney.
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NORTHERN PRESBYTERY.

James R. Willson, Samuel M. Willson,	James Milligan, William L. Roberts, John Fisher,	Samuel S. Brown, William McCuen, James Guthrie, Jr.	M. I. Johnston, Alexander McCrea,
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Number of Ministers—18.

Number of Elders—18.

These withdrew, on the 7th of August, 1833, from the Synod which they believed to be constituted in an irregular manner, and assembled in the church in Cherry street, below Eleventh, formerly occupied by this congregation. The whole number of ministers and elders enrolled in the Synod which they left was thirty-five, but six of these—two ministers and four elders—did not appear, so that the number in actual attendance was twenty-nine. The majority committed, it would seem, a tactical error in withdrawing. Majorities do not usually withdraw. They can do a great deal better than that. But the church building which they left was in the hands of their opponents. They withdrew, as Isaac withdrew from Esek and from Sitnah ; they digged another well and called it Rehoboth, saying, "The Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." Their expectation has been fulfilled. After fifty years, having passed through various vicissitudes, the Synod of our former brethren is but little larger than then. At the last meeting of our own Synod, there were present ninety-five ministers and sixty-eight ruling elders, or one hundred and sixty-three members in all.

with an easy hand, he devoted his life to the work of the Christian ministry and the maintenance of a difficult and unpopular testimony for truth. The decision of character and self-sacrificing spirit evinced in this step, was manifest in his whole subsequent career. No human soul ever held more unswerving allegiance to the truth. Few men ever sought with such earnestness, grasped with so much satisfaction, and maintained with such fidelity the great principles of belief. There are two opposite states of mind which are equally consistent with indifference to the truth. The one is a vacillating, unsteady disposition which holds but feebly what has been lightly embraced, and is blown about with every wind of doctrine; the other is a blind and stubborn adherence to previous belief because change is a confession of error and mortifying to pride. From both these extremes your former pastor was delivered by his love of truth for truth's own sake. His steadfastness was not bigotry. His convictions were not the mere accident of education. The fixedness of his conviction was not the mere inveteracy of habit. His opinions were formed after profound personal examination of every item of belief, and if he did not readily change them, it was because the field of argument on both sides had been already reviewed in his mind. He had always a reason for his belief, a reason always commanding respect, even when not satisfactory to others. With instinctive anxiety his mind reached downward toward fundamental principles. Concrete cases seemed to him as important as the principles they involved, and as plain; hence, at once, his skill in the solution of practical questions and the tenacity with which he contended for his solutions. In all his researches after truth, he was aided by a rare keenness and clearness of intellectual vision. His greatness, moreover, lay in moral qualities equally with mental gifts. His unbending conscientiousness, his unaffected sincerity, his integrity and honor in all his dealings with men and with brethren, his utter incapacity for double dealing or even for concealment, his steadfastness of purpose and consistency of conduct, his ready sympathy and correct impulses, are the outlines of a singularly symmetrical and balanced character, happily guarded from extremes. He was steadfast without bigotry; conscientious in minutest things, but not superstitious; open and guileless as the sunshine, yet not imprudent; concealing nothing for himself, but faithful to all the confidences of others; the frankest of opponents, the most trustworthy of friends. Devoted by his tastes and natural aptitudes to a life of study, he was yet ready for all the activities of life and full of sympathy with all its emotions. As a preacher of the gospel, as a pastor of the flock, as a defender of the faith, as a presbyter in the courts of the church, as a teacher of her candidates for the ministry, he was equally able, diligent and successful. For the purity and steadfastness of her testimony, for the correctness and efficiency of her internal polity, for the intelligence and fidelity of her members and the qualifications of her ministry, the church has and

will ever have cause to remember with gratitude the name of James McLeod Willson.* Through many conflicts and trials he was faithfully sustained by a devoted people, and his relation to this congregation was only terminated by his removal to Allegheny as theological professor in 1872.

I pass to a brief review of the

PUBLIC MOVEMENTS AND CONTROVERSIES

which have entered into the life and history of this congregation. This young pastor entered on his ministry at a period which was well fitted to call forth all his masterly powers. The American Anti-Slavery Society had been formed a year before. The Temperance movement arose a few years earlier still. Into both these unpopular and hated movements of reform he threw himself with characteristic decisiveness and zeal. I have here in my hand the Constitution of the Union Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, organized June 12th, 1838, with James M. Willson as President, and William S. Pierce, now Judge Pierce, of the Court of Common Pleas, as Secretary. For thirty years, until the civil war broke the shackles of the slave, there was hardly a Sabbath on which prayer was not publicly offered in this church for the emancipation of the oppressed. When George Thompson came from England to lecture against slavery, there was no other church whose doors were open to him except that which was then occupied by this congregation. While other churches would gladly bury their record on this question, we have none which we do not exult to display.†

Previous to that time the liquor traffic had been generally considered a legitimate and honorable business. In the light of the growing discussion of temperance principles, Mr. Willson saw clearly its inconsistency with the Christian profession, and although some members of his own congregation were still engaged in the traffic, he spoke frankly and strongly what he believed to be the truth, and labored in the superior courts of the church for a strictly prohibitory discipline against the manufacture, sale and use of intoxicating drinks.

The young pastor's course in becoming a member of voluntary associations, such as Temperance and Anti-Slavery societies, provoked severe censure from some members of his flock. There were those at that time who believed that it is inconsistent for Christian men to unite with those who do not profess Christianity, or for members of one branch of the church to unite with members of other churches, in societies for the promotion of any object, however laudable. Their theory was that the church is herself a sufficient organization for car-

* Some sentences in this paragraph are drawn from the notice of Prof. Willson prepared by the same hand under direction of Synod. See minutes, 1868, page 203.

† The latest (Moore's) Digest of the deliverances of the Presbyterian General Assembly, gives its action in the year 1818, and suppresses, with a mere reference, all that follows, including the celebrated decision of 1845, that "slave-holding is no bar to Christian communion." This is to be considerate of the reputation of the church rather than of the truth of history.

rying forward every good work, and that to organize additional societies for moral and religious ends is a disparagement of the authority and adequacy of the instrumentality which God has ordained for these ends. Against these views Mr. Willson stoutly maintained the right of Christians to co-operate as citizens with their fellow citizens in any good work, and the necessity for such organizations in the present divided state of the church.

Another controversy arose over the nature and limits of the office of the Deacon in the New Testament church. Mr. Willson earnestly maintained that the deacon is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the Christian church; that the treasury of the Lord ought to be in the hands of ordained ecclesiastical officers; that no congregation is fully or properly organized unless it has deacons; and that the principle underlying the transaction recorded in the sixth of Acts, consistently applied, requires that all temporal concerns, including the care and management of all church property, ought to be intrusted to their hands. His treatise on this subject is a masterpiece of argument and a store-house of learning, and has been for forty years regarded as decisive of the questions at issue, not only within our own body, but by numbers of the best trained minds in other denominations. The whole church, by emphatic deliverances of Synod, endorsed his views. His position on some of these questions, however, cost him much suffering from the opposition of a portion of his flock, and led, in seven years after his first settlement, to the withdrawal of a considerable number, and the formation of another congregation.

The work of Foreign Missions engaged very early the attention of the pastor and of his congregation. The churches were everywhere beginning to throb with the pulsations of a new born missionary zeal. The great modern enterprise which contemplates the evangelization of the world, was in the flush of its early enthusiasm and vigor. Accordingly, we find what I suppose to be the first missionary society in a Covenanter church in America, organized in this congregation as early as 1840, and a long memorial from this society to the Synod in the following year. This memorial was referred to a committee, which reported a recommendation that funds be raised in all our congregations for the cause of missions, and two young men of piety and talents be sought to be educated for the foreign field. This appears to have been the first step in the work which has since grown to such proportions and borne such abundant fruit. The *Covenanter*, the monthly magazine established by Mr. Willson in 1845, was dedicated, among other objects, to the arousing of the church to the great work of sending missionaries to the heathen.

The central principle of the church's testimony, the authority of Christ over the nations, was of course illustrated and defended by your former pastor with unflagging zeal. Two masterly treatises from his pen present the Christian principles of civil government in the

most convincing light. To the National Reform movement in its beginnings, he lent his wise counsel and his powerful advocacy, and his untimely death was felt by none more deeply than by those who have been specially engaged in this branch of the church's work. I hardly need to add that a steadfast testimony was always lifted in this place against the secret orders, with their ensnaring oaths, their spurious professions of charity, their Christless worship, and their unrepublican and despotic organization.

Thus the history of this congregation has been, largely, the history of those movements of reform in the political and religious world, which have been most surprising and most beneficent in their results.

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

During the last fifty years, three houses of worship have been occupied by the congregation. The church in Cherry street was purchased for \$8782,17 in the summer of 1833. Of this amount about one thousand dollars was contributed in cash; two thousand dollars was loaned by individuals; three thousand remained on mortgage, and \$2782,17 was ground rent, in all nearly eight thousand dollars of indebtedness. During thirty years this debt was only reduced about two thousand dollars, leaving nearly six thousand dollars of incumbrance, the interest on which alone during that time had amounted to twice the principal, or twelve thousand dollars. Shortly before the sale of the property in Cherry street a special effort reduced the debt by the payment of three thousand dollars. After some years in public halls, we worshiped next for ten years at 17th and Filbert street, a spot made sacred to us forever by the memory of our act of covenanting. Now we occupy a much more commodious and beautiful house than ever before; while within the last few weeks provision has been made to extinguish the last remaining dollar of indebtedness, of any kind. When the pledges now made have been redeemed, the congregation will have the satisfaction for the first time in its history of worshipping in a church on which there rests not a farthing of financial obligation. Especially gratifying has been the part taken in this effort by the Sabbath-school, which began the work by assuming \$2000, or one-half of the whole sum to be paid, and by the young people of the church who last week presented to the congregation their personal subscriptions amounting to almost eight hundred dollars. On the part of all, both young and old, this effort has been regarded as a thank offering for the blessings with which, during half a century, this church has been crowned. We have good reason to set up this stone of remembrance and to say: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." "The Lord hath been mindful of us and he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron."

CONCLUSION.

No true summary of the results accomplished during these fifty years can be presented, for the reason that these results lie largely be-

yond the range of mortal vision. Here we can only record that nearly six thousand sermons have been preached in that time; that prayer meetings have had an unbroken history; that more than one hundred communion seasons have been observed,* and that about one thousand persons have been received into the fellowship of the church. About one hundred and fifty thousand dollars have been contributed to the cause of Christ. The real results, however, lie in a region where no statistics are obtainable. They are hid with Christ in God. We know that a goodly multitude have gone from this sanctuary into the presence of God, and there await the coming of those who follow after. Little children and gray haired men; many whole families; and many families, part of whose members are still on the earth, have been guided and assisted heavenward by the ordinances which have here been dispensed. Humbly, in view of unworthiness; penitently, in view of its sins and short-comings, let us lay the work at the feet of our Judge, and await the disclosures of that day when the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.

I can not forget that three congregations are gathered before me, both formed from this church within fifty years; the second in 1841, the third in 1850. Our union in these services is a visible expression of the brotherly covenant which holds us together in unity and peace. Dear brethren, let our harmony through years to come be like the blending of our voices to-day in our songs of praise; and our co-operation in every good work like the united pleadings of our hearts as we have come together to the throne of grace. May our sorrows be common sorrows, and our joys mutual joys, both helping to cement the bonds of brotherly love. And when you shall each celebrate your fiftieth anniversary, may you have a richer crown, and a fuller store of garnered fruits, than those that rejoice our hearts to-day.

My mind turns irresistibly to two brethren with whom I counselled concerning these services when our first arrangements were being made—the esteemed pastor of the Second congregation, Dr. Wylie, and our own beloved brother and ruling elder, Matthew McConnell. Since then, both have been called to a more glorious assembly and to more delightful exercises than these. Soon we too shall follow them; may we be as well prepared! Only three persons are now communicants here, out of one hundred and forty-five who sat down together at the Lord's table on the first Sabbath of December, 1833. But a few here and there of those who are communicants to-day—like stalks of grain which the reaper has overlooked—shall witness our one hundredth anniversary, fifty years hence. But if the fathers have passed away, others have arisen to take their places. The one hundred and forty-five have become three congregations and six hundred and forty communicants. The eighteen ministers who sat in the Synod after the division, are now one hundred and twelve. No one can doubt that with

* Twice in the year until January, 1872; since then three times.

wiser and more zealous effort, these numbers might have been greatly increased. Let us resolve to day that whatever zeal and patience and fidelity and self sacrifice can do, shall be done in this city for the promotion of the whole cause of Christ, and of that part of his work which is specially committed to our hands.

FIFTY YEARS OF TEMPERANCE WORK.*

BY THE REV. J. C. K. MILLIGAN, NEW YORK.

You deserve the commendations and gratulations of brethren. For fifty years your organization has stood, and is now three bands. You have labored against the ordinary difficulties of a Christian Church, and also against the greater opposition to a witnessing Church contending for the sovereign claims of Jesus over the nations, and when the nation and church unite in their reject'ion. You have done this with unwavering integrity, and without abating jot or tittle of your covenanted principles. Others have done virtuously, but who can show a better record than yours?

In this memorial service I am asked to speak on "Fifty Years of Temperance." It is an appropriate theme; for Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit, is essential to the welfare of all to whom the Gospel comes, and has been a "faithful contending" of this Church in all its history. But the subject is too vast for an hour's discussion; and only the barest outline can here be given of a few prominent points.

Has there been progress? and what is it? In the answer we must remember that progress is a relative term. It may exist where there is apparent retrogression, and may have been great where others have far exceeded it. Like the frog in the well, the friends of Temperance may have slipped backward every night, but by daily gains be nearing their goal. The pendulum moves both ways equally, yet the hands go steadily forward. The ship always zigzags, and is often driven back; but at last reaches the haven. The driving wheel of an engine may move in an opposite direction from its propelling force, and "the likeness as the appearance of a man" on the throne above the wheels of Divine Providence, reveals One who can and will secure moral and spiritual progress, even though the wings, and eyes, and hands, and the living creatures running and returning as the appearance of lightning, seem in the prophet's vision an infinite tangle and contrariety of motion. All history is the record of the Redeemer's progress, and illustrates the riddle of Samson: "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness."

The Temperance cause has had its vicissitudes; here and in one

* Abstract of Address delivered at the Semi-Centennial celebration of the First Reformed Presbyterian church, Philadelphia.