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ART. I.—PRESBYTERIANISM AND THE PEOPLE.

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AMONG the productions which have secured to the name of Albert Barnes a permanent place in Presbyterian literature, prominence might well be given to his brief treatise on the *Affinities of Presbyterianism*. First delivered as an address before the Presbyterian Historical Society, then published by request in one of our denominational reviews, and afterward issued by the Publication Committee as a tract for the times, this admirable treatise has been read by hundreds of ministers and thoughtful laymen in different sections of the country, and has done much both to shape the popular conceptions of Presbyterianism, and to give tone and quality to our denominational life. With no trace of sectarian partisanship, and without excessive partiality for the type of polity and of doctrine which it commends, this tract defines most happily the marked relationship or affiliations between Presbyterianism on one side, and certain types of mind, certain forms of culture, certain stages and tendencies in society, on the other. Presbyterianism has rarely seen in such brief compass so exact, comprehensive, just, exquisite a portraiture of itself as it is, or so wise and inspiring a delineation of what it ought to be, as one of the main forms of Protestantism, and one of the foremost regenerative forms in modern life.

But while the existence of such special affinities is to be recognized, and while such specific incentive and stimulation are gratefully to be accepted, may it not be wise to inquire whether this view, when carried into practice, does not involve some seri-

ous liabilities? If it be granted that the Presbyterian polity and the Calvinistic system of doctrine are naturally allied, and as a matter of history do invariably exist together; if it be granted that these are more attractive to certain classes of mind in any community, or to any community at a given stage in its development and culture, than any other existing combination of faith and order; if it be granted that Presbyterianism thus fills a peculiar place and office in Christendom, and that it possesses some special qualities and capabilities of this sort which ensure to it eminent success, wherever these natural conditions appear; are we, therefore, at liberty to infer that our Presbyterianism can exist and flourish only where such specific affinities occur? May we presume that, because certain types of mind are naturally in sympathy with our system of doctrine or our mode of government, there must be other types, different in constitution or training, to which such doctrine and government are naturally repulsive, and over which these are not likely to exert any beneficent influence? Shall we conclude that, since Presbyterianism spontaneously allies itself with intelligence, with education, with free government, with a high grade of civilization, it can thrive only where these abound, and must give way to other varieties of Christianity, Protestant or Papal, wherever such natural conditions are wanting?

These inquiries are more practical than may at first sight be supposed. There is some danger that our Presbyterianism may be regarded as the religion of a class or a period, rather than as a form of Christianity suited to all varieties of humanity, and capable of prospering under all social conditions; some danger that its loyal adherents may fall into the error of presuming that its special mission is to the more cultivated or affluent or influential classes in society, that its work for Christ is substantially finished when it has reached and affected these leading classes, and that there are considerable portions or sections of such society for whose salvation it has but slight resources and consequently but small responsibility; some danger, in a word, that under the influence of such views, carried to extremes, our denomination may become seriously narrowed alike in aim and in influence, and may even forfeit in some degree its true historic character and glory as, in the broadest sense of that phrase, a missionary type of Protestantism. It is no needless or intrusive

act to warn our ministry against any conceptions of Presbyterianism which would tend on any side to diminish their ardor in that work of universal evangelism to which their divine commission is calling them. Nor is it intrusive or needless to implore our membership to divest themselves of every inclination to neglect, under whatever impulse of denominational pride, the multitudes who may stand below them in the scale of earthly station, but who constitute the main material from which our Christian sects derive their accessions and their strength. And well will it be for our denomination if, in the style and arrangements of our churches, in the forms of our worship, in the presentation of our doctrines, in the peculiarities of our organization, and in the mode and range of our activities, we steadfastly maintain our claim to be, not the faith of a class or a period, but A RELIGION FOR THE PEOPLE.

This caution is greatly emphasized in our land and times by the vastness and the urgency of that work of general evangelization to which all branches of American Protestantism seem, at the present hour, to be divinely summoned. Looking at the millions who throng our cities, greater and smaller, we are compelled to recognize the appalling fact that a large proportion of them are living neither under the nurture of Protestantism, nor even beneath the training of Catholicism, but rather in utter irreligion, verifying to the letter the apostolic description: "having no hope and without God in the world." Looking at the millions who constitute our rural population, we are compelled to note, at least in many sections, a gradual retreating of religion toward municipal centres, not unlike the retrocession of blood toward the heart in certain stages of disease: a process which is leaving no small part of that population in a state of practical ungodliness, and of increasing social and moral degeneracy. Two great fields of effort, both imperative and urgent in their claim, are thus opening to the view of American Protestantism; the concentration of evangelical influence upon the unsanctified masses of our cities, and the diffusion of the truth and grace of the Gospel among these neglected rural classes.\* And must not Pres-

\* Nothing is here said respecting the solemn problem of the South: and yet is it not becoming clear that the social and political difficulties in that section, which are baffling the wisdom of statesmen, and proving the worthlessness of legal nostrums, can be healed only by the combined, energetic, loving ministrations of our evangelical Christianity?

byterianism accept its share of this work and this responsibility? Can it excuse itself on the plea that it has only a select mission to certain classes in this vast aggregate, or to such localities as are sufficiently cultivated to understand and appreciate it? May it turn away from these perishing multitudes in city and country to train its polished artillery upon the wise, the mighty, the rich, the noble? Dare it assume that its doctrine and order, its methods and appointments, its qualities and tendencies, are such as unfit it to share in this general work of evangelization? Or is it summoned, at this remarkable juncture in American life, to exhibit its true character, and make itself beneficently known and felt among the evangelical churches of the land as a religion for the people?

If these special affinities are in any degree disqualifying the Presbyterian Church from taking a prominent part in such evangelistic work, and constraining it rather to become the faith of a class or an epoch, the fact may be made apparent by either of two methods: by an examination of Presbyterianism in *its interior and essential qualities*, or by a consideration of *its actual career and its comparative success*. In each of these methods, let us make the investigation.

I. OUR DOCTRINES: are they suited to the people, and acceptable with the people? There is a pregnant sense in which all evangelical truth—the truth on whose divine efficiency all branches of Protestantism are alike relying, is unacceptable to mankind of whatever social grade. The Gospel of Christ is not welcome to the depraved taste—not congenial to the degenerate nature. This painful fact confronts all who, under whatever denominational banner, go forth to proclaim to these perishing multitudes the tidings of redemption. But so far forth Presbyterianism bears only its proportion of a common burden, and instead of soliciting exemption on this ground, it ought to find here an argument for greater zeal and urgency in publishing, together with other evangelical churches, the common salvation. For, next to the constraining love of God, as exhibited in the Gospel and experienced by the regenerate heart, what incentive to such effort equals that found, not merely in the sin, but in the blindness, the unbelief, the spiritual insensibility of the world.

If any special disability exists in the sphere of doctrine, it must lie in that Calvinism which the Presbyterian Church ac-

cepts as the best expression of the Gospel system, and by which that church is consciously distinguished from other sections of evangelical Christendom. If it be true, as we believe, that such Calvinism expresses more clearly and fully than any other human system the pure teaching of Scripture ; and if it were also true that it is less readily received by some because it contains most completely the essential and salutary truth of Christianity ; the obligation to proclaim it to the world would certainly not be diminished, but would rather be immeasurably enhanced by such a contrast. Loyalty both to the system and to the Scripture would require every sincere Presbyterian to publish abroad all the more earnestly his cherished form of faith, even at the hazard of unfavorable comparison with other types of doctrine—if such there are—which win the sympathies of men more easily by the omission of those stern, searching, humbling elements of the Gospel which Calvinism specially represents and emphasizes.

But is it true that our system of doctrine, when intelligently and judiciously presented, meets with any peculiar impediments? It may be true that Calvinism makes some special drafts upon the diligence and the thoughtfulness and the culture of those who hear it presented ; and that, while some are strongly attracted to it by this peculiarity, others shrink spontaneously from the serious, honest, prolonged meditation to which it invites them. It is certain that as a system it touches our humanity at many points which are very tender because they are so vital ; that it aims to awaken very profound and solemn views of sin in what are its most essential characteristics ; that it penetrates the conscience very deeply, and seeks to develop a most solemn sense of both guilt and need before God. It is certain that no type of Christianity presents broader, or nobler, or more impressive conceptions of redemption ; or enables men more fully to realize how, from their helplessness and their sin, the wondrous scheme of grace gives complete deliverance. But do such peculiarities constitute the weakness of Presbyterianism in evangelistic effort, or do they contain the blessed secret of its strength? Has this type of Christian doctrine been potent in the world in defiance of these, or because of them? Have those who have promulgated it succeeded by keeping these peculiarities in the background, or by pressing them out into full, decisive

prominence? Are not these—these and no others—the living arguments by which we have been enabled as a denomination to reach, influence, persuade men? Are not these the truths which the people in their spiritual necessity have heard most gladly, and by which they have been led to turn from sin, and to seek salvation? Certainly there is nothing in the experience of Presbyterianism which goes to show that this type of doctrine, intelligently set forth, stands in the way of the most direct, practical evangelism; nothing which forbids the conclusion that this system is as capable as any other evangelical system of being preached to men of all classes and conditions in forms which will interest, win, move, save them.

It must be granted that Calvinism, at least as much as any other type of evangelical doctrine, needs to be proclaimed by intelligent, careful, conscientious, as well as godly men. The task has sometimes been undertaken by persons who have not understood the system theoretically, or who have not surrendered themselves thoroughly to its spiritualizing power. The doctrine has sometimes been set forth in dry, dogmatic, forbidding forms, rather than in the vivid, picturesque methods of the Scripture; it has sometimes been presented wholly in its severer and more humiliating, rather than in its more comforting and sustaining aspects. The minds of the hearers are sometimes attracted too much by the intellectual elements of it, and too much engaged in it as a study, while its wonderful capacity to nourish the heart—its amazing stimulation in the line of practical duty, are relatively ignored. It may even be so set forth as to awaken pride rather than humility, or quiet the conscience where it should arouse, or fill the soul with a false sense of security instead of inspiring it to give all diligence in making its redemption sure. There is room for the question whether Calvinistic preaching is not occasionally open to such criticism; or whether a large proportion of the objections urged against the system are not in fact objections to such unhappy presentations of it—whether methods less technical and scholastic would not remove such hindrances to ministerial success, and be the beginning, in at least some instances, of a new era of efficiency and of fruit. But, whatever may be true in this respect, is it not certain that Calvinism itself is neither a weak nor unfruitful system when properly conceived and considerably urged on human at-

tion? And, so far as its type of belief is concerned, is it not certain that the Presbyterian Church labors under no special disability, but is rather most efficiently equipped for evangelistic work among all classes of American society?

OUR WORSHIP: How far in this direction are we disqualified, as a Christian Church, from engaging in this work of universal evangelization! Here again we stand in the main on ground common to all sections of Protestantism; observing in our churches substantially that simple, informal, serious, spiritual type of devotion which came in with the Reformation, and still prevails with minor diversities in most at least of the Reformed communions. In some of these sections of Protestantism, the liturgical element in worship is more prominent. Those which adhered most nearly to the Papal conception of the church, have shown a corresponding preference, more or less decisive, for a fixed liturgy with its associated peculiarities. But does any evidence appear to indicate that this liturgical quality is rendering such denominations more acceptable to the people, or more successful in bringing the multitudes to Christ? If there be any advantage on either side, does it not rest rather with those branches of Protestantism which, like our own, have preferred a more free, simple, inartificial mode of social devotion? The obvious fact is, that fixed liturgies with their usual accompaniments of dress and mode, though quite in harmony with the Papal theory of the church and its priesthood, are in marked contrast with the central idea and spirit of Protestantism, and consequently are hindrances rather than helps in free, warm, spontaneous evangelistic work.

Contrasting the varieties of worship in the several Reformed communions, we discover at once the antithetic fact, that our preferred mode of social devotion is somewhat less fresh and fervid, less fitted to excite emotion and gratify religious sensibility, than that adopted by some other denominations. This antithesis suggests at once the query whether our religious services might not be improved in this direction—whether a greater measure of earnestness, more of the free flow of feeling, less of staid precision and passive acquiescence—a larger infusion of active, participating, jubilant interest in such services—would not render our worship more attractive to the people, and give it greater worth as means of culture and of grace. Yet it

is not to be forgotten that there is peculiar impressiveness in what may not inappropriately be described as the sacred propriety, the quiet dignity, the reverent air and temper of our religious services. That impressiveness is admitted, not merely by minds of peculiar temperament or of special education, but by the masses of those who habitually worship in our sanctuaries. If the lack of fervor or of freedom is ever felt as a deficiency, these antithetic qualities are quite as often regarded as constituting in some degree a special attraction. If any are driven away from our congregations by what seems to them an unspiritual coldness, a stiffened formality in our worship, others are quite as frequently driven into our communion by what they appreciate as a happy medium between liturgical formalism on the one side, and superficial, boisterous, uninformative modes of devotion on the other.

It should be said, however, that the Presbyterian Church has, in common with other sections of Protestantism, a vital interest in the general question already suggested, whether what may be termed the Protestant conception of worship does not need some modifications, in order to render that worship in the highest measure efficient as an ally in evangelistic work. Vinet in his *Pastoral Theology* (Part III. Sect. 1.) instituted a suggestive comparison between Protestant and Papal worship, with reference especially to the degree of active participation on the part of the people. According to the Papal theory, worship is a holy cultus in which all are to participate actively—not an appointed observance conducted by the priesthood alone. In Protestant usage, prayer and praise and the reading of Scriptures are too often surrendered wholly to minister and choir, while the people sit in passive, though it be attentive interest, conscious of but small responsibility, and but slightly stirred by spiritual emotion. There is cogency in his plea for worship as a holy act, in which all should be united, and through which valuable spiritual impressions should be made on all who share in the observance. And may not our common Protestantism, and especially the various Reformed Churches, be exposed to the danger of losing in this way something of the power inherent in their social devotions, spiritually and savingly to impress those who come within the range of their influence? May not our Presbyterianism wisely consider the question whether its ability



to interest and influence even through its accustomed modes of social devotion, might not be greatly enhanced by such modifications as would make the people active participants in worship, and render such worship less an incidental ceremony, and more a Holy Act?

OUR POLITY: do we find here a hindrance in the way of denominational enlargement through aggressive missionary work? That polity has existed, under various names and modifications, for more than three hundred years. It was restored, in its modern forms, amid the struggles of the Reformation. It has been widely accepted as a happy medium between Prelacy on the one side and Independency on the other; a medium which embodies harmoniously both the imperial and the democratic elements in Christianity, and which well preserves the rights and liberties of the membership, while sustaining efficiently the interests of just authority and of spiritual order. It is believed to have, at least in the outline, a clear basis and warrant in Scripture; and to be justified fully by some centuries of experiments, and by the growing respect and love of those sections of the Reformed Church among whom it has been put into practical, faithful use.

Does this polity stand at any point in the way of the highest evangelistic efficiency? Is its machinery too cumbrous; are its relative methods too complex or perplexing? Is it something too difficult to be understood, or to be put into beneficent practice, among plain people living in the ordinary relationship of the Christian Church? Is it found to be inconsistent with the equities of the Gospel, or with the equality or the brotherhood of believers? Does it prove a hindrance to the free spiritual development of the individual disciple, or to the healthful growth of the particular church? Is it unattractive or forbidding on such grounds, to those who intelligently seek membership in our churches; do they shrink from it as an offence, or refuse to submit themselves to its control? It is to be admitted that all systems of church government which involve permanent and effective organization, joint activities, mutual submission and service, are more or less exposed to the unfriendly criticism of this class. It may also be confessed that the Presbyterian polity may be so administered, managed in so churchly a spirit, and with such tenacious regard for forms and authorities, as to become

cumbrous, inefficient and unattractive, not merely to the common people, but equally to educated and thoughtful men. But such liabilities are neither inevitable nor frequent; nor is there reason to suppose that any extensive objections to Presbyterianism on this ground exist in the popular mind. Individuals may indeed prefer a type of polity which relieves the membership from all responsibility for government by throwing it unreservedly into the hands of an anointed class; but such individuals are not numerous, neither do they belong to the common people. Others may prefer a type of polity which seems to permit the sacrifice of order and joint efficiency in the interest of personal freedom, or to discard all organization under the disintegrating impulse of personal license; but such persons represent no extensive classes in society, nor are they often found among those masses for whose evangelization the Church of Christ in our land and time is specially called to labor. To those masses the Presbyterian polity will present no forbidding aspect, as they turn to Christ and his Church for light and salvation.

On the other hand, it is no presumption to say that this polity has some characteristics which specially fit and endow the Presbyterian Church for evangelistic work. Some of these are found in the peculiarities of the two lay offices recognized in that polity, in its careful adjustment and distribution of duties among the membership, in the degree of compactness and of consequent strength and vigor secured by it, and in the systematic and practical benevolence which it steadily aims to evoke. Every Presbyterian Church properly constituted and officered is *de facto* a missionary organization; possessing all that is needful in the line of equipment or method for diffusive evangelical effort. This is indeed the true conception of such a Church, as portrayed in our Form of Government; not merely a well-ordered household, existing for interior training and comfort, but rather a compact array of disciplined and united believers, joined together for external endeavor and aggressive warfare.\* It is this aspect of our governmental system which

\* It will probably be admitted by those who have closely examined the subject, that most of the Protestant Churches were originally shaped rather on the theory of an interior development and expansion. The growth they sought was a growth from within rather than a growth by aggression and conquest. The Presbyterian Church had this character originally; and many traces of such a theory still exist in our Form of Government. But neither Scotch nor English Presbyterianism

most commends it to a large proportion of the maturer minds who enroll themselves under the Presbyterian flag, and which determines largely our place and influence among evangelical denominations, and it may fairly be questioned whether we have not in this respect an advantage over most Protestant bodies; an advantage which brings with it both larger opportunities and more extensive and solemn responsibility.

OUR SPIRIT, STYLE, TENDENCY: is there anything standing behind doctrine and worship and polity, and suggested generally by these terms, which indisposes the Presbyterian Church to engage in missionary effort, and which constrains it rather to be the religion of a class? It has been said that the life of our denomination is a special life; that it thrives only under certain favorable conditions and in certain stages of society, like trees which bear their choicest fruitage only when adjacent trees are cut away, and they are permitted to stand alone, in favorable contact with the air and the sunshine. It has been asserted that this type of Protestantism is the product only of a specific grade of personal and social cultivation, and that it consequently looks down with instinctive contempt on all beneath it, and expects to draw men into its fold only when they have risen to the mental level where it can properly touch and mould them into its own peculiar image. It has been compared by its enemies to the scholar who finds his natural and his choicest companionships, not in the rough or illiterate world, but in books and among scholars like himself; to the man of wealth or of exalted station, who cherishes small interest in the poor and humble, and seeks rather the association of the affluent, the fashionable, the eminent in public life. Such it has been said, is the spirit of the denomination; such are its style and its tendency. It is not a religion for the people; its life is peculiar, unique, remote; it is the faith of a class.

It may frankly be admitted that among evangelical denominations the Presbyterian Church is exposed in this direction to some special liabilities. For Presbyterianism is by its own nature eminently an intelligent, educating, elevating system. It

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clings rigidly to the continental conception; and in our country, from the first, the vast demands of our expanding population required a recognition of the opposite theory, and led to the incorporation of *Christian Missions* as an essential part of our denominational organization.

aims to produce in men not impressions but states—not impulses but character. It cultivates, and it respects and loves culture; it is thoughtful, and it constrains its adherents to thoughtfulness. Its chosen forms of sentiment are delicate rather than rude or robust; its preferred experience is quiet and reflective rather than noisy or garrulous; its exterior is calm and sedate rather than demonstrative. And both those who sit in its sanctuaries and those who minister at its altars, are insensibly affected by these qualities; and almost unconsciously take on a corresponding cast and style. Minds of kindred make are specially attracted to it by such characteristics; they spontaneously seek its associations; with quiet enthusiasm they accept it, and give it their cordial support. To such classes it makes direct and emphatic appeal, and their response is correspondingly prompt and earnest. They not only love it, but love it deeply, strongly. Nurtured and strengthened and elevated by it, it wins in return their full and warm allegiance; they freely consecrate to it their attainments, their possessions, their service.

And there is danger that this large class of adherents, drawn into the denomination by such special affinities, may impart to the whole body too much of the form, the tone, the coloring which their specific experiences and inclinations would supply. Strict candor requires not only that this liability should be recognized in theory, but also that every fact suggesting or illustrating its presence should be carefully noted. We cannot afford as American Presbyterians to ignore such indications if they exist; we cannot regard them as trivial, for the influence and even the life of our denomination are dependent upon the prompt correction of every such tendency. Let us dare to ask the question whether American Presbyterianism is becoming, as has been intimated, an urban rather than a rural form of Christianity; whether, in marked contrast with its earlier history, it thrives and grows in cities rather than among our rural populations. Let us dare to inquire whether among our city populations, that Presbyterianism is thriving among the upper rather than the lower classes; whether more merchants than mechanics, more lawyers than laborers, more rich and eminent in society than poor and lowly, are found among the membership of our civic churches. Should any tendency toward such special affiliations be developing itself—should our denomination be found,

not moving freely through all ranks and gradations of American society in both city and country, but localizing itself in municipal centres, and becoming in some sense a class religion there, it is high time that the danger were disclosed, and that prompt, united, instant effort were made to correct it.

But it is well to remember at this point that Presbyterianism contains within itself the sure corrective to such liabilities. As a system it is essentially democratic, alike in structure and in operation. It recognizes neither the existence nor the claims of any class. It takes absolutely no account of earthly station, of wealth, of any other temporal distinction. It does not exalt even the eldership or the ministry above their brethren in the Church, or free them in the least from the responsibility to be simply, solely, as one that serveth. It plants itself squarely on the grand Christian ideas of equality and brotherhood, of mutual love and ministration. It makes the republic of faith, like the republic of letters, the common home and heritage of all who in the spirit of faith seek admission. Its confession, its polity, its worship, are alike made to conform at every point to these broad Christian principles. In a word, it has guarded itself, so far as it is possible for any constitution to guard it, against the possibility of becoming merely the religion of a class; it has asserted, so far as it is possible for a constitution to assert, its high and holy claim to be a faith for men of every class, and of whatever temperament or condition.

So far, therefore, as these interior qualities or characteristics go, are we not justified in the conclusion that our Presbyterianism is laboring under no disabilities which prevent it from engaging with the fairest prospect of success, in the great work of conquering this land, with all its diversified population, for Christ? May we not confidently affirm that, as in its type of doctrine, its modes of worship and its polity, so in its main spirit and style and character, it has been grandly fitted of God to do, in our land and time, some signal thing for him and for the perishing souls of men? Properly guarded against those exposures which grow out of certain specific affinities, and especially against those attractions toward wealth and culture which are too apparent in nearly all sections of American Protestantism, may it not become in the hands of our Messiah one of the foremost agencies in subduing even the world unto himself.

II. Our discussion has thus far been limited to an examination of Presbyterianism, as a system, with reference to its interior qualities and adaptations. We shall be led to the same conclusions if we consider further, even in brief, its known career and history, and compare the results actually attained by it with the recorded experience and development of other sections of the common Christianity.

During the century of the Reformation, we find Presbyterianism, wherever it was planted, becoming the elect belief not of a favored and cultured few, but of the multitude; we see it spreading with equal facility among all classes, and in every instance becoming the dominant faith in those countries where it obtained foothold. Originating substantially in Switzerland under the shaping hand of Calvin, it was at once accepted by Swiss Protestants of every grade, as a type of Christianity worthy of their warmest adherence. As it passed from Geneva into France, and thence into the Palatinate, it maintained steadily its primary claim and characteristic as a religion for the people. It even penetrated Germany, and in that stronghold of Lutheranism found friends and advocates not among the wealthy or educated alone or chiefly, but quite as much among the humbler classes. It was carried by the zeal of Knox into Scotland, and was so commended by his genius and so illustrated by his example that, notwithstanding the fiercest oppositions, it speedily obtained general, almost universal, acceptance. Borne in like manner into England, it there embedded itself so thoroughly in the popular respect that the Established Church, aided by all the resources of the civil power, was never able to expel or subvert it. In the entire record of its development and progress during that eventful century, nothing can be found to show that this primitive Presbyterianism was in the least hindered by such special disabilities as we have been considering. The common people, as well as the more educated and conspicuous classes, everywhere received it, and received it gladly as a form of Christianity not only intelligible to their understanding and justified by sound reason, but eminently suited to their spiritual needs, and laden in practice with beneficent fruitage.

Following the lines of its history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we are led almost without even apparent variations to the same result. In Switzerland, in France, in

Holland, in England and Scotland, we search in vain for any traces of a disposition or tendency to withdraw from contact with the masses, or to become the petted faith of an elect class. Let us take Scotland as an illustration. The story of the prolonged struggle between the successors of Knox and Melville, on the one hand, with the people at their side, and an ambitious prelacy, backed by kingly influence on the other, furnishes most decisive evidence of the true character and place of Presbyterianism during that long interval, as the accepted and honored faith of the nation. All efforts to supplant it by the introduction of a more aristocratic polity, a more artistic style of worship, a less stern and thorough type of doctrine, signally failed during that struggle—failed signally because the heart of the people never swerved from its first and holiest love. All later attempts in the same direction, through moderatism ignoring essential as well as incidental things, through the implantation of erratic forms of belief, as through philosophic unbelief wearing the garb of religion, hence for the same reason came to naught. Presbyterianism has never forsaken the people of Scotland, and the people of Scotland have never forsaken Presbyterianism. All classes, all conditions, have alike adhered to it and alike rejoiced in it. And if there be any section of Scotch society in which that Presbyterianism has found and is finding its firmest support, it is not the more aristocratic or affluent or cultured, but rather what may be termed the great middle class—that central body in whom the best life of the nation is flowing, and by whom the best interests of society are most strongly sustained.

A similar illustration might be found in the earlier history of American Presbyterianism. The long and interesting records of its introduction in a modified form in New England, of its more extensive implantation in the central states, of its growth in Virginia and the Carolinas, of its gradual diffusion beyond the Alleghenies, and its remarkable progress in Ohio and Kentucky and the contiguous territories, contain abundant evidence of its adaptability to the conscious needs even of the humblest classes. The men and women who, driven from their homes in Ireland and Scotland by the cruel hand of persecution at the commencement of the eighteenth century, sought an asylum in this new continent, and, who settled chiefly in Eastern Pennsyl-

vania and the districts adjacent, were not the representatives of a lordly aristocracy, or eminent for intellectual or social culture. They were plain, industrious, energetic, honest, devout, godly; and the type of Christianity which they brought with them, and established as a permanent institution in society wherever they found a home, was like themselves. If it was in any sense above them, or unsuited to them, they never discovered the fact. And in their continuous efforts to propagate it among the destitute populations rapidly spreading to the south and west, they were never consciously embarrassed by any developed lack of adaptation in their system, for the missionary work they undertook. The great revivals which at the close of the eighteenth century spread over Western Pennsylvania, and Eastern and Southern Ohio, and which in a few years visited and blessed the settled portions of Kentucky and Tennessee, show conclusively that the Presbyterianism of that century believed itself to be a religion for the people, and was accepted as such by the people. If it found special support in any class of American society—if it was most largely represented as gold in quartz in any social stratum from the seaboard to the Mississippi, that class or stratum lay nearer the basis than the surface of such society—it was composed of plain men and women in village and country who, though lacking possibly in cultivation and polish, were yet intelligent enough to recognize it as an unquestionable message from God, and honest enough to surrender themselves to its claims.

If there were space to unfold it, the special history of Presbyterian missions in our own day, whether foreign or domestic, would be seen to furnish further evidence in the same direction. It is probably true that all types both of doctrine and of polity are found to need some modifications of statement, some specific adjustments, to adapt them to the mental and social status of communities just emerging from heathenism. But do we discover anything in this respect which seems to contrast Presbyterianism disadvantageously with other forms of Protestantism? Are our missionaries on pagan soil beset by any serious impediments growing out of these denominational peculiarities—confronted by any difficulties but such as all evangelical missionaries meet in their endeavor to lead a heathen world to Christ? Or is there anything in the measure of success attained, in the



comparative fruits and issues of such labor, which points toward the conclusion that Presbyterianism is to have no share, or but small share, in the glorious task of discipling the nations?

In our missionary work at home, if anywhere, it might be anticipated that, if Presbyterianism is a religion for the educated, the affluent, the influential chiefly, this fact would become most glaringly, painfully manifest. As our commissioned laborers go forth into destitute localities, whether in the older states or along the frontier lines of our civilization, such a fact would rise everywhere as an impassable barrier between them and the people; it would frustrate every plan, paralyze every effort, render useless all expenditure. But does candid, adequate comparison disclose any such disability? Is it not found, in fact, that Presbyterianism, wherever rightly used, as readily teaches these destitute multitudes, and as readily impresses and wins them, as any other variety of the common Protestantism? It may be that other denominations have sometimes created greater stir, attracted larger numbers, enkindled a more spontaneous enthusiasm; but is it true that any of them has succeeded in planting more flourishing Sabbath Schools, in establishing more vigorous churches, in impregnating the community with a more healthful, productive religious life? To the tests of long and wide experiment we may safely submit such questions. The sure witness of history, on our own soil as well as in foreign fields, certifies to the truth that our denominational influence is limited by no geographic boundaries, by no social conditions, by no varieties of mind or culture.

A glance at the experience of other denominations may serve not merely to confirm our confidence in the conclusions thus reached, but also to deepen our sense of obligation to maintain inviolably the historic position of Presbyterianism as a religion for the people. It is not invidious to say that there have been varieties of Protestantism, American as well as European, in whose career a strong inclination toward what may be described as a class religion has made itself apparent. On the one side there have been denominations which have developed an aristocratic rather than a popular caste throughout their entire structure; whose worship has been stately and liturgical rather than spontaneous or fervid; whose polity has been shaped on monarchical rather than republican models; whose spirit, style and ten-

dency are such as to attract certain elect classes more than the common people. They have been too elegant, too refined, too elevated either to descend to familiar contact with the multitude, or to find favor in the sight of the multitude. Their ministers, like the Mosaic priesthood, have rather moved in stately dignity before the eyes of men, than entered on terms of simple equality into the hearts and experiences of men. Their sanctuaries, though often rustic in style, have generally been found not in the edges of the forest, or where farms alone grace the landscape, or the village stretches along the hillside, but in the more elegant streets of our larger towns. Civic rather than rural in their affinities, they have also been found in our cities in intimate connection for the most part, not with the laboring classes, but with wealth, with culture, with public and political influence. Certain higher strata in society have furnished both their chosen field of effort, and the material by which their success has been measured. When they have undertaken the larger task of evangelizing the multitude, they have relied on mission chapels and hired visitations and other special instrumentalities, forgetful of the eternal truth that no church can do aught for the people without first consenting to stand on the level of a complete equality, and approaching them in the freeness and the generosity of a Christlike love. Forgetting this truth, and carrying out more or less consciously a narrower theory, they have failed to be in any significant sense missionary organizations, and have become the church and the faith of a class.

On the other hand, there have been denominations in this country as in others, which have gone to the opposite extreme—which have claimed the honor of devoting themselves especially to the welfare of the multitudes whom other sections of Protestantism were supposed to be neglecting, and have aspired to be known in an eminent sense as a type of Christianity for the poor. Their churches have been tabernacles, and their ministers have been men, unspoiled by the learning of the schools. They have been distinguished by plainness in dress, simplicity in preaching, earnestness rather than art in devotion. They have trampled under foot all earthly distinctions, despised wealth, condemned culture as inconsistent with piety. Turning aside from the wise and the mighty, the scribe and the disputer of this world, they

have sought rather the friendship of the laboring classes. Elaborate systems of doctrine and fixed and ornate modes of worship have alike received their unqualified condemnation. The simplest modes of presenting the Gospel, the most fervid forms of social devotion, the utmost freedom in fellowship and activity, have been at once their cultivated preference, and the source of their popularity. Their field has been found almost exclusively in the lower strata of society : they have been from choice, the church of the poor.

The career of such denominations betrays the fallacy and the moral error involved in such distinctions. No church can indulge itself in special affinities of the first class, and persist in such indulgence, without finding itself as a result among the minor sects in numbers, and even in influence. The people whom under the impulse of such tendencies it has neglected and perhaps despised, will neglect and despise it in turn ; and its splendid sanctuaries, however adorned or attractive, will never resound with the tread of the multitudes thronging toward the cross. No church can undertake on the other hand an exclusive mission to the poor, without either seeing the poor turn away from its doors to seek the fellowship of churches where such distinctions are unknown, or finding itself compelled by an interior law to abandon its original peculiarity, and enter on a larger mission to men of all grades and conditions. The latter has been the more frequent result. Such denominations have gradually broadened their basis, enlarged and beautified their sanctuaries, educated their ministry, subdued and dignified their worship, cultivated method and decorum in their system, admitted the wealthy and the educated into membership, until at length they have ceased to be the churches of a class, and become the representatives of a religion for the people.

The grand fact is that Christ, in the constitution of his Church, has made no provision for such distinctions. It is a grievous, dangerous error, alike in principle and in policy, to organize denominations in the interest of any section or stratum of human society. The church belongs to man as man ; it lies constructively in human nature ; it is the outgrowth of our sanctified humanity. Its mission is to the race, and its ordained end can therefore never be reached by conquests however extensive among any class or section of mankind. The denomination that

most fully ignores all social differences, and labors directly for the salvation of all men alike, ensures to itself the largest and best success ; and our common Christianity will be strongest, most effectual, most divine, when among its various branches there will be none wherein the poorest and richest, the most cultivated and the plainest, will not stand exactly on a level. One religion for all men, for all classes, for all communities, in all ages ; this is the divine law under which the church is constituted, and in accordance with which it has won, is winning, will perpetually win its noblest triumphs.

Even Catholicism is teaching us this lesson. Within that marvellous organism, we hear nothing of different phases or types of doctrine, adapted to the intellectual condition or taste of particular classes ; one system of belief is received by all, whatever their degree of cultivation. And in like manner one polity includes alike the richest and the poorest, monarchist and republican ; and one worship meets the demand of the most refined and æsthetic on the one hand, and the rudest, least intellectual on the other. The Papacy has not found it necessary to admit the too frequent Protestant distinction of elegant sanctuaries for the wealthy, and mission chapels for the poor. In the grandest cathedrals of Europe, in the most costly temples directed by Romanism on this continent, men, women and children of all classes kneel together, without embarrassment from the contact, in the presence of him who is Maker of them all. And is it not the boast of Döllinger and other writers of the same type, that Catholicism is far superior to Protestantism in this regard ; that it knows no difference of condition, of color, of nationality, but that within its generous embrace there is room for every variety of social status, and for every representative of the common humanity ? Well will it be for every section of Protestantism to heed the lesson ; and well will it be for Presbyterianism to see and know that it can fulfill its divine mission, attain its true elevation, bear its choicest fruit only as it becomes in a sense far higher than Romanism has ever conceived, *a religion for the people.*