THE BEAUTIFUL HOPE OF DOING SOME PERPETUAL GOOD UPON THIS EARTH

Prepared by

DR. CHAS. E. DIEHL

at request of

THE TRUSTEES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED

"—the beautiful hope of doing some perpetual good upon this earth."

The charter of the Trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was originally issued in 1868 and to give emphasis to its powers for holding and administering trust funds the charter was amended in 1925 and the corporate name changed so as to include the term "the Presbyterian Foundation." Since that time it has rendered a valuable service to the Southern Presbyterian Church, its causes and its institutions. It has far greater potentialities than are apparently recognized, and it will render a much larger service if and when our people come to know about it, realize the soundness of its management, and the opportunities it affords in perpetuating our influence and carrying forward through the years the Christian work in which we were interested during our lifetime.

Unlike the people in England and France, two-thirds of the property owners in the United States die without having made a will. Of the relatively few in this country who do dispose of their property by will, still fewer seem to regard a will as a means of carrying on the good works of their lifetime, of prolonging their personality, and of extending their influence into the future. It has been estimated that only one person out of twelve who make wills includes any bequest to philanthropy. Many who consistently, and often gen-

erously, support Christian causes during their lifetime neglect the opportunity which a will affords of making a significant and lasting contribution to society.

Comparatively few, it seems, have the conviction that all that we have has come to us by the good hand of our God, and some seem quite devoid of any real sense of stewardship. We are the trustees of the material possessions with which God has endowed us. By the wise and discriminating use of our wealth we can do a vast amount of good now and in the future. We must not forget that avarice is one of the seven deadly sins, that selfishness runs in our blood, and is at the root of nearly everything that wounds our Father's heart and hurts our fellowman. Our Lord had a good deal to say against covetousness and too great a love for money, but He never said that it was wrong to make money, or to take pleasure in making it honestly. He was forever trying to bring us to the point where we find pleasure in giving it away in the support of worthy causes. Money is never an end in itself, but only a means to an end. It has value, but it is not an ultimate value. It is not something that has a worthwhileness which is ultimate. There are many things, such as honor, health, happiness, wisdom, courage, the appreciation of beauty, and a host of others, which money cannot buy. The list of The Unpurchasables is almost unbelievably long.

Someone has remarked that for many years the world has been like a shop into which some mischief-maker has entered unobserved and changed the labels around, so that cheap things had high priced labels attached to them and really valuable things have been priced low. A sad awakening always follows, for men in need turn suddenly to realize on their possessions and find that what they thought was of great value proves to be of little worth, and what they have disdained as worthless is of inestimable value. Often we find a man who has sacrificed to build up a great business, or one who has sacrificed everything, even moral scruples, for a title or some coveted position, only to find endless worries and anxieties, and inescapable responsibilities for which the *soul* is ill equipped. In the meanwhile, he has lost a quiet heart, the secret of serenity, the virtue of humility, the ideal of lowly and sometimes ill-rewarded service, the ability to pray. These qualities of soul may have seemed trivial, but in an hour of crisis we know them to be the fine gold of life. Money, popularity, fame, worldly success, high social position, are worthless in some emergencies, though they carry high-priced labels. They are valuable means, but they are not ends in themselves.

The Church and its institutions are trustees of spiritual values which are enduring, but they rest upon an economic base. It is only a spiritual estate which one can carry over

into the other world, but that spiritual estate is built up largely by our attitude toward and the use which we make of our material goods. Perhaps the distinguishing characteristic of our age is the fact that we attach an entirely exaggerated importance to material wealth. With the most of us our religion hardly seems to touch at all our attitude with regard to money. The central ambition of many of us is not that we may become wise or good, but that we may become materially prosperous. Money has as much right to its place in human life as any other gift of God, and the wise use of it can give great blessing and joy. There are many pretty names, such as prudence, thrift, care for one's family, which disguise our undue love of money, so that we do not recognize our fault. Money may be the ugliest thing on God's earth. Again, it may be, as Sir James Barrie has said, "always a beautiful thing." Nor does all this apply only to those who have large means. It applies quite as well to any consistent followers of Christ, however small are his or her possessions. It has often been noted that, generally speaking, Presbyterians are a generous lot, but that they are woefully neglectful of the causes and institutions of their own Church.

In a recent conversation with the writer, Bishop James M. Maxon, of the Diocese of Tennessee, spoke of the responsibility in this connection which he felt rested upon him as

the head of the Diocese with regard to the members of the Episcopal Church. He said that he did not mind at all asking people for money, that in many cases he felt that it was a means of grace to them, if he could get them to respond unselfishly to his appeal. He further said that he was trying to get every member of the Episcopal Church of Tennessee to bequeath something to the Church or one of its institutions or one of its causes. He said in effect, "I do not care how poor the individual is, if he or she can bequeath only a dollar, it will evidence the spirit that I think a Christian should have. I feel that no member of the Church should be content to go out of this world without making an attempt to provide for carrying on the work of the Church of Christ after he or she is gone. This applies to every one, rich and poor, and I believe that each one should according to his or her ability make a bequest for the perpetuation of the Church and its institutions because he or she has benefited by the rich heritage which has come down to us through past generations."

From the days of George Washington down to our present time every President of the United States has recognized the vital importance of the Church and its institutions for the welfare of this country. Woodrow Wilson said "Our civilization cannot survive materially unless it be redeemed spiritually." Calvin Coolidge said "The strength of a coun-

try is the strength of its religious convictions." Herbert Hoover said "Our church and religious institutions are indispensable stabilizing factors in our civilization."

Because the Government recognizes the great value to society of the Church and its institutions and realizes that it is economy in the long run to have their needs met, it encourages gifts and bequests to these institutions by exempting them from gift and inheritance taxes, and also by allowing an exemption of fifteen per cent from income taxes. With the very severe taxation schedule made necessary by recent developments and by present conditions, this provision of the Government should be an unusual encouragement to our people to provide adequately for the Church and its institutions. The establishment of foundations, public and private, has been stimulated as a result of the situation which exists today. Rotary International has established a foundation, and Rotarians all over the country are being asked to contribute funds or War Bonds to this foundation. It would seem that the members of our Church should be as interested in the Church, as loyal and as generous, as are the Rotarians to International Rotary, especially so when the fundamental philosophy and principles of the Rotary Club are a direct product of the teaching of the Church and its institutions.

The Presbyterian Foundation was created by the General Assembly of the Southern

Presbyterian Church to be a Holding Corporation, is responsible to the General Assembly, and is set up for the purpose of making it easy for any one to give or leave money, real estate or other valuable property, to the Presbyterian Church in the United States, or to be held in trust for the benefit of one or more causes or institutions of the Church. It has the same functions as a trust company among banking institutions, and will act as a trustee for any one desiring to make a gift while living, or by will, to the Church or to any of its causes or institutions. It affords the easiest and most economical way of dividing a gift or bequest among a number of causes or institutions. More than that, it gives assurance to the donor that, with changing conditions which may cause changes in the present setup of the causes or institutions of the Church in the future, funds will not be dissipated. Under those conditions, their use would be directed by competent officials of our Church in the channels which would most nearly meet the wishes of the donor. Many people through the past seventy years have been persuaded to give to institutions which were not soundly established and whose future was uncertain. When some of these institutions piled up indebtedness and failed to continue, thus nullifying the efforts of the donors to perpetuate them, and in addition calling upon these same donors for more money to pay the indebtedness, the result was not

happy. Because of experiences of this kind, donors have rather shied away from giving large sums to institutions which were not soundly established. It is quite possible, without running any risk like that, to leave money for an institution of that kind to the Presbyterian Foundation with certain specific directions which would obviate such an unhappy experience. Of course, if a donor is interested in doing something for a soundly established institution, it would probably be better for him to deal directly with that institution. However, if the possibility noted above were realized by our people, it might encourage gifts for institutions which are not yet soundly established and be the means of continuing their existence. This is only one of the many advantages which could be mentioned by having our people acquaint themselves with the opportunities which are offered by an examination into and an investment in the Presbyterian Foundation.

CHAS. E. DIEHL.

The Trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the Presbyterian Foundation, Inc.
Box 1393 - Charlotte, N. C.

R. A. Dunn ..... Charlotte, N. C.
Chairman of the Board

T. S. McPheeters ..... Charlotte, N. C.
President

P. S. Gilchrist ..... Charlotte, N. C.
Vice-President

Geo. M. Rose ..... Charlotte, N. C.
Secretary-Treasurer

Neal Y. Pharr ..... Charlotte, N. C.
Attorney

Chas. A. Cannon ..... Concord, N. C.

Rev. C. M. Richards ..... Davidson, N. C.

F. L. Jackson ..... Davidson, N. C.

Jas. H. Kennedy ..... Gastonia, N. C.

Representing the Synods

Walter D. Bellingrath ..... Mobile, Ala.
Synod of Alabama

J. P. McCallie ..... Chattanooga, Tenn.
Synod of Appalachia

J. R. Hampton ..... Little Rock, Ark.
Synod of Arkansas

F. C. Groover ..... Jacksonville, Fla.
Synod of Florida

C. A. Rowland ..... Athens, Ga.
Synod of Georgia

Rev. W. H. Hopper ..... Louisville, Ky.
Synod of Kentucky

Rev. W. F. O'Kelley ..... Minden, La.
Synod of Louisiana

W. Calvin Wells ..... Jackson, Miss.
Synod of Mississippi

Rev. J. Layton Mauze ..... Kansas City, Mo.
Synod of Missouri

Rev. C. M. Boyd ..... Charlotte, N. C.
Synod of North Carolina

Rev. Chris Matheson ..... Shawnee, Okla.
Synod of Oklahoma

D. L. McLaurin ..... McColl, S. C.
Synod of South Carolina

Rev. Chas. E. Diehl ..... Memphis, Tenn.
Synod of Tennessee

Rev. C. T. Caldwell ..... Waco, Texas
Synod of Texas

C. Grattan Price ..... Harrisonburg, Va.
Synod of Virginia

Rev. C. Groshon Gunn ..... Bluefield, W. Va.

Ex-officio Members

Rev. C. Darby Fulton ..... Nashville, Tenn.

Rev. Homer McMillan ..... Atlanta, Ga.

Rev. Henry H. Sweets ..... Louisville, Ky.

Dr. E. D. Grant ..... Richmond, Va.

Rev. B. K. Tenney ..... Atlanta, Ga.

This name should be used in Wills and Life Insurance Policies:

THE TRUSTEES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED