

# The Church, The People, and the Age

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## *Analysis and Summary*

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**ALL TRUTH HARMONIOUS**

1. I do not think it wise "to ask the great majority of people to subscribe to statements that deal with debated and controversial questions." Few churches do this, and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, with which I am connected, only asks of persons applying for admission to its membership a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

2. All truth is harmonious and coheres into a system, and therefore "a fundamental theology of the Church" must "be related to the literary, scientific, and philosophical certainties of our time" and cannot "be unassailable and final" if it "does not accord with the assured results of science." It is also "true that a message to be effective must stand for and teach those things that constitute the sum total of the values of human life, whatever their source may be." However, these state-

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ments are little more than truisms, and the question must always be determined what are "the assured results of science" and what are "those things that constitute the sum total of the values of human life." "The assured results of science" cannot conflict with the assured results of theology, because science deals only with phenomena, and theology along with philosophy goes back of phenomena into their ultimate cause and nature. Yet conflict has arisen between these two departments of knowledge because scientists sometimes go outside of their province and begin to speak with an air of authority on questions of philosophy and theology, and theologians sometimes unwisely take alarm at the proper conclusions of science, and combat them only to be defeated. Theology should be based only on truth and on truth from any and all sources, and it should therefore be hospitable toward the "assured results" of study in all fields of knowledge and to all the "things that constitute the sum total of the values of human life." It must be admitted that theologians have often mistakenly opposed the results of science, which afterward they were forced to accept, and have thus alienated men of science and culture, but there has been a marked improvement in this respect. Theology is now, more than formerly, using all the results of knowledge and all the values of life to illustrate its own teaching and to reflect the Light of the world.