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CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

SAMUEL G. CRAIG, Editor

H. McALLISTER GRIFFITHS, Managing Editor

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The Corporate Witness of the Church

THE primary task of the organized church as of the individual Christian is to bear witness. Our LORD's final command was: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." In obedience to this command the apostles (as soon as the Holy Spirit had come upon them) entered upon a campaign of witnessing—a campaign in which they continued active until their memberships had been transferred from the church militant to the church triumphant (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3-15; 5; 32; 10:39-42; 13:31; 22:15; with which compare MATTHEW 24:14 and LUKE 24:48.)

This campaign of witnessing stressed both the facts and the doctrines that constitute the Christian religion. "I delivered unto you first of all," PAUL wrote to the Corinthians, "that which I also received: that CHRIST died for our sins according to the Scriptures." "CHRIST died"—that was the statement of a fact. "CHRIST died for our sins"—that was the statement of a doctrine, i.e. the true explanation of the fact. The fact without the doctrine would have been meaningless: the doctrine without the fact would have been empty. He who is silent either as to the facts or the doctrines that lie at the basis of the Christian religion is worthless as a Christian witness.

It is conceivable that CHRIST should not have established a church. In that case we would be under obligation to witness for CHRIST as individuals; but would not need to be concerned about the

corporate witness of the church to which we belong. As a matter of fact, however, He did establish a church. Moreover there is nothing to indicate that He approves of un-attached Christians, those who accept Him as their personal LORD and SAVIOUR but who are not members of His organized church. Hence, the situation being what it is, we are both under obligation to be members of the organized church and to do all in our power to see to it that its corporate witness is both clean-cut and adequate. Ideally there should be but one church and this one church should bear faithful witness to a full-orbed gospel. Lacking this one church we must be content to belong to the church that best wit-

nesses to the gospel in the community in which our lot is cast. But, whatever the church to which we belong, we are under obligation, as much as in us lies, to see to it that in its corporate capacity it bears full and unequivocal witness to the gospel of the grace of God. This is not to say that it is enough that we belong to an organization calling itself a church. Conceivably all the churches in a community may have "so degenerated as to become no churches of CHRIST but synagogues of Satan" (Confession of Faith, Chapter 25). Suppose, for instance, that the Presbyterian Church should so modify its creed as to bring it into harmony with "Modernism." In that case its corporate testimony would be hostile to the gospel of the grace of God and as such an organization to which no genuine Christian should belong.

We would not be understood as minimizing the importance of the witness of the individual Christian. Important and indispensable as that is, however, it is insignificant as compared to the corporate witness of the church to which the individual belongs by as much as that organization is greater than the individual. How little, for instance, is the significance that attaches to the witness of any individual Presbyterian as compared with the corporate testimony of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. with its two million members! The corporate witness of the church is therefore a matter of great importance in the maintenance and propagation of the Christian religion, true as it is that

IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial Notes and Comments	
A Significant Letter.....	2
"Needed Emphases in the Church Today".....	3
Two Calls to Repentance.....	3
Presbyterian Pelagianism.....	4
Wm. Childs Robinson	
Notes on Biblical Exposition—XXII... ..	6
J. Gresham Machen	
Let Us Become "Antioch Christians" Once More!.....	9
John C. Monsma	
Letters to the Editor.....	12
"Perfectionism": A Book Review.....	14
News of the Church.....	16

Let Us Become "Antioch Christians" Once More!

An address by
The Rev. John Clover Mosma

PERHAPS the most glorious day of my life was the one I spent some time ago in the old city of Antioch, in northern Syria, the city that may be rightly called the capital of early Christianity. That day represents a high tide in my spiritual life. Walking the streets of that ancient town I was stirred to my heart's depths by a strange and thrilling sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Time and ages seemed to submerge and become lost to sight and I felt myself identified with the great church that sent out Paul and Barnabas and a host of other evangelists and missionaries, that entertained and put life and spirit into more than thirty church conventions in post-apostolic times, and that served as a spiritual powerhouse for all the world, from India to Spain.

The church of Antioch was the church of the Holy Spirit *par excellence*. Its deep spirituality made it the institution it was. There was a real, direct, daily fellowship between Christ in heaven and the soul of every member, man or woman, in that church. And that meant faith, a deep, purposeful faith. That meant the exact opposite of apathy and indifferentism. That meant victory—though Nero thundered and the Jewish chief priests ground their teeth in impotent rage. Give me a hundred—a mere hundred—men and women that are daily in actual touch with God, and they will work wonders. The things that are impossible with men will prove possible with God—through their agency.

Deep spirituality. Is there anything our badly deteriorated Presbyterian Church needs worse than that? I do not refer to the effervescent emotionalism that is so much sought after among certain religious groups. That would be foreign to the genius of Presbyterianism, of the Reformed faith. What I have in mind is a quiet, steady, daily walk with God. "And Enoch walked with God." "And I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." And then the outreach to heaven: "And they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

Walking with God! Yet—mind you—not just any God. Walking decidedly and unalterably with the God of the Holy Scriptures. We have committees on spiritual

emphasis these days, and evangelistic conferences, and ministerial retreats. But the trouble is that very many of the men that are engaged in these "spiritual" pursuits have a God in mind other than the One of the Scriptures. They will miss their mark. They have not set God—the God of the Scriptures—before their eyes. He will not let Himself be found of them. A true "walking with God," a deep and abiding spirituality, is possible only with those who embrace the God of the Bible in unfeigned love and in the passion of a great, unquestioning desire.

But that being understood, is there anything our Church in its distress stands more in need of than a true "walking with God," a genuine, intimate fellowship with the God of its life? Has not the pulsebeat of our spiritual life during the last decades been extremely weak and intermittent? Have we not administered overdoses of artificial stimulants, to the extent that our large and cumbersome body is rapidly becoming inured to them? Using the stethoscope of the Divine Word, have not many of us detected symptoms that literally affrighted us? And in these circumstances have we not cried out for the living God, realizing that human help is vain, that only direct action by the Holy Spirit can help and lift up and stir to new life and activity our sadly weakened Church?

And when God's Spirit begins to move—as we pray humbly and beseechingly that He will—the first thing that will stand out before us, sharply and vividly, will be our common guilt. I speak advisedly of "common" guilt. We orthodox have been too much inclined to cast the blame for the Church's condition upon our opponents. We say that Modernism has sapped our strength; that the Modernists have brought all this shame upon our Presbyterian Zion. We blame the false prophets; those whom Ezekiel described as daubing with untempered mortar; the wolves in sheep's clothing, as Jesus with His customary directness described religious deceivers. And we forget that if the orthodox had done their duty, long ago, these false prophets would never have had their chance. We also forget that if the orthodox were doing their duty today the assailants of God and His Word would be on the defensive everywhere, and their fight would be a losing one.

And so I speak of "common" guilt. There is on the one hand the enormous guilt of the

backsliders, preachers and people, who dishonor God's holy Name and despise His Holy Word. But there is also the grievous guilt of those who failed to watch, and to protest, and to act with definiteness and decision at the proper time; the guilt of the men and women of God whose love for their Lord was too tepid and lukewarm to emit sparks and flames when His honor was at stake.

If therefore we mean to attempt a real church reformation we must start out with real penitence, a genuine humbling of ourselves before Him whom we have grieved so deeply and so long. Our souls must weep tears of repentance. We must listen with deepest attention and sympathy to Israel's weeping prophet as Jehovah speaks through Him and says, "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto Me." But our hearts must at the same time join themselves to Jeremiah when he begs and cries, "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy Name's sake! For we are called by Thy Name; leave us not!"

Fellow-believers, the success of all attempts at church reformation is absolutely conditioned upon this attitude of soul and mind. Let us confess our frightful sins of omission and neglect. Let us plead for forgiveness in the name of Christ. And then let us beg for the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of loyalty and courage—, for a willingness to suffer, if necessary, the worst of pain and shame for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

I have spoken of courage. We shall need it. If we actually mean to follow King Josiah's example in destroying the high places and clearing away the rubbish from God's holy temple; if we actually mean to uphold the Book of God's revelation and defend its sacredness and inviolability against all attacks, under-handed and open; if we actually mean to subscribe to Paul's anathema upon the preachers of "another gospel" and to govern ourselves accordingly; we shall need a courage that is truly born of God. We shall need persistence, too. The sad conditions in which we find ourselves are not of recent date. Their roots run far down into the soil of church history. A spiritual and psychological atmosphere has developed in the course of long years that is far from homogeneous with our best Presbyterian traditions and that has permeated the whole of our church life and affected the minds of old and young, educated and uneducated, with its sweet, narcotic poison. Besides, there is the Father of Lies and the Prince of Darkness who will leave no stone unturned to hamper our efforts and spoil our good work. Persistence we shall need, as much as courage. Our battle will

not be a brief and spectacular one, with heavy casualties and a quick decision. But it will be the battle of the Lord God of Hosts, and we have His promise that He Himself will be in the van. I pray and trust that at least a measure of that grim determination that in ages gone by featured the warfare of the Scots, the Scots-Irish, the old Cameronians, the Huguenots and the Dutch, will be found in the hearts of the Presbyterian orthodox of today as they set about to defend and restore the heritage of their mighty fathers.

I have already spoken of our most fundamental need as I see it—a genuine and deep spirituality. There is a fearful decline in the personal, spiritual life of our people. A virile, personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a consequent fearless witnessing for Him in every domain of life are almost like strange, exotic plants in our denominational garden. Men and women of conviction are extremely thinly sown. A worldliness is rampant among us so calloused and shameless and raw that in all the annals of our ecclesiastical history, from the days of Francis Makemie on, you will not find anything like it.

And upon the loss of personal faith a sad indifference as to faith's contents followed as a matter of course. We still have our precious Standards, but you and I know that the authoritative character of those documents is no longer recognized by thousands of our fellow-communicants; that even hundreds of ministers regard them as articles belonging in an antique shop or a museum, instead of upon the moderator's tables of our judicatories, small and large. We are fast becoming a non-confessional Church. We have opened our doors to doctrines un-Presbyterian and un-Biblical. Infidelity is trampling with amazing ruthlessness upon that which our fathers deemed holy and exalted, by which they lived and died, and we, their spiritual descendants, are actually expected to witness the spectacle with hands folded, as true "men of peace."

There is the question of education—in our seminaries, and also in our colleges. Of the seminaries not much need be said here and now. We are, I take it, familiar with the facts. The imperative necessity of the establishment of Westminster Seminary some years ago, in order to have at least one theological training school that dared to follow the apostle Paul in his wholesome intolerance of infidelity and doctrinal indifferentism, tells rather enough of the story. That colleges supported or endorsed by our Church are working both insidiously or openly to support the program of the ecclesiastical revolutionaries is perhaps not so generally known. I have just finished my investigation of one of them, as the chairman of a special presbyterial committee, and my heart is still filled with disgust and sorrow at the things we found. What a dis-

honor it all was for Him whom we worship in our hearts as the Wisdom of God.

That a church-political machine has been erected in our midst is a fact only too well known. And that the machine represents and promotes doctrines and policies that are contrary to Presbyterian principles, that violate our most sacred covenants, and that reduce in effect the Christ whom our fathers honored—the Redeemer-King before whom Calvin and Knox and Melville bowed in humblest reverence—to a gilded figure-head, while a coterie of high ecclesiastics hands its orders around quite in arbitrary fashion—these, too, are facts with which we are well acquainted.

In fact, our whole Presbyterian system of government and discipline has suffered a breakdown. In the circumstances it is really not to be wondered at that men ignorant of Reformed church polity and with selfish ambitions are lording it over the Church. This mammoth institution which we call the Presbyterian Church cannot be run without some form of government!

This breakdown of our governmental and disciplinary system has not happened with the suddenness of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. There has been a slow process of disintegration that started generations back. Today we hardly know what Presbyterian government and discipline are. The subjects have been wiped off the curricula of seminaries. Principles of polity are only seldom discussed or debated at our judicatories. One would have a hard time to find even one Presbyterian Church session well posted on church discipline, and exercising it, for the benefit of the church and in the name of Christ, our King.

That our missions are in a bad plight everybody knows—even the dyed-in-the-wool modernist. Our Boards are having an extremely hard time getting their money together, and with all their mechanistic contrivances they have not been able to prevent the annual shortages that have begun as far back as 1925—long before the depression. The truth of the matter is that most of our people are growing indifferent, and that some of them are growing suspicious. Though these latter have not the facts on hand, they suspect that something is radically wrong and their enthusiasm has been waning. We who are here know that the preaching of the Gospel of the Son of God to poor and lost sinners is no longer the dominating feature of much of our mission work,—but "social uplift," education and cultural development. We know that our Boards are following more and more a policy of religious eclecticism, so that Hindus and Buddhists and Shintoists throw their arms around the shoulders of our missionaries and whisper sweet words of welcome and peace. I have for years been receiving mail from some of our outstanding missionaries, in Japan, in

China, in Korea, in India, and other lands, in which they lament the situation and mourn to God because of the attitude of the Boards. I repeat, we—you and I—know the facts. And we know, better than anything else in this connection, how our high officials by a conspiracy of silence in the denominational press and by threatening the reputations and livelihood of our orthodox missionaries in the field and our ministers at home seek to squelch or to forestall any effective criticism that might be directed at them.

God forbid that we should look upon this whole matter of church deformation as an abstract proposition, or that in thinking of the Church we should think only and merely of an organized institution, with its judicatories, departments, executives, local officers and general membership. We are handling a *living* thing, my brethren and sisters! We are treating a high and holy thing! We are dealing with the Church of the living God, the blood-bought possession of our Lord and Saviour! We are dealing with that of which you and I confess to be living members through sovereign grace, into which our children were born as the seed of the Covenant, and in and by which we and our children are prepared for eternity. Shall we be anything less than tremendously concerned about that which has so much to do with our eternal destiny and welfare? Shall we not shrink with horror from the prospect of having our children and grandchildren trained up under ministrations that cheat them out of heaven itself; that lead them along flower-strewn paths, to the tune of soft and indolent music, on to graves from which there will be no rising unto glory?

Then what must we do?

That a change in conditions is necessary needs no argument. I only want to emphasize the great need of avoiding anything superficial. We should and must have a *thoroughgoing* change, a reformation that goes to the *heart* of things, and that from heart reaches out to every section of the periphery.

Some of us seem in the past to have been satisfied with a sort of *laissez faire* policy on the part of the Church. "I won't bother you if you let me alone." In other words, they object to the control that the modernists are now exerting alone and by themselves, but would apparently be satisfied if the modernists and orthodox could "run" the Church on a basis of strict equality. Oftentimes such people are particular and careful when it comes to their own local church, but lenient and big-hearted when the Church as a whole is concerned. At home they want an exclusive church, doctrinally speaking; they prefer and even insist upon the old Gospel; but for the denomination at large they favor,—at least, they tolerate,—the inclusive idea. Such an attitude, of

course, is not only illogical, and even foolish, but dangerous in the extreme.

No, the inclusive Church idea must be torn up and cast out, root and branch. The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. stands unequivocally opposed to it, both historically and doctrinally. Those who belong to her membership and yet attack her Constitution, her doctrines, her polity, and her historical methods, are interlopers and seditionists. They have a full right to their opinions; they even have a full right to spread them as assiduously as brains and money will allow;—but not until they are outside our Church boundaries. And when once we have them outside—may God speed the day!—they will at once become the objects of our loving missionary effort. We can then try to win them for our precious, eternal faith.

I want to stress something else. A thoroughgoing reformation requires more than a *revival*. A genuine spiritual revival is the first requisite. I have already stressed that at the beginning. But we need more, far more, than the stirring of individual souls to a fuller and more zestful life. The whole, enormous structure of the Church needs overhauling. Great reconstructive efforts must be made in all departments. The great doctrinal and governmental principles to which our fathers held with utmost tenacity, by which they lived, for which they died, must again be brought to the fore; they must again be made to exert their powerful directive influence—everywhere.

Let Presbyterians no longer give heed to the twaddle that those principles are outworn; that they no longer fit in the twentieth century scheme of things. Gold is gold, whether you find it new in the gold mines of South Africa or bring it up from the darkness of King Tut-Ankh-Amen's tomb in Egypt. There is no old or new to it. It is never outworn or out of style. Let Presbyterians wipe the dust from the gold of their principles, those principles that hail from eternity and belong to the ages, and let them highly resolve that no materials will be found in their reconstructed temple that are out of harmony with their solidness and lustre.

To introduce, in the name and with the help of God, our desperately needed reformation we must organize our orthodox forces throughout the Church. If anywhere, the old motto is applicable in our situation: "United we stand; divided we fall." No battle has ever been won by soldiers acting individually and for and by themselves. In solid, compact, well-organized ranks we must meet our opponents. If we do, there is no doubt about a victorious outcome. Our opponents have really nothing to fall back on. They are religious privateers, everyone of them. They have nothing authoritative to back them. They soar on Icarus-wings and seek to reach the glamorous nothings of

a *fata morgana*, a mirage. We have *back* of us and *with* us and *in* us the history, the traditions, the Constitution, the doctrines, the world-conquering FAITH of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; we have going on before us the everlasting SON OF GOD;—and in these circumstances the outcome should not be in doubt. All we need do, and do carefully and thoroughly, is *organize*.

Presbyterian Pelagianism (Continued)

would have long since been Mexicanized, or Sovietized, or anarchized. This method of defending the Federal Council easily suggests the third question concerning that body: (3) Is the Federal Council patriotic or unpatriotic, pro-American or pro-Soviet? The wide prevalence of this question is acknowledged even by those who defend Presbyterian participation in the Federal Council, e.g., Rev. Dr. J. T. Bergen of Minneapolis in *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*, July 1932.

But even if each of these three questions were satisfactorily answered, from the standpoint of this article there would still be grave objection to Presbyterian participation in this organization. Are not Presbyterians taking a Pelagian position when, for the sake of accomplishing such social and political matters as the abrogation of the color line in the best hotels, the Americanization of Dr. D. C. Mackintosh, the proper disposal of Fiume, the removal of the German confession of unique war guilt in the Versailles treaty, the curbing of militarism, they support a Federal Council which uses as a radio preacher a man who has "decoded" the Resurrection of Jesus into the Greek doctrine of the immortality of His spirit (*The Modern Use of the Bible*), who has rejected the Virgin Birth and the Second Coming of Christ, who has used the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New York to caricature and hold up to ridicule the doctrine of the atonement found in the Westminster Standards and taught by the Southern Presbyterian Church, namely, the satisfaction of Divine justice by penal substitution (*Shall the Fundamentalists Win?*), who

calls in question the supreme object of Presbyterian worship with a sermon, *The Peril of Worshipping Jesus?* Can Calvinists properly support for social purposes a Council whose radio preachers present a New Protestantism antagonistic to the Reformation battle standard—justification by faith—in the nature of faith, the function of faith, the certainty of faith, the ground of justification, the nature of justification, and the graciousness or meritoriousness of the whole process? Basing ecclesiastical organization on social interests, to the disregard of difference in belief, is the characteristic of Hinduism, not of historic Christianity.

Turning finally to the question of Church union, Dr. William A. Brown's article, already mentioned, furnishes the latest basis for discussion. In the interest of Augustinianism statements by prominent representatives of each of the two Union Theological Seminaries, will be opposed to the unionism advocated by this professor emeritus of Union, N. Y., in the *Review of Union*, Va. In his inaugural address Dr. Ben R. Lacy, Jr., of Union (Va.), very courageously drew a line of distinction and demarcation between those seminaries which accepted the supernatural and those which rejected the supernatural (*Union Seminary Review*, July 1927, p. 360). It does not admit of doubt that Dr. Lacy used the word supernatural in its usual and historical sense of miraculous; and that three years after the *Auburn Affirmation* he thus heroically placed himself and his seminary on the side of the miracles of the new Testament. On the other hand Dr. Brown defends the *Auburn Affirmation* and thus undertakes to destroy Dr. Lacy's line of distinction, since *The Affirmation* declares that the acceptance of the miracles of the Gospels is not necessary for Presbyterian ordination. A careless reader may not gather this from Dr. Brown's article. The New York professor comes out in large type for "THE RE-DISCOVERY OF THE SUPERNATURAL." But the sensitized reader will discern that in this section, *Union Seminary Review*, July 1932, pp. 390-392, Dr. Brown is not using the word supernatural in its usual sense of the miraculous. Of course,