

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



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

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By Way of Preface

CHRISTIANITY TODAY will be edited from the viewpoint of those who hold that Christianity as it exists throughout the world, in as far as it is not Christianity falsely so-called, is essentially one with Christianity as it is authoritatively set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as it has been confessed through all the Christian centuries.

This means, in the judgment of its editors, that what is known as evangelical Christianity is a purer and more adequate expression of Christianity than what is known as "Catholic" Christianity. It means, also, according to the same judgment, that what arrogates to itself the name of Modernism, in all its consistent forms of expression, is not Christianity at all.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY has been established to state, defend and further the system of thought and life taught in the Bible—a system of thought and life which in the judgment of its editors has found its most complete and most carefully guarded as well as its most vital expression in the standards of the Presbyterian Church.

It seems to us that there is an imperative need of such a paper, most of all within the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. inasmuch as the recent change of policy on the part of *The Presbyterian* means that there is now no paper within this great church that is committed to a militant defense of its faith against its enemies—whether within or without its borders. But while the more immediate occasion for starting this paper is the recent change of policy on the part of *The Presbyterian*, it is the situation

throughout the Church-at-large that calls most insistently for its establishment. We refer to that wide-spread defection from Christianity which is so obvious a phenomenon in the age in which we live—a defection rooted in the so-called "Enlightenment" of the 18th century with its thorough-going naturalism of thought and sentiment but which within the last fifty years has assumed such proportions throughout Europe and America that the enemies of Christianity have gathered courage to contest the right of historic Christianity (which is supernatural to the core) to dominate the culture and civilization of the future. Wholly apart from what has happened in connection with *The Presbyterian* and wholly apart from what may be the future of *The Presbyterian* we believe there is an imperative need for such a paper as CHRISTIANITY TODAY aspires to be. This paper will fail of its purpose if it does not prove helpful not only to Presbyterians but to Christians everywhere in maintaining their heritage in the face of encroaching Modernism and in transmitting it undiminished to those who shall come after them.

But while the viewpoint of its editors will be that of the Calvinistic rather than that of the Lutheran or Arminian Churches there will be the full recognition of the fact that what they hold in common with other evangelical Christians is much more important than what they hold in distinction from them. In fact while they will be as unflinchingly opposed to Rome as were their fathers they will not be blind to the fact that as the lines are drawn today—theism over against

atheism; Christ the God-man over against the man Jesus; the cross as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice over against the cross as a symbol of self-sacrifice; salvation as a divine gift over against salvation as a human achievement; the Bible as the revealed Word of God over against the Bible as a purely human product; the moral law as a divinely imposed rule of life over against the moral law as an ever-changing resultant of human insight and experience—Rome, at the points at which the battle rages most fiercely today, is our ally rather than our opponent.

An additional reason for establishing this paper is the fact that Westminster Theological Seminary has been founded in Philadelphia to carry on and perpetuate the policies and traditions of Princeton Theological Seminary as it existed prior to its reorganization by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. We rejoice in this event as we look upon it as the most hopeful and encouraging event for the future of the Presbyterian Church and evangelical Christianity that has happened for many a day. As matters now stand, however, this institution lacks the support of any paper, in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. at least, that has a really sympathetic understanding of the things for which it stands. While CHRISTIANITY TODAY is not connected in any official way with Westminster Seminary it hopes to be of use in furthering its interests—along with those of other institutions that stand four-square for the Bible and the gospel it contains.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY will not only be free of all ecclesiastical control but its editors will be free to determine its char-

acter and policy according to their convictions. These convictions include:

(1) The conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and as such completely trustworthy whether as regards its factual, doctrinal or ethical representations;

(2) the conviction that the system of thought and life taught in the Bible is valid and capable of convincing intellectual defense in the forum of the world's thought;

(3) the conviction that Christian doctrines are the root rather than the fruit of the Christian life and hence that the Standards of the Presbyterian Church correctly assert that "truth is in order to goodness" and that "no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are";

(4) the conviction that it is the duty of Christians to bear clearcut witness to the Christian faith against all who oppose it, whether within or without the church.

The editors of this paper believe in all heartiness and sincerity that the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. They hold that the Bible is true both in the sense of "truth of idea" and of "truth of fact." So far are they from supposing that we can be indifferent to the question of the historical truthfulness of the Bible that they hold that its supreme value lies in the fact that it records those great acts of redemption that God has wrought for the salvation of His people—acts that have their culmination in the birth, atoning death and triumphant resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who feel no consciousness of the guilt and power of sin may be content with a Bible from which they derive only moral and religious instruction and inspiration, but those who see themselves as they really are will not be able to find rest for their souls in anything short of an authentic record of the wonders that God has wrought for their salvation. Apart from the recognition of the facts recorded in the Bible as actual historical occurrences there is, indeed, no such thing as Christianity as we understand it. But while we stress the importance of the facts we do not fall into

the error of supposing that the facts of themselves are constitutive of Christianity. Give the facts no interpretation and they are meaningless. Give them an interpretation other than that of the Bible and they will yield us something other than Christianity. It takes both the facts recorded in the Bible and the interpretation of those facts given us in the Bible (i.e. the Biblical doctrines) to yield us Christianity. In a word we hold with the Church of all ages that the Bible gives us both a trustworthy record of the facts that lie at the basis of the Christian religion and an authoritative explanation of those facts.

If the Bible contains not only a trustworthy record of that great series of redemptive acts that God has wrought for the salvation of the world but the meaning of those acts as understood by God himself, it follows as a matter of course that the system of thought and life taught in the Bible is valid and worthy of all acceptation. Not only that but we hold this system of thought and life is capable of defense in the forum of the world's thought and that it is the duty of Christian scholars and thinkers to organize not only its defense but its attack as over against that energy of thought and fertility of assault which characterizes the world in its anti-Christian manifestations. The editors of this paper have no sympathy with those who decry controversy as useless or even as wrong and un-Christian. It passes our comprehension how any intelligent Christian can decry controversy in view of the fact that Christ and His apostles were controversialists, that practically every book of the New Testament was born out of controversy, and that through all the Christian ages, in every period of crisis, it has been not theological pacifists but sturdy contenders for the faith who in the providence of God have saved the day. To controversy for its own sake we are wholly averse but in days like these when Christianity is everywhere spoken against, both as a system of thought and as a way of life, it seems to us little short of sheer unfaithfulness to Christ Himself for the Christian scholar and thinker to decline to enter the lists in defense of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. While then the primary purpose of this paper will be to state and expound the Christian

religion as a system of thought and a way of life yet it will not neglect the task of defending what it regards as genuine Christianity against all who oppose it whether within or without the church.

But while we hope to be of service in promoting a better understanding of what Christianity really is, and in defending it against attack whether by open enemies or alleged friends, yet we will fail of our main objective if we do not prove instrumental in furthering its interests at home and abroad. Our exposition and defense of Christianity will never be an end in itself but always for the sake of strengthening and confirming the faith of Christian believers and of leading others to a like faith. We expect to exhibit a zeal for the facts and doctrines of Christianity but this will be done not in the interests of a sterile intellectualism but in the interests of the Christian life itself. The contrast expressed in the widely current saying, "Christianity is life not doctrine," we regard for instance as false and misleading. We believe as fully as any that Christianity is a life and that a knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, no matter how correct, profits only those in whom it issues in a Christian life. Doctrines are not life. Certainly not. It does not follow, however, that they are not indispensable to life. Doctrines are not the cause of life. Nobody ever said they were. It does not follow, however, that they are not an essential condition of life. As a matter of fact Christianity is both life and doctrine—but the life is the expression of the doctrine, not the doctrine the expression of the life.

With this preliminary statement of our aim and purpose we begin the publication of this paper. We are acutely conscious of our insufficiency for the task and not without fears lest the inadequacy of our statement and defense of Christianity—whether as a system of thought or a way of life—may conceal rather than reveal to our readers the real strength and beauty of the Christian religion and its ability to satisfy both the minds and the hearts of men. However it seems to us that there is a real need of the kind of paper that CHRISTIANITY TODAY would fain be and so we have undertaken the task in dependence on God and with the prayer that our efforts may be blessed of Him.

Christianity as It Was and Is

THE religion we profess is a religion of the present as well as of the past. This finds its explanation most of all in the fact that the object of our faith as Christians is JESUS CHRIST as He exists today. Suppose it were true that JESUS is merely one of those "dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule our spirits from their urns"—one who lived and worked in the past but not one who also lives and works in the present. Then Christianity would be little more than an exaggerated form of hero worship. Then we might know of a JESUS of history but we could know nothing of a JESUS of experience. How cold, how lifeless the Christian religion would be were it not for the fact that CHRIST is one who can say: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore." The secret of Christianity's progress in the world, of the hold it has on the hearts of men, of our assurance for its future, lies in the fact that it points men to a living LORD and SAVIOUR, to whom they can pray, in whom they can put their trust, from whom they can obtain power, upon whom they can build their confidence not only for time but for eternity.

The fact that the object of our faith is CHRIST as He exists today does not lead us to underestimate the value of the Biblical record of His earthly, historical life. In fact it is only in the Scriptures that we can obtain dependable knowledge of the living CHRIST. Apart from that source of knowledge we have no assurance that the CHRIST with whom we hold communion is the CHRIST of reality. What is more, apart from His earthly, historical life the CHRIST as He exists today would have little or no significance for us. The life He lived on earth, more especially the death that He died, were prerequisites to the functions He now performs. That He is qualified to bestow upon us the forgiveness of our sins, and grant unto us an inheritance among those who are sanctified through faith in Him, is due to what He experienced on earth. It should never be forgotten that the object of Christian faith is CHRIST "in the garments of Sacred Scriptures" or as the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Standards puts it, CHRIST "as He is offered to us in the gospel."

That we can have knowledge of CHRIST as He exists today by reading a book whose final pages were written nearly nineteen centuries ago finds its explanation in the fact that "JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever." We are conscious of ourselves as changing with the passing years. These changes are not merely physical. They are moral and intellectual and spiritual as well. We think differently and we act differently than we once did. Our loves and our hates and our admirations are other than they once were. Suppose that JESUS CHRIST though alive were subject to change like the rest of us. Then that ancient book might tell us of what He was like some nineteen hundred years ago, but it would give us no assured knowledge of what He is like today. What we want to know, however, and must know, if CHRIST is to have any large significance for us, is what He is like today, most of all whether He is still the same strong SON OF GOD who can save sinners, that One upon whom we can safely venture our all—whether for this life or the life to come.

Other biographies tell us of what men were once like but they give us no assured knowledge of what they are like today. The Gospels however—and here we touch on that which separates them from all other biographies—tell us not only of what JESUS CHRIST was like some nineteen hundred years ago, they tell us of what He is like today. This makes the Gospels the most up to date of all books. They have to do not merely with a great historical figure in the past; they have to do with the person of the hour, with Him who is today exerting a greater and more direct influence over the thoughts and lives of men than any other. In fact not only the Gospels but all the books of the NEW TESTAMENT were written by those who were firmly convinced of the continued existence of JESUS CHRIST as an ever-present reality who would abide the same through every change and chance of time. They never represent JESUS CHRIST merely as a great and noble man who lived and died and left behind Him the aroma of a useful and beautiful life and who set in motion influences whose energies had not yet been exhausted. For them even more fully than preceding His death CHRIST was not an

inert but an active being. The value of the NEW TESTAMENT can be appreciated aright only as it is recognized that it tells us not only of what JESUS was but of what He is, not only of how He thought and felt nineteen hundred years ago but of how He thinks and feels today, not only of the power He wielded in the first century but of the power He wields in the twentieth century and which He will continue to wield until the end of time.

If the object of our faith as Christians is JESUS CHRIST as He exists today, and if JESUS CHRIST as He exists today is in all essentials the same JESUS CHRIST of whom we learn in the NEW TESTAMENT, the conclusion is inescapable that genuine Christianity is essentially one with the Christianity of the NEW TESTAMENT. It is true that much of what is called Christianity today exhibits no real resemblance to the Christianity of the NEW TESTAMENT but that merely advertises the fact that much of what is called Christianity today is falsely so called. Few things are more needed at the present time than the making clear of just what Christianity is in a way that will enable the man in the street to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit article. Just now we are merely concerned to point out that because JESUS CHRIST, who stands at the center of Christianity and makes it what it is, abides the same as age succeeds age the Christianity of today, in as far as it is genuine, is essentially one with the Christianity of the NEW TESTAMENT.

To perceive that CHRIST as He exists today is an active not an inert CHRIST is to perceive that Christianity is more than a system of thought and life, that it is also a divine dynamic that is destined to turn and overturn until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord. At a time when Christianity is being everywhere spoken against both as a system of thought and a way of life, especially in academic circles, we need to realize for our heartening and encouragement that the conflict for and against Christianity is not merely an intellectual struggle between two life and world views. If that were the whole of it we would have no confidence in the ultimate triumph of Christianity. This is not to admit that intellectually the Christian occupies the less defensible position. Far from it. It is merely to recognize that

Christianity must make its appeal to sinners, to those who are prejudiced against it both as a system of thought and a way of life, and that here in a marked degree the proverb holds good that "men convinced against their will remain of the same opinion still." We need to keep clearly in mind, therefore, that while Christianity is, or at least involves, a specific way of thinking and living yet that it is at the same time infinitely more than this. Those who think of Christianity as merely one life and world view among others do not reckon with the risen and glorified and ever-present CHRIST. They think of Him merely as one who was, not of Him as one who also is and who through all the world's changes continued to work as only God can work. JESUS CHRIST being what He is, we are persuaded that Christianity will yet, despite all opposition, make its way to victory. We do not pretend to say what the immediate future has in store for Christians. It may be that the love of more and more will wax cold. It may be that the Church is facing persecutions worse than those of the early centuries. But of this we are sure that JESUS CHRIST being what He is His cause will ultimately triumph. In CHRIST Himself lies our final assurance that the future belongs to Christianity. Under His leadership we face a certain though by no means easy victory.

A Statement and an Appeal

CHRISTIANITY TODAY will not be operated for profit but wholly in the interest of a great cause. Its origin has been made possible by the contributions of a small number of individuals. If, however, the paper is to continue to exist, and more especially if it is to realize its aims and purposes in any large way, it must have the aid and cooperation of a large number of like-minded persons. We begin with no list of subscribers and can hope to secure any considerable number of subscribers only as those who sympathize with this venture of faith interest themselves in its behalf.

This they can do: (1) by subscribing themselves; (2) by subscribing for or inducing others to subscribe; (3) by sending us the names of those who they believe would be interested; and (4) by con-

tributing, as the Lord has prospered them and as He leads them, to the financial needs of the paper. We can offer no financial or other inducements to secure this service save the sake of the cause we seek to further. We have fixed the price of the paper at one dollar a year so as to bring it within reach of all. As soon as the size of our subscription list, or the amount of the contributions received, justifies it, we will either increase the size of the paper or issue it as a fortnightly. If every one to whom we are privileged to send this first issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY would send his own and two other subscriptions—many we are sure will send a much larger number—this paper would at once become second to no other paper in the world as an available instrument for expounding and defending the Gospel of the grace of God. We earnestly solicit the help of all who approve its aim and purpose in bringing it to the attention of men everywhere. If we may do so without being suspected of cant, we ask the prayers of all those who love the LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity and in truth, in behalf of CHRISTIANITY TODAY and the cause for which it stands.

A Word of Explanation

WHILE this first issue fairly indicates the sort of paper CHRISTIANITY TODAY expects to be, yet because of certain practical considerations we have been compelled to curtail certain features and to omit altogether at least one feature that we anticipate will prove especially valuable to our readers.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY to a larger extent than this number might indicate expects to be a news journal. It does not indeed expect to concern itself with news of purely local interest, but as far as matters of interest to the church at large is concerned it hopes to keep its readers fully informed in a fresh and unbiased manner. With the help of all available sources of information, including its own correspondents at home and abroad, it plans to report all events and movements throughout the world that have any significant bearing upon the fortunes of Christianity in the modern world.

The feature which in the nature of the case could not be included in this issue may be tentatively designated as "Ques-

tions Relative to Christian Faith and Practice." In answering any questions that may be submitted to them by readers, the editors of CHRISTIANITY TODAY will have the assistance of a number of leading experts, including some of the members of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, and so hope to be able to give more or less authoritative answers to the questions that may be asked them. The editors will necessarily have to be the judges as to the relevancy and importance of the questions submitted but at any rate they will not pronounce them irrelevant and unimportant merely because they are difficult or divisive.

It will be noted that this issue contains no advertisements. While we recognize that advertisements are often valuable to the reader, we believe that the advantages to be derived from them are more than offset by their disadvantages. A non-advertising policy not only leaves all possible space available for advancing the purpose for which the paper exists, it saves its editors from the embarrassing entanglements which are more or less inevitable in dealing with modern advertising. We hope to continue this policy but our ability to do this will depend largely upon the willingness of friends to supply the needed additional support.

The Managing Editor

THE Rev. H. McAllister Griffiths is a native of San Francisco, California. He received his secondary education in the schools of Berkeley, California, and is a graduate of the University of California, where he majored in Law and Military Science. He studied Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary, and Philosophy in the Graduate School of Princeton University. For a year we was an assistant editor of *The Sunday School Times*. In 1925 he was ordained to the ministry by the Presbytery of Cape Breton of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was Minister of the historic congregation of Scotsburn, Pictou County, Nova Scotia, from 1926 to 1930. He has become well-known in the United States and Canada as a preacher and writer. He is now a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.