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# CHRISTIANITY TODAY



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

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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

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power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." (John 10:18.) His ascension shows that He lives as our high priest. God's Word makes clear that if any preach any other gospel than the doctrine of Christ which Paul and all other Apostles preached, they are accursed, fallen from grace, not from God, whose ways are evil. If any receive them into their house or bid them God-speed he is a partaker of their evil deeds.

B. E. JACOBS.

Albany, Ore.

### "Signs of the Times"

To the Editor of CHRISTIANITY TODAY:

SIR: Such is the condition of the world today, nationally, politically, morally, religiously and spiritually, that the absorbing question on the lips of every one you meet is, "What is the matter of the world?" I am enclosing an address by Judge Akerman, of Tampa, Florida, Judge of the United States District Court, delivered before the Rotary Club of Lakeland, Florida, on the subject, "The Signs of the Times." The address is so striking in the portrayal of world conditions, that I feel that it should have a wider hearing. Hence I am commending it to the readers of CHRISTIANITY TODAY. But before reading the address, and fully to appreciate its significance, the 24th chapter of Matthew, the 21st chapter of Luke and the 3rd and 4th chapters of 2 Timothy should be read. In answer to the question by His disciples, Christ gave "the signs of His coming and the end of the world." And then He said, "Learn a parable of the fig tree. When the branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door." And then he said "Watch." To fail to watch for these signs, indicates a want of interest or confidence in Christ's words!

Having read the signs given by Christ and Paul, you will be able to see the correspondence in the signs given by the Judge, and the signs given by Christ. The special importance that attaches to the Judge's deliverance on this subject, is that it is not by a preacher or even a Christian, but by one who disavows any interest in Christianity or its creeds—by a man of the world. There certainly is a responsibility and personal interest for every one to watch.

Excerpts from the address follow:

"In a time of peace," he said, "millions out of employment, large percentages of whom, with their dependents, are on the verge of starvation; manufacture is at a standstill; business is bankrupt; nations, states, counties, districts, municipalities and individuals are attempting to repudiate just debts; taxation in our country and all of its

political divisions is exorbitant; crime, corruption and graft are rampant; respect for law, order and decency are at a low ebb, and communism is spreading at a rate that those of us who are in the best position to know dare not admit even to ourselves.

"If I were asked to name the causes for all of this, the answer would be short and simple. Too much legislation; government in business; paternalism; extravagance, public and private; loss of respect for law and public officials; failure of courts, prosecuting officers and jurors to discharge their duties fully; the breakdown in the American home, and the departure from the religion of our fathers.

"Our governments, national, state and municipal, have regulated business, in many instances unwisely and unjustly until it has been almost regulated out of business.

"My old-fashioned idea of a home is a place where a tired man returns at night as a haven of rest; there the dear mother gathers her brood and teaches them principles of honesty, integrity and respect for law, order, decency and for the rights of others; a place to which the young men and women, as they go out in the world will always look back as sacred. Now in a mild way it has been turned into a bar-room and gambling den, and the children regard it as a sleeping car to crawl into in the early hours of the morning.

"I am not a church man and care very

little for creeds and dogmas, but history teaches that a nation without some religion is without patriotism and a nation without patriotism is doomed.

"Congress met last December and has remained in session until now, and most of the time has been taken up jockeying for political position. At the end of the last fiscal year, the national budget was two billions of dollars out of balance. Congress by a niggardly spirit of economy, and by taxing everything except the air we breathe, claimed to have balanced the budget, and then proceeded to provide for expenditures which would again throw it more than two billions out of balance.

"Our last legislature, elected on a platform of economy, after the regular session and two extra sessions, adjourned, after having appropriated more money than ever in the history of the state, and having added many new taxes including an additional automobile and gasoline tax.

"I have listened in on the two great political conventions and have read the long platform of the republicans and the short platform of the democrats and again I can see nothing constructive, but only a play for political position. In fact the only thing I got out of these conventions was that when I observed the antics of the women delegates, I became a thorough convert to the repeal of the 19th amendment."

E. E. BIGGER.

Clearwater, Fla.

## "Perfectionism"—A Book Review

PERFECTION by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield. Oxford University Press. Two volumes, pp. 399 and 611. \$3.50 per volume.

THE great interest that Dr. Warfield took in Perfectionism is indicated by the fact that it has required two large volumes to reprint his contributions to an understanding of this subject. It goes without saying that what he has written in this connection should not be ignored by any one interested in a movement that has played and continues to play an important role in the drama of Protestantism.

The first of these volumes is particularly concerned with Perfectionism as it has manifested itself in Germany. Here we have not only an account and explanation of the "Higher Life" Movement as it has appeared in the churches of Germany but an extended account of the assault on the Reformation doctrine of sin and grace made by Rationalist scholars like Ritschl, Wernle, Clemen, Pfeleiderer, and Windsch. The second concerns itself more particularly with Perfectionism

as it has found expression in these United States. Here we have not only an extended account and running criticism of "Oberlin Perfectionism" (Pres. Mahan and Charles G. Finney), of "John Humphrey Noyes and His 'Bible Communists,'" and of "The Mystical Perfectionism of Thomas Cogswell Upham," but of "The Higher Life Movement" (W. E. Boardman, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pearsall Smith) and "The Victorious Life Movement" (Charles G. Trumbull). While there is no independent treatment of the "Keswick Movement" there is frequent reference to it, Dr. Warfield apparently regarding it as the least objectionable of the Perfectionist movements.

According to Dr. Warfield the immediate source of most of the Perfectionism of modern Protestantism is to be found in the teaching of John Wesley, particularly in his teaching that justification and sanctification are two separate gifts of God to be separately obtained by separate acts of faith. He points out, however, that Perfectionist tendencies have appeared "constantly along the courses of two fundamental streams of

thought. Wherever Mysticism intrudes, it carries a tendency to Perfectionism with it. On Mystical ground—as, for example, among the Quakers—a Perfectionism has been developed to which that taught by Wesley shows such similarity, even in details and modes of expression, that a mistaken attempt has been made to discover an immediate genetic connection between them. Wherever again men lapse into an essentially Pelagian mode of thinking concerning the endowments of human nature and the conditions of human action, a Perfectionism similar to that taught by Pelagius himself tends to repeat itself. That is to say, history verifies the correlation of Perfectionism and Libertarianism, and wherever Libertarianism rules the thoughts of men, Perfectionism persistently makes its appearance. It is to this stream of influence that Wesleyan Perfectionism owes its origin. Its roots are set historically in the Semi-Pelagian Perfectionism of the Dutch Remonstrants. . . . Its particular differentiation is determined by the supernaturalism which it shares with the whole body of modifications introduced by Wesley into his fundamental Arminianism, from which Wesleyanism has acquired its Evangelical character" (Vol. I, p. 3; Vol. II, pp. 463 and 562).

Dr. Warfield maintains that Perfectionism in all its forms involves a rejection of the type of Christianity taught and exemplified by the Reformers and imbedded in the doctrinal formularies of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. "It belongs to the very essence of the type of Christianity propagated by the Reformation," he writes, "that the believer should feel himself continuously unworthy of the grace by which he lives. At the center of this type of Christianity lies the contrast of sin and grace; and about this center everything else revolves. This is in large part the meaning of the emphasis put on justification by faith in this type of Christianity. It is its conviction that there is nothing in us or done by us, at any stage of our earthly development, because of which we are acceptable to God. We must always be accepted for Christ's sake, or we cannot ever be accepted at all. This is not true of us only 'when we believe.' It is just as true after we have believed. It will continue to be true as long as we live. Our need of Christ does not cease with our believing; nor does the nature of our relation to Him or to God through Him ever alter, no matter what our attainments in Christian graces or our achievements in Christian behaviour may be. It is always on His 'blood and righteousness' alone that we can rest. There is never anything that we are or have or do that can take His place, or that can take a place along with Him. We are always unworthy, and all that we have or do of good is always of pure grace. Though blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens lies in Christ, we are still just 'miserable sinners'; 'miserable sinners' saved by grace

to be sure, but 'miserable sinners' still, deserving nothing but everlasting wrath. That is the attitude which the Reformers took, and that is the attitude which the Protestant world has learned from the Reformers to take, toward the relation of believers to Christ" (Vol. I, p. 113).

Pelagian Perfectionism involves so thorough-going a rejection of the Scriptural doctrines of sin and grace that it has found little advocacy in professedly Christian circles apart from the rationalistic scholars of Germany and their followers in England and America. Wesleyan Perfectionism, however, has not only characterized Methodist teaching but has exerted a large influence in non-Methodist circles. In fact, as already intimated, most of the Perfectionism of modern times grows out of or at least is intimately bound up with the Wesleyan teaching that justification and sanctification are two distinct experiences that are attained by two distinct acts of faith. According to this view we are freed from the guilt of sin by one act of faith and from the power of sin by another act of faith. Hence it is held that sanctification is as immediate as justification. This carries with it the notion that a man may be justified without being in any degree sanctified. It is to be noticed that while this view has much to say of the guilt and power of sin it is strangely silent concerning sin as pollution and corruption. "As wave after wave of the 'holiness movement' has broken over us during the past century," writes Dr. Warfield, "each has brought something distinctive of itself. But a common fundamental character has informed them all, and this common fundamental character has been communicated to them by the Wesleyan doctrine. The essential elements of that doctrine repeat themselves in all these movements, and form their characteristic features. In all of them alike justification and sanctification are divided from one another as two separate gifts of God. In all of them alike sanctification is represented as obtained, just like justification, by an act of simple faith, but not by the same act of faith by which justification is obtained, but by a new and separate act of faith, exercised for this specific purpose. In all of them alike the sanctification which comes from this act of faith, comes immediately on believing, and all at once, and in all of them alike this sanctification, thus received, is complete sanctification. In all of them alike, however, it is to be added, this complete sanctification does not bring complete freedom from all sin; but only, say, from sinning; or freedom from conscious sinning; or from the commission of 'known sins.' And in all of them alike, moreover, this sanctification is not a stable condition into which we enter once for all by faith, but a momentary attainment, which must be maintained moment by moment, and which may readily be lost and is often lost, but may also be repeatedly in-

stantaneously recovered" (Vol. II, p. 563).

It is obvious that in as far as Dr. Warfield's account is correct most Perfectionism stands or falls with the validity of this teaching as to justification and sanctification. Dr. Warfield maintains, rightly we believe, that such teaching is contrary to the New Testament. "According to New Testament teaching," he writes, "sanctification is not related to faith directly and immediately, so that in believing in Jesus we receive both justification and sanctification as parallel products of our faith; or either the one or the other, according as our faith is directed to the one or the other. Sanctification is related directly not to faith but to justification; and as faith is the instrumental cause of justification, so is justification the instrumental cause of sanctification. The *vinculum* which binds justification and sanctification together is not that they are both alike effects of faith—so that he who believes must have both—because faith is the *præ* of both alike. Nor is it even that both are obtained in Christ, so that he who has Christ who is made to us both righteousness and sanctification, must have both because Christ is the common source of both. It is true that he who has faith has and must have both; and it is true that he who has Christ has and must have both. But they do not come out of faith or from Christ in the same way. Justification comes through faith; sanctification through justification, and only mediately through faith. So that the order is invariable, faith, justification, sanctification; not arbitrarily but in the nature of the case" (Vol. I, p. 363).

Dr. Warfield of course is a "Perfectionist" in the sense that he holds that Christ saves to the "utmost" and hence that ultimately believers will be completely sanctified. He maintains, however, that God sanctifies the sinner not immediately but by process and that this process is never completed in this life. "The power of Christ to save to the utmost," he writes, "is the foundation of all our hope, and every one who believes in Him commits himself to Him for this and nothing less; we do, all of us, expect to receive and do receive it all, without limitation and without diminution, and in this expectation, sure and steadfast, lies all our comfort and all our joy. But the revelation of it (i. e. of salvation to the utmost) would not need to be made to us—we would not need to be told of it—if it were a present experience, not a matter of hope. Nor would the revelation made in this great declaration be true, if the measure of salvation we have already received were all we are to expect, if a complete salvation of soul and body were not the portion of His saints. And certainly it would not be true if even the measure of salvation we have already received from Him were unstable or liable to be lost tomorrow, its maintenance depending not on Him but on us. The whole force of the declaration hangs precisely upon

our being as yet *viatores* not *consummatores*; exactly what it does is to give us assurance of the consummation. The state of that Christian is sad indeed who must believe that what he is already is the uttermost which Christ is able to do for him, and that henceforth he must depend on himself" (Vol. II, p. 517).

Dr. Warfield holds that it is a very imperfect perfection that the Perfectionists advocate. At the best it is an absence of conscious or known sins rather than an inner purity of character. In other words it stresses freedom from the guilt and power of sin but deals lightly with the pollution and corruption of sin. What is more, he shows that an antinomian tendency has dogged the footsteps of all forms of Perfectionism. He does not of course maintain that all or even that many "Perfectionists" are antinomians, true as it is that he holds that "Perfectionism is impossible in the presence of a deep sense or a profound conception of sin."

Dr. Warfield also points out that at the root of most Perfectionism is a Pelagian conception of the will that leads its advocates to suspend sanctification in the last analysis on what man does rather than on what God does (Vol. II, pp. 533, 539, 578, 602). Nothing is more certain, however, than that according to the Scriptures salvation is in the last analysis all of God, nothing of ourselves. The doctrine of the autocracy of the human will cannot be reconciled with the Biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God. It is primary Christian teaching to which Dr. Warfield gives expression when he writes: "It is not true that 'God can save no man unless that man does his part toward salvation.' Man has no part to do toward salvation; and, if he had, he could not do it—his very character as a sinner is that he is helpless, that he is 'lost.' He is very active indeed in the process of his salvation, for this activity is of the substance of his salvation: he works out his own salvation, but only as God works in him the willing and the doing according to His good pleasure. It is not true that 'God forces salvation on on man.' It would be truer to say that no man is saved on whom God does not force salvation—though the language would not be exact. It is not true that the 'eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' which is the 'free gift of God' is merely put at our option and 'our wills are free' to accept or reject it. Our wills are free enough, but they are hopelessly biased to its rejection and will certainly reject it so long as it is only an 'offer.' But it is not true that God's free gift of eternal life to His people is only an 'offer': it is a 'gift'—and what God gives He does not merely place at our disposal to be accepted or rejected as we may chance to choose, but 'gives,' makes ours, as He gave life to Lazarus and wholeness to the man with the withered hand. It was not

in the power of Lazarus to reject—it was not in his power to accept—the gift of life which Christ gave him; nor is it in the power of dead souls to reject life—or to 'accept' it—when God 'gives' it to them. The God in whom we trust is a God who quickens the dead and commands the things that are not as though they were" (Vol. II, p. 604).

We have quoted at some length from these

volumes as it is safe to assume that they will not be available to most of our readers. We trust, however, that these citations will so whet the appetites of at least our ministerial readers that they will not rest until they have read the volumes as a whole. Both historically and doctrinally they are of first importance in any study of Perfectionism as it has appeared in modern Protestantism.

S. G. C.

## News of the Church

### Westminster Seminary Opens with Record Enrollment

THE opening exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary were held on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 28th, in Witherspoon Hall, Philadelphia. The fourth year of the Seminary's history was begun auspiciously before a large gathering of people from Philadelphia and vicinity. The Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D., Litt.D., chairman of the Faculty, presided. (The Seminary follows the old Princeton tradition of having no "President"—a tradition broken at Princeton with the appointment of J. Ross Stevenson to that office.)

After the hearty singing of the Long Metre Doxology, the Invocation was offered by the Rev. Joseph Taylor Britan, D.D., well known minister who is chaplain of the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia. Then was sung the old Scottish Paraphrase beginning

Supreme in wisdom as in power  
The Rock of Ages stands;  
Though Him thou canst not see or trace  
The working of His hands.

The Scripture Lesson, Ecclesiastes 1:1-11, was read by the Rev. Ralph E. Wallis, widely and favorably known as the active pastor of Philadelphia's Oxford Presbyterian Church. Prayer was then offered by the Rev. Burleigh Cruikshank, D.D., pastor of the great St. Paul Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and Moderator of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The greeting to the entering students was given by Dr. Machen. Already this feature of the opening is becoming a tradition. In words that were simple, yet pulsing with the eloquent passion of a great conviction, Dr. Machen outlined to the entrants the kind of fellowship to which he welcomed them. He began by saying that it was a pleasure to welcome so many alumni to the exercises. Although the Seminary was only three years old it already possessed an active and flourishing alumni society. He rejoiced also in the fellowship of Christian friends of Philadelphia and vicinity, for all were united by a common desire that men should be sent out to preach the pure gospel. Then,

turning to the new students, he said that the faculty rejoiced to welcome the largest class by a considerable margin that had yet come to the Seminary. But he rejoiced still more in the conviction that they had entered in the sincere desire (1) to acquaint themselves with the Word of God, and (2) to proclaim it. There is always the danger that men will come to a theological seminary as to any graduate school,—simply following the line of least resistance, and entering the ministry as one of a number of possible professions. Westminster, he thought, was as free of this attitude as any institution in the world, because it is plain that students desiring "preferment" will not come to a seminary whose very existence is evidence of its struggle against the temper of the age and of the visible church.

There were some things, he continued, that the Seminary could not offer. The new students had discovered before this that the campus was rudimentary. But the students would be received into the warmest possible friendship. The speaker had had other academic experiences, in various parts of the world, but never had he shared such a warm experience as since the founding of Westminster. During that time he could say sincerely that he had learned more from his students, then he could have taught them—for they had come with a different purpose and ambition than students of other seminaries. The welcome, then, was to

(1) *A Fellowship of Testimony.* The fact of their entering Westminster Seminary is itself a testimony,—a protest against the current in the church and in favor of the great doctrines of the Word.

(2) *A Fellowship of Prayer.* All labor, study, or efforts of any kind were vain unless they had the blessing of Almighty God. That blessing comes to those who pray for it. From the beginning, and always, students and faculty should be united in a great bond of prevailing prayer. Nothing could take its place.

(3) *A Fellowship of Labor.* Young men had come to this Seminary because they wanted to learn in an institution whose re-