

F. S. DYNNESS
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Fourth Anniversary Number

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



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

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Published monthly by
THE PRESBYTERIAN AND
REFORMED PUBLISHING CO., Inc.
501 Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., Pa.

MID-MAY, 1934
Vol. 5 No. 1

\$1.00 A YEAR EVERYWHERE
Entered as second-class matter May 11, 1931, at
the Post Office at Philadelphia, Pa., under the
Act of March 3, 1879.

The Question of the Hour: An Editorial



MORE than once in the history of nations and churches, issues in themselves important have suddenly and dramatically given rise to other issues of such tremendous moment, that the new have come to overshadow the old. That is happening now in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The issue concerning Foreign Missions is a great issue—let no mistake be made about that. Yet, it is the evident intention of the bureaucracy now dominating the machinery of the Church to compel support of the official Board of Foreign Missions and to use force against those who have established an Independent Board. Thus a new issue, that of Christian liberty, has arisen. And with it the Church must now answer a question which will determine her future.

The question is simply this: Who is to be the master of the conscience of the Christian man? God or men? When a minister stands up in the pulpit, whose minister is he to be—the minister of men or a minister of Christ? To whom does the minister go for his authority? The moment you make a man pledge to support a board or agency—any board or agency, no matter how good it is now—whatever its policies may become in the future (on the plea of loyalty or any other plea), that moment you have created a slave—a man who cannot call his soul his own. For this man's conscience has abdicated in favor of the consciences of other men. The ordination vows of a minister do not pledge support to the future policies of successive General Assemblies, much less the policies of the Boards, the creatures of those Assemblies. To ask a man who has sincerely taken his ordination vows, who is completely loyal to the Bible and the constitution of the Church, to pledge support to an agency that he himself believes not to be loyal to the Word of God, is to ask a fearful and a monstrous thing. This is true even if the man is mistaken. The instant that the Presbyterian Church (or any other church) decrees that the Christian conscience must be bound by boards, agencies, courts of the Church, or any thing beside the Word of God, then that Church ceases to be an abode of free men, ceases to be a truly Protestant Church. And no matter how vigorous or large such a church may seem now, if it sets up its own authority as binding on men's consciences in the place of the Word of God, it will surely die as a Church of Christ.

All these things ought to be recognized not only by those who do not have confidence in the Board of Foreign Missions, but also by those who do. They should see clearly, looking down the corridors of the years to be, that if they introduce the principle of compulsion in support and giving, in order to meet

the challenge of a temporary emergency, they will be cutting the very spinal cord of missionary and benevolent giving. The Presbyterian Church has behind it a great record as a truly liberal church. By whom was that record made? By slaves who toiled at the crack of the taskmaster's whip? No—it was made by the voluntary, free outpouring of gifts of the plain man and woman—men and women whose hearts were inflamed with love for Christ and those for whom He died. Nothing less than this motive will maintain a great volume of gifts over a period of years. And if Christian people do not believe that any particular agency will spend their money in the way they want it spent, the remedy is not to threaten and coerce these donors, but to see to it that the agency involved is so reformed and so administered that the question of confidence need never again be raised.

These are the counsels of prudence and foresightedness, which the General Assembly of 1934 would be well advised to consider. Doubtless other counsels will be urged upon the commissioners. They will be told that loyalty to the Church and its law demands the suppression of those who believe the whole policy of the Board of Foreign Missions to be not loyal to the Word of God, and who have, whether wisely or unwisely, yet clearly within their constitutional rights, established their own voluntary, independent agency. The commissioners should resolutely refuse to be stampeded by the excitement of the moment or by the misdirected zeal of those who think they do God's service in making support of the agencies of the Church a matter of compulsion and not of free will. If they are so stampeded in their anxiety to save a Board they may succeed in wrecking and disrupting a whole Church. For there are hosts of persons in the Church who, while they may not as yet be concerned about the Independent Board, will rise in indignation to fight for their liberties if short-sighted counsels prevail, if in the hysteria of an hour, the General Assembly sets itself up as an authority to bind men's consciences, coordinate with the Word of God. No Christian but wants Christ in His Word to be the master of his conscience; no Christian truly aware of what Christian liberty means, but will resist to the death any attempt to make the will of other men the master of his conscience. Let the commissioners ponder carefully the great pronouncement of the Westminster Divines as to liberty, and as they read, let them remember that these words, in Chapter XX of the Confession of Faith, and not Assembly deliverances, are the law of the Church: "God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey

such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."

Is Jesus Christ still to be the only Head and King of this Presbyterian Church?

OUR FIFTH YEAR



WITH this issue CHRISTIANITY TODAY enters upon its fifth year. We have been grateful for the many expressions of appreciation we have received from our friends, though we have been conscious that they have often been more flattering than our merits warrant. We have also been greatly gratified by the fact that even our enemies have acknowledged that the paper is "ably edited" and that it manifests "great ability and vitality," though they have intimated at times that our zeal and ability might be better employed. We feel as strongly as we ever did that there is need of such a paper and we shall endeavor to make it more and more worthy of the cause it seeks to further. We always like to receive suggestions looking to its improvement, even though it is not always possible to adopt them. Indirectly, if not directly, they have done much to shape our course. A number have suggested that we renew our "Question and Answer" department. We would like to know whether others approve this suggestion. We are glad to be able to say that our list of subscribers has increased during the past year. This has been largely due to the fact that our subscribers have commended the paper to others. We trust they will continue to do so. For only as they do so can we hope to go from strength to strength.

CLERK AS JUDGE AND JURY



THE Form of Government makes it mandatory that each judicatory choose a clerk whose duty it shall also be to preserve the records carefully and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required (Chapter XX).

The clerk chosen by the General Assembly in accordance with that provision is apparently of the opinion that his duties are much more extensive than the Form of Government indicates. It would seem, in fact, that he thinks he has been authorized not only to record the "transactions" of the General Assembly but to interpret them—the word "transactions" being taken so broadly as to include the constitution of the Church as it is or as it may be altered or amended by the presbyteries. What is more, he seems to be of the opinion that it is his duty to speak with authority to ministers and elders as to their fiduciary obligations relative to any and all funds that may be collected in Presbyterian churches.

Evidence of the above is afforded by letters which the present clerk of the Assembly recently wrote to the members of the presbyteries of Baltimore and Lackawanna affirming that the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions is illegal and unconstitutional, that "any minister or ruling elder who gives his official sanction or support to this Board is disloyal to his ordination vows," that presbyteries should neither license or ordain students from Westminster Seminary "until they have given a written pledge that they will support the official agencies of the Church as a part of their pledge of loyalty to the government and discipline of the Church," and that it is a "diversion of funds" for any session or society connected with any church, Presbytery or Synod "to take offerings for or vote money to the so-called Independent Board."

It would be interesting to know just where or how DR. MUDGE got such a conception of his duties. Possibly he has been reading about HITLER and other modern dictators and has been led to conceive of his duties after their manner. Be that as it may, he has no more authority to interpret the Constitution

of the Church and the transactions of the General Assembly than has any other minister or any elder. Whether or no DR. MUDGE is aware of it, the parity of the ministry is a basic principle of the Presbyterian form of government. DR. MUDGE, of course, has the same right to his opinion as to the meaning and binding force of the Constitution and the deliverances of the General Assembly as any other minister, but no more *authority* attaches to his pronouncements than attaches to the opinion of the youngest or least known minister in the Church. DR. MUDGE is not lacking in ability as a clerk, but as judge and jury we see little about him to commend. We would suggest that he confine himself to the duties that have been assigned him by the Assembly.

THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY



THE organization in Seattle, Washington, of the "Christian Assembly" by a group of earnest and able laymen is, in the estimation of the editors, exceedingly significant. Without prior consultation with conservative groups elsewhere, this band of believers has issued a trumpet blast for the faith. It will be found elsewhere in this issue. It is hoped that chapters of the Christian Assembly will be organized from coast to coast. Perhaps the ministers of the Church, who, as a body, have been ecclesiastically complacent in the face of growing unbelief, are about to find lay people assuming the leadership in the battle. The launching of the Christian Assembly is, we repeat, an encouraging and significant event.

MODERATORS



THE usual pre-Assembly maneuvering for position on the part of those with avowed or latent ambitions to be Moderator is under way. Just now two names are most prominently mentioned. DR. HERBERT BOOTH SMITH of Los Angeles has been reported as waging his own campaign personally, and with great vigor. DR. WILLIAM CHALMERS COVERT, retiring General Secretary of the Board of Christian Education, has been nominated by his Presbytery, Chicago, and would doubtless feel the honor to be a fitting one. Other commissioners to the Assembly will be waiting patiently to see if the call will come to them. DR. WILLIAM HIRAM FOULKES, of Newark, N. J., sometimes described as a hardy perennial among candidates, will be there, as well as RULING ELDER JOHN H. FINLEY of the *New York Times*, rumored as the possible nominee of the New York group. Others will no doubt be mentioned. There are plenty of strong, evangelical, faithful pastors who might be nominated, who would be entirely free from any connection with the Boards. It is about time for the Presbyterian Church to recognize the forgotten man and, in a practical way, reaffirm her belief in the parity of the clergy.

THE PLIGHT OF THE BOARDS



DMITTEDLY the Boards of the Church—at least apart from the Board of Pensions—are in a bad way. Naturally those more immediately responsible for their administration are ready with explanations of the existing situation. There is truth of course in the statement that shrinkage of gifts has been due to business conditions. That, however, is by no means the whole story. It is even more true, in our opinion, that the Boards themselves are to blame.

In the first place, the Boards have not confined themselves to the tasks assigned them. Instead of looking upon themselves as the servants of the Church they have sought to play the part of its masters. Take, for instance, the matter of the re-organization of Princeton Seminary when that matter was agitating the Church a few years ago. It will hardly be denied that the

Boards, indirectly if not directly, threw their influence in favor of the reorganization. In fact unless the Boards—men like ROBERT E. SPEER and JOHN MCDOWELL in the van—had thrown their influence in favor of the reorganization it is quite unlikely that it would have been put into effect. Naturally this was not fitted to make those who opposed the reorganization think well of the Boards. This is only an illustration of the manner in which the Boards have attempted, with no small success, to determine as well as carry out the policies of the Church.

It is more important to note that multitudes have lost confidence in the Boards because they have not shown themselves loyal to the doctrinal standards of the Church. It could hardly be expected that those who believe the Bible to be God's Word, and the system of doctrine set forth in the Confession of Faith to be the system of doctrine taught in that infallible Word, would feel that organizations run in a manner to meet the approval of Auburn Affirmationists were deserving of their support. As a result Presbyterian gifts have, in large part, been turned into other channels. What is more, the Boards—at least the Board of Foreign Missions—are doing nothing to lead any one to think that they have been misjudged. Witness the "Reply to the Board of Foreign Missions" by Chester Presbytery to be found in the April issue of this paper.

We believe, then, that the Boards themselves are largely responsible for their present plight. To raise a hue and cry about the Independent Board may be useful as a means of diverting attention from the Boards themselves but it will not be effective in restoring confidence in them. The Independent Board is a symptom, not a cause. Remove the cause and the Independent Board will disappear almost overnight. Destroy the Independent Board by ecclesiastical action, if that is possible, and the plight of the Boards will be made worse, not better. To condemn others because of their orthodoxy is not fitted to create the impression that you are orthodox yourself.

DR. SLOSSER'S REPLY TO DR. MACARTNEY



IN the *United Presbyterian* of April 26th, PROFESSOR GAIVUS JACKSON SLOSSER of Western Theological Seminary offers a reply to the article by DR. MACARTNEY against the proposed merger of our Church and the United Presbyterian, printed in the last issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY under the title "Thou Shalt Say, No!"

While PROFESSOR SLOSSER is not himself a signer of the Auburn Affirmation, his reply is in large part an eulogy of that document. Apparently he would have approved if the Committee on Organic Union had made it a part of the doctrinal basis of the proposed union. After citing copiously from it, he asks, "Do you not see clearly that both the Affirmation and its signers were and are absolutely loyal to the Scriptures and to their Church?"—and this notwithstanding the fact that it expressly states that the doctrine of the full truthfulness of the Scriptures is not only false but harmful!

PROFESSOR SLOSSER fails to mention the fact that the Auburn Affirmation was an attack on the deliverances of previous Assemblies relative to the so-called "five points." And yet that is absolutely essential to any real understanding of the meaning and significance of that document. In the light of that fact it appears to be a creed that represents the writers of the Bible as untrustworthy both as recorders of historical facts and as doctrinal guides, that is ambiguous in its assertion of the true deity and humanity of our Lord, that knows nothing of the death of Christ as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and that refuses to assert that Jesus was virgin-born or that He rose from the dead in the same body with which He suffered. We submit that such a creed cannot be confessed by those who are intelligently loyal to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church and earnest preachers of evangelical Christianity. PROFESSOR SLOSSER'S article is at least fitted to confirm what we have previously stated relative to the degree to which the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. is permeated by Modernism.

PROFESSOR SLOSSER has the temerity to allege that the Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church and the Auburn Affirmation are "equally condemned" by the "trouble-making group" that is opposing the merger. Such a statement is, of course, absurd as well as contrary to fact. While the Confessional Statement is regarded as inadequate and in serious respects faulty, no one, as far as we know, supposes that it is as bad as the Auburn Affirmation.

PROFESSOR SLOSSER repeatedly refers to those in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. who oppose the union as a "willful troublemaking minority." This is not the first time, however, that those most loyal to God and His truth have been called trouble-makers. The case of Ahab and Elijah will be recalled.

DR. MACKENZIE VS. DR. VAN TIL



THE correspondence between DR. MACKENZIE and DR. VAN TIL, occasioned by the latter's review of the former's book, carried on through these columns, is now closed (see page 13). We are sure our readers have found it interesting as well as highly informing. Without pronouncing any editorial judgment as to who should be judged the victor, we want to say that we think the event has shown that we made no mistake when we asked DR. VAN TIL to review DR. MACKENZIE'S book because of what we considered his special qualifications for the task.

In the covering letter that accompanied his final letter, DR. MACKENZIE advises us that our suggestion in our March issue that he lost his temper while writing his first letter was "thoroughly erroneous." We stand corrected. We may be pardoned, however, for expressing the hope that DR. MACKENZIE, if he ever does lose his temper, will not write for publication while in that state of mind. For if he writes that way when "cool," it is somewhat fearful to contemplate what he might write if he should get really mad. But even if DR. MACKENZIE has not been guilty of losing his temper, we think he has been guilty of "attributing unworthy motives" to his adversary. He seeks to convey the impression that DR. VAN TIL reviewed his book unfavorably because of his connection with Princeton Seminary.

"The head and front of my offending in your sight," he writes, "is that I am a modern Princetonianist—a new heresy unknown to the Westminster divines." Again he refers to "the new Westminster brand" of Calvinism. Here, we are sure, DR. MACKENZIE is "thoroughly erroneous." It is zeal for the Reformed Faith, not antagonism to Princeton Seminary, that animates DR. VAN TIL. Moreover there is no such thing as a "Westminster brand" of Calvinism. If the word "Westminster" is substituted for the word "Princeton" in the following statement of PROFESSOR CASPAR WISTAR HODGE, made in 1927—as is justified by the fact that Westminster Seminary was established to carry on and perpetuate the policies and traditions of Princeton as it existed before its reorganization in 1929—it will afford an admirable statement of the brand of Calvinism for which Westminster Seminary stands:

"It has sometimes been mistakenly supposed that there is a 'Princeton Theology.' DRs. ALEXANDER and CHARLES HODGE always repudiated this idea. Princeton Seminary has always taught and upheld the theology of the Westminster Confession—the majesty and sovereignty of Almighty God, the total inability of fallen man to save himself, and that the whole of salvation is to be ascribed to the power and grace of God. This is simply the pure and consistent form of evangelicalism which says with Paul, 'by grace have ye been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is God's Gift.'

"This generic Calvinism has been taught in Princeton Seminary under the specific form of the Covenant Theology, and so richly developed in the Westminster Confession, and

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damental purpose is to maintain pure doctrine, a valid testimony, unity of action and peace among the brethren.

2. That the power delegated or lodged in the leadership of the church, particularly that represented in the General Assembly, has failed and is failing to maintain pure doctrine, which has resulted in an uncertain and conflicting testimony, destroyed unity of action and is threatening peace among the brethren.

3. That this failure is evidenced by:

(a) Failure to make an adequate declarative repudiation of the Auburn Affirmation.

(b) Failure to disapprove the action of Presbyteries and Boards of the Church in admitting to the ministry and the mission fields of the Church candidates who failed to concur in or accept the essential doctrines of our Confession of Faith, some of which were re-affirmed by the General Assembly of 1923.

(c) Failure to make an adequate declarative repudiation of the Laymen's Mission Appraisal and Report; to prohibit and protect against an outside organized and financed propaganda from using and exploiting our churches in the interest of putting into effect the Faith-destroying program proposed in "Re-thinking Missions."

(d) Failure to separate itself from the Federal Council of Churches, whose national radio broadcasts have belittled and ridiculed doctrines of our Confession of Faith.

(e) Failure to give, and in preventing from being given, adequate consideration to the charge of Modernism in the Board of Foreign Missions.

WE BELIEVE:

That the annual election of Moderator of the General Assembly is now looked upon as a measuring of the strength of the Modernistic and Evangelistic forces for leadership in the Church—a contest with political flavor, humiliating before the judgment of the world and destructive of true Christian testimony.

That each year has seen the wedge of Modernism driven deeper and deeper into the body of the Church, the doctrinal destination of which is now clearly revealed in the Laymen's Missionary Appraisal and Report, and which we believe to be a doctrine of men, intellectually conceived, ethical, cultural, man-powered, Christless, and not the vital and essential Gospel of the Grace of God.

BELIEVING:

That the above statements are symbolical of a generally known condition in the Church, which is grieving and distressing evangelical Christians, who are perforce made a party thereto:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That we, evangelical Christians, stand fast and "earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3); and believing that God's Word is "Forever, O Lord, settled in Heaven" (Psalm 118-89), and that "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him" (Shorter Catechism); do hereby refuse to depart from the

Gospel of God's Grace; and to associate ourselves in a fellowship for the purpose of:

1. Seeking by prayer and the study of God's Word to obtain a better knowledge of the Will of God and His revelation concerning the Church.

2. Seeking the Lord's way as to how we can best contend for the Faith.

3. Seeking to know no authority above the Lord Jesus Christ, and to recognize no leadership above the Holy Spirit.

4. Informing ourselves as to the true and actual conditions within the Church.

5. Accumulating and disseminating true and clear information concerning these conditions.

6. Ceasing acquiescence and becoming protestant against Modernistic preaching, teaching, and leadership that is contrary to the Word of God.

7. Determining our individual and collective duty, relation and responsibility to and in the church, in view of these conditions.

In testimony thereto, we have attached our names:

Signed.....

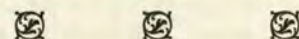
The Christian Assembly is not an attempt to organize a new movement or promote any new doctrine, but is primarily intended as an organization to inform, unify and furnish a medium through which Bible-believing Christians may voice their protest against so-called Modernism in the Presbyterian Church.

The Leadership of the Church seem to be entangled in loyalties: to organizations, institutions, persons, financial supports and outside groups: which has all but closed our church courts for corrective action. The time has come when the laity must act, if the church is to continue as a witness for the truth, once for all delivered to the saints.

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Editorial: MacKenzie v. Van Til

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grounded in the Scripture statement, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.'

"The newer modifications of Calvinism have passed away, and this pure and consistent form of Christian supernaturalism and evangelicalism alone stands as an impregnable barrier against the flood of naturalism which threatens to overwhelm all the Churches of Christendom. 'Soli deo gloria' may well be called the motto of Princeton Seminary, as it is of all true theology and religion."