

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

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

MID-APRIL, 1934
Vol. 4 No. 12

\$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.

Editorial Notes and Comments

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY SUSTAINS DR. MACHEN



IN stating his opposition to the "Plan of Union," in the January issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY, DR. MACHEN expressed the opinion that its proposed "Formula of Subscription" "obscures what is really quite central in the present formula of creed subscription in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.—namely, that there is only one system of doctrine taught in the Bible and that system is the Reformed or 'Calvinistic' system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith and the Catechism of the Church."

In its issue of March 14th *The Christian Century* says editorially: "Professor MACHEN is, we think, right in so interpreting the new formula. His keen, incisive mind,

Skilled to divide
A hair 'twixt south and southwest side,

did not overlook, as a less meticulous critic or a more careless theologian might have done, the significant difference between the system and a system of truths drawn from the Bible." *The Christian Century* then adds: "If he has called attention to a point which might otherwise have escaped attention, he deserves the gratitude of all schools of Presbyterian opinion. He has helped them to take this step, if they take it, with their eyes open to its meaning."

The Christian Century does not, of course, share Dr. Machen's opinion that the system of doctrine expressed in the Westminster Standards is the one and only system of doctrine contained in the Bible. It maintains, in fact, that there are other systems of doctrine that have as good a right to maintain that they have been derived from the Bible as the system set forth in the Confession of Faith and Catechism of the Presbyterian Church. Such an opinion is, it is almost needless to say, in flat opposition to the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is inconceivable that God Himself should be the author of mutually opposed systems of doctrine. That, of course, does not worry *The Christian Century* as its view of the Bible is thoroughly modernistic. Those, however, who believe not only that the Bible is the Word of God but that the one and only system of doctrine that it teaches is that set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms will appraise the matter quite differently. They will agree with *The Christian Century* that "for those who have hitherto held the Westminster doctrines as the system of truth taught in the Scriptures to hold them still but only as one of

the systems which men have devised out of materials drawn from that source is a step so long that it may fairly be called a stride." But they will hold that it is a stride—a long stride—not in the right but in the wrong direction.

We are grateful to *The Christian Century* for what it has done toward clarifying the doctrinal significance of the "Plan of Union."

A FRIENDLY WARNING



THE editor of this paper is well disposed toward the United Presbyterians. A large part of his early education was received at Tarkio College where he had as his classmates such well-known United Presbyterians as H. H. MARLIN and WILLIAM MURCHIE. He owes a special indebtedness to Dr. J. A. THOMPSON, president-emeritus of Tarkio College, whom he acknowledges as one of the major influences in his life. His own father was reared in the United Presbyterian Church (N. Y.) so that he himself was doubtless saved from being a United Presbyterian only by reason of the fact that there was no United Presbyterian church in that part of the Middle West to which his father went as a young man.

In view of what has been related, it might be expected that the writer would be heartily in favor of the proposed merger of the United Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., with which he is connected. As a matter of fact, however, he is opposed to it, and that because, in his judgment, the consummation of this merger would not be for the best interests of either of these churches.

He does not think it would be for the best interest of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. because, as he pointed out in the last issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY, he believes that the terms of union not only involve a serious lowering of the doctrinal standards of the Church, but that they would be creative of a situation in which it would be relatively easy further to amend them in the direction of Modernism. Doubtless some of his United Presbyterian friends will not admit that the terms of union involve any lowering of the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Even DR. GORDON MACLENNAN, whose view of what the consummation of this merger would mean for the United Presbyterians is very much in accord with the writer's, does not seem to agree with him at this point (see *The Presbyterian* for Feb. 8th and *The Christian Union Herald* for March 17th). He can only say that in his judgment Professor JOHN MURRAY and DR. MACHEN, among others, has made this clear—a judgment in which even *The Christian Century* concurs as may be learned from an adjoining editorial.

The writer is more particularly concerned to point out, how-

Presbyterian ministers, teachers, lawyers and doctors glow with the pomp of golden banners. They would testify to the purpose that prompted them to give themselves to the cause most worth living for in a troubled, bewildered world—making Christ known, and pointing to the gates of heaven which He opened to sinful men. They knew Him and the power of His resurrection and they were eager, able witnesses before the tribunal of the American people.

No Alexander would have us turn the past into an elegy, certainly not if by any means it could be turned into an inspiration. A family like the Alexanders is rare. But there are numerous homes in America where a beginning not unlike the Alexanders' is entirely possible. From godly fathers and praying mothers we must expect new generations of witnesses. If much of the Presbyterian Church is decadent; if trusted agencies are failing; if the light of life is smoldering where once it shined so bright; now is the time for leaders to appear. And God will provide them.

On the day this article is written the author has had the good fortune to find abundant evidence of an oncoming army of Christian young men. March 31st, at the California Club in Los Angeles, nineteen university undergraduates attended a luncheon at the invitation of two youthful ministers, Milo F. Jamison and Samuel H. Suther-

land. The gathering seemed to be constituted solely of boys. But these boys, working together, not only have organized and developed a students' church at the State University; they have established unique and popular Bible Clubs as well.

It was astonishing to discover the information of the situation in the Presbyterian Church possessed by the whole company. The nineteen students are aware of prevailing conditions and are resolved to enter the Presbyterian ministry if they can, whatever the price they must pay. They want to bear witness to the truth. In a score of colleges from the Atlantic to the Pacific similar groups have been found. They are the untouched reserves of the Church and they are waiting for the bugle call. Promising young men are now coming to Westminster Theological Seminary in such numbers that there is little room left for more. Their hearts are not cold and professional; they are aflame with enthusiasm. Everyone of them is capable of a great work.

Let none of us Bible-believing Presbyterians faint or grow weary. From the past we can choose our own examples of integrity, loyalty and determination and we can be grateful to God for a family like the Alexanders. But God's resources for the future are inexhaustible. Elijah's mantle will fall upon Elisha before the day is done.

THOU SHALT SAY, NO!

Shall We Unite?

By Clarence Edward Macartney

[The Editors of CHRISTIANITY TODAY are glad to publish this arresting and informative article. In our opinion it presents a graphic picture of facts as they are in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. and as they may become if the proposed union goes into effect. The editors gladly share Dr. Macartney's estimate of the evangelical convictions of the great bulk of United Presbyterians. They are sure however that the author in bearing witness to them is not in any sense approving the Confessional Statement adopted by the United Presbyterian Church in 1925, which statement is included in the proposed Basis of Union as an "historical interpretative statement." We agree with Dr. Macartney's estimate of the rank and file of the United Presbyterian Church, and we also agree with Dr. J. Gresham Machen in holding that the basis of union as now offered is essentially destructive of what evangelical Christians hold dear. Now, the United Presbyterians are in a church with an evangelical majority and a bad creed. Presbyterians, U. S. A., are in a church with an evangelical minority and a good creed. Under the proposed union all who might remain in the union church would be in a church with an evangelical minority and a bad creed.

We call attention in this connection to the article by J. Gresham Machen which appears with Dr. Macartney's article in the present number of CHRISTIANITY TODAY. The two articles, taken in conjunction, show that the proposed union would be a calamity both for the United Presbyterian Church and for the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.]



STERN old Covenanter, about to finish life's pilgrimage, summoned his eldest son, and said to him: "John, I am not long for this world. It's time that you were married. I hope you will marry in the Church, but if you do marry out of the Church, don't go *lower* than a U. P.!"

The dying charge of the old Covenanter sums up our opinion of the doctrine and practice of the United Presbyterian Church. That church we hold to be superior to almost every branch of the Presbyterian family in sober and godly living and in firm adherence to the cardinal truths of the Christian faith.

Why, then, should those of us in the Presbyterian

Church who so highly esteem the United Presbyterian Church not favor the proposed union of the United Presbyterian Church of N. A. with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America? I will endeavor to put down briefly and sincerely our objections to this union, and why we hope and pray that it shall not be consummated.

In the first place, it is well for all United Presbyterian ministers, elders, and communicant members clearly to realize that should the majority of the Presbyteries in both denominations ratify the union,¹ then all churches, all min-

¹ Editor's Note: Two-thirds of the Presbyteries must vote for the Basis of Union in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., for adoption. In the United Presbyterian Church the total votes in all the Presbyteries are counted for and against.

isters, and all members *must* go into the union. But suppose a single congregation of the Presbyterian Church, or a single congregation of the United Presbyterian Church should express itself as unanimously opposed to the union? What then? In they go, in spite of their unanimous dissent. But suppose such a congregation should say they will have nothing to do with such a union? The members might constitute an independent congregation, but all their buildings, properties, and endowments go with the union. This is made clear by a letter to me from the Stated Clerk of our own General Assembly. In this letter Dr. Mudge says:

1. "The plan of union makes no provision for dissenting churches.

2. "Every particular church will be upon the roll of the church resulting in the organic union.

3. "The properties of all the particular churches will have the same relationship to the church resulting from the organic union as it had to the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. or to the United Presbyterian Church of N. A. prior to the consummation of the union.

4. "After the organic union is consummated any minister or communicant member who does not wish to continue in the church resulting from the union, may enter into other ecclesiastical relations by the orderly process of asking for, and securing, letters of dismissal. It should be clearly understood, however, that any departing minister or communicant member can take with him or her no ecclesiastical property whatever."

This shows how iron-clad the terms of union are. I feel that some churches in both denominations have the idea that they can stay out of the union even if it is consummated. But *in* you go, whether you like it or not; and *all* your church properties and endowments go along with you.

The chief consideration for a Church of Christ planning to enter such a union should be whether or not the Kingdom of God will be thereby advanced. Reference is frequently made to villages and hamlets where United Presbyterian and Presbyterian Churches are established, and both of them weak, struggling bodies. I know a little town where you can stand and throw a rock and hit a Reformed Presbyterian, a United Presbyterian, or just a plain Presbyterian Church. But this argument can be overdone. The main thing for the United Presbyterians to face is this: What effect will this union have on the witness of the United Presbyterian Church to Christ and His Kingdom?

I wonder if the rank and file of our United Presbyterian brethren have any conception of the true state which exists within the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.?

In 1910, aroused by the course of the Presbytery of New York in licensing and ordaining young men who refused to affirm their faith in certain cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the General Assembly made a declaration concerning some of the doctrines which were called in question. There were five doctrines mentioned in the declaration, and hence the popular name "The Five Points." The declaration was as follows:

1. "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide

and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error.

2. "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.

3. "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God.

4. "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and of our standards concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that on the third day He rose again from the dead with the same body with which He suffered, with which also He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession."

5. "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God as the supreme standard of our faith that our Lord Jesus showed His power and love by working mighty miracles. This working was not contrary to nature, but superior to it."

In 1923, when a dispute arose in the Presbyterian Church over the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Harry E. Fosdick in the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New York, the General Assembly of 1923 directed the Presbytery of New York to take such action as would "require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform with the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith." In connection with this mandate to the Presbytery of New York, the General Assembly also reaffirmed the five doctrines mentioned by the General Assembly of 1910. In answer to this action of the General Assembly, twelve hundred ministers of the Presbyterian Church signed what was called the "Auburn Affirmation." Some of the statements of that Affirmation shocked and amazed thousands of Presbyterians when the Affirmation appeared. I believe they will shock and amaze United Presbyterians who may not be familiar with them. Here are some excerpts from the "Auburn Affirmation":

1. "There is no assertion in the Scriptures that their writers were kept from error. . . . We hold that the General Assembly of 1923 in asserting that 'the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide, and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error' spoke without warrant of the Scriptures or of the Confession of Faith.

2. "We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines (the Five Points). . . . Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly as satisfactory explanation of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship."

It has been claimed that some of those who signed the "Auburn Affirmation" did so merely as a protest against

methods of ecclesiastical procedure, and that they did not mean to endorse loose doctrinal statements, or indifference to such statements. I know of several signers who confessed to me their great regret at having signed the Affirmation, with the subsequent implication as to their beliefs. But what inspired the Affirmation was the ringing declaration of the General Assembly that the great doctrines mentioned and commonly called the "Five Points" are now, ever have been, and ever must be, cardinal and essential doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, and of Catholic Christianity.

The Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, Section 8, says "The Old Testament and the New Testament being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic." But according to the Auburn Affirmation the General Assembly of 1923 in asserting that the writers of the Holy Scripture were kept from error, spoke "without warrant of the Scriptures or of the Confession of Faith."

The Confession of Faith, Chapter 8, Section 4, says of our Lord's Resurrection, "On the third day he arose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered." This,

according to the Auburn Affirmationists, is only a "theory," and not an essential doctrine of our Standards. Again, the Confession of Faith, Chapter 8, Section 2, says, "The Son of God did take upon him man's nature, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance." This again, according to the Affirmationists, may be regarded as a mere "theory" as to the Incarnation.

The Confession of Faith, Chapter 8, Section 5, again says, "The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself hath fully satisfied the justice of his father." This again, according to the Auburn Affirmation, is but a "theory."

To the "Auburn Affirmationists" the statement of the Confession of Faith as to the Scriptures "Kept pure in all ages," does not mean "Kept free from error"!

Let all United Presbyterians remember that this Affirmation was signed by 1200 ministers, more than a tenth of those on the roll of the Presbyterian Church, and more than all the ministers now in the United Presbyterian Church.

(Concluded on Page 19)

The Theology of Dr. Mackenzie

A Rejoinder by Dr. Van Til

[The Editors publish herewith the rejoinder of Dr. Van Til to Dr. D. Mackenzie's criticism of the review of his book, "Christianity—the Paradox of God." The Review appeared in our February number and the communication of Dr. Mackenzie in our March issue. The Editors believe it unwise to prolong the discussion indefinitely. Therefore they will permit Dr. Mackenzie to reply further in the next issue, if he so desires. As is customary in such discussions, Dr. Van Til as the first writer will be allowed to reply to whatever Dr. Mackenzie may write, if he so desires, also in the May issue. Then the correspondence will be closed.]



IN his reply to my criticism of his book, *Christianity—The Paradox of God* (CHRISTIANITY TODAY, February, 1934), Dr. Mackenzie falls back on certain theological distinctions which, he says, he took for granted, since his general theological position was well known. Thus, for example, he would make it appear as though I were criticizing him for such an innocent thing as using the term "chance" in everyday life with reference to the unexpected for us rather than for God, or for such a praiseworthy thing as pointing out that "chance" if really entertained as a serious concept, should be removed from a Christian's vocabulary.

I propose, therefore, first of all to go back to Dr. Mackenzie's well-known writings in order to see whether they warrant his present conclusion. My judgment is that they do not. On the contrary, it was to some considerable extent because of the nature of the background with which these well-known writings of Dr. Mackenzie furnished me, that I felt compelled to make the criticism contained in my review.

The writings referred to are chiefly five articles in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* entitled "Ethics and Morality" (Christian), "Free Will," "Libertarianism and Necessitarianism," "Synergism," and "Transcendentalism."

It will be noted that all the articles in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, to which I confine myself here, deal with subjects in which a definite position would, in the nature of the

case, have to be taken on the chief issue between Calvinism and Arminianism, as well as between the Christian and the non-Christian solutions of the problem of free will.

In these articles Dr. Mackenzie quotes from several philosophers but makes very little use of the literature of the great Reformed theologians. We are prevented from thinking of this neglect of Reformed theology as incidental, inasmuch as the content of the articles is opposed to Reformed theology in the whole of its spirit and approach as well as in its specific teaching.

THE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

In the first place, the Reformed theologians have made the concept of God as absolute in all His attributes determinative for the whole of their theology. God has revealed Himself as absolute in all His attributes. This God-concept is fundamental and the man-concept must be adjusted to it.

That Dr. Mackenzie does not agree with this Reformed approach appears only too clearly. In his article, "Free Will," he says: "Can God's sovereignty be reconciled with such freedom of choice as we require? It cannot if God's absoluteness be asserted without qualification; then the moral life becomes unintelligible. Butler has warned us against speculating on how God ought to reveal Himself. We ought rather to find out how He has revealed Himself. So God's absoluteness must be approached from experience. The defect of Augustinianism and Calvinism is that they start from a knowledge of God's

study *Matt. 7:24, 27; Eph. 6:10-20; I Tim. 6:17-19; Rev. 21:1-7. Golden Text—Rev. 11:15.*)

These chapters are among the most soul-shaking in the Bible. They are filled with the portentousness of doom to come, with the climax of human sin, with the mighty sweep of an eternal purpose. Over all lies the shadow of the wing of God, thrown in protection over His own. If ever the teaching of Scripture is clear in its great outlines while mysterious in its near details, it is here. These words of our Lord are doubtless partly to be understood literally, and partly as symbolism. Yet if symbols they were the symbols which He chose to shake and warn the soul of man!

In these chapters we see no gradual improvement of human civilization, and character until at last the whole world "lapped in universal law" awaits the triumphant return of the King. A world that could achieve perfection that way first would hardly need Him afterward. No—here we see stupendous forces in conflict and collision. We see earthquake and fire, cataclysm and overturning, sleeping and watching, and at the last the return of the King to do what man could not do and what man in God's eternal purpose was never destined to do. The future of the Kingdom is safe—safe because the King Himself reigns even now from Heaven, and some day will set His throne on earth.

Lesson for May 27, 1934

THE LAST JUDGMENT

(*Lesson Text—Matt. 25:31-46. Also study Luke 10:25-27; James 1:27; 2:14-17; Psalm 86:1-7. Golden Text—II Cor. 5:10.*)

To one who reads the words of our Lord with attention and understanding there is etched an unforgettable and solemn picture on the fabric of the mind. Here is retribution made graphic, certain, passed far beyond the so often useless chatter of speculation and argument. Sin, which is always being judged, is coming for its final appearance before the bar of the One who is altogether Holy, whose Holiness is as great and boundless as His very Being.

Space is too limited here to deal with the many important questions that naturally throng the mind. How many judgments are there? When? How? All these are serious questions that will repay earnest thought. But one thing is clear: Whoever is judged will be judged on the basis of character and condemned because that character is ruined by sin. No one will be condemned excepting for his sin. Yet many sinners will not be condemned! Why? Because as they are called to stand before the throne, a figure in spotless white will interpose between them and the wrath of God, saying, "These are mine. I have purchased them

with my own blood. I bore their sin upon the cross. They are complete in me." And to such, judgment holds no terror.

Thou Shalt Say, No!—Concluded

In 1929 there were those in the Presbyterian Church who were convinced that the establishment of an independent Presbyterian Seminary was necessary to uphold the Standards of the Confession of Faith and to train young men for the Gospel ministry, the result was the Westminster Seminary at Philadelphia, greatly used of God in the four years of its brief history. Many of the students, four of the Faculty and several of the former directors of Princeton Theological Seminary took part in the establishment of the New Seminary.

In 1933 a body of earnest men within the Presbyterian Church established an independent Board of Foreign Missions. The reason for this was deep dissatisfaction with some of the policies and practices of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, and a chief proponent of this union, writing in "The Christian Union Herald" for April 24th, and answering an article published by Dr. A. Gordon MacLennan in a previous issue of that paper, cites the action of the General Assembly of 1933, which, by an overwhelming vote of the Assembly, expressed "entire confidence in the members of the Board, its secretaries, missionaries, policies and transactions." It was *that very vote* which gave occasion for the establishment of the new Board, and which caused grave misgivings in the minds of many ministers and churches who still support missionary work under our Foreign Board.

In 1931, one thousand and eighty-two ministers in the Presbyterian Church organized the Presbyterian League of Faith. The objects of the League are as follows:

1. "To maintain loyalty to the Bible as the Word of God.
2. "To maintain the Reformed, or Calvinistic, system of doctrine.
3. "To oppose changes in the historic formula of creed subscription required of candidates to the ministry and eldership.
4. "To oppose the attack made by the document commonly called 'The Auburn Affirmation.'
5. "To warn men everywhere that salvation is to be obtained not by human merit, or human effort to please God, but only through the redeeming work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
6. "To encourage the vigorous defense and joyous propagation of the Gospel in

its fullness as it is set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith on the basis of Holy Scripture."

Among the almost eleven hundred members of the League of Faith are well known names in the Presbyterian Church. Prominent professors, missionaries, ministers, and three former moderators of the General Assembly are on the list of members.

It would be preposterous to say that the many earnest men of the Presbyterian Church who have taken part in these movements of protest are laboring under a foolish hallucination, and attacking an enemy who does not exist. The organization of these different movements is conclusive proof that there is a most serious doctrinal division within the Presbyterian Church. If the United Presbyterians wish to unite with our church, they should act in full knowledge of the lamentable doctrinal condition which now obtains within the Presbyterian Church.

But, it will be asked, Would not the accession of the ministers and churches of the United Presbyterian Church strengthen the hands of evangelical men in the Presbyterian Church? In my opinion it would not. The total ministry of the United Presbyterian Church would not equal the number of men who signed the "Auburn Affirmation," and the other hundreds who did not have the courage of their convictions, or lack of convictions, but who secretly bow at the low altar of the "Auburn Affirmation." A small and questionable gain in the number of evangelical men in the Presbyterian Church would be cancelled by the catastrophe which would befall the men of the United Presbyterian Church.

The United Presbyterian Church is a Church united not only in name, but in loyal adherence to the great doctrines of Grace. Should you unite with the Presbyterian Church, you will find yourselves in an altogether different and new condition. You have made a grand and united testimony to our Lord and to His Kingdom. You have done this in your Seminaries, in your General Assemblies, and in your missionary Boards. The question before the United Presbyterian Church is this: Shall we silence our witness and quench the lamp of our Testimony? The moment the United Presbyterian Church united with the Presbyterian Church, its distinctive witness will be lost.

John Calvin once said that he would cross the seven seas for the sake of true Church Union. Earnest Christians everywhere will subscribe to that sentiment, and everywhere true believers will pray that the torn and rent robe of the Church of Christ shall again be a Seamless Robe.