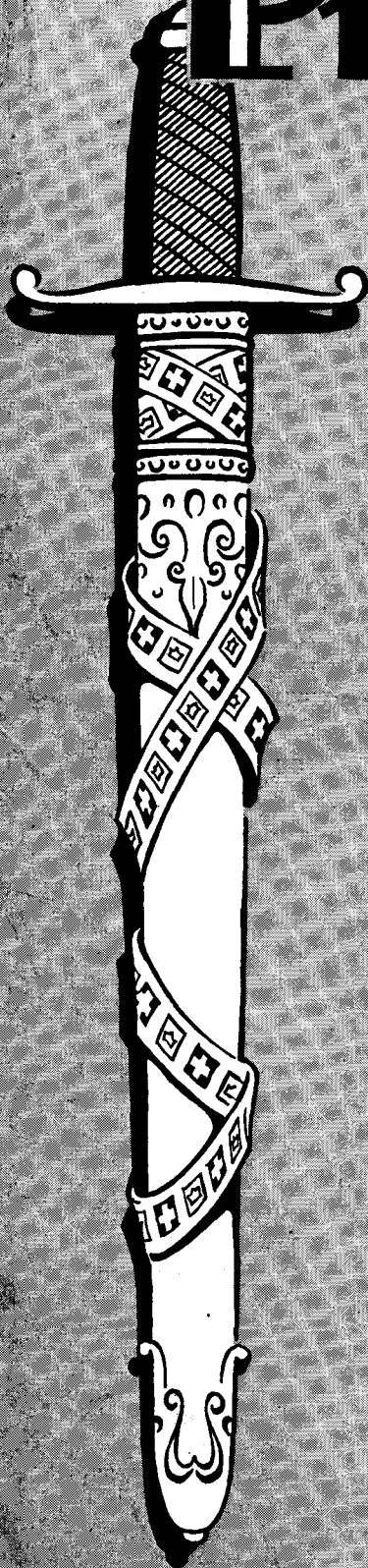


October 21, 1935

# The Presbyterian Guardian



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD

## From the "Admonitio Morienti"

"While there is life in thee, in this death alone place thy trust, confide in nothing else besides; to this death commit thyself altogether; with this shelter thy whole self; with this death array thyself from head to foot. And if the Lord Thy God will judge thee, say, Lord, between thy judgment and me I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; no otherwise can I contend with Thee. And if He say to thee, Thou art a sinner, say Lord, I stretch forth the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and Thee. If He say, Thou art worthy of condemnation, say, Lord, I set the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my evil deserts and Thee, and His merits I offer for those merits which I ought to have, but have not of my own. If He say that He is wroth with thee, say, Lord, I lift up the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thy wrath and me."

—(St. Anselm)

THE PRESBYTERIAN  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
COVENANT UNION

# EDITORIAL

## AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Thank you for your letter of September 24th, addressed to me and, I understand, to many other clergymen of this country. No one could help feeling both greatly honored and a little flattered that such a request for counsel should come from the President of the United States.

It is true that some have said that your motive in writing such a letter was strictly political. I prefer not to believe this. It would be humiliating to me as an American to think that our President would or could traffic with the sanctions of religion or the needs of humanity for any selfish political advantage. I am therefore assuming your sincerity and shall try to make a sincere reply. If my advice is not pleasing, please remember that you asked for it, though no doubt you never have heard of me in your life. My belief that this is so is confirmed by the fact that your typist did a rather bad job of spelling my name.

Concerning politics or the practical political implementation of your social security program, I am sorry that I cannot advise you. Certainly the human objectives of that program, the relief of distress and the care of age, are shared with you by all right-thinking men. But concerning the particular methods by which you are attempting to attain these objectives, my best friends and acquaintances are hopelessly divided. Nor am I quite so naive as to think that you have asked the advice of clergymen as touching political considerations.

You have, however, asked for my counsel. It is this:

I believe that, at the foundation, the chief dangers of our national life are moral dangers. We are in far more peril as a nation from the decay of the national character than from the decay either of potatoes, corn, cotton or slaughtered pigs. If we can come through these troubled times having retained or recovered that core of integrity in individual lives that has hitherto constituted the collective soul of America, we shall live under institutions perhaps flexible but always existing by, and deriving their force from, the consent of free men. A nation of such free, and, in the true sense, good men will shape institutions to fit its own character. But no institutions or form of society, no matter how excellently devised, can or will preserve a nation if its moral character decays.

I would be less than honest if I did not say that I and many others believe that America stands morally

upon the brink of an abyss, if we have not indeed already begun to slide into it. When I say "moral" I refer not merely to relationships between the sexes, I mean the whole life of man in its relation to right and wrong. I and many others also believe profoundly that there is only one salvation for our country, or for any of us. We believe that apart from God and His Life in the life of men there is no such thing as living morality, integrity, goodness or truth. Further, we know of no other way to God and His life than through Jesus Christ His Son, our Redeemer, who shed His blood and poured out His soul to save us from the very thing that now spreads ruin about us: the consequences and the pollution of moral evil, or more shortly, simply *sin*.

Earnestly I ask you not to despise this counsel as that of enthusiasts or cranks. It would be the counsel, I truly believe, of those men and women of the past whose character has until now stamped its impress upon our national life and history. We believe that for *sin* there ought to be repentance, true and deep. We know that for repentance there is abundant forgiveness. And after forgiveness comes strength and grace for the good life.

Lead our people, Mr. President, in a great act of unfeigned national repentance and humiliation before God. In our collective national life God is even more forgotten than your "forgotten man." Call upon our nation, yes, in spite of its diverse inheritance of races and creeds, to join you in a return to God through the shed blood of the Cross. Lead our nation back to God, so that we shall again be a truly Christian nation!

No doubt this would be very bad politics, Mr. President. That is fully understood. But by such an act you would assume forever in American life and history a place that politics or even the summit of secular statesmanship could never gain you. Your voice could call us as that of no other living man. You would tower down centuries as the greatest leader the American people ever had—the one man who had the insight to see that salvation comes, not to eyes that look down, but to eyes that look up; the one man who had the courage and humility to lead a people back to God where alone the national soul might be reborn, and the national life find abundant and free expression.

To lead us thus in national repentance would be a glorious act. But, better still, it would be *right*. Will you do it, Mr. President?

Sincerely yours,

The Editor of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN.

## President Roosevelt's Letter to the Ministers

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 24, 1935.

Reverend and dear Sir:

Your high calling brings you into intimate daily contact not only with members of your own church, but with people generally in your community. I am sure you see the problems of your people with wise and sympathetic understanding.

Because of the grave responsibilities of my office, I am turning to representative Clergymen for counsel and advice,—feeling confident that no

group can give more accurate or unbiased views.

I am particularly anxious that the new Social Security Legislation just enacted, for which we have worked so long, providing for old age pensions, aid for crippled children and unemployment insurance, shall be carried out in keeping with the high purposes with which this law was enacted. It is also vitally important that the Works Program shall be administered to provide employment at useful work, and that our unemployed as well as the nation as a whole may derive the greatest possible benefits.

I shall deem it a favor if you will

write me about conditions in your community. Tell me where you feel our government can better serve our people.

We can solve our many problems, but no one man or single group can do it,—we shall have to work together for the common end of better spiritual and material conditions for the American people.

May I have your counsel and your help? I am leaving on a short vacation but will be back in Washington in a few weeks, and I will deeply appreciate your writing to me.

Very sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

(For editorial comment on this letter, see page 23.)

# WARNING

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