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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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Editorial Notes and Comments

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM



THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, in its issue of September 21st, contains an article by E. Stanley Jones of more than passing interest. It is entitled "Jesus Enters the Soul of the East," and purports to indicate the ways in which the Kingdom grows or rather the ways in which Dr. Jones has watched it grow in the East. In the first place, it has grown in a way that can be seen and measured—the mustard seed has become a great tree. In the second

place, it has grown through the silent permeation of human society by the ideas and mind and spirit of Jesus—the leaven is leavening the whole lump. More concretely expressed, Dr. Jones says he has not only seen the Church in the East grow as an organization at the rate of 12,000 a month during the last ten years; he has also seen the ideas, the outlook, the spirit of the whole people changed to such an extent that an Indian Christian editor writes: "The religion of the educated Indian is an indistinguishable blend of Hinduism and the spirit of Christ." Dr. Jones says that while the mustard seed growth is very remarkable, the leaven growth is still more remarkable. Christ, he writes, "is entering into the texture of the soul of the East and it may be that this quiet, silent coming will, in the end, be more permanent and make men better Christians than the more sudden acceptance."

Dr. Jones writes attractively and persuasively and yet it seems to us that every truly Christian heart must be conscious that there is something wrong in this representation. What is that something? Is it not the more or less suppressed assumption that if men accept "the ideas and mind and spirit of Jesus" we need not be greatly concerned about their personal attitude toward Him as Lord and Saviour? It seems to us that he does not give adequate recognition to the fact that Christianity owes not only its origin but its continuance to the person of Christ. The place that Christ occupies in Christianity is quite different from the position that Buddha and Mohammed occupy in their respective religions. Christ is not merely one who lived and worked some 1900 years ago. He has lived and worked through all the years that have followed, so that Christianity has been as dependent upon Him throughout the Christian ages—is as dependent upon Him today—as when He trod the earth. Buddha and Mohammed might be forgotten without necessitating any essential changes in the religions they founded, because that which binds their followers together is not loyalty to their persons but loyalty to the principles and precepts they taught and exemplified. If they beheld the things done on the earth, it is quite supposable that they are satisfied in proportion

as they see the principles they taught ruling the hearts of men. It is otherwise in the case of Christ. He is not satisfied to see men observing the things He commanded, even if they observe them in a spirit of love unless they act out of a consideration for Himself. He promised to be with His disciples unto the end of the world and desires their love, trust, obedience and worship. Where He is forgotten or ignored, even if His spirit lives on in individuals or even communities and much of what He taught is known and done, Christianity does not exist. For Christ Himself is Christianity. He does not merely point out the way to God and salvation. He is the Way itself.

That Dr. Jones' own work in promoting the coming of the kingdom in India leaves much to be desired is indicated by an excerpt from a letter received from a missionary in India. He writes: "I have listened to him six times. I have heard him give a great address on Christ, not as Saviour, but as one who died for truth! I have never heard Dr. Jones speak of the guilt of sin and I have never heard him preach the Gospel. I am not saying he does not know it but I have not heard him preach it. But I have heard of Hindoos who were thinking of baptism after hearing Dr. Jones draw back from it. I have heard of two law students who said, 'We like Dr. Jones, for he allows us to stay in our own religion,' and adds, 'Oh, if Dr. Jones would only preach the Gospel, what might we not see?'"

THE PLAN OF UNION



THE Joint Committee on Organic Union of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. and the United Presbyterian Church reported to their respective Assemblies that "important changes" had been made in the proposed Plan of Union and requested "the General Assemblies of the negotiating Churches to permit the Committee to continue its study of the Plan of Union until the Fall of 1933 with the understanding that on or before January 1, 1934,

the Plan of Union as amended to that date will be printed and distributed to the ministers of the negotiating Churches, to the clerks of sessions of all the particular churches of the negotiating Churches, and to such persons as may be willing to purchase copies of the Plan of Union at a nominal cost."

"The most important of these changes is," in the language of the Committee's report, "the confining of the Doctrinal Basis of Union to 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the supreme standard, acknowledged as the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and upon the subordinate standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the amendments adopted in 1903 by the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; all of which subordinate standards are recognized as agreeable to and founded upon the Scriptures.'"

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Freedom in the Presbyterian Church: Dr. Machen's Protest in the Presbytery of New Brunswick

[The following is the text of the protest offered by Dr. J. Gresham Machen concerning the action of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in amending its rules providing for the examination of ministers and candidates as to their willingness to support the Board of Foreign Missions. An account of the meeting is found in the news pages.]

PROTEST



DESIRE, very respectfully, to record my dissent from and protest against the action of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in inserting the following additional paragraphs in the rules of Presbytery:

In Article 7—Ministers:

"A member of another Presbytery, or a minister from any other ecclesiastical body, seeking membership in the Presbytery, shall be examined as to his willingness to support the regularly authorized Boards and Agencies of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., particularly the Board of Foreign Missions. A record of this examination shall be made in the Minutes of Presbytery."

In Article 8—Candidates:

"All candidates seeking licensure or ordination shall be examined as to their willingness to support the regularly authorized Boards and Agencies of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., particularly the Board of Foreign Missions. A record of this examination shall be made in the Minutes of Presbytery."

My reasons for making this protest are, in part, as follows:

1. In requiring that candidates for licensure, ordination or transfer shall be examined not merely as to their fitness for their ministerial function but as to their willingness to perform certain future acts, and in requiring that this examination shall be recorded, this action of Presbytery requires of candidates for licensure, ordination or transfer a pledge additional to the pledges required in the "Constitutional Questions" contained in the Form of Government. It is thus to all intents and purposes adding another question to those Constitutional Questions. Such addition can lawfully be made only by an amendment to the Form of Government, passed by a majority of all the presbyteries in the regular way.

2. The Form of Government, Chapter XIV, amended in 1932, sets forth subjects in which candidates are to be examined. Those subjects concern the candidate's fitness, but they do not include any examination regarding his willingness to perform future acts. The omission is clearly significant. It shows that the only pledges regarding future acts to be required of candidates for the ministry are those that are found in the Constitutional Questions. The addition of another pledge is not justified, therefore, by the sections on examinations any more than it is justified by the section containing the Constitutional Questions.

3. In requiring of candidates for licensure, ordination or transfer an examination as to their willingness to support the Boards and Agencies of the Church, particularly the Board of Foreign Missions, this action is practically making support of the Boards to be a tax necessarily involved in loyal membership in the Church or at least in this Presbytery. But as a matter of fact support of the Boards is, according to Presbyterian law, not a tax but purely a freewill offering. That appears in several ways.

(a) There is nothing in the Constitution of the Church requiring support of the official Boards and Agencies on the part of the ministers. Since there is no such requirement in the Constitution, the establishment of such a requirement by the Presbytery of New Brunswick is plainly unconstitutional.

(b) Certain positive pronouncements of the General Assembly confirm this conclusion. While these pronouncements have merely informatory and not strictly legal force, their informatory force, especially because of the occasion on which two of them at least were made, is very great.

(1) When the Board of Foreign Missions was established as the Board of the combined church at the time of the union between the Old School and New School bodies, a concurrent resolution of the two Assemblies expressly stated that while the churches should be encouraged to sustain the one set of Boards for Home and Foreign Missions and other religious enterprises of the Church they were free to cast their contributions into other channels if they desired to do so (DIGEST, 1930, Vol. ii, p. 38).

(2) In the report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Missions, approved by the Assemblies of 1869, reporting to the united Assembly of 1870, which report was adopted by the Assembly and is found on pp. 44-46, Minutes of 1870, it is said:

"Equally free and responsible directly to Christ are all Christian people, in deciding through what agencies they will do their share of work for Missions."

Also in the Minutes for the year 1870, page 39 in the Report of the Committee on Conference with the American Board, it is said:

"That the time has now come when an effort should be made, *as far as may be consistent with the fullest liberty of individuals and churches*, to concentrate the counsels, the energies and contributions of the whole united Church in the work about to be carried on by our Foreign Mission Board" (italics ours).

(3) The General Assembly has held that there is no such thing as an obligatory assessment in the Presbyterian Church, even regarding a thing like mileage for Commissioners to the General Assembly (DIGEST, 1930, Vol. i, pp. 477-479, No. 3, No. 4). All giving is voluntary. But if a minister sustains this examination required by the Presbytery of New Brunswick his giving to the Boards is no longer voluntary. In order, therefore, that he may enter into this Presbytery he will have been required to assume a radically different attitude toward the whole nature of the support of the Boards from that which is prescribed in the Constitution of the Church.

(4) Persons who declare their willingness to support the Boards and Agencies of the Presbyterian Church, in accordance with the plain intent of this action of Presbytery, are binding themselves either to conduct which is contrary to common honesty or to conduct which is an evasion of the responsibilities of a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. If a minister who has obtained his entrance into the Presbytery of New Brunswick by declaring his willingness to support the Boards and Agencies becomes convinced that the Boards and Agencies are unfaithful to their trust, two courses of action are open to him. In the first place, he may continue to support the Boards and Agencies in accordance with the pledge which has been exacted of him by Presbytery, despite the fact that he knows those Boards and Agencies to be unfaithful. That course of action is contrary to common honesty. Or, in the second place, being no longer able conscientiously to support the Boards and Agencies, he may withdraw from the ministry. That course

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This Changing World

By
"Calvinist"

ONE of the tender parting injunctions of our Lord to His disciples is recorded by St. John in these words: "this is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Spoken originally to the little apostolic group on the night in which He was betrayed, these are yet words that ought to be binding to the Christian heart of every generation. Sadly, the professed people of Jesus Christ have ever fallen far short of obedience to His command. We have not loved each other as we ought, and in each true Christian soul abides a sense of incompleteness and shame.

Especially in times of controversy it is imperative that the words of our Lord be not forgotten. Hatred between Christian men is inexcusable—doubly inexcusable when it is thought to be for the sake of the One who, loving us, died upon the cross.

The love of Christians for each other is based upon, and is a reflection of, the mutual love of Christ and His redeemed children. We love each other because we love Him, we find closeness with fellow-Christians when by faith we stand together beneath His cross.

No man is infallible, and every Christian makes mistakes. Sometimes in the history of Christ's church those mistakes, vouched for by good men, have plunged the church into tragic periods of recession and decline. Many a measure brought forth by men who will stand nearer the throne than we will ever stand, has carried ruin and havoc in its train. Well-meaning Christian men may in good faith sponsor, and have sponsored in the past, measures incalculably pernicious to the cause of the Gospel.

In such a case, what must Christian men and women do, who see such events repeating themselves in the church? Surely they ought to love their fellow Christians always, and be loyal to the obligations of Christian friendship. But there is another loyalty whose obligations ought to be supreme to Christian men—love and loyalty to the truth as it is in Jesus. No man is ever justified in allowing personal love or friendship to deter him from speaking the brave, perhaps lonely, word for his Lord. He must speak out against error and for the truth. God has never set His seal upon compromise. We must speak in love, but we ought never to forget that what we speak must be the Truth of God, or else all our "love" will be a mockery. We should pray that God's grace will keep us from all rancor, personalities and bitterness. We ought always to speak in love. But our love for the truth should be greater than our desire not to give offense. Christians are under an obli-

gation to speak the truth, whatever the cost, whenever it needs to be spoken, and if the truth spoken in love offends and disturbs, they should not be afraid of the responsibility. True Christian contention is always against wrong measures and against those who promote them, not as individuals, but as representing movements destructive of the real peace of the Church. If they at times must mention names, it will not mean that they have any desire to enter into personalities. Those whom they oppose may possibly at times be among their dearest friends. But no Christian dares let his loyalty to the Truth as God has given it become dependent upon the claims of friendship. The claims of truth impose a duty no real lover of God or man can escape.

Yet, rightly understood, the claims of truth and friendship ought never to conflict. May we not remember that it is our God who hates the sin but who loves the sinner? And may we not, *must* we not, love the man to whose views we object while at the same time opposing those views with all our strength? Indeed, any other attitude would lead to a confession that it is impossible to hate error without also hating the person who is mistaken, a view which must be emphatically repudiated as contrary to the whole spirit of the gospel. One may contend with all his might against the error which another teaches, and against the things he does, while at the same moment loving that one with all his heart.

Further, it is an *obligation* of true friendship to express a difference if one honestly believes it to be a matter of great moment. A true friend does not allow another to tread the pathway that leads that one or others to disaster, without giving some warning. A person who keeps silence as to a matter of principle "for friendship's sake" is really no friend at all. Were one to be mute regarding issues vital to the church because of personal friendship, or because of the risk of misunderstanding, that one would be no true lover of his fellow-men, of Christ's church, or of the church's only Head and King.

It needs also to be noted that Modernists have no monopoly on Christian love. I am persuaded that, while Modernism is not Christianity, there may be Modernists who do not consistently carry their principles into their lives, and who, in spite of apostasy, possess a saving relation to Christ formed in days of younger, stronger faith. For this we all rejoice. But it is the common fashion of Modernists and others to

imply that militant conservatives all lack the virtue of Christian love, which is represented as being an exclusive possession of those more "liberally inclined." From this view I also dissent, and call twenty centuries of Christian history to witness to the fact that it is only those who hold to the historic Christ who long retain those graces of the gospel that sweeten and purify human conduct. None of us can naturally have Christian love for his fellows. Such love is the result of the regenerative grace of the Holy Spirit, is contrary to the natural man, and cannot be experienced apart from the historic, only, Christ.

Speaking the truth in love, then, should be our aim. Doubtless, being human, we all will at times fall below it. And in any contention into which we may be led, we will always hope for the turning again of any and all who have forsaken the gospel, or its defense, to the allegiance of other years. Even as we oppose them, it will be with the prayer that they may turn to stand firmly for the gospel, whether for the first time, or after a period of doubt, struggle and indecision. They will be received in Christian love as brothers in the Lord by those who feel an inescapable obligation to contend for the faith in days when it is being attacked and thousands are being led astray as never before. Let us speak in love, then, guarding our heart with all diligence, but let us not forget that to speak the saving truth of the Gospel sincerely, diligently and without stain of compromise is in itself the most loving act that one human can do for another.

Freedom in the Presbyterian Church—Continued

of action is evasion of his responsibility as a minister in the Presbyterian Church, since it is perfectly clear that disagreement with the policy of an administrative agency support of which according to the Constitution is voluntary is no sufficient reason for relinquishment of the great trust involved in ordination.

(5) This action of Presbytery is degrading to the Boards and Agencies. The Boards and Agencies will never in the long run prosper, even from the worldly point of view and still more clearly in the sight of God, if they depend for their support upon compulsion; they will truly prosper only if they are able to show themselves worthy of the free-will offerings of the people of God.