

# 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

### A STATEMENT

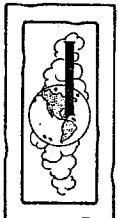


THIS issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY has been sent to many, including all the ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., who do not receive it regularly. This has been done in the confidence that they will find its contents both interesting and valuable, and in the expectation that a goodly proportion of them will have their appetites so whetted by its contents that they will want to add their names to our list of subscribers.

In selecting the material for this issue we have been largely influenced by two considerations: (1) the desire to make known to as many as possible the more basic of our objections to the tentative "Plan of Union" that has been submitted by the Joint Committee on Organic Union of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and the United Presbyterian Church; (2) the desire to convey to as many as possible reliable as well as up-to-date information about Westminster Theological Seminary. By yielding to these desires, especially to the latter, we have been compelled to omit—in most instances merely to curtail—some of our standard features.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY was established early in 1930 to state, defend and further the system of thought and life taught in the Bible in the conviction that this system of thought and life has as yet found its most complete and most carefully guarded as well as its most vital expression in the existing Standards of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Our correspondence indicates that in the judgment of friend and foe alike CHRISTIANITY TODAY occupies a unique position among Presbyterian publications not only because it is the one periodical that is committed to a militant defense of the faith professed by the Presbyterian Church but because of the ability and wholeheartedness with which it states and expounds that faith. It is our constant endeavor to make the paper increasingly effective as a means of furthering the cause it has been established to promote.

### TWO WORTHWHILE BOOKS



IN our March issue we editorially commended Professor Loraine Boettner's book "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination" and promised that in a later issue we would publish a review commensurate with its importance. That promise is now fulfilled by the publication on page eleven of Professor Floyd Hamilton's review of this notable book—a book which has already reached the dignity of a second edition.

Professor Hamilton is himself an author of distinction. In 1927 he gave us "The Basis of Christian Faith: A Modern Defense of the Christian Religion." More recently he

has given us a companion volume entitled, "The Basis of Evolutionary Faith: A Critique of the Theory of Evolution." This volume was not only appreciatively reviewed in our February issue but has been highly commended by other publications at home and abroad. It seems to be the consensus of opinion that it is the first critique of evolution available fitted to meet the needs of those possessed of an ordinary college education or its equivalent. Unfortunately, however, it is published only in an English edition. Through special arrangement with the author, copies may be obtained through the office of CHRISTIANITY TODAY for \$1.50.

### WESTMINSTER SEMINARY



WHILE this paper sustains no official relations with Westminster Seminary it is in hearty sympathy with the aims and ideals of this institution and desirous of doing everything possible to further its interest. There is in fact no other theological seminary—certainly no other connected with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.—with whose aims and ideals we have so full a measure of sympathy.

Dr. WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN of New York City in a recent article, printed in the *Union Seminary Review* of Richmond Va., stated that the declaration issued in 1924, commonly called the Auburn Affirmation, was signed by "professors of every Presbyterian seminary but one." He was referring, of course, to Princeton Seminary. Since that time, however, an official statement, signed by the President of its faculty and the President of its Board of Trustees, has come from that institution commending signers of the Auburn Affirmation to the confidence of the Church despite the fact that they are on record not only as affirming that the Bible contains errors but as denying that such doctrines as the virgin birth of our LORD, His bodily resurrection (and by implication His return in other than a spiritual sense) and His death as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God are essential doctrines of the Word of God and the standards of the Presbyterian Church. Hence while it remains true that the faculty of Princeton Seminary contains no signers of the Auburn Affirmation, yet obviously they might all sign it without losing favor with its present Board of Control. It seems clear, therefore, that according to Dr. Brown, Westminster Seminary is now the only institution for the training of ministers for the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. that is not more or less tainted with what we call Modernism.

We would not be understood as implying that we are in hearty sympathy with Westminster Seminary merely because it is free from the taint of Modernism. That, important as it is, is but a negative virtue. While we would not approve Westminster Seminary if it lacked this virtue, it is its positive virtues that command our admiration. Without equivocation or compromise it holds that Christianity as set forth in the Westminster Stand-

# The Importance of Christian Scholarship for Evangelism

An address delivered in London before the Bible League, June 17, 1932

By the Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D., Litt.D.



It seems to me, as I stand here before you today, that there is one blessing in these days of defection and unbelief which we have come to value as we never valued it before. That is the blessing of Christian fellowship in the presence of a hostile world, and in the presence of a visible Church which too often has departed from the Word of God. Today, during the three meetings of this League, in the portion of the meetings which has been allotted to me, I am to have the privilege of delivering three addresses on the subject, "The Importance of Christian Scholarship."

It is no doubt unfortunate that the person who speaks about this subject should have so limited an experimental acquaintance with the subject about which he is endeavoring to speak; but in these days of anti-intellectualism you may be willing to hear a word in defence of the intellect, even from one whose qualifications for speaking on that subject are so limited as mine.

There was a time when the raising of the question as to the importance of Christian scholarship might have seemed to be ridiculous; there was a time when a man who does so much talking as a minister or a Sunday School teacher does, and as no doubt every Christian ought to do, in the propagation of the Faith to which he adheres, would have regarded it as a matter of course that he ought to know something about the subject of which he undertakes to talk.

But in recent years we have got far beyond all such elementary considerations as that; modern pedagogy has emancipated us, whether we be in the pulpit or in the professor's chair or in the pew, from anything so irksome as earnest labor in the acquisition of knowledge. It never seems to occur to many modern teachers that the primary business of the teacher is to study the subject that he is going to teach. Instead of studying the subject that he is going to teach, he studies "education"; a knowledge of the methodology of teaching takes the place of a knowledge of the particular branch of literature, history or science to which a man has devoted his life.

This substitution of methodology for content in the preparation of the teacher is based upon a particular view of what education is. It is based upon the view that education consists primarily, not in the imparting of information, but in a training of the faculties of the child; that the business of the teacher is not to teach, but to develop in the child a faculty which will enable the child to learn.

This child-centred notion of education seems to involve emancipation from a vast amount of drudgery. It used to

be thought necessary to do some hard work at school. When a textbook was given to a class, it was expected that the contents of the textbook should be mastered. But now all that has been changed. Storing up facts in the mind was a long and painful process, and it is indeed comforting to know that we can now do without it. Away with all drudgery and all hard work! Self-expression has taken their place. A great pedagogic discovery has been made—the discovery that it is possible to think with a completely empty mind.

It cannot be said that the results of the discovery are impressive. This child-centred notion of education has resulted, particularly in America, where it has been most ruthlessly applied, in a boundless superficiality of which we Americans certainly have little reason to be proud; but it has probably not been confined to America by any means. I wonder when the reaction will come. I wonder when we shall have that revival of learning which we so much need, and which I verily believe might be, in the providence of God, as was the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, the precursor of a Reformation in the Church. When that revival of learning comes, we may be sure that it will sweep away the present absurd over-emphasis upon methodology in teaching at the expense of content. We shall never have a true revival of learning until teachers turn their attention away from the mere mental processes of the child out into the marvelous richness and variety of the universe and of human life. Not teachers who have studied the methodology of teaching, but teachers who are on fire with a love of the subjects that they are going to teach are the real torch-bearers of intellectual advance.

Certainly the present view of education is, when it is applied to the work of the preacher and of the teacher in the Church, sceptical to the core. It is summed up in what is called "religious education." I wonder sometimes at the readiness with which Christian people—I do not mean Church-members, but real Bible-believing Christians—use that term; for the ordinary implications of the term are quite opposed to the Christian religion. The fundamental notion underlying the ordinary use of the term "religious education" is that the business of the teacher in the Church is not to impart knowledge of a fixed body of truth which God has revealed, but to train the religious faculty of the child. The religious faculty of the child, it is supposed, may be trained by the use of the most widely diverse doctrinal content: it may be trained in this generation, perhaps, by the thought of a personal God; but in another generation it may be trained equally well by the thought

of an ideal humanity as the only God there is. Thus the search for objective and permanent truth is given up, and instead we have turned our attention to the religious faculties of man. In other words, men have become interested today in religion because they have ceased to believe in God.

As over against such scepticism, the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, presents a body of truth which God has revealed; and if we hold the Biblical view, we shall regard it as our supreme function, as teachers and as preachers and as Christian parents and as simple Christians, to impart a knowledge of that body of truth. The Christian preacher, we shall hold, needs above all to know the thing that he is endeavoring to preach.

But if knowledge is necessary to preaching, it does seem probable that the fuller the knowledge is, the better the preacher will be able to do his work. Underlying preaching, in other words, is Christian scholarship; and it is in defence of Christian scholarship that I have thought it might be fitting to say a few words to you today.

Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow-men, in at least three ways.

In the first place, it is necessary for evangelism.\* In saying so, I am perfectly well aware of the fact that I am putting myself squarely in conflict with a method of religious work which is widely prevalent at the present time. Knowledge, the advocates of that method seem to think, is quite unnecessary to faith; at the beginning a man may be a Fundamentalist or a Modernist, he may hold a Christian or an anti-Christian view of Christ. Never mind; he is to be received, quite apart from his opinions, on the basis of "simple faith." Afterwards, indeed, he will, if he has really been converted, read his Bible and come to a more and more correct view of Christ and of the meaning of Christ's death. If he does not come to a more and more correct view, one may perhaps suspect that his conversion was not a real one after all. But at the beginning all that is thought to be unnecessary. All that a man has to believe in at the beginning is conversion: he is saved on the basis of simple faith; correct opinions about God and Christ come later.

With regard to this method, it may of course be said at once that the "simple faith" thus spoken of is not faith at all; or, rather, it is not faith in Christ. A man cannot trust a person whom he holds to be untrustworthy. Faith always contains an intellectual element. A very little knowledge is often sufficient if a man is to believe, but some knowledge there must be. So if a man is to trust Christ he must know something about Christ; he may know only a very little, but without some knowledge he could not believe at all.

What these advocates of a "simple faith" which involves no knowledge of Christ really mean by "simple faith" is

faith, perhaps, but it is not faith in Christ. It is faith in the practitioners of the method; but it is not faith in Christ. To have faith in Christ one must have knowledge of Christ, however slight; and it is not a matter of indifference whether the opinions held about Christ are true or false.

But is this modern anti-intellectualistic view of faith in accordance with the New Testament? Does the New Testament offer a man salvation first, on the basis of a psychological process of conversion or surrender—falsely called faith—and then preach the gospel to him afterwards; or does the New Testament preach the gospel to him first, set forth to him first the facts about Christ and the meaning of His death, and then ask him to accept the One thus presented in order that his soul may be saved?

That question can be answered very simply by an examination of the examples of conversion which the New Testament contains.

Three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost. They were converted by Peter's sermon. What did Peter's sermon contain? Did it contain merely an account of Peter's own experience of salvation; did it consist solely in exhortation to the people to confess their sins? Not at all. What Peter did on the day of Pentecost was to set forth the facts about Jesus Christ—His life, His miracles, His death, His resurrection. It was on the basis of that setting forth of the facts about Christ that the three thousand believed, confessed their sins, and were saved.

Paul and Silas were in prison one night at Philippi. There was a miracle; the prisoners were released. The jailor was impressed and said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Did the jailor believe then and there; was he saved without further delay? I think not. We are expressly told that Paul and Silas, after that, "spake unto him the word of the Lord." Then and not till then was he baptized, and I think we are plainly to understand that then and not till then was he saved.

Our Saviour sat one day by the well. He talked with a sinful woman, and laid His finger upon the sore spot in her life. "Thou hast had five husbands," He said; "and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." The woman then apparently sought to evade the consideration of the sin in her own life by asking a theological question regarding the right place in which to worship God. What did Jesus do with her theological question? Did He brush it aside after the manner of modern religious workers? Did He say to the woman: "You are evading the real question; do not trouble yourself about theological matters, but let us return to the consideration of the sin in your life." Not at all. He answered that theological question with the utmost fulness as though the salvation of the woman's soul depended on her obtaining the right answer. In reply to that sinful woman, and to what modern religious workers would have regarded as an evasive question, Jesus engaged in some of the profoundest theological teaching in the whole New Testament. A right view of God, according to Jesus, is not something that comes merely after salvation, but it is something important for salvation.

\* The other two lectures before the Bible League dealt with "The Importance of Christian Scholarship for the Defence of the Faith" and "The Importance of Christian Scholarship for the Building Up of the Church." All three lectures are published in the *Bible League Quarterly* for July-September, 1932, 45 Doughty Street, Bedford Row, London, W. C. 1.

The Apostle Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians gives a precious summary of his missionary preaching. He does so by telling what it was to which the Thessalonians turned when they were saved. Was it a mere program of life to which they turned? Was it a "simple faith," in the modern sense which divorces faith from knowledge and supposes that a man can have "simple faith" in a person of whom he knows nothing or about whom he holds opinions that make faith in him absurd? Not at all. In turning to Christ those Thessalonian Christians turned to a whole system of theology. "Ye turned to God from idols," says Paul, "to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." "Ye turned to God from idols"—there is theology proper. "And to wait for His Son from heaven"—there is Christology. "Whom He raised from the dead"—there is the supernatural act of God in history. "Even Jesus"—there is the humanity of our Lord. "Which delivereth us from the wrath to come"—there is the Christian doctrine of sin and the Christian doctrine of the Cross of Christ.

So it is in the New Testament from beginning to end. The examples might be multiplied indefinitely. The New Testament gives not one bit of comfort to those who separate faith from knowledge, to those who hold the absurd view that a man can trust a person about whom he knows nothing. What many men despise today as "doctrine" the New Testament calls the gospel; and the New Testament treats it as the message upon which salvation depends.

But if that be so, if salvation depends upon the message in which Christ is offered as Saviour, it is obviously important that we should get the message straight. That is where Christian scholarship comes in. Christian scholarship is important in order that we may tell the story of Jesus and His love straight and full and plain.

At this point, indeed, an objection may arise. Is not the gospel a very simple thing, it may be asked; and will not its simplicity be obscured by too much scholarly research? The objection springs from a false view of what scholarship is; it springs from the notion that scholarship leads a man to be obscure. Exactly the reverse is the case. Ignorance is obscure; but scholarship brings order out of confusion, places things in their logical relations, and makes the message shine forth clear.

There are, indeed, evangelists who are not scholars, but scholarship is necessary to evangelism all the same. In the first place, though there are evangelists who are not scholars, the greatest evangelists, like the Apostle Paul and like Martin Luther, have been scholars. In the second place, the evangelists who are not scholars are dependent upon scholars to help them get their message straight; it is out of a great underlying fund of Christian learning that true evangelism springs.

That is something that the Church of our day needs to take to heart. Life, according to the New Testament, is founded upon truth; and the attempt to reverse the order results only in despair and in spiritual death. Let us not deceive ourselves, my friends. Christian experience is

necessary to evangelism; but evangelism does not consist merely in the rehearsal of what has happened in the evangelist's own soul. We shall, indeed, be but poor witnesses for Christ if we can tell only what Christ has done for the world or for the Church and cannot tell what He has done personally for us. But we shall also be poor witnesses if we recount only the experiences of our own lives. Christian evangelism does not consist merely in a man's going about the world saying: "Look at me, what a wonderful experience I have, how happy I am, what wonderful Christian virtues I exhibit; you can all be as good and as happy as I am if you will just make a complete surrender of your wills in obedience to what I say." That is what many religious workers seem to think that evangelism is. We can preach the gospel, they tell us, by our lives, and do not need to preach it by our words. But they are wrong. Men are not saved by the exhibition of our glorious Christian virtues; they are not saved by the contagion of our experiences. We cannot be the instruments of God in saving them if we preach to them thus only ourselves. Nay, we must preach to them the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is only through the gospel which sets Him forth that they can be saved.

If you want health for your souls, and if you want to be the instruments of bringing health to others, do not turn your gaze forever within, as though you could find Christ there. Rather, turn your gaze away from your own miserable experiences, away from your own sin, to the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered to us in the gospel. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Only when we turn away from ourselves to that uplifted Saviour shall we have healing for our deadly hurt.

It is the same old story, my friends—the same old story of the natural man. Men are trying today, as they have always been trying, to save themselves—to save themselves by their own act of surrender, by the excellence of their own faith, by mystic experiences of their own lives. But it is all in vain. Not that way is peace with God to be obtained. It is to be obtained only in the old, old way—by attention to something that was done once for all long ago, and by acceptance of the living Saviour who there, once for all, brought redemption for our sin. Oh, that men would turn for salvation from their own experience to the Cross of Christ; oh, that they would turn from the phenomena of religion to the living God!

That that may be done, there is but one way. It is not found in a study of the psychology of religion; it is not found in "religious education"; it is not found in an analysis of one's own spiritual states. Oh, no. It is found only in the blessed written Word. There are the words of life. There God speaks. Let us attend to His voice. Let us above all things know the Word. Let us study it with all our minds, let us cherish it with all our hearts. Then let us try, very humbly, to bring it to the unsaved. Let us pray that God may honor not the messengers but the message, that despite our unworthiness He may make His Word upon our unworthy lips to be a message of life.