

# 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.

NOVEMBER, 1934  
Vol. 5 No. 6

\$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 GENERAL COUNCIL AS A CLOSE CORPORATION

**W**E have previously made clear that the General Council exceeded its legal powers when it proposed and in effect initiated judicial action against the members of the Independent Board. It is true that this action by the General Council has been defended on the ground that Section XII of Chapter XXVI of the Form of Government refers only to the General Councils of Synods and Presbyteries. The speciousness of this contention was pointed out in our last issue (p. 107). In this connection we are concerned to direct attention not only to the fact that the resolution adopted by the 1930 Assembly—which is relied upon to prove that only General Councils of Synods and Presbyteries are forbidden to deal with business of a judicial nature—was proposed by the General Council itself but that the membership of the General Council that initiated the action against the Independent Board in 1934 was very much the same as it was in 1930. Members in 1934 who were also members in 1930 include L. S. MUDGE, W. C. COVERT, C. B. McAFEE, H. B. MASTER, J. W. McIVOR, W. E. BROOKS, M. A. MATTHEWS, C. S. LAWRENCE and J. M. T. FINNEY. Members of the Administrative Committee of the General Council (its most important committee) in 1934 who were also members of this committee in 1930 include L. S. MUDGE, C. B. McAFEE, M. A. MATTHEWS and J. M. T. FINNEY. It will be generally agreed, we believe, that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. is largely controlled by its General Council, as the General Assembly is little more than a rubber stamp that gives validity to the decisions of the General Council. Obviously this was the case as far as the action against the members of the Independent Board is concerned. Probably, however, the degree to which the General Council is a close corporation is not so generally recognized. Explain it as we may, there seems to be no doubt but that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., despite its boasted democracy, is in effect controlled by a self-perpetuating hierarchy.

### THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY

**W**E take this occasion again to commend this theological review to the attention of the more scholarly of our readers. In exposition and defense of the historic Christian faith it comes nearer to filling the vacancy created by the passing of the Princeton Theological Review than any existing publication. DR. OSWALD T. ALLIS, former editor of the Princeton Review, is one of its associate editors. It is edited by DRs. JOHN R. MACKAY and DONALD MACLEAN of Edinburgh and published by James Clarke & Co. Ltd., London, but may be ordered through Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 234 Pearl Street, N. W., Grand Rapids, Michigan (price ten shillings per annum). It seems to us

that every minister ought to be a regular reader of a scholarly magazine of this type—for the preservation of his intellectual self-respect if for no other reason. DR. W. CHILDS ROBINSON, of Columbia Seminary, who writes our Southern Presbyterian Church letter, has recently contributed two notable articles to this magazine under the titles "Jesus Christ Is Jehovah" and "The Theocentric Theology Implicit in the Name of the Trinity." Its contributors include European as well as English and American scholars so that in fact as well as in name it is "international in scope and outlook." Book reviews constitute an outstanding feature.

### AUBURN AFFIRMATIONISTS LAUNCH ORGAN

**U**NDER the title of "*The Presbyterian Tribune*" a group of Auburn Affirmationists has launched a bi-weekly paper. Both in appearance and content its first issue (October 4th) is quite similar to that of the defunct *Presbyterian Advance* of which it is professedly a continuation. Its publication office is located at 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

In referring to this new paper as an organ of the Auburn Affirmationists we do not mean to assert that it makes this claim for itself. However *The Christian Century*—misnamed if we mistake not—which "extends good wishes in unlimited measure," has stated that "building on the support of the group which signed the 'Auburn Affirmation,' the promoters of the *Tribune* hope to prove that there is sufficient liberalism within the Presbyterian denomination to keep a periodical going" (Oct. 3, p. 1229). That this representation is amply warranted is indicated not only by the fact that its editor is an Auburn Affirmationist but by the fact that fifteen of the twenty-two ministers on its "Editorial Council" and among its "Special Contributors" are also Auburn Affirmationists. What is more, the other seven include outstanding Presbyterian liberals. How thorough-going this paper expects to be in its liberalism is indicated by the fact that it "aspires" to be a denominational rather than an interdenominational magazine because the latter field is "already ably and brilliantly covered by the *Christian Century*." Its close sympathy with the *Christian Century* is further indicated by the fact that its editor is and expects to remain on the staff of the *Christian Century*.

We are told that "this new paper is not being launched to carry on theological controversy" but rather "to apply the spirit and ethic of Jesus Christ to the baffling problems of this day." Such statements, however, should be taken with several grains of salt. A paper whose theological assumptions and presuppositions are those of Modernism is necessarily engaged in theological propaganda even if it contains little formal theological discussion. Moreover it should be remembered that the ethic of Christianity is tied up with its doctrines. It is self-deception to suppose that the ideals and attitudes of Christianity will long

## Westminster Seminary Begins Sixth Year

WESTMINSTER Seminary opened for its sixth year with exercises held in Witherspoon Auditorium, Philadelphia, on the afternoon of September 26th before a large audience. Chief speaker was President Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, President of Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia, who delivered an outstanding address on "Our search for truth: To what is it leading?" This address will be published in a later issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY.

Presiding was the Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D., Litt., D., chairman of the Faculty. The invocation was offered by the Rev. Arthur R. Porter, D.D., of Drexel Hill, Pa. The Scripture was read by the Rev. Howard C. Cooper, of the East Park Church, Phila., Pa. Prayer was offered by Herbert W. Bieber, D.D., of Bala-Cynwyd, Pa., and the Rev. H. H. Kurtz, of Brandywine Manor, Pa. The hymns were "O God, the Rock of Ages"; "Who is on the Lord's Side?"; "Awake my soul stretch every nerve." The Benediction was pronounced by the Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D.

The enrollment of students for this year is ninety, the largest since the founding of the seminary.

### Dr. Machen's Address To New Students

Dr. Machen, in welcoming the new students touched upon the great doctrinal issue concerning authority, now being raised in the Church. Afterward a spectator, not connected in any way with the Seminary, remarked: "It was one of the bravest things he ever said." He spoke with an earnestness which made all present feel the solemnity of the occasion, as follows:

"Westminster Theological Seminary today begins its sixth year. All indications are that it will have the largest enrollment in its history. Apparently the attacks that have been made upon it have not prevented men from entering its walls. Even the letter sent by the Moderator of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in the name of the Administrative Committee of the General Council, to all the ministers and sessions in the Church, in which letter the Seminary is attacked as being part of a divisive movement, has apparently not made men afraid to be identified with such an unpopular institution.

"What is the Seminary endeavoring to do? What is it asking that its students shall learn?"

"That question can be answered very simply. The curriculum of the Seminary is indeed rather broad. It embraces, for example, a survey of the whole history of the Church in the past nineteen hundred years.

It includes some account of the problems dealt with by philosophy—the problem of knowledge, the problem of the existence of the world. But at the heart and core of its curriculum, giving life and movement to all the rest, is found the study of a Book. That Book is the Bible, the Word of God.

"The authority of the Bible has been assailed in many ways during the past nineteen hundred years. It has been assailed of course by those who deny definitely and clearly that the Bible is true. But it has also been assailed in subtler and more dangerous ways. Especially has it been attacked by those who claim the right to interpret it authoritatively, by those who seek thus to put some living human authority between it and the plain man's reading of its words.

"In that way it is attacked by the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church does not deny the truth of the Bible. No, it defends the truth of the Bible. Noble service has been rendered, and is just now being rendered, by Roman Catholic scholars in the defense of the truth of the Word of God. We rejoice in the labors of such scholars and we have deep sympathy with the great Church that they represent. But we are opposed to the Roman Catholic position. Why are we opposed to it? For one great central reason—because it holds that there is a living human authority that has a right to give an authoritative interpretation of the Bible. We are opposed to it because it holds that the seat of authority in religion is not just the Bible, but the Bible interpreted authoritatively by the Church. That, we hold, is a deadly error indeed: it puts fallible men in a place of authority that belongs only to the Word of God.

"The same thing exactly was done by the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. That Assembly abandoned the Reformation and returned essentially to the Roman Catholic position. It held that it is the duty of every officer and member of the Church to support whatever missionary program may be set up by the shifting votes of the General Assembly. It held, in particular, that a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. may not examine the missionary program to determine whether it is in accord with the Word of God, giving his support to it if it is in accord with the Word of God and withholding his support if it is contrary to the Word of God. No, it held that a minister must take the Bible from his pulpit desk and put the Minutes of the last General Assembly in its place, or rather that he must keep the Bible there but put the Minutes of the General Assembly on top of it, limiting his interpretation of the Bible

to what the last General Assembly says that the Bible means.

"That demand was contrary to the heart and core of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Being contrary to the Constitution of the Church, it was a lawless, rebellious act. It was also contrary to the heart and core of Protestantism; it meant the abandonment of the right of private judgment for which our fathers suffered and bled and died. But it was contrary to something more than the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.; it was contrary to the Word of the living God.

"What will be the result of this conflict between the Bible and the General Assembly. The General Assembly might seem to have everything on its side. It has ample funds to carry on its propaganda; it has ample funds to be used in the defamation of those who dare to defend the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church and dare to defend the high liberty which is guaranteed to every Christian man by the Word of God. It has the power, through subservient presbyteries, to close the door of opportunity in the way of those men who will not promise as a condition of ordination that they will support some human authority instead of obeying the injunctions of the Word of God. It has the whole world on its side. The whole spirit of the present age is contrary to liberty and in favor of just such actions as the action of this last General Assembly.

"Yet we make bold to think that the General Assembly ultimately will be the loser in this battle. Many times have bodies of men tried to hinder the preaching of the gospel, ever since those disciples said to the Lord Jesus about one who was casting out demons in the name of Christ but was not in their little company: 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him because he followeth not us.' Many times has ecclesiastical authority thought that it could prevent the preaching of the cross of Christ at home and abroad. Yet all such efforts have been vain. Again and again has the teaching of Scripture been found to be true that 'the Word of God is not bound.' So we do not fear the attack which the General Assembly has made upon the Bible. The Bible will triumph in the end.

"We welcome you, therefore, at Westminster Seminary, to the study of this Book. It is a dangerous book to study. The study of it may lead you to sacrifice the favor of men and to suffer for the sake of Christ. Yet we bid you study it all the same. It may cost you the favor of men, but if you study it aright it will gain for you the favor of God."