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## "MISERABLE-SINNER CHRISTIANITY" IN THE HANDS OF THE RATIONALISTS

### III. WINDISCH AND THE END

The assault on the Reformation conception of the Christian life could not end on so ambiguous a note as that struck by Pfeleiderer. On the contrary, what may very properly be spoken of as the last word said in furtherance of it, was the most direct that had been said since Wernle's own, and in many respects the most forceful and telling of all. We are referring, of course, to Hans Windisch's at once brilliant and ponderous volume on *Baptism and Sin in the Oldest Christianity up to Origen*,<sup>1</sup> which was published in 1908. We have already pointed out the relation of the book to Wernle's published twelve years before. It came into the controversy which Wernle had provoked, very distinctly at the end, when the debate was languishing, and indeed, from the point of view of Wernle's contentions, when the battle was lost. It had much the appearance accordingly of a last vigorous attack, seeking to wring a victory out of defeat. And assuredly little was left unsaid by Windisch that could be said to rescue and save a lost cause.

What Windisch undertakes to do, to speak now of the formal contents of his volume, is to take up Wernle's proposition that to Paul Christians are in their actual nature sinless men, to justify it by a really thorough exegetical survey of the Pauline material, and then to place it in its histor-

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<sup>1</sup>*Taufe und Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origines. Ein Beitrag zur altchristlichen Dogmengeschichte*, 1908. The book, published when he was twenty-seven years old, was Windisch's first book; at least it was preceded only by his Doctor's dissertation on *The Theodicy of Justin*, 1906.

## THE CHURCHMANSHIP OF WILLIAM HENRY ROBERTS

The service of the late Dr. Roberts to the cause of his Master was many sided. During his whole ministry he was a faithful and convincing preacher of the gospel. Evangelism was constantly on his mind and heart and he was interested in every movement directed towards the conversion of souls. He had the pastoral instinct and his annual reports to the General Assembly on Christian Life and Work revealed his close and sympathetic touch with all the problems of the parish. He loved to teach and every phase of Christian education challenged his attention and coöperation. The long list of books and pamphlets and reports of which he was the author or editor is an enduring monument to his literary taste and ability. He was a noble spirited citizen and patriot, and loyally supported any enterprise which served the betterment of the community and the welfare of the nation. His business training, knowledge of men and administrative talent admirably fitted him for the executive positions which he filled with marked efficiency. But Dr. Roberts was preëminently a churchman who loved and served the Church of Christ with an ardor and a diligence which few men in his generation have equalled.

One would naturally expect this as an outcome of his early training. He was a son of the manse. His father for fifty-eight years was a minister in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church and was abundantly blessed in his labors for Christ. He had a record of more than five thousand converts won to Christ under his preaching. The son was justly proud of such a noble father and declared—"I am what I am from the human side because of what he did for me as a young man." His college training was in an institution affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, and the formative influence of home and college took such a strong hold upon him that although he turned aside for a few years to serve the State in the Treasury Department and the Congressional Library, the call of the Church was irresistible. Completing his

training for the ministry in "The Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church" at Princeton, he held a brief pastorate at Cranford, New Jersey, then became Librarian of Princeton Seminary and rendered a service of lasting value in organizing this important department of theological discipline when a new library building was occupied in the year 1879. This experience of nine years duration acquainted him with the literature of the Church and his service of seven years in the Chair of Practical Theology in Lane Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, gave him the opportunity to study in detail the life and work of the Church in its claims upon the Christian ministry.

Meanwhile he had been elected to the office of Permanent Clerk of the General Assembly and when the office of Stated Clerk was vacated by the death of Dr. Hatfield, Dr. Roberts was elected to the position in 1884. It is interesting to note that Dr. Hatfield died, as did Dr. Roberts, at the age of seventy-six, and counting his service in the New School Assembly, he filled the office of Stated Clerk for thirty-seven years, surpassing Dr. Roberts' term by one year. This office gave Dr. Roberts points of contact with every phase of church life and activity, and with his organizing instinct, talent for details and zeal for the mastery of any subject or problem which confronted him, he became in time a veritable ecclesiastical encyclopedia. Back of his authoritative knowledge of matters pertaining to organized Christianity, was his deep interest in and loyal devotion to the Church which he served. It may be remarked that the deliberations of Church courts are not always electric and to sit through the prolonged sessions of Boards and Committees whose number is legion requires a store of grace and patience which souls only of rare endowment can accumulate. Those who were intimately associated with Dr. Roberts will testify that on no occasion did he ever display lack of interest in any fact, figure or fancy that had any bearing upon the work of the Church. It was his meat and his drink to consider and discuss the affairs of all churches in general and of his own church in particular.

His pride in the history, the doctrine, government, worship and service of the Presbyterian Church was not obscured by any bushel. Whatever claim any church might make as to preëminence could be challenged by Dr. Roberts with a counter and superior claim of Presbyterianism. He resented the assumption that Congregationalism alone can claim descent from the Pilgrim fathers and insisted that Presbyterians in their doctrine, polity and worship have a closer kinship with the founders of the New England Colonies than any other American Christians. His authorship was almost wholly along denominational lines, and he has placed Presbyterians under obligations which cannot be measured by the material which he has gathered and put into useful shape, bearing upon the Constitution of our Church. Believing that the Reformed Theology and the Presbyterian System have a special mission in world redemption, he deplored the divisions among those churches which claim Calvin as their spiritual progenitor, and to bring about closer relations he gave unreservedly his best energies. The Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian System was to his mind a great forward step in the direction of organic union, and through the Council of the Reformed Churches in America holding the Presbyterian System, he hoped for such a co-operation among kindred Calvinistic churches as would greatly advance the interests of Christian Unity and of the Kingdom of Christ.

In 1903 when the Assembly appointed a Committee on Church Coöperation and Union he was made the Chairman and with unflinching tact and judgment, with whole-hearted interest and self-denying effort through the intervening years he has faithfully endeavored to promote the expressed desire of the Assembly for a closer "coöperation, confederation and consolidation with other churches." It was largely through his leadership that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was reunited with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. One of the most impressive scenes ever witnessed

in any of our Assembly meetings was the one at Philadelphia when the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church came as a body into the membership of the Presbyterian Church. Referring to this union Dr. Roberts, a few days afterwards, testified, "It was the crown of my life for which I shall always thank God alike in earth and heaven."

One would hardly expect such a devout Presbyterian to advocate union with churches other than those belonging to the Calvinistic group. But, acting under the instructions of our highest court—the Assembly—Dr. Roberts has been a zealous advocate and promoter of coöperation among all evangelical churches. He took a prominent part in the organization of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. For a number of years he was Chairman of its Executive Committee, and also Chairman of its Committee on Evangelism, and up to the time of his death he was a member of its Administrative Committee. When the Protestant Episcopal Church proposed a World Conference on Faith and Order Dr. Roberts led the Assembly to a most sympathetic response and in all the preliminary conferences held in America Dr. Roberts was recognized as an outstanding figure among the non-episcopal churches whose wide acquaintance, expert knowledge of religious conditions at home and abroad and well-balanced judgment, made him an indispensable counsellor. He had hoped to attend the Preliminary Conference at Geneva, but failing health compelled him with great reluctance to abandon the idea.

The Assembly at its meeting in Columbus two years ago received a large number of overtures dealing with a proposed union of all evangelical churches in the United States. In answer to these overtures and upon the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Bills and Overtures the Assembly unanimously and by a rising vote took the following action:

"We do declare and place on record our profound conviction that the time has come for Organic Church Union of the Evangelical Churches of America.

"This Assembly overtures the National Bodies of the

Evangelical Communities of America to meet with our representatives for the purpose of formulating a Plan of Organic Union."

The Assembly's Committee on Church Coöperation and Union "is authorized and directed to designate a place and time, not later than January 1, 1919, for the above named convention: to prepare a suitable invitation; to fix the ratio of representation; and appoint the delegates of our Body, to prepare a tentative plan of Organic Union for presentation and to attend to all necessary arrangements."

Whatever views Dr. Roberts may have personally held as to the wisdom of such a momentous action, the orders of the Assembly were clear and explicit and so he threw himself with his wonted zeal into the leadership of the movement for Organic Union of the Evangelical Churches. He was elected the Chairman of the first Council and of its Ad interim Committee. He was greatly concerned lest the Assembly at Philadelphia might misinterpret the Plan of Union and misjudge the brethren of his own and other communions who in all the negotiations had not given the slightest hint of a desire to depart from the evangelical faith, but on the contrary, had exhibited only that loyalty to Christ as Saviour and Lord which could serve as a basis for coöperation in the advancement of His Kingdom. His association with the brethren of other communions, the intimate friendships which he formed had disarmed all the suspicions and fears which he might have entertained as in the case of strangers, and made him eager for union with those who had been invited to meet solely on an evangelical platform. And when the Assembly approved the plan, it seemed a fitting response to the appeal which he made from his chair on the platform when welcoming his Welsh brethren, the Lord seemed to give him in his weakness supernatural strength to say "But above all other things let us work with them and with all other Christians in that cause to which I have devoted my life, 'that they all may be one'; that is my message to you and to all other Christians, 'that they all may be one,' God bless us all."

It is significant that Dr. Roberts was not in sympathy with the Interchurch World Movement and mainly because he felt that the movement had not emerged in a natural and spontaneous way from the churches so as to wholly represent their mind and purpose and spirit, but had been thrust upon the churches in a frenzied effort to apply war standards and measures to Christian enterprises. It was not what it claimed to be and meant to be—an Inter-Church Movement. This again revealed his whole-hearted loyalty to the Christian Church as the divinely ordained agency for the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth. An old chronicle in its description of an English gentleman stated that although he was not a religious man, he was otherwise an ideal churchman. Dr. Roberts as a great churchman believed in all the "notes" of the church which have been embodied in the Creeds, viz: Unity, Catholicity, Apostolicity and holiness. The last message which he gave to the Presbyterian Church, speaking as an aged Simeon about to depart, reveals the simple faith in Christ which was back of all his churchmanship.

"And now brethren, let us stand together. Let all controversy cease. Shoulder to shoulder let us go forward in the great work which God has entrusted to us. I tell you there is a vast amount of responsibility on the Presbyterian Church in these critical days, and may God enable us in all our congregations, our presbyteries, our synods, and especially in the General Assembly, to be true to that responsibility. God bless us all wherever we labor, and God grant us all one of these days to meet the Lord face to face. When God will order me so to do, I know not. But I wish to bear clear testimony here on this platform to my faith, my absolute faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and that He will keep His every promise made unto me and to all believers. I thank you, brethren and friends."

The Assembly then rose and sang "Blest be the tie that binds."

*Princeton.*

J. ROSS STEVENSON.