

The Presbyterian Outlook

Continuing The Presbyterian



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Early Assembly Actions

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MAY 9 1960

First Arkansas leader in 60 years is elected moderator of the 100th General Assembly in Jacksonville: Marion A. Boggs who completes the first team of brothers (with Wade H. Boggs) to be moderators. . . . Retiring moderator, Ernest Trice Thompson, calls for church leadership to set tone for society and presents joint "Message to the Nation" with UPUSA leaders. . . . Ad interim study on adult work is approved and committee is continued. . . . Benevolence budget for 1961 adopted for \$9,456,230. . . . Examination of tithing is directed. . . . Central treasureship to be studied. . . . Tobacco stocks held by agencies are left untouched. . . . Book of Church Order sent to presbyteries for vote as presented by committee. . . . Possible dual ordination (with Episcopalians) not recognized. . . . Per capita tax raised from 21¢ to 27¢ without discussion. . . . Formal induction of James A. Millard, Jr., as stated clerk is scheduled. . . . "Stewardship of accumulated possessions" called for by Presbyterian Foundation. . . . Annuities and Relief program is praised. . . . Presbyterian Survey circulation marks 228,000. . . . Ambitious plans noted in television, radio, audio-visuals. . . . Minister's moving expense is certified as a "church expense." . . . Protest of persecutions in Colombia is issued. . . . Request of Mexican church for full fraternal relationship is recognized. (Continued next week.)

The Presbyterian Outlook

OLD IN SERVICE

CONTINUING THE PRESBYTERIAN TRIBUNE

NEW IN SPIRIT

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Little Rock Pastor Becomes Assembly's Moderator

**Marion A. Boggs of Second Church
Is Elected by 100th Assembly
In Jacksonville**

An Arkansas "favorite son" was named moderator of the 100th Presbyterian, U.S. General Assembly, meeting in Jacksonville, Fla.

Marion A. Boggs, pastor of the Second church, Little Rock, since 1939 and with all but one year of his ministerial life spent in the Synod of Arkansas, became the first moderator from that synod since Joseph W. Martin, chief justice of Arkansas' Supreme Court, was elected in 1900.

Dr Boggs received 260 votes in a final ballot against R. Matthew Lynn of the First church, Midland, Texas, who received 251. The first ballot eliminated H. E. (Jeb) Russell, Second church, Memphis, Tenn., and James Sprunt, Bethel church, Staunton, Va. The vote was: Boggs 146, Lynn 136, Russell 135, Sprunt 94.

Gavel and Celtic Cross

Dr. Boggs was inducted into office by the retiring moderator, Ernest Trice Thompson of Richmond, Va. He was presented the symbolic gavel and the traditional Celtic cross which is held by successive Assembly moderators in the U.S. and UPUSA churches. The crosses were originally three until the 1958 merger of the U. P. and USA Presbyterian Churches when two of them were welded. Originally contributed by former moderator Harrison Ray Anderson, Fourth church, Chicago, Ill., consistent worker for Presbyterian reunion, they are reminders of the hope of eventual union of the divided Presbyterian family when the crosses will become one.

Dr. Boggs was nominated by President Samuel Burney Hay of Stillman College (Ala.) who paid tribute to Dr. Boggs' long and diverse contributions to the church. J. Randolph Taylor, Washington, D. C., pastor, seconded the nomination, describing Dr. Boggs as "a man of symbolic significance . . . a man who has become the epitomized expression of the kind of reconciliation that we in our General Assembly would serve and should serve in the light of our present day." As Little Rock has become a symbol to the world, he said, "so we have



DR. BOGGS: "A man of
symbolic significance."

a symbol of the kind of ministry of reconciliation whereby we would obey the Pauline injunction to 'speak the truth in love.' " Dr. Boggs has been true to his prophetic insight, he said, "and yet at the same time has not lost the vision of his pastoral responsibilities and has held his laymen to him."

Dr. Lynn was nominated by Lawrence Stell, Charlotte, N. C., pastor, and Hubert H. Hopper, Dallas, Texas, Presbyterian executive, who described his far-reaching service and his identity with the full scope of the church's concern.

M. Graham Clark, Point Lookout, Mo., nominated Dr. Russell and the seconding speech was made by D. Brantley Burns, Knoxville, Tenn., elder. James Sprunt was nominated by R. F. Kepler, Staunton, Va., and Ralph E. Moore, Cleveland, Tenn.

Newspapers in Jacksonville had also predicted the nomination of Arthur V. Gibson, Atlanta, Ga., pastor, but it was understood that a decision against this step was reached on the afternoon before the Assembly opened.

When the Assembly opened, 513 commissioners had been enrolled and this number was later increased to 521.

Dr. Boggs' election marked the first time in the church's history that brothers

Mexican Fraternal Delegate Urges Consideration of His Church On Basis of Equality

have been elected moderators of the Assembly. Wade H. Boggs, Atlanta, Ga., former executive secretary of the Board of Annuities and Relief, now retired, was moderator in 1954.

In addition to the retiring moderator's sermon (page 5), Dr. Thompson also presented a joint "Message to the Nation," drawn up by a committee of eight, named by the UPUSA and U. S. moderators (page 8). This was something new in the Assembly's history and it was not presented for any possible action by the Assembly.

Riverside Entertainment

Albert J. Kissling, pastor of the host Riverside church, welcomed the Assembly, read a letter of greeting from Governor LeRoy Collins, and presented Howard Covington, chairman of the Riverside committee, who said, "I have often wondered why a General Assembly never repeated itself in a church. I now know!" A full corps of workers from Riverside and other Jacksonville churches provided efficiently and imaginatively for the comfort and expeditious operation of the Assembly. It was the judgment of commissioners that no church has provided more commodious and up-to-date facilities for this annual meeting.

In the extended first-evening session, the moderator received a plaque from officials of Boy Scouts of America, marking Scouting's 50th anniversary, in appreciation of the fact that a higher percentage of Presbyterian congregations sponsor Scout troops than any other denomination.

Chaplains Presented

Eighteen active-duty chaplains were recognized by the Assembly and tribute was paid their work in the Armed Forces and Veterans Administration.

Five former Assembly moderators were presented: John R. Cunningham (1947), C. Darby Fulton (1948), W. E. Price (1949), J. McDowell Richards (1955), William M. Elliott, Jr., (1957). Also, E. C. Scott, who retired last year after 24 years as the Assembly's stated clerk, was presented.

Christ and You—The Living Church

TEXT: Matthew 16:13-24

THE WORD CHURCH has many different meanings. It refers sometimes to a building, sometimes to a local congregation, sometimes to a denomination, and sometimes to the church universal. Theologians speak of the invisible church and the visible church, the church militant and the church triumphant. We are interested at the present time in the living church, the church in which we meet Christ, and in which Christ lays hold upon our lives.

It will help us to understand this church if we go back to the words that Jesus spoke to Peter on the road to Caesarea Philippi.

I.

"Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" Jesus asked, and then, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

According to John's account, this was not the first confession of the disciples' faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. (See John 2:41-45.) But the earlier confessions had been based on the witness of John the Baptist and of the popular expectation of a political messiah who would save the nation from Rome. Peter's confession on the road to Caesarea Philippi was based on inner conviction. It grew out of his own personal experience and was altogether independent of public opinion. It was an acknowledgment which came from his recognition of the divine in Jesus. God had revealed himself to Peter through Jesus, and it was Peter's response to that divine revelation which led him to affirm, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The earlier confessions, which reflected the opinions of others and were based on the conventional view of the Christ, brought no particular commendation. Now Jesus declares exultantly, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

Personal Revelation

We might note here that genuine or vital faith always comes as a response to a personal revelation. We can teach our children that God is their Father and that Jesus is Savior and Lord, and they will believe because of what we have told them, but that is not a faith that will

By ERNEST T. THOMPSON

endure despite all the vicissitudes of life. A really vital faith is not present until God in person has spoken through Christ and until a growing boy or girl, man or woman responds to that personal revelation within his heart; until he can say as a result of inner conviction, of personal experience, independent of the views of others about him, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

It was now, when God had revealed himself to Peter and when Peter had responded in faith to that revelation, that Jesus spoke for the first time of the church; "my church," he called it.

The Greek word translated church is *ecclesia*, which comes from two roots meaning to call out from. Contemporary writers used the word to describe an assembly of citizens. In the *Septuagint*, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *ecclesia*, or church, is used to describe Israel as the People of God, called to the worship and service of God. But Israel had been chosen for a purpose, not only to know God but to make him known—not only to enjoy God's blessings but also to share these blessings with all mankind—and that mission had been forgotten. The Messianic hope had become for most Jews a purely nationalistic one. They looked now only for the exaltation of their own people, and it was largely for this reason that they did not recognize their Messiah when he came. Now Jesus is about to call out from Israel a group that will be charged with the responsibility of carrying out God's purpose for all mankind in the place of the Israel which had rejected its divine mission.

II. The Foundation of the Church

"You are Peter (Greek, *Petros*)," Jesus said, "and on this rock (Greek, *Petra*) I will build my church." What is the rock, the foundation on which Christ will build his church?

Roman Catholics, as we know, say that this rock is Peter and his successors, the Bishops of Rome. They claim that the present Bishop of Rome, as successor of Peter and vicar of Christ, is the absolute ruler of the church, and that when he speaks officially as head of the church he is infallible in matters of faith and morals.

To substantiate this claim, Roman Catholics would have to prove at least five points: They would have to prove first, that when Jesus said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my

church," he meant to make Peter infallible and to give him absolute power in the church, but there is no such evidence in the New Testament; quite the contrary. They would have to prove in the second place that such power as Peter had was transferable, and of this there is not the slightest hint in the Scriptures, and in fact, no such claim was made by the Bishops of Rome until many generations had passed. Roman Catholics would have to prove in the third place that Peter visited Rome. Probably this is so, but the evidence is late and uncertain. Fourth, they would have to prove that Peter became the Bishop of Rome, but the evidence all indicates that Rome had no single Bishop until late in the second century. Fifth, they would have to prove that Peter sought to transmit such power as he possessed to the Bishops of Rome as his successors. This, for the reason indicated above, could hardly have been the case, and there is no evidence that any Bishop of Rome even claimed it was for more than two hundred years. The Roman Catholic Church would have to prove all five of these points.

As a matter of fact, it can prove no one of the five.

If Peter was the rock on which the church was founded, it was because he was the first to confess his faith in Christ and because he was the natural leader of the twelve, the one, who humanly speaking, did more than anyone else to establish the church.

Protestant Position

Protestants generally, however, hold that the rock on which the church is founded is the truth which Peter confessed or the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This is the logical interpretation, for if Jesus had wished to say that his church was founded on Peter, he would naturally have said, "You are Peter, and upon you I will build my church." And if he had wished to say that his church was founded by Peter and his successors, he would naturally have said, "You are Peter, and upon you and your successors in office I will build my church."

The Protestant interpretation is not only the natural interpretation, but also accords with the Scripture as a whole. The Apostle Paul had a great deal to say about the church, and on several occasions he likens it to a building, but the foundation on which the church is built is never Peter, it is always Jesus. (See Eph. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 3:11.)

DR. THOMPSON preached this sermon as the retiring moderator at the opening of the 100th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., in the Riverside church, Jacksonville, Fla.

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Peter too compares the church to a building, and to a building founded on Christ Jesus, not himself. "Come to him," he cries (1 Peter 2:4), "to that living stone rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious, and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, for it stands in Scripture, 'I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him (i.e., Jesus) will not be put to shame.'" The two apostles agree then that the church is built on Jesus who is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that it is composed of men who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, and who receive from him a common life—men, that is, who are called out from the world to worship and serve God through Jesus Christ.

III. The Future of the Church

It was of this church that Jesus said, "The powers of death shall not prevail against it." To the men of that time it must have seemed amazing for one to predict that from this humble beginning there would come a society that would endure to the end of time. Yet that prediction has been fulfilled to this present moment. Every other society then in existence has perished, but the church is more widely spread in the world today than ever before in its history.

As one of our hymns has it, "O where are kings and empires now of old that went and came, but Lord thy church is praying yet a thousand years the same."

But notice that Jesus did not promise that the church cannot suffer loss, or go into eclipse, or even die in any particular locality, in any particular country, or in any particular region. He does not say that the Presbyterian Church in your own community will never languish or die. He does not say that the Presbyterian Church in the United States will not lose its influence. He does not say that Protestantism will necessarily survive. He does not say that the church behind the Iron Curtain will not finally be extinguished. On the other hand he warned us, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men." And that warning has been realized in many parts of the world. In many places where once strong and flourishing it is now weak, dying or dead. The church itself will not die, but the church in any particular place may decline and even die, and it will do so unless it fulfills its God-given function.

What then is the function of the church?

IV. The Function of the Church

Jesus describes that function in different language on different occasions. Here

he puts it in two figures, and first, the figure of the keys. "I will give you," he says, "the keys to the kingdom of heaven."

The kingdom of heaven, Matthew's regular term for the kingdom of God, is God's reign among men on this earth, as well as in the world to come. It includes those blessings which are available for men and for society when the reign of God becomes a fact. Now Jesus gives to Peter, and to all after him who believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the keys that will open these blessings to other men in this life and in the life to come. It is our primary responsibility then, as believers in Christ, to open the way for men to find these blessings which God, on his part, is always ready to give. And, unless that responsibility is accepted by members of the church as well as its ministers, the church will finally wither and die. In our missions overseas, in the rapidly growing cities of our homeland, in our projected Mission to the Nation, the Presbyterian Church in the United States has today an unparalleled opportunity to open the doors of the kingdom to men that it dare not let slip out of its hands.

But Jesus does not stop with the figure of the keys. "Whatever you bind on earth," he continues, "shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This verse, translated by Moffatt, reads, "Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven." That is the exact meaning of Jesus' words in modern speech, for to bind and loose were technical expressions used by the rabbis, meaning to permit and to forbid certain courses of action. Matthew 18:18, makes it clear that this authority is given not only to Peter, but also to the early Christian community. Through them the Risen Christ was to express his will. Through them he was to carry out his purpose. What they ordered Christ would desire. What they forbade Christ would disapprove.

The fulfillment of this tremendous promise is found in the writings of the New Testament where the Apostles laid down the principles which will henceforth guide the consciences of men. Other New Testament passages, for example Matthew 28:19, make it clear that in a lesser sense this power continues to be exercised by those followers of Jesus who, by their teaching or lives, by their words or examples, impress the world more deeply with a sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is permitted and what is forbidden. The church is the appointed agency through which God's reign and his righteousness are to be extended on earth. It is the appointed agency through which the moral judgments of God revealed in Scripture may find concrete and definite expression. Our

task as individual members of the church is to see that the moral judgments of God are clearly and adequately expressed through us.

World in the Church

But what troubles me as I follow the history of the church is that so often the moral judgments of the church reflect the prejudices and interests of its members rather than the moral judgments of God. This fact has been illustrated over and over again. To many observers of our modern society the church seems to reflect the opinions of the world about it rather than the mind of Christ, to lag behind rather than to lead in moral and ethical sensitivity. This may be inevitable. The church is now so largely identified with society that it naturally reflects the viewpoint of society as a whole. It cannot be too far ahead of the world, because there is so much of the world in the church.

What we have a right to expect, I think, is that the minister will reflect the judgments of Christ and not the judgments of the world, that our church officers and Sunday school teachers, and at least a minority of active Christian laymen will be ahead of the world and not behind it in their ethical thinking; that there will be, in other words, a cutting edge, a creative minority within the church, more sensitive than others to the mind of Christ, who shall point the way in which the consciences of men will ultimately move; and that our church courts, particularly our highest church court, will reflect this creative, forward-looking, more fully Christian point-of-view.

But unfortunately church leaders themselves often reflect the viewpoint of the world rather than the viewpoint of Christ.

We should not be too much surprised, I suppose, because that was the case of Simon Peter himself. In Matthew 16:21 we read that "from that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. Peter began to rebuke him saying, 'God forbid Lord, this shall never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me, for you are not on the side of God but of men.'"

Jesus is speaking here to the Apostle whom a moment ago he had so highly commended, the Apostle who had just confessed his faith in him as the Son of God, the Apostle who in time would do more to establish the church than any other. And now Jesus tells this man that he is a spokesman of the devil, that he is a hindrance to him rather than a help, that he is not for God but against him.

First, but not Last

Is it really possible for a man to believe in Christ and yet not have the mind of Christ, to be rather a spokesman of the devil, to hinder rather than to help Christ's cause, to be fighting in the ranks of those who are opposed rather than those who aid the progress of the kingdom of God?

Of course it is. Peter was the first of such men, but by no means the last. In every age there have been men who have acknowledged Jesus as Lord, and yet in this battle or that they fought on the side of the devil rather than on the side of God. I imagine we all know such men today, or think we do. We may be wrong in our judgments, yet such men there are, or otherwise the church would not be so divided in its judgments regarding the critical issues of the day.

As a matter of fact this is true of all of us at one time or another, in one area of our life or another.

As we look back over our lives we will have to admit that there have been times when we too have allowed the devil to use us for his mouthpiece. There have been occasions when we hindered rather than helped the cause of Christ. There have been issues in which we have been ranged on the popular side, that is, on man's side, rather than on God's side, which so often is other than the popular side.

And since this is so, we will have to admit that there is a possibility that such is still the case, that in one respect or another we reflect the mind of the world and not the mind of Christ, that on this point or that we are spokesmen for the devil, that in this cause or that we are a hindrance rather than a help, that in this issue or that we are on men's side rather than on God's side. We do not know that this is the case, of course, but we have to admit that there is that possibility. This is true because our minds are molded by the traditions that have come down to us, by the pressures that flow in from every side, and it is difficult for us to escape the errors of our age.

Not to recognize that this is the case means that our eyes are shut to the light that might otherwise come to us from his Word, that we do not recognize our own shortcomings and therefore do not in penitence seek his pardoning grace as we ought, that in consequence we are lacking in sympathy and understanding of our fellowmen.

To Avoid the Danger

How can we avoid this danger to which Peter and we, with so many others, have succumbed?

We cannot now discuss the question fully, but we know that after Jesus had rebuked Peter he turned to his disciples and said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself. . . ." This is not

the whole of the answer to our question, but it is a part of the answer. For if we put ourselves, our creed, our nation or our race, in the center of our thinking, and permit it to become the end of our being, our moral vision will necessarily be distorted.

Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." In spite of his obtuseness at Caesarea Philippi, in spite of his later cowardice on that black day when Jesus was crucified, in spite of his stumbling and blundering to the end, Peter was greatly used by Christ, because he never ceased to follow Christ, as he was led by the Holy Spirit. On the housetop at Joppa, for example, he remonstrated with his Master as he had done some years earlier at Caesarea Philippi. "No, no, no, Lord," he reiterated emphatically, "for I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

But Christ's words sounded again and again in his ears. "What God has cleansed you must not call common." And while Peter pondered that simple but profound truth an unexpected summons came from Cornelius, a Gentile, and step by step Peter broke with his past, departed from the traditions of his people, and followed the promptings of the Spirit until at last the light came. Truly I perceive," he said, "that God shows no partiality."

When the church in Jerusalem remon-

strated with him because he had sat down at the table with a Gentile, Peter told the tale from beginning to end, until his final unanswerable word, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

But note this. Peter would have withstood God if he had not re-examined his old prejudice in the light of the new truth which had come to him through Jesus Christ, if he had not followed the promptings of the Spirit down the new paths that were opening before him.

The Holy Spirit does not always show us the final scene any more than he showed the final scene to Peter there on the housetop, but he will ordinarily show us the one step that lies ahead, and if we take that step and the next the fuller truth will finally come. If we refuse to take that first step, the truth may be forever hidden from our eyes.

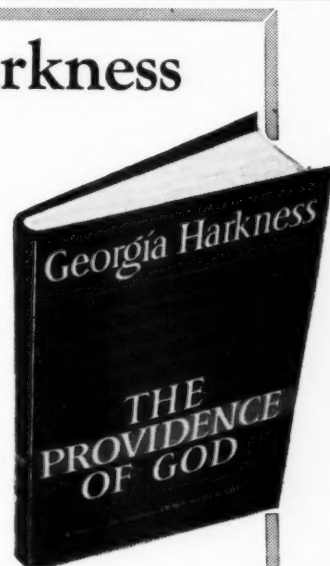
God grant that our minds may be opened to the promptings of his Spirit in our own day and in this General Assembly; that we may be willing now and always to re-examine old ideas in the light of the truth that has been given us; that when God leads in new paths we may follow; that when opposition breaks we may reply with Peter, "Who was I that I could withstand God?"

by Georgia Harkness

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