

The Presbyterian Guardian

October 10, 1936

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

One Dollar a Year

J. GRESHAM MACHEN *Editors*
NED B. STONEHOUSE

Published semi-monthly by
THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
1212 Commonwealth Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

THOMAS R. BIRCH,
Managing Editor

A STEP TO AVOID

WHAT was the really decisive step in the long downward march of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. into its present condition of hopeless corruption? Was it the union between the Old and New Schools in 1869? Was it the union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church so ruthlessly forced through in 1905-1906? Was it the decision of the General Assembly in 1910, refusing to sustain the complaint against licensure of certain Union Theological Seminary students? Was it the return of the Modernist-indifferentist forces to full power in 1925 after the brief interruption to their rule which had been caused by the moderatorship of Dr. Clarence E. Macartney? Was it the destruction of the orthodox Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929 and the substitution for it of the very different institution which now occupies the old buildings and bears the old name?

Well, any one of these events might perhaps lay claim to the unenviable distinction.

But we are inclined to think that another event may also conceivably lay such claim. The more we review the history of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the more we are inclined to think that perhaps the really decisive step in the downward path was the adoption of the amendments to the doctrinal Standards of the Church in 1903.

We hold that grave view of the amendments for two reasons.

In the first place, the amendments are bad in themselves. Mr. John Murray has shown that very clearly in the last number of *THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN*. Even in themselves, and quite without reference to the

purpose for which they were adopted or the results that came from them, they do tend to obscure the great central Reformed doctrine of the grace of God.

In the second place, these amendments are shown to be disastrous by their effects in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Their evil effects have been manifest throughout the entire subsequent history of the church, and they became manifest with particular clearness just after the adoption of the amendments. The amendments were the decisive factor in the accomplishment of a very disastrous church union, the union between the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Just consider for a moment the situation which prevailed between 1903 and 1906, when the union was being accomplished. Here were two churches. One of them, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., had a distinctly Calvinistic creed; the other, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, had an equally distinctly anti-Calvinistic—namely, Arminian—creed.

Well, those two churches came together on the basis of the doctrinal standards of one of them—the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Did that mean that the Cumberland Presbyterians, formerly holding the Arminianism so plainly set forth in their creed, repudiated that Arminianism and returned to the Calvinistic fold? No, we are afraid it meant nothing of the kind. The Cumberland Presbyterians who came into the union were very careful not to say that their uniting with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. meant any such essential change in their doctrinal convictions. What they did say, in effect, was that the 1903 amendments to the Standards of the

Come Out and Be Ye Separate

Our Testimony to Christians in the
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

By the REV. J. OLIVER BUSWELL, JR., D.D.
President of Wheaton College



Dr. Buswell

WHEN I stepped out of the old ecclesiastical connection and into the new my sensation was that of a person stepping out of a stuffy room into the fresh air. My first exclamation came involuntarily as an expression of joy and gratitude for vigorous fellowship in the proclamation of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!" (Ephesians 1:3.) Our hearts are glad and our faces are set forward to the task of proclaiming the gospel in the dark places of the earth, free from the entangling alliances of modernist ecclesiastical machinery.

Are we faithful shepherds? Paul commanded the elders of the church at Ephesus to "shepherd (not merely feed) the church of God" because of the fact that "grievous wolves" were coming from the outside and traitorous leadership was going to develop from within. (See Acts 20:28-30.) We have sought to obey this command. We have warned the flock for many years of the wolves and the false leaders. Things have at last come to such a pass that those who place the word of man above the Word of God have gained control of the fold in which the sheep should have been protected. What would faithful shepherds do under such circumstances? We believe we have done the only logical thing. We have erected another shelter, The Presbyterian Church of America, in which the sheep may take refuge. We believe that we still have a duty toward the sheep who remain in the fold which is now under the control of an anti-Christian regime. Let us refer briefly to several different classes of these.

"We Have Just Begun to Fight"

To those who say, "We will stay in

and fight," several remarks may be appropriate. (1) We believe we have had more experience than you in fighting Modernism in the church. We have frequently and emphatically appealed to you for your suggestions as to the way in which the wolves of Modernism should be fought off. We have often heard you say, "We agree with your principles but we do not like your methods." We have always answered, "What methods do you suggest?" and your answer has always been silence.

(2) We do not deny the sincerity of some of those who now say that they will fight Modernism within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., but in regard to others we have serious misgivings. We observe a prominent person, now making a show of "holy boldness" against the enemies of the faith, who when put in a position where he had to vote one way or the other, voted to depose the Rev. Carl McIntire from the ministry! It is difficult to see how the claim of fighting off the wolves can be sincere on the lips of such a one.

(3) Not a few of those who loudly protest that they will "stay in and fight" are now bitterly persecuting some of the sheep who have taken refuge in the new shelter. To these we would say that if our methods are wrong, they are at least now outside of your ecclesiastical horizon. We sincerely hope, brethren, that you will soon begin to attack the wolves instead of the sheep, but we are afraid that instead of attacking the wolves you are actually following the leadership of those leaders from within who are assisting the wolves in the destruction of the flock.

"Our Labors Are Confined to Our Local Parishes"

There are many men who sincerely love the Lord who are not wide awake to the issues of the times and who really believe that within the field of the local church they can serve Christ and win souls to Him without being responsible for the affairs of the de-

nomination as a whole. To these we would remark: (1) You have a definite responsibility for the church as a whole by virtue of your ordination vows and by virtue of the clear teaching of the Scripture. You have solemnly promised to contend for the purity of the church regardless of all persecution which may arise on that account. You are under command of the Scripture to do what shepherds ought to do in the face of the wolves and the false leaders.

(2) Your Protestant liberties are gone. You will very soon find that your testimony in your own local church is no longer that which it has always been under the true Presbyterian form of government. In the isolated communities of northern Wisconsin a group of courageous pastors were disciplined for no other offense (remember, these things are matters of record) than that of uniting together with Christian leaders of other denominations to conduct an independent young people's Bible camp. The fact that souls are being saved, lives transformed, young people induced to undertake full-time Christian service in this Bible camp, makes no difference. A presbytery has ordered Presbyterians to withdraw their support. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America has upheld the decision to suspend from the ministry one who is guilty of such an offense. Threats have been given with increasing virulence. Attend a presbytery meeting and vote for Protestant doctrine and Protestant liberties and see what happens. General Assembly stated in 1934 that if you do not support the Boards and agencies of the church to the utmost of your ability you are as guilty as one who refuses to come to the Lord's table. Have you forgotten those blasphemous words, and their clear implication for the local church? How long do you suppose you will be able to designate your gifts for those only who preach the gospel, under the Board of

Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.?

Young Men Seeking Ordination

At the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, I made the statement that a young man who accepts ordination by a presbytery dominated by the ecclesiastical policy of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is guilty of either base falsehood or gross folly. We believe that no one could deny that it is the policy of the present ecclesiastical regime in that denomination to require candidates for ordination to promise adherence to the Boards and agencies of the church whether they, the candidates, believe these Boards and agencies to be loyal to the Christian faith or not. Any young man who states in one sentence that he believes the Bible to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and states in another sentence that he will be loyal to the Boards and agencies of the church regardless of his private opinion of their loyalty to the Word of God, is either basely false or profoundly foolish.

It is of the very essence of Protestant missionary endeavor that our giving and our serving must be spontaneous and voluntary. It is true that a certain set of Boards and agencies have been erected constitutionally to serve for the denomination as such, but it is also true that when these Boards and agencies were erected it was agreed that their erection would not in any way interfere with the liberty of Presbyterians in serving and giving to other agencies. The denominational agencies, according to true Presbyterian principles, must merit the confidence of the people in order to secure their support. "The quality of mercy (missions) is not strained," according to secular opinion. According to inspired Scripture our giving must be "not of necessity."

It is of the very essence of true Presbyterian theology that the Bible is not only infallible but is also perspicuous so that it is the immediate authority for every Christian. It is of the very essence of the true Presbyterian form of government that the church is not a legislative body, that the law of the church is given in the Scriptures, and that the functions of church courts are only ministerial and declarative and cannot bind the consciences of men by virtue of their

own authority. If they attempt to do so then, by true Presbyterian doctrinal standards, it is a sin to obey their decrees. Therefore when you promise to support the official Boards and agencies of your denomination regardless of your opinion of their loyalty to Christ, you are putting the word of man first and the Word of God in a subordinate position.

The Uninformed

To all those who love the Lord but are ignorant of the issues in the denomination, we must explain why we have found it necessary to leave the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and to form another denomination, through the agency of which it is hoped the Reformed Faith and the Presbyterian (Scriptural) form of church government may be preserved.

(1) We have separated from the old organization not alone because there is Modernism in the church. For years there has been tolerated within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. the teaching of "another gospel" which is not a gospel. Volumes of evidence of this fact are available, if anyone sincerely wishes to inquire. This has not been a whispering campaign. What we have had to say has been said openly and in printed form over our signatures, but we must make it very clear that we have not left the church in which we were brought up, because a certain amount of Modernism has, against our protest, been tolerated therein. During those years we remained within the denomination, seeking to be as faithful as we could to our vows to maintain the purity of the church.

(2) Nor have we left solely because Modernism was propagated by the Boards and agencies. We have presented to all who will examine the evidence a mass of material conclusively showing that for years the Boards and agencies of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. have tolerated and propagated "another gospel" which is not a gospel. Nevertheless it is not because, in addition to sending out some sound missionaries, the Boards were sending out others who denied the faith; it is not because the Boards and agencies tolerated and propagated Modernism that we have found it necessary to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. We remained within the church and did all we could possibly do to purify the church and bring it back to the

Word of God and its constitutional standards.

Comity and Co-operation

(3) Again, our separation took place not only because of non-Christian relationships of comity. Our Lord prayed not that we should be taken out of the world but that we should be kept from the evil one. There are some relationships with non-Christian or anti-Christian organizations which are wrong and compromising. Against these we have always protested. For the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to take money given for the spread of the gospel and give it for the support of institutions which tolerate communistic, anti-Christian, and immoral teaching is, we hold, very wrong. There are, on the other hand, certain relationships of comity with secular or non-Christian institutions which are clearly recognized in the New Testament. Our Lord engaged in the ordinary social relationships with those who were ungodly and sinful in the extreme. Paul discusses the question of a Christian business man attending the trade guild banquets. It ought to be understood that a person does not compromise his Christian testimony when he, without doing that which is sinful, meets the world in its ordinary business and secular activities. We have not withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. because our Boards and agencies maintained these ordinary and necessary relationships of contact with secular or non-Christian organizations. We have not even made a criticism on this point.

For example, if a student takes certain courses in Hebrew or in Greek in a non-Christian or anti-Christian theological school, and if that student then becomes converted and enrolls in an orthodox theological seminary, his Hebrew credits are perfectly acceptable on a purely secular academic basis. There are certain business and educational relationships between schools and seminaries which come distinctly within the classification of those things countenanced and approved by our Lord and by the Apostle Paul.

If I should send a letter to twenty or more of your neighbors stating that you "probably" stole the automobile which now stands in your garage, when I know that there is no such probability, I should be bearing

false witness against my neighbor. Similarly, if I should say that a Princeton professor in participating in an academic procession in a modernist school had "probably" conveyed greetings to false teachers in the manner forbidden in II John, verse 10,—if I should make such a statement while knowing full well through my familiarity with academic affairs that there really is no probability that the greeting was of the kind forbidden by the Scripture,—if I should make any such statement under any such circumstances, I should also call that bearing false witness against one's neighbor.

(4) Nor was our action due to any opposition to denominationalism as such. It is my personal opinion that many of the prominent Protestant denominations have departed far from the faith. I am not familiar with the problems and polity involved in all of these cases, but I sincerely regret that officialdom in many of the denominations seems to be given over to compromise or to false doctrine. Nevertheless I do not share the opinions of those who oppose denominationalism as such. I feel that through the generations past the great denominations have exerted a steadying influence. I have the heartiest sympathy for independent local work as an emergency or a temporary transition measure, or as a type of work fitting peculiar local circumstances. Nevertheless I feel that many of the splendid local independent churches and missions which we observe today are very likely to draw together in a type of fellowship which will really amount to that which prevailed under the orthodox denominational system. As for myself, I believe it is right for me to worship the Lord in company with a group of people who have a widespread communion and who recognize local groups in many places as belonging to the same church. Those of us who have united with The Presbyterian Church of America are members of a "denomination." We believe that the Presbyterian form of government is Scriptural and ought to be perpetuated. As a representative or republican type of government, it has maintained for many generations great stability both in faith and in practice throughout the church.

The "Mandate"

(5) Specifically we were compelled to separate because of the final apos-

tate commitment of the Syracuse Assembly. Up to the time when the General Assembly in 1934 by virtue of its own authority and without pretense of scriptural basis for its illegal acts, ordered us to resign from a certain independent mission board, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. had not by any legal act renounced its primary allegiance to the Word of God and to the doctrinal standards derived therefrom. Just as loyal American citizens have recently resisted certain socialistic, unconstitutional legislation and appealed to the Supreme Court, so we resisted unlawful action and appealed to the judicial processes of the church. The offense of which we were accused was refusing to obey the "mandate" of the General Assembly, which in its own words claimed to be based upon the authority of the Assembly and not upon the Word of God or the Constitution of the church. Every court of the church in which our cases were tried, as an incidental matter, upheld the right of a Presbyterian minister who had denied the inerrancy of the Scripture and had stated that the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the miracles of our Lord, are mere non-essential theories,—upheld, I say, the right of a minister who had taken such a position to sit in judgment upon us. Furthermore every court, as a direct and main matter of business, decreed that we must obey the "mandate" of the General Assembly, that because of an assumed ecclesiastical authority we must resign from The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. When the General Assembly, constituted as a court and sitting in regular judicial procedure, upheld the decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission and pronounced guilty of offenses those who had disobeyed the illegal mandate of men in the interests of the Word of God, then the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. ceased to be a church in whose communion we could conscientiously remain. That body is now, through a protracted official process of judicial action, definitely committed to an apostate position.

I believe that one may rightfully remain within a church just as long as it is positively committed to the Word of God and the faith once for all delivered to the saints. I believe, however, that as soon as a church falls into the hands of the wolves and

the false leaders so that by official action that church is clearly committed to an anti-Christian position, it is the duty of every true believer in Christ to renounce that jurisdiction and to find fellowship for himself and refuge for the flock for which he is responsible in another assembly.

I am not sufficiently familiar with the recent history of the great Protestant denominations to give many illustrations. I am, however, reasonably familiar with at least one parallel case. I know a minister who entered into fellowship with an individual church whose testimony in the local horizon was orthodox. Later the denomination to which that church belonged officially committed itself to an organic union with the Universalist denomination. Although that organic union was not consummated, he felt that he could not remain within the denomination even in a local communion as long as that decision stood as an official denominational act. Within a short time that denomination actually consummated an organic union with a body whose historical position was definitely Unitarian. The local church after long deliberation definitely decided to remain within the denomination. My friend found it necessary with his family to seek other affiliations.

I believe also the same principle ought to apply to the local church when the denomination is not officially disloyal to the Word of God. One may remain and give his testimony as long as it is possible to keep the organization true in its witness. There is no perfect church to be found anywhere, but there is such a thing as essential loyalty to the Word of God. When, however, a local church gets into the hands of those who are disloyal to the Word of God, I believe it is the duty of a believing Christian to find fellowship in another assembly.

We ought to consider the illustration of the milk for our children. The milk delivered at our house had a strange taste one day some years ago. My wife protested and investigated, and learned that the taste came from the odor of fresh paint which had been used in the separator room. The taste did not continue, the milk was essentially good. On another occasion tiny splinters of red wood appeared in the butter. It was discovered that a new redwood churn had been purchased. The matter was promptly

attended to. The butter was good and all went well thereafter. However, on another occasion, milk was delivered in a sour or semi-sour condition and the bottles gave evidence of improper washing. After one protest, sour or semi-sour milk was again delivered and the bottle containing supposedly clean milk was found to have clots of chocolate milk still clinging to the inside. This was a very different situation. My wife changed milk companies with immediate and permanent

effectiveness! Why should we be less careful for the spiritual diet of our children than for their material food?

We believe that the government of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. has been seized by the Modernists and the inclusivists. That denomination, after a long and painful judicial process, by final action has given supreme authority to the word of man rather than the Word of God. We believe it is time for Bible-believing Christians to find fellowship in another assembly.

which state your case declare that it was not a doctrinal issue at all, but a matter of church government and of church discipline. But I fear the representation given in these documents has not proved convincing to the public. As far as you were concerned it certainly was a doctrinal issue through and through. The secular press reported it to be a fight of fundamentalism against Modernism. Religious weekly periodicals of liberal stamp have likewise considered it such. And even the Presbyterian ministers, who recently met at Pittsburgh, could not rest satisfied in the representation of these official documents, but called attention to the doctrinal issue which was underneath it all. This case will not go down in history as a squabble over matters of church government. But history will write it down as a battle of militant Calvinism against militant Modernism, coupled with religious indifferentism.

Not everything that transpires in such a conflict will be reason for the giving of thanks. There will be much that will be cause for regret. It will be a matter of regret, I suppose, that you must now leave behind in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. many associations which you had come to cherish. It will be a matter of regret that, in your struggle for the defense of the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, it was not Calvinism but Modernism that won the day in the ecclesiastical court. It will again be a matter of regret to you that several Christian brethren in that church, of whom you might reasonably have expected that they would join you in combating the common foe, either have never enlisted in the battle or have stopped halfway. And I can imagine there will be regrets for some of the possible mistakes you will have made, certainly for things which, if you were to do them over, you would have done differently. But whatever regrets you may have there never can be any reasonable regret, but on the contrary humble gratitude to God, that He has counted you worthy to defend His cause against Modernism in an hour of crisis such as this.

But the reason for thankfulness is even greater. I dare say it extends also to the establishment of the independent organization of Westminster Seminary and of The Presbyterian Church of America, with which

Thank God and Take Courage

By the REV. H. HENRY MEETER, Th.D.
Professor of Bible in Calvin College

The following article is the first part of the address delivered at the opening of Westminster Theological Seminary on September 30th. The rest of the address will appear in the next issue of "The Presbyterian Guardian."

"And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15).

THE story is familiar. The apostle Paul, in his defense of the Christian gospel, is nearing the capital of the empire as a prisoner in bonds. Brethren from Rome have come out to Appii Forum to greet him and to offer him their encouragement and sympathy. Whereupon we read: "Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage." With you there are in spirit present today many Christian friends of various denominations and schools, among others of the Christian Reformed denomination and of Calvin College and Seminary, whose unofficial spokesman I may consider myself to be. We are here to extend the hand of Christian sympathy to you, and to offer you our encouragements in the struggle for the defense of the Christian gospel, in which you are engaged. We hope that our sympathy with you in your battle for the truth will inspire you, like Paul, to thank God and take courage.

Lest these expressions of sympathy and words of encouragement be nothing more than an empty gesture, permit me to state the reasons why we believe you may thank God and why you may take courage. (1) There is

very good reason for this, when you reflect upon your past history and consider the nature of the cause in which you have been engaged. (2) There is also good reason when you direct the eye ahead and observe the opportunities for success which lie before you in the future, if you gauge the possible success of your cause by the success which attended similar causes of note in the history of Calvinism. And (3) we believe there is equally good reason, judging from the favorable time in which your movement is launched.

I.

Not every cause in which men may choose to be engaged is deserving of thanks to God. We do not consider any success which the Nazis at present may be having in establishing a religion for Germans only as supplying reason for gratitude to God, nor any which the Russian communistic leaders may have in their attempts to establish atheism in their country. Even where causes are worthy, the reasons for gratitude will differ widely. You have been engaged in battling for a cause. It is a worthy cause. It is a great cause. It is a cause that gives reason for profoundest gratitude to God. It is the cause of the Christian gospel, of Calvinism, or if you will, of consistent Christianity, against modern religious liberalism.

It is true the official documents of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.