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Keeping Our Eyes on the Lord

KEEPING our eyes on the Lord" is a phrase which most of us have used but seldom appreciated. It has a deep spiritual significance which brings comfort and stability especially in a time of bewilderment. The classic illustration of Peter, drowning in the sea of Galilee when he was consumed by the dangers around him instead of watching and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, makes us all understand the importance of keeping our eyes on God.

We as Christians should never for one moment assume that an individual, a group of individuals, an organization, or even a church, will at all times have the courage or the insight to act in accordance with the Word of God. In every instance it is incumbent upon us to judge a church or an individual on the basis of the Bible. But that gives us a measure of comfort for we believe with all our souls that The Presbyterian Church of America has moved in strict accord with the Word of God. There is every reason to believe that her course will continue so because she has kept her eyes on God and chosen God's will in spite of what man has said.

Why should we keep our eyes on the Lord? The answer is obvious. He alone is God. He is sovereign and doeth all things well. He is not swayed by human passion, by prejudice, by pride, by hatred, or by selfishness. His actions are just, merciful and loving. He is high and lifted up above the frailties of man and the vacillations of this world.

There is much satisfaction in contemplating the fact that God never makes a mistake. He is the Truth and can do no wrong. All things are just only as they meas-

ure up to His Word. Is this action right? Is that doctrine true? Our answer cannot be: in our opinion that action is wrong, or, men have always held to that belief. No, our judgment must be solely based on the principles laid down in the Bible. Action or doctrine is right or wrong only in so far as it conforms or fails to conform with that standard. When we proceed in that fashion, and so keep our eyes on God, then we, too, shall be less in error in our judgments.

Again, by keeping our eyes on God our lives will remain more stable for God never disappoints. On the other hand, all of us do things and speak words which disappoint. Let us throw ourselves upon the Lord for His arms will never fail us. When we are weak, when we are grief stricken, when everything about us seems futile, then we can call upon the Lord for He will strengthen, comfort, and give meaning to what has occurred.

God has given a few choice souls a double portion of His Spirit and a large measure of faith. J. Gresham Machen was such a man. When the tumult and the shouting were loudest, when the house was falling down, then our beloved friend, Dr. Machen, was strongest in his faith and steadiest in his gaze on the Lord Jesus Christ. But most of us have not received these gifts from God. He has not entrusted us with such important leadership. We need always to walk conscious of our vision fixed upon God.

When we say that we should keep our eyes on God we do not mean the God of our imagination. We mean the God revealed in the Bible. Here is where so many fall short. It is possible to make ourselves believe that

"That They Go Forward"

A Spiritual Tonic for The Presbyterian Church of America

By the REV. JOHN J. DE WAARD



Mr. De Waard

AND the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exodus 14:15). There was no other way. To go backward would mean death and slavery. But to go forward seemed impossible, for there was no bridge over the Red Sea. In obedience to the command Israel went forward "into the midst of the sea on dry ground." Yet I suppose the expression, "dry ground," must not be taken absolutely. I have a feeling that the going forward was difficult. I imagine they slipped and fell often as they went through the muddy bottom. And when finally they did stand on yonder bank their feet were not clean. But be that all as it may, going forward is hard and the temptation not to do so is everpresent.

There may be various excuses for yielding to the temptation not to go forward. To go forward is the Lord's command but there are different excuses for disobedience to it. Israel was discouraged. There was a strong, well-equipped army in the rear, which they had no power to conquer; the Red Sea was before them, which it seemed they could not cross. Humanly speaking they had reasons for discouragement. There was for them no apparent escape. The end seemed to have come at the very beginning. Though it is often easier to say than to do, yet it is true that they should have gone forward knowing the power of their God. There are no obstacles which cannot be overcome when the Lord is with His people.

There is another excuse sometimes given for disobedience to the command, "Go forward!" A great journey forward has already been made. One grows weary of going ever on and on, especially when the difficulties of the journey are great. The natural desire to rest becomes intense and the temptation to give heed to it great. The man who sets forth on a very cold night through the deep snow grows tired soon and he wants to lie down

and rest. That is a dangerous thing to do. It is certain death. Forward is the command which must be obeyed. Of the two excuses for disobedience to the command this one appears to be the more compelling.

As a little church we have come a long way, and the way has been hard for many reasons. It was a difficult struggle which finally issued in separation from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. There were many men who could not understand how imperative it was for us to maintain the purity of the Reformed Faith to the utmost of our ability. What seemed to them only foolishness and a perverse desire to disturb the peace was to us God's wisdom and mercy, and though some of us were sometimes tempted to rest from the struggle we dared not be disobedient and we went forward. But it was hard.

Presently we had our own little church. Though we were happy, none of us thought that our difficulties were over. And it soon became apparent that they were not. Few though we were in numbers, we could not all live together in the same church. It was no petty, insignificant thing which made that impossible for us. Some of us took the Confession of Faith seriously as the purest uninspired expression of revealed truth and we did not want to tamper with it, either directly or by methods of indirection. Others wanted to modify that Confession in practice if not in fact. There was a temptation for some of us not to go forward. But the church went forward, raising still higher the banner of Reformed truth, though the consequences of that forward step were for some of us hard to endure.

There were many Sundays in village halls, in homes and other buildings which had never before been used for church meetings. Sometimes we were crowded for room and the old piano hardly took the place of the beautiful organ. We had no other attraction to offer people as an inducement to worship with us save the purity and power of the Reformed

Faith. And we have nothing now to attract men and women to our church save only the cross where the Prince of glory died. It is enough.

During these days God did not leave us without refreshment. It was an old village hall, where the boys had played basket ball the night before, or it was a private dwelling, but in no cathedral had people ever sung as they sang now out of the fullness of their hearts, "A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord, a wonderful Saviour to me." We were rewarded; we are not complaining. Yet it was no pleasure to leave our fine church homes and crowd into such places as we could find. But we went forward, and a few congregations now have their own church homes again.

We have come a long way. It would not be surprising if some were tempted now to discontinue moving forward. We are not yet in the land of rest and will not be for a long time. There is still much hard work to be done. The Lord will ask us to give up more than we have done so far, in otherwise legitimate comfort, ease and plenty. The surprising thing is that in spite of hardships and unlooked for disappointments our people are moving forward with joy. On August 17th it was my privilege to speak at the laying of the corner stone of the new building of the Bethel Church in Oostburg, Wisconsin. There were many people present and it was an impressive service. But the way in which those people sang, "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord," made one feel that they would move forward in spite of all difficulties. It takes no prophet to predict that despite all hardships and sacrifices which may be necessary these people will move forward. Having put their hand to the plow they will not look backward now. And this is only one of the several groups throughout the country. All these people have heard the command of the Lord, "That they move forward," and they will not be disobedient. If the Lord had given us thousands of dollars and many costly buildings, He

would not have given us as much as He has now given us all in the determination of our people to move forward.

"That they move forward!" After the three hours of darkness and the

cross comes the resurrection morning. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The American Heathen

By the REV. JOHN P. GALBRAITH

IN THE Gethsemane Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia we have instituted something which should have begun long, long ago, and which I hope will be started in all of the congregations of The Presbyterian Church of America. We have organized a Men's Missionary Society. In the past, when we have thought of a missionary society, we have thought exclusively of the women's society. May it not be so in the future in The Presbyterian Church of America! Our men's society was organized because we felt that the men had been missing a great blessing which the women have had for generations—the blessing of learning about missionary work in order that they might do more for it.

But what is mission work? What constitutes a mission field? By remaining faithful to the etymology of the word, "mission," we will realize that a mission field, strictly speaking, is a heathen field to which missionaries must be "sent" with the gospel, in contrast with the field in which the heathen may come to the gospel. We in the United States are too prone to look back to the Christian founders of this nation and think that this definition excludes our country from the status of a mission field. It does not. On the contrary, it makes this country one of the great mission fields of the world. I hear someone say, "What! Heathen in the United States? Why, this is a civilized country." That person evidently believes that heathenism consists of war paint, voodoo dances, and witch doctors. The United States even has some of these, but they constitute merely one group of those in our nation who come under the classification of "heathen"—one who, as Noah Webster describes him, is "an unconverted individual of a people that does not acknowledge the God of the Bible."

It is for the destruction of this heathenism that God charges His disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). How we have endeavored, through our foreign mission enterprises, to fulfill the first portion of that Scripture and have sent missionaries "to the uttermost parts of the earth," "among all nations!" But oh, how we have neglected that last part! How we have neglected our own beloved nation and its many heathen! How we have neglected to begin "at Jerusalem!" Oh yes, we have our churches to which many people can come. But the heathen is "stiffnecked," he is altogether "turned out of the way," and at "enmity against God," and will not turn even to that which is accessible to him. The Word must be sent to him. For that reason, our Men's Missionary Society is planning street meetings in the city.

But what about those poor heathen who are not within reach of the gospel, even were they anxious to hear it? "But," you ask, "are there such people in this country?" That question, which is often asked when the subject of home missions is broached, has given rise to this article and to the writer's realization of how little any of us American Christians know about American Heathenism.

How Many Heathen?

What, then, is the extent of American Heathenism? Let us first consider a few statistics for the nation at large. Speaking in round numbers there are about 130 million people in the United States. Of this number about 60 million are members of churches. *Less than half* of our population is connected with some church organization. But of these 60 million church members, how many do you

think are Christians? We certainly must eliminate most of those who belong to churches with unevangelical creeds, such as Jews, Roman Catholics, Universalists, Unitarians, and Mormons. These all seek salvation without Christ, or through something in addition to Christ, although Scripture says that there is "but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." We find that such church members total over 25 million, leaving only about 35 million out of 130 million who belong to churches with evangelical creeds. But even that small number is greater than the Christian population of this land. We who have left the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. know from personal experience that there are many, many people, members and ministers in that church which professes an evangelical creed, who are no more evangelical than their Unitarian or Universalist brethren. There is only one who knows how many of these 35 million are Christians, and we dare not make even an estimate lest we ourselves be judged. But we can see from this, in view of the terrible conditions of unbelief even in the reputedly evangelical churches—not only the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., but most others—how very few Christians there are in this population of 130 million souls. There are, then, 100 million who are not only not Christians, but *who do not hear the gospel!*

Where are these millions of lost souls? Where shall we go to find them? Where is this home mission field of which we have been speaking? I have already mentioned that it begins at the very doors of the true Christian churches. But I wish to take you now to the fields where there are no Christian churches—fields from Maine to California.

New England Heathen

In the last year we have read in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN various accounts of the pioneer work which the Committee for the Propagation of the Reformed Faith in New England has been doing in that part of our country. We have read that last summer it was able to send nine Westminster Seminary students up there, and this year ten. We have read how these men have been able to reach several hundred people with the gospel in some twenty towns and