

# The Covenanter Witness

"THE FIELD IS THE WORLD, THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD" ©

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The Late Thomas Melville Slater, D.D.

# Some Loving Tributes to Dr. T. M. Slater

## A Rich Legacy to the Church

In Glasgow's History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America (p.671) there is a very modest biography—14 lines—of a certain William Slater, son of James and Martha (Thompson) Slater. Note those two names. This son William Slater was for forty-four years pastor of the Miller's Run Congregation. History says that Miller's Run Congregation no longer exists, but that is not quite so. William Slater had a brother Thomas who had a son Thomas Melville who passed away June 5, 1951, of whose life we are giving some glimpses in this number of the Witness. William Slater also had a sister Jane who became the mother of the Georges, (R. J. George) and the grandmother of Georges, Slaters, Colemans' Taggarts, Carithers, (ministers and missionaries of the Church), and others. Millers Run also gave the Thompsons, the McBurneys, the Robbs, the Scotts, the Connors, and many, many worthy laymen and women.

Is Miller's Run dead? Read the partial answer in the undying influence of Thomas Melville Slater.

## Dr. Slater

The Reverend Thomas Melville Slater, D.D., died June 5 in Mountainside Hospital, Montclair, N. J., at the age of 82. He and his wife, the former Annabelle Hunter, lived at 6 Carteret St., Upper Montclair, N. J.

Mr. Slater, was born near Canonsburg, Washington Co., Pa. He attended Jefferson Academy in that town, graduated from Geneva College in 1892 and the Covenanter Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh in 1897. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Geneva College.

In 1897 he was installed as pastor of the Covenanter congregation at Bovina, N. Y. In 1904 he was released from that pastorate and was pastor of the Seattle, Washington, congregation. After seventeen years there, he accepted charge of the Montclair, N. J., congregation in 1921. He retired four years ago because of poor health.

Dr. Slater was a member of the Covenanter Board of Foreign Missions and a member of the Board of Trustees of Geneva College and was Moderator of Synod in 1921.

After retiring, he wrote on the subject of Lodges and Secret Societies and published pamphlets at his own expense.

His wife, a daughter Mary (Mrs. Robert Ward), Bloomfield, N. J., two sons John Slater and Thomas Slater, survive him.

## Another Course Finished

W. J. McKnight, D.D.

Thomas Melville Slater was born in 1869, completed his College work with honors in 1892, graduated from the Theological Seminary in 1897, and finished his course in 1951. In annotating a few characteristics of this man of God one could not do better perhaps than to avail oneself of Paul's method of procedure—first, "that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

A radius of about forty years—forty-three, to be exact—would run a rim around a little group of us and enclose us within a circumference of many cherished episodes and no end of pleasant memories. Of the group in mind but two of us still await the summons to shuffle off this mortal coil. The recent departure of T. M. Slater—we called him "Mel"—sets in motion the usual list of questions common to such occasions. Was he a happy, joyful sort of person, or was he prevalingly serious? What kind of neighbor did he prove himself to be? Was he genial, cheerful, companionable, or preponderantly sedate and given to gravity? To hear him speaking from the pulpit, or in religious gatherings, a casual listener might be led to think that in things of lighter vein he would perhaps be lacking. On crossing his threshold, however, any illusion of that description would evaporate and vanish before the door was closed. He was a jovial host and a welcome guest. It was the same to the end. His radiant countenance wore "the years like a beatitude." It was his conviction that the Lord Jesus, in giving us life, has given us "all things richly to enjoy."

From the other angle the vista is equally clear. No one who knew Thomas Melville Slater could ever doubt his right to say with David, "I have walked in mine integrity." He had none of the "double minded man" in his makeup. He knew what he believed. He knew why he believed it. His convictions were founded on the Word of God. Ingrained in his creed and manner of living were such precepts as these: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." "Turn not aside from (the commandment) to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper." "As for God, His way is perfect." "The redeemed shall walk there." Any movement to sell out the principles of Revealed Religion for "a morsel of meat" was abhorrent to him. His dreams were of a piece with Jacob's at Bethel, linked with the incorruptible "inheritance" of eternity. In so far as he was concerned Esau was welcome to his little "mess of pottage." He was severely stricken a few years ago at Winona Lake. We all thought it was the end. But he mounted up again on wings as an eagle. He plunged forward into a field of labor for which his equipment was still intact. The work was so well done that it caught the eye of a total stranger in a distant city who sent him a thousand dollars to encourage him in his worthy task. And this by the way, if we stop to think of it, is by no means a common phenomenon. It is a providential mode of saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Compromising "spectres of the mind" had no fascination for him. How near he could come to giving up his covenanted profession of faith without doing it merited nothing from him but his sovereign contempt. The promise upon which he laid hold was specific — "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." His characteristic excellencies, accordingly, (in Browning's phrase),

"Lead him at his grandest to the grave."

FAREWELL, GOOD SOLDIER, THE REST OF  
YOUR GROUP WILL SOON BE WITH YOU.

## Fellowship With the Spirit

Rev. J. Paul Wilson

"If (there be) any fellowship of the Spirit" Phil. 2:1

How precious that word "fellowship"! It brings to mind that intimacy of comradeship which grows up between those who have sweat and suffered in a common worthwhile cause. It suggests that sympathy borne of love which lends solace and comfort in time of pain and discouragement. It speaks of that honest dealing with faults which a true friend can exercise upon another.

It was this fellowship that prevailed between Dr. T. M. Slater and the blessed Spirit of God. Dr. Slater knew the Holy Spirit as an intimate person with Whom fellowship in thought and sentiment was possible. He had sought to know the mind and purpose of the Spirit. He had set himself to work hand in hand with the Spirit in fulfilling the Kingdom purposes.

The associations of the writer with Dr. Slater began in 1926 at the first National C.Y.P.U. Conference at Winona Lake. The intimacy of the fellowship between us has grown through a knowledge of each member of his family and it has deepened through the fact that Dr. Slater was the pastor of my wife for many years. We were privileged to break bread in the Slater home a number of times and each occasion was one to be remembered for its sweet and happy communion in Spiritual things.

On one occasion Dr. Slater assisted us in communion while we were in Barnet, Vermont, and I was personally much blessed by his preaching and conversations relating to the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and of believers. The blessings of the surrendered life were made exceeding attractive through the life and conversations of our friend.

The place of "the fellowship of the Spirit" in the life of Dr. Slater is recalled to us again and again on occasions when our older brethren in the ministry reminisce on the times of refreshing in the Church. It is recalled that Dr. Slater was presiding at the Synod prayer meeting in 1913 when the Spirit fell upon the Synod bringing repentance, confession, reconciliation among brethren, and the richer blessings of the Spirit's infilling in the lives of so many. He would be the last to claim honor in such a time of refreshing—God alone is to be praised—yet we recognize that God uses human instruments as channels and we rejoice that He found in our departed brother a vessel sanctified and mete for the Master's use.

In recent years, while united in the responsibilities of the Foreign Mission Board, on which he served for 29 years, the vital concern for the missionaries on the field and for the work of the kingdom in which they were engaged was always evident in the remarks of Dr. Slater at the meetings and in his correspondence relating to the work of the fields. So it was in all his interests and labors. He was associated with the College as a member of the Board of Trustees, and his interests in every avenue of the Church's testimony and service were vital and consistent. His was a life of long and faithful service in the furtherance of the cause of Christ. The

secret and the most significant factor in fashioning the life and character of our departed brother was the "fellowship of the Spirit." Would that more of us may enjoy the intimacy of such fellowship as did he.

## God's Nobleman

E. G. Russell, D.D.

The writer's acquaintance with Dr. T. M. Slater began when he entered his first pastorate in the Bovina Congregation. This acquaintance grew into a lasting Christian friendship and brotherhood through the years. It was due largely to his influence that I started on the course that led into the Gospel ministry. During that pastorate our brother won his way into the confidence of his parishioners and the esteem of the people of the community. He was a brother beloved.

He was a diligent worker. His ministry indicated it. He worked his way into the Word and came forth with treasures new and old. His preaching gave evidence that he had given the Word close and careful study. He was a "workman that needed not to be ashamed." And by a kindly pastoral program he worked his way into the hearts of those who sat under his earnest ministry, and became endeared to the Lord's people.

He was a devout witness too. Everyone who knew him intimately realized that he was a man of genuine devoutness and true holiness. There was no question about his high degree of genuine piety. He was a spiritually minded servant of Christ. His heart was perfect in the sight of the Lord. And because of those qualities his witness was all the more clear and forceful. His exposition of the Word and his witness to Christ revealed that he knew the Saviour and had been with Him. A minister's contribution to the Gospel cause is made by his clear witness to the truth as it is in Jesus. The Lord had endowed our brother intellectually and spiritually to give a zealous witness to the whole Gospel, and he patiently declared all the truth whether people would accept it or not. And when the truth was received he humbly rejoiced and gave God the glory, but when it was spurned he bore no bitterness against those who disbelieved.

He was a daring warrior also. He was valiant in the battle against modern evils that endanger souls and hinder the Church and corrupt its members. How few are the men who lift up their voice with strength against the wicked practices of these times, such as gambling and divorce and strong drink and other vices, but he was among the few. He often spoke vigorously against the dishonor shown to Christ by our Government in its refusal to make any acknowledgement of the Governor among the nations. But his most zealous assault during the latter part of his ministry was against the vast empire of secrecy which he engaged in almost single handed. His preparation and distribution of tracts which set forth the un-Christian nature of secret oath-bound fraternal orders has certainly awakened many Christian men and women to the false religious claims and disillusionment that those orders spread abroad. His labors are over but his works follow him.

## Other Tributes

"Well a good many things have happened since I last saw you.—The one that took me by surprise was the death of my superlatively good friend Dr. Slater.

He was a man among men. One that never swerved from what he felt to be right and who worked hard up to the very end. We had been companions for upwards of 60 years."—Will McKnight.

"Dr. Slater was such a fine Christian gentleman. He leaves not only with you but with a multitude of friends a real blessing in having known him."—Ava Allen Wylie

"Your husband was a faithful servant of the Master and death for him was a promotion."—Rev. J. W. Springer, A College Classmate

"I shall always remember him best as I knew him at Sterling, loving, thoughtful, with an aura of peacefulness that God gives those who are constantly close to Him."—Martha Price, a grand niece

"I am sure everyone who writes to you has some special memory of Dr. Slater besides his brilliance and humor. I remember his old time Children's Day Service and then when I was older I saw that he was exceptionally brilliant. His sermons were carefully prepared and had a lot of meaning—a thing that escaped me when I was little."—Miriam Marsters Wallace of New Hampshire.

"It saddens me to think of Mr. Slater gone. I never think of him without a lifting of my spirits. He was such an outstanding Christian, it was a joy to have known him."—Hildreth T. Pammoyer.

"Rev. Slater was a true example of a Christian."—Mrs. J. C. Tweed.

## World Temperance Sabbath October 28

Synod adopted the following resolution:

"That the Sabbath Schools of the church take an offering for the temperance committee on World's Temperance Sabbath in October, and that this day be commitment day for pledge signing, the pledge to be supplied by the Temperance Committee."

This is a reminder for pastors and superintendents to make use of this opportunity to render a great service to all our people personally and to the cause. The following pledge is offered by the temperance committee:

### Sabbath School Temperance Pledge

That I may give my best service to home and country, I promise, God helping me, not to use alcoholic beverages in any form.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

If pastors or superintendents will request the number of these pledges desired, they will be forwarded promptly.

Order from —

Alvin W. Smith  
706 Hillcrest Ave.  
Orlando, Fla.

## Building for Total Abstinence Through the Churches

One way to build for total abstinence through the churches is by the appointment of a temperance director in each church school. It will be the business of this director to see that **temperance instruction** is disseminated in each department of the church school. How necessary this is!—The more children and young people we mold into total abstainers TODAY the more likely we will have a sober nation TOMORROW. Start in your church now. Ask your superintendent to appoint a temperance director. At the same time, why not enlist his help in the observance of World Temperance Sabbath (the last Sabbath in October)? Have a big rally on that day and reach the entire community with a well-informed speaker.

B. Blanche Butts,  
National Corr. Secty.  
Union Signal 9-8-51.

## A Challenge to All Modernists Everywhere

By Hubert H. Heath

I am hereby challenging all Modernists everywhere. Let him answer who can. It has been customary for Modernists who have obtained credentials after taking the solemn vows of the church (only to betray them) to defend their conduct by saying that they took those vows "with mental reservations."

The man who takes an oath, or sacred vows with "Mental Reservations" has been guilty of perjury in his own heart the moment he takes them, and is guilty before Almighty God.

The vows of the church taken at the altar are more than merely morally and spiritually binding. They are LEGAL obligations and where one solemnly swears at the altar that he believes the articles of religion of any church, and will faithfully teach them, taking that solemn obligation with his tongue in his cheek, intending to violate them, any credentials issued to him are invalid in law because they are obtained by fraud.

Such an act is far worse and the guilt of one who does so is far deeper than that of a man who looks upon a woman to lust after her. It is written, "Every liar shall have his part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." I do not envy such men, neither is it I who condemns them. There is One who will condemn them unless they sincerely repent and confess their sin in committing such treachery.

There is something in the nature of things which the mind of man, which reason, which human power cannot effect, and certainly that which produces this must be better than man. What can this be but God?—Cicero.

We did not become believers by struggling, but by trusting in what Christ had done for us; so we shall become fruitful by trusting the same Saviour to work in and through us.

—Hudson Taylor.