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THE SO-CALLED "CHILD LABOR AMENDMENT"

REPORTS have just appeared in the public press to the effect that a renewed effort will be made to secure early in 1937 the ratification of the "Twenty-second Amendment" to the Constitution of the United States, which was submitted to the states by Congress in 1924. That amendment has often been called the "Child Labor Amendment," and its advocacy has sometimes been carried on under the guise of humanitarianism, as though the amendment were just intended to prevent sweat-shop conditions or the like. As a matter of fact, it is just about as heartless a measure as anything that could possibly be conceived.

AN ATTACK UPON THE FAMILY

It provides that "the Congress shall have power to limit, regulate and prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age." Some people have a sort of notion that the amendment merely refers to gainful employment, but that is not at all the case. The word "labor" was expressly insisted on in the wording of the amendment as over against the word "employment." A large number of other changes intended to reduce the powers given to Congress to some sort of rational limits were also voted down according to the wishes of the radical elements that determined the wording. The amendment gives to any officials whom Congress may choose to appoint power to enter into the homes of the people and to regulate or prevent altogether those home activities of children and youth without which there can be no normal development of family life.

The amendment does not merely give to Congress powers now possessed by state legislatures.

If, indeed, it did merely do that, it would certainly be bad enough. It would even then be the most extreme instance yet observed of that centralization of power which is such a menace to the life of our country.

But as a matter of fact it does far more than that. No state legislature, it is safe to say, now possesses, under the constitution of the state (to say nothing of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States), power to prohibit altogether the labor of persons under eighteen years of age. Yet that is exactly the power that this amendment gives to Congress. We must remember that the amendment is to be written, not into some subordinate instrument, but into the Constitution of the United States, which is the safeguard of our liberties. It may well be held to have the effect of repealing any guarantees of liberty, now in the Constitution, which will conflict with it. That being so, this movement will practically wipe out the rights of the 45,000,000 persons under eighteen years of age in this country, and the rights of their parents so far as those persons are concerned. It will place those 45,000,000 persons under the despotic control of government officials.

CAN CONGRESS BE TRUSTED?

Some people say that Congress can be trusted not to make unwise use of those powers. But we are really amazed when people advance any such argument as that.

In the first place, the reposing of such implicit trust in the legislative branch of our government is contrary to the heart and core of our Constitution. Our Constitution seeks to safeguard liberty by a system of careful checks and balances between the legislative, execu-

Inconsistently Good Sermons

A Review by the REV. PROFESSOR R. B. KUIPER

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THE FAITH OF CHRISTENDOM, *A Series of Studies on the Apostles' Creed*, by John M. Vander Meulen, D.D., LL.D. Published in 1936 by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Virginia.



Mr. Kuiper

JOHAN M. VANDER MEULEN was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on April 12, 1870. At the age of twenty-six he was ordained a minister of the gospel. He served several Reformed and Presbyterian churches and for six years taught Psychology and Pedagogy at Hope College, Holland, Michigan. In 1920 he became President of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. This position he held for a decade, after which he continued in the same seminary as Professor of Systematic Theology. On June 7, 1936, he was translated to the Church Triumphant.

In reviewing his *Faith of Christendom*, a series of sermons on the Apostles' Creed, I am aided by personal acquaintance with Dr. Vander Meulen made at the home of common friends in his first charge and my fourth, the Second Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, and even more by the fact that on many occasions I was privileged to hear him preach. For instance, I heard his stirring address at the funeral of his intimate friend and colleague, Dr. Henry Dosker, and the oration which he delivered in the chapel of Hope College at the funeral of the Honorable G. J. Diekema, American minister to the Netherlands. It is said that able preachers are wont to rise to the greatest heights of eloquence on such solemn occasions. Surely, that was true of Massillon and other famous preachers at the court of Louis XIV. and I am inclined to think that it held also of Dr. Vander Meulen.

The reading of his *Faith of Christendom* has confirmed me in the opinion, which I have long held, that the author ranks as one of the most eloquent preachers of his day. The secret of his eloquence lay not in one thing but in many. It may be ac-

counted for in large measure by his concrete expression, vivid imagery, homely illustration, captivating simplicity, rugged honesty, emotional warmth, unquestionable sincerity, and, by no means least, his devotion to the faith of his fathers.

In these sermons on the Apostles' Creed we find Dr. Vander Meulen at his best. The grandeur of the subjects which he set himself to discuss called forth the best that was in him. If he did occasionally preach on trivial topics—and he surely did when once I heard him elaborate on the text “and a chair”—, there is nothing paltry about the themes of this great creed. If at times he distorted his text—and it can hardly be denied that he fell into this great and prevalent evil when on a certain occasion he announced as his text “the destruction that wasteth at noonday” and as his theme, “The Perils of Middle Age”—, the subject matter of this series of sermons did not permit such unholy toying.

Dr. Vander Meulen held the Apostles' Creed in higher esteem than does the present reviewer. The declaration “That I call the Maximum Faith of Christendom” (p. 35) seems to me a greatly exaggerated description of a summary of the Christian faith which says nothing about such fundamental doctrines, to name but two, as the inspiration of Holy Scripture and the new birth. To be sure, for the early centuries of the Christian era it was indeed a most excellent confession of faith, but since then an illuminated Church has, in opposition to numerous heresies and by way of painstaking study of the Scriptures, elaborated Christian dogma so much more fully that today only a considerably fuller creed merits the description “the Maximum Faith of Christendom.”

Dr. Vander Meulen chose to skip the article “descended into hell.” In view of the thick cloud of confusion surrounding the historic meaning and proper interpretation of this phrase, I think he is to be praised for this decision rather than chided. Calvin's view, embodied in the Heidelberg Catechism, that Christ suffered the

agonies of hell in all His sufferings but especially on the cross, is beyond cavil true to fact and altogether deserving of emphasis, but whether the early Church had this in mind when it confessed that Christ “descended into hell” is, to say the least, an open question.

Several prominent features of these discourses render them at once most timely and deserving of warm commendation.

Throughout they stress the truth that Christianity is a religion of fact. How often that is forgotten. How often it is even denied. Pearl Buck stands by no means alone in informing men that, if such an historical event as the bodily resurrection of Jesus should be disproved, that would be no cause for worry, since the spirit of Christ and Christianity would go marching on just the same. How radically different was the position of the inspired apostle who wrote to the Corinthian Church: “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” Backward modernist preachers still assure their audiences that Christianity is not a doctrine, but a life. They deny that it is a doctrine as well as a life and, while making this denial, do not seem even remotely to think of the perfectly obvious fact that prior to both of these it is a story. Dr. Vander Meulen knew full well that historical events constitute the foundation of the Christian religion, and, if this foundation were destroyed, that the whole structure would topple into ruins.

More specifically Christianity stands or falls with certain *supernatural* events; for instance, Jesus' virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In this day and age the forces of neo-pagan naturalism are with all their might storming the citadel of Christian supernaturalism: Dr. Vander Meulen in his book made a valuable contribution toward warding off this attack and driving back the attackers. He fought bravely not only, but on the whole effectively.

The Faith of Christendom is a mili-

tant volume. How could it be otherwise? It sets forth the Christian faith, and Christianity is of all religions most militant. It must be that because it puts forth the stupendous claim of being the only true religion and, while granting readily that other religions contain elements of truth and goodness, yet boldly stamps them all essentially false. Christianity is exclusive. The nauseating religious pacifism and inclusivism abroad in the Church today are about as anti-Christian as anything can be. Nor are they right who piously say that the gospel needs no defense since it is abundantly able to defend itself. The chief of the apostles was at variance with that sentiment and therefore told the Philippians that he was "set for the defense of the gospel." Ministers often boast of avoiding controversy and presenting the truth positively only. They ignore Paul's scathing denunciation: "If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema." As white never seems quite so white as when it is placed against a black background, so it is difficult to conceive of a more effective method of presenting truth than by way of contrast with error. And will not the blood of men be required at the hands of that watchman who fails to warn them of the approaching foe? Dr. Vander Meulen was a faithful watchman. He blew the trumpet when he preached these sermons.

To call attention to little errors in a book containing so much good as *The Faith of Christendom* were pettifogging. Sad to say, however, the book is marred by defects so serious that to pass them over in silence would require the stifling of conscience.

The volume contains many quotations, but comparatively few are from Scripture. There can be no question about it that Dr. Vander Meulen subscribed wholeheartedly to the truth that preaching must be declaration of the Word of God. None the less, it is saddening to see him yield to the temptation to follow the example of so many modernist preachers in quoting the philosophers and scientists and literati of the world extensively and God's own Word sparingly. Then too, several of his citations are from adherents of liberal theology, and too often he quotes them uncritically.

One has a right to expect sermons

on the Apostles' Creed to be doctrinal. Several of the discourses contained in this volume really are that, but a few are apologetic to the point of practically excluding doctrine. For example, the sermon on Christ's resurrection does establish the fact over against denials—which is most laudable—but says next to nothing about the significance of this event. Doctrine, which may be described as the interpretation of events, is largely lacking. But how unsatisfying is a sermon on Christ's resurrection which fails to stress the truths that He "was raised for our justification," that Christians are raised with Him unto "newness of life," and that the resurrected Christ is "the firstfruits of them that are asleep"—in a word, that fails to link Christ's resurrection with the believer's justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Sorry to say, Dr. Vander Meulen did not altogether escape the anti-intellectual attitude which is so characteristic, not only of present-day Modernism, but also of much that goes by the name of fundamentalism. He at least gives it comfort when, in making the point—which is a good one—that "religious faith is never a matter of mere logical coercion," he says unfortunately that "the scales between the reasons for it and the reasons against it are so sufficiently balanced that you yourself with your attitude tip the scales either one way or the other and say, I do not believe, or, I do" (pp. 25, 26). As a matter of fact, to believe is reasonable to the highest degree, and to refuse to believe is utterly unreasonable. In other words, not only the will and the emotions of the unbeliever are corrupted, but his intellect also has gone awry, and the perversion of his intellect as well as the corruption of his other faculties accounts for his unbelief.

The volume contains a number of doctrinal statements which are, to put it very mildly, of doubtful validity. The experience of Pentecost is said to have been repeated often (pp. 175, 176). The author evidently approved of the sentiment of a friend who said: "I never come to my work without asking her (his deceased wife) to come with me. And she does come" (p. 221). We are informed that the human body is in some sense a source or seat of sin (p. 260). The

clause: "Whenever He (the Holy Spirit) has succeeded in making a man willing" (p. 178), leaves room for the serious error that regenerating grace is resistible.

It is quite the vogue in these days, when clamor for the union of churches fills the air, to belittle denominational differences. Of course, it is true that some of the differences which separate churches are picayune. Others, however, are valid not only, but supremely important. And so we are surprised to learn that, while Dr. Vander Meulen liked the doctrines of the Presbyterian denomination "because they make God central and not man," yet he did not feel that in the sight of God it was "necessarily any better than any other evangelical denomination" (p. 189).

The greatest fault of this series of sermons lies, no doubt, in what Dr. Abraham Kuyper used to style "a fading away of boundaries." The author repeatedly fails to draw the line of demarcation between Christianity and Modernism as sharply as should be done. When saying this I am thinking not only of his rather uncritical quotation from liberal authors, but also, for instance, of some of his statements concerning miracles. "Conservative theology," we read, "prefers to take them, for reasons I hope to indicate in this chapter. The Liberal theology prefers to leave them because it can accept only natural events. That seems to me a narrow prejudice and therefore a mental limitation and weakness" (p. 145). Surely, that statement hardly excels in virility. Again, after informing the reader that "Emergent Evolution" has discarded the slogan, *Natura non facit saltum*, the author says: "But a 'jump,' a 'novelty,' sounds suspiciously like a scientific name for miracle" (p. 34). Apparently the author here greatly underestimates the width of the gulf that yawns between naturalism and supernaturalism.

I rejoice that Dr. Vander Meulen, great preacher that he was, blew his trumpet. I cannot suppress the wish that the sound of his trumpet had been clearer and louder.

Turning from inconsistencies in the volume, I wish to testify to keen delight in reading the chapter *Why Did He Die a Criminal's Death?* From the viewpoint of sound doctrine this sermon is to my mind easily the best

of the series. Vander Meulen's conception of that doctrine which is known as the heart of Christian truth was uncompromising in its purity, and he set it forth with all the fervor of his warm heart. In unambiguous language he interpreted Christ's death on the cross as a vicarious sacrifice for the expiation of sin. With all the eloquence at his command he proclaimed the so-called satisfaction theory of the atonement, which in reality is no theory at all but the clear and emphatic teaching

of the Bible and therefore gospel truth.

Trusting in that sacrifice, John M. Vander Meulen, having put the finishing touches to his *Faith of Christendom*, went to meet his God. He wrote the preface in May. The seventh of June his Lord called him to his reward. How fitting that the last chapter of this his last book should be on "The Life Everlasting" and should conclude with the cry,

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Would God I were in thee!"

Suffering and Sin

A Meditation on the Sixth Psalm

By the REV. DAVID FREEMAN



Mr. Freeman

DAVID was a great sufferer. But he suffered in a way in which most people do not suffer. They call that suffering which affects their fortunes in this world. It goes not beyond their physical and mental woes. David saw his sins as the cause of his misfortunes. He was not, however, a greater sinner than others, but he felt his sins more keenly than others.

True, he was stricken by calamities, but it was the sin which these things brought before him that brought pain. As blighted plants and fields in a drought droop and wither away; as one sick and feverish is weak; so far did he feel his strength dissipated. There was nothing left within or without to lean upon. One cannot conceive of a more crushed and afflicted man. He was weary with his groaning; he watered his couch with his tears; his eye was consumed with grief. The shadow of death was over him. All was dark.

Many a man has been brought low by calamity, but none have described it as this man of God describes it. The reason is that his sufferings had a deep inwardness about them. He related them to God. They touched his soul.

The Sovereign God

To a man of God nothing that happens is outside of God's plan and purpose for him. It is God who is deal-

ing with him even though the calamity is apparently brought on by himself or by others. He is a sovereign God and with Him we ever have to do. David did not restrict God to his joys, but he took Him into account in his sorrows as well. The Lord was ever before him.

Sin Against God

We are always offenders before God. No man can stand before Him innocent of great transgression; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one. Our misfortune is not undeserved. Who can stand before God and say that he deserves more than he has received? We have rather cause to say that we have been treated better than we have deserved. We cannot say that we deserve more than we have received. What we deserve is the last ounce of God's wrath, which we richly merit because of our sins.

David knew the wickedness of his own heart. He knew he had no merit to plead, therefore he acknowledged his sins to be justly recompensed. His sad case did not lead to murmuring and repining as it does to many of us. Before the eyes of a godly man, God is always justified in His dealings. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

We have not seen the hideousness of sin, nor the offense which it is to

God, if we do not acknowledge that we have been dealt with in justice. More is not laid upon us than is due to us as sinners.

God Is Not Cruel

But God's just judgment must never be looked upon as cruelty. Only self-righteousness and human depravity can charge God with such a thing. It is ascribing a sin of the creature to the holy and righteous Creator. How base is man so to regard God. There is, therefore, no need to call on God to be just. He will not punish more than the offense demands. What He renders in His judgment is honorable.

Why, then, does David pray to be spared? Why does he not stand upon his feet like a man and take the penalty that is due him? "Coward!" says the boasting and proud man of the world. Only men who know not the awfulness of sin and the hell that awaits them, can point the finger of scorn at the penitent soul. They know not that, should God give to a man his just deserts, destruction and the lake of fire would overtake him. Can a man's heart be so hard; is he so callous as not to fear the wrath of God for his sins? No, a man is not to be blamed for suing for mercy at the bar of God. It is the only thing he can do, if he is to have a chance to live.

God's Mercy

Thank God a man is saved if he pleads only mercy from God, for He delights to show mercy. God will not despise a broken and a contrite heart. Nothing lays hold upon God's graciousness as does the acknowledgment that there is no soundness in us, and that we cannot lift ourselves up. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."

When we know not God's grace then is He very far away indeed. Even our repentance cannot avail us anything, and all our calling He cannot hear. We must see His free offer of pardon in Jesus Christ, whom He gave to us to be the propitiation for our sins. All good comes to us from the reconciliation wrought for us on Calvary's cross. There the wrath of God was removed from us because the price of sin was paid by Him