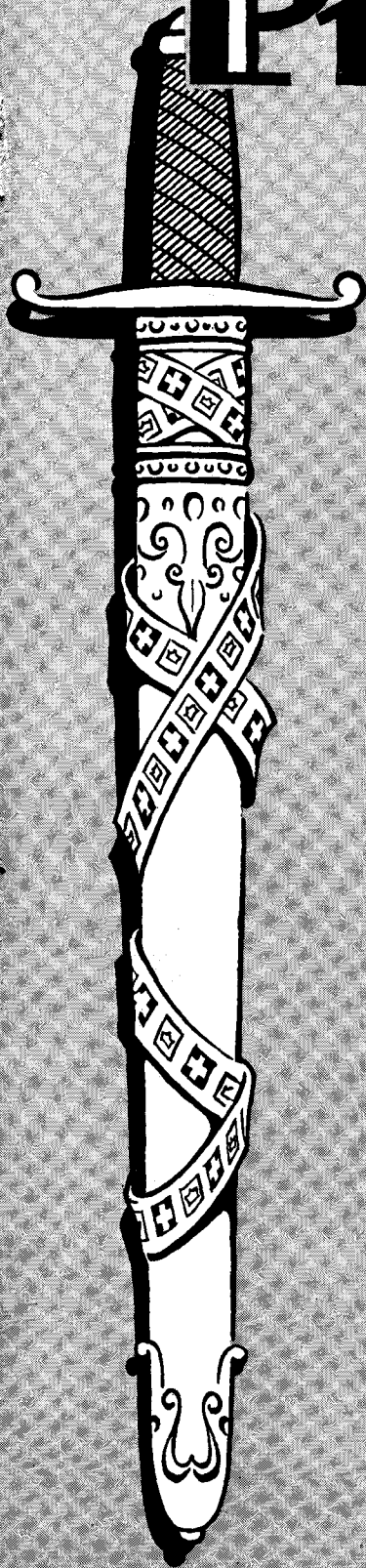


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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD

PSALM 102: 13-22

Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet
Thou to mount Sion shall extend:
Her time for favour which was set,
Behold, is now come to an end.
Thy saints take pleasure in her stones,
Her very dust to them is dear.
All heathen lands and kingly thrones
On earth thy glorious name shall fear.

God in his glory shall appear,
When Sion he builds and repairs.
He shall regard and lend his ear
Unto the needy's humble pray'rs:
Th' afflicted's pray'r he will not scorn.
All times this shall be on record:
And generations yet unborn
Shall praise and magnify the Lord.

He from his holy place look'd down,
The earth he view'd from heav'n on high,
To hear the pris'ner's mourning groan,
And free them that are doom'd to die;
That Sion, and Jerus'lem too,
His name and praise may well record,
When people and the kingdoms do
Assemble all to praise the Lord.

—From The Scottish Psalter.

THE PRESBYTERIAN
CONSTITUTIONAL
COVENANT UNION

Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Soviet Russia, run for all practical purposes by one party. One-party domination is always extremely perilous. In the countries just mentioned, the dominant parties have, for all practical purposes, identified themselves with the state. "Loyalty" in those lands now involves approval of the party in power. Opposition elements are ruthlessly crushed. The "blood purge" is an essential element in this process. All this is the exact reverse of the democratic concept inherent in both the American and Presbyterian systems. Yet exactly the same thing is happening in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. "Loyalty" is being identified with approval—even in advance!—of the acts of the party in power and the official agencies it dominates. This cannot be defended on the ground that the Presbyterian Church is a voluntary society, from which persons may easily withdraw, for the one simple reason that ours is a constitutional church in which Protestant liberties are guaranteed and in which good standing does not depend upon approval of the group in temporary control.

We have seen the rise of the totalitarian state, and now we face an attempt to establish a totalitarian Church in what was once a citadel of constitutional democracy. 1936 will see the culmination of the attempt of those in power to eliminate the "conservative" party. This party stands for nothing novel or strange. Its platform is simply the whole Constitution of the Church, nothing more, nothing less. In standing on the Constitution, it has been attempting to bring about reform, to check bureaucratic centralization of power, to resist the attempts being made to make approval of the administration a test of ministerial communion, to restore as a practical matter the witness to the Gospel now sadly obscured by the dominance of the modernist-indifferentist machine. In reply to this, the machine is attempting to imitate Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini by eliminating the opposition party. The commissioners will be asked to help hitlerize the Church on the plea that "loyalty" demands the punishment and expulsion of the "disloyal" conservatives.

Commissioners who do not trouble to think for themselves, or who are fearful of the Church machine will accept what the platform says and vote as they are told, without question. But those who will think for themselves, in whom the spirit of democratic, constitutional liberty is not dead, will resist these machine demands with all their might. Humanly speaking, all depends upon the presence in the Assembly of men who are intelligent and essential Protestants. Such will have courage to stand against the tide. They will refuse to be stampeded by the perfervid emotionalism of the platform. They will not be afraid to march right up to the

breastwork of halos behind which the machine will barricade itself. They will be willing to risk being reviled and misunderstood as long as they are right, as long as they can speak a good word and strike a good blow for the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

This year the party in power has made every effort to keep its known and conspicuous opponents from being elected as commissioners to the Assembly. That effort has succeeded to a large degree. The great submerged body of conservatives will be about as well represented by known champions in the coming Assembly as are the German Jews in Hitler's latest Reichstag. If the Constitution of the Church is to be preserved by votes at this Assembly, it will have to be by men who have not until now taken an active part in the current controversy. The course of the Assembly will depend upon the "unknown commissioners." Perhaps God in His providence is preparing some hitherto nationally obscure or inactive champion for His truth. Such an one may even read these words before realizing the task which God has set him. If such an unknown Luther there be, may God give him grace and strength. For the Church stands upon the brink of irremediable apostasy. This is not merely because of a projected injustice to loyal men. It is because this year's decision will involve either obedience to, or final rejection of, the final authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking through His Word. If the word of man, as represented by the action of the 1934 Assembly against the Independent Board is judicially upheld, the headship of Christ will have been officially rejected. The Roman Catholic principle of the nature of Church power will then have triumphed. True Protestant Christians will then have to separate themselves from an organization that has repudiated the Reformation. God grant that official desire for power may not drive a great Church into suicidal madness.

If this happens—and we pray God that it may not—the historic witness of the Church will undoubtedly be carried on apart from an organization that has become officially apostate. In that case those who carry on the true spiritual succession will be, now and in the coming years, the true Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

ESCHATOLOGICAL FREEDOM

AMONG those who love the Gospel there are well-known differences concerning eschatology. On essential facts and doctrines, all true adherents of the Reformed Faith ought to be and are in hearty agreement. Yet, as touching upon matters which are not of the essence of the Reformed Faith, the Presbyterian Churches have always recognized a wide area of liberty. For example, the fact that Christ will some day return

(Concluded on Page 52)

perfectly able to "build a new world" in their own strength. The attitude is well expressed on p. 19 of *Youth at Worship*: "Adolescents do not pray for power equal to their tasks but tasks equal to their power."

Recommended Books

Revealing is the list of recommended books found in section IV of *Youth Action in Personal Religious Living*. Books for devotional use are here recommended under eleven different headings; under each heading the three that are especially recommended are starred (*). With almost unflinching regularity the recommended books present the so-called "liberal" viewpoint and this is especially true of those which are starred. For example under books about Jesus Christ, Fosdick's "The Manhood of the Master" is especially recommended. Likewise his "The Meaning of Faith" under books about our beliefs, "The Meaning of Prayer" under books about the meaning of prayer, and "Twelve Tests of Character" under books about character. It is rather ironic that a church whose General Assembly passed the Philadelphia Overture of 1923 now supports a Board of Christian Education which especially recommends Dr. Fosdick's books to her young people. It would seem utterly impossible to contend that a Board which allows the approval of such a list of books to its young people is greatly concerned in holding to the tenets of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

One thing more should at least be mentioned. It is the picture which these publications present of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is quite in keeping with their attitude toward the Bible, toward God, and toward man. Since youth is so perfectly able to care for all his needs it would obviously be folly to suggest to him that he needs a Savior, for that would indeed be "revolting to idealistic youth." Hence Christ is spoken of as "Poet seer of Galilee, as "Clearest thinker man has known," as "Kingly servant of man's need," as "Our leader and our guide," but not as "Savior" or as "Lord."

In summary, then, is the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in regard to her Summer Conferences and Leadership Training to be regarded faithful to its responsibility? The above

related evidence would seem to demand that the answer be "By no means!" If anyone should feel this review has been partisan, let him select at random any three of the publications recently used in our summer conferences or in leadership training classes and find his heart sink as he realizes the kind of teaching which is sponsored by the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

ESCHATOLOGICAL FREEDOM

(Concluded from Page 44)

in visible glory to the earth is of the essence of the Reformed Faith. Dif-

ferences over the *mode* in which that return will take place, whether according to the pre-, post- or a-millennial view, have certainly been historically regarded as being within the area of permitted liberty. Of course the Bible does not teach all three views, so somebody is wrong. But the differences are such as can be held by Christian brethren. Certainly it would be folly for Christians to divide upon this issue when we need a united front against Modernism by those who truly believe and love the Gospel.

The series of articles by Mr. John Murray appearing in the GUARDIAN is emphatically not to be interpreted as an effort to read pre-millennarians out of the communion of the church. Pre-millennarians are found on the Board and in the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, on the Board and in the staff of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and in the membership and staff of The Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union. These persons believe that there is no incongruity between the Reformed Faith and belief in the pre-millennial return of our Lord. As we understand it, the dispensationalism against which Mr. Murray will write is of a kind that denies the fundamental unity of the Covenant of Grace, which is an essential doctrine of the Reformed Faith.

Mr. Murray has well expressed this when, in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN for February 3rd, he identified the form of dispensationalism against which he will write as that "which discovers in the several dispensations of God's redemptive revelation distinct and even contrary principles of divine procedure and thus destroys the unity of God's dealings with fallen mankind." To be pre-millennial, however, does not at all mean that one must hold this error. If anyone has the idea that the time has come for an eschatological pogrom by those holding one or any of these views against the others, we believe that it should be promptly dropped. With doctrines repugnant to the Reformed, Biblical Faith, no compromise. With differences within the area of the Reformed system and concerning matters not essential to it, absolute liberty.

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