

The Presbyterian Guardian

December 26, 1936

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 6

One Dollar a Year

J. GRESHAM MACHEN
NED B. STONEHOUSE *Editors*

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

THOMAS R. BIRCH,
Managing Editor

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-

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Salvation of Infants

By JOHN MURRAY



Mr. Murray

THE *Christian Century* in the issue for November 25th, 1936, in an editorial that purports to deal with some actions of the second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America says: "In plain words, what Dr. Machen and his followers have now done is to deny that the Presbyterians were true Christians when, a generation ago, they expunged from their creed the declaration that children dying in infancy are lost and inserted the assertion that God loves all men." We confine our attention now to the part of the sentence that deals with the question of infants dying in infancy.

Misrepresentation

We could not expect that *The Christian Century* in an editorial dealing with The Presbyterian Church of America would not be influenced by the theological bias which it represents. But it is surely not too much to expect that the editors of *The Christian Century* would before writing make some attempt to become acquainted with the elementary facts. What they have done, however, is to give us an example of amazing ignorance and misrepresentation.

To say that the Presbyterians, a generation ago, "expunged from their creed the declaration that children dying in infancy are lost" is simply not true. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. did not expunge such a declaration simply because there was no such declaration that needed to be expunged. It could not expunge what did not exist.

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. did in 1903 adopt with several other revisions of and additions to the Confession of Faith a Declaratory Statement, and part of that Declaratory Statement declares as follows: "With reference to Chapter X, Section III, of the Confession of Faith, that it is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are

lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases."

The second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America meeting in Philadelphia last month in adopting a Confession of Faith and Catechisms omitted *in toto* the Declaratory Statement of 1903 as well as the two additional chapters and certain other revisions adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in that same year. It therefore included in that which was omitted the part of the Declaratory Statement quoted above.

This means that The Presbyterian Church of America on the question of infants dying in infancy is content, so far as creedal statement is concerned, to revert to the position held by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. before 1903, which in turn is the position of the Westminster Standards as they were framed by the Westminster divines in 1646.

The question is now very simple. What do the Westminster Standards, or more particularly what does the Westminster Confession of Faith, say on this question? All it has to say is contained in Chapter X, Section III.

The Teaching of the Confession

This section of the Confession of Faith reads as follows: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." This is a statement that has been much maligned and misunderstood. We proceed to show that it is adequate and unassailable. It reflects the wisdom and care so characteristic of the Westminster divines.

First of all it is to be noted that this section occurs in the chapter on "Effectual Calling." It seems hardly to have occurred to many of the

critics of the statement to take note of this fact. It is a statement in a particular context, under a particular heading, and must not, therefore, be abstracted from that context. The Confession in this chapter is not dealing at all with the question of the extent of the salvation of infants dying in infancy. The question at issue is that raised by the terms in which effectual calling has been defined in the two preceding sections of this chapter. They read as follows: "I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

"II. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

Effectual calling, it is apparent, has been defined in terms that require an intelligent act of faith. The minds of the called are *enlightened* spiritually and savingly to *understand* the things of God. They are effectually drawn to Jesus Christ. They come most *freely*, being made *willing* by His grace. They *answer* the call, and *embrace* the grace offered and conveyed in it. These intelligent exercises of understanding and will are such as can be predicated only of those who have reached a certain stage of intellectual and intelligent apprehension. They are predicable, in other words, only of those who are capable of being outwardly called by the min-

istry of the Word, and not predicable of those who do not in the nature of the case possess that equipment.

Now if this is so the question is forced upon us: What about those who are *incapable* of being called outwardly by the ministry of the Word, who are incapable of the intelligent exercises of understanding and will, in terms of which effectual calling has been defined? Are all such, simply because they do not have the psychological equipment required for such exercise, excluded from that grace and salvation by Jesus Christ to which men are introduced by the call of God? In a word, are they excluded *in toto* from the election of grace? It is precisely to that question that the Confession gives its answer in this section.

When we speak of those who are "incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word," there are two classes that naturally come to our mind. They are infants dying in infancy and imbeciles. With these two classes the Confession deals. Our interest at the present time is with the first class, infants dying in infancy. They are the first sub-class of those who are "incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." They are not, the Confession implies, for that reason excluded from the election of grace and the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved."

Important Principles Conserved

By this terse statement the Confession guards certain very important principles. (1) Infants dying in infancy belong to the mass of fallen humanity, and are therefore in need of redemption and regeneration and salvation just as are all others not dying in infancy. They are not in this regard in a class by themselves. They are not to be regarded as free from corruption and guilt simply for the reason that they are infants. The Westminster divines were jealous to remember that we are born in sin and shapen in iniquity.

(2) If infants dying in infancy are saved, they are saved because they have been by God elected to salvation. Election respects all of the human race, infant and adult, who inherit eternal life. The salvation of infants, just like the salvation of adults, finds its ultimate source in the

sovereign election of God. Even if all infants dying in infancy are saved, it is just because in the amazing grace of God they have all been elected to salvation.

(3) The salvation of infants dying in infancy is realized through the redemption that is in Christ and regeneration by the Spirit.

Extent of Infant Salvation Left Undetermined

The Confession, therefore, as stated already, does not deal with the extent of the salvation of infants dying in infancy. That is entirely outside the scope of the chapter and beside its purpose. Why should it determine a question that is not relevant to the topic under discussion? The framers were better logicians than their critics.

It is not to be supposed that the phrase "elect infants, dying in infancy," in the context in which it occurs, implies that there are non-elect infants, dying in infancy. If it is to be argued that the logical opposite is implied or at least suggested, then the logical opposite of "elect infants dying in infancy" is not non-elect infants dying in infancy but *elect infants, not dying in infancy*. That, of course, is implied. All of the elect were infants at one time or another, with the exception of Adam and Eve, if they are included in the election of grace. With that exception all the elect were infants. Some die in infancy, some do not. It is with the former the Confession deals in this section.

In the minutes of the Westminster Assembly the phrase "elect of infants" occurs. Dr. A. F. Mitchell says that this is the form it appears to have borne in the draft first brought in to the Assembly. If that had been the form finally adopted some plausibility would have been given to the argument that the Confession distinguished between elect and non-elect infants dying in infancy. "But the very fact," says Dr. Mitchell, "that the form of expression was changed shows how anxious the divines intrusted with the methodising of the Confession were to guard against pronouncing dogmatically on questions on which neither Scripture nor the Reformed Churches had definitely pronounced."*

It is true that Reformed theologians of the highest repute believed and argued that all infants dying in infancy are elect and therefore regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. There are others, also of the highest repute, who would say that we may indulge a highly probable hope that such is the fact. There are still others who suspend judgment on this question and who therefore take the position that we have no warrant from Scripture to affirm or deny that all infants dying in infancy are elect and therefore saved. Among the latter are some of the most highly accomplished in the art of Biblical interpretation. It is surely a question on which the teaching of Scripture cannot be expressly explicit. Creedal dogmatism, therefore, on such an issue would run counter to the whole genius and purpose of true creedal formulation and confession. Chapter X, Section III, is just another example and proof that the Westminster divines were governed by that high conception of their function as creed-composers.

The Presbyterian Church of America by its action at the last General Assembly exhibited something of appreciation for that conception of creedal confession, appreciation for the care that governed the Westminster divines in the discharge of the task undertaken by them. The Presbyterian Church of America has to that extent, at least, shown itself worthy of the great Reformed tradition it seeks to represent and perpetuate.

*The Westminster Assembly, p. 398.

This Week in Religion

THE religious news broadcast sponsored by "The Presbyterian Guardian" is now on the air every Saturday afternoon from 5.30 to 5.45 over Station WIP (610 kilocycles).

Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse, Editor of "The Presbyterian Guardian," takes his listeners behind the scenes in the varied and thrilling events of the week, and interprets those events in the light of consistent Christianity. Plan to listen this week.