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## THE PASSING OF J. GRESHAM MACHEN

OUR hearts are deeply wounded but not unto despair. We who remain are not sorrowing as those who have no hope, for our God added grace to grace when he crowned His work of lifelong favor toward His servant with a most joyous testimony of abundant entrance into the heavenly home. A Roman Catholic sister who had served as one of his nurses remarked that he had been "all spirit." But the fact remains that to us he was a dearly beloved Christian brother whose life touched ours for good at a thousand points. Indeed, he was far more than a brother to many of us. He was a father in Israel and we have become orphans. The cry of our grieving hearts in these days has been: "Our father, our father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" But God who was so gracious to him has not forsaken us. Thanks to His blessed Name, we have the assurance that the Lord his God is the living God who remains as the guide and stay of His people.

### A FATHER IN ISRAEL

As Elijah was the spiritual father of Elisha and of other "sons of the prophets," Dr. Machen was the spiritual father of countless Christians in our time. The world over, many of God's little ones listened eagerly to his words, whether spoken or written, for, more than any other in this generation, he clearly expressed and defended and strengthened their Christian faith on the basis of the Word of God. "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you," Paul wrote to the Galatians, and this bold figure accurately expresses the relationship between Dr. Machen and a great circle of humble believers in the Bible as the Word of God.

And he was notably the spiritual father of a generation of theological students who crowded into his classrooms. How profoundly the thinking and living of young men have been affected by his teaching! Commending his learning with singular gifts as a teacher, his influence upon his students was lasting and in many instances so powerful as to alter radically the course of their lives. He was so much a man of power and energy that his very presence often proved a source of stimulation to thought and action.

Moreover, to many of us he manifested all of the affection that a natural father might possibly bestow upon his sons. Besides his loving care for all of the churches, which found touching expression in the last week of his life, nothing seemed to give him more joy than to encourage and help others. His acts of generosity were legion. How precious to his sons are the letters of advice and encouragement—how did he find time to write them all?—and the memories of the sympathy with which he received us in the midst of his dreadfully busy life! We never addressed him as a father—he was far too democratic to allow that as a possibility—but in the midst of our jolly fellowship we never quite forgot a certain sense of his separateness which today brings spontaneously to our lips the exclamation of Elisha: "Our father, our father."

### THE CHARIOT OF ISRAEL

We have depended so much upon him in the past that it might well appear that we could not go on without him. Dauntless warrior for the Lord, clothed with the full armor of God, he bore the brunt of the battle against the enemies of God's people. Humble children of God have looked to him as their protector and de-



**J. Gresham Machen**  
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# Dr. Machen's Hope and the Active Obedience of Christ

By JOHN MURRAY

"I'M SO thankful for active obedience of Christ: no hope without it." This was the last message of our beloved friend Dr. Machen to the present writer. It was apparently dictated to his nurse on the day of his decease January 1st. The subject of the active obedience of Christ formed the topic of one of the last conversations we were privileged to have with him, and by the message quoted above he wanted us to know how much that precious truth meant to him as he was passing through the valley of the shadow of death. He was then about to pass into the immediate presence of his Lord. Why should he have suspended the issues of eternal hope upon this truth? Why did he dare to say: "*No hope without it*"? We hang on to the last words of our friends, but particularly should we do so when they are pregnant with the issues of eternal life or death. It surely interests us to know what precisely he meant by that expression.

## The Passive Obedience

In Reformed Theology the formula of the "active and passive obedience of Christ" has been used to set forth and guard two distinct aspects of the substitutionary work of Christ. The passive obedience of Christ is the term that has been used to denote all that Christ did, as the substitute of His people, to satisfy all the claims of law and justice against their sins. It denotes the satisfaction on the part of Christ of all the penal demands of the divine law. The sins of His people were imputed to Christ, and that imputation became the ground of the penalty-bearing that He endured in their room and stead. That satisfaction rendered by Christ is in turn imputed to His people, and becomes the ground of full remission of sin and exemption from its condemnation. So by the grace of God complete remission of sin and of its penalty is grounded in real satisfaction to law and justice. God is just and the justi-

fier of him who hath faith in Jesus (Cf. Rom. 3:26).

## The Active Obedience

But the law of God demands more than penalty for sin. It requires of us also perfect obedience to its precept. Justification is a reckoning of us in the divine judgment as not only free from guilt and condemnation but also as having fulfilled all the requirements of His law. It is a declaration that we are, in His sight, righteous. In other words it involves not only remission of sin but also acceptance with God as righteous and therefore reception into the divine favor. There must, then, be positive righteousness placed to the account of the justified person. What is that righteousness? Or, to put it otherwise, what is the ground of this actual justification? It is surely the substitutionary work of Christ, and therefore that substitutionary work must, in order to supply the ground of a real justification, include not only satisfaction for sin and guilt but also obedience to the law in all the extent and detail of its demands. It is this latter that the term "active obedience" denotes. It refers to that undefiled and undefilable righteousness of Christ that is His as our representative and substitute in virtue of His perfect obedience to the divine law. It is that righteousness imputed to the believer that justifies the sentence of justification, and is the proper ground of reception into the divine favor and of the title to everlasting life. Eternal life is a gift of divine grace, but this grace reigns through *righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. "Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment* came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18, 19).

## The Title to Glory

It is surely surpassingly appropriate that exactly that truth should occupy the mind of the believer as he is about to pass into the immediate presence of his Lord. How can he with equanimity entertain the thought of appearing before Him except as he looks for favor and acceptance with Him? How can he contemplate the enjoyment of glory unspeakable apart from a title in righteousness to it? And where can he find the righteousness that grounds a title to such bliss? The answer is apparent: it is in the perfect righteousness of his surety and substitute. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, "And by that righteousness being imputed to us, is meant no other than this, that that righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness that ought to be in ourselves: Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves: and so we suppose that a title to eternal life is given us as the reward of this righteousness."\*

## A Charge to Those Who Follow

Dr. Machen fought the good fight: he finished the course: he kept the faith. As he was about to cross the line into the unseen beyond, no doubt his mind would fain reiterate to those who remain behind, the charge of Paul to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." (II Tim. 4:2). And apparently there was one thing in particular he would have us constantly raise aloft before the eyes of a sin-dead world: It is the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ, his Saviour and Lord. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even of thine only*" (Ps. 71:16).

\*WORKS. New York, 1881. Vol. IV. p. 91.