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THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

*A Presbyterian weekly magazine devoted to the
statement, defense and propagation of the
Gospel, the faith which was once for
all delivered unto the saints*

JANUARY 23, 1952

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One of

The Most Important Articles We've

*Published, written on the most VITAL issue facing the
Christian Church begins (complete in this issue) on p. 4.*

AFFIRMING:

- that the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* were written by men
inspired by the *Holy Spirit*.
- that *they are the Word of God*.
- that *they are the revelation of God's will for man* and of man's duty to God.
- that *they are the only infallible and authoritative rule of faith and life*.

We urge you to read it!

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EDITORIAL

What Shall I Preach? The Word Or The World?

During the First World War, a pious pastor became so engrossed in the American cause that on Sunday his people only got warmed over what they had to read in the papers and periodicals every day of the week.

When the servant of Elisha saw the horses and chariots of the Syrians, come to capture and carry away the man of God, he was terrified. But at the prayer of Elisha his eyes were opened and he beheld the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Accordingly, he learned that they which are for us are more than they that be against us.

An examination of this current world is certainly discouraging, perhaps terrifying. Why should we expect it to be different? The world rejected the Messiah as an infant. Herod slew the babes of Bethlehem in an effort to rid the world of the Christ Child. When virtue had unfolded itself in perfect and complete manhood, this world crucified virtue Incarnate. If we are only or chiefly preaching the world to the Church we are inviting pessimism.

But when the Holy Spirit illumines our eyes as He did the eyes of the servant of the man of God so that we see heaven opened and armies of heaven following the Faithful and True Rider on the white horse, courage replaces discouragement—hope supplants fear.

Then *vexilla Dei prodeunt*. Now the name of this glorious rider is THE WORD OF GOD, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Brethren, the seed of the Kingdom is the Word of God. We are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God. Our people are to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, and to cherish the

memory of those that spake unto them the Word of God. Therefore, preach the Word.

—Wm.C.R.

What Is The Bible Basis For Women Elders?

According to reports in another periodical, our Church is faced with the issue of whether or not to have women as ruling elders. Our first concern in this matter is this: what is the rule by which the issue is to be settled? Are we to determine this matter, as so many other questions have been decided of late, by human reasoning; or is it to be determined by appeal to the Word?

Is the appeal to be made to the number or the prominence of the advocates of the change? or by reference to the practice of other churches? or to democratic principles? or to the acknowledged intellectual and spiritual abilities of many of our Church women?

Interesting as such matters are, they do not, in the opinion of the writer, constitute the basis upon which our Church professes to settle issues. Our first ordination vow commits us to the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice. The first chapter of our Confession asserts that the Supreme Judge by which all issues in religion are to be settled "can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." In our third ordination vow we express our approval of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Now our Book of Church Order is more emphatic in deriving our government from the Bible than is that of the U.S.A. Book. It starts with an assertion of the Scriptural character of Presbyterianism, and adds thereto in its tenth paragraph, thus:

"Christ, as King, has given to His Church, officers, oracles and ordinances; and especially has He ordained therein His system of doc-

trine, GOVERNMENT, discipline, and worship; all of which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced therefrom; and to which things He commands THAT NOTHING BE ADDED and that from them naught be taken away." (Emphasis supplied).

While many of the leaders of the U.S.A. Church understand that the ruling elder is the representative of the people and gets his position and authority from them, the fathers of the Southern Church wrote into our Book of Church Order their doctrine that the presbyter of the New Testament, as of the Jewish synagogue, is primarily the ruling elder, the shepherd of the flock. Thus, the ruling elder is the gift of the ascended Christ to the Church, and from the Head of the Church the elder receives his position, prerogatives, qualifications and authorization.

Consequently, with the highest respect for those who have suggested this change, we invite them to give us the exegetical or Scriptural basis for the proposal they are advocating. —Wm.C.R.

Our Gracious God

Let us start this year with a renewed act of faith in the God of all grace, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. For salvation is all of grace; and the mercy of God is the logic of our religion.

God chose us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. He saved us according to His own purpose and grace that were given us in Christ before times eternal. If you would know that God loved you because He is gracious, not because you were of "supreme worth" or of "infinite value" go back with Calvin to Ephesians 1 or I Peter 1:1-2. In choosing us before we were, God did not elect us because of any worth we had—but because He looked upon us in the Beloved. "The foreknowledge of God excludes every worthiness on the part of man."

At redemption that which remained of the creation of God was an object of His approbation, but that which came from our rebellion was an object of His just opposition. What was still of Him He delighted in; what we had wrought (sin) He condemned. "In adopting us, therefore, God does not inquire what we are, and is not reconciled to us by any personal worth" (Calvin). God so loved us as to give His only begotten Son for the salvation of a

world that was "hateful and hating", that cut off the heads of the babes of Bethlehem and crucified the Lord of glory. Yea, it is through the blackest crime ever committed—the Crucifixion of Christ—that God manifests His exact justice and rich grace in the salvation of sinners.

Likewise, God is gracious in the work of salvation. As Christ died for us even while we were enemies of God, so the Holy Spirit illumined these natural hearts which were rooted in sin-blinding enmity and turned them from hatred to God to a love responding to His great love for us. Thus grace means the goodness or love of God, the freeness or gratuitousness of that love, and the saving power or efficacy of this gracious love. The Sermon on the Mount is the pattern of gracious living that ensues when His children become like the heavenly Father who is present in His grace.

Again in His infinite wisdom, God has provided the means by which He works His grace in us, namely the Word, the sacraments and prayer communion with the Father. He who knows all things has given us the Holy Scriptures to be the guide for our lives as we walk through this world of sin, and shame, and fear. If you would enjoy the grace of our God lay hold of His bountiful promises. They are all yea in Christ, they are sealed in the sacraments, they are to be plead in prayer. Yes and yield to His admonitions. His judgments are true and righteous altogether, and no man is so high on top that God cannot topple him to the earth. And no one is so low that God cannot exalt. The LORD who is righteous in all His ways and gracious in all His works, upholds all that fall and raises up all those that are bowed down. Here is Calvin's hymn of praise to our gracious Lord:

"I greet Thee, who my sure Redeemer art,
My only trust, and Saviour of my heart!
Who so much toil and woe
And pain didst undergo
For my poor worthless sake;
We pray Thee from our hearts,
All idle griefs and smarts
And foolish cares to take.

Thou art the true and perfect gentleness;
No harshness hast Thou, and no bitterness:
Make us to taste and prove,
Make us adore and love
The sweet grace found in Thee;
With longing to abide
Ever at Thy dear side
In the sweet eternity."

—Wm.C.R.

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