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*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*

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A National Challenge

BY WM. E. DOUGHTY

(See Anglers)

O America, America, stretching between the two great seas, in whose heart flows the rich blood of many nations, into whose mountain safes God has put riches of fabulous amount, in whose plains the Almighty has planted the magic genius that blossoms into harvests with which to feed the hungry multitudes of earth, nursed by Puritan and Pilgrim, defended by patriot and missionary, guided by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, sanctified by a faith as pure as looks up to heaven from any land; O America, let thy Master make thee a saviour of the nations; let thy God flood thee with a resistless passion for conquest; let thy Father lead thee over mountains and seas, through fire and flood, through sickness and pain, out—out to that great hour when all men shall hear the call of Christ, and the last lonely soul shall see the uplifted cross, and the whole world be bound back to the heart of God!

It Is God That Justifieth

**The Gospel Is The Power Of God Unto
Salvation. Son, Be Of Good Cheer,
Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee.**

These texts remind us that the Gospel is not a mere set of human ideas. It is the power of God. In and through the preaching of His Gospel, God acts. Justification is an act of God's free grace. God *acts* in justifying a sinner not less than He acts in judging an impenitent person. There are writers and speakers who treat the one as well as the other as though they were both matters of human intellectualization, or mechanical cause and effect. But the Bible sees God in action. For it, God turns the wicked into hell and the Son of Man says to those on His left hand: Depart from Me, ye cursed into everlasting punishment. For it, Christ says to the paralytic, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee; and it is God that justifieth.

Let us also keep in mind that according to the Book, we are to pray continually: Forgive us our debts—trespasses—sins. Our Confession testifies, "God doth continually forgive the sins of those that are justified." If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Whenever we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Calvin well writes:

"Our first entrance, therefore, into the Church and Kingdom of God is the remission of sins, without which we have no covenant or union with God." "Nor does God only once receive and adopt us into His Church by the remission of sins; He likewise preserves and keeps us in it by the same mercy." "Wherefore it ought to be held as a certain conclusion, that from the liberality, by the intervention of Christ, through the sanctification of the Spirit, pardon of sins has been, and is daily, bestowed upon us, who have been admitted and grafted into the Church." "Whatever holiness may distinguish the children of God, yet such is their condition as long as they inhabit a mortal body, that they cannot stand before God without the remission of sins." Institutes IV :i:20-22.

Finally, it ought to be emphasized that this is God's work, not man's. It is not a mere matter of brushing guilt-consciousness from our minds, as one might brush cobwebs from his face. In our sin we are guilty before God, obnoxious to His wrath. God must deal with us. Blessed be His Name, He does—He forgiveth all our iniquities. And He does this out of free grace through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus. The ground on which God's great mercy acts is the righteousness of Christ. It is not because of our faith as some too loosely say. Paul never uses *dia* with the accusative when he speaks of faith. Jonathan Edwards found that men were misconstruing the covenant into an agreement or legal bargain between equals. Dragging God down to man's level, they described faith as the condition of the covenant, and then they made it the cause of our forgiveness - - and ended by having God in debt to man and obligated to forgive him. Away with such humanistic conceits, Edwards thundered. Here again let us re-read our Confession: God freely justifieth those whom He calls by pardoning their sins for Christ's sake alone—by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them. Moreover, this justification is only of free grace, inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, His obedience and satisfaction are accepted in our stead, and even the faith by which we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation is the gift of God, the inward work of the Holy Spirit.

Brother, draw the confidence God has for you in this blessed assurance: It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? —W.C.R.

The Kingship Of Christ And The Plan Of Union

In Our Book Of Church Order And In The Form Of Government

CHAPTER II

The differences between these two documents may be concretely exhibited by quoting our chapter in full, italicizing the words that are taken over in the 1954 Plan of Union and adding in parentheses with italics the few words the Plan adds, thus:

"(Of Jesus Christ), The King And Head Of The Church.

(1). 8. *Jesus Christ*, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever; *having all power given unto him in heaven and in*

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earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be (is) the Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all; he, being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his Church, and gave all officers necessary for the edification of his Church and the perfecting of his saints.

(2). 9. Jesus, the Mediator, the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Saviour, and Head of the Church contains in himself, by way of eminency, all the offices of his Church, and has many of their names attributed to him in the Scriptures. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister, and Bishop, and the only Lawgiver in Zion. It belongs to his Majesty from his throne of glory, to rule and teach (*Since his ascension to heaven he is present with and governs the Church, through his Word and Spirit, (and) by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising his own authority, and enforcing his own laws, unto the edification and establishment of his kingdom.*

(3). 10. Christ, as King, has given to his (*The Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church has given (it) to his Church, officers (the ministry), oracles, and ordinances (of God)*); and especially has he ordained therein his system of doctrine, government, and worship; all 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.

11. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, he is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit, and the benefits of all his offices are effectually applied by the Holy Spirit.

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As to other sections, the 1954 Plan includes our paragraph 18, but it omits our paragraph 19 which had a place in the 1943 Plan of Union. This deleted paragraph reads:

"19. The exercise of ecclesiastical power, whether joint or several, has the divine sanction, when in conformity with the statutes enacted by Christ, the Lawgiver, and when put forth by courts or by officers appointed thereunto in his Word."

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Chapter 5 of the *Form of Government* in the 1954 Plan repeats the position that the "radical principles" of Presbyterian Church government and discipline are that a larger part of the church, or a representation of it shall govern a smaller, that is that a majority shall govern. Here again we see the intrusion of eighteenth century principles in lieu of

the Bible doctrine that "the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King, He will save us."

Subordinate to this rule of rational principles, we have sections taken from our paragraph 58, B. C. O. Here, however, the FORM OF GOVERNMENT omits the following good statements of our paragraph, thus:

"First, They (Church Courts) can make no laws binding the conscience; but may frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, within or without the pale of the Church, and decide cases of conscience. Secondly, they have the power to establish rules for the government, discipline, worship, and extension of the Church, which must be agreeable to the doctrines contained in the Scriptures, the circumstantial details only of these matters being left to the Christian prudence and wisdom of church officers and courts. Thirdly, they possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ."

Why should these clearly marked out limits of Church jurisdiction and authority be omitted—except that the 1954 Plan of Union does not hold to Christ as the sole King, the only Lawgiver in Zion, as our Book of Church Order teaches it?

* * * * *

When one turns to the new *Book of Discipline* in the 1954 Plan he finds that its chapter 1 paragraph 8 defines an offense in some of the same language used in our par. 179. But there is a significant difference. Our Book defines an offense as anything contrary to the Word of God and places a period there. Instead of the period the Plan goes on to state "or to those expositions of its teachings as to faith and practice which are contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States." Further the Plan omits the following statute of limitation given in our paragraph 179, thus:

"Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture, as interpreted in these Standards."

It seems to us that the 1954 Plan opens the way for condemning men under those "general principles" or "radical principles" which the Plan of Union has taken over from eighteenth century thinking and included at significant places in the Plan. Slavery to Christ alone is the true and only freedom of the human soul. In His Body, the Church, one ought to be subject only to His Word and His Spirit, and officers and courts ought to be expressly instructed that their exercise of church power has the divine sanction only when it is in conformity with the statutes enacted by Christ the Lawgiver, B. C. O. par. 19.

—W.C.R.