

the PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

supporting continuation of a Presbyterian witness loyal to Scripture and the Reformed faith

Fight for Your Property!

With due respect to all, I disagree with the spiritually minded folk who wish to display the meekness of Christ by abandoning their property. I also disagree with those who are willing to give up without a fight because they believe themselves bereft of legal ammunition. I do *not* think it is Biblically wise or right to give up and move out.

Although Jesus said, "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also," we must be sure we understand what He was teaching. Both this verse and its larger context (Matt. 5:38-42) show that our Lord was decrying the sinful human tendency to insist on our rights, especially legal rights. All will agree that this insistence on personal and legal rights is an unattractive mark of the old nature.

However, Christ was certainly not telling us that it is never in order to wrestle for the sake of principle. In discussing the disciplinary measures which must be taken to keep His Church pure, our Lord spoke in another vein (Matt. 18:15-17). He did not tell us to let ourselves and His holy Church be run over. He did not speak of turning the other cheek or of throwing in the cloak in addition to the coat.

—Henry M. Hope Jr.
(See p. 9)

S. S. LESSON AND YOUTH PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER 10

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RE GREEDY CHURCHMEN

When I consider present conditions existing between some Presbyterian Church US and Presbyterian Church in America factions, I am concerned that Christians stop quarreling over property and money matters. Both concerns are worldly and Christians

must focus their concerns on things of the spirit and not things of the flesh.

The Christian's responsibility is to enhance the proclamation of God's truth to a sinful and lost world. The salvation of one poor soul would be worth much more

than all the church property and pride of all the men involved in this quarreling.

To be more specific without using names, there are further moves in our area to annul presbytery actions which dismissed certain congregations with their property to the PCA. These moves are being generated and led by some ministers of the PCUS and by one well known minister in particular. The objective seems to be mainly to produce confusion and, perhaps, to seize some property.

I would ask, Are these ministers seeking worldly pride and glory? Where is the evidence that there is any interest in having God's truth preached? What could possibly be gained by such selfishness? It would seem to me that the result of the efforts that are being made will only serve the selfish purposes of a few men and further divide the Christian community.

Surely as Christians we already have lost too much valuable time given us for the evangelization of the world. Instead of this selfish, childish bickering, it is past time that we get down on our knees and pray fervently for a Spirit-led revival. Until we begin acting as little children in the sight of God we cannot expect revival or growth in the Church.

—C. O. Baker Jr.
Huntsville, Ala.

Ministers we understand. What we cannot understand is the support they get from elders who know better and practice a different standard of honesty in their personal affairs. See pp. 4, 9, this issue.—Ed.

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THIS WEEK— Vol. XXXV, No. 21, September 22, 1976

Reformation Coming? 7

Many conditions which prepared for the 16th-century Reformation are present today by W. Stanford Reid

Let's Uphold the Law! 9

It is not un-Christian behavior for Christians to fight for their property by Henry M. Hope Jr.

Witherspoon and Doctrine 11

A defense of the connection between the doctrine of justification and holiness of life by William C. Robinson

Departments—

Editorials	12
The Layman and his Church	13
Sunday School Lesson, October 10	14
Youth Program, October 10	16
Book Reviews	18

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WE WERE MISTAKEN

On the editorial page of the Aug. 4 *Journal* there occurs this statement in reference to the proposed ordination vows in the *Book of Confessions* adopted by the 1976 PCUS General Assembly:

"Under the present rules, officers promise to be 'subject to the brethren in the Lord.' The context of God's will and Word is invoked. Under the new rules there is a flat promise that officers will 'submit to the government and discipline of the Church.'"

I am unable to reconcile the above statement with what I find in the "Assembly Adopted Edition" of the proposed *Book of Confessions*. It seems to me the old and the new

Witherspoon and Doctrine

WILLIAM C. ROBINSON

John Witherspoon, the leader of the evangelical party in the Kirk of Scotland, was called to this land in 1768 as president of Princeton University. Here he helped reorganize the Presbyterian Church and was instrumental in forming the first General Assembly. He wrote the *Parliamentary Principles* which transformed a "branch" of an established Church into a free Church.

The only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Witherspoon labored so mightily for the American cause that the state of New Jersey proclaimed 1775 as John Witherspoon Year: "In tribute to this man of God, patriot, educator and signer of the Declaration of Independence, and to encourage a return to God, patriotism, fidelity in government, true education and the spirit of 1776."

Dr. Witherspoon wrote a pamphlet on the connection between the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ and holiness of life. In testimony to the Gospel he preached, the following summary is presented.

The Reformation doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ was attacked on the grounds that it loosened the obligations to practice Christian living. Dr. Witherspoon replied, "On the contrary, the belief and acceptance of justification by the grace of God through the imputed righteousness of Christ makes men greater lovers of purity and holiness and fills them with a greater abhorrence of sin."

Experience shows that those who deny their own righteousness and hope for justification through Christ are the most tender, the most

fearful of sinning, and the most holy in their lives.

Using Scriptural language, Dr. Witherspoon described the doctrine thus: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. But we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In support of this Biblical truth, Dr. Witherspoon argued this way: First, one who expects justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ has the strongest convictions of the obligation of the holy law of God upon every reasonable creature. What Christ did for the salvation of sinners magnifies the law of God; He obeyed its precepts and endured its penalty.

Second, he who believes in Christ and expects justification by His imputed righteousness must have the deepest and strongest sense of the evil of sin in itself. Even though God is the God of love, He does not forgive sin without an atonement. The greatness of the price, "the precious blood of Christ," shows God's abhorrence of sin. The dignity and glory of the Redeemer, along with

the greatness and severity of His suffering, testify to the heinousness of sin.

In order to save sinners, sin had to be expiated, even though God's own Son was the sacrificial victim. Therefore, the condemnation of sin was as truly in view as the salvation of sinners.

Third, he who expects justification only through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ has the most awful views of the danger of sin. He sees not only the obligation and purity of the law, but also the severity of the sanctions of that law, that is, the fear of the wrath and vengeance of God on account of sin. Those who flee to the propitiation of Christ for deliverance and rescue still believe that every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God both in this life and the one to come.

Fourth, those who expect justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ have the highest sense of the purity and holiness of the divine nature, and therefore the necessity of purity to fit them for His presence and enjoyment. Worshipers of God seek to be like Him. Even when God is inclined to mercy, the experience of mercy is obstructed until justice is satisfied as His Son stands in our place. Thus His mediation shows the purity of the divine nature.

Fifth, the motives of gratitude and thankfulness to God for His salvation lead to pure and holy lives.

Sixth, those who expect to be justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ must be possessed of a supreme and superlative love to God which is not only the source and principle but the very sum and substance—nay the perfection of holiness. His love for us begets our love for Him. We love because He first loved us. The supreme love of God is what is meant by holiness. ☐

The author, professor emeritus of Church history at Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Ga., now lives in retirement in Claremont, Cal.