

Why The Presbyterian Guardian?

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HAVING just undertaken the editorship of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, as announced in the last issue, we desire to say, in the first place, that this change in the staff does not mean any change in the position taken by the paper in the great issues of the day. We regard it as a great privilege to continue to the best of our ability the unswerving defense of the Bible and of the Reformed Faith which Dr. H. McAllister Griffiths has been maintaining, and we only hope that we may be able to follow in his footsteps.

What we shall now say, therefore, is not to be interpreted as an enunciation of any new principles or aims but simply as a reiteration, in view of present conditions, of principles and aims which have determined the policy of this paper from the beginning.

What is Meant by "Presbyterian"?

In the first place, THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN is truly "Presbyterian."

That word "Presbyterian," etymologically considered, designates a certain form of church government. But as actually used in the course of church history during the past three hundred years it also designates a certain system of doctrine.

The system of doctrine which it designates is popularly called "Calvinism." More correctly it is called the "Reformed Faith."

The churches holding the Reformed system of doctrine on the continent of Europe came to be called the "Reformed" churches. In Scotland they came to be called the "Presbyterian" churches. When adherents of these various bodies came to America, they retained the terminology used in their native lands. So there are in America various "Presbyterian" churches and various "Reformed" churches. The two terms designate essentially the same thing. "Presbyterian" doctrine is the same thing as "Reformed" doctrine, and "Presbyterian" church government is the same thing as "Reformed" church government.

THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN holds to that "Presbyterian" or "Reformed" system of doctrine, and to that "Presbyterian"

or "Reformed" type of church government.

The reason why we hold to both of these things—which are related in the closest possible way—is that we believe them to be in accord with the Bible, which is the Word of God.

Believing as we do that the "Reformed Faith," or in other words "Presbyterian doctrine," is taught in the Bible, we are necessarily opposed to all doctrine which is contrary to Presbyterian doctrine.

Hence we differ from churches that have given up that doctrine no matter whether they are nominally "Presbyterian" or not. That is the reason why we withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

That church said to us in effect: "If you remain with us you must support the official Boards." But the official Boards are manifestly furthering Modernist propaganda. Modernism is diametrically opposed to Presbyterianism, since Modernism is actually anti-Christian and Presbyterianism is simply consistent Christianity. Hence if we had obeyed the order and remained in the church we should have had to cease being Presbyterian. We should henceforth have been Presbyterian in name but not Presbyterian in fact.

We could not make any such decision as that. Instead we withdrew from the church organization to which we formerly belonged. *We withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in order that we might continue to be Presbyterian.*

The Presbyterian Church of America

Having withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in order that we may continue to be Presbyterian, we cherish with our whole souls the name "Presbyterian." If we abandoned that name we should be like an army without a flag. Hence we adopted—together with our brethren—the name "The Presbyterian Church of America."

The adoption of that name served a twofold purpose.

In the first place, it indicated clearly what is at the very heart of our movement—namely, the fact that our purpose

is simply to remain true to our Presbyterian heritage. It made perfectly clear that we are endeavoring not to be some peculiar variety of Presbyterians, but simply to be Presbyterians.

In the second place, however, it distinguished us clearly from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Nothing could possibly have been farther from our minds than any confusion between our church and that church. We hold to the Bible. That church, we believe, has departed from the Bible. We have made the distinction between the two churches stand out clear from the very beginning, as appears plainly on the third page of the Minutes of our first General Assembly.

The Church Universal

In the pages of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN special attention will of course be given to the affairs of The Presbyterian Church of America, to which all of the members of the editorial staff belong. But attention will also be given to the affairs of the whole Christian world. We desire to say that with some emphasis. The conflict which is raging at the present time between Modernism and the Christian Faith is a world-wide conflict. It is going on in many countries and in many ecclesiastical bodies, and everywhere it is essentially the same. We shall make every effort to keep our readers informed about the various phases of that conflict, and about the way in which, despite opposition from unbelief, God is blessing the true preaching of the gospel in many lands.

Thus we hope earnestly that our readers increasingly will be found among our brethren in other communions and in other countries than our own. What we said just now about our devotion to the Reformed system of doctrine must not be understood as betokening any coolness in our Christian fellowship with Christian brethren who do not hold that system. We believe, indeed, that the Reformed system is true, and can therefore never regard it as a matter of indifference whether a man holds that system or some other. But at the same time we gladly recognize the large measure of truth that other systems possess.

How warm, for example, is our Christian fellowship with our brethren of genuinely Lutheran churches such as the Missouri Synod! When the Atlantic District of that great church by official action sent greetings and congratulations to us (See "Machen," page 285)

4TH. MARK 12:28-34 (42)

The sum of the ten commandments is also the sum of all that God requires of man. Nevertheless, let it not be said that this is a very simple thing. For man has utterly failed to observe this perfectly; nor is he able to do so. It took the willing sacrifice of the perfect Son of God (who left the glory of heaven and entered the sin-cursed earth) to redeem man from the curse of his disobedience and to clothe him with the spotless robes of Christ's righteousness.

—HENRY D. PHILLIPS

Machen

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in view of the forming of the Presbyterian Church of America, such action was expressive of a deep underlying community of mind and heart.

It is very evident to every man who keeps his eyes open that the forming of the Presbyterian Church of America is of profound interest to many men and women in many Christian bodies. There are many earnest men and women—not only in the Reformed churches but also in other communions—who see that a standard has here been lifted up which may well be followed by others who are now shackled by compromising associations with unbelief. So we in turn are profoundly interested in those who are our brethren in the Christian warfare, no matter where they may be found. It will be the earnest endeavor of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN to foster this community of interest in every possible way.

What is a "Guardian"?

We have pointed out that THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN is Presbyterian. In closing, we desire to point out that it is a "Guardian."

Hence we are not at all ashamed of saying that we are endeavoring to defend the Christian Faith—that we are endeavoring to be truly a "Guardian."

In order that it may be truly a "Guardian," it must present the facts, no matter how alarming or discouraging they may seem to be. A real guardian is also a watchman, and so we are trying to be a watchman by telling Christian people what enemies are at work in the world and in the church.

Thus this paper will endeavor to present the news of the church throughout the world, recording the encouraging things when they occur, but also record-

ing the steps in the widespread apostasy. We are going to endeavor to present the news of the church universal so clearly and succinctly that our readers may be truly informed as to what is really going on.

It should never be forgotten, however, that we are viewing the facts always in the light of God's Word. So this paper will not contain merely a bare chronicle of ecclesiastical happenings; it will also—and most fundamentally of all—contain expositions of the Bible and helps for the Christian's devotional life.

Thus, by its contents taken as a whole it will try to help its readers avoid the feeble if not spurious orthodoxy which withdraws from ecclesiastical responsibilities or makes common cause with unbelief, and it will seek to promote the real orthodoxy which leads men to take their stand as true witnesses to Jesus Christ.

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On the other hand, it conveys a solemn responsibility. It is conceivable, for example, that this principle might compel me to vote in an ecclesiastical assembly contrary to the very men from whom I have learned this glorious truth. God alone is my Master and His Word is my only rule. This is the case in so far as I am a consistent Protestant, a true Christian.

(4) Finally, the Scriptures are sufficient. How well this was recognized in the days of the Reformation! It was the Scriptures that determined, in every field and in every detail, the progress of that movement. It had scarcely begun when the leaders became completely conscious that they must return with unqualified dependence to the Scriptures to determine alike their doctrine and their conduct. Someone has well said that the Reformation can be explained in one sentence: "It called men from the study of tradition to the study of the Bible itself." It was effective in this because it placed the Bible in the hands of the people and because the people used it. Because of the sufficiency of the Word, they denied the need either of the tradition of the Romanists or of the inner light of the Anabaptists. Let us glory in the same sufficiency today and be guided by the Word and by the Word alone.

I hope you realize what these attributes of the Bible mean for your preaching. More and more, as you

take up the work of the ministry, you will be impressed with the impossibility of the task assigned you. More and more you will realize how utterly inadequate you are to devise a message which can in any way reach the hearts and meet the needs of those before you. And then you may give thanks that it is not your word but God's Word which you are to proclaim, and because it is His Word you may be sure that He, who is able, will bless it to its appointed end.

Let me add here one thought. The central teaching of that Word is Christ and Him crucified. The one in whom this Word abides has grasped this historic truth in a personal way and is able to say with Paul, "He loved me and gave himself for me." If this is wrought into your soul, then you are possessed of a never-failing source of strength. Love for Him who first loved you cannot but arm heart and mind and will for the conflict before you. Love at once inculcates every virtue and rules out every vice.

III

Finally John indicates how this strength should be used. He specifies the victory it secures. Says he, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The tense is surely worth noting. Calvin says, "He says that they had conquered who were as yet engaged in the contest. Our condition is far otherwise than that of those who fight under the banner of men, for war is doubtful to them and the issue is uncertain; but we are conquerors before we engage with the enemy, for our head Christ has once for all conquered for us the whole world."

Truly the overcoming of the wicked one includes a lot of territory—in fact, it includes all the territory there is. It was to the wicked one that God declared, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Now without covering all territory, allow me simply to remind you that it is all hereby covered and then pass on to two very particular points which it should cover in the lives of preachers and prospective preachers.

I take the reminder from Ralph Barton Perry's recently published *Puritanism and Democracy*. He says, "They [the Puritans] cultivated their moral strength like athletes training, and they used that strength out of doors, in the world, as statesmen and soldiers."

As we pass now to the two particu-