

CHRISTIANITY
— & —
LIBERALISM

LEGACY EDITION

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

*Includes New Essays by the Faculty of
Westminster Theological Seminary*

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To My Mother





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Foreword

A fitting way for Westminster Theological Seminary to celebrate our 90th anniversary is to hark back to the work that firmly placed our founder, and former Princeton Theological Seminary professor, J. Gresham Machen, on the turbulent path to becoming the leading biblically minded reformer of the liberalizing Presbyterian church in the early twentieth century.

Machen's rigorous thinking, lucid communication, and trenchant criticism of liberalism endow his work with timeless character. Indeed, *Christianity and Liberalism* has become the seminal work that distinguishes historic Christianity from the subtly but utterly distinct and divergent theology of the modernizing church. For Machen, although Christianity and liberalism sounded much alike, they were, in essence, two different religions. The first was the revealed religion of the Lord Jesus Christ; the second was a manmade reconstruction of the former that intended to make that religion palatable to minds that had imbibed the tenets of autonomous reason trumpeted by post-Enlightenment theologians. The steps from the appearance of Machen's groundbreaking work to the birth of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia can be traced with unbroken historical clarity.

As this new edition of Machen's revolutionary work appears, a word of explanation may be appropriate. After all, the volume has remained in print longer than most books of its vintage, and new translations continue to appear abroad. There are three primary reasons that Westminster has chosen to issue this new

publication: (1) a new milestone; (2) a declaration of theological fidelity; (3) a unanimous theological consensus from faculty members.

This new publication by Westminster faculty marks both the milestone of our 90th anniversary and the fact that, as of 2019, Machen's classic work is now in the public domain and no longer protected by copyright. It is fitting to celebrate this second milestone and the volume's new, unfettered stage with the anticipation that it will continue to offer its clarion witness to the historic truths of biblical Christianity.

The faculty reissues this book with a desire to do more than honor Machen in the 90th year of the seminary that he launched. The members of the Westminster faculty are keenly aware that the seminary was named for the Presbyterian Confession that most celebrates the inspiration and truthfulness of Holy Scripture. Indeed, the Confession begins by affirming that the Scriptures are the only sure foundation for theological truth. Thus we intend, by the new release of *Christianity and Liberalism*, to communicate collectively the vital significance that this work, as well as the Confession of Faith, has on our ministries and academic endeavors. We are proclaiming again Machen's vision to establish a seminary with a faculty that consciously subscribe *ex animo* to the Confession, with a full commitment to the "whole counsel of God." What Machen passionately pursued—namely, to bring a full, biblical reformation to the theology of the church—is what our faculty strive to do today. With this founding vision in mind—through rigorous, pastoral instruction based upon the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God—the faculty daily train the next generations of leaders for Christ's global church.

The essays included here, one contributed by each mem-

ber of the full-time faculty, reveal that Machen's visionary theological commitments remain a shared and unanimous concern among our faculty. We believe this is critical to communicate openly and broadly, given the substantial theological testing the seminary experienced and addressed in the not-too-distant past. The unity of the Westminster faculty in its commitment to biblical theology and to the clarity, certainty, and authority of the Word of God, is herein unmistakably heralded by an integrated witness to Scripture in the tradition of Machen.

Please welcome the publication of these new essays along with this historic and magisterial work. We encourage you to share this new edition with many. In so doing, you join us in fulfilling the founding vision of Westminster, for Westminster exists for nothing less than to train specialists in the Bible to proclaim the whole counsel of God for Christ and his global church. Could there be any greater mission for a seminary today or in the coming generations until the King of glory returns?

Sincerely on behalf of the faculty,
Dr. Peter A. Lillback, President
January 3, 2019



Introduction to the Legacy Edition

The Theological Leadership of J. Gresham Machen

DAVID B. GARNER

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:3–4)

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8–9)

Those who lead well discern precisely, believe passionately, and communicate clearly. Though leadership traits are shared across various spheres, some orbits of leadership matter more than others. Abraham Lincoln surely deserves greater admiration than Tom Brady. Yet, as transforming as Lincoln's leadership was, his political impact pales in significance when compared to effective leadership in the church of Jesus Christ. Such leadership impacts things ultimate and eternal.

Gospel truth well-spoken delivers the words of life. Hearers reckon with eternal life and death *literally*. So then, 20/20 spiritual vision, cloudless theological conviction, and compelling communication bear ultimate *gravitas* for the souls of mankind. To be sure, the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary and the author of *Christianity and Liberalism* bore these leadership marks, even as he grasped the soul-stakes of biblical truth.

In the early years of the twentieth century, J. Gresham Machen and a group of other luminaries at Princeton Theological Seminary perceived that their seminary's glory had departed. Belief in biblical truth and in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ were in serious peril. Forced out by the tyranny within that institution, they took a great risk. They left pay, pensions, and prestige at Princeton to launch a new seminary built upon the sure and unchanging foundation of Scripture's supreme authority. Following Machen's lead, this small group of biblical scholars founded Westminster Theological Seminary in the fall of 1929.

Understanding the times and the stakes, Machen stood up and spoke resolutely. When Machen rang the bell for the start of the seminary's inaugural classes at the first convocation on September 25, 1929, he sounded an alarm as well:

Our new institution is devoted to an unpopular cause; it is devoted to the service of One who is despised and rejected by the world and increasingly belittled by the visible church, the majestic Lord and Savior who is presented to us in the Word of God. From him men are turning away one by one. His sayings are too hard, his deeds of power too

strange, his atoning death too great an offense to human pride. But to him, despite all, we hold.¹

Relinquishing comforts and sureties of this world for themselves and their families, Machen and his cohorts marched forward with conviction while they humbly held fast to the Christ of Scripture.

Just nine months earlier, Machen, already a proven Princeton New Testament scholar, articulately addressed the board of directors at that esteemed seminary. Having served in his professorship for thirteen years (appointed in May 1915), Machen read the board of directors' plan of December 13, 1928, with a heavy heart. He could not ignore the forces of unbelief sucking the soul out of Princeton orthodoxy. Like any good leader, Machen saw the need for bold and open action, and he took it. He reflected carefully for two weeks on the matter and penned a respectful yet unambiguous letter to the board of directors, saying, "I cannot do what seems to me to be contrary to the cause of truth."² Machen could not sit idly. A gospel leader never saunters past theological problems.

The kind of courage it took to launch the new seminary was becoming a pattern in this young leader. Six years earlier, when the winds of Harry Emerson Fosdick's famed sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," whipped across the American ecclesial landscape, Machen penned his classic, lucid expression of the Christian faith: *Christianity and Liberalism*. In it, he delivered

1. J. Gresham Machen, "Inaugural Lecture," Westminster Theological Seminary, 1929.

2. Letter from J. Gresham Machen to the Princeton Theological Seminary board of directors, December 27, 1928. Princeton Theological Seminary Archives (accessed September 24, 2018).

a decisive blow and a stern warning: “Shall we accept the Jesus of the New Testament as our Saviour, or shall we reject Him with the liberal Church?”³ Machen’s question was provocative and perceptive. Liberalism, he contended, offered no alternative version of Christianity but a religion of an entirely different species. “The plain fact is that liberalism, whether it be true or false, is no mere ‘heresy’—no mere divergence at isolated points from Christian teaching. On the contrary it proceeds from a totally different root, and it constitutes, in essentials, a unitary system of its own.”⁴ Liberal “Christianity” was not Christianity at all.

All around him, Machen witnessed the deterioration of orthodox Christian theology. Liberal forces had imposed elastic redefinitions and stretched the sacred faith beyond its breaking point. Yet here was the rub: Liberalism was (and is) attractive. It appeared friendly because it refused narrowness. It brought compelling breadth to combat ostensibly unfriendly and bigoted Christian theology. It brought desirable warmth to combat allegedly cold Christian dogma. It offered a plausible platform, complete with a universalist parachute to provide a soft spiritual landing for all men everywhere.

Machen was no stranger to the potent magnetism of liberalism’s version of love. Once tempted by the plausible arguments (Col. 2:4) of liberal scholarship, Machen himself had tasted unbelief. For a season, he flirted with its compelling compromises, yet by the grace of God, he resisted its inebriating effects, discerning that any attempted *synthesis* of liberalism with Christian orthodoxy remained pure liberalism. Liberal leaven spoiled

3. Page 113 of this present volume.

4. Pages 176–77 of this present volume.

the whole loaf. To abandon biblical authority was to dive into a stewpot that cooks out the life-giving and life-transforming power of the gospel.

Having escaped the alluring cauldron, Machen was never the same. He could not help but speak; he could not help but lead. He proclaimed the pure, biblical gospel of Christ Jesus—in its exclusivity and theological brilliance—as that which alone changes lives. Indeed, it changed his. Armed with a clear vision of gospel power and a conviction of the anemic effects of liberalism, Machen went into the trenches of theological warfare clutching an uncompromising claim: Liberalism's changing theology changes no one. Scripture's unchanging theology, in stark contrast, changes lives eternally.

To counter liberalism's attractiveness and seeming plausibility, Machen offered an unvarnished rendering of its desperate and dark soul: "Modern liberalism, placing Jesus alongside other benefactors of mankind, is perfectly inoffensive in the modern world. All men speak well of it. It is entirely inoffensive. But it is also entirely futile. The offence of the Cross is done away, but so is the glory and the power."⁵ However compelling and attractive it might be, liberalism is un-Christian. As such, it is powerless. In fact, it is anti-Christian and intrinsically damning.

No wonder the book created—and continues to create—such a stir! Such spiritually discerning leadership jolts people from their sleepy delusions. It warns of flimsy scaffolding and broken foundations. It boldly tells the man in his burning mansion that he will die if he does not depart. It denies a soft spiritual landing for all men everywhere. Theological leaders tell the

5. Page 128 of this present volume.

truth—they advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of God’s Word, they combat every gospel nemesis.

To the contention that Christianity is not about doctrine but about life, Machen exposed the doctrinal foundation beneath Christian morality. “The Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message. It was based, not upon mere feeling, not upon a mere program of work, but upon an account of facts. In other words it was based upon doctrine.”⁶ To the contention that Christianity is about love, not dogma, Machen similarly exposed a blinding fallacy. “Human affection, apparently so simple, is really just bristling with dogma.”⁷ To the contention that Jesus was merely an ethical leader, Machen evidenced not an ounce of theological *or evangelical* sympathy: “Let us not deceive ourselves. A Jewish teacher of the first century can never satisfy the longing of our souls. Clothe Him with all the art of modern research, throw upon Him the warm, deceptive calcium-light of modern sentimentality; and despite it all common sense will come to its rights again, and for our brief hour of self-deception—as though we had been with Jesus—will wreak havoc upon us the revenge of hopeless disillusionment.”⁸

In *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen leads. And for that leadership, the warring Machen endured much criticism in his life. Such denunciation has not ceased with his death. But his undaunted leadership prevails, because his words continue to expose and to address the *gravitas* of divine grace. Machen’s voice

6. Page 21 of this present volume.

7. Page 55–56 of this present volume.

8. Page 41 of this present volume.

still speaks clearly of what really matters. His concern remains as much missional as it is theological: “If we really love our fellowmen we shall never be content with binding up their wounds or pouring on oil and wine or rendering them any such lesser service. We shall indeed do such things for them. But the main business of our lives will be to bring them to the Saviour of their souls.”⁹

Machen’s 20/20 vision, undaunted conviction, and verbal precision deliver clarity concerning truth and error, life and death, freedom and bondage. Truth, life, and freedom come *only in the gospel of Jesus Christ*, the historic Son of God, born, crucified, and raised from the dead according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1–3). Liberalism’s flawed recipe concocts the sure formula for spiritual incarceration and eternal death. “Emancipation from the blessed will of God always involves bondage to some worse taskmaster.”¹⁰

Christianity and Liberalism is, among other things, a leadership book. It leads us to see the Christian faith in its exclusive, life-giving, freedom-granting beauty. Machen profiles the gospel in its historical and redemptive contours, its doctrinal and ethical truth, and its power and warmth. He exposes the errors and consequences of unbelief and urges us to trust completely in the Word of God. *Christianity and Liberalism* will not tolerate reading for amusement or mere intellectual interest. Machen’s words lead us, and those words expect—no, *demand*—a response. You will either follow Machen or you will fight him, but *Christianity and Liberalism* eliminates spiritual no-man’s land. You must either embrace his thesis or reject it; you cannot merely dismiss it.

9. Page 162 of this present volume.

10. Page 149 of this present volume.

REV. DR. DAVID B. GARNER (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is vice president of advancement and associate professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. An ordained teaching elder in the PCA, Dr. Garner previously served as pastor of teaching at Proclamation Presbyterian Church in Bryn Mawr, PA, and as a missionary to Bulgaria. He is the author of *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ*.

Acknowledgments

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Locke, Angie Messinger, Sheldon Nordhues, Danny Olinger, Josiah Pettit, and Jim Sweet. Jim Sweet deserves special note, as his vision for the publication of this current volume spans more than a decade.

Finally, let me express my gratitude to each of my colleagues who devoted precious time and energy to craft their essays for this special volume. The Westminster Theological Seminary faculty's shared appreciation for our theological legacy and our common commitment to perpetuate that legacy—to proclaim the whole counsel of God for Christ and his global church—give testimony to God's ongoing kindness upon our 90-year old institution. Through these essays and the republication of Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, we seek to extol Jesus Christ and to advance his pure and glorious gospel, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. For the gift of common convictions and for God's grace in granting my colleagues skill to handle his Word so capably yet humbly, I give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

David B. Garner, Editor
February 4, 2019



Preface

On November 3, 1921, the author of the present book delivered before the Ruling Elders' Association of Chester Presbytery an address which was subsequently published in *The Princeton Theological Review*, vol. xx, 1922, pp. 93-117, under the title "Liberalism or Christianity." The interest with which the published address was received has encouraged the author to undertake a more extensive presentation of the same subject. By courtesy of *The Princeton Theological Review*, free use has been made of the address, which may be regarded as the nucleus of the present book. Grateful acknowledgment is also due to the editor of *The Presbyterian* for kind permission to use various brief articles which were published in that journal. The principal divisions of the subject were originally suggested to the author by a conversation which he held in 1921 with the Rev. Paul Martin of Princeton, who has not, however, been consulted as to the method of treatment.



Introduction

The purpose of this book is not to decide the religious issue of the present day, but merely to present the issue as sharply and clearly as possible, in order that the reader may be aided in deciding it for himself. Presenting an issue sharply is indeed by no means a popular business at the present time; there are many who prefer to fight their intellectual battles in what Dr. Francis L. Patton has aptly called a “condition of low visibility.”¹ Clear-cut definition of terms in religious matters, bold facing of the logical implications of religious views, is by many persons regarded as an impious proceeding. May it not discourage contribution to mission boards? May it not hinder the progress of consolidation, and produce a poor showing in columns of Church statistics? But with such persons we cannot possibly bring ourselves to agree. Light may seem at times to be an impertinent intruder, but it is always beneficial in the end. The type of religion which rejoices in the pious sound of traditional phrases, regardless of their meanings, or shrinks from “controversial” matters, will never stand amid the shocks of life. In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight.

1. Francis L. Patton, in the introduction to William Hallock Johnson, *The Christian Faith Under Modern Searchlights*, [1916], p. 7.

In the sphere of religion, in particular, the present time is a time of conflict; the great redemptive religion which has always been known as Christianity is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology. This modern non-redemptive religion is called “modernism” or “liberalism.” Both names are unsatisfactory; the latter, in particular, is question-begging. The movement designated as “liberalism” is regarded as “liberal” only by its friends; to its opponents it seems to involve a narrow ignoring of many relevant facts. And indeed the movement is so various in its manifestations that one may almost despair of finding any common name which will apply to all its forms. But manifold as are the forms in which the movement appears, the root of the movement is one; the many varieties of modern liberal religion are rooted in naturalism—that is, in the denial of any entrance of the creative power of God (as distinguished from the ordinary course of nature) in connection with the origin of Christianity. The word “naturalism” is here used in a sense somewhat different from its philosophical meaning. In this non-philosophical sense it describes with fair accuracy the real root of what is called, by what may turn out to be a degradation of an originally noble word, “liberal” religion.

The rise of this modern naturalistic liberalism has not come by chance, but has been occasioned by important changes which have recently taken place in the conditions of life. The past one hundred years have witnessed the beginning of a new era in human history, which may conceivably be regretted, but certainly cannot be ignored, by the most obstinate conservatism. The change is not something that lies beneath the surface and

might be visible only to the discerning eye; on the contrary it forces itself upon the attention of the plain man at a hundred points. Modern inventions and the industrialism that has been built upon them have given us in many respects a new world to live in; we can no more remove ourselves from that world than we can escape from the atmosphere that we breathe.

But such changes in the material conditions of life do not stand alone; they have been produced by mighty changes in the human mind, as in their turn they themselves give rise to further spiritual changes. The industrial world of to-day has been produced not by blind forces of nature but by the conscious activity of the human spirit; it has been produced by the achievements of science. The outstanding feature of recent history is an enormous widening of human knowledge, which has gone hand in hand with such perfecting of the instrument of investigation that scarcely any limits can be assigned to future progress in the material realm.

The application of modern scientific methods is almost as broad as the universe in which we live. Though the most palpable achievements are in the sphere of physics and chemistry, the sphere of human life cannot be isolated from the rest, and with the other sciences there has appeared, for example, a modern science of history, which, with psychology and sociology and the like, claims, even if it does not deserve, full equality with its sister sciences. No department of knowledge can maintain its isolation from the modern lust of scientific conquest; treaties of inviolability, though hallowed by all the sanctions of age-long tradition, are being flung ruthlessly to the winds.

In such an age, it is obvious that every inheritance from the past must be subject to searching criticism; and as a matter of

fact some convictions of the human race have crumbled to pieces in the test. Indeed, dependence of any institution upon the past is now sometimes even regarded as furnishing a presumption, not in favor of it, but against it. So many convictions have had to be abandoned that men have sometimes come to believe that all convictions must go.

If such an attitude be justifiable, then no institution is faced by a stronger hostile presumption than the institution of the Christian religion, for no institution has based itself more squarely upon the authority of a by-gone age. We are not now inquiring whether such policy is wise or historically justifiable; in any case the fact itself is plain, that Christianity during many centuries has consistently appealed for the truth of its claims, not merely and not even primarily to current experience, but to certain ancient books the most recent of which was written some nineteen hundred years ago. It is no wonder that that appeal is being criticized to-day; for the writers of the books in question were no doubt men of their own age, whose outlook upon the material world, judged by modern standards, must have been of the crudest and most elementary kind. Inevitably the question arises whether the opinions of such men can ever be normative for men of the present day; in other words, whether first-century religion can ever stand in company with twentieth-century science.

However the question may be answered, it presents a serious problem to the modern Church. Attempts are indeed sometimes made to make the answer easier than at first sight it appears to be. Religion, it is said, is so entirely separate from science, that the two, rightly defined, cannot possibly come into conflict. This attempt at separation, as it is hoped the following pages may show, is open to objections of the most serious kind. But

what must now be observed is that even if the separation is justifiable it cannot be effected without effort; the removal of the problem of religion and science itself constitutes a problem. For, rightly or wrongly, religion during the centuries has as a matter of fact connected itself with a host of convictions, especially in the sphere of history, which may form the subject of scientific investigation; just as scientific investigators, on the other hand, have sometimes attached themselves, again rightly or wrongly, to conclusions which impinge upon the innermost domain of philosophy and of religion. For example, if any simple Christian of one hundred years ago, or even of to-day, were asked what would become of his religion if history should prove indubitably that no man called Jesus ever lived and died in the first century of our era, he would undoubtedly answer that his religion would fall away. Yet the investigation of events in the first century in Judæa, just as much as in Italy or in Greece, belongs to the sphere of scientific history. In other words, our simple Christian, whether rightly or wrongly, whether wisely or unwisely, has as a matter of fact connected his religion, in a way that to him seems indissoluble, with convictions about which science also has a right to speak. If, then, those convictions, ostensibly religious, which belong to the sphere of science, are not really religious at all, the demonstration of that fact is itself no trifling task. Even if the problem of science and religion reduces itself to the problem of disentangling religion from pseudo-scientific accretions, the seriousness of the problem is not thereby diminished. From every point of view, therefore, the problem in question is the most serious concern of the Church. What is the relation between Christianity and modern culture; may Christianity be maintained in a scientific age?

It is this problem which modern liberalism attempts to solve. Admitting that scientific objections may arise against the particularities of the Christian religion—against the Christian doctrines of the person of Christ, and of redemption through His death and resurrection—the liberal theologian seeks to rescue certain of the general principles of religion, of which these particularities are thought to be mere temporary symbols, and these general principles he regards as constituting “the essence of Christianity.”

It may well be questioned, however, whether this method of defence will really prove to be efficacious; for after the apologist has abandoned his outer defences to the enemy and withdrawn into some inner citadel, he will probably discover that the enemy pursues him even there. Modern materialism, especially in the realm of psychology, is not content with occupying the lower quarters of the Christian city, but pushes its way into all the higher reaches of life; it is just as much opposed to the philosophical idealism of the liberal preacher as to the Biblical doctrines that the liberal preacher has abandoned in the interests of peace. Mere concessiveness, therefore, will never succeed in avoiding the intellectual conflict. In the intellectual battle of the present day there can be no “peace without victory”; one side or the other must win.

As a matter of fact, however, it may appear that the figure which has just been used is altogether misleading; it may appear that what the liberal theologian has retained after abandoning to the enemy one Christian doctrine after another is not Christianity at all, but a religion which is so entirely different from Christianity as to belong in a distinct category. It may appear further that the fears of the modern man as to Christianity were entirely ungrounded, and that in abandoning the embattled walls of the

city of God he has fled in needless panic into the open plains of a vague natural religion only to fall an easy victim to the enemy who ever lies in ambush there.

Two lines of criticism, then, are possible with respect to the liberal attempt at reconciling science and Christianity. Modern liberalism may be criticized (1) on the ground that it is un-Christian and (2) on the ground that it is unscientific. We shall concern ourselves here chiefly with the former line of criticism; we shall be interested in showing that despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions. But in showing that the liberal attempt at rescuing Christianity is false we are not showing that there is no way of rescuing Christianity at all; on the contrary, it may appear incidentally, even in the present little book, that it is not the Christianity of the New Testament which is in conflict with science, but the supposed Christianity of the modern liberal Church, and that the real city of God, and that city alone, has defences which are capable of warding off the assaults of modern unbelief. However, our immediate concern is with the other side of the problem; our principal concern just now is to show that the liberal attempt at reconciling Christianity with modern science has really relinquished everything distinctive of Christianity, so that what remains is in essentials only that same indefinite type of religious aspiration which was in the world before Christianity came upon the scene. In trying to remove from Christianity everything that could possibly be objected to in the name of science, in trying to bribe off the enemy by those concessions which the enemy most desires, the apologist has really abandoned what he started out to defend. Here as in many other departments of life it appears that

the things that are sometimes thought to be hardest to defend are also the things that are most worth defending.

In maintaining that liberalism in the modern Church represents a return to an un-Christian and sub-Christian form of the religious life, we are particularly anxious not to be misunderstood. “Un-Christian” in such a connection is sometimes taken as a term of opprobrium. We do not mean it at all as such. Socrates was not a Christian, neither was Goethe; yet we share to the full the respect with which their names are regarded. They tower immeasurably above the common run of men; if he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than they, he is certainly greater not by any inherent superiority, but by virtue of an undeserved privilege which ought to make him humble rather than contemptuous.

Such considerations, however, should not be allowed to obscure the vital importance of the question at issue. If a condition could be conceived in which all the preaching of the Church should be controlled by the liberalism which in many quarters has already become preponderant, then, we believe, Christianity would at last have perished from the earth and the gospel would have sounded forth for the last time. If so, it follows that the inquiry with which we are now concerned is immeasurably the most important of all those with which the Church has to deal. Vastly more important than all questions with regard to methods of preaching is the root question as to what it is that shall be preached.

Many, no doubt, will turn in impatience from the inquiry—all those, namely, who have settled the question in such a way that they cannot even conceive of its being reopened. Such, for example, are the pietists, of whom there are still many. “What,” they say, “is the need of argument in defence of the Bible? Is it

not the Word of God, and does it not carry with it an immediate certitude of its truth which could only be obscured by defence? If science comes into contradiction with the Bible so much the worse for science!" For these persons we have the highest respect, for we believe that they are right in the main point; they have arrived by a direct and easy road at a conviction which for other men is attained only through intellectual struggle. But we cannot reasonably expect them to be interested in what we have to say.

Another class of uninterested persons is much more numerous. It consists of those who have definitely settled the question in the opposite way. By them this little book, if it ever comes into their hands, will soon be flung aside as only another attempt at defence of a position already hopelessly lost. There are still individuals, they will say, who believe that the earth is flat; there are also individuals who defend the Christianity of the Church, miracles and atonement and all. In either case, it will be said, the phenomenon is interesting as a curious example of arrested development, but it is nothing more.

Such a closing of the question, however, whether it approve itself finally or no, is in its present form based upon a very imperfect view of the situation; it is based upon a grossly exaggerated estimate of the achievements of modern science. Scientific investigation, as has already been observed, has certainly accomplished much; it has in many respects produced a new world. But there is another aspect of the picture which should not be ignored. The modern world represents in some respects an enormous improvement over the world in which our ancestors lived; but in other respects it exhibits a lamentable decline. The improvement appears in the physical conditions of life, but in the spiritual realm there is a corresponding loss. The loss is clearest,

perhaps, in the realm of art. Despite the mighty revolution which has been produced in the external conditions of life, no great poet is now living to celebrate the change; humanity has suddenly become dumb. Gone, too, are the great painters and the great musicians and the great sculptors. The art that still subsists is largely imitative, and where it is not imitative it is usually bizarre. Even the appreciation of the glories of the past is gradually being lost, under the influence of a utilitarian education that concerns itself only with the production of physical well-being. The "Outline of History" of Mr. H. G. Wells, with its contemptuous neglect of all the higher ranges of human life, is a thoroughly modern book.

This unprecedented decline in literature and art is only one manifestation of a more far-reaching phenomenon; it is only one instance of that narrowing of the range of personality which has been going on in the modern world. The whole development of modern society has tended mightily toward the limitation of the realm of freedom for the individual man. The tendency is most clearly seen in socialism; a socialistic state would mean the reduction to a minimum of the sphere of individual choice. Labor and recreation, under a socialistic government, would both be prescribed, and individual liberty would be gone. But the same tendency exhibits itself to-day even in those communities where the name of socialism is most abhorred. When once the majority has determined that a certain régime is beneficial, that régime without further hesitation is forced ruthlessly upon the individual man. It never seems to occur to modern legislatures that although "welfare" is good, forced welfare may be bad. In other words, utilitarianism is being carried out to its logical conclusions; in the interests of physical well-being the great principles of liberty are being thrown ruthlessly to the winds.

The result is an unparalleled impoverishment of human life. Personality can only be developed in the realm of individual choice. And that realm, in the modern state, is being slowly but steadily contracted. The tendency is making itself felt especially in the sphere of education. The object of education, it is now assumed, is the production of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. But the greatest happiness for the greatest number, it is assumed further, can be defined only by the will of the majority. Idiosyncrasies in education, therefore, it is said, must be avoided, and the choice of schools must be taken away from the individual parent and placed in the hands of the state. The state then exercises its authority through the instruments that are ready to hand, and at once, therefore, the child is placed under the control of psychological experts, themselves without the slightest acquaintance with the higher realms of human life, who proceed to prevent any such acquaintance being gained by those who come under their care. Such a result is being slightly delayed in America by the remnants of Anglo-Saxon individualism, but the signs of the times are all contrary to the maintenance of this half-way position; liberty is certainly held by but a precarious tenure when once its underlying principles have been lost. For a time it looked as though the utilitarianism which came into vogue in the middle of the nineteenth century would be a purely academic matter, without influence upon daily life. But such appearances have proved to be deceptive. The dominant tendency, even in a country like America, which formerly prided itself on its freedom from bureaucratic regulation of the details of life, is toward a drab utilitarianism in which all higher aspirations are to be lost.

Manifestations of such a tendency can easily be seen. In the state of Nebraska, for example, a law is now in force according to

which no instruction in any school in the state, public or private, is to be given through the medium of a language other than English, and no language other than English is to be studied even as a language until the child has passed an examination before the county superintendent of education showing that the eighth grade has been passed.² In other words, no foreign language, apparently not even Latin or Greek, is to be studied until the child is too old to learn it well. It is in this way that modern collectivism deals with a kind of study which is absolutely essential to all genuine mental advance. The minds of the people of Nebraska, and of any other states where similar laws prevail,³ are to be kept by the power of the state in a permanent condition of arrested development.

It might seem as though with such laws obscurantism had reached its lowest possible depths. But there are depths lower still. In the state of Oregon, on Election Day, 1922, a law was passed by a referendum vote in accordance with which all children in the state are required to attend the public schools. Christian schools and private schools, at least in the all-important lower grades, are thus wiped out of existence. Such laws, which if the present temper of the people prevails will probably soon be extended far beyond the bounds of one state,⁴ mean of course the ultimate destruction of all real education. When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already

2. See *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials* passed by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska at the Thirty-Seventh Session, 1919, Chapter 249, p. 1019.

3. Compare, for example, *Legislative Acts* of the General Assembly of Ohio, Vol. cviii, 1919, pp. 614f.; and *Acts and Joint Resolutions* of the General Assembly of Iowa, 1919, Chapter 198, p. 219.

4. In Michigan, a bill similar to the one now passed in Oregon recently received an enormous vote at a referendum, and an agitation looking at least in the same general direction is said to be continuing.

are—their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudo-scientific fads of experimental psychology—one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system. But the principle of such laws and their ultimate tendency are far worse than the immediate results.⁵ A public-school system, in itself, is indeed

5. The evil principle is seen with special clearness in the so-called “Lusk Laws” in the state of New York. One of these refers to teachers in the public schools. The other provides that “No person, firm, corporation or society shall conduct, maintain or operate any school, institute, class or course of instruction in any subjects whatever without making application for and being granted a license from the university of the state of New York to so conduct, maintain or operate such institute, school, class or course.” It is further provided that “A school, institute, class or course licensed as provided in this section shall be subject to visitation by officers and employees of the university of the state of New York.” See *Laws of the State of New York*, 1921, Vol. III, Chapter 667, pp. 2049–2051. This law is so broadly worded that it could not possibly be enforced, even by the whole German army in its pre-war efficiency or by all the espionage system of the Czar. The exact measure of enforcement is left to the discretion of officials, and the citizens are placed in constant danger of that intolerable interference with private life which a real enforcement of the provision about “courses of instruction in any subjects whatever” would mean. One of the exemptions is in principle particularly bad. “Nor shall such license be required,” the law provides, “by schools now or hereafter established and maintained by a religious denomination or sect well recognized as such at the time this section takes effect.” One can certainly rejoice that the existing churches are freed, for the time being, from the menace involved in the law. But in principle the limitation of the exemption to the existing churches really runs counter to the fundamental idea of religious liberty; for it sets up a distinction between established religions and those that are not established. There was always tolerance for established religious bodies, even in the Roman Empire; but religious liberty consists in equal rights for religious bodies that are new. The other exemptions do not remove in the slightest the oppressive character of the law. Bad as the law must be in its immediate effects, it is far more alarming in what it reveals about the temper of the people. A people which tolerates such preposterous legislation upon the statute books is a people that has wandered far away from the principles of American liberty. True patriotism will not conceal the menace, but will rather seek to recall the citizens to those great principles for which our fathers, in America and in England, were willing to bleed and die. There are some encouraging indications that the Lusk Laws may soon be repealed. If they are repealed, they will still serve as a warning that only by constant watchfulness can liberty be preserved.

of enormous benefit to the race. But it is of benefit only if it is kept healthy at every moment by the absolutely free possibility of the competition of private schools. A public-school system, if it means the providing of free education for those who desire it, is a noteworthy and beneficent achievement of modern times; but when once it becomes monopolistic it is the most perfect instrument of tyranny which has yet been devised. Freedom of thought in the middle ages was combated by the Inquisition, but the modern method is far more effective. Place the lives of children in their formative years, despite the convictions of their parents, under the intimate control of experts appointed by the state, force them then to attend schools where the higher aspirations of humanity are crushed out, and where the mind is filled with the materialism of the day, and it is difficult to see how even the remnants of liberty can subsist. Such a tyranny, supported as it is by a perverse technique used as the instrument in destroying human souls, is certainly far more dangerous than the crude tyrannies of the past, which despite their weapons of fire and sword permitted thought at least to be free.

The truth is that the materialistic paternalism of the present day, if allowed to go on unchecked, will rapidly make of America one huge "Main Street," where spiritual adventure will be discouraged and democracy will be regarded as consisting in the reduction of all mankind to the proportions of the narrowest and least gifted of the citizens. God grant that there may come a reaction, and that the great principles of Anglo-Saxon liberty may be rediscovered before it is too late! But whatever solution be found for the educational and social problems of our own country, a lamentable condition must be detected in the world at large. It

cannot be denied that great men are few or non-existent, and that there has been a general contracting of the area of personal life. Material betterment has gone hand in hand with spiritual decline.

Such a condition of the world ought to cause the choice between modernism and traditionalism, liberalism and conservatism, to be approached without any of the prejudice which is too often displayed. In view of the lamentable defects of modern life, a type of religion certainly should not be commended simply because it is modern or condemned simply because it is old. On the contrary, the condition of mankind is such that one may well ask what it is that made the men of past generations so great and the men of the present generation so small. In the midst of all the material achievements of modern life, one may well ask the question whether in gaining the whole world we have not lost our own soul. Are we forever condemned to live the sordid life of utilitarianism? Or is there some lost secret which if rediscovered will restore to mankind something of the glories of the past?

Such a secret the writer of this little book would discover in the Christian religion. But the Christian religion which is meant is certainly not the religion of the modern liberal Church, but a message of divine grace, almost forgotten now, as it was in the middle ages, but destined to burst forth once more in God's good time, in a new Reformation, and bring light and freedom to mankind. What that message is can be made clear, as is the case with all definition, only by way of exclusion, by way of contrast. In setting forth the current liberalism, now almost dominant in the Church, over against Christianity, we are animated,

therefore, by no merely negative or polemic purpose; on the contrary, by showing what Christianity is not we hope to be able to show what Christianity is, in order that men may be led to turn from the weak and beggarly elements and have recourse again to the grace of God.

Doctrine

Modern liberalism in the Church, whatever judgment may be passed upon it, is at any rate no longer merely an academic matter. It is no longer a matter merely of theological seminaries or universities. On the contrary its attack upon the fundamentals of the Christian faith is being carried on vigorously by Sunday-School “lesson-helps,” by the pulpit, and by the religious press. If such an attack be unjustified, the remedy is not to be found, as some devout persons have suggested, in the abolition of theological seminaries, or the abandonment of scientific theology, but rather in a more earnest search after truth and a more loyal devotion to it when once it is found.

At the theological seminaries and universities, however, the roots of the great issue are more clearly seen than in the world at large; among students the reassuring employment of traditional phrases is often abandoned, and the advocates of a new religion are not at pains, as they are in the Church at large, to maintain an appearance of conformity with the past. But such frankness, we are convinced, ought to be extended to the people as a whole. Few desires on the part of religious teachers have been more harmfully exaggerated than the desire to “avoid giving offence.” Only too often that desire has come perilously near dishonesty; the religious teacher, in his heart of hearts, is well aware of the radicalism of his views, but is unwilling to relinquish his place in