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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii 32

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"THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH IN CHRISTIANITY OF TODAY"

(From a Sermon by Rev. J. Layton Mauze, D. D., at Montreat, N. C. Reprinted from The Presbyterian Standard.)

We have landed upon a time when there is a large body of Christian activities going on outside of, and largely detached from, the church. On every hand we see evidences of the fact that the significance of church membership is fading out and the church is slipping. While the total gifts from living donors for all purposes to Protestant churches during 1929 did not exceed \$520,000,000, there was contributed last year for philanthropic purposes in the United States alone approximately \$2,500,000. In the judgment of the Pierce and Hedrick Corporation "most of this money was donated by members of the church." Can this mean that a large portion of the church's constituency are thus placing their money outside of the works of the church because they are convinced that the time is coming when the church will cease to be?

So many things that were once done by the church are now being done by extra church organizations. These outside organizations have reached a stage of development and type of service which seriously question the primacy of the church as an interpreter of practical Christianity. Once it was only the lodges which claimed first the men and later the women, but now the community is alive with a vast variety of agencies each embodying some function traditionally associated with the church. The development of women's clubs, the many inter-denominational and undenominational organizations which honeycomb the community, the various civic clubs for men, all tend to pull church people away from service in the church. Education, hospitalization, homes for orphans and the aged were once the major function of the church, but now almost completely severed from it.

In the last eighteen years the average membership of women to men in the church decreased from four-fifths to two-thirds. The church is losing its hold on women's lives outside their homes. Increasingly our women are taking more interest in organizations — educational, benevolent, social and political — and less in the church. As women have entered these new fields of service they have lost their interest in the church's program. A recent study of one thousand of the most prominent social workers in America indicated that fully ninety per cent were originally members of the church, but large numbers of these are now utterly out of sympathy with it. Millions of persons who in the church caught their original vision and inspiration for Christian service are now lost to the church's life. To these persons the church no longer has any challenge for supremacy over their hearts and lives.

There is another group of church members whose connection with the church is of the flimsiest. About the only need they feel for the church is to receive its ordinance at birth, marriage and death. Their feeling for the church never approaches devotion.

The American church is rich in equipment, ministers and financial resources, but it has been making a miserable showing in membership gains, in evangelizing the masses and in missionary conquests. In the year 1928 the churches gained 1,000,000 members, whereas in 1929 they gained only 800,000. About one-third of the Protestant churches in the major denominations in this country did

not gain a single member to their rolls during last year.

The situation in our own branch of the church is such as to bow our heads in shame. While we, ministers and members have been flogged with the scourge of complicated machinery and new games of religious tiddledy-winks, our executive committees have run deeper and ever deeper into debt and our net gain in membership last year was less than 4,000, the smallest gains in money and members we have had for years. Dr. A. A. Little has recently called the attention of our people to the little interest aroused at the last Assembly by these deplorable facts. Our Church would do well to take heed to his closing words:

"We talk about challenging the Church to fill the treasury of our committees, and that is good, but far better challenge the Church to fill the depleted ranks of its membership with men and women from the world. Men will invest their money in a going concern."

With our membership virtually static and our per capita gifts decreasing, and that in a section of the country enjoying a phenomenal increase in population and wealth, we cannot say our denomination is a "going concern."

I have stated these few sorrowful facts regarding the church today that you may see there are, apparently, at least, grounds for the rather widespread notion that the church has about lived out its day and that it is rapidly passing. In the light of these things, what have we to say? Can we justify the church's continued existence and support? Is it not a needless and troublesome appendix, the sooner removed the better?

At the Council in Rome A. D. 1514, the supposed extermination of the Lollards and Waldenses was celebrated in a proclamation beginning, "The last of the Protestants dead!" That statement was much like the newspaper report of the death of Mark Twain, which he philosophically said "was considerably exaggerated." Neither is the church of today a corpse. The world is not yet ready to junk the church. No better time or place than this could be desired in which to re-evaluate the church that we may give to it the appreciation and support it deserves. Therefore I ask you to consider with me "The Place of the Church in Christianity Today" because of the church's origin, mission and achievements.

I. The Divine Origin of the Church.

The church is not a child of yesterday. It is one of three original divine institutions and takes its place along with the family and the State in constituting that three-fold cord which is not easily broken. These three supplement and complement one another and no one of them is complete without the other two.

self-emptying, nothing remains to Him but "My Church." From the fact that His Church is retained with the Father, we may get some glimpse of the value He set upon it. For it is His precious blood. To it He committed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. He claimed its spiritual character as an impregnable rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail and through its instrumentality His Kingdom would be established in the world.

It is manifest that the church is very precious to Christ. It is His Bride over which He, the Bridegroom, rejoices, to which He surrenders all, and upon which He centers His heart in ardent love. The church is His very body, in which Christ dwells, through which He is revealed, and by which He works. The Church is His vice-regent on earth, to which Christ has delegated those divine powers and prerogatives that enable Him to represent and act for Him in closing of the doors of the Kingdom. It is impossible to conceive an intimacy more sacred or a value more rare or a position more important and vital. As you cannot crumble an envelope without doing a little damage to the letter which it contains, so you cannot despise the church without wounding its Lord. He is ever saying to His Church, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." The church and Christ are inseparable. You cannot reject the one without the other. A churchless Christianity is a Christless Christianity. You can have any one of the other great world religions without its founder, but you cannot have Christianity without Christ.

(To be continued next week)

QUARTERLY MESSAGE

Dear Presidents of White River Presbyterial:

As the vacation time is wending its way to a close, and the extreme summer days are passing into oblivion, we are sure you are turning your minds towards the harvest and the days when we shall soon have our thoughts taken up with school activities as teachers and mothers.

Notwithstanding the hurly burly of life and our anxiety to plan for the material things of life, as officers and members of the White River Presbyterial of the great Presbyterian Church of which we are a part, I am anxiously asking, as your humble servant (Pres.), that we be not unmindful of our duty as members and women, who must live up to our obligations as Christians in doing our bit to put over the program of our great Church, which is striving to do all that makes for the betterment of humanity everywhere.

We want to keep our societies spiritually alive and financially strong. Our second quarter ends September 10, 1930. Please send to our treasurer, Mrs. C. S. Mebane, 334 Amber Street, Hot Springs, Ark., your apportionment on the quota.

We are also asking that each society do its work in Mission Study classes as per request of the Church. October and November are the months for National Study; January and February, for Foreign Study. It is expected that each age group will do its amount of study. In the meantime you will receive information concerning same in order that you may receive your books and begin promptly.

Let your slogan be, "I'll do my duty for God and my Church."

Praying for the success of each local and Presbyterial, we are very humbly yours,

MRS. H. M. STINSON, President.
MRS. I. N. BYRUM, Cor. Sec.

"BACK TO COLLEGE" SERVICE IN THE SHILOH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT KNOXVILLE, TENN.

By The Scribe

The Inter-Collegiate Club, an organization representing seven colleges, sponsored the first "Back to College" service in the Shiloh Presbyterian church, Sunday, September 7th. At the morning hour the pastor, Rev. A. H. George, delivered a special message to the collegians. At the evening hour a well balanced program was carried out by the group, assisted by others. Prof. J. A. Carey, head of the department of English at Knoxville College, delivered a short message to the group. He urged the students to live a purposeful life and to cleave to the principles of religion.

On Thursday, September 4th, the church gave a social in honor of the collegians in the basement of the church. It was an evening of fun, frolic and good eats for the youngsters. Mrs. M. B. George and Miss Elizabeth Kyle supervised the games.

The Shiloh church is gradually setting in motion various organizations of young people, hoping to develop in the near future a well rounded young people's department. Thus far the following groups have been set up: The Westminster Guild, the Young Men's Fellowship and the Young People's Forum. The last named group meets on Sabbath. The others have their week-day meetings. All groups are meeting with increasing interest. The first two groups will carry on the program of the Presbyterian Church for young people as outlined. It is the aim of the Forum to provide a place where youth and age may meet on a common ground for a free discussion of the problems common to both groups. This organization has already begun to establish helpful contacts with other groups. Recently about 25 young people of the First Presbyterian church (white) conducted a service in the Shiloh church under the auspices of the Forum. They discussed: Christ in Human Relations and in Industry. The group was led by a Junior student at Davidson College. The Forum plans to have outside speakers twice a month.

The Junior congregation has been in operation for some time. The interest in this division is good and the number is increasing. The organization is not complete yet.

The church is getting things in order for a series of meetings to begin the 10th of November under the leadership of Rev. B. F. Glasco, D. D., of Pittsburgh, Pa. Prior to his coming a special study of the Book of Acts will be made. Prayer meetings will be held at the church and in various sections of the city where groups of members are located. A group of special workers will be trained. The ground will be broken for this prince of the pulpit when he comes.

HOLBROOK STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DANVILLE, VA.

The hammers of the carpenters are ringing on the manse of Holbrook Street church. They are expecting to have it completed by the first of October. We are looking forward to the coming of our pastor. The Presbyterians of Holbrook Street church are forging along by the help of the good Master.

Dr. T. A. Long, of Johnson C. Smith University, spent a few days in the city recently visiting friends. We are always glad to welcome Dr. Long as he was with us so long in this city as Principal of Danville Industrial High School.

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL AND EVANGELISTIC SERVICES AT COTTON PLANT, ARK.

By Mrs. L. Stinson

From August 25 to September 7, the members of Westminster Presbyterian church, Cotton Plant, Ark., with their many friends of the other churches of the city, enjoyed the Vacation Bible School and evangelistic services conducted under the most efficient leadership of Rev. C. N. Shropshire, Sabbath School Missionary, and Rev. T. B. Hargrave, Synodical evangelist for Canadian Synod.

Personally I do not feel equal to the task of writing an article to the paper concerning such a wonderful meeting. However, since the duty has been imposed upon me I shall try in a way to let the Presbyterian constituency know how much we have been helped from a spiritual, intellectual and social standpoint.

At the beginning a very fine spirit was exhibited and ran to a high tension, which created much enthusiasm, making the meeting a success from start to finish.

The first day 60 or more enrolled in the school and each successive day brought an increase until the entire enrollment reached 101. Classes were arranged in age groups, and from the Tiny Tot Beginners to the Seniors all were much interested in the well systematized class work, from which all learned lessons from the Bible. We have no hesitancy in saying that the Vacation Bible School has meant much in Cotton Plant and if we are spared another year we feel that our number will greatly increase. Our goal for next year is 250.

After class work came the recreation period. I fear that I can not express in words the hilarity which this part of the program brought to each one.

The group started out playing "girls against the boys." Of course it was thrilling to see the girls challenge the stronger side, because of their physical strength, but finally we decided to mimic our big sister, the School of Methods, by having captains and using the old familiar "Reds and Blues." Now you can imagine yourself in Cotton Plant helping the "Reds" march on to victory, as they most surely did.

We would not have the reader think we treasure this feature more than others of this wonderful program which has just closed, but we do want to say, that the social side is the one item on the Vacation Bible School program that is playing a great part in spreading good everywhere it is held.

Just after play hour Rev. T. B. Hargrave, in a most devout and untiringly interesting way, gave to the group each day, a sermonette in a very simple manner, that the smallest child could not only hear but know the meaning.

We truly feel that impressions were indelibly made for good in the hearts of many, old and young. Each sermonette was powerful. We dare not say which was the best, because superiority seemed to have garbed each one. The second, "The Three Robbers — Selfishness, Disobey and Mistreat," after being carefully explained by Rev. Hargrave, really held sway, as it was often referred to on the playground and kept each one urging to remember to keep the three unpleasant qualities out of the games.

Each night many gathered at the church to listen and have their spiritual strength renewed as God's message came through His own servant, Rev. Hargrave, whose soul is in this great work which God has called him to do. We might add that a small

group met each day at 1 o'clock and spent one hour in prayer.

It was very pathetic to see young children touched, and wanting to have Jesus Christ rule in their lives, so much so that twenty or more confessed Christ.

With Mrs. R. E. Mahon as directress, and Miss F. B. Stinson, pianist, the singing made a heavenly atmosphere prevail.

On Sunday after the sermon in the morning communion was given to a large number of communicants, and in the evening the services closed with another powerful message by Rev. Hargrave.

During the last week Mrs. T. B. Hargrave and two dear little children joined the husband and father for a week-end visit. We were more than pleased to have this lovely family in our town and in our homes. Mrs. Hargrave added much to our music with her superior ability.

Each week-end the group was served refreshments which all seemingly enjoyed, but after the close the guests, the Shropshire and Hargrave families, along with a few others, were entertained a way out on the lonely but ever-running little stream, "Cash River," where the air was breezy and quietness prevailed. The activities of the party broke this for a spell and the forest rang with joy, while the merry makers indulged in plenty of good sport, namely, hurting, fishing, boat-riding, and cooking over open camp fires. Now we can only say the day will hold pleasant memories for those who were present.

After enjoying every minute of the day we loaded our auto and were about to start for home, when Darby Erwin, a most dignified and peppy member of the present Senior class of Cotton Plant Academy, led the bunch in three rousing yells for the Hargraves, Shropshires and the sponsors of the wonderful entertainment. To this Rev. Hargrave most eloquently responded, having the group to remember that the name Cotton Plant would not pass into oblivion soon. The gracious Mr. and Mrs. Darby, of our sister church, were responsible for the wonderful entertainment.

For 1931 we invite you to come to Westminster Presbyterian church for Vacation Bible School and Evangelistic service.

FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ABERDEEN, N. C.

The members of Faith church and visiting friends turned out in full on last Sunday all day. Rev. Toney, our pastor, brought us a strong sermon at 11 A. M. His text was Isaiah 45:22, subject, "The Way to Look for Help." He mentioned the condition of the country and of its standing in need spiritually and financially. Our State is being blessed, if so, have we been looking unto Him? Why should not all parts of the globe look unto God?

After Sunday school the Young People's Progressive Club which met a few Sundays ago under the direction of Mrs. Toney, the pastor's wife, and re-organized, gave a very interesting program that was really enjoyed by all. The program follows:

Introductory remarks by Mr. Theocian Carter, which was very timely. Music by the Club. Scripture reading by Miss Sara Wilson. Prayer by Mr. Carter. Saxophone solo, Mr. Harold Lashley. Paper, Mrs. McLeod. Paper, Miss Bernice Barbee. Address, Mr. J. Rendall Lashley. Trio, Misses Lashley, Fairley and Wilson. Recitation, Miss Fairley. Critic, Mr. Davis Solo. Mr. Geo. Lashley. Collection, Messrs. Wm. Love and Carl Barbee.

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