

# American Presbyterian

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

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## MORE ADEQUATE CHURCH BUILDINGS

By Rev. A. S. Meschem

(A paper read at the 24th Annual Workers' Conference, held at Johnson C. Smith University, March 7th to 11th.)

### PART I.

I come to you today to speak not only in behalf of thousands of men and women of our group in the great Southwest but also to speak to you upon a subject that should be and is of vital importance to our great Church as a whole.

I do not come to you solely to give you a resume of my experiences as a pastor in that far-off sector of Christendom, although there may be some here that might gain inspiration from my experiences there, but I come also to be inspired, to learn, and to receive inspiration from those of us that have been striving in different sections, under different conditions, amid scenes that might have been more pleasing or displeasing as the case may be.

I come with a hope and faith that after this meeting shall have come to its conclusion we shall each profit by what is said and done here to such an extent that it will be for the greater glory of God, the Church, and mankind everywhere.

It is needless for me to say that I am pleased to be with you here, that I am honored with this chance to lift my voice in support of our religious program, and allowed to mingle and co-mingle with the members of this intelligent body of Christian men and women as they go about the business of strengthening the ramparts of our far-flung lines of religious striving, building surely, strongly, indestructibly toward the spiritual regeneration of mankind. Truly we are builders all. Those of us that travel the highways and the remote byways of our chosen fields in the army of Christianity are brought face to face with the fact that every day we must build a little here, a little there, until the last block of stone has been put in place, the last nail has been driven, or the last brick has been laid, and we are ready to lay down the tools of the Christian artisan and receive that reward that is ever waiting for the faithful worker who promotes the kingdom of Christ here on earth.

The field of religious endeavor in more modern times has branched out into activities so varied that it seems to be a far cry from the beginning of the present century. The methods used then and now are widely divergent though the ends are just the same: the saving of souls, the redemption of mankind, the spreading of the Master's kingdom everywhere.

As Christian workers gathered to initiate, create and appreciate plans that will promote a greater interest and activity as well as produce greater and more far-reaching results in the swelling of the Christian army, we can well appreciate the lines of Edwin Markham:

"To each one is given a marble to carve for the wall,  
A stone that is needed to heighten the beauty of all;  
And only his soul has the magic to give it grace;  
And only his hands have the cunning to put it in place.  
Yes, that task is given to each one, no other can do;  
So the errand is waiting; it has waited through the ages for you,  
And now you appear; and the hushed ones are turning their gaze  
To see what you do with your chance in the chamber of days."

It is said that at the birth of Christianity the workers and missionaries were confronted with problems that were as taxing to their powers as are those that are being met today. A new cult or religious order was looked upon with skepticism, suspicion and in most cases with downright antagonism. The stupendous task undertaken by Paul and his co-workers

was finally culminated in major nations of the world adopting and embracing Christianity. From that time it has spread slowly but surely until today it is accepted as the one and true religion by a major portion of the civilized nations of the world.

But what about the problems it has encountered in its irresistible march? It is not my aim to recount all of them, for time does not allow it. I could talk about the attempt to rule civilization under the guise of Roman Catholicism, and the resultant reaction that brought forth Martin Luther and the Reformation. I could speak of John and Charles Wesley, of John Calvin and the beginning of the church government under the presbyter, and hosts of other men who fought to have their religious convictions embedded in the minds and consciences of men. Out of them has been moulded the great masses of Christians of today.

My subject "More Adequate Church Buildings" concerns the saint as well as the sinner. We have problems to cope with in the ranks of the Church of today that reach from the Home to the Community, from the Community to the State and Nation, and from the Nation to the World. They range from the domestic and individual problems of the home to the social, economic and political problems as related to world-wide conditions. In fact every phase of human striving is ours to meet and try to solve. There is never a single minute when the church is not called upon to meet some situation that calls for such prompt and firm action upon its part as will justify the people's faith in its place as the spiritual and religious leader in the uplift of mankind. As such we must have facilities to keep pace with the ever-changing, ever-advancing conditions of modern civilization. The obsolete buildings of yesterday must become more adequate to meet these changes and we must build not only for today but for the future.

Everything has changed. Styles in architecture and methods of religious serving have changed. Where once the church building was used to meet for the strictly formal religious service, today it should be built to meet all forms of Christian community service. In fact the church building should be a community center in constant daily use throughout the year. With that in mind we should build accordingly. The mechanic uses his best tools to work with and when the finished product is placed upon the market, its greatest advertisement is its own finished perfection and beauty. It catches the eye, attracts attention, meets with approval and sells itself to the public because of its finished perfection. The church edifice is a tool for soul winning. It should be made attractive inside and out. It should be made attractive not only from a physical standpoint but from an utilitarian angle as well. Useful not only for religious worship, but also for community uplift.

When I think of the church of yesterday and what the church of today and tomorrow should be, I can not help but think of some of our so-called Christians. You know the kind of fellow that does any and everything on week-days, but on Sundays assumes his best air, goes to church, strikes a devout pose and to all outward appearances is the very essence of purity? Yet for six days thereafter he is anything but that.

The old time church would have its services on stated Sundays and very often would not open its doors again until the next preaching Sunday unless in an emergency like death or a

special meeting. I hope you see the comparison. No one likes to hear the preacher preach the same sermon over and over again and again, and no one is going to church except on Sunday for worship unless we initiate a program that will draw them there during the week as well as on Sunday. Then in planning an edifice that is adequate we must build with these things in mind. We must build for the future. There are so many outside commercialized influences to catch the attention of the youth of today that we feel the need of combating these influences that tend to draw the youth away from the church with such weapons as will counteract these influences.

The church building should be planned in such a way that all forms of activities filled with interest to the young and adult people of the church and community can be carried out and draw them toward the church at all times. This has the psychological effect of elevating the mind to such a spiritual attitude that the boy or girl, man or woman will begin to evaluate those Christian values received from the church alongside the things received elsewhere, and I am sure that if we have done our part wisely and well the church will not suffer in the comparison.

As the churches of the world have been undergoing some changes in the past, so is the world changing apace. The most characteristic aspect of the world today is its drive toward change. There is a common dissatisfaction with institutions, governments and relationships in general. With this critical attitude toward all that we survey comes an urge to change the evil influences that play upon the world. Stabilized institutions of other years are being torn asunder. The state of placid contentment that was ours in the past has been uprooted and as we gaze upon the bewildering chaos about us we search in every direction for a way out; a solution, if you please, to these shifting changes in the lives of humanity. Let us deviate for a while and see what some of these changes are.

1st. Our social life is changing. 2nd. International life is changing the world over. 3rd. Intellectual life has become increasingly secularized. 4th. Capital and Labor are in an upheaval.

Taking the first condition under consideration we find that recreation centers less in home and family and is affected more by worldly interests. If we cast our eyes upon the panoramic picture that world powers present to us today we see evidences of autocracy, tyranny, intolerance and anarchy. Thrift for power has become a driving force behind the motives of most governmental leaders of the day. The Church is being subordinated to the whims of State affairs. We see the Nazi under the guise of national pride riding the crest of religious intolerance and the drama of Martin Luther, 400 years old, being re-enacted upon the stage of the Third Reich with Dr. Neimoeiler, a World War veteran, as chief actor and martyr to Nazi intolerance. We see the Black Shirts of Mussolini under the guise of promoting civilization, crushing the life from prostrate Ethiopia, and placing her liberties beneath the iron heel of Il Duce. In southwestern Europe we find "Sunny" Spain for over a year a bloody shambles of internal strife, a mere pawn in the political chess game that nations are playing to gain political as well as military domination over Western Europe. In the "Far East" the forces of Japan and China are locked in a titanic struggle of extermination with "Oriental" domination and territorial expansion the goal of the soldiers of "Little Nippon." All over the world the war dogs are being held in leash only because the spark has not been applied to the smouldering passions of Greed and Power that seem to permeate the hearts of

the leaders of the "Great Powers."

The leading educational institutions are no longer Church-directed schools. Where once our schools of higher learning promulgated the principles of Christianity most schools of the 20th century are indifferent to most of the principles of Christianity. The lower schools (Primary and Secondary) have nothing in their courses that we can justly term religious. Secular clubs and forums practically exclude religious discussions from their programmes and the sum total of present day thinking as a whole is mostly materialistic, with scarcely a thought of the principles of the lowly Nazarene, Christ Jesus.

In labor and business we find vast forces dividing the people into two distinct classes: Capital and Labor. Labor itself is split into two major groups, the Committee of Industrial Organization and the American Federation of Labor. The wide difference of opinion in the ranks of the working people is significant in that the less people have in common the harder it is to lead them into like channels of thought and action. Summing up, then, we find that these changes affect the home and individual life and the economic and social life of the world.

(Continued next week)

## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSIONARY CONFERENCE AT ALBANY, GEORGIA

March 30-April 2

By Reporter

The continuance of any organization is in direct proportion to benefits gained. Employing the desired opportunity to shake hands with one's fellow-laborers; the passion to gather in consecrated fellowship around the table of ideas; the eagerness to advance conceptions of practical application; the yearning for lines of detailed information and the necessity of a renewed determination to reveal God in all His Majesty—if these factors are to be employed as measuring rods, then the annual meeting of the Missionaries in the four Negro Synods of the South has completed one of the most impressive, informative and inspirational conferences in its history.

The devotional periods, conducted by Dr. J. M. Somerdike, Secretary of the Unit of Sunday School Missions, were characterized by a mastery of thought, and the messages gave knowledge of the divine, understanding and altogether excellent God. The beauty of these elements of serious meditation was in the simple, dignified and unadorned presentation.

The symposium directed by Dr. A. B. McCoy, Superintendent of the Mission Fields of the South, and supplemented by six of the toilers of the field, was, as its designation infers, a conversational feast, at which there was a banqueting together on "The Missionary at Work."

The discourses excellently developed from the subject, "Our Fields and Their Needs," by Rev. Franklin Gregg, of Newnan, Georgia, and Rev. L. B. West, D. D., of Charlotte, North Carolina, were obviously kindled by spiritual influence. The former unfolded the subject philosophically, appealing to the love of wisdom, calm judgment, equable temper and sound religion. Dr. West, Field Representative for the Unit of Colored Work, amplified the subject physically, from the general observations of his work over the entire field.

No longer need the great question mark follow the words, "Parish Plan." It has been tested and it has withstood the trial. It exists as a reality, elbowing its way into the lives of the forgotten people of the rural areas of the South; keeping alive within them the desire to know God, annihilating denominational feuds, granting

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## THE PRESBYTERIAL OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

By Mae Gates Nance

The Presbyterial Society of National and Foreign Missions of Southern Virginia met with the Holbrook St. Presbyterian church, Danville, April 5-7, during the meeting of the Presbyterial of Southern Virginia.

The session began with an executive meeting held in the Sunday School rooms of the above named church, Tuesday at 4 P. M. The President, Mrs. McNair, of Ingleside-Fee Junior College, Burkeville, Va., expressed her appreciation for the hearty co-operation of the body during the year. She also made some very helpful and laudable recommendations that would tend to make every woman in the Church more mission-minded. She spoke of the National meeting of the Women's Missionary Organizations of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. to be held at Buck Hill Falls, Pa., in May.

Mrs. M. H. Burrell, of Roanoke, made a motion that the Executive Committee meet semi-annually. Aside from the annual meeting in April it should meet each October, after the Synodical meeting, at Ingleside-Fee Junior College for an all-day session. The motion was carried. Adjournment.

Wednesday A. M., at 8 o'clock, the Executive meeting was continued with devotionals led by Mrs. R. L. Hyde, Secretary of Missionary Education, Amelia, Va., after which business prior to the opening of the Presbyterial was concluded.

The Presbyterial convened at 9 o'clock. The general theme was, "If I Be His Disciple." The worship theme was, "Church Women Ready for Creative Work." Worship service was conducted by Mrs. L. Lomax, of Norfolk.

Greetings from the hostess church were extended by Mrs. L. Wilson. The response was by Mrs. Ella Walker, of South Boston.

The roll call disclosed about 60 delegates present. The following visitors were introduced: Mrs. R. E. McNair, Synodical President of Greensboro, N. C.; Miss Virginia Ray, of the Board of National Missions, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Miss Naomi Freeman, representative of the Board of Christian Education in the Catawba Synod, and Miss Rachel Swann, of the Young People's League of the Eastern District of Virginia.

After appointment of committees on Nominations, Resolutions and Findings the President spoke most interestingly on "Our Present Accomplishments and Our Future Aims."

The Presbyterial Secretaries gave their reports this year in a panel discussion led by Mrs. M. L. Kendrick, of Burkeville. This was novel and proved most interesting.

### Wednesday Afternoon

At 2 o'clock the worship service, "The Creation of a Kingdom—The World Made Ready"—Luke 1, was led by Mrs. Nina Morton of Randolph, Va. Mrs. Nannie Frasier, of Richmond, Va., our Synodical delegate, gave the high spots of the meeting held on the beautiful campus of Johnson C. Smith University last October. This meeting was the 50th Anniversary or Golden Jubilee of the Synodical of Catawba.

The Treasurer, Mrs. M. H. Burrell, of Roanoke, made her report and all hearts were made glad when she stated that Southern Virginia had gone over the top this year. The apportionment to the Mission Boards (\$432) was met in full.

A round table discussion was led by Miss Ray, our Board representative. She stressed the use of our literature in our Societies, especially methods of making our "Year Book of Prayer" live.

Mrs. R. E. McNair, our Synodical President, brought greetings from the Synodical of Catawba. She thanked the body for the splendid co-operation

shown in putting over the "Dime Day" drive in the locals for the Girls' Dormitory Building Fund at Smith University, and asked that this day be observed again this year. She emphasized the need for greater mission work the coming year and asked that each society increase its Foreign Missions quota one dollar this year, to take care of our work in China.

### Popular Meeting Program

Devotional Theme: "Be ye therefore ready also," was led by Missionary Women of Holbrook Street church.

Program, Young People, led by Miss E. Reynolds, Mrs. Hattie Henry, Miss Ida Allen and Miss Vera Bruner.

Paper—How Can We Interest Youth in Missions—by Miss Vera Bruner, Danville, Va.

Paper—Responsibility of Church Women for Preparing the Hearts, Heads, and Minds of the Youth of the Church—Miss Rachel Swann, Amelia, Va.

Vocal Solo, Mrs. H. E. James, Petersburg, Va.

Paper, Mrs. C. P. Hedrick, Suffolk, Va.

Instrumental Solo, Mrs. T. A. Robinson, Petersburg, Va.

Findings, Mrs. Fred Nance, Norfolk, Va.

Vocal Solo, Mrs. J. M. Rollins, Newport News, Va.

Address: Miss Virginia Ray, Board Representative.

Instrumental Solo, Mrs. J. M. Rollins, Newport News, Va.

How Our Gifts are Making Ready the Kingdom of God, Mrs. H. M. Burrell, Roanoke, Va.

Offering.

Remarks: Moderator.

Resolutions.

Closing Song—Benediction.

### Presbyterial Officers

President: Mrs. M. E. McNair, Ingleside-Fee, Burkeville, Va.

Vice-President: Mrs. G. P. Hedrick, 216 Culloden St., Suffolk, Va.

Recording Secretary: Mrs. T. A. Robinson, 231 New St., Petersburg, Va.

Assistant Recording Secretary: Mrs. L. Lomax, 931 Rugby St., Norfolk, Va.

Cor. Secretary: Mrs. M. L. Kendrick, Ingleside-Fee, Burkeville, Va.

Hon. Corresponding Secretary: Mrs. S. J. Dillard, Martinsville, Va.

Treasurer: Mrs. M. H. Burrell, 117 Patton Ave. N. W., Roanoke, Va.

Secretary Over Seas and National Missions Sewing: Mrs. J. E. Tice, Petersburg, Va.

Secretary of Stewardship: Mrs. M. B. Marks, Burkeville, Va.

Secretary of Membership: Mrs. Bertram Motley, 486 Gay Street, Danville, Va.

Secretary Missionary Education: Mrs. R. L. Hyde, Amelia, Va.

Secretary of Young People: Miss E. Reynolds, 302 S. Main Street, Petersburg, Va.

Secretary of Children: Mrs. H. E. James, 3 Ross Court, Petersburg, Va.

Secretary of Spiritual Life Groups: Mrs. N. E. Frasier, 911½ 5th St., Richmond, Va.

Secretary of Literature: Mrs. Fred Nance, 908 Lexington St., Norfolk, Va.

Program Committee: Chairman, Miss E. Reynolds, 302 S. Main St., Danville, Va.

Mrs. M. E. Hill, 1040 Wilcox St., Petersburg, Va.

Mrs. Ursula Jones, 213 Guarantee St., Petersburg, Va.

### Entertainment

The good people of Danville spared no pains in making our stay there a most pleasant one. All denominations joined hands with Holbrook Street church in entertaining the delegates. Miss Lelia Lowe, organist of the church, entertained informally

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