

THE
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GUARDIAN

Pillar and Ground of the Truth: Thomas

Who Is Sufficient? Ahlfeldt

Creation and Evolution: Presbytery Resolution

Here and There in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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**Prince of Peace, Thou Mighty Jesus,
Lowly born in Bethlehem,
Come, disturb our vain composure,
Our self-righteousness as men,
Our appeasement of sin's power
And our faint, complacent love.
Conquer by Thy Word and Spirit:
Give us *Thy* peace, Lord above.**

— R. E. N.



THE HOUSE OF GOD,

WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD,

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH

GEOFFREY THOMAS

Most joyful, excellent, and glorious things are everywhere in the Scriptures spoken of this Church," wrote Henry Barrow four years before his martyrdom on April 6, 1593. Barrow was one of the last three men who died as Separatists on English soil. Anyone who reads his Confession will see that it was out of love for the church that he seceded from the Church of England, for he writes further of the church:

It is called the city, house, temple, and mountain of the eternal God, the chosen generation, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the vineyard, the heritage, the Kingdom of Christ, yea, His spouse, His queen, and His body, the joy of the whole earth. To this society is the covenant and all the promises made of peace, of love, and of salvation and the presence of God, of His graces, of His power, and of His protection.

In our text the apostle Paul calls her "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." And all these titles shed a glorious light on the church and its relationship to her Lord. But the glory grows in brightness when we realize this, that in almost every place where the word 'church' is found in the New Testament the reference is to the local community of believers, that is, the Christians who lived and worshipped at Corinth, or in Rome, or in Ephesus.

Now it is true that on several occasions the word 'church' refers to the universal church composing all God's elect. For example, when our Lord says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), he cannot be referring only to one particular localized assembly. He is speaking of the whole community of the people of God. These are the primary uses of the word 'church' in the Bible—the local

congregation and the broader communion of saints.

The Local Church

Our first task in considering the names and titles ascribed to the church in our text is to determine whether Paul is referring to it in its local or universal manifestations. And there can be no doubt whatsoever here that Paul is referring to the local church in which Timothy was minister and elder. In the first seven verses of the chapter Paul is describing the qualifications of a bishop or elder. He must be "blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach" and so on. Paul turns next to the character of the deacons in verses 8 to 10 and again in verses 12 and 13. Even the wives of the deacons are described for us in verse 11 — "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."

Clearly, then, a local situation is in mind and this is certified to us by Paul's words at the beginning of our text: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here are all the demands and rigorous requirements for any officeholder in the church of God, and the reason for all this is found in our text. You see, this is no club or fraternal or lodge

This charge, based on 1 Timothy 3:15, was given to the church at the ordination and induction of the Rev. Irfon Hughes at Beulah, Rhymney, Wales in the fall of 1967. Mr. Hughes was one of seven students in the Presbyterian College, Aberystwyth, who seceded from the Presbyterian Church in Wales earlier that year because of its departure from its Confession of Faith.

or social gathering for which you are electing officials. No, this is "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Of course, it would be possible for us to spend our time considering each one of these titles. There is this first one, "the house of God" — that is God's household, where he dwells, where he manifests his love and authority. Now if you entered my house and soon began to criticize the way I disciplined my children and manifested my authority over my wife and questioned the way I rule and govern my home, then I would not take very kindly to this and you would soon outstay your welcome! You see, that would be a grave intrusion into a realm where you had no authority. And if I questioned the governing of your home then I would be seriously in the wrong. So it is with God's house; it is not for us to question the means and rules he chooses to manifest his love and authority in the church. They are clear enough in such an epistle as this and our response to them is simply obedience.

Its Titles

Then Paul goes on to another title, "the church of the living God." You will see no statues, no dead idols to worship in our chapels. Why is that? Well, our God is "the living God," the God who created life, and giveth life, and who quickeneth whom he will. What comfort there is for the minister of the gospel in this truth! An old room-mate of mine at theological college is now a Presbyterian minister in Canada. He wrote to me recently describing the situation he faced in one of his churches. A young couple, expecting a baby, had been forced to marry and they had later come to my friend asking him if he would baptize the child. However,

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neither of them had shown any penitence or godly sorrow concerning their conduct and so he refused. As a result a number of their friends and relatives, including some elders in the church, had stopped attending.

While the lot of the minister of the gospel is hard enough because of men outside of Christ "dead in trespasses and sins," his problems are intensified these days by all these evidences of spiritual death within the churches. But my friend at the close of this letter put all this in true perspective. "Nevertheless," he wrote, "blessed be the Lord, for our God is the living God." He is the God who gives life to the dead, the God who revives even dying churches.

Another Metaphor

There are, then, these titles in the earlier part of this verse that we could spend a much longer time considering. But it is to neither of these principally that I would draw your attention; rather it is to this final phrase used only here by this apostle. He has talked of the house of God: it is one of his frequent metaphors. But now he does not describe the believers as "living stones" as Peter does, although he would have been quite justified in using this picture here. He does not look at the walls or stones, he rather compares the church to the pillars and the ground (or foundation) of a building, and he says that this church at Ephesus, the church of the living God, is "the pillar and ground of the truth."

Now what does Paul mean by this expression? In what ways are believers compared to the pillars and foundation of a building? Well, there are some commentators who think that the reference is to the practice in the ancient world for public notices to be attached to a pillar in the market place or central meeting place like the Areopagus on Mar's Hill. You see, wandering philosophers or debaters or teachers would advertise their lectures hoping that many would attend and would pay them. So they would advertise the time and place of their meetings plus a small sample of their teaching.

So then, young Theocrates would be strolling in the market and there he would see this notice on one of the pillars: "Transcendental Meditation," and the comment, "By meditation one becomes one with the mind of the universe and the ground of being." "I

think I'll give that a try," says young Theocrates. (*Now I use modern terminology there, but anyone who knows anything about the monism of Greek thought, that is, that it does not recognize the Creator-creation distinction will realize that so many modern heresies derive their origin from Athens and not from Jerusalem. Dr. Van Til will show you that!*) Well, these commentators suggest that this practice is what Paul has in mind here. The church placards and announces the truth of God in much the same way. He talks elsewhere of "living epistles" and here he is talking, as it were, of "living pillars."

Now there is clearly some truth in this interpretation but I do not think it is the correct one, and simply for this reason, that these two words "pillar and ground" hang together. They are not meant to be interpreted separately, the pillar explaining one aspect of Paul's teaching and the ground explaining another. No, they both tell us one thing about the church and it is the same thing. So if you explain the picture of the pillar in this way how are you going to explain this word "ground" or "foundation"? No, the requirements of biblical hermeneutics demand one common interpretation of these two metaphors.

Pillar and Ground

It would seem to me that the correct interpretation is quite simple. The function of the pillars and foundation is to support the building. You will realize this yourself, that these are the most basic requirements for any building. You notice today whenever a great building is erected the first thing that is done is that a great hole is dug into the ground to let in the foundation, and then on this foundation a huge mass of steel girders — the pillars — are erected. Finally all the building is set upon these. The foundation and the pillars support the entire building; the walls, the floors, the ceilings, the doors and windows all rest on these.

Now Paul says you believers in the local church at Ephesus, you are like this foundation and these pillars and you uphold and support the truth. The truth of God rests upon you.

This is a surprising statement, indeed a daring statement of the apostle's, because it appears to run counter to all the other teaching in the Scriptures. You see, elsewhere in the New

Testament the great emphasis is this: that our lives are built on the foundation of the truth, not that the truth rests on us. Remember at the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock" (Mt. 7:24). Then he proceeds to tell them that familiar parable: to build your lives on the teaching of Jesus is wisdom; to build your lives on anything else is utter folly. This is the only foundation for building a life — the Word of the Lord.

**How firm a foundation,
Ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith
In his excellent Word.**

You will remember what Paul writes to the Corinthians, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11). The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. The church builds upon him and his teaching. He said, "I am the truth." He said, "Thy word is truth." This is the foundation on which the church rests.

That picture is very clear and important in the New Testament, but

GEOFFREY THOMAS

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In the photograph he is standing at the village sign of Machen, a small town in South Wales 15 miles from Aberfan, scene of the tip disaster two years ago.



that is not the image Paul is using here. He is saying rather, "You Christians, *you* are the foundation and the pillars on which the eternal and unchanging truth of God rests. *You* support the truth." And, remember, Paul is here writing not about the universal church — though this is true about the universal church — but of the local church, the congregation of believers in Rome, or in Ephesus, or here in Rhymney, or wherever.

You Christians

You uphold and support the truth of God in this place. Not the local high school, not the University College down the valley, not the library, not any learned society, not any individual, however gifted or qualified he may be, but you Christians and you alone are the pillar and ground of the truth of God in this place. If men here fail to find the truth from you then there is nowhere else where they can find it. That is the staggering claim Paul is making here for the church.

Now then there are some people at this juncture who might ask, "Yes, but what is the truth? It is all very well talking of our responsibility to uphold it, but what is it that we are upholding? Can anyone know? Look at all the divisions in the church. Look at all the different opinions ministers and theologians and philosophers have. What is this truth that we are supposed to support?"

We agree that that is a problem, but not nearly as bewildering as some would have us think. Division and false teaching in the professing church is nothing new. Read the New Testament epistles and you will see there that various forms of error were already emerging and attacking the truth. But even since the time of the apostles there has been a stream of orthodoxy which has always been maintained. Christ himself made a promise that he would give his Holy Spirit to his church, who would lead it into all truth. It goes without saying that this promise has been kept. Whenever error has asserted itself in the professing church God has raised up men who have upheld the truth.

We have Tertullian and the doctrine of the Trinity, Athanasius and the doctrine of the person of Christ, Augustine and the doctrine of man in sin and grace, Anselm and the doctrine of atonement, Luther and the

doctrine of justification by faith alone, Calvin and the doctrine of authority, Kuyper and the doctrine of common grace, Warfield and the doctrine of Scripture, and so on. Each of these men has profited from his predecessors in the same field and has made his own contribution to the doctrine that is now the possession of the church at large.

Or we can think of the truth that the church upholds in terms of the great confessions of faith, such as the Apostles' creed, and the fourth century Nicene creed, and the fifth century statement of Chalcedon. Then there are the twelve great Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century — you are familiar with the 39 Articles and the Heidelberg Catechism and others. Then in the seventeenth century came the Westminster Confession of Faith of the Presbyterians and the Savoy Confession of the Independents and the Old London Confession of the Baptists. In the nineteenth century the Welsh Presbyterians brought out an admirable Confession of Faith, which may or may not be the confessional document of that denomination! And now in the twentieth century, just in recent years, we have the 1966 Strict Baptist Affirmation of Faith.

You see, both through its individual theologians and the clarification of Christian teaching they make, and through its creeds and confessions the church is always led to further refinement and more precise definition of the truth. The church should never confess or teach less truth than that which God has caused to be defined in earlier generations. This is a retrograde step which must grieve the Holy Spirit. The truth which the church upholds is not merely that which is formulated in the skeletal creeds of fundamentalism, which historically have arisen for a negative purpose to keep out extreme modernists, but that truth which is no less than the whole counsel of God. The whole system of truth revealed in the Scriptures, confessed by historic Christianity and defended by its theologians — that is the truth of which the church is the pillar and ground.

Influence of the Church

Indeed God have mercy upon our sinful world if the church upholds anything else! If the church failed to support the truth of God's Word in the midst of this sensual and apostate

generation, then the whole of society would be reduced to chaos and life would be unbearable. I say, this world is only saved from a return to the dark ages and to utter anarchy because God's church does uphold his eternal truth. You see, God's truth has a sanctifying and purifying and transforming power.

You will recall the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel. He saw in a vision a great image: its head was of fine gold; its chest was of silver; its legs were of iron; and its feet, the foundation on which this entire structure rested, were made of an adulterated mixture of clay and iron. From a distance how imposing and secure it looked with its mighty head of gold and chest of silver! But when you came near to it you found that the pillar and ground upon which the whole figure rested was an impure mixture of iron and clay.

Falsehood and Truth

You remember that the different metals represented different kingdoms that men tried to set up in the world. All of them were established on the basis of vain glory and lust for power; the foundation of all their endeavors was impure. Then, rolling and bounding down the mountain towards this structure came a great boulder which no man's hand had touched and this boulder utterly destroyed the idol. The boulder is God's kingdom, of which the church is a part. And the warning is given to all men who seek to establish utopias on this earth without any reference to God and his Word that the stone "cut out without hands" shall utterly "brake them to pieces" too until they become "like the chaff of the summer threshing floor."

So too a professing church that rests on a foundation of human reason or man-made traditions must also heed the warning of that vision. God will utterly destroy those churches that support another gospel which is no gospel. No matter how strong and imposing they may appear, if they do not uphold the truth of God's Word they will be destroyed.

Throughout its history the church has taken this duty seriously. During the first century how zealous it was to maintain the pure Word of God! Again during the Reformation era the church was more concerned about its witness to the truth than anything else. The truth was dearer to the hearts of men than their possessions, their lives,

yea, even their wives and children. What else can explain the courage men had to burn at the stake rather than forsake what they believed? What else could make weak women and children endure such torture and death rather than give in to the demands of their captors and forsake the teaching of Christ?

What else could make men break away and divide the whole professing church rather than stay in a body that proclaimed an adulterated mixture of truth and error? Nothing other than this: they were convinced that the eternal truth of God was being jeopardized and if they capitulated a whole generation would perish ignorant of the truth and the professing church itself would come under God's righteous judgments.

Foundations Eroded

Oh, how sad in comparison is our plight today! How little is the concern of the church for purity of doctrine! Instead of casting out men who deny such cardinal truths as the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ and his substitutionary atonement, the professing church often elevates these people to her highest ranks and honors.

You know there are two ways of destroying a building. You can put a bomb under its foundations and blow it up, or you can remove the foundation stones one by one. And in the history of the church, heresies have rarely attacked the church openly but always under cover of progress or enlightenment. Men say to us today, "Come now, you are not going to break fellowship with us over limited atonement, are you?" Out goes one stone. And, "You are not going to break fellowship over the infallibility of Scripture?" Out goes another. And, "We can still be in fellowship and differ over the Virgin Birth, can't we?" Out goes another stone. So one by one the foundations are eroded away and soon the whole professing church crumbles and falls.

How important then it is for the foundation to be durable and unshakable! And here that foundation is you. You are the pillar and ground of the truth. You uphold the faith once delivered to the saints in this place, and no one else. It is your responsibility to ensure that this truth is upheld and loved and vindicated and preached by this church. Of course you are not all gifted to be preachers of this truth,

Not the local schools, not the university, not the library, not any learned society, not any individual—but you Christians and you alone are the pillar and ground of the truth of God in this place.

though each one must be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15).

Your Preacher's Task

You have, however, called a preacher who will be your spokesman in declaring this truth. How great, then, is his responsibility! What love you must manifest to him! There are hundreds dying in sin without God and without hope within a square mile of this building, and your heartfelt desire is that they should hear and receive the truth of God to their salvation.

So, you will be much in prayer for your minister; both in the secret place and in the weekly prayer meeting you will remember God's servant in this place. You are familiar with some church members who are always grumbling about their ministers. Well, you must gain a reputation for loving your minister. I charge you, men and women of Beulah Rhymney, to love your minister! Suffer him long and be kind, never envying or boasting in your superior knowledge. You must bear all things from him, believe all things from him, hope all things for him and endure all things from him. You must rejoice ever in the truth that he preaches.

Also the Scriptures tell us that "the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). So you will be ever attentive to the needs of your minister and imaginative in your support of him, always taking the initiative in anticipating his needs, for it is a reproach on any church which fails to provide adequately for its minister. You will do all this not only from love for him but from love for the truth that he proclaims here.

Your Responsibility

This then is the charge I leave with you, that above all else you remember your calling to be the pillar and ground of the truth. It rests on you, God's message of redemption to an enslaved world. Are you strong enough in these decadent days to up-

hold this body of divinity, God's Holy Word? And are you able to do it in such a way that you are not prominent but the truth itself?

At first glance this title may appear to be a very flattering one. Some may think that we have been simply boasting of our superior knowledge. But on examination this is far from the case. When you go to a completed building do you see the foundation? Do you see the pillars and girders? No, of course not. You see only the fine building standing there, but you know from the very fact that it stands so tall that it has a foundation which is well-nigh indestructible.

Now you are like those pillars and foundations. When men approach they should not see you, they should rather see the truth you uphold, even that One who said "I am the Truth." Do you support Christ in this way, upholding him thus in the sight of men? He said, "If I am upheld, if I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me."

Are you strong enough to uphold him and his Word of truth? In your own strength, no. We are weak and impure creatures, yet God has provided in his grace for such a people. He has promised his Spirit of Truth who shall abide with us and in us for ever, an indestructible power by whom our lives and the life of our churches are made strong.

That is why Paul could look at the local church, this fallible and sinful company of people, and say to them, "You are the pillar and ground of the truth." There will always be a remnant who will uphold the truth—even if many become false churches—a remnant according to the election of grace. The pillar and ground of truth cannot be destroyed, not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. God Almighty himself will see to it that his church continues to the end of time as the custodian of the truth. Martin Luther was glorying in this when he wrote:

**And though this world with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.**

Who Is Sufficient for These Things?

CARL A. AHLFELDT

That a day has been set aside as a day of prayer indicates our consciousness of our insufficiency. Westminster Seminary stands for earnest, diligent, and thorough preparation for the work of the Lord. Yet Westminster, by calling for this day of prayer, acknowledges that neither faculty, nor trustees, nor students are sufficient without God's enabling help and blessing. It is good and wholesome for us all to recognize and humbly confess this fact.

I would propose therefore that our thoughts revolve around closely related themes: *Our Insufficiency* and *Our Sufficiency*. Both of these themes are set forth by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians.

Paul in this epistle (II Cor. 2:16c) writing of his responsibility and work asks a question, "And who is sufficient for these things?" The implied answer, as we see from the following context, is "No one, unless he has been enabled by God in a very definite way." If the Apostle Paul thus declared the insufficiency of any man for the Lord's work, who are we to feel otherwise? What a magnificent example of the triumph of God's grace we see in Paul! What an effective servant of the Lord! Yet Paul made it very plain that no one in himself was sufficient for these things, neither he nor anyone else. If the inspired Apostle made such a declaration, who are we then to assume that we are sufficient?

Our Insufficiency

Moreover, it was precisely in the work of the gospel ministry that he declared man's insufficiency. Paul at this point is preparing to defend his place as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He would establish his authority against his detractors. Yet central in his apostolic labors was his work in the ministry of the gospel. He readily admitted that in and of himself he was insufficient for this work. All of his authority and ability as an apostle and minister of Jesus Christ was not of himself, but bestowed by his sov-

erign God. Paul had a divine summons to preach the gospel. He wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians (9:16), "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Yet now as he thinks of the gospel ministry he cries, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Thus the question of the Apostle Paul comes home to us in a special way. We too are concerned about our place in the ministry of the gospel. Most of you are making diligent preparation to enter that ministry and spend your lives therein. How we thank God for you and for the thorough, faithful training which Westminster is giving you! Yet the question comes to you and to me today, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is right that we should feel our insufficiency in the ministry of the gospel, and let me assure you that if you are a sincere and faithful minister of Jesus Christ, as the years go by you will feel your own insufficiency more and more. There will be certain times when you will feel keenly your own insufficiency.

Doubtless there were many times like that in the life of Paul. He had been through just such a time when he wrote this letter. It was on his third missionary journey, and he had been laboring in Ephesus. During his ministry there it seemed that pastoral burdens were descending upon him from every side — not only from the work in Ephesus, but from his labors in other cities, especially in Galatia and in Corinth. This may well have been in his mind when he wrote in

Westminster Seminary's annual day of prayer in mid-November was the occasion for this message by the pastor of Pilgrim Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Bangor, Maine. A second will follow next month.

While there is a special office of minister of the gospel to which some are called, every Christian has a responsibility in this ministry. You will find in this article much that is helpful for your own prayer life.

11:28, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." If you are a sincere and faithful minister of Jesus Christ the truth of this statement will come home to you more and more, and you will feel strongly your own insufficiency.

Magnitude of the Task

We might do well to consider first of all the reason for our own insufficiency.

We are insufficient, for one thing, because of the magnitude of the task before us. We are to make known the knowledge of God in the gospel. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph (leadeth us in triumph) in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (II Cor. 2:14-15).

This task is greatly magnified because it is God's sacred Word which we handle. Think of how precious the Bible is, the Word of God written! Recall the glory of the revelation which it contains, of the wonder of the various ways in which God made known to men the truths which now have been committed wholly to writing. Think of the marvel of inspiration whereby God's Word has been rendered infallible! Here is the pure truth of God. We may well tremble that we are permitted to handle it. What if we were to dilute it, what if we were to twist it? What a responsibility it is to be entrusted with the sacred Word of God! What a responsibility is ours to stand up and declare, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Eternal Issues

Our task is also greatly magnified because of the eternal issues involved in our presentation of God's Word. Paul here declares, "To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these

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The Presbyterian GUARDIAN

EDITOR

ROBERT E. NICHOLAS



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Presbytery Adopts Resolution on Creation and Evolution

In answer to a question raised by a session as to what should be expected of ordained officers of the church, with respect to the Biblical teaching on creation, the Presbytery of Southern California decided in an action on May 3, 1968 that ordained men should be able to make the following affirmations:

1. The one true and living God existed alone in eternity, and beside Him there was no matter, energy, space or time.
2. The one true and living God, according to His Sovereign decree, determined to create, or make of nothing, the world and all things therein, whether visible or invisible.
3. God performed His creative work in six days. (We recognize different interpretations of the word "day" and do not feel that one interpretation is to be insisted upon to the exclusion of all others.)
4. That no part of the universe nor any creature in it came into being by chance or by any power other than that of the Sovereign God.
5. That God created man, male and female, after His own image, and as God's image bearer man possesses an immortal soul. Thus man is distinct from all other earthly creatures even though his body is composed of the elements of his environment.
6. That when God created man, it was God's inbreathing that constituted man a living creature, and thus God did not impress His

image upon some pre-existing living creature.

7. That the entire human family has descended from the first human pair, and, with the one exception of Christ, this descent has been by ordinary generation.
8. That man, when created by God, was holy. Then God entered into a covenant of works with the one man Adam. In the covenant Adam represented his posterity, and thus when he violated the requirement, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him into an estate of sin.

The Presbytery believes this to be the teaching of the Bible.

Westminster Hosts Evangelical Theological Society

A review of Old Testament studies will highlight the twentieth anniversary program of the Evangelical Theological Society to be held December 26-28 at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Dean Kenneth S. Kantzer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School is to present the introductory essay as president of ETS. Vice-president Carl F. H. Henry will also address the 150 or more evangelical scholars expected to attend from many areas in North America.

Guest lecturers from overseas are Donald J. Wiseman of the University of London, speaking on "Assyriology and O.T. Studies"; Pieter A. Verhoef of Stellenbosch Seminary, S. Africa, whose topic is "The Relationship between Old and New Testaments"; and F. Derek Kidner of Tyndale House, Cambridge, giving an address on "Wisdom Literature and the O.T."

Six major areas of investigation including 23 significant Old Testament topics are to be covered during the three-day meeting by members of ETS, plus selected papers, in parallel sessions, on New Testament and the other theological disciplines, following regular practice at these annual gatherings.

The position of the Evangelical Theological Society as to Scripture is stated as follows: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs."

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ROBERT E. NICHOLAS: Editor-Manager

Who Is Sufficient?

(continued from page 114)

things?" How important are the eternal destinies of men! The minister of the gospel is almost overwhelmed when he realizes that he is used of God, either to bring people to heaven or to increase their guilt as they continue their way to an eternal hell.

I once read of a minister who abruptly stopped in the midst of his sermon and cried out: "What am I doing? I am leading some of you to God, but some of you I am burdening with a deeper guilt as you continue your way to an endless hell!" It behooves the minister to make the issues crystal clear. A doctor or a surgeon may well tremble as he deals with the physical life of a patient. The issues involved for the minister of the gospel are for eternity.

Our task is exceedingly great because of the condition of the people to whom we minister. Men are always by nature dead in trespasses and sins. They are spiritually dead, and unless God in his sovereign grace quickens them by his Spirit, the task of the minister is impossible. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1).

Prejudice and Ignorance

There are times, however, when the impossibility of the task of the ministry in dealing with people dead in their sins is especially clear. It must have been so for Paul in his day. What a burden was his to go forth and face the bitter prejudice and hardness of heart of the very people who rejected the Savior whom God had sent unto them! What a task it was to go forth amid the ignorance and sin of the cities of the Roman Empire and proclaim the gospel of Christ to heathen people! Humanly speaking, what response could he expect?

In many ways our situation today is parallel to that in Paul's day. As we look out over humanity today what hope have we of success in presenting the gospel? Many people to whom we minister today are as ignorant of the truth as the pagans in Paul's day. Our whole nation has moved far away from the faith of our fathers. Many people who all their lives have attended churches which bear historic and honored names have never really

been taught the Bible. Our modern educational system has bowed God out of the picture, and our youth have come to question and reject the great truths of Scripture when they do hear them. We face multitudes who have never been taught the truth, and who often refuse to acknowledge even that there is such a thing as ultimate truth.

Fruits of Sin

As we look out over the world today what bitter fruit this whole outlook has produced! Sin has warped and twisted individual lives and ruined homes. Problems have engulfed our society and government in city, state, and nation. During the past election time I marveled at the willingness of men to run for high office. What a world they face! Who are we then as ministers of the gospel to stem this tide? How can we deliver even one soul and life? And yet how desperately our help is needed! God has called us to the ministry for such a time as this. I could cite for you case after case of bitter tragedy in lives and homes because of sin. "And who is sufficient for these things?"

How very much aware the Apostle Paul was that his sufficiency was not of himself as he faced the magnitude of the task before him! He and his fellow-workers were not willing to corrupt or adulterate the Word of God. They spoke that word sincerely as in the sight of God (2:17): "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." Paul referred in this verse to ministers who were not true to their task.

There are those in the ministry today who do not take the Word of God seriously; they are not too much concerned to convey faithfully the pure truth of that Word. They may not deny it in an outright manner, but they will adulterate it and will use it to their own personal ends. These may enter their task with a sense of their sufficiency, but this cannot be true of sincere servants of the Lord. As such we are activated by a true zeal for God; as such we give forth only that message which comes from God; as such we remember that God is the witness of all that we do.

But there is still a further reason for our insufficiency. As we face the great task before us we are frail and we are sinful.

Our Limitations

How frail and limited we are in our powers! We are only creatures and impotent as we face these eternal issues. In ourselves we do not have the answers to the dreadful results of sin. In our own wisdom do we even have a message to proclaim? Can we change a single heart? Can we bind up the wounded and broken in spirit? Can we untangle the devastating effects of sin in people's lives? How helpless a minister feels as he realizes his frailty! He would cry out with the Psalmist, "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). There may well be times when you will lack even the physical and mental strength for the task before you. We shall always lack the spiritual power for which our task calls.

Our insufficiency is accentuated even more by the fact that we are not only frail, but very sinful. As we read the epistles of Paul we see how he continually felt his unworthiness of handling the gospel. From the very first when he was called upon to preach the gospel he felt this. He wrote to the Ephesians, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8). This sense of his unworthiness never left Paul. Though he had made three great missionary journeys, had established a number of churches, had written epistles which became part of the holy Scriptures, yet he wrote to the Philippians, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (3:12).

Our Unworthiness

If you are a sincere and true minister of Jesus Christ this sense of unworthiness will never leave you. At times it will become overwhelming. There will be occasions when you walk into the pulpit feeling, Who am I to undertake this responsibility and privilege at hand? This feeling is absolutely true. We are not worthy of handling the sacred Word. We are not worthy of dealing with these issues of life and death. We must echo the words of Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of

hosts" (6:5). If anyone should feel his need of divine forgiving grace, it is the minister of Jesus Christ. How dare we handle God's Word, how dare we minister to the deepest need of people, a need which involves their eternal future, without continually receiving the mercy of God?

Consider now *what the effect on us should be as we realize our insufficiency.*

It should lead us to the most diligent kind of preparation for our work that we can possibly make. Paul wrote, "Now thanks be unto God, which . . . maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." God made known the savor of his knowledge through Paul, and Paul was prepared to be thus used of God. He knew God's Word, and he knew it well. His sense of the magnitude of the task before him, and his sense of his own unworthiness, increased his sense of the importance of knowing that Word.

Need for Preparation

Our insufficiency should make us diligent to obtain the best training for the gospel ministry that we possibly can get. God in his sovereign providence had prepared Paul well for the great work which lay before him. Our insufficiency should make us appreciate a school like Westminster Theological Seminary more than ever. This is especially true in the day in which we live. With sin and error rampant on every side, how we need the kind of preparation for the ministry which this school gives! There are many of us who more and more thank God for Westminster. Let me exhort you: While you are here make the most of your opportunity. Your most diligent training will be none too good for the task ahead.

Our insufficiency should also make us prepare carefully for each particular task in our ministry. Let us never feel that we can take any task of the Lord, so to speak, in stride. Let us never feel that we need less than an all-out effort in doing the work of the Lord. Let us not make the mistake of Israel at Ai: "And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few" (Josh. 7:3). You recall the tragic results at

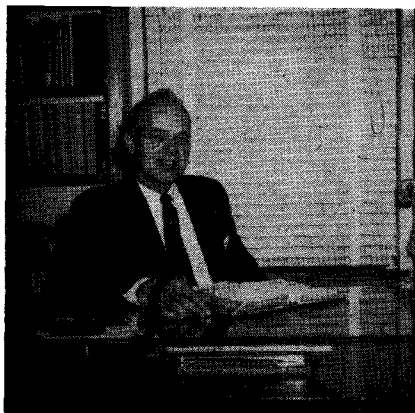
Ai. Never feel that anything less than your best is good enough.

A sense of our insufficiency should lead us to a fresh appreciation of the honor and privilege of being called to the ministry of the gospel. Not every one is called in a special way to that ministry. Our very insufficiency in ourselves shows the privilege which is ours in being called. The Apostle Paul had such a sense of his honor in being called to this service. Here in this letter he strongly maintains his apostolic office, boldly opposing those who would detract from it. But all the while he shows a deep sense of his privilege in being thus called and enabled by God. Such should be the effect upon us as we realize our own insufficiency to be servants of the Lord.

Humility

The sense of our insufficiency should keep us very humble. We have no reason for pride in our achievements in the gospel ministry. Let us realize full well that if God were to withdraw his blessing our accomplishment would be exactly nothing. Our Lord said to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

We are sometimes prone to forget our insufficiency and slip into pride. Even in the apostolic church this tendency was evident. Thus Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7). Let us not think that we are immune to the temptation to pride. If we remember our insufficiency in ourselves we shall be guarded against the sin of pride.



CARL A. AHLFELDT

Pride is a sin which is exceedingly heinous in the sight of God. How often in Scripture we are warned against it! "And be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pet. 5:5-6). To the extent that we allow pride to intrude into our ministry of the gospel, to that extent we shall forfeit the blessing of God. Thus an awareness of our own insufficiency may guard us against a very dangerous temptation.

A true realization of our insufficiency will drive us to prayer. How can it be otherwise for the Christian worker who knows his own insufficiency?

**Has He found thy message true?
Truth, and truly spoken, too?
Utter'd with a purpose whole
From a self-forgetful soul,
Bent on nothing save the fame
Of the great redeeming Name,
And the pardon, life and bliss,
Of the flock He bought for His?**

**Think! — but, ah, with thoughts
like these,
Hasten, sinner, to thy knees.**

Paul's Example of Prayer

The Apostle Paul was a man of prayer. Evidently he felt that he could not carry on his ministry without much prayer. How often in his epistles he makes reference to his life of prayer! He wrote to the Romans, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (1:9). Again he wrote to the Corinthians, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:4). And to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (1:3-4).

He wrote to the Colossians, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (1:3). Again to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" (I Thess. 1:2).

We have the same thing also in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count

you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (1:11). Paul wrote to Timothy, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (II Tim. 1:3).

Thus we get the distinct impression that the life of Paul was filled with prayer. The Apostle had a very busy life, traveling on his missionary journeys, preaching in strange cities, establishing churches, writing his epistles—all the while earning his livelihood by tent-making. Really, one wonders how he ever found time to pray. Surely he must have felt strongly that his exercise of the privilege of prayer was important. He must have prayed as he walked the dusty roads, prayed while he wove tents, prayed on board ship—using every opportunity to commune with his God.

Instruction in Prayer

Not only did Paul set a great example in prayer. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he gave authoritative exhortation and instruction in prayer. Thus he wrote to the Ephesians, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (6:17-19).

Again he wrote to the Thessalonians, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17); and "Brethren, pray for us" (v. 25). In this Paul echoed the admonition of Christ, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). This instruction of Scripture applies, of course, to every Christian; but it applies a hundredfold to the minister of the gospel.

Ministers of the gospel who have been greatly used of God have universally been men of prayer. Martin Luther said, "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." David Brainard wrote, "I love to be alone in my cottage where I can spend much time in prayer." Robert Murray McCheyne of Dundee,

Westminster

Seminary

Campus



Scotland, died at the age of 29. Yet he was marvellously used of God. His memoirs have further been a great inspiration to countless ministers of the gospel. This is what he had to say: "Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this . . . Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, your thoughts, your words from God."

Men of Prayer

Charles Haddon Spurgeon put it like this: "Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, else he were disqualified for the office he has undertaken. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only will you need to be pitied, but your people also, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded."

Let the realization of our insufficiency impel us to maintain faithfully a life of prayer. With all my heart let me exhort you: Make room in your ministry for prayer. I say this because great pressure will build up to keep you from the time at the throne of grace. The effectiveness of prayer is not to be measured by the length of time spent in it; nevertheless, prayer takes time. When duties multiply, this is one exercise which we are tempted to neglect. *Take* time to pray, take it *first*. Unless you do so there will not be time left for it.

Our activity of prayer must needs embrace many things. As servants of God we need to pray for ourselves. Well did Paul write to Timothy,

"Take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). We need to pray that we might be fit servants of the Lord, that we might be clean vessels empowered by the Spirit of God.

We need to pray concerning our sermons and messages. They must be forged upon the anvil of prayer.

We need to pray for individuals, for each member of the flock, and for each one whom God enables us to reach in our ministry. What a vast field for intercession there is here for the faithful servant of the Lord! How we need prayer for God's wisdom in our counseling and care of people!

We need to pray for our fellow servants of the Lord. We must uphold them, as we need them to uphold us, before the throne of grace. Let us especially remember our brethren in the difficult places at home and abroad.

We need to pray concerning the wider aspects of the work of God's Kingdom. How can we fulfill our responsibilities in our community or in our nation without faithful prayer? Scripture exhorts us to pray for those in authority "that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:2).

Driven to Prayer

Is it not clear then that a realization of our insufficiency will drive us to prayer? "And who is sufficient for these things?" Without God's enabling grace, no one. This is simply a very definite fact of life.

As we have a proper sense of our insufficiency it is to the glory of God. This has proven so time and again

in the course of history. See Israel standing helpless at the Red Sea with mountains on either side of them, the sea before them, and Pharaoh's host behind them. They stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, and God is glorified.

Gideon has what appears to be a respectable army, 32,000 men. But they are too many, and God uses the three hundred. The victory is obviously of God, and God is glorified. It is so with the proclamation of the gospel.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29).

July Youth Convention at Covenant College

With their theme "Alive in God's World" high schoolers and adult youth leaders will converge at the Lookout Mountain campus of Covenant College July 5-11, 1969 for a triennial youth convention. Earlier and similar leadership conferences have been held at Horn Creek and Bear Trap ranches in Colorado.

Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, president of Westminster Seminary, is the evening speaker. Pastor George W. Smith of the Manchester Reformed Presbyterian Church will conduct an adult seminar for present and future youth group leaders. Names of other Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian men are yet to be announced for the classes and workshops designed to strengthen the youth programs of local churches.

While the convention is sponsored by the National Reformed Presbyterian Youth Fellowship, Orthodox Presbyterian delegates are also being invited, according to the director of the Youth Fellowship, Arthur L. Kay of Wilmington, Delaware. More detailed information is being sent directly to the local churches.

Here and There in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Santa Cruz, Calif.—Sunday school and morning services are being held in the Live Oak School Cafeteria on Chanticleer Avenue not far from the new Capitola Road site. Other meetings take place at the home of Pastor Melvin Nonhof or of other members. The congregation is seeking additional gifts or loans throughout the denomination as well as locally for its new building designed by William de Boer of Stockton.

Bridgeton, N. J.—Special gospel services were conducted in late October at Calvary Church by Professor Jay Adams of Westminster Seminary, reports Arthur Olson, pastor.

Valdosta, Ga.—Participants of the Presbytery of the South in the installation of Cromwell G. Roskamp as pastor of Westminster Church were Messrs. Elmer Dortzbach, Jonathan Male, and Hartman Eager, an elder of the congregation. Two ministers of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., Messrs. John Clelland and Morton Smith, were also invited to participate because of their former close relationship to the Westminster congregation.

Stockton, Calif.—Bethany Church was host to the Presbytery of Northern California for its fall meeting. Among other actions a call was extended to Edwards Elliott, pastor in Garden Grove, to serve as a "roving missionary" within the Presbytery.

Center Square, Pa.—The fall Presbyterial at Community Church heard Mrs. Bruce Hunt of Korea and Mr. William Krispin, recently licensed by the Presbytery and living and working in South Philadelphia. In reporting on the meeting Mrs. John Kinnaird wrote: "Where are we going to get the eight new missionaries needed in the next few years? The demand is so great for the services of missionaries in Eritrea, Formosa, Japan and Korea. . . . And what opportunities for the gospel in the heart of our cities! I left wondering, 'What's a mother to do?' Most of us aren't free to go to Korea or even to South Philadelphia. But—I could really start praying for these fields. I could teach

my children of God's demands and the needs of the world. I could show them more love, and the neighbors, and others, for the sake of Christ—until it might reach the nearest ghetto. I could start here, today."

Naples, Fla.—The doctoral dissertation of George W. Knight, III has appeared under the title, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles*. His doctorate was received from the Free University of Amsterdam. Dr. Knight, with the permission of the Presbytery of the South, serves as stated supply of Covenant Presbyterian Church, which is affiliated with the RPC/ES.

Donald Duff Ordained.

Wheaton, Ill.—Donald J. Duff was ordained to the gospel ministry as a teacher on October 18 by the Presbytery of the Midwest (formerly known as the Presbytery of Wisconsin). A graduate of Calvin College and of Westminster Seminary in 1964, he was licensed to preach in 1965. He labored on behalf of the Presbytery in Hanover Park from June 1964 to June 1966. Since then he has been the Bible teacher at Timothy Christian High in Elmhurst.

Those who took part in the service were Messrs. James Bosgraf of Hanover Park; Donald Parker of Tinley Park, who gave the sermon; Charles Horne; Francis Breisch, who delivered a charge to the teacher; John Baldwin; and Ned Elliott, who furnished music.

Bridgewater, So. Dak.—Mrs. Marion Kleinjan reports that 36 women representing ten churches attended the fall Presbyterial of the Dakotas at Trinity Church. Mrs. Robert Sander presided at the business sessions. Following morning prayer periods, the afternoon was highlighted by a film, "The Tall Preacher," presenting the work of missionary radio ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia.

South San Francisco, Calif.—"The Genevan Times" is one of many church papers or newsletters that bring monthly news of congregational activities to our office. The latest issue of the "Times" has a new face of

Return Requested

John Calvin on its cover by artist Robert Santo, an elder in the Brentwood congregation.

Middletown, Del. — Grace Church observed its 30th anniversary in mid-October with Mr. Everett DeVelde of First Church, Baltimore, preaching. At a Saturday fellowship dinner he showed slides illustrating the origin and growth of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. "His comments gave us all a better understanding of our rich heritage," said Pastor Clarke Evans.

Nashville, Tenn.—Orthodox Presbyterians and others of like faith are invited to attend the newly formed Church of the Covenant, writes Dr. Robert H. Countess, pastor. The address is 2002 - 21st Ave. South. The work is under the auspices of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Cleveland, Ohio — "Learning to Love People" was the theme of two recent Ohio Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship conferences. Speakers were Vern Miller, white pastor of an integrated church, and Bill Pannell, Negro evangelist with the Tom Skinner Crusades. Mr. Laurence Sibley is a regional director of IVCF. The Sibley family are members of Nashua OPC, Edinburg, Pa. and he supplied the pulpit there recently while Pastor Boyce Spocner spent the day with a new group in South Dayton, Ohio.

La Mirada, Calif. — A new addition to the church program is a college age Machen League. They will be working at solving problems they face at school and work, planning for marriage and life goals, according to Mrs. Robert Essig, sponsor. The Senior High Machen League hosted an area rally in October.

URGENT NEED for a Christian women to keep house and care for five children (ages 2-8) because of serious illness of the wife of the Rev. George Hall. Room, board and reasonable salary. Phone 717-944-5835.

An Index for Volume 37 will appear in the January issue.

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