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## Modern Reformation

FROM [Wanted: Thinking Christians](#) , JUL/AUG 1994

# Machen On The Mind

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...The growth of ignorance in the Church is the logical and inevitable result of the false notion that Christianity is a life and not also a doctrine; if Christianity is not a doctrine then of course teaching is not necessary to Christianity. But whatever the causes for the growth of ignorance in the Church, the evil must be remedied. It must be remedied primarily by the renewal of Christian education in the family, but also by the use of whatever other educational agencies the Church can find. Christian education is the chief business of the hour for every earnest Christian man. Christianity cannot subsist unless men know what Christianity is...

### **Christianity & Liberalism p. 176-177**

What many men despise today as "doctrine" the New Testament calls the gospel; and the New Testament treats it as the message upon which salvation depends. But if that be so, if salvation depends upon the message in which Christ is offered as Savior, it is obviously important that we should get the message straight. That is where Christian scholarship comes in. Christian Scholarship is important in order that we may tell the story of Jesus and his love straight and full and plain. At this point, indeed, an objection may arise. Is not the gospel a very simple thing, it may be asked; and will not its simplicity be obscured by too much scholarly research? The objection springs from a false view of what scholarship is; it springs from the notion that scholarship leads a man to be obscure. Exactly the reverse is the case. Ignorance is obscure; but scholarship brings order out of confusion, places things in their logical relations, and makes the message shine forth clear.

### **Education, Christianity & The State p. 20**

The ignorance of the Church is explained by the failure of the Christian family as an educational institution; but what in turn explains that failure? Why is it that Christian parents have neglected the instruction of their children; why is it that preaching has ceased to be educational and doctrinal; why is it that even Sunday Schools and Bible classes have come to consider solely applications of Christianity without studying the Christianity that is to be applied? These questions take us into the very heart of the situation; the growth of ignorance in the Church, the growth of indifference with regard to the simple facts recorded in the Bible, all goes back to a great spiritual movement, really sceptical in its tendency, which has been going forward during the last one hundred years a movement which appears not only in philosophers and theologians such as Kant and Schleiermacher and Ritschl, but also in a widespread attitude of plain men and women throughout the world. The depreciation of the intellect, with the exaltation in the place of it of the feelings or of the will, is, we think, a basic fact in modern life, which is rapidly leading to a condition in which men neither know anything nor care anything about the doctrinal content of the Christian religion, and in which there is in general a lamentable intellectual decline.

### **What is Faith p. 22-23**

We are told that our theological differences will disappear if we just get down on our knees together in prayer. Well, I can only say about that kind of prayer, which is indifferent to the question whether the gospel is true or false, that it is not Christian prayer; it is bowing down in the house of Rimmon. God save us from it!

### **Education, Christianity & The State p. 28**

Is this modern anti-intellectualistic view of faith in accordance with the New Testament? Does the New Testament offer a man salvation first, on the basis of psychological process of conversion or surrender—falsely called faith—and then preach the gospel to him afterwards; or does the New Testament preach the gospel to him first, set forth to him the facts about Christ and the meaning of his death, and then ask him to accept the one thus presented in order that his soul may be saved? ...What did Peter's [Pentecost] sermon contain? Did it contain merely an account of Peter's own experience of salvation; did it consist solely in exhortation to the people to confess their sins? Not at all. What Peter did on the day of Pentecost was to set forth the facts about Jesus Christ his life, his miracles, his death, his resurrection. It was on the basis of that setting forth of the facts about Christ that the three thousand believed, confessed their sins, and were saved.

### **Education, Christianity & The State p. 17-18**

Some of us may desire to ask whether Jesus of Nazareth really made themore abundant life of man the ultimate end of existence.

### **What is Faith p. 39**

Evangelism does not consist merely in the rehearsal of what has happened in the evangelists own soul... Christian evangelism does not consist merely in a man's going about the world saying, "Look at me, what a wonderful experience I have, how happy I am, what wonderful Christian virtues I exhibit; you can all be as good and as happy as I am if you will just make a complete surrender of your wills in obedience to what I say." That is what many religious workers seem to think that evangelism is... But they are wrong. Men are not saved by the exhibition of our glorious Christian virtues; they are not saved by the contagion of our experiences. We cannot be the instruments of God in saving them if we preach to them thus only ourselves. Nay, we must preach to them the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is only through the gospel which sets him forth that they can be saved.

### **Education, Christianity & The State p. 21-22**

...The Epistles of Paul and all the sources make it abundantly plain that the testimony was primarily not to inner spiritual facts but to what Jesus had done once for all in his death and resurrection. Christianity is based, then, upon an account of something that happened, and the Christian worker is primarily a witness. But if so, it is rather important that the Christian worker should tell the truth. When a man takes his seat upon the witness stand, it makes little difference what the cut of his coat is, or whether his sentences are nicely turned. The important thing is that he tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If we are to be truly Christians, then, it does make a vast difference what our teachings are.

### **Christianity & Liberalism p. 53**

If the saving work of Christ were confined to what he does now for every Christian, there would be no such thing as a Christian gospel- an account of an event which put a new face on life. What we should have left would be simply mysticism, and mysticism is quite different from Christianity. It is the connection of the present experience of the believer with an actual historic appearance of Jesus in the world which prevents our religion from being mysticism and causes it to be Christianity. It must certainly be admitted,then, that Christianity does

depend upon something that happened; our religion must be abandoned altogether unless at a definite point in history Jesus died as a propitiation for the sins of men. Christianity is certainly dependent upon history.

### **Christianity & Liberalism p. 120-121**

For further study on the life of Machen, you might look at D.G. Hart's book, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* published by Johns Hopkins University Press (now available in paperback by Baker Books). Another place to look is Ned B. Stonehouse's *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*. Books still in print by Machen include *Christianity & Liberalism* (Eerdmans, 1923), *What is Faith* (Banner of Truth, 1925), *God Transcendent* (Banner of Truth, 1982), *Education, the State & Christianity* (The Trinity Foundation, 1987). You can also access a number of Machen articles here at our web site in the "Misc. Articles" section.

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