

Tributes to Dr. J. Gresham Machen
Delivered at First Presbyterian Church
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Sunday, January 3, 1937

DR. MACARTNEY:

When I read yesterday morning the information of the passing of Dr. Machen in a hospital in North Dakota, a wave of sorrow swept over me for I realized that in this world I had lost a close personal friend. We were classmates at Princeton, and through all the years that have passed since that friendship remained unbroken. When I thought of the Church my mind reverted to those great words of the Apostle, and they are words which truly can be spoken of Dr. Machen: "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course."

The most notable chapter in Dr. Machen's career was not the chapter written in the glare of publicity but during his long term as Professor of the New Testament in Princeton Theological Seminary. During most of those years Dr. Maitland Alexander was the President of the Board of Directors of Princeton Theological Seminary. It is therefore highly appropriate that on this occasion he should voice my feelings and the feelings of many in this congregation, of thousands in the Presbyterian Church and in the Christian Church throughout the world.

DR. ALEXANDER:

On Tuesday of last week Dr. Machen sat in my office and told me his hopes and his plans concerning that theological institution which he himself founded, Westminster Theological Seminary. And then I had a telegram from the hospital in Bismark saying he was very ill, followed up by another bulletin, and then the information that he had passed away. I said to myself, "A prince has fallen in Israel." What Dr. J. Gresham Machen's death will mean to the thousands of Bible-believing Christians throughout the world is hard to tell.

I do not hesitate to say that he was the world's greatest New Testament scholar, and those who attempted to answer him were thrown back like waves that beat against an eternal rock. He was the greatest champion of the Reformed Faith in the world. By the Reformed Faith -- I will put it in words that you will understand and I will understand better than that theological phrase -- he was the world's greatest champion of the old-fashioned, evangelical religion. He believed in the eternal purposes of God; he believed that God came down to earth to save the world; he believed in the bodily resurrection of the believer; he believed in the inerrant Bible; and he stood for those things through thick and thin, through the storms of persecution and amid the great efforts that were made to stop him.

I believe Dr. Machen was also a man, as he would have to be, of intense convictions and wonderful courage. I remember after he had had a great setback in his convictions I met him and I expected to find him sunk, as it were as I was myself, and instead I found him bubbling over with triumph. I said to him, "I don't see how you can feel this way." "Well," he said, "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice"; and that was the underlying philosophy of his life.

Then, Dr. Machen was a humble Christian. I do not know any man that I have ever known that was as truly humble before his God as he was. He was a man of principle, of course he was a man of intense Bible study. He was a man who gave his heart wholly and unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Machen was the object of great personal attacks by the men in power in his own Church, which issue finally in the end refused him communion in the Presbyterian Church. It is one of the few things that I have ever felt that made me wish that I was not a Presbyterian. I am ashamed of the Church. And now that Dr. Machen is dead I am wondering: Will his blood be the seed of another Church, or will his blood water the dying elements of evangelical faith so that it will grow into a great and glorious honor of Christ. I believe it will. I believe the result of his death will be almost greater than the results of his life, and if I were standing today as they laid him to rest, I would say, "Servant of God, well done. Rest from thy great employ." And I would say perhaps to those who were listening, that there are men who are greater in their death than they were in their life, and I would say, "Here was a man who was the greatest of all in his life and in his death generated a power that will almost pull down the adversaries of the Son of God and exalt Him in His Cross high above all things, that men will return from the uttermost ends of the earth to be sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

CHOIR:

One Hundred and Twenty-First Psalm.

CONGREGATION:

Hymn - Beulah Land