

A DEFENSE OF CHRIST'S CAUSE

By
Gerald B. Winrod

PROLOGUE

ON September 28, 1943, I started a series of religious meetings in a large Church at St. Petersburg, Florida . . . of which Dr. William T. Watson is the Pastor.

Two days later, Tuesday morning, for no known reason and without provocation, the St. Petersburg Daily Times published a front-page editorial smear attack against me. The article was also read over radio WTSP. Mr. Nelson Poynter owns both the newspaper and the radio station.

I appealed to him by personal interview, telegram and letter for permission to answer the falsehoods circulated against me. He refused to grant me space in the newspaper or sell me time over the radio. Thereupon, a great mass meeting was arranged for Sunday night, October 3rd . . . at which time I answered the charges.

I invited Mr. Poynter to be present and share the pulpit with me. He declined. The complete text of my Answer was then published in the St. Petersburg Daily Independent.

This pamphlet contains the Message which I delivered on that occasion. With these facts in mind, turn to page 4. This matter is important because, (1) it exposes a certain type of smear artist who may become exceedingly dangerous in time of war, and (2) it is indicative of trends toward a great public awakening among the American people.

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October 9, 1943

Rev. Gerald B. Winrod,
Wichita, Kansas.

Personal

My dear Rev. Winrod:

Your friend Rev. William T. Watson, President of the Florida Bible Institute at St. Petersburg, Florida, was good enough to send me a full page advertisement from the Independent which carried your answer to the smear charges of sniper Nelson Poynter.

I read every word of your reply with deep interest. These character assassins are still at large but the day of reckoning will arrive and is on its way.

With assurances of my highest esteem, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

Robert R. Reynolds
Robert R. Reynolds, U. S. S.

RRR/mch

A DEFENSE

IN HIS unwarranted and abusive attack upon me last Tuesday morning, casting an indirect but potent reflection upon the Church life of the community as a whole, Mr. Nelson Poynter, editor of the St. Petersburg Times, placed his tongue in his cheek, and had the unmitigated gall to imply that he believed in the sacred doctrine of American Civil Liberty.

His statement that the "Constitution is operating even during war," would lead one, accepting his remark at its face value, to believe that he really subscribes to such traditional American ideals as freedom of speech, freedom of press, and other Constitutional safe-guards.

But what are the facts?

Resorting to the cheapest, most morbid, deceitful, divisive form of journalism, he sought to divide a large section of this community into hostile camps. He sought to smear this Church, a place dedicated to the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sought to smear the religious services which have been held here during the past week. He sought to smear his sister radio station, WSUN. He sought to smear Dr. William T. Watson for having me here.

Dr. Watson is a nationally-known Christian leader, preacher, president of a progressive educational institution; he is loved and respected in religious circles throughout the nation; he has devoted almost twenty years of his life to the civic and spiritual welfare of St. Petersburg, helping to make it the kind of place, to which tourists from the North like to come. Mr. Poynter owes Dr. Watson a public apology. And Mr. Poynter sought in his editorial to smear me.

He published, what I will presently show, to be a compilation of half-truths, a string of falsehoods. His article bears this heading: "THE WIN-ROD RECORD—AN EDITORIAL."

We shall presently examine every point in this attack, with meticulous care. We shall go through it with a fine tooth comb. But first, I insist that we shall examine a part of the "THE POYNTER RECORD."

Actions Louder Than Words

Mr. Poynter professes to believe in the doctrine of civil liberty. But, what are the facts?

His deeds speak so loudly that I cannot hear his words.

Last Tuesday afternoon—the day the attack was published, Dr. Watson and I called at Mr. Poynter's office in the Times' building. I explained that the article contained statements which were untrue. I asked him to give me the same number of words, the same front-page position of his paper, in order to refute the utterly false statements published that morning.

He refused to agree, saying he would make no "commitments." He stated that he did not even wish to talk with me. He indicated I could write something if I wanted to, with no assurance whatever, that he would allow me so much as one inch of space in which to refute the charges. He accused us, Dr. Watson and me, of seeking cheap publicity. Dr. Watson handled him on that one!

Does Mr. Poynter really believe that the Constitution is operating?

Mr. Poynter owns radio station WTSP.

Last Tuesday morning he caused the text of the attack to be read over this station, thereby blanketing the whole surrounding territory with the same false statements that appeared in the article.

Following our interview at his office in the Times building, Dr. Watson and I called on Mr. Lex Herron, business manager of WTSP, and asked the privilege of purchasing time for a series of straight Gospel broadcasts—salvation messages, such as I have been giving each day during the past week through station WSUN. We offered to submit scripts of all talks in advance. We offered to pay for the time consumed in advance.

We went back Wednesday afternoon for our answer and learned that Mr. Poynter had instructed Mr. Herron to turn us down.

Does he really believe that the Constitution is operating?

Then, later in the day, Wednesday, we personally delivered a letter to the station in which I called attention to the fact that the attack had been read over the air and, in that letter, I said these words:

"I hereby demand, in the interest of truth, fair play and my personal civil liberties, the right of immediately refuting the charges through the facilities of your air channel—the place where the injustice was perpetrated."

On the following day, Thursday, Mr. Herron told us that Mr. Poynter had instructed him to ignore our written request and refuse to answer.

Does he really believe that the Constitution is operating?

Last Friday morning, Dr. Watson paid his regular weekly visit to the advertising department of the Times' office for the purpose of inserting usual Sunday announcements on the Saturday Church page.

He took with him a duplicate of the same advertisement that appeared on the Church page of the St. Petersburg Independent yesterday evening. The gentleman at the advertising desk examined the copy and explained that, on direct orders from Mr. Poynter, any such advertisement was not to be allowed to appear on the Church page.

Does he really believe that the Constitution is operating?

Does he believe in civil liberty just for himself, and not for others? If so, he is at variance with the conception of human liberty as expressed by the founding fathers of our Republic and written into the Bill of Rights.

As I know my heart, as God knows my heart, I would not deny Mr. Nelson Poynter the right of criticizing me if I had it in my power to do so.

Indeed I gained permission from Dr. Watson to invite him into this pulpit tonight so that he would be assured of the most convenient arrangement possible to continue his attack upon me. Why is he not here? The chair designated for him in the pulpit remains vacant! I sincerely hoped he would be here to face me openly, publicly, for a frank discussion.

In the language of another, I may disagree with you but I will fight "to the death" for your right to speak your convictions.

Smear Artist Technique

Coming now to an analysis of the editorial.

I think we will all agree that there are two kinds of falsehoods: One, the outright lie . . . and the

other, the half truth. Now it is a fact, well-known to smear artists, that a half truth is often more potent, more useful, and a more deadly weapon for tearing down good people than an outright lie.

But remember, a half truth deliberately uttered for the purpose of wounding, for injuring, for stabbing another—such a half truth becomes a lie, the most subtle, vicious and perniciously poison kind of a lie. The man who uses a half truth under these circumstances is a liar.

In his attack, Mr. Poynter shows himself to be a master in this kind of black magic. He has mastered the technique of telling a half truth in such a way as to convey an utterly false impression.

Mr. Poynter resorts to half truth technique when he says, I am bracketed with, and I quote, "Elizabeth Dilling and William Dudley Pelley, organizer of the Silver Shirts."

I have met Mrs. Dilling. I have read some of her books. On one occasion she was a house guest in our home at Wichita. Mrs. Winrod and I know her to be a true, Bible-believing child of God. She has given her son, her only son, to the armed forces and that boy is serving his Country in uniform tonight.

But here is the half truth:

Mr. Poynter "brackets" me with William Dudley Pelley of the Silver Shirts but does not explain that I have never in my life seen Mr. Pelley or collaborated with him in any manner, shape, form or fashion.

I talked with a business man in this city the other day—a man who knew nothing about me except what he had read in the St. Petersburg Times. He said, most certainly, it was his impression that Pelley and Winrod were in some way associated.

Mr. Poynter then compares the Silver Shirts with, and I quote: "Nazi brownshirts and Mussolini blackshirts."

Thus, he causes the mind of the reader to run from Pelley, to Winrod, to Nazi brownshirts, to Mussolini blackshirts, neglecting to explain that all I know about the Silver Shirts is what I have read in the newspapers, and that I have consistently opposed Nazism and Fascism with all the vigor at my command.

Opposed to Nazism and Fascism

I shall cite two examples: First, in a coast-to-coast broadcast, made from Denver, Colorado—a program in which five Ministers of the Gospel participated including Dr. Watson, I denounced both Nazism and Fascism in language unmistakably clear. This broadcast was carried to St. Petersburg through station WTSP. (Applause.)

That address, over a nationwide network of stations, was made long before our Country entered the war. This is only one of dozens of instances to which I could call your attention.

Mr. Poynter did not explain that in January 1935, a Minister from Chicago, and I, traveling through Europe came to the border of Italy and were turned back, denied entrance to the country, denied the right of riding across one corner of Italy on a railroad train because "Mussolini's black-shirts," yonder at that border station had a record of our anti-Fascist activities in the United States and recognized our names from our passports.

Even back there, in those days, I was discussing Fascism as the product of hell and talking about Mussolini as the possible Antichrist of Bible prophecy, predicted to rise during the end-time of the present age.

The Klan Falsehood

Let us examine the next half truth:

Mr. Poynter says: "He (Winrod) was a notorious Catholic-baiter when this was profitable in the hey-day of the Kansas Ku Klux Klan."

When you read that statement, I dare say you identified me, at once in your thinking as having, at some time, been an active leader in the Ku Klux Klan organization.

Well, in the first place, during the "hey-day" of the Ku Klux Klan I was not even making my home in Kansas. I lived in Ohio.

When I saw this falsehood, last Tuesday morning, my mind went back to a day—if I mistake not, in the year 1920, when in Columbus, Ohio, a Klan organizer approached me, inviting me to join the organization, and I refused. I have never belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, or had any connection with it.

The statement that I was "a notorious Catholic-baiter" is an unmitigated falsehood. There is not a word of truth in it.

I am a Protestant Minister of the Gospel. As such, I cannot accept some of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church any more than a priest, bishop or cardinal can accept some of the doctrines of the various Protestant denominations. Any differences of opinion in this regard have been, and are, purely doctrinal and theological. The phrase "notorious Catholic baiter" is nonsense!

Now, notice Mr. Poynter's technique, in saying, and I quote: "The Defender was highly recommended by Welt-Dienst, an official Nazi propaganda agency."

I wish somebody would tell me who, or what, is Welt-Dienst. The phrase simply does not register with me. Frankly, I do not know what he is talking about. As far as I can recall, I never heard or saw the name in print in my life, until I read it, in this editorial.

But, I will tell Mr. Poynter one thing: If he ever catches any Nazi, Fascist or Communist propaganda outfit saying anything GOOD ABOUT ME, and he will bring the matter to my attention, I'll sue them for libel!

Strikes a Christian Family

With regard to the next half truth, I will say candidly, that I was dumb-founded to find a man serving as editor of a newspaper the size of the St. Petersburg Times, capable of taking up a poison pen to strike, if possible, below the belt—and wound the sanctity of another man's home and family circle.

I think the average reader, of last Tuesday's smear article must have resented his unwarranted invasion, his vicious and uninvited intrusion into my fireside.

I only wish Mrs. Winrod were here. She would explain some things to Nelson Poynter. She has traveled with me all this summer, holding evangelistic services and Bible Conferences in eight different eastern and New England cities. Mrs. Winrod is a good Preacher in her own right. She enjoys the respect and admiration of all who know her. She is a charming woman, a real Bible student, a devoted Christian—who loves her home, as the best place, the most sacred place, in all the world. Incidentally, before our marriage, she lived in St. Petersburg and still has many warm friends here.

And for your information, Nelson Poynter, I

am speaking of my wife, the mother of my three children.

Had we known, sir, that you were going to deliver this blow against our home, you may be sure Mrs. Winrod would have been here to help defend it.

You, Nelson Poynter, told a damnable vicious half truth. You deliberately sought to convey the utterly false impression that our family circle is broken. Do you wonder, sir, that with my attorneys, we are giving serious thought about bringing legal action against you in the courts? You are guilty among other things, of having struck at my wife, my three children, my lovely Christian home. I make no threats, understand, but I ask you Nelson Poynter, What would you do, if you were in my place? Your evil deed is magnified by the gutter language in which your thoughts were couched.

Yes, some years ago, Mrs. Winrod did go down to death's door, smitten with a deadly ailment from which few people ever recover. Yes, it was only a miracle, an answer to prayer, that she did recover. All over the Nation, Christian people were remembering her at the Throne of Grace. God intervened. We witnessed visible results from the spiritual exertions. She was spared to raise her children.

Yes, during this ordeal, I was under heavy pressure, even as I am, at this hour. Year after year, I have endured smear campaigns such as this one—because I am the victim of a nation-wide conspiracy of lies. Every conceivable falsehood has been hurled at me. Enormous sums of money have been spent in trying to ruin me.

The pressure has at times been very great upon the members of my family. Something snapped a few years ago, and there was a short period of estrangement. Within a few months, the circle was cemented again more firmly than ever before.

Mr. Poynter, by use of a half truth, you left the false impression, that my family circle is broken today. Hereafter, I invite you to keep your nose out of my personal affairs. (Prolonged applause.)

Bond Purchases

I find one phrase in the editorial with which, I believe, we can all agree. He says: "War plays havoc with our emotions."

Knowing this to be the case, then it seems to me a man in Mr. Poynter's position and responsibility, should be exceedingly careful about questioning the patriotism of anyone unless absolutely sure of his ground. Especially in time of war!

I submit that the purchase of war bonds offers a fairly good index to a man's patriotic sentiments in the present crisis. I do not know when Mr. Poynter purchased his first war bond, but I started buying my bonds on June 4, 1941. That was two years and four months ago, six months prior to Pearl Harbor.

I have not been able to invest large sums of money in defense bonds and war bonds, but I have bought them consistently and to the best of my ability, starting, as I say, June 4, 1941.

Digging Chrome

Now about my arrest in July 1942.

In reading Mr. Poynter's description one would gain the impression that I am definitely the criminal type, facing immediate incarceration.

But what are the facts?

One day, in July of last year, Walter Winchell, speaking allegedly from an inspired source, announced that I had been chosen the first of a group of Gospel Preachers in the United States to be arrested and imprisoned. To use his exact language, "Fundamentalist men of the cloth."

I had, at that time, taken temporary leave from my evangelistic labors, and with my family was residing in the little mining village of Downieville, California. Why was I out there?

An uncle of mine, on my father's side, spent some thirty years at the mining business in that part of northern California. When Uncle Tom died in 1938, a portion of his interests came to me. To date, I have never realized one cent of profit from the properties, and it is doubtful if I ever shall.

But, knowing that modest quantities of the strategic mineral called chrome existed on our holdings, and that chrome is indispensable to the manufacture of war materials, my cousin, Mr. Carroll Winrod, and I, decided as a service to our Country, to turn out as much of the precious ore as possible.

We secured a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation at Washington, D. C., and I

arranged to spend part of last summer out there helping get things started.

I was in Downieville when Walter Winchell published his statement to the effect that I had been chosen first of a group of Gospel Preachers to be destroyed. As I recall, it was eight days later that I learned of my presence being desired in Washington, on a warrant. I was shocked to hear that my accusers said I had been interfering with the morale of the army and navy.

The reaction among clergymen and laymen alike was electric. I have received thousands of letters, telegrams, long distance calls and other expressions from followers of the Lord Jesus Christ—representing all denominations.

I hurried to Washington, was taken to a cell, finger-printed, bonded, arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and then returned to my home in Wichita. I was at the Capital all told, about six hours, and have not since been asked to return. That was fifteen months ago. I do not profess to know what may be in the minds and hearts of those for whom Walter Winchell professes to speak.

I do know in my own heart, however, that I take second place to no man in love for my Country, my Flag, our boys on the far-flung battlefields of the world, and the Christian institutions that have made this the greatest nation that God's sunshine has ever fallen upon!

It is a matter of irony, that on the evening when I learned of my presence being desired at Washington, I had spent the day on rocky mountain trails, fighting rattlesnakes, helping engineers, producing chrome, to assist with the war effort. Returning to Wichita from Washington, I have continued with my editorial, evangelistic and preaching labors. I am glad to report that these labors for the Lord and Master have now expanded beyond anything previously known.

"Jewish Communistic Plot"

In the second paragraph of his editorial, Mr. Poynter raises the Jewish question by using the term, "Jewish-Communistic plot." I am glad for his frankness. It helps to identify the true source of my opposition.

The smearing to which I have been subjected this week is not new. I encounter it wherever I go. In every instance, the smearers say practically the

same thing, use the same innuendoes, and make the same false charges.

The attack operates according to a nation-wide plan. It operates according to a blueprint. It stems from one point of common origin. Mr. Poynter's reference to a "Jewish-Communistic plot" is both significant and clarifying. Unwittingly he has helped expose the true Jewish source of my opposition.

I dislike no man because of his nationality. As a Minister of the Gospel it is incumbent upon me to preach the Gospel to Jew and Gentile alike.

But it has been established on the floor of the United States Congress and recorded in the archives of the United States Government, that the international, atheistic, Communistic plot to wipe Christianity from the face of the earth, to overthrow orderly government throughout the world by physical violence—as the Communistic organizations of the United States advocate, this plot was organized, financed, directed and motivated by a group of apostate, atheistic, unbelieving Jews.

Why honorable, law-abiding Jewish citizens in this community and over the United States, should be offended and prompted to organize smear campaigns of falsehood and villification when the apostate members of their race are condemned, is difficult to understand. (Applause.)

"Must Win This War"

But I hasten to reiterate my position, and restate the attitude that I have steadfastly maintained since the war began.

As a political philosophy, as a totalitarian ideology, as a system of dictatorship in which human liberty is abolished and the citizen made the slave and serf of the state, as a program of world revolution designed to overthrow our Government by physical force and terrorism, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM, FOR THE UNITED STATES, MUST BE REJECTED BY ALL GOOD PEOPLE.

On the other hand, everyone realizes that we are at war. War creates stringencies. At any cost we must win this war. Civilians cannot hope to be experts in matters of military strategy. We must accept, without question, the decision of our military leaders, yonder on the far-flung battlefields of the world.

David, the Psalmist, says that God sometimes causes the wrath of men to praise Him. If, in the opinion of those entrusted with military responsibility, the Soviet armies in Asia are an asset and helpful to our cause—well and good!

We accept their judgment without question. As Christians, we pray God to give direction to their thoughts and motivate their decisions. May they make wise decisions so that the smallest number of our boys shall be obliged to lay down their lives.

But this does not imply, for a minute that we accept atheistic Communism as a political philosophy here at home. I have no regrets, or apologies to make, for having consistently opposed Communist activity here in the United States along with Nazism and Fascism. (Applause.)

A Libel Suit

Parenthetically, let me say that approximately a year ago, Walter Winchell—a man whom many believe, is doing his race, the Jewish race, much harm, by conducting persistent, smear campaigns . . . about a year ago, this man, published an attack upon me in the newsstand publication called "Liberty."

A few weeks ago, in the courts of Chicago, I brought legal action, a libel suit against "Liberty" for \$200,000. The case is now pending. In our petition my attorneys showed that Winchell plagiarized his attack in Liberty from the columns of the "Communist Daily Worker," official organ of the Communist Party of the United States.

In other words, back in January 1937, the "Communist Daily Worker" published a series of articles against me—utter falsehoods, and Walter Winchell rehashed them about a year ago in the weekly magazine called "Liberty."

And the material in the "Daily Worker," reprinted in "Liberty," is substantially the same as you read last Tuesday morning on the front page of the St. Petersburg Daily Times. (Applause.)

Before closing, I want to announce that nothing said here tonight precludes the possibility of legal action for libel against Nelson Poynter, the St. Petersburg Times, and radio Station WTSP if in the opinion of my attorneys and the Christian people of this community such a suit is necessary and advisable. My attorneys now have the matter under consideration. The Statute of Limitations allows

one year in which to promote litigation of that type.

Christ's Cause Uppermost

I am sorry this unpleasant controversy has occurred. We did not precipitate it. We did not want it. But we found ourselves forced into a position where the Cause of Christ in this community, this Church, our family, and our personal honor, combined to make refutation necessary.

I have spoken with restraint. There are many other things I might have said. There is no malice in my heart. I am sure my colleague, your Pastor, Dr. Watson, feels the same way.

My saintly little Mother is in this meeting, with me, tonight. She has been much in prayer for the service of the evening. Mrs. Winrod's Mother, Mother Warren, is here tonight. She too has been in prayer for this service. Our son John Paul is here.

I hope I have defended Christ's Cause, and our family name, in a way pleasing to these who know me best, and in a way that will bring victory to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Prolonged applause.)

★ ★ ★

P. S.—Since the above address was delivered Sunday night, Mr. Poynter released another smear Monday morning—after maintaining silence for five days. The Monday attack was published when he knew it would be too late for me to answer before a St. Petersburg audience. It is to be regretted that he did not accept my invitation to say what was on his mind Sunday night.

His Monday quotation from the new smear volume "Under Cover," is taken verbatim out of the "Communist Daily Worker" and does not contain a scintilla of truth. Incidentally, book stores in many parts of the nation are refusing to accept orders for "Under Cover" because of its libellous character.

A Defender Publication. Price 10 cents the copy . . . \$1.00 a dozen . . . \$3.00 per 100 copies. Order from, Defender Publishers, Wichita 1, Kansas.

THE DEFENDER MAGAZINE . . .
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