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God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

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Guest Editorial

Sister Churches

IF one may judge an Assembly by the number of important decisions reached, the twenty-first Assembly of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church which recently met in Rochester was not a great Assembly. Certainly no great controversial issue was before it, and no one question occupied a large part of the time of the commissioners. This is not typical of our past. And it is not likely to be of future assemblies, when such consequential matters as the form of government and a new hymnal will be decided upon. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that one should judge the success of an assembly by the far-reaching character of its special decisions. The basic business of the Church is with its program of missions and education and related matters, and when these matters are calmly considered, without the distraction of tensions and crises raised by particular problems and controversies, it may most fully be realizing its basic purpose.

There were to be sure some significant decisions, and due attention is being drawn to them in the story concerning the Assembly appearing in this number. One of these however is worthy of special notice. This is the decision whereby a relationship of "full correspondence" was established with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Reformed Churches) of the Netherlands. This denomination took the initiative a couple of years ago of exploring the possibility of entering upon such a relationship and at its last Synod decided to enter upon it, subject to ratification of our Assembly.

Implicit in this decision is the judgment on both sides that the two Churches are in word and deed truly Reformed Churches, committed to the Scriptures and the historic Reformed confessions, and concerned to maintain the Christian faith and life by the exercise of discipline according to the teaching of the Word. This relationship is commonly described as that of "sister" churches and involves a concern to maintain intimate fellowship and counsel. Specifically it also includes an acceptance of the attestations of the Churches with

regard to ministers and members. On the other hand, the relationship does not involve the judgment that the "sisters" must agree in every particular or approach their work and problems in exactly the same way. No special inquiry as to such details was instituted, but evidently the Gereformeerde Kerken acted in the assurance that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is faithful to its profession as a Reformed Church.

This development is a source of profound gratification, especially as one considers the memorable history of this Netherlands Church and its strength. It is the denomination which came formally into being in 1892 as the result of the union of two mighty streams of revival of the Reformed Faith in the Netherlands, the "Separation" of 1834 and the "Doleantie" of 1886, the latter under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper who was also the founder of the Free University of Amsterdam. It has two notable centers of theological learning—a strong Seminary at Kampen in addition to the Free University. Its membership totals more than 700,000 souls, nearly seven per cent of the population of the Netherlands. There are 13 particular Synods, 62 classes (presbyteries), over 800 congregations, and more than a thousand ministers. The average size of the particular churches in the Netherlands is over 870 souls.

This development may be greeted with thanksgiving to the Head of the Church. Previously we have enjoyed the opportunities of fellowship and cooperation in the Reformed Ecumenical Synods, but the new relationship allows for more frequent contacts which may prove richly fruitful. If this fellowship and cooperation are to be significant, we must be zealous that we shall prove indeed to be a Reformed Church and thus also one that prayerfully and conscientiously is committed to continuous self-reformation according to the Scriptures and in dependence upon the grace of God.

NED B. STONEHOUSE.

Dimensionalism or The Word

Comments on the Theology of
Dr. John A. Mackay, President
of Princeton Theological Seminary

By C. VAN TIL

IT was Dr. Clarence Edward Macartney who spoke at the first Commencement of Westminster Seminary on May 6, 1930. Said Dr. Macartney at that time, "A decent respect to the opinions of Presbyterians, and evangelical Christians in the United States and throughout the world, requires that we should declare the causes which impelled us to separate from Princeton Theological Seminary. A statement of these causes must, of necessity, embrace a brief survey of the present condition of the Protestant Church."¹

Then he spoke of how on an August day one summer he was seated in the park in Geneva, Switzerland, looking at the International Monument of the Reformation. "Over all, cut in great letters was the familiar motto of the Reformation, 'Post Tenebras Lux' . . . As I gazed earnestly and reminiscently upon the memorial to our spiritual forefathers, the vagrant August wind was blowing the yellow leaves about the gardens, telling me that the end of the summer was at hand. Has the Protestant Church, which we and our fathers took to be a Tree of Life, whose leaf could never wither, come to its sere and yellow leaf? Is its grandeur and glory only in the past . . .? . . . Has the inexorable hand which has spelled the passing of so many of the kingdoms and societies of mankind now appeared to write upon the wall of Protestant Christianity, 'Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting?'"²

Then in looking over the field of Protestantism, Dr. Macartney spoke of a "deleted Bible" and a "diluted gospel," another gospel 'which is not another' that is widely proclaimed in Protestant churches.

He spoke with amazement of the fact that the substitution of this "other gospel" for the true gospel had largely come about in one generation. He reminded his audience that some thirty years earlier Union Theological Seminary in New York "broke from its connection with the General Assembly of

the Presbyterian Church because it found that that connection hampered the seminary in its liberty to teach Liberalism and Modernism."³ But today, he added in substance, we have established a new seminary free from all control of the General Assembly "because it was discovered, to our sorrow and amazement, that such connection was a menace to our liberty to be loyal as we understood loyalty, to the doctrines of evangelical Christianity."⁴ We can no longer hope as Dr. Francis L. Patton hoped, when "he delivered the

DR. C. VAN TIL, Professor of Apologetics in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, is one of the four professors who left Princeton Seminary in 1929 to join in the founding of Westminster. Dr. Van Til has continued on the faculty of Westminster and is at present its senior member. He was one of the speakers at the annual dinner of the Westminster Alumni Association on May 11, and we present here the address which he delivered on that occasion.

funeral sermon over his colleague . . . Dr. Wistar Hodge," that Princeton would "lead the van in the great fight for fundamental Christianity" . . . We bear no grudge against Princeton, the seminary which nurtured us and whose grand traditions are precious unto us. If God shall still use Princeton as a witness to the truth, we shall rejoice in it."⁵

Then, as he addressed the graduating class, he said in closing,

"As ye go, preach! As ye go, preach! As ye go, preach! And may the blessing of the Triune God be upon you.

"God of the Prophets! bless the prophets' sons!

"Elijah's mantle o'er Elisha cast!"⁶

Reality is Hierarchical

And now, after nearly a quarter century, what may we expect? Does it look as though the shadows that had fallen on Princeton will lift? What are

men now taught and told to preach in that ancient institution, once the citadel of the Reformed Faith in this land?

Listen to Dr. John A. Mackay, President of Princeton Seminary, as he addresses the opening exercises of the seminary in September, 1949, and tells the students what to preach. They must of course preach the truth as Jesus tells us to preach it. And what does Jesus Christ tell us? "Jesus Christ said, not in so many words, but by implication, that reality is hierarchical. That means that you have in the universe a graded scale of being. You have God, you have man, you have animals, you have matter; you have also spirits, angelic and satanic. There is an hierarchical nature of things in which true order is achieved when the lower gives obedience to the higher."⁷ It is this that Jesus Christ tell us as the "Lord of thought."

But Christ also speaks to us as the "Lord of life." As the Lord of life he tells us that as for him, so for his followers, crucifixion is inevitable. "Deity in all its fulness was in the Crucified Jesus making manifest the self-giving and forgiving love of God. Jesus in his death wrestled with and overcame all the cosmic forces that stood in the way of man's salvation. Rising again from the dead, the Crucified conquered death and made the great Enemy a spiritual mother." Hence, "when man sets out to serve God in truth the end is crucifixion." But "Jesus Christ saved death for spiritual ends. In her dread womb new life was engendered and a new law of spiritual advance revealed."⁸

Here, then, is the gospel that Princeton Seminary proclaims. Her students are not to say that God created and controls the universe. They are not to preach that the eternal Son of God took to himself a human nature and in it bore the wrath of God for sinners. They are not to preach the grand particularities of the gospel. They are rather to preach about the nature of Reality. In Reality, they must tell men, there are gradations. God occupies the highest place. But by love he comes down with the whole of his being to share the state and fate of man, in suffering. This is the way downward. There follows a way upward. "For the Lord of life is the crucified conqueror of death."⁹ "Redemption, the partici-

¹"Protestantism's Tomorrow," in *Christianity Today*, May, 1930, p. 8.

²*Ibid.*

³*Idem*, p. 9.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Idem*, p. 9f.

⁶*Idem*, p. 10.

⁷The Princeton Seminary Bulletin, Winter 1950,

p. 8.

⁸*Idem*, pp. 11, 12.

⁹*Idem*, p. 12.

pation of man in the life of God, is thus found by the seeker to be the meaning and the goal of Biblical truth."¹⁰

The Cross

It is this way downward and this way upward that constitute the divine drama. The central point of this drama is the cross. "In the Cross of Jesus Christ the inmost nature of evil and the inmost nature of divine redemptive love were both revealed. It was there that the supreme crisis in both the life of God and man took place." Man's "Everlasting Nay" hurled against God was defeated by God's "Everlasting Yea." Thus an end was made of "sin and its power over man." Thus all that stood between man and his true destiny was removed. It is now the destiny of man to participate in the new divine order—the order of the Resurrection.¹¹

The Bible as Perspective

Where then must men learn about this divine drama, this "Eternal Yea" of God? Of course, from the Bible. But not from the Bible as an "objective criterion" of truth. "There is no such criterion where the human realm is dealt with, or any realm which is directly related to our ultimate sense of values."¹² It is only if we first reject the idea of an objective criterion and commit ourselves to participation in the drama of God that we can write "a lyrical interlude on Biblical authority." "When men are willing to adopt a Biblical point of view, to put themselves in the perspective from which the Bible looks at all things and to identify themselves with the spiritual order of life which the Bible unveils, they understand the Bible, they see those spiritual realities about which the Bible speaks."¹³

The Great Commission

When men thus "learn Christ," when they thus leave the balcony and walk the dusty road, they will understand "The Great Commission." For on the road they will meet Jesus Christ as "a luminous category for thinking and a compelling personality for living." This "compelling personality" . . . "or-

¹⁰John A. Mackay: *A Preface to Christian Theology*, 1941, p. 66. Used by permission of Macmillan Co.

¹¹*Idem*, p. 95.

¹²"The Gospel and our Generation," in *The Christian Message for the World Today*, New York, Round Table Press, 1934, p. 96.

¹³John A. Mackay: *God's Order*, 1933, pp. 4, 5. Used by permission of Macmillan Co.

dains us to a *mission*."¹⁴ And then we "move from Golgotha and the empty tomb to a mountain and a trail. There we confront an imperious Person with a pointing finger, and not merely a luminous personality."¹⁵ We then note that "this same Jesus Christ commands His Church to summon men everywhere to become His disciples."¹⁶ "He of the yoke and of the towel says: . . . With my yoke upon you, and girded each of you with a towel . . . get ready for the Road."¹⁷

Preaching to the Horizontally Minded

As you thus walk along with your inseparable Road-Companion, you will meet those who are "the horizontally minded." "Horizontal-mindedness is

¹⁴"The Great Commission and the Church Today," in *Missions Under the Cross*, ed. Norman Goodall, New York, Friendship Press, 1953, p. 129-30.

¹⁵*Idem*, p. 130.

¹⁶*Idem*, p. 131.

¹⁷*Idem*, p. 132f.

interested only in a world of two dimensions, a world which is all surface with infinite breadth and infinite length . . . Their characteristic gaze is parallel with the surface of the ground . . . Their representative philosophy is a philosophy of history from which certainties and ultimates are excluded . . . For such a type of mind the dimension of the eternal and the absolute means nothing."¹⁸

What shall we say to these horizontally minded ones? "To a horizontally minded generation which has lost its way, our message is: Look up, sheer along the line of the vertical. Let the eternal in. We shall discover thereby the significance of life in the light of God. So shall our efforts at the organization of life on the terrestrial plane, be inspired by the eternal Wisdom and undertaken through the eternal Strength."¹⁹ (See "*Van Til*," p. 118)

¹⁸"The Gospel and Our Generation," p. 122.

¹⁹*Idem*, p. 123.

Westminster and the Middle States Association

By ROBERT S. MARSDEN

IN the May, 1954, issue of the GUARDIAN a news item tells of the accreditation of Westminster Theological Seminary by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This Association is an accreditation agency of the first rank whose judgments on academic matters is weighty in the counsels of education. The background of the decision of the Association will be of interest to readers of the GUARDIAN.

In February, a committee of five educators, headed by Dr. Charles C. Tillinghast, Principal-emeritus of the Horace Mann School of New York City made an evaluation visit of several days to Westminster. The visit followed application of the Seminary for admission to the Association which had just announced its intention of including graduate and professional schools in its membership. The application itself was a lengthy document requiring very considerable work on the part of a committee of the Westminster Faculty with Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse as chairman. It contained required information of a detailed nature concerning every phase of Westminster's activity. The accredi-

tation followed an evaluation of the application and the report of the visiting committee.

The *Report* of the evaluation visit, a 44-page document, contains some criticisms of the Seminary's program and many valuable recommendations for the improvement of the work of the Seminary. For instance, it recommends that "in plans for building expansion, the Trustees give careful consideration to the need of a fire-proof building for the library collection," and "that as soon as feasible, proper office space be provided for the members of the faculty." These and some eighteen other recommendations will be considered by the appropriate authorities of the Seminary in the near future.

Purposes

Readers of the GUARDIAN will be happy to read a number of excerpts from the *Report*. Commenting on the pledges required of members of the Faculty and of the Board of Trustees, the *Report* says, "It can easily be seen that the underlying purposes of the Seminary are unequivocally expressed, clearly (See "*Westminster*," p. 115)