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The Saga of a Soul

By the REV. W. D. REID, D.D.,

of Montreal, Canada

ONE evening as I came into my pulpit in Taylor Church, Montreal, I looked out over a great sea of faces. The church was packed to the doors, and many chairs had been brought in and were occupied. Just a few seats from the pulpit I noticed a rather striking stranger, with a pair of keen, alert eyes but in them a strange, hungry look. When the congregation arose to sing the first hymn, the stranger remained seated. I was told later by some who sat in his vicinity that during prayer, while all heads were bowed, he sat bolt upright and looked rather scornfully around the bowed worshippers. During the sermon he listened intently to all that was said, but several times he shook his head emphatically and smiled rather sarcastically.

This peculiar man somewhat fascinated me, and I determined to go down to the door through which he would make his exit. As he approached me, I held out my hand and said to him, "You are a stranger, sir; we are glad to welcome you to our church." Without taking my hand he replied, "Yes sir, this is the first time I have been here." "May I ask you what your name is?" I said to him. "Oh, there is no use in your getting my name," he responded, "as I am an unbeliever, and do not go to church." "Ah well, we are glad to have you with us, and hope we will see you back again," I replied. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Maybe."

Next Sunday evening the "unbeliever" was in church again, and with him was his wife. His attitude was not

so antagonistic as it had been the preceding Sunday, and he listened intently without any shaking of his head. Again I went down to his door and, as he approached me, I said jocularly, "Glad to see you, my friend; are you going to give me your name tonight?" He smiled and said, "Oh, I don't mind. My name is Thomas Rogers." "May I also ask your address," I continued. "Yes, you may have my address if you wish," he agreed. "It is 946 Craig Street, but there is no use in your coming around to see me, as I am an unbeliever."

However, I was interested, and that week I determined to pay my friend Rogers a visit. Upon ringing the bell, I was admitted and welcomed by a fine, happy-looking, English woman, who warned me that I had better be very cautious of what I said to her husband as he was very much prejudiced against churches and ministers. Her husband was in his tailor's shop, which was in the rear of the building, and she went back to invite him in. In the meantime she said to me, "Now don't be offended at anything he may say, for he is a very blunt sort of man." I assured her that I would follow her instructions.

In a short time Mr. Rogers appeared, and the first thing with which he greeted me was: "There is no use in your coming here, for I am an unbeliever, as I told you last Sunday night." "Ah well," I replied, "there are lots of decent unbelievers, and I just thought I

Princeton's President and Pagan Philosophy

By the REV. CORNELIUS VAN TIL, Ph.D.

Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary

HAS the chief source of theological error departed from Princeton Seminary now that Professor Emil Brunner has gone back to his own country? We do not think so. The chief source of error remains in the person of its president, Dr. John A. Mackay. He is either unable or unwilling to distinguish Christian from non-Christian literature. How then can he do anything but lead Princeton ever farther from the path of the historic Christian faith?

In *The Presbyterian* of November 23, 1939, Dr. Mackay writes an article in which he discusses a book by the late Professor A. A. Bowman. Now Professor Bowman was a truly great teacher and a first-rate philosopher. With all that Dr. Mackay says in praise of his greatness we can, having been in his classes for some years, most heartily concur. But there is one thing that Professor Bowman never pretended to be, either in his classes or in his writings, and that is a believer in historic Christianity. And yet Dr. Mackay virtually recommends Bowman's philosophy as being essentially sound. At least, he has not a word of criticism to offer for a philosophy that is basically un-Christian.

Bowman's notion of God is quite the opposite of that set forth in the famous Shorter Catechism definition. He is amazingly frank to admit that for him the eternity of God is nothing but unending time. He says, "In the concept of God, the definitory notion must be that of eternity. He is the eternal spirit—this, not in the timeless sense, but in the sense of everlasting endurance. The being of God defines itself in relation to its time conditions, as an absolutely perfect adjustment of every past to every future in a present that is infinite in each direction" (*A Sacramental Universe*, p. 369). Bowman places great stress upon his contention that time is the condition of every form of spiritual existence. This may even be said to be the main thrust of this book as of his other writings. Bowman holds that, unless we think of both God and man as cumulative

temporal experiences, the world about us cannot be made intelligible. We mention this fact to indicate that Bowman is perfectly explicit in his denial of what, for the Westminster standards, is the basis of all sound theology.

In the second place, Bowman in effect denies what the Shorter Catechism affirms when it says, "The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good." Bowman insists repeatedly that he holds to a "self-contained" and self-existent physical world as he holds to a self-contained and self-existent spiritual world (*A Sacramental Universe*, p. 9. See also *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 52; Vol. II, p. 390). This point is not incidental but fundamental to his position. It is the exact counterpart of his notion of God as a temporally cumulative experience. Or, we may say that for Bowman God must exist as a temporally cumulative experience just because the physical universe exists as non-created reality. Bowman seeks to bring two independent variables into one heterogeneous system. That is his avowed purpose. Accordingly he can say: "For the definition of creation is the functional dependence of the physical world in its entirety on the energies of the spirit" (*idem*, p. 369). Two forms of irreducible existence, the physical and the spiritual, are to throw mutual light on one another (see *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 42f. and Vol. II, p. 413). Bowman therefore holds that "man, with all his limitations, is necessary to God" (*idem*, Vol. II, p. 333). Whatever Bowman may mean by "creation of a spatial universe," in the passage quoted by Dr. Mackay, he assuredly cannot mean the historic doctrine of creation out of nothing without betraying the fundamental principle of his philosophy. Even from the quotations given by Dr. Mackay it is clear that Bowman's philosophy is basically pantheistic. What sense is there to the idea of space as "the unconsciousness of

omniscience, the unconsciousness of God," or to the idea of the "vibrations of the physical world" as "the overtones of the divine orchestration," except upon a position that has once for all cut itself loose from the notion of God as the self-contained free Creator of the world?

It is in the light of such notions of God and of the creation of the world by God that we must understand the quotation Dr. Mackay gives from Professor Bowman on the doctrine of the incarnation. After this quotation, Dr. Mackay remarks: "Here is a philosopher who did his thinking in living contact with human wayfarers, one who knew with them the agony of self-defeat, who discerned the perversion of a true human instinct in the modern cult of the deified tyrant, who recognized man's need of an historical incarnation of the divine if he was to know the road he should take and be able to achieve goodness upon it, who saw and adored that incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Such a philosophy has something real to say to the world of our time."

Bowman, however, means by the incarnation of the divine in Jesus no more than a particularly high instance of the general principle of incarnation that manifests itself everywhere that spirit comes into functional contact with the physical. Every man's "embodied life" is at its best "an activity of incarnation" (*A Sacramental Universe*, p. 370). Bowman's philosophy cannot and does not make room for the notion of the incarnation by which "the only Redeemer of God's elect became man, and so was, and continueth to be God, and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever." For Bowman there is no essential difference between the "nature" of God and the "nature" of man. Surely it is to fail fundamentally of one's duty as a minister of the gospel—not to speak of one's duty as the president of a seminary solemnly committed to the propagation of the Reformed Faith—not to warn Christ's little ones against such a destructive philosophy as is presented in the

writings of Professor Bowman. His philosophy is perhaps as fine a philosophy as one could find on non-Christian bases, but it is subversive of the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.

In conclusion, we would contrast the sad failure of Dr. Mackay to warn against patent error with the open avowal of error on the part of the Rev. A. A. Griffing, a minister of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., in an article that appeared in the December 7th issue of *The Presbyterian Tribune*.

Mr. Griffing among other things declares: "I cannot say that the Confession of Faith says for me all I feel about the Atonement, or that it even hits the core of it." This is noteworthy and praiseworthy frankness. We know just where we are when a man openly asserts his disagreement with the doctrine of atonement which his church accepts in its creed. But if Bowman had spoken more fully on the atonement than he did he would also have maintained that not even the core of his views is expressed in the Westminster Confession. Bowman holds that through his views of time as a cumulative experience one can think of man as identifying himself with his own past while at the same time disowning the evil in it. Bowman virtually argues that men can do away with their own sins by self-consciously disowning them. He presents Jesus as appealing to this inherent capacity in man to save himself. "The subject can even in a sense repudiate his experiences. He can refuse to *identify* himself with certain passages in his subjective history: he can disown his past and dissociate himself from elements in the present of his inner life. This is a possibility of which the Founder of Christianity was wont to take advantage when He addressed Himself, over the head of those experiences which we call men's sins, to the core of personality within the agent" (*A Sacramental Universe*, p. 192). We are not at all surprised to find this doctrine of Kantian self-salvation in the philosophy of one who wants by all means to walk in the footsteps of Kant. The open denial of the historic doctrine of the atonement made by Mr. Griffing and the "non-aggression pact" made by Dr. Mackay with a somewhat less open denial of the atonement should challenge the

"Fundamentalists" in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to do some-

thing more than utter faint intermittent protests.

Sowing the Seed

By the REV. EGBERT W. ANDREWS

Orthodox Presbyterian Missionary to Manchoukuo

AT ONE time during the past year when the future looked particularly dark for a forward movement in our Harbin church and, indeed, for the work of all loyal churches of Jesus Christ in this country, one of those attending our services turned to me and said, "The present is the time for seed-sowing, isn't it; and, pastor, you hope for the spring when the little shoots will begin to sprout, don't you?" It is true that the present is seed-sowing time. It is always seed-sowing time. In saying this, it is not forgotten that others have sown before us and that we, having entered into their labors, should water the sown seed and the tender shoots already springing up. But it does seem that God has called us in this land and in these days to specialize in sowing the seed. Sowing is possible wherever a person with the heart of a sower has contact with the hearts of men. No matter what restrictions may be made, nothing can prevent the scattering of the seed as long as sowers live among men.

Much of my work of the past year has been in scattering the seed, that is, in spreading the gospel of God's salvation by distributing literature and preaching the Word. Opportunities for this present themselves on every hand. The Word of Life has gone forth in the daily contacts with bank clerks, store clerks, transit employees and cobblers; in the special trips made from house to house in various parts of Harbin; in the opportunities opened by itinerating, among fellow-travelers on trains, busses, horse-carts and by foot, with officials, inn-keepers and restaurant-keepers and in the house-to-house preaching in many of the 12 towns and 11 villages visited during the year. In addition to the spoken word, it has gone forth on thousands of tracts, in more than a thousand Gospel portions, in more than a hundred New Testaments and in a number of Bibles. Realizing that I have not taken full advantage of these many opportunities, my prayer is

"Lord, give me more the heart of a sower."

It is necessary, however, not only to sow the seed but also to water it repeatedly. Since the Biblical counterpart of sowing and watering the seed is one and the same thing, that is, the preaching of God's Word, it appears that the watering that we are called upon to do is the repeated expounding of the full counsel of God to the same people. From the fact that we cannot certainly know until eternity which of our hearers have received the Word as seed into their hearts and that those who have received it need to have it constantly watered, the repeated preaching of the Word serves the double function of scattering the seed where it has not been received before and of watering that already sown. Hence the importance of the frequent preaching of the Word to the same hearers. But, whereas nothing can stop the sowing of the seed, there may be and are many hindrances to the repeated preaching of it to the same hearers.

It is therefore an occasion of great thanksgiving to God on my part that in the past year He has given the privilege of presenting the Word fairly regularly to over 30 different children and of holding services every Sunday for the adults.

Recently, I have realized my responsibility in giving these people further opportunities to study the Bible. An adults' Bible class and a mid-week prayer meeting have been added. Efforts toward starting a catechumen class have so far not been successful. I do praise God, however, for the opportunity of watering the seed sown in the hearts of these people.

The same privilege is not ours in any of the country places that have been visited, yet a number of people in each of them have professed conversion, and in one town two services a week were held over a period of nearly a year. We hope and pray that all of the believers will heed God's