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A church that commands us to support any program on the authority of the decisions of the church is usurping in the interests of fallible men an authority that belongs only to God.

—J. Gresham Machen

J. Gresham Machen
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No Other Way

THE history of human thought as it relates to the Christian faith is one of the most interesting of studies. The Christian faith itself, in its historic, biblical, orthodox character and content, has come down through two thousand years essentially unchanged. But alongside of that faith, claiming to be a part of it yet ever seeking to interpret it anew, there has been what is essentially another religion. This other religion, finding its ultimate center in man rather than the true God, has changed its colors, revised its thought, and formulated its convictions to suit the current demands of the modern man.

A most interesting aspect of this development has occurred in connection with the decline of Liberalism and the rise of Neo-orthodoxy.

The Christian faith in its historic, Biblical character consists of a personal trust in certain realities which are objective to the individual. Central in such objective realities are the absolute, supernatural God of the Scriptures, the creation of the world, the fact of God's exhaustive providence, of His revelation of Himself in nature and in the infallible Scriptures, the fall and consequent sinfulness of man and the finished work of redemption wrought out according to the purpose of God in the person and work of His eternal Son, Jesus Christ.

With the appearance of the dogma of evolution, and the rise of the so-called scientific method in the last century, many persons felt that these objective realities could no longer be intelligently maintained. The idea of God, yes, but not the absolute God of Scripture. The idea of creation—only if within the context of an ultimately evolutionary process. That the Scriptures were an infallible revelation—Biblical criticism had supposedly proven them to be marred by the human authors. Jesus Christ—science could not accept the virgin birth, miracles, bodily resurrection, or vicarious atonement.

The problem of the scientific liberal, therefore, was to keep Christianity in some form, even when all the objective realities had evaporated. He did this by reinterpreting Christianity in terms of an ethical system, and by turning Jesus from a divine redeemer into a human teacher. The ultimates of religion were no longer outside the individual but within him.

and "faith" consisted not of trust, but of imitation.

With the passing years, however, this type of liberalism became increasingly unsatisfactory. Man was not as good as the liberals would like to think of him as being. Two world wars, and their revelation of fundamental human character, did not encourage a faith which found its object in the individual. Scientific studies led not to answers, but to ultimate mysteries. Man continued to long for something outside of himself in which he could rest and be satisfied. Liberalism became static, and in becoming static ceased to satisfy even the liberal.

Hence there came the inevitable return to some sort of objective reality. But the spirit of science and of liberalism could not allow a return to the realities of the historic faith. The existence of objective realities would be asserted, yes, but their true nature would be all vague. And the historic, temporal realities of traditional faith would be considered merely as the symbols of something beyond. The Bible is not itself revelation, but the record of events in which revelation somehow took place. It merely points to, and does not itself constitute, revelation. The fall of man as recorded in Scripture is not itself historically significant, but symbolizes something non-historical which happens to every man. The incarnation, resurrection and especially the atoning work of Christ are but symbols of something outside of history. Whether they themselves happened or not is of relatively little import. Perhaps they did.

Under this system the Christian faith consists not in the relation of the individual to the historical realities, but to that which these are supposed to symbolize, to something in the last analysis vague, shadowy, unknown and unknowable. Traditional Christian terminology can easily be used in such a system, but it is meaningless.

Here is where many men find themselves today. It is where, for example, some leading teachers in Presbyterianism's Princeton Seminary stand. But it is not a place where man can or will stop. As long as men choose to reject God's holy Word, their search will go on. It will be fruitless. There is no other way.

L. W. S.

Reading, Hearing and Keeping the Word of God

*A Welcome to the New Students
At Westminster Seminary*

By C. VAN TIL

IN the absence of Professor Kuiper the faculty has asked me to address the incoming students with a few words of welcome. I do so on the basis of what John the Apostle writes in Revelation 1:3—"Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

We welcome you to a fellowship in reading, a fellowship in hearing and a fellowship in keeping the things that are written in the Scriptures as the final and finished revelation of God in Christ by His Spirit.

From far and near, at great expense of time and money, you have come to us. Many of you are exempted from military service so that you may prepare yourselves for the service of God. Can we offer you anything that will justify all this? No, indeed, not if you look to us. There are no great personalities among us—we have no Schweitzers and no Barths. Yet we welcome you and are confident you will not be disappointed.

We offer you a fellowship in *reading* the Word of God; we want to read that Word with you in the language in which it was written. By reading it thus you will be least dependent upon the wisdom of man, including any wisdom of his own that any one of the faculty members might presume to offer. We want to read that Word with you after the analogy of faith. We would compare Scripture with Scripture in order to sense the correct and full meaning of each section as we read. By thus reading we shall learn to submit every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Again you will thus be least dependent upon the wisdom of men, as by the supposed requirements of logic or by supposed fact they would make the Scriptures teach what they do not teach.

As we are engaged in a fellowship of reading, we shall also be engaged in a fellowship of *hearing* the Word of God. It is the living God whose voice is

heard in the Scriptures. Of human words, when written down in books, it is true in a sense to say that the letter killeth. For no man can catch the flow of life and history and tell his fellowman in any exhaustive fashion what it means. But God who controls whatsoever comes to pass, to whom what happens in this world of passing ages is altogether subject, He and He alone can speak with living voice through a book that is a finished revelation of His will to man.

As together we read and as together we hear the voice of the great God triune, the Creator and the Judge of all mankind, we would bow before His majesty in true humility.

Yea, much more than that; we would not only read and hear but we would also together learn to *keep* the words that are written in this book. We would not be only hearers but also doers of the Word. We would not straightway forget what manner of men we are. On the contrary we would learn to know that we are creatures of God. We would learn to know the meaning of the word of obedience when we hear His voice; what else but adoration and obedience befits those who hear the word of their Maker and their Judge? We would be obedient to His Word when He calls us daily to repentance for our sins; we would be obedient also to His Word when He tells us who read and hear that we must call others, even all men, to repentance for their sins.

Jesus Himself has informed us how difficult this reading, this hearing, this keeping of the Word will be in the days that precede the coming of the Son of Man. Men will not read, men will not hear and least of all will men keep the words of the prophecy of this book. They have always been, but in a special sense will be in these last days, lovers of self rather than lovers of God. They will read and hear and keep only such words as proceed from the wisdom of man. If they pretend to no special wisdom of their own they will

seek wisdom from some great scientist, philosopher or theologian. They will be told, Lo Here, or Lo There, is the Christ or true explication of the Christ; but all these Christs will be false Christs, made in the image of sinful man. When men obey such Christs they but obey themselves.

So we welcome you to a fellowship of suffering for the sake of reading, hearing and keeping the words of the prophecy of this book, in the midst of a world where men hear and listen only to themselves, and in the midst of a church that serves false Christs.

But you say, "Your seminary is only some twenty years of age. Where did men go before 1929 when they wanted to learn to read and hear and keep the Word of God in the way that you propose to do?" The answer is that these men then went to Princeton Seminary. For a century and more a faculty of learned and godly men at that Seminary taught generation after generation of students how to read and hear and keep the Word of God. But since 1929 the light of God has been interpreted in terms of the life of man. The life of man has in turn been interpreted by human science and human philosophy. To be sure, lip service is paid to the Word of God. But it is openly avowed, for instance, by the Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton, Dr. George S. Hendry, that nowhere in the Bible can there be any such thing as a system of truth.¹ He would have none of the doctrine of verbal or plenary inspiration of Scripture. The unifying point of Scripture, he says, "is outside of Scripture itself."² It stands, he says, "at the vanishing point of the biblical perspectives."³

When students then read the Bible they do not hear the voice of God. They do not learn to know who God is and what He requires of man. What they hear is the voice of man, not that of God; the Bible is interpreted in accordance with the findings of science falsely so-called, and in accordance with a vain philosophy. Accordingly each man finds in the Bible the god he wants; at best it will be the god of an idealist philosophy. It is a god of whom nothing intelligible can be said; it is therefore the god nobody knows, the god who does not exist.

And as for the Christ of present day Princeton Seminary, it is not the Christ of Charles Hodge, of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield and of Geerhardus

Vos. The Christ of these men I have named was delineated in the Scriptures; their students therefore knew who Christ was and what He came into the world to do, namely, to save men from their sins and from the wrath of God to come. But the Christ of modernized Princeton is not God. If he were, no one could know anything of him for he stands at the "vanishing point of Biblical revelation." He is not even a man. If he were, nobody could know anything of him. He would then himself need salvation. He is an *It*, a set of ideals for human behavior that men have set up for themselves from no other resources but their own.

A theology such as this, with a God nobody knows and a Christ nobody knows, with a God-man that does not exist and so makes no claims upon man and cannot come to judge men for their sins, such a theology, I say, will naturally get a ready hearing in the world today. Such a theology does not call men to repentance for their sins. It agrees with the world in denying the fall of man into sin. It agrees with the world in holding to man's essential ability to save himself, to the extent that he may be said to need salvation at all. Such a theology has no challenge at all to the natural man. It offers him no hope; it leaves men as it finds them, without God and without hope in the world.

It was therefore to perpetuate a the-

ology such as that of the men of old Princeton that Westminster Seminary was organized in 1929. To read the words of God, and to hear His voice through the words of the Bible; and from it to learn what He requires of man, to learn of the nature of man's sin and of the remedy that God has graciously provided through Christ the Son of God and Son of man,—to read, to hear, to keep the words of the prophecy of this book, Westminster Theological Seminary was organized at the first.

If you young men who have come to us wish to join us in this fellowship of reading and hearing and keeping the Word of God, you are most welcome indeed. With us you will seem to be with the forces that are retreating now; in reality the victory then is yours. For God is on His throne, and Christ still rules. The wisdom of man will again be made foolishness with God. Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

¹ *God the Creator*; Nashville, 1938. p. 146.

² "The Exposition of Holy Scripture," in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 43.

³ "The Rediscovery of the Bible," in *Reformation Old and New*, ed. by F. W. Canfield, London, 1947, p. 154.

machinery of foreign missions in China," and the mistake of subsidizing and managing the native church as has been attempted. "Hence," he says, "it is my opinion that the benefit of communism is first of all that it will cut the young church away from the apron strings of its rich aunties and uncles from U. S. A."

The letter to our Committee above referred to speaks of our Orthodox Presbyterian missionaries having been free from the entanglement and embarrassment caused by the twin encumbrances of property and pay-roll which had hampered most of the longer established missions in China in their desire to turn over control and support of the churches to the native Christians.

Having seen the blessing that attended the application of the indigenous church principles in the African field which they adopted in 1940, the Mission Board of the Christian Reformed Church declared itself in 1942 in favor of the establishing of native churches on its American Indian field. It explained that to mean "... such a manifestation of the body of Christ which is by natives in a native setting under native supervision and control."

The difficulty of arriving at such a goal when the work has been begun along very different lines and when for years native Christian groups have been to a great extent subsidized and controlled by the foreign missionaries is seen by the fact that since the declara-

Some Questions About Methods In Missionary Work

An Introduction to the Problems Which Arise on the Foreign Field

By CLARENCE W. DUFF

"ACTUALLY, J——, we are nothing but bankers in the midst of the flock. I have not preached for weeks. I rarely get time to do Christian work, like translating. My time is consumed with the red tape and toil of maintaining an over-burdened property and financial program which is as artificial as it is spiritually dead. I have been gratified to learn since our ladies evacuated from upcountry work that some results have come in the church under Chinese leaders which,

in my estimation, could never have been worked out with the foreigners there . . . My prayer is that out of this confusion (caused by the communist revolution) some lasting good is being worked out."

The above is an excerpt from a letter written by a missionary in China and quoted by one of our Orthodox Presbyterian missionaries in a letter to our Foreign Mission Committee. The writer quoted also speaks of his "long-standing disapproval of the traditional

IN this article, prepared at our request, Mr. Duff, missionary of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church to Eritrea, raises more questions than he answers. He himself has faced some of these problems. He believes, and we with him, that a church engaged in a foreign mission enterprise, should try early to settle its basic principles. The Orthodox Presbyterian foreign missions committee is already studying these matters. The church as a whole should also be aware of them. There may even be something here which might affect the efforts of our local congregations in community evangelistic endeavors. We shall be glad to receive other articles dealing with this matter of missionary method.