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Recent Developments at Princeton

AN EDITORIAL

SINCE the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929 several new professors have been appointed at that institution. Only two of the old faculty remain.

The first men to be appointed under the new regime were Drs. Kuizenga, Zwemer and Mackenzie. It became apparent, especially from the writings of Dr. Mackenzie, that a new and different theology had been introduced at Princeton. In the articles that he contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* Dr. Mackenzie substituted human experience for the Bible as the last court of appeal for sound doctrine. We quote one typical sentence: "The defect of Augustinianism and Calvinism is that they start from a knowledge of God's absoluteness above experience, deduce logically from this his eternal decrees, and so explain individual experience. We must start from experience, however, and, doing so, the problem is to reconcile God's absoluteness in grace with man's freedom" (Vol. VI, p. 126).

Starting from experience as the final seat of authority Dr. Mackenzie feels free to wipe out the distinction between the Reformed Faith and Arminianism. He rejects both unconditional election and limited atonement. He says that the synergist was right in rejecting the doctrine which holds that God made "remedial provision only for some" (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 164).

But Dr. Mackenzie did not stop short with indifference to specifically Reformed truths. His inclusivism

extended itself even to non-Christian views. He sought to bring evolution and creation into harmony with one another, as the following words indicate: "Perhaps the day may come also when the scientific view of natural selection and the New Testament doctrine of an election by grace may be seen to be both sides of God's activity, and not the horns of an inescapable dilemma. Not 'either-or', but 'both-and'" (*Christianity—The Paradox of God*, p. 80). He even employed the concept of *chance* in order to answer the problem of the relation of a changeless God to human responsibility.

It appears then that the experience starting-point has in the case of Dr. Mackenzie, as in the case of so many others, bred an indifference to the uniqueness of the Reformed Faith and even an indifference to the uniqueness of Christianity. This theological indifference expresses itself in the church by a tolerance of Arminianism and of Modernism. The theology of Dr. Mackenzie fits in admirably with the inclusivist policy introduced into Princeton Seminary by its former president, Dr. J. Ross Stevenson.

THE NEW PRESIDENT

The new president, Dr. John A. Mackay, is following in the footsteps of his predecessor. During Dr. Stevenson's regime Auburn Affirmationists were elected to the governing board of the seminary, and during Dr. Mackay's regime an Auburn Affirmationist has been added to the faculty. Dr. William Robertson

Farmer, an Auburn Affirmationist, is now teaching as "visiting Professor of Homiletics" (*Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Nov. 1937, p. 24). Dr. Mackay was a leader in the recent Oxford conference where the "orthodox" and the Modernists sought for a common platform in theology. He has also openly expressed his sympathies with the Buchmanite movement.

Reformed men have sometimes rejoiced in the fact that Dr. Mackay is emphasizing the need of having a theology. But the theology Dr. Mackay is seeking to introduce is of the Barthian sort, as his article in *The Journal of Religion* for January, 1937, shows. We shall not now speak of Barthianism in general. It has been pointed out in previous issues of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN that Barthianism, like Modernism, is indifferent to the Bible as the finished revelation of God. And this is, in effect, the same as substituting human experience for the Bible as the final court of appeal in all questions of truth and practice.

Otto Piper

It must be said to the credit of Dr. Mackay that he is bringing men of scholarship and attainment to Princeton. One of these is Dr. Otto Piper, of Germany. Dr. Piper is "Guest Professor of Systematic Theology" for the year 1937-1938. Let us look at some points in his theology.

As in the case of Dr. Mackenzie, Dr. Piper begins his theology with the experience approach. He draws the line of orthodoxy straight from Luther to Schleiermacher. He tells us that the experience-theory of Schleiermacher is essentially the same as that of Luther. He adds that Emil Brunner's criticism of Schleiermacher, as set forth in "Die Mystik und das Wort" rests chiefly upon misunderstanding (*Gottes Wahrheit und die Wahrheit der Kirche*, 1933, p. 57). Now if it be remembered that Schleiermacher is the "father of modern theology," that is, the father of modernist theology which has broken with the Bible as the sole source and seat of authority, the far-reaching significance of virtually identifying Luther's conception of Christian experience with Schleiermacher's conception of Christian experience, becomes clear.

In this pamphlet on "Erlösung als Erfahrung" it is once more human experience that is set before us as the standard of truth. The same is true of

his large two volume work on, "Die Grundlagen der evangelischen Ethik" (see p. xi ff.).

As in the case of Dr. Mackenzie the experience-approach led to an indifference with respect to Reformed doctrines so, in the case of Dr. Piper, there is a marked indifference to denominational distinctions. We quote: "Nothing would please the writer more than a removal of all Confessional differences in Protestantism. However, though the author is exerting himself in every way to further this cause, he does not hide from himself his fundamentally Lutheran attitude" (*Ethik*, Vol. I. p. xxiii.). This is indeed remarkable. Princeton Seminary is by its charter solemnly committed to the Reformed Faith. Dr. Piper has committed himself to the wiping out of all denominational differences and therewith to the destruction of the Reformed Faith. And if in his accepted program he should be hindered by his tradition that tradition would draw him toward Lutheranism rather than toward the Reformed Faith.

In his pamphlet, "Vom Machtwillen der Kirche", Dr. Piper argues that truth must not be thought of as coming to the church in a given and finished revelation. Truth, he says, is not static but dynamic. And because truth is dynamic we can easily come to an understanding with those who hold views opposite to our own. We should not say that their views are false and our views are true. Accordingly, no one group in the church should presume to possess the truth and to represent the true doctrine of the church. "For that reason," he says, "it should never be our goal to have one point of view dominate over other points of view either in the church or in theology" (p. 34). It is not proper, he holds, to seek to replace the common orthodoxy in the church by liberalism or to replace liberalism by orthodoxy.

Thus we see again that when men substitute experience for the Bible as the seat of authority they cannot stop short at indifference to denominational distinctions. They are bound in the end to wipe out the distinction between Modernism and Christianity as well.

Emil Brunner

The last man to be appointed to the faculty at Princeton is Dr. Emil

Brunner. Dr. Brunner, as is well known, was formerly associated with Karl Barth. He is one of the chief exponents of "dialectical theology." We have no space to follow Brunner in the intricacies of his theology. It may suffice to mention the fact that Brunner, like the other men discussed in this article, and like Dr. Homrighausen whose book was reviewed in the February issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, substitutes human experience for the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth and for that reason does not maintain the uniqueness of the Reformed or even of the Christian Faith.

That Brunner begins with experience as something that must interpret the Bible, instead of starting from the Bible which must interpret human experience, can be seen from the fact that he has no hesitation in accepting the principles of "higher criticism." He even feels that it is our business to engage in "higher criticism." The human element in the Scripture, he thinks, is inherently wrong and we must separate it from the divine. In several of his books Brunner speaks in this vein. We quote from his recent book, "Our Faith." It was published in 1936. In this book, as well as in his earlier books, he continues to give to the human mind the right to find the Word of God in the Bible rather than to accept the Bible as such as the Word of God. He asks the question: "Is the whole Bible God's Word then?" He answers with a proviso: "Yes, in so far as it speaks of that which is 'here' in Christ" (p. 9).

Brunner gives us an interesting analogy from which we can learn his conception of Scripture. "Is everything true that is to be found in the Bible?" he asks. In reply he says: "Let me draw a somewhat modern analogy by way of answering this question. Every one has seen the trade slogan 'His Master's Voice'. If you buy a gramophone record you are told that you will hear the Master Caruso. Is that true? Of course. But really his voice? Certainly! And yet—there are some noises made by the machine which are not the master's voice, but the scratching of the steel needle upon the hard disk. But do not become impatient with the hard disk! For only by means of the record can you hear 'the master's voice.' So, too, is it with the Bible. It makes the real Master's voice audible—really his voice, his

ords, what he wants to say. But ere are incidental noises accompanying, just because God speaks His Word through the voice of man" (p. 10). It is, in Brunner's latest as well as in his earlier writings, the wisdom of man himself to pick out of the Bible that which he thinks of as is "Master's Voice."

Dr. Mackay is anxious to assure us that Brunner is now more orthodox than he used to be. However, in the very letter from Brunner which Dr. Mackay publishes to prove his point, we have once more the fatal proviso that we noted above to the effect that we must distinguish the human from the divine in the Bible. Brunner says: "It is, however, my conviction that faith in the inspiration of the Bible does not exclude, but include, the distinction between the Word of God and the earthly, temporal vessel which carries it" (*The Presbyterian*, February 17, 1938). There is, then, no noticeable difference between Brunner's earlier and later writings on the point of the relation of human experience to Scripture. Brunner continues to make experience the final seat of truth.

We note in conclusion that as Brunner accepts the negative criticism of the Bible so he also accepts the evolution theory of the origin of man as probably true. Though he speaks frequently of the creation doctrine and its importance it is evident that he does not hold the Genesis narrative to be an historical record. In his large work on Ethics, "Das Gebot und die Ordnungen," he says we have nothing to do with primitive man as a subject of ethics (p. 4). The fall of man in paradise and original sin have no determining significance in Brunner's theology. He holds that the whole question of man's animal origin has no important bearing upon the Christian Faith. "Whether or not God has employed an evolution of millions of years for the purpose of creating man is the critical concern of the natural scientist; it is not a critical question for Faith" (*Our Faith*, p. 36).

What the recent developments at Princeton mean ought now to be plain. Princeton once was a bulwark of the Reformed Faith. Who can, in the light of such facts as we have enumerated, call it such today? But can we at least look to Princeton for a defense of the evangelical faith? It seems not. When men are called to its

faculty who, it is known, accept negative Bible criticism and evolution, no great defense of the Bible and of the truths of the Bible can reasonably be expected. Those who are sincerely concerned for the eternal welfare of men's souls in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. cannot afford to ignore these facts.

—C. VAN TIL.

Dr. Speer's Reading List

THE condition of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. gives no encouragement to true Christians and friends of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Robert E. Speer is one of the most trusted leaders of that church and is now serving as the President of the Board of Trustees of Princeton Theological Seminary. A particularly clear light has been thrown upon the trend which dominates the leadership of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and of Princeton Theological Seminary by the publication of a list of twenty books selected by Dr. Speer for helpful reading at this season of the year. The group has appeared in *The Presbyterian Tribune* for February 17, 1938, as well as elsewhere.

In a list of twenty authors, selected by Dr. Speer from men all over the world, there are no fewer than four signers of the Auburn Affirmation. This in itself suffices to characterize the list, but it will be illuminating to note very briefly some further facts concerning authors on the list.

The first to appear is Dr. John Baillie. Dr. Baillie was formerly Professor of Christian Theology at Auburn Theological Seminary and later Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York. He is one of the signers of the Auburn Affirmation and his affiliations make clear the trend of his theology.

Following Dr. Baillie comes Ernest Sutherland Bates. He appears as the editor of the recently published "The Bible Designed to be Read as Living Literature." The modernistic nature of the rearrangement and omission which characterizes this volume was well set forth in *The Sunday School Times*, January 23, 1937.

Next comes another Auburn Affirmationist, followed by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick. The character of Dr. Fosdick's preaching and writing hardly needs comment. Years ago the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

was unwilling to allow him to continue to preach regularly in one of its pulpits without a doctrinal subscription which Dr. Fosdick failed to make. Now one of his books is commended to the Christian public of this country by the President of the Board of Trustees of Princeton Seminary.

Another prominent name appearing in the list is that of Dr. E. Stanley Jones. The attack upon the foundational doctrine of Scripture which characterizes Dr. Jones' "The Christ of the Indian Road" is well known, and the thoroughly unevangelical character of his missionary preaching has been becoming more and more clearly apparent with each passing year.

Dr. Jones is followed on the list by another Auburn Affirmationist, Dr. J. V. Moldenhawer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New York City, the pulpit from which Dr. Fosdick formerly preached and one which has been characterized by liberal preaching.

Perusing these selections further we come to a book by Professor Reinhold Niebuhr who is William E. Dodge, Jr., Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Another prominent name which soon appears is that of Albert Schweitzer. Dr. Schweitzer's "Von Reimarus zu Wrede", translated into English under the title, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," has long been a leading handbook of those who believe that Jesus was mistaken concerning the future course of events here upon earth and that the gospel which He preached during His earthly ministry was one dominated by the mistaken idea that the existing world order was, within a few years, to pass away. The ethics which He taught were those suitable to this mistaken idea.

The next author to appear is Edward Shillito, the genial London correspondent of *The Christian Century*, whose interests and aims are well indicated by his journalistic connection.

A little further on we have a book by Miss Evelyn Underhill, perhaps the leading exponent of mysticism in the world today. Miss Underhill's conception of communication with God is a conception entirely foreign to the Scriptural doctrine of a trustworthy and infallible revelation delivered in the entire Bible once for all.