

GUARDIAN



What was probably the largest number of parents, friends, and other visitors ever to attend Commencement exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary assembled on the campus on a beautiful day last May. A part of the crowd is shown here shortly after the Professor of Apologetics had concluded his address to the graduates which is reproduced herewith.

Twenty men received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, and seven that of Master of Theology, at these 34th annual exercises on May 22. The degree of Doctor of Theology was conferred upon Sierd Woudstra, of Canada.

Professor R. B. Kuiper's address on "Corruption of the Best" appeared in our May issue, and the address by the Rev. Eugene Bradford earlier that same afternoon at the dedication of Montgomery Library was printed in the June issue.



Address to Graduates

CORNELIUS VAN TIL

When Jesus officially began his work of saving his people from their sin, the Holy Spirit descended upon him and soon led him out into the wilderness there to meet Satan, his great enemy. Satan proposed to him the notion of peaceful co-existence between them, but Jesus did not think well of this idea. He did not believe that good and evil are equally ultimate. He did not think that evil had any right to exist at all. He believed that Satan and his hosts must be destroyed. He believed that he could do this very thing.

Jesus did not merely *believe* that he could do this thing. He *knew* that he could do it. The Father had sent him to do it. He knew that Satan is a creature and that no opposition to God on the part of *any* creature can withstand the high purposes of God. So Jesus declares war on Satan: "Get thee behind me, Satan," said he, and then began to preach the gospel to the poor in spirit that they might become the heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Calling unto him twelve disciples, Jesus sent them out to preach and to say "the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have

received, freely give" (Mt. 10:7-8).

The Disciples

As he himself was aware of the wiles of the devil, so he wanted those who were to be his servants to be aware of them also. They must be conscious of the fact that the spirit of Satan is back even of the opposition of men: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Mt. 10:16). He adds: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mt. 10:22).

The Apostle Paul knew what it meant to have his mind darkened and his heart hardened against the Christ by virtue of Satan's control over him. But he also knew what it was to be set free from Satan's clutches by the power of Christ and his Spirit.

Augustine

In the early church it was St. Augustine who, more deeply than others, sensed the depth of the antithesis between the city of God and the city of the world.

Soon after him, however, the leaders in the church, in utter neglect of

the orders of the head of the church, accepted Satan's offer of peaceful co-existence. To all intents and purposes the Roman church combined the gospel of salvation through Christ with the gospel of salvation by Aristotle, that is, the gospel of salvation by man. Evil was assumed to be something for which man is not finally responsible. It was supposed to be a part of this world itself as it had come forth from the womb of chance. And as evil was eternal and built into the nature of the world itself, so there was assumed to be no final escape from it. The Christ proclaimed by the Roman church is not the Christ to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. It is not the Christ who finished the work of redemption of his own while he was on earth. The gospel that emanated from St. Peter's in Rome did not set men free; it did not translate men from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of the Son of God. The gospel according to Rome creates in men false hopes and then leaves them in jeopardy every hour.

But in his grace the Christ, looking down from heaven, raised up Martin Luther. Luther knew the source of evil in the world; why else did he throw his ink-well at the devil? But he knew also that Christ had destroyed the works of Satan. And so he preached and taught once more the gospel of free and full redemption through Jesus Christ who had finished his work on earth and had gone to heaven to prepare a place for his own.

The Situation Today

But once again the situation in the church has deteriorated. Once again the people of God are left to the mercy of those who, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day and like the authorities in the church in Luther's day, know neither the serious nature of sin nor the glory of redemption from it. The Roman church still feeds its people on husks that do not satisfy. This we expect. But now the Protestant church, in its great central agencies, has also introduced the notion of peaceful co-existence between good and evil. The modern Protestant church has, by and large, combined the gospel of Christ with the gospel of modern philosophy. It is once more the gospel of compromise with the forces of evil.

Alas for the world, when that which is called the church of Christ brings it such a gospel. For the mercy of Christ is not in this gospel. The picture of Christ as the great Physician who heals the sick, who raises men from death and drives out devils is not presented by those who advocate the modern ecumenical church.

The World as Self-deceived

The men of this world are above all self-deceived. To be sure, men today speak of sin. They also speak of guilt. They even speak of man as being worse than the beast in his inhumanity to man and in his loathing of himself in his filthiness. But they do not speak of man as originally made perfect in the image of God. They do not speak of him as having in Adam, the first man, rebelled against the love of God. They therefore do not speak of man the sinner as under the wrath of God and doomed to eternal separation from God.

The men of the world need therefore to be told that their diagnosis of themselves is not deep enough. They must be told that only the great Physician can diagnose their case for what it is. Does a patient diagnose his own case? It is the great Physician alone who can tell him of the deadly nature of his ailment.

Your First Task

And here, my friends, is the first task that you must undertake. In all that you have learned at this institution, this is first, namely, that you must not allow sinners to diagnose their own case. You are to come with

the doctor's book, the Scriptures. When modern man speaks of himself as the *irrational man*, when modern depth-psychology speaks of man as a cess-pool of iniquity, then you are not to be deceived by this. You are not to think that he has as yet got an inkling of the heinousness of sin in the sight of God. Sin is the rejection of God. The wages of sin is death, eternal death, eternal separation from the presence of God.

This is the diagnosis, not as you make it, but as the great Physician himself makes it. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 25:46).

Your Second Task

But then for those who accept the diagnosis of the great Physician, for them there is healing too. The great Physician makes his diagnosis for the very purpose of healing. And here is your second task. When modern man makes an analysis of his plight and comes to the conclusion that his case is hopeless, then you come with the mercy of Christ. When modern man looks this way and that, blinded by the god of this world, and comes to the conclusion that there is *no exit*, then you are to come and tell him that Christ is the *Way* that leads out of sin into forgiveness and glory.

When modern man says that no one knows or can know anything about such a way, then you are to tell him that Christ is the *Truth* and that he has established his kingdom of truth over against Satan and the lie. When modern man, utterly deprived of light by the Prince of darkness, concludes that his existence is existence unto death, then you are to proclaim to him the fact that as Christ is the way and the truth, so he is the *Life*. If men say that there is no resurrection of the dead, then you are to say: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). As you preach Christ and him crucified, so you are to preach Christ and the resurrection.

But if you thus proclaim the Christ as the great Physician to the world, what then of the modern church? What shall you say to those who are leaders in the church but no longer preach Christ as the way, the truth, and the life? You shall plead with them not to join the world in its self-

deception. You shall plead with them to return once again, as Luther and as Calvin did, to the doctor's Book, where alone the face of the great Physician may be seen. You shall tell them that the wisdom of this world has been made foolishness with God, but that it has pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Compassion even on the 'Church'

And if they will not hear, then you shall follow the example of your Savior as he wept over Jerusalem and weep over them as well as over those who follow them, ever beseeching the Savior to grant unto them his Holy Spirit that their eyes may be opened to see the Christ for what he really is and for what he really came to do. Did he not come to destroy the works of the devil? Did he not come to establish the kingdom of glory?

Never doubt but that Christ will accomplish his task. "It is finished," he said, when about to give up the ghost on the cross. It was finished. Satan had been defeated. And though he would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect of God, he cannot succeed. And though "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit," yet the Holy Spirit will enable the blind to see. Great is the truth and it must prevail. That is, great is Christ and he must rule because it is his right to rule.

To preach Christ as the light of the world is your great privilege. To preach Christ as the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life* is your great joy.

As you do so, look ever into the face of the great Physician who has healed you from your sin. Ever remember that you are in yourselves no better and no wiser than are other men. You have been saved by grace.

And as you are saved by grace, you may be daily strengthened in your task by grace. Look ever into the face of him who said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:1-2). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (Jn. 15:7-8).