

The Presbyterian



Edmund P. Clowney (left) was named Acting President of Westminster Theological Seminary at the May meeting of its Board of Trustees. He is shown receiving the congratulations of the Board's President, the Rev. LeRoy B. Oliver, during the Thirty-sixth Commencement exercises of the Seminary.

An alumnus of Westminster, Professor Clowney became a member of its faculty in 1952 following ten years in the Orthodox Presbyterian pastorate. He served as Dean of Academic Affairs beginning in 1962 and a year later was appointed Professor of Practical Theology.

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Messiahship Maintained

EDWARD WYBENGA

Question of Christ's Authority Luke 20:1-8

Jesus had entered Jerusalem as a King amid the acclamations of the multitude. He had shown his authority by driving the merchants and money-changers out of the sacred precincts of the temple. He was preaching to the people daily as they listened to him with rapt attention.

All of this was a source of much displeasure to the enemies of Jesus. They were seeking his destruction but they realized that they could not succeed as long as the multitudes clung to him and respected his authority. They proposed a number of questions in order to get him to say something that could be used against him.

The chief-priests and scribes and elders first asked this question: "By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" If Jesus should say that this authority had been given to him by men, he could be accused of disloyalty to the recognized Jewish authorities, civil and religious, for they had given no such authority. If Christ should say that this authority was his by virtue of his divinity, he could be accused of blasphemy in making himself to be God.

Jesus saw through their question. He knew that they knew that it was by divine authority that he did his mighty works. Therefore, to bring to nought their vain and evil purposes, Jesus answered with a question of his own, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?" By "the baptism of John" Jesus meant the entire ministry of John, his teachings and his work.

If they should answer that John's ministry was "from heaven" — from God and by divine authority — they would condemn themselves for they had rejected John's preaching. If they should say that John's ministry was "from men," they would incur the

wrath of the people who regarded John as a great prophet of God. To save themselves, therefore, they refused to make a commitment, saying that they knew not the answer.

But that was a lie. They knew full well that John's ministry was by divine authority; and they knew equally well that Jesus' authority was of divine origin. Had they been willing to recognize John as God's messenger, they would have accepted the divine authority of Jesus, for John spoke of him as the Christ or Messiah.

Jesus left the matter there, saying, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Thus, instead of his being discredited by his enemies, they themselves were discredited in the eyes of the people as incompetent judges.

To further establish his claims to Messiahship and to point out the great sin of the Jewish nation in rejecting him, Jesus now put forth a parable.

The Wicked Husbandmen Luke 20:9-19

The householder who planted the vineyard is God. The vineyard is his chosen people, Israel, upon whom God through the ages had bestowed so much care. The husbandmen were the political and religious rulers to whom the vineyard had been entrusted. The servants who were sent to receive the fruit of the vineyard were the prophets and messengers of God who sought the fruits of repentance and righteous living among the people.

But God's prophets were killed, their message rejected. At last God sent his own Son, supposing that they would respect him and accept his message. But it was not so. The wicked husbandmen saw in him the heir. If he were killed, they could take the inheritance by force, so they reasoned. And so they slew him on the cross of Calvary.

Now Jesus' question (Matt. 21:40):

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" And their answer: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons" (Matt. 21:41). In this answer the enemies of Jesus unwittingly condemn themselves.

This was the very thing predicted many centuries before by the prophet David when he said: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matt. 21:42, from Ps. 118:22, 23). The "stone which the builders rejected" is the Lord Jesus Christ, rejected by his own nation.

But God's redemptive plan was not defeated. That very stone became the cornerstone, the foundation stone upon which the church was built. This was the work of God, so astounding that all who beheld said, "It is marvellous in our eyes."

Hear Jesus' solemn words of warning: "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). Thus the Gentiles accepted the gospel rejected by the Jews, and upon the Jews fell the judgment of God: "And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

They who stumble in unbelief on that stone shall bring spiritual injury upon themselves. They upon whom the stone shall fall in the Judgment Day shall perish forever! The rejected and crucified Christ will yet prove himself to be triumphant in the end, and all his enemies shall be utterly destroyed.

The Bible says: "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:30, 31). "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Ministry of the Word Today

JAMES I. PACKER

In II Timothy 4:5, Paul summons Timothy to "make full proof" of his ministry. Other versions have "fulfill thy ministry." The ministry in view is, of course, the ministry of the Word—the service of God and men through the service of God's revealed truth.

Ministers of the Word are privileged and responsible men. The New Testament describes them as stewards of God's mysteries, heralds, ambassadors for Christ, teachers in the Lord's name. As messengers of God, they stand in the true prophetic succession, and also in the true apostolic succession, which (may I, as an Anglican, remind you!) has nothing to do with bishops, but everything to do with preaching the gospel.

The New Testament also calls ministers *pastors*—that is, shepherds, charged to feed and guard Christ's flock. How do they feed Christ's flock? Precisely by their ministry of the Word. This point needs stressing. In Britain, and in America too, I suspect, the modern custom is to define pastoring in terms of visitation and sympathy. We say of a man, "To be sure, he's no preacher, he can't teach, but yet he's a good pastor." Scripture, however, obliges us to define pastoral care in terms of the public and private ministry of the Word of God. It is not enough to visit and show sympathy. Only as one preaches and teaches the Word is one a true pastor, feeding the flock. Only so does one's ministry become a ministration of the Spirit. Only so does the minister fulfill his calling.

Application

Feeding Christ's sheep by ministering the Word to them involves two problems. First, there is the problem of content—for the whole counsel of God must be made known to them. Second, there is the problem of application, ethical and experiential—for the truth must be brought to bear on their lives, so that it meets them where they are to draw them closer to Christ. Application is no rule-of-thumb af-

fair, but a diagnostic and prescriptive science demanding as much skill as does the formulating of the truth to be applied; indeed, it is in many ways easier to grasp biblical doctrine than it is to apply it to the heart-needs of men and women.

Hence, as a Puritan once put it, the pastor must study two books, not just one. Certainly, he must know the book of Scripture—"Brethren," said C. H. Spurgeon to his students, "if in your pastorates you are not theologians, you are just nothing at all"—but this is not enough. He must also be a master in reading the book of the human heart. He must know men no less well than he knows his Bible. "Who is sufficient for these things?" we cry. Paul gives us the answer: "Our sufficiency is of God." Here is the burden, and the glory, of the ministry. The task seems superhuman, and impossibly demanding; yet in God's strength it can be done.

My theme is ministry of the Word *today*. Was there ever a time, I wonder, when the minister's task appeared more difficult and daunting than it does today? Here I would mention two things in particular which seem to me to raise the acutest difficulties for us: first, the disintegrated vision of evangelicals, and second, the opposition of decadent Protestantism. Let me say a word about each.

Disintegrated Vision

When I speak of *the disintegrated vision of evangelicals*, I am not thinking of the fragmenting of churches, or the break-up of organizations, or the presence of rivalries or rogue elephants in our ranks. I have in mind a trouble deeper than any of these. I am thinking of the way in which our

The insights of this commencement address at Westminster Seminary merit your perusal again and again—whether you are in the pulpit or the pew. Dr. Packer is the Warden of Latimer House, Oxford, England.



vision of the Christian life, the true life of the redeemed people of God, has been split and shattered, so that values which belong together are now isolated and opposed to each other, and we all appear partial and lopsided in our Christian outlook.

Look at the evangelical world, and what do you see? Some are concerned for purity of doctrine, others for aggressive evangelism, others for personal holiness, others for an evangelical social conscience and cultural contribution. These are all proper Christian concerns; but which of us succeeds in maintaining them all, in a proper relation and balance? Who cares equally for purity of doctrine *and* aggressive evangelism, for personal holiness *and* Christian culture, for social justice *and* separation from the world?

We are all inclined, through the conditioning we have received in that section of the evangelical world where, humanly speaking, our roots are, to overlook and neglect some of these concerns as we prosecute others. And the authentic Reformed and biblical vision of the life of the redeemed—the vision, that is, of the purest doc-

trine working the profoundest all-round transformation of life, the vision of a genuinely godly humanism springing from a genuinely human godliness, the Puritan vision, Kuyper's vision — that vision has been obscured and lost. To say that we need to recover it is easy, but actually to do so will be hard; meanwhile, our inveterate lopsidedness makes it desperately difficult to achieve true biblical balance and breadth in our ministry of the Word.

Decadent Protestantism

Then we have to face *the opposition of decadent Protestantism*. Decadence is a melancholy thing, doubly so when it regards itself as progressive and demands to hold the helm and steer the ship; and decadence, we know, has actually taken over in many, indeed most, of the older Protestant churches. Of course, this dominant outlook does not recognize itself as decadence, but such it demonstrably is, for one distinctive mark of decadence is reversion, and the reversionary tendencies of modern Protestantism are plain for all to see.

Forty years ago, Dr. J. Gresham Machen, in his invaluable *Christianity and Liberalism*, showed that the liberalism of his day, the liberalism which saw God as the universal Father, kind but not holy, pervasive but not fully personal, was not Christianity, but a reversion from Christianity to a type of pantheizing paganism that was in the world before Christianity came on the scene, and which in fact Christianity had displaced.

This naturalistic liberalism is still, we know, very much alive. Neo-orthodox theologians have laboured for a generation to re-introduce supernatural elements of the biblical gospel into the liberal matrix, but in this they are like men running up an escalator that is constantly moving down: sooner or later their breath will give out, and they will find themselves back at the bottom. For while they work (as they do work) with a fundamentally naturalistic view of revelation and knowledge of God, they cannot consistently maintain a supernaturalistic view of redemption, but can only hold to any elements of Christian supernaturalism by sheer will-power, against the logic of their own systems. They have not

overcome the reversionary tendencies of liberalism, but rather fallen victim to them.

"Honest to God"

Again: in Britain we have recently been occupied with the so-called "*Honest to God* debate" (now exported to America, I understand!). The position which Bishop Robinson, in his somewhat bumbling way, sketched out in *Honest to God* appears to be this: that the ultimate religious reality is not the living and speaking God of the Bible, but rather the story of Jesus regarded as a therapeutic symbol or myth. According to this view, Jesus' death and resurrection, regarded as historical events, have no ultimate saving significance, and the resurrection is indeed historically doubtful. Now, what is this professedly "radical," *avant-garde*, super-modern teaching but a return in principle to that pagan gnosticism of which the Christian church washed its hands in the second century A.D.?

Again: what is the modern spirit of ecumenical inclusivism, with its relativizing of doctrinal differences about salvation and grace, its welcoming attitude to Eastern Orthodoxy, its readiness to flirt with Rome, but a reversion to the doctrinal immaturity which almost ruined the church in the days of Arianism, when most Christians could not see that clear doctrine about the person and place of the Lord Jesus Christ mattered at all, one way or the other?

Here are some of the phenomena of contemporary Protestant decadence. They are pervasive and perplexing; they infect men's minds, as a kind of theological smog; and in this tainted atmosphere clear and faithful ministry of the Word becomes more than ordinarily difficult.

Yet the principles relating to our ministry remain unchanged. On the one hand, where the Word of God is faithfully expounded and applied the promise is that life will follow: the Word will not return to God void. On the other hand, where this ministry of the Word fails neither the individual nor the world as a whole has any hope whatever. The issue is as stark as that. The first need of this age, as of every age, is faithful ministry of the Word of God. And

if we who are called to this ministry are to sustain it faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of God and the good of men, there are two necessities which we must bring to it: first, faith in a God who speaks; second, faith in the adequacy of the gospel. This is a further unchanging principle. Let me elaborate it a little.

I said there must be *faith in a God who speaks*. I hope that form of words did not suggest to you that I was lurching into Barthianism! What I have in mind here is actually the biblical corrective to Barthianism. Let me explain.

God Has Spoken

The basis of evangelical faith and theology is the conviction that, as the opening sentence of Hebrews puts it, *God has spoken*. He has accommodated himself to human language in order to convey his thoughts to our minds. He has *talked*—talked through the lips of prophets, and apostles, and his Son; talked in and through the written words of Holy Scripture. It is to this process of divine talking in history that the word "inspiration" points.

Scripture exhibits more than one type of inspiration. There is the *dualistic* inspiration of the prophet delivering a message which he knows to have been given him from without. There is the *lyric* inspiration of the psalmist, responding to God in exalted accents of praise, and prayer, and meditation. There is the *organic* inspiration of the prose writers of Scripture, the historians and teachers, whose own thoughts were fused with God's without their mental processes being altered or heightened in any psychologically distinctive way. Yet the fact of inspiration—the fact that in each case the human word is also, and equally, and indeed primarily, a divine word, the fact that what Scripture says, God says—remains constant.

Thus, Holy Scripture is more than a human record of revelation in history; it is itself a divine revelation in writing. God has spoken, and the Bible is his Word. This we maintain against all modern views which substitute private revelation by existential encounter for public revelation by once-for-all inspired writing, and on this basis claim liberty to deviate from what is written.

God Speaks Still

But this is not all that has to be said. On this basis, and with equal

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emphasis, we must now go on to insist that *God speaks still*. What he has said, he continues to say. The instruction which he gave once-for-all, in application to the original recipients of the biblical books, he gives afresh in application to each subsequent reader, and generation of readers. The biblical Word of God is a *message* — a message addressed to us in our day no less directly than it was addressed to those for whose instruction the sixty-six books of Scripture were written long ago.

There will be no dispute that, regarded as a human product, Holy Scripture has the nature of *preaching*, in the sense that it was all written for the purpose for which sermons are preached — namely, to instruct and edify. The biblical books, we may say, were written *ad hominem*, to man, to help him know and serve his Maker; they were written *ad peccatorem*, to the sinner, to tell him of his need and of God's grace; they were written *ad credentem*, to the believer, to nourish his faith and devotion and obedience. What we must now grasp, however, is that what is true of Scripture from the standpoint of its human character is no less true from the standpoint of its divine character. Whether for purposes of devotion, or theology, or ministry, it is both right and fruitful to think of Holy Scripture as God's sermon, which he is even now preaching to us who approach his Word.

Let Scripture Talk

The position can be illustrated from another mode of instruction. Reading Scripture, or hearing it read, is like joining God's seminar. In a seminar, a group of students will go to a tutor, one will take and read a written essay, and then the tutor will comment on it in the presence of the group. If he is a wise instructor, he will so angle and adapt his comments that they will contain an application to everybody present. Thus all learn by overhearing words addressed in the first instance to the essayist. So with us when we read the Bible. We overhear God talking to Abraham, to Moses, to Israel, to the Jews of Christ's day, to the Roman and Corinthian churches, and so forth, and the Holy Spirit enables us to apply his words to ourselves in our own situation and so to see, from what he said to them, what he now has to say to us. Similarly, by watching how he dealt with men in Bible times, we learn the principles of his



Whether in the classroom or at the coffee-and-donut break, Westminster students are engaged in the pursuit of what Dr. Packer described as "the authentic Reformed and biblical vision of the life of the redeemed—the vision, that is, of the purest doctrine working the profoundest all-round transformation of life."

dealing with us. And in this way we come to know him and have fellowship with him through his Word.

It is vital that we understand this, if we would effectively preach God's Word. For this is the essential idea of Christian preaching—to take a text from Scripture and *let it talk*, delivering its own message in application to the hearers. Nor is there any divine authority, or liberty, or power, in preaching, nor any warrant to expect blessing, save when the preacher is clear that he is doing no more than explaining and applying the Word of God, thus seeking simply to be the mouthpiece whereby God himself addresses his people. This is why faith in a God who speaks is basic to effective ministry of the Word, today as in every age.

Adequacy of the Gospel

The second requirement for such ministry is *faith in the adequacy of the gospel*. On this, too, we must dwell for a moment.

In the true apostolic succession, which is the true prophetic succession, we are shut up to the rule which Paul imposed on himself when he went to Corinth—"I determined not to know

any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). By this Paul does not mean, of course, that he never preached any truth but the atonement; what he means is that, in all his preaching of the whole counsel of God, he kept the cross at the centre, and never let his hearers lose sight of the hill called Calvary. We must learn to do as he did, if we would see fruit in our ministry.

The wisest thing I ever heard said was a remark by an old clergyman which, as it seemed to me, summed up the whole of Christianity in two clauses and fourteen words! The remark was this: "God is sovereign in all things, and all problems find their solution at Calvary." I have lived with that dictum for years, and I have not exhausted its meaning yet. It is the star by which I seek to steer in my ministry, and I commend it to you as a guiding star for yours. To see that in a world governed by a sovereign God all spiritual problems—all problems, that is, concerning man's relation to God, and God's to man—must be solved at the foot of the cross is the beginning of ministerial wisdom. Let me illustrate from some of the

"God is sovereign in all things, and all problems find their solution at Calvary."

commonest kinds of spiritual problems.

There are some whose basic trouble is lack of assurance as to the reality of their peace with God. We can only help them by pointing them to Calvary, where Jesus "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20), and teaching them what it means to trust and glory in the cross.

Point to the Cross

There are others who need to realize—in trouble or loneliness or special personal difficulty, perhaps—the reality of God's love for them. "He doesn't seem to care," is their complaint. We can only help them as we remind them that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8), and as we teach them to measure God's love to them by Calvary.

Some need reassurance concerning the sufficiency of God as they face costly choices and decisions. "Yes," they say, "I know this is the way God would have me go; but dare I take it? It will be hard; it will be lonely; it involves risk. Can I trust God to uphold me and provide for me?" We can only help these people by pointing them to the cross and to Paul's reasoning about it—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? . . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:32, 37).

Some seek to evade moral challenges. How can we help them? Only, in the last analysis, by making them feel the force of Paul's argument in II Corinthians 5:14 f. — "The love of Christ constraineth us . . . he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Others, again, are troubled with besetting sins; they, too, must be taken back to Calvary, to learn both that there they were bought with a price, to glorify God in their body (I Corinthians 6:20), and also that "our old man is crucified with him . . . that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

And so we might go on with our

demonstration that spiritual problems get settled at Calvary alone, or else not at all.

Spiritual Solution

Let us see to it, then, that the message which we preach to men as the solution to their deepest problems is the apostolic message of the cross — "all problems find their solution at Calvary." And let us not be hasty to exchange it for fashionable techniques of so-called pastoral psychology which rest on a secular analysis of human nature, and which, when used, have the effect of leading men and women out of sight of the cross, and teaching them to look elsewhere for the healing of their souls. I am not saying that pastoral psychology, as a study, is a complete waste of time, but I am saying that spiritual needs cannot be met by the counselling techniques of a

naturalistic psychiatry, and woe betide us—and our people!—if we ministers go astray at this point.

What I am really pleading for in all this is a new Puritanism. That, of course, is a question-begging phrase which might mean many things; what I mean by it, however, is this. We need ministers, and churches, that combine strong faith in Scripture as the living Word of the living God with an equally strong faith in the adequacy of the gospel of the cross to bring life, and joy, and peace, and edifying, and victory, to needy sinners. We need a ministry of the Word that has both breadth and depth, that is both doctrinal and practical, evangelical and experiential. We need, in other words, what the Puritans actually had. May each generation of Westminster men catch the true Puritan spirit, and so "fulfil their ministry" to the glory of the God of truth and the blessing of those whom they serve in the gospel in these difficult and dangerous days.

Is there such a thing as final truth?

Why We Are Sad

EDWARD J. YOUNG

If one will turn to the back of *Trinity Hymnal* he will find there the Westminster Confession of Faith. This Confession has been adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as its subordinate standard because that Church believes that this Confession faithfully sets forth what the Word of God teaches. If one asks for a summary statement upon the Bible's teaching concerning God, for example, he will find it in the Westminster Confession. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church urges people to read and to study the Confession simply because it so clearly and simply and accurately sets forth what the Bible teaches. It is one of the best helps to Bible study in existence.

Should we of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church change the Confession for something new and supposedly up to date? We are living in a day of great intolerance of anything old. Our generation has deluded itself into

thinking that it must change everything and make everything more relevant. Should the Confession also be changed?

Now we who are labelled conservatives have no interest in holding on to something merely because it is old. A conservative wishes to "hold fast that which is good," and the way in which we tell whether something is good or not is whether it agrees with the Bible. The Bible is our test and touchstone. If something is biblical then we wish to hold on to it; if something is not biblical, then the sooner we change it for something that is biblical the better.

Relevant because Biblical

What then about the Westminster Confession of Faith? Is it biblical? To ask that question is to answer it. It is the prince of all confessions, for it is eminently biblical. It is also precise in language, easy to understand, and

distinguished by a lack of that vagueness which characterizes so much modern theology. When one reads the Confession for the first time he is surprised to discover how up to date its language really is. And, of course, the reason for this is obvious. The Confession is simply setting forth the truth of the Bible and it is rather difficult to present the truth of the Bible unless one uses language that is universally relevant.

Is there then any reason for changing the language of the Confession? It would seem that, if we desire to be faithful to the Bible, there could be only one reason. Conceivably we might think that we could today express the scriptural doctrine of God—to take but one example—more accurately than the Confession has done. If that were the case our only reason for changing the wording of the Confession would be the more accurately to express what the Bible teaches. That, it would seem, is the only legitimate reason why a church might want to change the wording of her Confession.

For our part, however, we do not believe that there is such a need. The more we read the Confession, the more impressed we are with the conciseness and preciseness of its language. Very obviously the framers of the Westminster Confession wanted to give all glory to God, and this they sought to do in the careful manner in which they expressed the teachings of the Bible. We frankly do not believe that we today can improve upon the language of the Confession in its doctrinal utterances. There have been changes made respecting certain questions such as that of the civil magistrate. But he would indeed be rash who thinks that he can seriously improve upon the Confession's statement's about God, the Trinity, the Person of Christ, etc. Theologically, this Confession towers high above other Confessions.

Proposal for Change

Nevertheless, there is underway today for a proposal to change the Confession. This change is not to be brought about by a rewriting, but rather by an interpretation of the Confession which really takes from it all its meaning. As is well known to readers of *The Presbyterian Guardian* a new Confession is being proposed to the United Presbyterian Church. Much has already been written about this proposed Confession of 1967 and



Like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Westminster Theological Seminary is wholeheartedly committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith as a summary of that system of doctrine which is contained in Holy Scripture.

The photo shows a seminarian in after-class discussion of some phase of that system with his teacher, the Rev. Norman Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd is now on leave to complete his doctoral studies at the Free University of Amsterdam, and will return as Assistant Professor in Systematic Theology, effective June 1, 1966.

much will undoubtedly still be written concerning it. In this article, however, we wish to dwell on one point and on one point alone, namely that the proposal to relegate the Westminster Confession to the museum of by-gone confessions is really a denial that there is such a thing as ultimate or final truth. Can this point be sustained?

It is evident that the proposed Confession is not being offered in order that there may be a clearer and more accurate presentation of the teaching of the Bible. This proposal is not the work of long, arduous, prayerful, exegetical work upon the Scriptures. In fact, nowhere in this proposal is the Bible called the Word of God. On the contrary the Bible is said to be merely a normative witness to the Word of God, which is Jesus Christ. This of course, is the language of the modern dialectical theology, but our concern in this article is not with that.

In the *Introductory Comment and Analysis* we are told that the Westminster doctrine of the Bible "rested primarily on a view of inspiration and equated the Biblical canon directly

with the Word of God." This means, to use simple language, that the sixty-six books of the Bible are not to be equated with the Word of God. "By contrast the preeminent and primary meaning of the Word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate," it is stated. Enough has been said to show that the proposed Confession is not an attempt to better to understand and set forth the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, the Word of the ever living God.

Ultimate Truth Denied

Why then is the Westminster Confession regarded as no longer satisfactory for today? Obviously it is not because the Westminster Confession is not thought to be an adequate summary of the teaching of the Bible while the new Confession is thought to be a more accurate presentation of those teachings. Not at all. Why then should we relegate the Westminster Confession to the dusty limbo of unnecessary confessions? Let us hear some of the reasons given. We are told, "The test of a confession is not

how it conforms to type or excels in style, but whether it brings the church actually to express in words and deeds the meaning of the gospel in contemporary life." The Westminster Confession, evidently, is unable to express the meaning of the gospel in contemporary life.

Then again, "In recent decades the preparation of teaching material for Sunday schools as well as of curricula for theological seminaries has depended less and less on the old documents and more upon principles drawn from living theology." And once more, "The present mission of the Presbyterian Church, ethical, ecumenical, intellectual, and evangelistic, cannot be adequately directed by a seventeenth century document, even a great and venerable one." All these statements are taken from the section of the report, *Confessions of the Church: Types and Functions*, by Edward A. Dowey, Jr. This is the philosophy which underlies the proposed Confession, and this philosophy, we believe, is a denial that there is such a thing as ultimate truth.

Rejection of Biblical Teaching

Inasmuch as it is not said that the Westminster Confession is insufficient for the present day because it does not adequately present the teaching of the Bible, the modern dissatisfaction is not that the Confession is an inadequate presentation of TRUTH. Not at all. The real reason for the rejection of the Westminster Confession is the tragic fact that modern churchmen no longer believe the eternal TRUTH that is expounded and clearly set forth in its words. And this is the same as saying that men no longer believe the TRUTH presented in the Bible itself.

The modern dissatisfaction is really not at all with the language of the Confession but with its teaching. It is a rejection of what the Bible itself teaches. That is the real ground for the dissatisfaction, and no amount of pious verbiage will camouflage that fact. What is meant when it is said that we are dependent "less and less on the old documents and more upon principles drawn from living theology?" It is perfectly clear what is meant. What is meant is that men no longer believe the truth expressed in the "old documents" but rather follow what the majority of modern churchmen happen to think is the truth.

What is "living theology?" It is not the teaching of the Bible. What

This is the first of a number of articles that Westminster Seminary's Old Testament Professor intends to write on the proposed Confession of 1967.

then can it possibly be but the views of modern men and the decisions of the church councils of our day? And what do the church councils talk about? Well, to judge from the reports that one reads of them and from their own declarations, it would seem that they are interested in all kinds of concerns, social welfare, race relations and the like. It would seem that the modern church councils are interested in almost everything except the everlasting gospel of salvation through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. On that subject, which according to the Bible, is the gospel, modern church councils are strangely silent.

Now we have no objection to anyone being interested in modern social problems. We happen to have considerable interest in them ourselves. But we do object when the church discusses these problems in such a way as to give the impression that they are the sole concern of the church. Is it not possible that what the church thinks is the will of God for man today will be something quite different in the future? Indeed it is. We are told that "a statement that is appropriate and powerful in its own day may fail to guide the church after some decades or centuries have gone by." And again, church theology "must be ready to respond again in the future to yet unknown but certainly profound changes that lie

In This Issue

One would hardly expect the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to remain silent about the Confession of 1967, as the Resolution on the opposite page bears out.

This new Confession is no cause for rejoicing, as the title of Dr. Young's piece reminds us. Mr. Kellogg's article is noteworthy both for what it says and for the circumstances of its delivery.

No one will be surprised that Dr. Van Til also has something to say on the subject in his "charge." While Dr. Packer was not dealing with this matter, his significant address is pertinent to the larger questions involved.

All in all, we think there is some

ahead." We suppose that when these profound changes come the church will have to write a new confession.

Changeless Truth

This is sad. Truth does not change. What the Bible teaches is true for all time, not merely for the first century of our era. What the Westminster Confession teaches, insofar as it faithfully reflects the Bible, is true for all time. It was true in the seventeenth century when this Confession was written, and it was even true long before the Confession was written. It is true today, and, inasmuch as it is true, is perfectly adequate for the needs of the church today.

The philosophy underlying the proposed Confession of 1967, however, has an entirely different view of truth. It apparently regards as true only that which is useful and relevant. It would speak to the man of today in language that the man of today likes to hear, and when the present scene changes and the language of today is no more heard (happy thought!) then the church will have to speak in some language that the man of the future will want to hear. And this, to put it bluntly, is a rejection of the fact that truth is ultimate and unchanging. The proposed Confession of 1967 is a rejection of the truth expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is a rejection of the truth of the Bible. It is a rejection of truth. Far better, because true, are the words of the hymn:

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun:
It gives a light to every age;
It gives, but borrows none.

good meat in these pages—and there'll be more to come in the months ahead. We are having a few extra copies printed, and they may be had at five for a dollar while they last. R. E. N.

PICTURE CREDITS

Jack Shepherd: pp. 89, 91, 98
John Tolsma: Cover, pp. 87, 97

NEW TRACT

An attractive 16-page pamphlet titled "An Introduction to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church" is now available from the Committee on Christian Education, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19126. It is priced at 7c per copy, but may be had in quantities of a hundred or more at 5c each.

Matching stationery with an envelope may be obtained for \$3.75 per hundred.

RESOLUTION ON THE PROPOSED CONFESSION OF 1967

At its recent General Assembly in Portland, Oregon the Orthodox Presbyterian Church expressed its "desire to serve those in the United Presbyterian Church who wish to continue adherence to the historic Christian faith as summarized in the Westminster Standards." The Assembly approved as one objective: "To offer our help and assurance of support for them in their present situation and to encourage them to take a firm and open stand for the Christian faith and in opposition to the theology set forth by the new Confession."

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. meeting in Columbus, Ohio in May, 1965 by vote of an overwhelming majority began the process of amending its doctrinal standards, which process is intended to lead to that denomination's abandonment of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as the current and authoritative confession of its faith; and

WHEREAS, this proposed change is based upon a clear denial of the Bible as the infallible Word of God; and

WHEREAS, such denial destroys the only foundation for the basic doctrines of the historic Christian faith; and

WHEREAS, in the Confession of 1967 expressions of Scripture which set forth the all-important doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ are stated to be merely "images of a truth," and not the truth itself;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That this Thirty-second General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church declares that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is completely committed to the Bible as the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as faithfully setting forth the teachings of Holy Scripture; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Orthodox Presbyterian Church hereby expresses its desire to serve those in the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. who wish to continue adherence to the historic Christian faith as summarized in the Westminster Standards.

In response to invitations by letter and newspaper ads nearly three hundred concerned Presbyterians attended a public rally in the Grant Hotel, San Diego on Sunday afternoon, June 20. The following address was given by the pastor of the Paradise Hills Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

STAND TRUE

EDWARD L. KELLOGG

We are living in a period of rapid change. Scientific changes are breathtaking. The feats of the astronaut twins, the walk in space, the pictures of the moon and the present 21,000 pound lead capsule hurtling around the earth are all a part of the exciting picture.

But of greater significance are the moral changes occurring not only in this nation but around the world, and the rebellious actions of people who are surging to and fro like the restless sea. This picture of change has a frightening aspect because modern

philosophy rejects the absolute. Everything is in a state of flux; everything is relative. There is no solid place to cast anchor. We talk sympathetically about little children who are insecure. But today we must acknowledge that great masses of humanity are insecure as they toss about in the stormy sea of relativism.

The church is not without responsibility for the present state of things in the world. In fact the church is primarily responsible. The task of God assigned the church, if faithfully performed, would have provided the

The Presbyterian GUARDIAN

EDITOR

Robert E. Nicholas



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world with an anchoring place and would have restrained the powerful forces of sin. The church is the light of the world. Its message and life should dispel the darkness of skepticism and fearful unbelief. The church is to be salt—seasoning and preserving. But the church has become as salt having lost its savor. Great is the responsibility of the church for the present world condition.

The Church as Founded

When our Lord was here upon earth he said to the disciples, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then he went to the cross and there laid down his very life for the church. The Good Shepherd died for the sheep. As Paul says in Acts 20, God purchased the church with his own blood. Atonement was made for sin so that God might be just and yet justify the ungodly.

Having risen from the dead, Jesus gave final instruction to the disciples and set forth what has since been called the Great Commission. Thus the primary task of the church was presented in these words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Following his instruction, they tarried at Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father, which promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit of God was poured out. Then conviction came on the multitude; hundreds said, "What shall we do?" Three thousand wrought upon by the divine Spirit were then raised up to a new life of faith and obedi-

ence. The church was being formed. These then imbued with a sense of urgency, witnessed to others.

Yes, a witness; that was the divine method — believers bearing a witness and telling people what they knew and believed concerning Jesus Christ and his wonderful saving work. So Jesus said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This was the great task of the church.

Thus even when persecution set in we read that believers went everywhere preaching the gospel. Powerful indeed was this spiritual effort. Thousands turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Though no sword or spear of steel was used to advance the cause, yet concerning apostles people said that they were those who had turned the world upside down. A group of humble souls, empowered by the Spirit of God, was being used to transform the world. Yes, the church then was as a light shining in the dark world. It was a salt, seasoning and preserving. What has happened? Why has so great a change occurred in our time? Will not the gospel work as effectively today as it did in those early times?

The Former Glory

There was a glory to the Presbyterian Church in this country in former times. Calvinist by conviction, it believed in the sovereignty of God and the authority of his holy Word. This also gave a strong sense of man's responsibility. Because of such firm convictions held by these early Presbyterians there was bound to be a profound influence felt in civil life too. Thus the American historian Bancroft writes that the Revolution of 1776 was the natural outgrowth of the principles which the Presbyterianism of the old world planted in her sons, the English Puritans, the Scotch Covenanters, the French Huguenots, the Dutch Calvinists and the Presbyterians of Ulster.

The great Church historian Phillip Schaff wrote,

The principles of the republic of the United States, can be traced through the intervening link of Puritanism to Calvinism, which, with all its theological rigor, has been the chief educator of manly character and promoter of constitutional freedom in modern times.

In his book, *The Creed of Presbyterians*, E. W. Smith asks concerning the American Colonists,

Where learned they these immortal principles of the rights of man, of human liberty, equality and self government, on which they based their republic, and which form today the distinctive glory of our American civilization?

Then he made answer saying,

In the school of Calvin they learned them. There the modern world learned them. So history teaches.

Yes, there was a profound influence felt even in civil affairs because these staunch Presbyterians, together with others mainly of Calvinistic persuasion, believed there was divine authority for such convictions. Reverence for God was in their hearts and they were ready to resist any tyranny or injustice. This was produced not by a meddling in political affairs by the church as church but by the faithful preaching of the Word of God from the pulpits. Such preaching affected also the family, the unit in society where children were nourished on the Word of God and the Shorter Catechism as daily food. And young and old believed with conviction that the chief end of man was to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

We need only go back fifty, seventy-five, one hundred years to see an illustrious company of scholars instructing the ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary. There was Charles Hodge, called the Prince of American Theologians, whose systematic theology has been a classic in that field. There was Benjamin Warfield, whose penetrating mind plunged into the depths of Scripture truth and set forth its teaching with beautiful clarity in striking contrast to many a so-called scholar. There was J. Gresham Machen, a brilliant New Testament scholar and apologete, whose work on the Virgin Birth of Christ shut the mouths of the most learned skeptics.

These men trained the ministry and that ministry went forth to preach the Word of God in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That was the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

False Teaching

What has happened? What has produced so great a change as we find today? Satan is constantly fighting against Jesus Christ, ever seeking to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. Even in apostolic times it is amazing to see the number of false teachers with whom the apostles contended. Read Galatians as Paul declares the teaching of Judaizers *anathema*. Read

the epistles of John and hear the warning to try the spirits because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Peter also warns of scoffers in the last days.

During the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries some devastating work was done in the field of higher criticism. Scholars, professing to seek the origins of the Bible, began to deny the divine authorship of Scripture. Young men studying under these theologians began to imbibe their teaching. Thus the poison of this denial of the divine authorship and the divine authority of Scripture began to penetrate into the seminaries and the church colleges with deadly result.

Religious education courses in the colleges presented the Bible as an evolutionary development in man's search for God. Alleged contradictions in Scripture were played up. Contradictions between Scripture and science so-called were pointed to and science was accepted as true. Confidence in the Bible as a trustworthy rule of faith and life was undermined.

The Auburn Affirmation

As early as 1924 an affirmation was drawn up in Auburn, New York called the Auburn Affirmation. This affirmation declared that "the doctrine of inerrancy, intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their supreme authority for faith and life." It also described the virgin birth of Christ, his miracles, his substitutionary death as "theories." The Bible presents these not as theories but as actual historical facts. 1,293 ministers of the Presbyterian Church signed this document.

In the following years the controversy went on, but modernists seemed to gain one victory, then another. In 1929 Princeton Theological Seminary was re-organized so as to include the modern liberal view, placing on its Board of Directors signers of the Auburn Affirmation. That resulted in several faculty members leaving to form Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Soon it became evident that the foreign missionary work of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. was contrary to the constitution both in the literature distributed to candidates, and in the missionary field. The true Christian faith was not being presented. Dr. J. Gresham Machen set this forth in precise manner but his overture

was rejected. He then led in the formation of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Soon the Church brought him to trial and he was deposed from the ministry, while others with him also were disciplined. That led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of America in 1936 (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church).

Dr. Clarence Edward MacCartney, a leading minister in the Presbyterian Church at the time, referring to the discipline of Dr. Machen, called it "the saddest tragedy which has befallen the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in half a century." He went on to say that "the suspension of Dr. Machen will cause astonishment and sorrow to thousands of earnest believers."

Even the secular press seemed amazed. Albert C. Dieffenbach, editor of the column "Religion Today" in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, said, "Strangest of all church trials in modern times is that which has just convicted Professor J. Gresham Machen of disobedience to the authorities of the Presbyterian Church . . . here is a man of distinction in scholarship and of unquestioned devoutness . . ."

Since 1936

What has happened in the intervening years since 1936? Occasionally ministers and laymen have protested certain actions. Occasionally a voice has been raised. But in the main those of conservative belief were content to preach in their own pulpits or to teach their own Sunday school classes as they felt right, but to do little to effect a purging of the denomination of its unbelief.

Gradually all the seminaries departed from the historic Presbyterian position concerning Scripture. Thus the foundation was destroyed. In recent years certain conservative ministers sought to establish a seminary that would be orthodox in teaching but their efforts failed. Here is a denomination with many seminaries to train its ministry and not one of them holds to the historic Christian position. This is an appalling situation. What hope is there for a church in which the schools that train the ministers reject the divine authorship of Scripture?

The constitution of what is now the United Presbyterian Church contains the Westminster Confession of Faith. That Confession of Faith is so clear in its statements and so precise in its

definitions that one cannot help but note the difference between it and modern proposals.

Listen to what it says about the Scripture. Having listed the sixty-six books, the Westminster Confession states:

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

A little further on it says,

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

Finally we read,

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scripture.

Now I ask, how can a modernist take ordination vows in which he answers affirmatively this question: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture?"

How can one who believes that Scripture contains contradictions, is not authoritative at many points, and is not wholly inspired by the Spirit of God, say that he sincerely receives and adopts the Confession as containing the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture? I say he can do it only by telling a falsehood. The basic problem is one of dishonesty. Scores of men have infiltrated the United Presbyterian Church by dishonesty, by taking vows with tongue in cheek. That is why that Church is so much under the control of modernism today.

Proposed Confession of 1967

But now at last, the Westminster Confession is going to be more or less put on the shelf and a Confession is to be passed which these men can affirm without tongue in cheek. It is called the Confession of 1967. At Columbus, Ohio recently the General Assembly met and gave initial approval by a vote of 643 to 110.

Now, friends, what is it that makes a confession of faith a good confession? Since a confession sets forth what you believe, surely accuracy is one requirement. Another, it would

seem, would be that it not omit the fundamental beliefs which you hold. And if we are testing a confession by the ultimate standard we must say a good confession is one which sets forth the teachings of God's Word. We believe Christianity is a revealed religion. We believe it is revealed to us in the Bible. If one is to give a statement of the Christian faith, then it must conform to the teaching of the Bible. It must not deviate to the right or to the left but must accurately present that teaching. And certainly a well balanced statement or confession of faith should not omit the central truths of the Bible.

As we look at the Confession of 1967 we are startled first of all by some glaring omissions.

Omissions

Section A deals with Jesus Christ and begins in the following manner: *In Jesus of Nazareth true humanity was realized once for all. Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, lived among his own people and shared their needs, temptations, joys and sorrows. He expressed the love of God in word and deed and became a brother of all kinds of sinful men.*

As you read you find no clear statement that Jesus Christ is very God, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal and only begotten Son. But this teaching is and has been a very essential teaching of the Christian faith as well as historic Presbyterianism. The nearest approach to acknowledgement of his deity is in an introductory statement which speaks of him as God with man. But that sort of statement in modern theological usage could mean most anything. It lacks the theological clarity and accuracy a confession should have.

Reading on we find no mention of the fall of man and sin in its relation to the law of God. But sin is the transgression of the law. Furthermore, without a clear presentation of the fall and its consequences the whole plan of salvation becomes meaningless.

Again we find no mention of the new birth, nor of conversion, nor of justification by faith, that glorious truth that transformed Martin Luther and turned the world upside down. When you think of substituting such an impoverished statement for the Westminster Confession of Faith you wonder how this is possible.

But then you discover that not only are there glaring omissions but also

what is given is a masterpiece of ambiguity. The very first sentence in part one says, "In Jesus of Nazareth true humanity was realized once for all."

What does that mean? Are you a true human or aren't you a true human? If you aren't, then what are you? The second sentence speaks about Jesus becoming "a brother to all kinds of sinful men." Now Jesus said he was a brother to those who did the will of his Father in heaven. He distinguished between the family of God and the family of Satan. This use of the term *brother* makes for confusion and allows for a false teaching on the matter.

Reconciliation Theme

Of special importance in this proposed Confession of 1967 is the theme of reconciliation. The first part is entitled, "God's Work of Reconciliation." The second, "The Ministry of Reconciliation" and the third, "The Fulfillment of Reconciliation."

A superficial observer might think this excellent, for is not reconciliation a very important theme of Scripture? But when you ask, "What is the reconciliation presented here?" you find it to be something far different from the Bible's teaching. Having described Christ's work as "the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life given for his sheep, atonement by a priest," etc. it explains, "These are images of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory in the depths of God's love for man."

But these are not *images* which we try to reach by some theory. They are statements which present a substitutionary death on the part of Christ, a death in the place of sinners.

Under the second heading on reconciliation which deals with the mission of the church we read, "To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as his reconciling community."

The statement does not go on to say that the church must fulfill the great commission and proclaim the message of God's saving grace as a means of reconciliation. Rather we read, *The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His life as man involves the church in the common life of men. His service to men commits the church to work for every form of human welfare.*

Thus instead of proclaiming the gospel the ministry turns to a social and economic effort in which one pro-

motes certain welfare activities in the community and nation.

Further under this heading of the ministry of reconciliation we read, "The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes acutely conscious of its own human character as a religion." Here Christianity is put in the same category as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Mohammedanism. It is described in terms of its alleged human character as a religion. But Scripture clearly declares the Christian religion to be unique and of divine origin.

Much more might be said but I would simply state that this Confession of 1967 is tragic. I cannot see how any honest Christian can continue in the United Presbyterian Church if this is ultimately adopted.

Monument or Tool

But someone may say, "Well, isn't the Westminster Confession also retained?" My answer is, "Yes, that is a part of the deceitfulness of the whole plan." It is retained as a sort of museum piece for the archives. Professor Edward A. Dowey, Jr., of Princeton Seminary, in the official document which introduced the Confession, said that such a statement as the Westminster Confession after some time comes to resemble a monument marking the past rather than a tool for present work.

In contrast to the words of Professor Dowey, it is interesting to read the words spoken by another Princeton professor in 1929. Professor F. W. Loetscher as he addressed the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1929 referred to the Westminster standards as

these incomparable works of religious and theological genius . . . those noblest products of the great religious revival that we call the Reformation, those matchless formularies which at least English speaking Christendom has come to regard as the most comprehensive, precise and adequate embodiment of the pure gospel of the grace of God.

And now this marvelous statement of biblical truth is to be placed in the museum, and the vague and impoverished Confession of 1967 is proposed as the working tool!

Well, possibly someone is saying, "I'm in the United Presbyterian Church and I would like to know what to do." First, I hope you will not say, "Well, there is nothing I can

do." Further I hope you will not say, "Well, I will just have to teach the Word in my Sunday school class and hope things will work out." I remind you that you have a corporate responsibility in the United Presbyterian Church.

Because of the nature of Presbyterian government, you share in responsibility for all of these decisions. Furthermore, you have a form of government which gives you the prerogative, and places upon you the responsibility, to take definite steps to see that the church returns to the Word of God.

The constitution of the United Presbyterian Church includes a Form of Government and Book of Discipline that enables you to lodge complaints, to appeal to higher judicatories, to present overtures calling for a correction of unconstitutional preaching, teaching and conduct in the church.

What Shall We Do ?

It seems to me that you face one of two courses: either in fulfillment of your responsibility you should prepare such overtures and take them to the church and carry them if necessary to the highest judicatory—and if the church fails to reform, then leave it. Or else you must recognize that others have done this, only to have their overtures rejected, and conclude that the church has officially taken a stand which is against the Word of God—and therefore you will leave the church now and unite with a denomination that is remaining faithful.

I cannot see how sincere, conscientious people can take any other course. You ought to see to it that your church does stand for the true faith or else get out, and get as many people to come out with you as possible. Don't let anyone deceive you into thinking that this is schism. True schism is that which separates from Jesus Christ first of all, and that is precisely what the modernism of our time is doing. If you urge people to leave a church that has departed from the true faith in order that they may be true to Jesus Christ you are not encouraging schism but are seeking that true unity for which Christ prayed.

I urge you each one to take a stand, and may that stand be one of obedience to Jesus Christ, the Head of the church.

Keep Yourselves from Idols

CORNELIUS VAN TIL

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18). It was with these and similar words that the last of the apostles wrote to the early followers of Jesus the Christ.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (I John 4:14).

How simple then the task that now awaits you who are called to be God's servants. It is the message of God's saving love in Jesus Christ with which you must go into the world. And the whole world lieth in wickedness. As for his own, to whom Jesus came, they received him not. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-12).

By grace you are saved. You were not wiser than other men. It is not you that have chosen Christ to be your Savior; it is Christ the Savior who has chosen you to be his witnesses. It is not you who by depth psychology have discovered the true need of man; it is Christ who through his servant John tells you that the whole world lieth in wickedness. It is not you — when you speak of *homo sapiens*, of 'organization' man or of 'irrational' man — who understand the nature of man. It is Christ who alone knows what is in the heart of man.

It is he who through Paul tells you that men walk "in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18). It is the Son of God that "hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:20, 21).

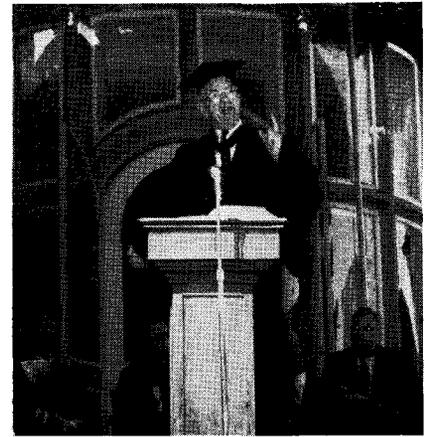
How Hard It Will Be

How difficult it will be to keep yourselves from idols! How hard it will be to discern the spirit of antichrist. If it were possible Satan would deceive the very elect of God. The antichrist appears as an angel of light. He enthrones himself in the place of Christ. He uses the words of Christ. He speaks even of the cross of Christ as that by means of which men must be saved. He speaks of the resurrection of Christ as the victory by which men have been and are being saved. He speaks of the kingdom of God in which all sin and unrighteousness shall be done away and men shall forever praise the Christ.

How often in the past has the church failed to discern the spirit of antichrist and therefore how often has it failed to keep itself from idols. How often the church has yielded to the idea that Christ has not come into the world, that he has not finished his work of redemption for his own in the world, but that he is identical with the ideals of sinful men as they would reform themselves and thus escape whatever punishment the gods may have for them.

It was thus in Luther's time. A great amalgamation had taken place. With pomp and circumstance the church of Rome was seemingly preaching the Christ of the Scriptures, but was in reality mostly preaching a Christ of its own construction. In Luther's time the church refused to stand on the gospel which Paul preached. Said that apostle: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . ." (I Corinthians 15:3). It was this gospel of the finished work of Christ for the salvation of men that the official church had toned down till little was to be found of it in its teaching.

Then Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Then Calvin came and,



"Discern the spirits and proclaim the Christ of God so long as your Maker and Redeemer gives you breath."

following Paul, urged men to turn away from idols, both physical and spiritual. All is idolatry that springs from the heart of the natural man, and a gospel that seeks for the cooperation of the natural man with the grace of God is not the true gospel at all, he insisted. Then did the churches prosper and "the Lord added daily such as should be saved." A great era of creed-making followed, finding its climax in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms.

The Broadening Church

In this country too the church made profession of its faith in the grace of God, but it was not to be for long. Soon the amalgamation process that had proved fatal to the spread of the gospel in the pre-Reformation church was to start anew, and with faster speed in the very churches of the Reformation. Dr. Lefferts A. Loetscher wrote of the *broadening church*, referring primarily to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., but what he said applies pretty much to the decline of the Protestant church in general.

The broadening church has now become so broad that its leadership wants to have it adopt a new confession. In the Confession of 1967 proposed for the United Presbyterian Church a greater amalgamation between belief and unbelief speaks forth than the Roman Catholic Church has ever offered.

Paul asked the church at Corinth to stand on the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ "according to the Scriptures." The church is now

no longer to stand on this. Oh yes, it must still use these words. The Introduction tells us that "the Confession is intended to be Biblical throughout" (*Blue Book of the 177th General Assembly*, p. 29). The church must continue to speak much of Scripture. It must speak of Scripture as the witness, even as the "normative witness" to the Christ.

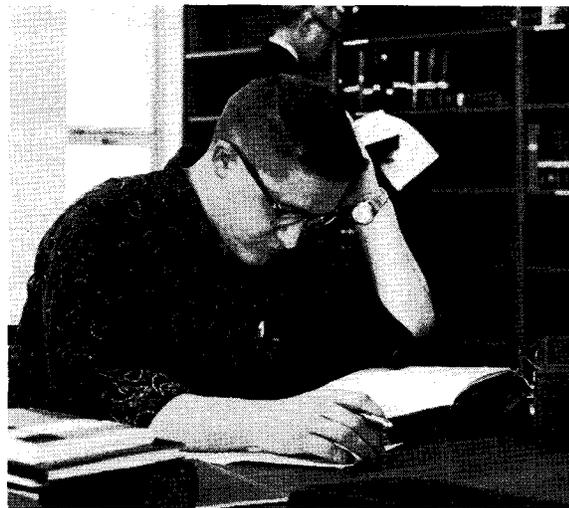
But who is the Christ of this new Confession to which the Scripture is said to bear witness? It is not the self-testifying Christ. That could not be. For it is assumed that if Christ is really incarnate in this world, then he must be thought of as participating in all the relativity of this world.

The Ancient Creeds

The new Confession, moreover, seems to speak with great respect of the creeds of the past. "In the ancient church," we are told, "salvation needed creedal definition in terms of the deity of the Redeemer. Later, the work of the Redeemer came to the fore, then the means of redemption" (*Blue Book*, p. 27). Do the 1960's no longer need a creedal statement on the deity of the Redeemer? Yes, we are told in effect, this decade needs this as information about what the church fathers used to believe and about what men in the first century used to think about Christ.

The church today, in genuine respect for the forefathers, carefully preserves the memory of what they thought about what men, living still earlier, thought about Christ. Not only the Westminster Confession, but other, and earlier confessions are to be included in a "Book of Confessions." All these creeds are to "stand in their original form and in historical sequence." A new Smithsonian Institute of Creeds will be erected, so that we and our children's children can see what our fathers actually believed about Christ.

What heroism it was for Charles Lindberg to venture across the waters of the broad Atlantic. What great faith in that feeble instrument of flight that carried him across the waters. But how much greater faith it was when our fathers ventured to lay out in neat conceptual arrangements the various relations within the three persons of the one God; or the relation of the divine and human natures of Christ. How did they dare thus to enter upon that which is inherently unknowable to man by means of con-



Said Dr. Van Til to the Westminster graduates: "Your whole training has centered about the Christ who died and rose again according to the Scriptures."

As the picture shows, that training requires diligent study!

cepts they themselves had to produce as finite and fallible men?

Unbelievable as it is to us today, they did so because they thought they had in the Scripture the very words of God. They "equated the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God" (*Blue Book*, p. 29). But now, those who introduce the new Confession argue, we are set free from the "doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies" (*Ibid.*, p. 29).

The Westminster Confession "derives from an age of scholastic theology, of preoccupation with authority, and law, of churchly and political absolutism," it is stated (p. 20). We are free from all this. "The Confession of 1967 is not designed to define the faith of Presbyterians. The central elements of the faith of Presbyterians are all shared as well by other Christians" (p. 29). The Confession must set the pace in leading all Christians in taking advantage "of the remarkable advances in the doctrine of revelation in the twentieth century" (*Ibid.*, p. 42).

The New Man

This modern advance in "the doctrine of revelation"—on what does it rest? It rests on the new doctrine of man. Let Dr. James I. McCord, the President of Princeton Seminary, tell you in his own words: "Actually, the Reformers could not ask, 'What is man?' They did not have the tools and background to raise this question. They could only ask, 'What is man as sinner?' But the nineteenth century produced a revolution in biology with Darwin and his discoveries, to be fol-

lowed by a revolution in the social sciences and psychology" (*Theology Today*, Vol. XVII, 3, p. 294).

Unable to ask the question, 'What is man?' the Reformers were bound to have a mistaken view of Christ as man in relation to Christ as God. They could do nothing better than simply repeat the creed of Chalcedon with respect to the relation of the two natures of Christ to one another. "But with the coming of the nineteenth century there were new factors unknown to the Chalcedonians. One was the new critical philosophy of Kant, with its emphasis on the subjective limitations of human knowledge." Another was the "replacement of the old ontological categories with psychological categories, while a third was a new understanding and mastery of historical tools. Basically, therefore, the Christological question remains undealt with in our time in the terms that are now available to us" (*Ibid.*, p. 298).

In more pointed form Dr. George S. Hendry, also of Princeton Seminary, tells us about the new view of man that underlies the new view of revelation. Modern philosophy, he argues, has shown us, chiefly through Kant, that man is spirit. And spirit is free. God too is spirit. God too is free.

At one stroke this insight relieves us, says Dr. Hendry, of such difficulties as the Westminster divines had in relating the all-inclusive plan of God to the responsibility of man. The whole relation between God and man is now for the first time seen to be exhaustively personal. Science is now seen to deal with the world of impersonal relations, and religion speaks

of that area where man stands face to face with God.

The New Christ

It is thus that a new theology — a theology in which man is no longer a creature, no longer a sinner, a theology in which man first tells himself who he is — then makes a Christ in man's image. Having made a Christ in the image of man, the proposed Confession now asks all men everywhere to bow to this Christ. The new creed thinks of the apostles as making a Christ in their image.

If the Reformers, if the writers of the Westminster Confession, could not even ask the question, 'What is man?' then they could not but find wrong answers for the question, *What is Christ?* Surely, then, those twelve innocent fishermen of Galilee, far more ignorant of Immanuel Kant, cannot claim to offer a Christ that is better than our own! Away then with Paul's Christ who died according to the Scriptures and who rose according to the Scriptures. Let us worship the Christ that we ourselves have made and are remolding every day.

How sad, how inexpressibly sad this spectacle! The church of the Reformation is not merely returning to Rome. If it were only that! But it is far worse than that. If the Roman church sought to amalgamate the teaching of the ancient Greeks, and notably that of Aristotle, with the truth of God as it is in Christ, there might be said to be some excuse for it. It had not yet been clearly pointed out that Greek philosophy is an apostate philosophy, a philosophy by means of which the natural man sought to suppress the truth about himself as a sinner in need of grace.

There is no excuse for the modern Protestant church. The Reformers themselves and many a son of the Reformers have clearly shown that if men are to be saved from sin they must allow the Great Physician to diagnose their sickness and give them healing. He alone knows the heart of man.

Your whole training has centered about the Christ who died and rose according to the Scriptures. The whole world lieth in wickedness and is without hope unless you and many others with you bring this Christ to men. The spirit of antichrist is now welcomed into much of the Protestant church by those who ought to be the first to banish it. No longer will many

preach the Christ who died for men to set them free from the wrath to come. No longer will they preach Christ as risen from the dead.

But discern ye the spirits and proclaim the Christ of God "according to the Scriptures" so long as your Maker and Redeemer gives you breath. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Spectators

Louis J. Voskuil

Spectator sports are exceedingly popular in America today. The World Series even touches the lives of people not ordinarily baseball fans. Saturday afternoon finds millions of people around their television sets or in the football stands. But after all, why shouldn't spectator sports be popular? It is so much more comfortable to wrap oneself in a heavy plaid blanket at the 50-yard line than to feel bone and flesh crunch together on the field. How much more pleasant it is to boo a fumble than to be the player and watch the ball squirt away because of the hard knock of an opposing tackler. When it is all over, as the heater in the '65 Compact is turned on, one can lay the blame for the loss on the quarterback or the coach. After all, we paid for our tickets; that gives us the right to be grandstand critics.

One of the paradoxes in the history of the church is the fact that often, just when it attained a hard-won success, at that moment it had already begun to decline. Certainly it must have been a great moment for the harried, persecuted Christians in A.D. 313 to find out that the emperor Constantine had officially sanctioned the existence of the church with the now famous Edict of Milan. No more confiscation of church property! No more executions of leaders! No more imprisonment or tortures!

A new day had dawned. Soon the emperor was to honor the church with favorable legislation. But surely some of the faithful must have regretted that premature rejoicing. For although peace was certainly welcome, much

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came with it that was not. The church became identified with the status quo. It wasn't too hard to change from a veneration of pagan idols to a veneration of saint's relics; from the celebration of pagan festivals to the celebration of religious holi-days. The day of the spectator church had dawned.

Complacency

If one paid for his ticket, what more could be expected? The clergy were beginning to put on a pretty good show for the money. If one didn't like it, there was always the option of calling in a different team. The benches were comfortable, the building spacious and pleasant. Certainly this was involvement enough. It hurts too much to get on the field. The struggle is too rough, the opponent too powerful; besides, they play for keeps. I would rather be a spectator and look on, wouldn't you?

There is much in the contemporary ecclesiastical scene that lends itself to the sort of non-involvement that characterized the church from time to time. American society has been molded and formed to a considerable degree by Christian principles operative within the various churches of her past. Much of the spirit is gone but the form remains. It is therefore quite possible to live according to a certain pattern acceptable to the church, to confess an intellectual or historical faith in Christ and yet never really make that final commitment to Christ which the Bible has always insisted on as necessary to true faith.

One feels a bit uneasy about the role of the church in society today. Somehow it all too often seems a bit insignificant or irrelevant. Whatever one might say about the medieval church, it could not be ignored. Even kings quailed before her pronouncements. But no more. It is rather comfortable to sit there on a Sunday morning with the sunlight filtering through the colored glass windows. Then home to the Sunday paper and a meal of steak and baked potatoes. I wonder whether this insignificance of the church isn't due to the fact that the church today, perhaps even the churches in the Reformed tradition, is made up largely of spectators. The clergy in turn are touched by professionalism. The greater pity of this is that the rising generation, sensing something wrong but unable to make proper distinctions, may well reject the

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body of Christ altogether, or become rather cynical onlookers themselves.

Commitment

Jesus has a cure for this spiritual malady. There were plenty of onlookers in his day too. He said to them, "He that is not with me is against me." There are only two prepositions in that answer, a *with* and an *against*. It is not only improper merely to look on but impossible. That statement of Christ is rather blunt, much too blunt for the ecumenical mind of today. But there it is. All the translations agree. Jesus calls his own to do battle. You cannot sit on the side lines in comfortable seats; you

must commit yourself.

But along with the battle comes refreshing strength from the Holy Spirit. Broken bones will mend in the day of victory. This doesn't necessarily call for a certain pattern of living, or a particular occupation. It does mean that whatever your task, the motivation comes from commitment to Christ, just that and nothing more. Remember also in committing yourself you are not approving the weaknesses or faults of your fellow soldiers. You are saying only—I fight for Christ. That is all. It is enough.

Listen then to the Word of God. "He that is not with me is against me."

Especially for the Ladies

Morning by Morning

Three Mothers of Ten

A branch of the apple tree, thrown against the sky, is the view from our dining room window. In spring the tiny, pale leaves are mostly hidden by the mass of pink blossoms. It is a sight to be enjoyed with every breakfast. In the fall, the sky is almost hidden by the leaves, and it is only occasionally that a bright red apple is set against the equally brilliant sky. We hesitate to pick the apples on that branch so that we may hold that glorious pattern of color a little longer. But it is not long before the tree is bare, not even a withered apple left to rattle in the autumn winds. The apple tree has done its work, fulfilled its season; and now it is time for it to rest.

We humans have turned nature's timetable backwards. In autumn when all growing things are settling into a winter's rest, we are just beginning the activities of another year. Resolutions at New Year's time seem a little like wasted effort. September is the time for planning and setting goals. Here are some "thoughts for September" that come to our minds. Perhaps you could add some of your own.

1. It's time to start baking again—how about apple pie for supper?
2. Take time for friendly talks with neighbors before winter hibernation sets in.
3. The place for a wall calendar is within pencil reach of the telephone; this year all appointments will be noted promptly.
4. It's easier to be a faithful prayer if you have a written list of requests.
5. Don't put off entertaining lonely students until the fall housecleaning is finished. Call someone today!
6. This is the time to plan a fall outing for the entire family... and perhaps that lonely student.

* * *

Finding time for regular daily devotions is a problem for most Christians. One mother with twin boys who were eighteen months old tried hard to find a workable solution. First she decided that she would get up a half hour before the children so that she could have a quiet time with the Lord. As the spring wore on and the days became longer, her twins woke up

earlier and earlier. Soon the time came that they were awake at five-thirty—but she found that her mind did not function well enough at five in the morning to make Bible study profitable! She now tries to schedule her devotions during the babies' nap time.

Those of us with a nine-to-five job find our lives so tightly ordered that an extra half-hour for Bible study and prayer just isn't there, or so it seems. Even when we can make the time available, we have all experienced the struggle for self-discipline as we try regularly and prayerfully to concentrate only on the Lord and his Word. Yet as we obey the command to feed upon his Word, we do experience growth in our Christian lives and a wonderful sense of fellowship with God. As we persevere, seeds of longing will be planted, and our hunger for knowledge and fellowship with God will increase.

Sometimes we can salvage short snatches of time, which might otherwise be wasted, for meditation and for prayer. Have you tried keeping a small edition of the Bible or a devotional booklet in the glove compartment of your car, for those moments when you're waiting at the train station or the school? Or having a devotional booklet on the shelf or window over your sink so you may read and meditate while your hands are busy with the dishes? (This might also be a good spot to tack up your list of prayer requests.) Or keeping one of the new Scripture portions now available in your pocketbook to read on the subway, bus or train as you commute? Again, instead of escaping via the television while you iron, why not prop a Bible beside the ironing board so that you can read a verse or two between shirts and meditate on them as you iron?

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We are interested in exchanging information with our readers. If you have any ideas for a Christmas program suitable for a meeting of the Women's Missionary Society, we would like to share it. Please send your ideas to: Women's Page, c/o The Presbyterian Guardian, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19126.