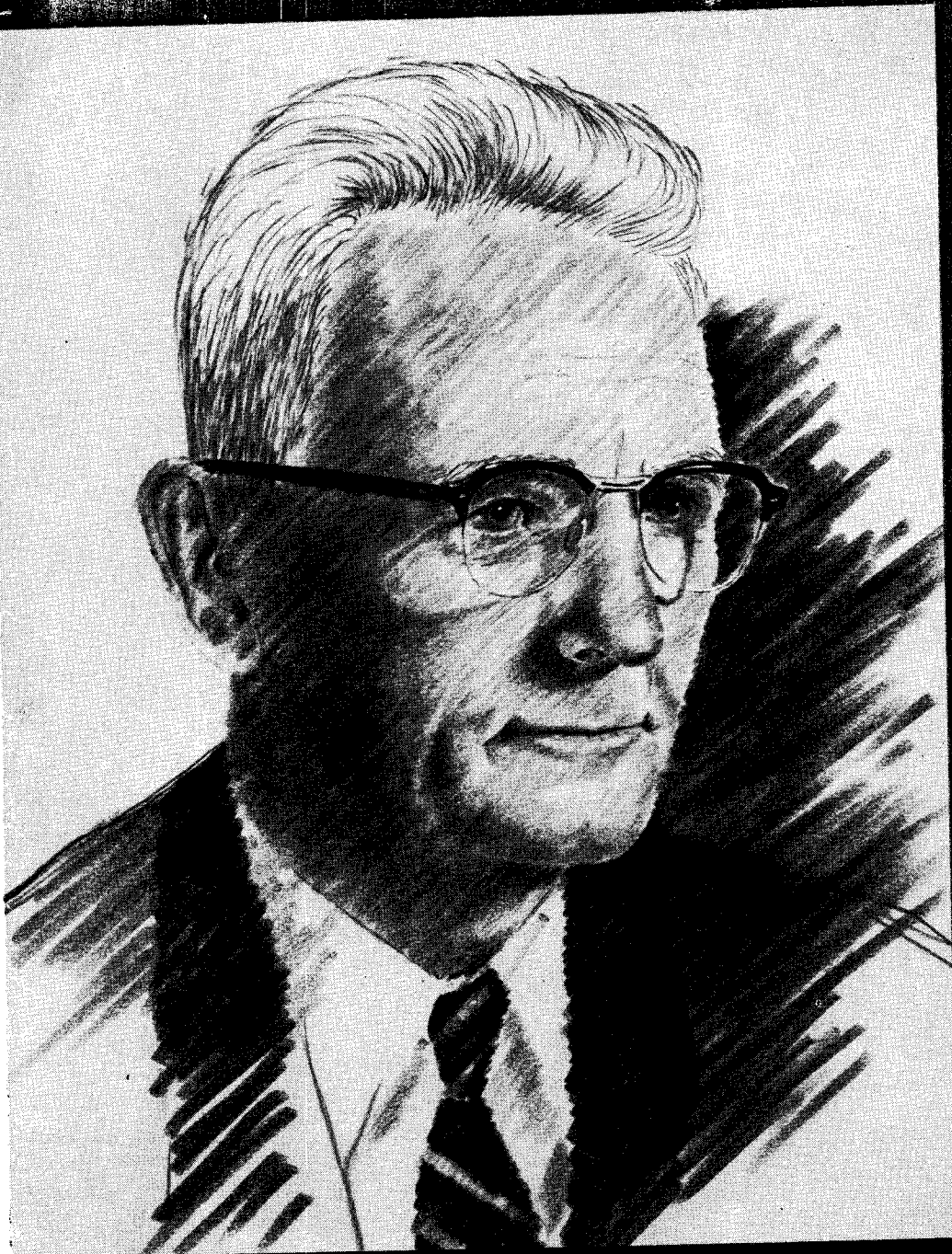


# GUARDIAN



## **Responsible Stewardship**

**EDWARD P. WYBENGA**

### **Zacchaeus**

**Luke 19:1-10**

Zacchaeus was among those who followed Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. He was eager to see Jesus about whom he had heard such wonderful things; but the crowd was so great and he was so small that he found himself frustrated in his ambition. Not to be defeated so quickly, he thought of a solution to his problem. He would run on ahead and climb that sycamore tree down the road. There he would get the best view of all.

No sooner thought than done, up in the tree Zacchaeus perched awaiting the approach of Jesus. It was no doubt more than mere curiosity that drove him to that sycamore tree. Zacchaeus was not a man of good reputation. We are told that he was "the chief among the publicans and he was rich." He had oppressed the people; he had been dishonest in his dealings with them; he had become rich at others' expense. But now there was a kind of hunger in his soul even his money could not satisfy.

As Jesus drew near he looked up and bade Zacchaeus come down with haste, for that very day the Lord would be his guest. Zacchaeus needed instruction; he needed to be taught the way of salvation and eternal life. Jesus saw his need and was impelled to meet it. Is that not always the way with our compassionate High Priest? There has never been a soul in need, a hungry soul seeking to be filled, that Jesus passed by with scorn or unconcern.

How did Zacchaeus respond to the self-invitation of Jesus? Did he resent it? Ah, no: "He made haste and came down and received him joyfully." But this turn of events met with strong disapproval on the part of the crowd. How could Jesus be a prophet of God, and then be a guest in the home of a publican? How could he defile himself in that way? What strange inconsistency—so they thought. However,

the crowd was sadly mistaken in their judgment of this event, as crowds often are. They failed to see that Jesus came not to save the self-righteous but penitent sinners. Was Zacchaeus then a penitent sinner? Yes, indeed. As Jesus conversed with him about sin and salvation, Zacchaeus saw how wicked and lost he was. He openly confessed his sins and determined henceforth to give half of his goods to the poor and to restore four times as much as he had stolen.

And what was Jesus' reaction to all this? Hear his words: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Zacchaeus had given evidence that he was a true son of Abraham by giving expression to the same faith and obedience of the patriarch, who "believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

Now the blessings of the gospel were given not only to him but also to his family: "This day is salvation come to this house." When you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you thereby open the way for your children to do likewise, in fulfillment of God's promise.

### **The Pounds** **Luke 19:11-27**

After Zacchaeus' conversion he became a good steward of his possessions for he now recognized his responsibility to God. The idea of responsible stewardship is now clearly set forth in the parable of the pounds.

Jesus said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." The nobleman is Christ himself who was about to leave this world, ascend to heaven, carry on his mediatorial reign from there; and, after a long period of time, return again to see what his servants had done in his absence.

Before the nobleman left he gave to each a sum of money to be put to work

for greater gain. The pounds symbolize the powers for constructive work which God has given to men. In the field and factory and office; in science, art, and literature; in the home and in the school; in the professions and government—everywhere we are called upon by God to use our several abilities for his glory and the true well-being of man.

After a long time the nobleman in the parable returned and called his servants to give account of themselves during his absence. He rewarded them in proportion to the use they had made of their endowments, with greater responsibilities, more glorious tasks.

There was one, however, who made no use of his pound on the supposition that his master was a heartless man who would reward none. There are many who think thus of God and do nothing for him. God will judge such by their own negligence. He will take from them what they have and give to those who make use of what has been given them.

It is a rule of divine providence that what is not used comes to nought. A muscle that is never exercised becomes weak and flabby. A mind that is not used becomes dull and stupid. Talents that are not used, opportunities that are neglected, will be lost and never regained. "From him that hath not"—i.e. does not use what he has in the service of God—"even that he hath shall be taken away from him."

As the nobleman went to a far country, so Christ has ascended to heaven. But Christ will return, and then will be the accounting. This will be his verdict upon all who rebel against his authority (v. 14): "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

The day of grace will then have come to an end; the day of judgment, without mercy, will have begun. Then all "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17). A dreadful day to all such!

But a glorious day to all who love Christ's appearing—to those to whom salvation has come and who have been good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Cover: drawing by John Tolsma

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# In Gratitude for Seventy Years

PAUL WOOLLEY

In June of the year 1895 the Kiel Canal, connecting the Baltic coast of Germany with its North Sea coast through German territory, was opened with a great deal of noise and fanfare. A few days earlier a much quieter event, but one which was to be more significant in terms of real values, had taken place in the farm country of the northeastern part of the Netherlands. Here on May 3 of that year Cornelius Van Til was born at Grootegast in the province of Groningen. He came to be called Kees, and he liked that much better than the long form of his name. Even today, C. Van Til is much better in his eyes than Cornelius Van Til.

These were noble years in the history of the Netherlands. King William, III, had died after a useful and prosperous reign and his young daughter Wilhelmina succeeded him. Her mother ruled as regent on behalf of the daughter. In Christian matters there was a great outpouring of talent. In 1892 four hundred thousand loyal Christians who had suffered a great deal for their Christian faith were united at last in one great church. Some of them had seen persecution from both church and state as early as 1834. Others had been faced with bitter unfairness in the decade of the 80's. Now they formed a great unity. To the public eye two men stood out above the others as scholars and leaders. One was the universal genius Abraham Kuyper, who had just completed his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* when Kees Van Til was born. The other was a brilliant dogmatician and historian, Herman Bavinck, who was working on a comprehensive dogmatics. It traced the history of the understanding of the Bible in a unique way for such a book. The first volume was on the bookstore counters, hot from the press, in 1895.

Kees had a good time on the farm even when the weather required wooden shoes but he was not to stay there many years. There were greater

opportunities in the open fertile fields of the American middle west than in the crowded Netherlands. So at the age of ten Kees' father brought his wife and children to the fields of northern Indiana along the Ridge Road that runs east to west on the height in the upper part of Lake County. It was open country, but twenty-five miles to the northwest was the great sprawling metropolis of Chicago, expanding in population every hour, not only through births but by constant immigration from Europe. Railroads were crisscrossing northern Indiana, all heading into the great knot of junctions in Chicago. Still nearer at hand Judge Elbert Gary's new United States Steel Corporation was buying up land on the shore of Lake Michigan just above where Kees now lived. There they were going to set up a great steel city that was to be named Gary, after the Judge himself, and was to become the second largest city in the state. So there was ample market for the products of the Van Til farm.

## Calvin and Princeton

The things that grew in the ground, however, were not the most important growth and father Van Til was wise enough to see that. He had some boys who could use both their brains and their hands. After school years they went to college—the college of the Church to which they belonged, the Christian Reformed. That Church was the nearest American equivalent to the great Church in the Netherlands that sheltered Kuyper and Bavinck.

Cornelius took his bachelor of arts degree in 1922 from Calvin College of Grand Rapids, Michigan. If his father had been wealthy, it would have been a few years earlier. But then perhaps the family ties would not have been as close and the son would not have been as easily able to understand all the varied difficulties that stand in the way of a complete education for many American boys.

By the time he finished Calvin, Van Til knew his interests and something about his abilities, and he headed for Princeton. In two years he had acquired two more degrees, bachelor of theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, marking the completion of its regular course for the ministry, and a master of arts degree from Princeton University. He was also keeping his feet on the ground by oiling the administrative wheels in the Seminary (later Warfield) Club, one of the four eating clubs which fed the students of Princeton Seminary. The girl he was later to marry did not need to be told how to cook, but he could have done it, if it had been necessary.

His studies did not stop with the end of the regular course in the Seminary. In 1925 he received the degree of master of theology. His particular interest was philosophy in its relation to the Christian faith. He had arrived in Princeton in time to study under William Brenton Greene, Jr., a wise mentor whose gentle nature and high voice had both amused students and endeared him to them. Although a New Englander by birth, Greene had graduated in Princeton in both arts and theology and had gone to the Princeton faculty in 1892 from the famous Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia to be Stuart Professor of the Relations of Philosophy and Science to the Christian Religion. The name of the chair was later shortened, but this was just the type of thing which interested Van Til, and he and Greene became warm friends.

## Doctor of Philosophy

At the opening of the academic year in the fall of 1925 Van Til was married to an Indiana neighbor, Miss Rena Klooster, and then continued his philosophical studies in the university, working especially under Archibald Allan Bowman, a native of Scotland on temporary loan to America, where he was Professor of Logic at Princeton University. Although their views were

far from coinciding, they were in many ways kindred spirits, and Van Til admired Bowman's clarity of thought and sincerity of Christian devotion. By vigorous application he made rapid progress on his dissertation. His interests were especially concerned with recent British idealism and its roots in Plato and early Greek philosophy. He wanted to see how all this was related to the contemporary Christian situation. The defense of his dissertation before the professors of varied views who constituted the Princeton department of philosophy at that time was lively, and he received his degree as doctor of philosophy at the 1927 commencement.

Van Til's eyes now turned back toward the home territory of the middle west. He was ordained and installed as pastor of the Christian Reformed Church at Spring Lake, Michigan, after the close of his studies in Princeton. He was not, however, to remain long in Michigan. For some years Greene had been unable to carry the full load in apologetics at Princeton Seminary. Temporary teachers were filling in, and finally the Board of Directors elected J. Gresham Machen to be Professor of Apologetics. This election needed, however, the approval of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and at the urgent plea of the president of the Seminary, Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, confirmation was denied to Dr. Machen. Instead a committee was set up to investigate the condition of the Seminary. Someone was needed to fill the vacancy left by the refusal to confirm Machen, and Van Til was appointed Instructor in Apologetics for the year 1928-1929.

### From Princeton to Westminster

This proved to be the last year of the old, historic Princeton, the last year in which the Board of Directors was to exist and to control the teaching. In the spring of 1929 the General Assembly voted to put the Seminary under a new Board of Trustees elected to introduce a different policy into the Seminary. Van Til was invited by the President to return, but he declined the invitation because of the change of control. In fact, he was back in Spring Lake, Michigan, when the invitation reached him to join the faculty of the new Westminster Theological Seminary in process of organization to continue the historic

confession of the Princeton Seminary. He was enthusiastic about the idea of Westminster, because he believed in a vigorous and militant stance to present the gospel in the contemporary world and wanted to support that in every way possible.

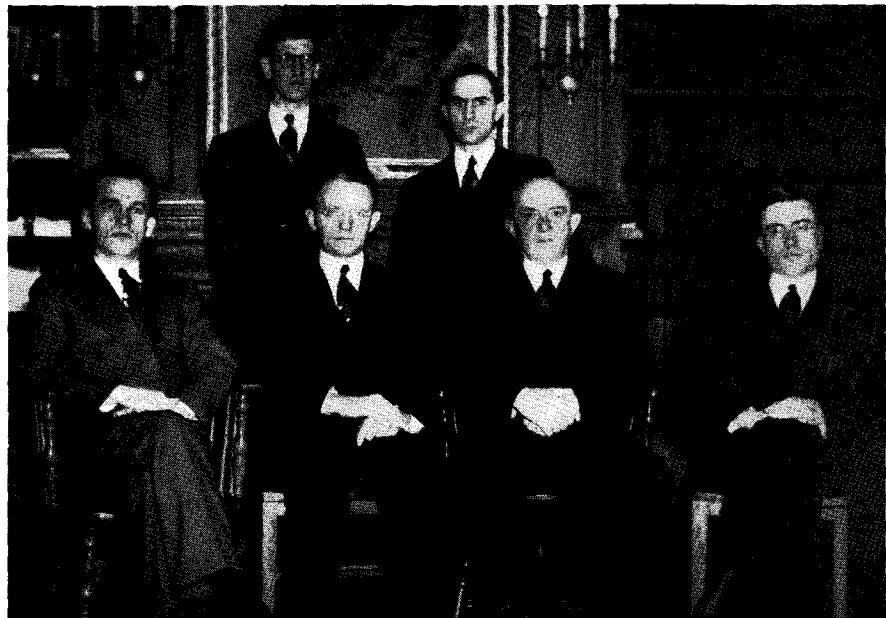
In September of 1929 Van Til began teaching as Professor of Apologetics in Philadelphia. He was convinced that there was a more accurate and more effective defense of the Christian faith than was furnished by the type which Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield had taught in Princeton and which Machen would have followed had he taught apologetics. It was founded upon the work of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands. He did not start with human reason or with some supposedly neutral standpoint which, of course, could never really be neutral. Instead he started with the conviction at the bottom of the heart of man that there is a God and that men are responsible to him. Information about that God is presented in the inspired Scriptures. There Christianity must begin.

### Teacher, Writer and Lecturer

Cornelius Van Til has been Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Seminary from 1929 to the present day. During that time he has formally taught something like a thousand students at both the regular and graduate levels. He has published at least

seven full-sized books, some of them more than once in revised editions. He has produced a dozen or so shorter pamphlets and booklets. Apart from these formally published items, he has written syllabi for guidance in instruction, in numbers and revisions which only an accomplished bibliographer could catalogue. These syllabi are not to be had through the ordinary book trade but they are so popular that people write for copies from points thousands of miles from Philadelphia. A constant stream of articles and book reviews has appeared in *The Westminster Theological Journal*. He also serves on the editorial staff of *Philosophia Reformata*.

Van Til has lectured throughout the English-speaking world and, before World War II, was made an honorary professor of the University of Debreczen in Hungary. Students are particularly anxious to hear him. His appearances before student groups in the United States are countless. Summers usually find him teaching in summer schools of theology or in student camps. He is universally recognized as one of the three or four top apologetes in this country who defend the historic view of the Christian faith in a learned fashion. He is, therefore, often that member of a variegated panel who represents the Christian defense of the historic values. But if he is one of the three or four top men, he is unique among that small group.



Westminster faculty in 1938, first year on new campus. Rear: Young, Murray; Front: Stonehouse, Van Til, Kuiper, Woolley.

He is the only one among them who does not appeal to some starting point or principle which is held also by men who are not Christian.

### Defender of the Faith

Van Til has recognized, as every one must, that new theological ideas with power to attract adherents originate more frequently on the continent of Europe than anywhere else. Throughout his years, therefore, he has been concerned to analyze these new ideas and to find out where they came from and to what conclusions they are ultimately going. One of his earlier essays in this direction had to do with the basic notions presented by the theology of Karl Barth. The volume *The New Modernism* (1946) was directed to this end. It proved to be a very powerful antidote to Barth. Less attention was devoted to Emil Brunner and other exponents of neo-orthodoxy. In recent years Van Til has given a good deal of thought to Heidegger and to other existentialists because of their influence on the Bultmannian and post-Bultmannian developments.

The doctrine of common grace is little known in many Christian circles. It is, however, indispensable to a Christian understanding of life and the world. Van Til's discussions of this subject have generated a good deal of healthy concern and have increased knowledge accordingly.

In the years just past he has been especially anxious to point out the essential elements in true Christianity and a book like *The Case for Calvinism* (1964) is the result.

### The Man Himself

The man himself shines through his literary activity, but only imperfectly. It is important to see him and to know him. In the classroom, at first sight, he might be thought to be only an entertainer drawing an infinity of circles. And he is an entertainer, for roars of laughter come in waves through the classroom door. But the standpoint which generates these waves is immediately apparent. The most noticeable thing about him is his gentleness. He speaks with great vigor and states his views boldly. No hearer is in doubt as to his basic viewpoint. But there is always a perfect gentleness accompanying him personally. He seems to lack entirely the flaring temper that troubles so many of us.

His convictions are firm, and he

brings tremendous energy to the statement of them. It manifests itself in the hours that he spends writing at his desk, in the forcefulness of his talk in the classroom or on the public platform, in his willingness to travel to fill engagements to speak. His devotion is boundless.

But the outstanding characteristic is the intellectual genius which he manifests. He stands out from his academic peers by the penetrating quality

of his analytic judgment. It is an intellectual pleasure of the highest type to follow his discussion of a current point of view. Cornelius Van Til is a brilliant member of the small group of top-flight intellects who defend and expound biblical Calvinism in its application to the problems of an age that explores space.

And for those whose pleasures are not intellectual there is always Mrs. Van Til's coconut cake.

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## Creative Builder

ROBERT D. KNUDSEN

Van Til has often pictured himself to his students as standing on the shoulders of the greats of Reformed theology and philosophy. He has claimed to be original only in the true sense of the word, that he has built creatively upon the foundations that others have laid.

All the greats of the old Princeton — Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, William Brenton Greene, J. Gresham Machen—are a part of this tradition. In the pyramid are also the greats of Dutch Reformed thought — Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. As Van Til began to formulate his ideas about a method of defending the Christian faith that would effectively challenge the natural man, who resists the clear testimony of God's revelation, he found a welcome ally in the new Christian philosophy that was being developed at the Free University of Amsterdam under the leadership of Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. Th. Vollenhoven. Van Til has for many years been interpreting and adapting this philosophy to the English speaking world.

Now recently Van Til has been called one of the outstanding voices in America for a truly reformational philosophy. Wheaton College has presented him with an award for stimulating such a large number of young men to further study. A long list of younger spokesmen for the Christian

faith have been stimulated by Van Til and have gone on to occupy positions of responsibility. Among them are Evan Runner of Calvin College, E. J. Carnell of Fuller Theological Seminary, William Young and David Freeman of the University of Rhode Island, Edmund P. Clowney of Westminster Theological Seminary. The positions that I myself have taken in Christian philosophy and in the interpretation of contemporary theology would not have been possible apart from Van Til's influence. Already in my undergraduate days at the University of California at Berkeley, I felt the inadequacy of the traditional defense of the Christian faith; but it was Van Til's writings and later his instruction that set me on the way that I am still traveling.

### Practical Influence

In the practical sphere also Van Til's influence has been felt. The Christian school system in the Philadelphia area owes much to him. He was one of the founders of the Willow Grove Christian Day School (now part of the Philadelphia-Montgomery Christian Academy), and his theories of Christian education have helped to inspire those who have carried on this work. The full impact of Van Til's struggle for Christian action must still be felt, but it appears wherever there is an attempt on this continent to let Christian principles have their effect in politics, in society, or in literature.

There are particularly two areas where Van Til's stance must be re-

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*Dr. Knudsen is Assistant Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary.*



spected. The first is his untiring struggle for a Reformed apologetics that does not compromise with unbelief but which challenges it at its root. Van Til must be honored for his unflinching stand for a consistently biblical approach. The second is his prophetic warning against the inroads of the so-called new orthodoxy or new reformation theology. In spite of the appearances, Van Til has pointed out that it retains a profound trust in the independence of man's reason from the revelation of God. It distorts the truths of God's Word. It is, at bottom, only a disguised modernism.

### Others too Must Build

Younger men, nevertheless, will have to come and build upon the foundation that Van Til has helped to lay. They, in turn, will have to stand on his shoulders. What happens to every important philosophy has happened to the Christian philosophy that Van Til has helped introduce. It is still being set forth enthusiastically and prophetically; but it is also being analyzed and criticized in a growing number of books and articles. If the reformational

claim to be a truly Christian philosophy.

Furthermore, the winds are shifting again in theology. They have shifted from Barth to Bultmann, and then from Bultmann to those who are trying to go beyond him. Van Til has been aware of these shifts. Although he has always specialized in the thought of Karl Barth, he has also read widely in the recent literature and has written on the post-Bultmann school. Nevertheless, those who have learned from Van Til will have to carry on this work. They will also have to place the prophetic warning that Van Til has uttered against the new reformation theology in the broad context of the history of modern theology. That is not to think lightly of what he has accomplished. It is only to prophesy that he, too, will occupy his place among the leaders of Reformed thought upon whose labors others will have to build.

## Personal Touch

I cannot forget Dr. Van Til and Mrs. Van Til. I am a Korean pastor who graduated from Westminster Seminary in May, 1936. When I was studying in that Seminary the school building was located on Pine Street in downtown Philadelphia, Pa. At that time, I took Dr. Machen's courses mostly because my major was New Testament exegesis.

One day, while I was standing in front of the bulletin board, Dr. Van Til appeared and began to talk with me with unusual concern for me. I cannot remember what he said to me at that time, but his facial expressions still remain vivid in my memory. In a word, he touched my heart with his deep humility, tenderness and love. I was impressed as if he were my elder brother.

I can never forget Mrs. Van Til too. Right after the commencement exercises in which I received my diploma, she came to me with great concern for me and shook my hand in a spirit of hearty congratulation. The impression of her great Christian spirit still remains vivid in my life.

The above-mentioned experiences indicate something about Dr. Van Til's theology. His theology is a powerful and living theology. Yes, he imparted this to me. I am thankful

to our Lord for his theology. His metaphysics and apologetics have brought me to the full understanding of true Christian theism. Particularly my research work on "Crisis Theology" under his instruction during the academic year 1938-1939 brought me to the true Christian view of revelation.

Ever since August of 1936 I have been writing commentaries on the Holy Scriptures. In this work I owe much of my thinking to Dr. Van Til. True apologetics is needed not only for defending Christian theism but also for a right understanding of the Bible. Without having a true Christian philosophy which also is derived from the Bible, we cannot apply hermeneutics to the Scriptures in the right fashion. Human autonomy can never interpret the Bible correctly.

I am now 61 years old. My ministry is of three kinds: seminary teaching, writing commentaries, and pastoral work. The Korean Church is now complicated with all sorts of thinking. At this point, we feel strongly the necessity of finding out the way of cultivating Calvinism in this land. I am convinced that Dr. Van Til's system is the most tenable Calvinistic thinking.

YUNE SUN PARK

*For nearly thirty years Dr. Park, in addition to his labors as a Korean Presbyterian pastor and a theological seminary professor, has devoted himself to preparing commentaries for the church in Korea. Having finished the New Testament books, eight volumes in all, he is now at work on the Old Testament and has completed three volumes.*

## Multiplication

In many ways I consider that Dr. Van Til is one of the greatest men I have had the privilege to know. In all of my educational experience I feel that he influenced my personal thinking as much as any other single faculty member.

My own experience was not so much that he brought any great revolution in my views. Rather, he helped me to become "epistemologically self-conscious." It was thus in apologetic methodology that he has been of the greatest sort of help in my own think-

### *Some of the best known works by C. Van Til are:*

The New Modernism (two editions)

Christianity and Barthianism

The Defense of the Faith

Common Grace

The Theology of James Daane

The Case for Calvinism

### *Important mimeographed materials:*

The New Evangelicalism

Christianity in Conflict (to be three volumes)

The Search for Meaning in Modern Thought

Kant, and Other Studies in Theology

Notes on Roman Catholicism

*Dr. Van Til is also the author of hundreds of other writings, including articles, sermons, addresses, reviews, and syllabi.*

insights of this philosophy are to be preserved and applied, its friends must also undertake this careful and painstaking labor. Its points of view must be clarified. If there is to be precision, differences among its adherents cannot remain hidden. It must also be evaluated again and again as to its

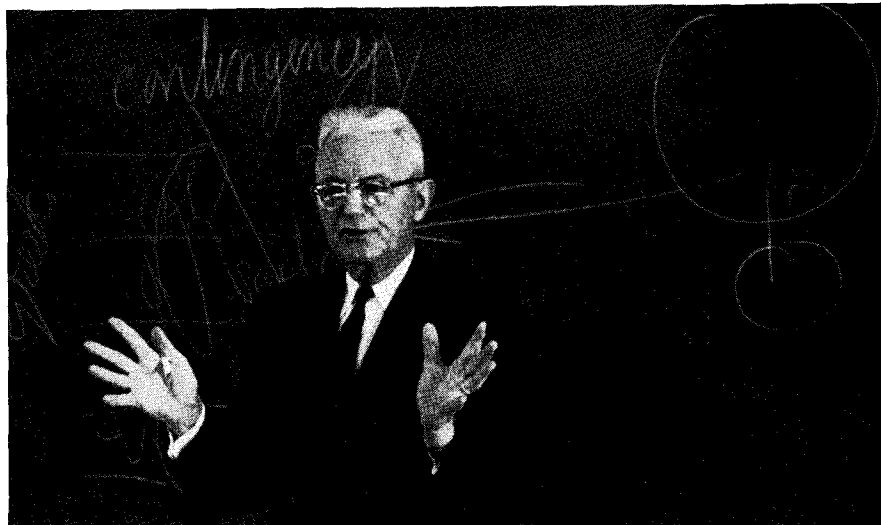
ing about the gospel in the world today.

One of the areas of contribution that he has made, which is perhaps often overlooked, is the indirect impact that he has had through his former students. I know that my own teaching for over ten years has been repeatedly punctuated with quotations from or allusions to Dr. Van Til. For a teacher to know that his instruction is being multiplied through those whom he has taught is abundant reward indeed.

May God richly bless you, sir, as you come to this milestone in your life, and may He enable those of us who have received so much from you to carry on in teaching the faith as consistently as you have done. We have all admired you for your courage to face any foe to the faith, and pray that we may be granted similar insight and courage.

MORTON H. SMITH

*Dr. Smith, a Southern Presbyterian, is Professor of Theology in the Reformed Theological Institute, Kosciusko, Mississippi.*



—Jack Shepherd photo

**“One of the high points of the class hour is Dr. Van Til’s work at the blackboard. To the delight of the students the blackboard soon comes to resemble a modern abstract painting—with crisscrossing lines, arrows, names of thinkers, and circles. The circles, of course, are the key to the whole design.”**

## Pioneer of the Faith

Just for a moment imagine that you are sitting in one of Dr. Van Til’s classes at Westminster Seminary. A bright student has posed a difficult question about the philosophy of Kant, and a spirited discussion follows. To you some of the terms seem as long as freight cars: “epistemological self-consciousness,” “concrete universal,” “ontological Trinity,” and “the Creator-creature distinction.”

You feel lost—but only for a moment. A young man in the back row raises his hand. “Dr. Van Til,” he says with a timid smile, “I’m afraid I didn’t quite get that last point about the Creator-creature distinction.” (As a matter of fact he has missed the whole point of the discussion.)

Then with untiring patience and a touch of humor Professor Van Til takes the time to bring this student back into the mainstream of the class discussion. He illustrates the Christian position by telling a story about a man (the believer) who wanders into a valley where everyone is blind (unregenerate men). The blind people then offer to sew the man’s eyes shut

so that he will see no more “illusions.”

Or he may tell an original parable about the owner of an estate (God) who stamps his name on all his property (the creation). Then he points out how foolish it is for the servants on the estate (men) to pretend that they have no knowledge that the Lord of the property exists.

As he continues using his picturesque language, the shy student and you begin to get the point. You see that this approach has a basic simplicity. It is just the old-fashioned gospel applied to the broad problems of human thought and to the defense of Christian doctrine.

One of the high points of the class hour is Dr. Van Til’s work at the blackboard. To the delight of the students the blackboard soon comes to resemble a modern abstract painting—with crisscrossing lines, arrows, names of thinkers, and circles. The circles, of course, are the key to the whole design. At bottom, he says, there are only two ways of looking at the relationship between God and man: there is the Christian approach with two circles,

and the non-Christian approach with one circle. The Christian recognizes in his reasoning that he is a dependent creature made in the image of God; the unbeliever thinks of himself as an independent being who is self-existent.

To those who know him, however, Dr. Van Til is more than a “classroom thinker.” To many of the people of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Glenside he is almost a second pastor, frequently making sick calls or visits to those with special needs. A nearby hospital has been a part of his “parish” and as a summer pulpit supply in Wisconsin he has sought also to minister to the sick and the shut-ins. To sum it up, here is a man whose scholarly teaching ministry is warmed by the heart of a true pastor both within and outside the classroom.

C. JOHN MILLER

*Mr. Miller, after a decade as teacher, pastor, and doctoral candidate in the field of literature at the University of the Pacific, has returned to Westminster to complete his seminary training. He is also writing for the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.*

## What If?

What if there arose in our times a prophet asking the hard questions?—Why must you worship in one place and think in another? Why can’t you have science and theology under one roof? As soon as you have one neutral fact, doesn’t your God become dependent?

What if suddenly we heard of the

God who was not fashioned and shaped by the proud finite mind of man? Of a God so good that there could be no criterion of goodness apart from him? Of a God so true and righteous altogether that no idea of consistency or contradiction had validity apart from him; that in logic we were straitened in ourselves, not in God? What if there were a God so important that he would have to come in as the foundation of man's thinking instead of as the capstone of thought?

What if there should come a philosopher so comprehensive that he would include in his structural thought facts hitherto excluded: the facts of sin, man's enmity, and the wrath of God? What if there were raised up an apostle to Greek and modern thought opening and alleging that God is not of a piece with man, and that the footsteps of God and man do echo in a universe that is theirs?

What if an epistemologist should appear showing us that although we know in part, yet since we know through God, our little knowledge is accurate and that therefore there is also an ocean of the unfathomable in every drop of knowledge? What if there were a God so exceedingly great that his predestination and decrees, instead of taking away man's freedom, could set man free and be the sole guarantor of freedom?

What if there came to our dark world a teacher introducing That Mystery which alone could throw light upon all mysteries, "I AM THAT I AM"? What if a voice were heard crying in our halls of learning, "Unless ye are born again ye cannot see"?

Cornelius Van Til, standing on the shoulders of such a giant of the Reformation as John Calvin, has brought to life's broad spectrum the majestic arch of the sovereignty of God and the rainbow tints of Christ's saving gospel.

R. K. CHURCHILL

*Mr. Churchill is the pastor of the Community Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Sonora, California.*

#### TEACHERS NEEDED

*Oostburg Christian School*

Two teachers needed for the 1965-66 school year: one for grade 1, and one for grade 3 and part of 4. Send letters of inquiry to Roland J. Dirkse, 725 Park Ave., Oostburg, Wisconsin 53070.

## Septuagesima Greeting

This former student of Dr. Van Til is only too glad to give an expression of gratitude to the Lord for the influence and help of such a teacher, particularly on such an occasion as this.

Again and again I am forced to the realization of how much his incisive thinking has assisted me as I seek to teach theology, ethics, or apologetics. His suggestion that, actually, any problem in understanding the Reformed faith arises from a defective appreciation of the implications of the doctrine of creation has aided me with the dear Lord's help to make clearer to many a student the precious truths of God's eternal plan and wondrous sovereign rulership of all things.

Perhaps one of the most satisfying experiences of coming to understand God's Word more clearly came to me in Dr. Van Til's course in Christian theistic ethics. He made plain the total diversity that exists between the worldling who mumbles about goodness and truth but has not the faintest idea what they are; and the Christian who, by God's wondrous grace in giving us the Holy Bible, possesses the absolute standard of God's declared ordination of what is good for man and what will destroy him, both now and in eternity.

But it is, of course, nowhere more apparent with what biblical fidelity and simplicity this our respected teacher has led us to accept the simple facts of Scripture, than in his treatment of the whole problem of witnessing to the unbeliever through a truly scriptural apologetic. The simple honesty of insistence that we remember in what a different biblical context the Christian holds every term and idea as over against his opponent—coupled with Dr. Van Til's stress on the need to examine and continually remember the differing presuppositions with which each begins—is most enlightening as one faces the problems of giving testimony to others.

The humility, so uncharacteristic of modern theology, whereby the effect of sin upon the basis of our reasoning is openly dealt with and Scripture thereby taken as the only source of truth, is so straightforward — when many men seem only to desire to think of themselves more highly than they

*(continued on page 58)*

### Feed My Sheep

Careful, shepherd, how you speak  
For God's little lambs are weak:  
Careful, shepherd, what you feed  
For of Truth there is such need.

Wolves there are within the flock  
Who arise God's Word to mock—  
Never *love* the wolf or bear —  
They come only near to tear.  
As did David strong and bold  
Guard the flock, defend the fold.

Sheep are stupid and they follow  
If you lead to swamp or wallow;  
If you sink deep into sin  
Stupidly they follow in.

Mix them not with goats or swine—  
These are sheep, I made them Mine:  
By my death upon the tree  
I have bought them—what a fee!

Yes, they'll listen for your voice,  
Follow where you lead, your choice  
Of the way by which to go  
Will be theirs; they trust you so.

I have made you shepherd too,  
Given them, a flock, to you.  
If you lead them far astray,  
What your answer on that day  
When their lives from you I quest  
Who with such a task art blest?

Never think a wolf a sheep  
Lest thou for a lost flock weep;  
As thou lovest, guide them true  
With thy crook the danger through.

Send thy dog to drive them in  
Lest they wander into sin.  
Reprove, rebuke, admonish, drive  
If thou wouldst save thy soul alive.

Feed them on the Living Bread,  
Show them Jesus to be fed.  
Fatten, feed them, on them gird  
Strength which flows from Living  
Word.

Warn them, shepherd, warn the herd!  
Lest the tempter on thee mock  
When from you he rends the flock.

R. K. R.

*Professor Rudolph wrote this poem, dated 3/16/61, as a tribute to Dr. Van Til.*



EDITOR

Robert E. Nicholas



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### For His Seventieth

We hope this issue of the *Guardian* may be something of a happy surprise for the beloved professor whose three score and ten years we join in celebrating. Who first thought of the idea we do not know—it all happened within the month—but a few phone calls, some air mail letters and one cablegram brought several responses in time for use. We fear that Dr. Van Til may be somewhat embarrassed since he would never desire such attention to be drawn to himself. This is all the more reason, however, for our delight in thus honoring him.

Just over half of his seventy years have been spent at Westminster Theological Seminary, and it seemed fitting to ask two of his colleagues as well as a number of his former students to write in appreciation of his unique contribution to that institution and to the church at large. We earnestly pray that he may enjoy many more years of fruitful service in God's kingdom.

R. E. N.

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### The Confession of 1967 at First Glance

As we are about to go to press we have just seen a copy of the text of the proposed "Confession of 1967" which appears in the Blue Book prepared for the mid-May 177th General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. The document will be in the focus of Presbyterian study for the next couple of years. All we can do now is mention a few of the more obvious points of concern for those who must surely realize that it brings to a culmination the whole direction

and trend of that denomination in this century.

The theme of this new Confession, according to the Preface, is "God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church," and this is said to be "the heart of the gospel in any age." What, then, is the gospel for 1967 as it centers in this "reconciling work in Jesus Christ"? In terms of the new creed it is a "mystery" that finds scriptural expression in various ways that are called "images of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory." Nor is there any doubt as to what is meant by these "images" or symbols of a truth that apparently can no longer be formulated. For they are designated by quoting the same precious words that the church has heretofore confessed as teaching the truth that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures: "the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life given for his sheep, atonement by a priest, a ransom of a slave, payment of a debt, vicarious satisfaction of a legal penalty, and victory over the powers of evil."

#### What of the Gospel?

These very terms that so plainly teach the substitutionary atonement by a perfect Savior to redeem his people from their sins—these have become, in the phrasing of the proposed Confession, merely symbols of something that is beyond the reach of being stated as objectively revealed truth. It is not putting it too strongly to conclude that *the heart of the gospel has been removed* from this section of the new creed. A reading of the context of II Corinthians 5, from which the theme of reconciliation is derived, will show that the inspired apostle had no such notion about the meaning of the death of Jesus as is proposed for 1967.

We plan to print the full text in a subsequent issue in order that further evaluations may be more readily followed by our readers. Our remarks here take into account background material submitted by the Special Committee headed by Dr. Edward A. Dowey, Jr., as well as the 4200-word Confession itself (much briefer than the 5900-word preliminary draft commented on in *Christianty Today* last October).

The explanatory material makes it clear that the desire for this new creed arises out of a conclusion that "the present mission of the Presbyterian

Church cannot be adequately directed by a seventeenth-century document," particularly because of the allegedly defective view of inspiration and revelation taught by the Westminster Confession.

#### View of the Bible

The Confession of 1967 breaks with the Westminster teaching that the Scripture itself is God's revelation. Rather, it sees the Bible as a normative witness to revelation that becomes God's word to the hearer—a view that is "uninhibited by the doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies," as the introductory analysis states. Instead of asking candidates for office the question as at present ("Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?") the newly proposed amendment to the Form of Government would read: "Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the normative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church catholic, and by his Spirit God's word to you?"

The whole concept of what a confession is intended to be is different. For one thing, confessional statements are regarded as including "such varied forms as hymns, liturgical formulas, doctrinal definitions, catechisms, theological systems in summary, and declarations of purpose against threatening evil." The Confession of 1967 is specifically said not to be "a system of doctrine." Nor is it designed as a statement of unchanging truth firmly grounded upon the objective authority of Scripture alone. Rather, it is a functional tool whose test of validity is its relevance to a living theology that comes to expression out of the experience and meaning of the contemporary situation.

#### Book of Confessions

As already indicated the structure of this Confession is not that of systematic doctrinal development. After a short Preface it has two main parts: "God's Work of Reconciliation" (formulated under three sections in the order of the apostolic benediction) and "The Ministry of Reconciliation" (under the heads of the Mission and the Equipment of the Church). There is a 25-line third part titled "The Fulfillment of Reconciliation."

Moreover, this proposed creed is to

be the eighth in a Book of Confessions, both ancient and modern, and left open for "such other confessions as are from time to time required by the Holy Spirit." This Book is to be the first division of the church's new constitution; the second will be the Book of Order. In place of the present third question for ordination ("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?") the candidate, under the new formula, will be asked: "Will you perform the duties of a minister of the gospel in obedience to Christ, under the authority of the Scripture, and the guidance of the confessions of this Church?" Here certainly is a far more subjective approach.

It is not too surprising to find the 1967 Confession practically eliminating such basic distinctions as, for example, that between the Christian religion and other religions, all of which are to be approached "with openness and respect." In the section on "Reconciliation in Society" there is a blurring of the line between the specific sphere of the church's task as church and the legitimate functions of government and society or groups within society, so that almost any noble effort for the general welfare of mankind would appear to be a part of the church's "ministry of reconciliation."

(concluded from page 56)

ought. In an hour when men seek to becloud issues and say that there is no truth, how refreshing to be given a position where there is clarity of perception and honest acknowledgement of important differences!

There has become apparent another great difference between this apologete and the more popularly acclaimed thinkers of our day: whereas they are difficult all too often because they themselves really do not have a clear idea, when Dr. Van Til seemed difficult to me it was because he was so plain and loyal in his adherence to the simple basis of the Word of God, the Bible. How often we hear, "So and so must be great, he is so difficult to understand," — when actually he is hard to understand because he is not saying anything in particular! But for me when at first I did not grasp what Dr. Van Til was teaching I found it often arose because I was not prepared

Finally, it is evident that this Confession of 1967 is quite ecumenical in its orientation. It will be no barrier to such proposals as that of Blake and Pike for an inclusivist merger of diverse denominations. The tones of universalism so prevalent in current theology are at least implicit throughout. Presbyterian and Reformed distinctives find little, if any, place. Whatever it may say about reconciliation, the new Confession cannot possibly be reconciled with its honored predecessor of three centuries' standing.

As to procedure, the UPUSA Assembly meeting in Columbus, Ohio is required to appoint a Special Committee of Fifteen, no more than two members from any one synod, to consider the proposed addition and constitutional changes. The Special Committee on a Brief Contemporary Statement of Faith is asking that it be continued for consultation by the Committee of Fifteen. The latter Committee will make recommendations to the 1966 General Assembly regarding the entire proposal. If adopted by the 1966 Assembly, the overtures will be submitted to the presbyteries for their approval (two thirds must consent to the doctrinal addition) before final adoption by the Assembly of 1967 — hence the date-name given to the proposed Confession.

R. E. N.

to be that simple in my devotion to basic principles of the Bible!

Not only has Dr. Van Til equipped his pupils with clearer insight through deeper appreciation of the great principles of the Word, but he has set them a wonderful example of Christian humility and love. Conscious as this writer is that there is no such thing as a self-made man; clear in the knowledge that all that we are and have are God's gifts; convinced as he is that there is a true validity to God's created agents through whom He works; this writer gladly thanks God for giving him such clear instruction and such a good example in his beloved professor.

Let us never forget the good doctor's marvelous insistence during the symposium on Barth a few years back when brilliant thinkers got themselves bogged down in the minutiae of the problem of whether Barth made re-

velation historical—to the point where they were symbolically debating whether when God's revelation stone hit our historical pool it did or did not send out ripples—Dr. Van Til with regard for the important and the simple demanded to know what either opinion would have to do with saving God's lost sheep! Whatever the outcome of the technical battle, whichever Barth might mean, would the lost sheep find the blood of Christ and heaven through his teaching? This and not theory is what matters.

Your liturgical son, praying for grace to remain faithful to God's truth, salutes you, Dr. Van Til.

ROBERT K. RUDOLPH

*Dr. Rudolph is Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics in the Seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church, Philadelphia.*

## Westminster Commencement

Dr James I. Packer, the widely known Warden of Latimer House, Oxford, England, will deliver the commencement address at Westminster Theological Seminary on May 19. He will also deliver a series of lectures the following week at the 15th Annual Reformed Ministerial Institute conducted by the Alumni Association of Westminster Seminary.

The subject of Dr. Packer's commencement address is "Ministry of the Word Today"; his lectures at the Institute will be on the subject, "The Puritan Heritage." One evening session of the Institute on May 25 will feature a popular address by Dr. Packer on "The Theology of Spiritual Renewal."

These two events on the calendar of Westminster Seminary provide an opportunity to hear an unusually gifted scholar and author whose books have had great influence in both this country and England. Dr. Packer's works include such books as *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, and *Keep Yourselves from Idols*, the latter being a popular reply to Archbishop Robinson's *Honest to God*.

Other events during the Commencement season will be the annual banquet at the Casa Conti on Tuesday evening and the Women's Auxiliary luncheon on Wednesday noon, May 19. The Rev. Le Roy Oliver, president of the Board of Trustees, is to speak to the ladies.

# What I Have Learned

It was my privilege to be a student in one of Dr. Van Til's courses many years ago. At that time I came to appreciate and value highly his penetrating scholarship in the exposition and defense of Christian truth. I have always admired his genuine friendliness and real humility. Since my student days I have profited greatly by his published writings.

From Dr. Van Til I learned most clearly and unanswerably that a man's basic philosophic viewpoint determines the end-products of his scholarship. A man's philosophy is all-important. The more consistent thinker he is, the more certain it is that his conclusions will be in harmony with his basic presuppositions. What a man believes about the Bible and about Jesus Christ cannot possibly be divorced from his basic philosophic position. The presuppositions of Kant or the modern existentialists cannot possibly lead to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Secondly, from Dr. Van Til I learned that the notion of neutral (completely uninterpreted or "brute") fact, as held by traditional Protestant apologetics, is an illusion which vitiates much would-be defense of Christianity. I learned the foolishness of holding the "just thereness" of facts. Facts do not simply exist—to hold that they do is a denial of the doctrine of creation. They are God-created facts and as soon as the human subject thinks about them at all he must interpret them in terms of some universal. In the end it comes down to God or man as the ultimate interpreter of facts. Consistent Christian theism interprets facts in terms of God's revelation of their meaning; modern secular humanism interprets facts in terms of "just thereness" and an assumed ultimacy of the human mind—the idolatrous, self-worshipping, sinful human mind.

Thirdly, from Dr. Van Til I have learned not to be deceived by the seeming religiosity and zeal of the Barthian and Neo-orthodox scholars of our day. These men use much of the terminology of the theology of the Reformation, but their real meaning differs radically from it. Always courteous and kind in his controversial writings, Dr. Van Til nevertheless penetrates the cloud of terminology and brings to light the real meaning

and implications of modern theological thought. His writings impress me as always seeking light, not heat, and always realizing that truth is of supreme importance and to be made known at all costs, regardless of consequences. If Dr. Van Til has enemies—and what defender of the truth does not?—surely the reason is his forthright, plain-spoken and unsparing exposure of the idols of the sin-darkened mind of modern man.

JOHANNES G. VOS

*Dr. Vos, Chairman of the Department of Biblical Literature, Religious Education and Philosophy in Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pa., is also Editor of Blue Banner Faith and Life and a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.*

## Plans for Orthodox Presbyterian Assembly

Arrangements are shaping up for meals and lodging for commissioners and guests who will attend the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon. An evening meeting at the host First Church is planned for Wednesday, July 7 with formal sessions getting under way Thursday morning, July 8.

Members of the congregation will be able to house some but by no means all of the visitors in their homes. Arrangements have been made to accommodate others in the dormitory facilities of Judson Baptist College, on Rocky Butte, about a mile from the church. Eighty rooms are available in the dorms and beds may be arranged to suit the preferences of commissioners and their families.

Rates are reported to be only a dollar per night for a bed (all beds are singles), but visitors must supply their own linens, pillows, and towels. The committee hopes to have these available at a nominal rental through a local agency.

There is no tenting on Rocky Butte, but camping trailers will be permitted at a dollar per night, with the use of dormitory facilities. There are camping areas outside of Portland, and arrangements have been made for any who desire to camp on the Vanden Hoek farm near Newberg, some 30



—Bob Jewell photo

The Rev. Albert G. Edwards in the pulpit of First Church, Portland, Oregon Host to General Assembly

miles away. The farm, which includes a private three-acre lake with fishing privileges, belongs to one of the elders of First Church.

A "substantial" breakfast will be served for fifty cents at the Judson dining hall for those who wish it. The plan is for all commissioners and families to eat the noon meal together at Judson's dining hall with the cost for the lunch only seventy-five cents. Everyone is to be "on his own" for evening meals, and the committee will furnish the names of restaurants in the vicinity at various price ranges.

The Activities and Transportation Committee is planning some sight-seeing trips for those who wish to enjoy Oregon from the mountains to the coast as well as around Portland. Car rental agencies near the church advertise at five dollars a day plus mileage. The gymnasium at Judson will be available for volley ball, etc. First Church is making every effort to make the stay of its guests pleasant, reports Pastor Albert Edwards.

*Any who even hope to attend are urged to make their tentative plans known at once: arrival day, number coming, whether they will have transportation, etc. Write Mr. Edwards, c/o First Church, 8245 N. E. Fremont, Portland 20, Oregon.*

# The Creeds and Doctrinal Advance

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

Last Sunday afternoon, in the first of our talks of this winter, I spoke to you in a summary sort of way about the progress of Christian doctrine in the church. I showed how the church advanced from the very meagre statement which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, on through the great early ecumenical creeds, setting forth the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, and through Augustine, with his presentation of the doctrine of sin and of divine grace, to the Reformation and to Calvin. I showed how that type of doctrine which follows on the path in which Calvin moved is called the Reformed faith.

The Reformed faith has found expression in a number of great creeds which all exhibit the same general type. One of these creeds is the Heidelberg Catechism. That is the official doctrinal standard of certain American churches whose members came originally from the continent of Europe. These churches are called "Reformed" churches.

Another of the great creeds setting forth the Reformed faith is the one that consists of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. They are the official doctrinal standards of certain American churches whose members originally came chiefly from Scotland and Ireland. These are called "Presbyterian" churches. It is these doctrinal standards to which I have frequently referred in these little talks that I have been giving on Sunday afternoons.

Perhaps one question was in the minds of some of you as I reviewed the progress of Christian doctrine. Why should the progress be thought to have been brought to a close in the seventeenth century, when the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms were produced? Why should there not be still further doctrinal advance? If the church advanced in doctrine up to the time of the Westminster Standards, why should it now

*Although delivered nearly thirty years ago, this address will likely strike the reader as having been prepared with today's events in mind! With his usual acumen Dr. Machen wrote words that are most timely in the light of the forthcoming "Creed of 1967" which is to be submitted to the May Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*

*The article is reprinted from the Guardian of February 10, 1940.*

not proceed still further on its onward march?

## What Doctrine Is

Well, there is no essential reason why it should not do so. However before it attempts to do so, it is very important for it to understand precisely what Christian doctrine is. It should understand very clearly that Christian doctrine is just a setting forth of what the Bible teaches. At the foundation of Christian doctrine is the acceptance of the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God.

That is often forgotten by those who today undertake to write confessional statements. Let us give expression to our Christian experience, they say, in forms better suited to the times in which we are living than are the older creeds of the church. So they sit down and concoct various forms of words, which they represent as being on a plane with the great creeds of Christendom.

When they do that, they are simply forgetting what the creeds of Christendom are. The creeds of Christendom are not expressions of Christian experience. They are summary statements of what God has told us in his Word. Far from the subject-matter of the creeds being derived from Christian experience, it is Christian experience

which is based upon the truth contained in the creeds; and the truth contained in the creeds is derived from the Bible, which is the Word of God. Groups of people that undertake to write a creed without believing in the full truthfulness of the Bible, and without taking the subject-matter of their creed from that inspired Word of God, are not at all taking an additional step on the pathway on which the great Christian creeds moved; rather, they are moving in an exactly opposite direction. What they are doing has nothing whatever to do with that grand progress of Christian doctrine of which I spoke. Far from continuing the advance of Christian doctrine they are starting something entirely different, and that something different, we may add, is doomed to failure from the start.

The first prerequisite, then, for any advance in Christian doctrine is that those who would engage in it should believe in the full truthfulness of the Bible and should endeavor to make their doctrine simply a presentation of what the Bible teaches.

## Principles to Be Observed

There are other principles also that must be observed if there is to be real doctrinal advance. For one thing, all real doctrinal advance proceeds in the direction of greater precision and fullness of doctrinal statement. Just run over in your minds again the history of the great creeds of the church. How meagre was the so-called Apostles' Creed, first formulated in the second century! How far more precise and full were the creeds of the great early councils, beginning with the Nicene creed in A. D. 325! How much more precise and how vastly richer still were the Reformation creeds and especially our Westminster Confession of Faith!

This increasing precision and this

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*At the foundation of Christian doctrine is the acceptance of the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God.*

increasing richness of doctrinal statement were arrived at particularly by way of refutation of errors as they successively arose. At first the church's convictions about some point of doctrine were implicit rather than explicit. They were not carefully defined. They were assumed rather than expressly stated. Then some new teaching arose. The church reflected on the matter, comparing the new teaching with the Bible. It found the new teaching to be contrary to the Bible. As over against the new teaching, it set forth precisely what the true Biblical teaching on the point is. So a great doctrine was clearly stated in some great Christian creed.

That method of doctrinal advance is, of course, in accord with the fundamental laws of the mind. You cannot set forth clearly what a thing is without placing it in contrast with what it is not. All definition proceeds by way of exclusion. How utterly shallow, then, is the notion that the church ought to make its teaching positive and not negative—the notion that controversy should be avoided and truth should be maintained without attack upon error! The simple fact is that truth cannot possibly be maintained in any such way. Truth can be maintained only when it is sharply differentiated from error. It is no wonder, then, that the great creeds of the church, as also the great revivals of religion in the church, were born in theological controversy. The increasing richness and the increasing precision of Christian doctrine were brought about very largely by the necessity of excluding one alien element after another from the teaching of the church.

### **Truth in Relation to Error**

In recent years the church has often entered upon an exactly opposite course of procedure. It has constructed what purport to be doctrinal statements, but these supposed doctrinal statements are constructed for a purpose which is just the opposite of the purpose that governed the formation of the great historic creeds.

The historic creeds were exclusive of error; they were intended to exclude error; they were intended to set forth the Biblical teaching in sharp

*Words are used which formerly had a meaning, and which ought to have a meaning now; but these words have been explained away. . . .*

contrast with what was opposed to the Biblical teaching, in order that the purity of the church might be preserved. These modern statements, on the contrary, are inclusive of error. They are designed to make room in the church for just as many people and for just as many types of thought as possible.

There are entirely too many denominations in this country, says the modern ecclesiastical efficiency expert. Obviously, many of them must be merged. But the trouble is, they have different creeds. Here is one church, for example, that has a clearly Calvinistic creed; here is another whose creed is just as clearly Arminian, let us say, and anti-Calvinistic. How in the world are we going to get the two together? Why, obviously, says the ecclesiastical efficiency expert, the thing to do is to tone down that Calvinistic creed; just smooth off its sharp angles, until Arminians will be able to accept it. Or else we can do something better still. We can write an entirely new creed that will contain only what Arminianism and Calvinism have in common, so that it can serve as the basis for some proposed new "United Church."

Such are the methods of modern church-unionism. Those methods are carried even to much greater lengths today than in the hypothetical example that I have just mentioned. Calvinism and Arminianism, which I have mentioned in the example, though they differ very widely, are both of them types of evangelical Christian belief. But many of these modern statements are so worded as to gain the assent not only of men who hold different varieties of Christian belief, like Calvinism and Arminianism, but also of men who hold to no really Christian belief at all.

Take some of the great world-conferences on missions, for example. At those conferences are represented men who believe in the virgin birth of Christ, his substitutionary atonement,

his bodily resurrection and other essential elements of the historic Christian faith, and also there are represented men who oppose these things or belittle them as entirely unimportant. There are many speeches—some of them from men generally thought to be evangelical Christians, some of them from distinguished Modernists. After days of such speech-making, a common statement of belief is presented and is unanimously adopted.

### **Vague Use of Words**

What is that common statement like? Well, its outstanding characteristic is apt to be just what would be expected from the circumstances under which it was adopted. Its outstanding characteristic is apt to be a complete absence of character—a complete and unrelieved vagueness. Really, when I read some of these statements, I am amazed at the amount of printer's ink which it is possible to use up without saying anything at all. Words and phrases are indeed used which formerly had a meaning, and which ought to have a meaning now; but these words have been explained away so long that in themselves they now afford no evidence whatever as to what the person who uses them really believes.

When such a vague statement is issued there are always found people who rejoice. Was it not great cause for rejoicing, they say, that our differences were all ironed out? We had been afraid, they say, lest some one would have objected to an evangelical statement like the statement of that missionary council; but our fears were groundless, and even those at the council who were accounted most radical consented to the statement like all the rest. Was not that perfectly splendid?

No, I say when people talk to me in that fashion, I do not think it was splendid at all. I think it was very sad. I should not have thought it to be splendid even if the statement of the council had been really evangelical instead of only apparently so. Is it splendid when men who are plainly out of accord with an evangelical statement acquiesce in the issuance of it and then go on exactly as before in their opposition to the things that the

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*The creeds of Christendom are not expressions of Christian experience. They are summary statements of what God has told us in his Word.*

statement contains? I am bound to think that that is the reverse of splendid

But, as a matter of fact, the statement in most cases is not really evangelical at all, but utterly vague. It is so worded as to offend no one. At least, it is so worded as to offend no one except those old-fashioned souls who are hungry for the bread of life and are not satisfied with a type of Christian doctrine that is afraid of its own shadow. The statement is usually so worded that the Modernists can interpret its traditional phrases in their own fashion; and, on the other hand, it is so worded that persons who are evangelical, or think they are evangelical, can bring it back to their constituency as a great diplomatic triumph of orthodoxy. Its great object is to avoid offence. The consequence is that it is just about as far removed as possible from the gospel of Christ. For the gospel of Christ is always offensive in the extreme.

When we pass from these modern statements to the great creeds, what a difference we discover! Instead of wordiness we find conciseness; instead of an unwillingness to offend, clear delimitation of truth from error; instead of obscurity, clearness; instead of vagueness, the utmost definiteness and precision.

### Differences of Purpose

All these differences are rooted in a fundamental difference of purpose. These modern statements are intended to show how little of truth we can get along with and still be Christians, whereas the great creeds of the church are intended to show how much of truth God has revealed to us in his Word. Let us sink our differences, say the authors of these modern statements, and get back to a few bare essentials; let us open our Bibles, say the authors of the great Christian creeds, and seek to unfold the full richness of truth that the Bible contains. Let us be careful, say the authors of these modern statements, not to discourage any of the various tendencies of thought that find a lodgment in the church; let us give all diligence, say the authors of the great Christian creeds, to exclude deadly error from

*The most important difference of all is that the authors of these modern statements do not really believe firmly in the existence of truth at all.*

the official teaching of the church, in order that thus the church may be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God.

That difference of purpose is a fundamental difference indeed. But I am inclined to think that there is another difference that is more fundamental still. The most important difference of all is that the authors of these modern statements do not really believe firmly in the existence of truth at all. Since doctrine, they say, is merely the expression of Christian experience, doctrines change and yet the fundamental experience remains the same. One generation expresses its Christian experience in one doctrine, and then another generation may express the same Christian experience in an exactly opposite doctrine. So the Modernism of today becomes the orthodoxy of tomorrow, which in turn gives place to a new Modernism, and so on in an infinite series. No doctrine, according to that theory, can remain valid forever; doctrine must change as the forms of thought change from age to age.

When you ask a person of this way of thinking whether he accepts the great historic creeds of the church, he says to you: "Oh yes, certainly I do. I accept them as expressions of the faith of the church. The Apostles' Creed expressed admirably the faith of the ancient church; the Westminster Confession was an admirable expression of the faith of men of the seventeenth century. But as for making these creeds the expression of my faith, of course I cannot possibly do that. I must express my faith in the terms that are suited to the people of the twentieth century. So I must construct a new and entirely different statement to be the creed of modern men."

### Skeptical Notion of Truth

"Well, then," I ask such a man, "do you think your statement is more true than those historic creeds?"

"Not at all," says he, if he really works out the logical conclusions of his conception of creeds; "those creeds

were true expressions of Christian experience, mine also is a true expression of essentially the same experience in the forms of thought that are suited to the present age, but my statement is not a bit more true than those ancient creeds; it, not a bit more than they, can lay claim to permanency; it is true in the present age, but that does not mean at all that it will remain true in the generations to come."

What shall we say about this skeptical notion of what truth is—this skeptical notion with regard to the nature of Christian doctrine? Well, we can say at least this about it: that it is entirely different from the notion that was cherished by those who gave us the great creeds of the church. Those who gave us the great creeds of the church, unlike the authors of these modern statements, believed that the creeds that they produced were true—true in the plain man's sense of the word "truth." They believed that the truth they contained would remain true forever.

### Doctrinal Advance Seems Unlikely

It is time now to get back to the question with which this talk began. Is it or is it not possible that there should be still further advance in Christian doctrine?

Yes, we answer, but only provided the necessary conditions for any real doctrinal advance be observed.

If there is to be any doctrinal advance, we must believe that doctrine is the setting forth of what is true, not a mere expression of religious experience in symbolic form; we must believe, in the second place, that doctrine is the setting forth of that particular truth that is contained in the Bible, which we must hold to be truly God's Word and altogether free from the errors found in other books; we must endeavor, in the third place, not to make doctrine as meagre and vague as possible in order that it shall make room for error, but as full and precise as possible in order that it shall exclude error and set forth the wonderful richness of what God has revealed. Ignore these conditions, and you have doctrinal retrogression or

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*Those who gave us the great creeds of the church believed that the creeds that they produced were true.*



*There can be no real progress unless there is something that is fixed.*

decadence; only if you observe them can you possibly have doctrinal advance.

Such doctrinal advance is certainly conceivable. It is perfectly conceivable that the church should examine the particular errors of the present day and should set forth over against them, even more clearly than is done in the existing creeds, the truth that is contained in God's Word. But I am bound to say that I think such doctrinal advance to be just now extremely unlikely. We are living in a time of widespread intellectual as well as moral decadence, and the visible church has unfortunately not kept free from this decadence. Christian education has been sadly neglected; learning has been despised; and real meditation has become almost a lost art. For these reasons, and other still more important reasons, I think it is clear that ours is not a creed-making age. Intellectual and moral indolence like ours do not constitute the soil out of which great Christian creeds may be expected to grow.

But even if ours were a creed-making age, I doubt very much that the doctrinal advance which it or any future age might produce would be com-

parable to the advance which found expression in the great historic creeds. I think it may well turn out that Christian doctrine in its great outlines, as set forth, for example, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, is now essentially complete. There may be improvements in statement here and there, in the interests of greater precision, but hardly any such great advance as that which was made, for example, at the time of Augustine or at the Reformation. All the great central parts of the Biblical system of doctrine have already been studied by the church and set forth in great creeds.

#### **The Secret of Progress**

We need not be too much surprised to discover that that is the case. The subject matter of Christian doctrine, it must be remembered, is fixed. It is found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to which nothing can be added.

Let no one say that the recognition of that fact brings with it a static condition of the human mind or is inimical to progress. On the contrary, it removes the shackles from the human mind and opens up untold avenues of progress.

The truth is, there can be no real progress unless there is something that is fixed. Archimedes said, "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world." Well, Christian doctrine provides that place to stand. Unless there be such a place to stand, all progress is an illusion. The very idea of progress implies something fixed. There is no progress in a kaleidoscope.

That is the trouble with the boasted progress of our modern age. The Bible at the start was given up. Nothing was to be regarded as fixed. All truth was regarded as relative. What has been the result? I will tell you. An unparalleled decadence—liberty prostrate, slavery stalking almost unchecked through the earth, the achievements of centuries crumbling in the dust, sweetness and decency despised, all meaning regarded as having been taken away from human life. What is the remedy? I will tell you that too. A return to God's Word! We had science for the sake of science, and got the World War; we had art for art's sake, and got ugliness gone mad; we had man for the sake of man and got a world of robots—men made into machines. Is it not time for us to come to ourselves, like the prodigal in a far country? Is it not time for us to seek real progress by a return to the living God?

## **Speaking of Problems in Getting a Church Built . . .**

SONORA, CALIF.

DEAR SISTER:

The men came, per arrangement, last Friday to erect the beautiful glu-laminated beams for our A-Frame church building. We have finished pouring the footing at just the right angle. The beams are to be based on these footings which are placed six feet outside the brick wall of the church. From these footings the beams will rise sharply and majestically to a height of 39 feet above the floor. Really that steep pitch roof is an uplifting sight even on the drawings.

Well, we had sent these specifications to the manufacturer who specializes in glu-lam beams for churches. They wanted to get the exact measure-

ments as they had contracted not only to make these all-important beams, but also to put them in place on the job.

So it was with much anticipation that we prepared for and looked forward to the coming of the beam raisers—so experienced, so expert, and all. They were to come on Friday.

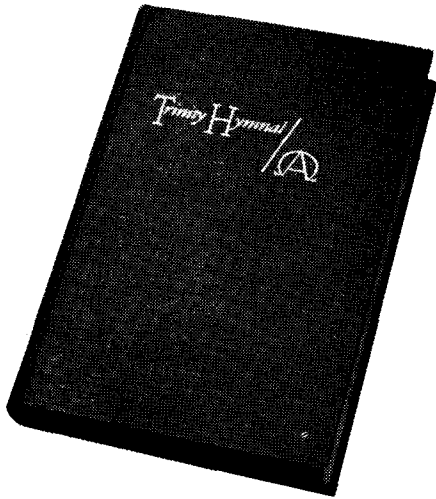
Friday dawned a little rainy. It never rained before in California but since we started our church building there have been showers of blessing every weekend when we have our workdays. But bravely through the rain came the wondermen and we had cameras all set to keep for posterity the grand spectacle of the majestic beams rising heavenward. O, yes, and

three giant crosses are to go up in front of the church. The central cross rises ten feet above the roof pitch. The seven-foot holes were already dug for the glu-lam crosses to be lowered into.

Well, as I said, here came the long-awaited experts, and we retired to a respectful distance. It was to be a dangerous job with all kinds of braces, and lifting derricks, etc. But, to make a short story long, our beautiful rain-soaked beams are not up yet; and won't be until I don't know when. Why not? Well, you see, the man and crew who put up pitch roofs can't come till a later date.

Verily, verily, the men who arrived last Friday came up prepared to put on a *flat roof* and of course came without proper equipment. You realize that all churches have flat roofs, really it's been quite the rage for centuries! So you simply can't blame this company. Is it their fault if we start build-

Mr. Kenneth Austin  
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ing a church with one of those new-fangled roofs which go up? Then too we can say that these men were applying the new theology—constructing A-frame buildings with a flat roof is just demythologizing the "A".

It was several months ago that we told the congregation that we should hold our first services in the new church on a certain date. Well, here we are two weeks before that day and our beautiful 5 x 16 x 46 beams are reclining on the ground. They are well wrapped with a substance which holds the water inside.

This is just a note to let you know that we are well and happy. Tearing up sheets of paper into little bits is not so bad. The temperature lowers and as I heard a preacher say once, there is a sense of achievement.

Your Sonora brother,  
BOB (CHURCHILL)

P.S. —The manufacturer writes now that he needs \$600. more to erect the beams.

P.P.S.—A company truck came this morning and hauled the beams away.

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Opportunity for Kindergarten teacher. Send inquiry to 15000 S.W. 67th Avenue, Miami, Florida.

## Machen League Rally

A garden party and smorgasboard dinner will open the annual overnight Machen League rally held at Westminster Seminary May 28-29. The Rev. Dirk Odendaal of South Africa will be the featured speaker on Friday evening.

Saturday morning the group will journey to Quarryville for a picnic and a message by the Rev. Jay Adams, Westfield, N. J. pastor. Total cost of the outing is \$1.75 and registrations are to be sent to the Rev. Wm. Rankin, 1323 Friendship St., Phila. by May 24. Sponsored by the Philadelphia area Machen Leagues, the New Jersey youth are also invited.

## New Addresses

The Rev. William A. Shell (ordained by the Presbytery of Wisconsin), 15W256 Forest Lane, Elmhurst, Ill. 60126.

Chaplain Michael D. Stingley, 506 Joe Morse Drive, Copperas Cove, Texas 76522.

The Rev. Melvin B. Nonhof (transfer to the Presbytery of the West Coast), 2324 Mattison Lane, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95062.

## ORTHODOX OR ORTHODOZE ?

It all happened by a slip of the typewriter. The word really was intended to be "Orthodox"; but, instead, because of a slip, it came out as "Orthodoze."

Is that not a very revealing slip, though? Are there not many slips of many kinds that are threatening to turn "Orthodox" into "Orthodoze" in relation to our Orthodox Presbyterian Church? Have opportunities been neglected, vision dimmed, imagination stilled, the strong, clear, sound of the gospel left unsounded when God's "Thus saith the Lord" needs to be heard? Slips like this will quickly turn the Orthodox Presbyterian Church into the "Orthodoze" Presbyterian Church.

"Orthodoze" may refer to the most peaceful and delightful sleep ever. We must, however, with all that is in us resist the slip that would change Orthodox into "Orthodoze." We must be truly Orthodox, truly, vigorously, shamelessly teaching and living the whole message of God.

"Awake, thou that sleepest and the Lord shall give thee light."

ALBERT G. EDWARDS