

The Presbyterian Guardian

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NED B. STONEHOUSE

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THOMAS R. BIRCH,
Managing Editor

THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

WE ARE looking forward to the second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America with profound thankfulness to almighty God. Very wonderful has been His goodness to us during the past months. When we think of the loyal groups of Christian people who are keeping aloft the banner of the Cross in many places throughout the length and breadth of our country, when we think of the loyal pastors who have for the sake of Christ faced the loss of all that the world holds dear, we thank our God for His favor so wonderfully given to His children. He has brought us through many troubles, and has placed before us a door of glorious opportunity. We call upon all that is within us to bless His excellent name.

A DANGER TO OUR CHURCH

At the same time we are perfectly aware of the fact that a danger faces our Church. That such dangers should arise is only what was to be expected. They have often arisen in similar situations. Ask anyone who is familiar with the early days of the reform movement under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands, and I think he will tell you that there were violent disputes among those who at first came with the orthodox and truly Reformed church. But God brought that church through all those early troubles. Those who were not really heart and soul with the movement did not finally go with it; the others put petty jealousies aside and were used of God in the building up of a great church. So we trust that it will be with these early troubles in The Presbyterian Church of America.

THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE

The root of our present trouble is found in those ancient enemies of Christian fellowship—misrepresentation and consequent suspicion. It is the purpose of the present editorial to correct the misrepresentation and allay the suspicion. We shall not be content with doing that in any partial fashion. This misrepresentation must be eliminated *radically*. The last vestiges of it must be removed if our Church is to go forward with full blessing and joy to the accomplishment of its great task.

What is the misrepresentation of which we speak? We can answer that question very simply. It is the misrepresentation that there are some persons at Westminster Theological Seminary or in The Presbyterian Church of America or on the editorial staff of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN who are unwilling to concede the right of their brethren who hold the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord to a place in the ministry of The Presbyterian Church of America.

This misrepresentation has been spread particularly by an editorial which appeared in the October 1st number of the *Christian Beacon*, a paper edited by the Rev. Carl McIntire, who is a member of the Presbytery of New Jersey in The Presbyterian Church of America. The editorial attacked in very vigorous language the Rev. Professor R. B. Kuiper, Professor of Practical Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary, and asserted that in his article published originally in *The Banner* of the Christian Reformed Church and reprinted in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN of September 12, 1936, he had declared or implied that the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord is contrary to the Reformed Faith.

There was nothing whatever in Professor Kuiper's

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the author on minor details of interpretation. For example, it is the judgment of the present writer that John Calvin should be regarded as ascribing an absolute rather than hypothetical necessity for the atonement. In this regard we think Calvin departs from Augustine to whom he usually pays profound deference.

But these are details on which there is room for diversity of interpretation, and any divergence in judgment on our part does not in the least affect our general estimate of the book, nor does it interfere with our wholehearted endorsement of Professor Berkhof's thesis from beginning to end.

An Inimitable Story Bible

THE CHILD'S STORY BIBLE, by Catherine F. Vos. Three volumes. \$2 each. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.

HERE is a Bible history in story form that you can place in the hands of your children with the confidence that it will stimulate their love for the Bible as the Word of God. Reverent and faithful in its presentation and interpretation of the contents of the Bible, it is marked further by evangelical fervor and wholesome piety. Moreover, it is superior to most books of this class in the comprehensiveness of its treatment: the first volume covers the period from Genesis to the Kings; the second takes up the Kings and covers the rest of the Old Testament period; volume three presents the history of the New Testament period. The publishers inform us that it is designed for children as young as seven years, but the reviewer can testify that even a four-year-old child will follow the stories with great interest, particularly if the one who reads will resort occasionally to a paraphrase or word of explanation. Printed attractively, and illustrated with thirty-two colored pictures in each volume, the work calls for a word of hearty congratulation to the publisher and to the National Union of Christian Schools, which sponsored it.

Mrs. Vos is the wife of Geerhardus Vos who, for so many years, was an outstanding representative of the scholarly and orthodox tradition of Princeton Theological Seminary. These volumes were written in that atmosphere, and bear the impress of the complete devotion to the Reformed Faith for

which the old Princeton stood. Mrs. Vos is the mother of four children, and these stories became crystallized as she instructed them in the truth of the Word. The author is a gifted story teller. When I called on Dr. and Mrs. Vos in their home in Santa Ana, Cali-

fornia, several months ago, Dr. Vos told me that Mrs. Vos' talent had been greatly stimulated by the stories which she had heard and had read in her childhood home—the stories of the inimitable Dickens.

—N. B. S.

Has The Presbyterian Guardian Attacked Premillennialism?

IN ORDER to present as clearly as possible all of the documents which are pertinent to this issue, we are reprinting first the Editorial on "Premillennialism," which appeared in *The Christian Beacon* for October 1, 1936, and the answer of Professor Kuiper.

The Editorial in "The Christian Beacon"

One of the truths of Scripture that has increasingly impressed itself for comfort and edification upon many Christians in these days of apostasy has been the premillennial return of Christ. In the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., which has officially departed from the faith, there was no question as to the right of individuals to be premillennialists, a-millennialists, or even post-millennialists. However, in recent months, during the days of the Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union, before it dissolved, and now at the formation of The Presbyterian Church of America, there has been considerable discussion among men of what is called "eschatological liberty." Men are free to be, it is said, "pre's," "a's" or "post's."

Why is it necessary even to talk about "eschatological liberty"? Such liberty has been recognized. The answer, we believe, is that men have had to talk about it because a few individuals who are a-millennialists have been attacking more strenuously the premillennialists. The premillennialist position has been quite generally accepted by Christian people, and the a-millennialists have launched their attack upon it. This attack has proceeded in various ways—most frequently in indirect ways—and has reached the stage where it has found itself in print a number of times.

A recent article appearing in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN leads us to feel that the time has come when the *Christian Beacon* should say a word about the matter. We are premillennialists, and believe that the Bible clearly teaches that there will be a millennium on this earth after the return of Christ, and that then Christ will reign here upon the throne of his father David. We believe with the Bible references compiled by Dr. C. I. Scofield that the millennium is a definite dispensation or period of time.

Under the title, "Why Separation Was Necessary," the Rev. Professor R. B. Kuiper, of Westminster Theological Sem-

inary, in an article printed in THE GUARDIAN, which reviews the formation of The Presbyterian Church of America, attacks the premillennial position in this matter. The editor, an a-millennialist, the Rev. Ned B. Stonehouse, comments concerning the article: "In this important article, which is reproduced slightly abridged from *The Banner*, organ of the Christian Reformed Church, Professor Kuiper justifies the formation of The Presbyterian Church of America and indicates certain conditions which he thinks must be fulfilled if the church is to have a future as a truly reformed body."

In all of this article there is only one short paragraph in which Dr. Kuiper refers to the matter of dispensationalism. The full quotation follows: "The General Assembly had the privilege of examining several graduates of Westminster Seminary for licensure and ordination. It would have warmed the cockles of the heart of any Christian Reformed minister to hear how closely they were questioned about the two errors which are so extremely prevalent among American Fundamentalists, Arminianism and the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible. The Assembly wanted to make sure that these prospective ministers were not tainted with such anti-reformed heresies."

In the first place we are quite sure that there has been some serious mistake made by Dr. Kuiper in regard to the facts related by him concerning the licensure of the two Westminster men. We were present, and we have also consulted others who were present at the time, and in the examination of the students relative to their views of eschatology no reference was made to the "Scofield Bible." There was a question asked concerning an alleged and little known form of so-called dispensationalism which violated the covenant of grace. The Rev. H. McAllister Griffiths, a premillennialist, editor at that time of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, immediately arose and said that question needed to be stated thus, "Do you believe that the Bible teaches only one way of salvation and that by the blood?" Mr. Griffiths said that if they answered this question in the affirmative it would satisfy him, and ought to be enough for anybody else. This was answered in the affirmative, and the question concerning dispensationalism was dropped. Therefore, we are at a loss to understand why Dr. Kuiper can assert that these two men condemned the "Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible," which was not even under discussion,

Furthermore, in our opinion, the even more significant matter at this point is that, without any effort to distinguish the good from the bad, Dr. Kuiper calls the "Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible" an "anti-reformed heresy." Heresy is not a pleasant word. The remark in regard to the "Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible" is an attack upon the premillennialists, as heretics.

According to Dr. Scofield's references to dispensationalism, the millennium is a dispensation. Of course, Dr. Kuiper does not believe in the millennium, and his generalized condemnation of the Scofield references leaves no room for the premillenarian to join with Scofield in believing that the millennium is a dispensation!

We feel perfectly sure, however, that it was not the mind or the intention of the members of the General Assembly, as indicated by Dr. Kuiper, in examining these young men to make sure that they "were not tainted with such anti-reformed heresies."

We are unable to see in our own thinking how the a-millennialists can say they grant liberty to the premillennialists and then turn in such a manner as this and condemn them as heretics. We firmly believe that by far the majority of the people in The Presbyterian Church of America are premillenarians, and the Church committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith is not committed to the particular view held by any individual.

We do not fear at the present time concerning the future of the right of premillennialists, but we do believe that unless the a-millennialists cease their veiled and continued attacks upon the premillennialist position concerning "dispensationalism" there will be a united expression on behalf of the premillenarians in the Church.

The great battle which has been raging in the Christian world has been over true Protestantism and true Presbyterianism and on that high level it should remain.

The Reply of Professor Kuiper

Professor Kuiper replied to the Editorial in a letter under date of October 6th, 1936, and requested that his letter be published in the *Christian Beacon*. The letter, not having been published in that paper, is here published for the first time:

October 6, 1936.

"The Rev. Carl McIntire,
Collingswood, N. J.

"Dear Mr. McIntire:

"I wish to thank you for the courtesy of mailing me a copy of the *Christian Beacon* of October 1 containing your editorial on 'Premillennialism.' While reading this editorial I could not suppress the wish that, before rushing into print, you had done me the previous courtesy of requesting a personal interview. That would have kept you, I am sure, from the wholly unwarranted misrepresentation of my position which constitutes the thrust

of your editorial and, I am frank to confess, deeply grieves me. It would also have spared me the unpleasant task of now calling attention to some serious fallacies in your reasoning.

"In my article in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN I made mention of 'the two errors which are so extremely prevalent among American Fundamentalists, Arminianism and the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible,' and I went on to style these errors 'anti-reformed heresies.' You call this 'an attack upon the premillennialists, as heretics.' Surely, here seems to be a clear instance of jumping at a conclusion.

"You indicate, however, by what process of reasoning you arrive at your conclusion. It runs thus: Kuiper condemns the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible as heresy; Scofield calls the millennium a dispensation; therefore Kuiper calls belief in a coming millennium heresy. But pray, what sort of reasoning is that? One might as well say: McIntire condemns the theology of Modernism as heresy; Modernism teaches that there is a Supreme Being; therefore McIntire brands belief in a Supreme Being heresy. I ask in all seriousness how you would like to have your position thus misrepresented.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that there is ever so much more to the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible than the mere teaching of Premillennialism. Nor do the two stand and fall together. There are premillenarians who have never heard of Scofield's dispensations. More important than that, there are serious students of God's Word who hold to the premillennial return of Christ and emphatically reject Scofield's system of dispensations as fraught with grave error.

"I am frankly an amillenarian. I was that already before the term had come into common usage. I have objections to Premillennialism. But never until now was I charged with intolerance toward my premillenarian brethren. It may interest you to know that when some years ago the Christian Reformed Church, in which I was then and am today a minister, refused to take steps toward putting up the bars against premillenarians, I was in hearty accord with that refusal. Some of my warmest friends and most ardent co-laborers in the gospel ministry are of premillenarian persuasion.

And I may add that I do not know of a single amillenarian minister in The Presbyterian Church of America who would exclude premillenarians from office in that communion. Your charge that 'the amillennialists say they grant liberty to the premillennialists and then turn and condemn them as heretics' is without foundation in fact.

"I have relieved my mind of a heavy burden, the onus of misrepresentation by a Christian brother. Before concluding this letter, however, I must beg leave to make a few additional statements.

"It is impossible in a mere letter to point out every error involved in the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible. Everybody at all interested in the subject should read Dr. Oswald T. Allis's noteworthy articles on this matter in *The Evangelical Quarterly* and Professor John Murray's valuable contributions in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN. Much more needs to be written and, no doubt, will be written in the near future to enlighten God's people on this subject. Suffice it now to say that Scofield's sharp distinction between the dispensation of grace and that of law, if carried through to its logical conclusion, must result in impairment to the exceedingly precious doctrine of salvation by grace and that his placing these dispensations over against each other leads logically to that rejection of God's law which is known as Antinomianism. When saying that, I am well aware that but few, if any, of Scofield's admirers actually go the full length of these conclusions and that Scofield himself frequently takes refuge in happy inconsistencies. But that in no wise alters the fact that the organizing principle of the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible is essentially heretical. And altogether apart from the question whether or not the Scofield Bible was actually named in the examination of candidates for ordination at the First General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America, I am just as positive now as I was last June that certain questions were directed to these candidates in order to make sure that they were not tainted with its errors.

"In the first paragraph of your editorial you plead for the same 'eschatological liberty' which is found in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., where there is 'no question as to the right of individuals to be premillenarians, amillenarians, or even postmil-

lenarians.' I simply cannot believe that you have thought through what you say here. In fact, I am certain that you have not. You know, of course, that there are not only supernaturalistic postmillenarians, who believe that the millennium will be ushered in by the preaching of the gospel, but also naturalistic postmillenarians, who expect it to be ushered in by such human efforts as education and social reform. The latter view, which is obviously modernist, may be freely held in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., but surely should not be tolerated in The Presbyterian Church of America. Then had we not better stop speaking of 'eschatological liberty' without qualification and be content with eschatological liberty within the limits of the system of doctrine of the Westminster Confession?

"Finally I want to express full agreement with the concluding sentence of your editorial. You say: 'The great battle which has been raging in the Christian world has been over true Protestantism and true Presbyterianism and on this high level it should remain.' I say: 'That is the point precisely.' But I take it for granted that no minister or elder in The Presbyterian Church of America will consider Scofield's comment on the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer—to name but one of his characteristic teachings—compatible with either true Protestantism or true Presbyterianism. Scofield describes the words 'as we forgive our debtors' as 'legal ground' and thus actually has the temerity to tell us that Christ taught His disciples to plead for forgiveness on 'legal ground.' He goes on to say: 'Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ's sake and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven.' How false an antithesis! Every true Presbyterian, even every true Protestant, knows that forgiveness must ever be a matter of pure grace, that Christ's merits are the one and only ground for forgiveness in every age, and that God has revealed this to man ever since he needed forgiveness.

"Hoping that this letter may help to remove misunderstanding among brethren and above all else may contribute something to the maintenance of the purity of the gospel, I remain

"Your brother in Christ,

(Signed) R. B. KUIPER."

Actions by the Presbytery of California

Having seen the editorial in the *Christian Beacon* and not having seen Professor Kuiper's reply, the Presbytery of California adopted the following resolution and the following overture at its meeting on October 21st:

The Resolution

WHEREAS there appeared in the September 12, 1936, issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN in an article written by Professor R. B. Kuiper the following paragraph:

"The General Assembly had the privilege of examining several graduates of Westminster Seminary for licensure and ordination. It would have warmed the cockles of the heart of any Christian Reformed minister to hear how closely they were questioned about the two errors which are so extremely prevalent among American fundamentalists, Arminianism and the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible. The Assembly wanted to make sure that these prospective ministers were not tainted with such anti-reformed heresies."

AND WHEREAS the above paragraph makes light of a doctrine which many of us in The Presbyterian Church of America hold near and dear to our hearts, namely, the premillennial return of our Lord.

AND WHEREAS we believe that such a statement was contrary to the facts of what actually occurred at the meeting of the General Assembly as attested to in an editorial in the *Christian Beacon* of October 1, 1936, entitled "Premillennialism,"

AND WHEREAS should there continue to be such uncharitable words as would make a Premillennialist in our denomination feel as unwelcome as were he a Modernist or an Arminian, there will be an immediate departure from our membership on the part of many,

AND WHEREAS it is our strong conviction that we Premillennialists (who are just as hostile to any type of hyper-dispensationalism nullifying the atonement as are our Post and A-millennial brethren) are thoroughly welcome in our present parent body.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we strongly protest the above-mentioned paragraph and all other statements of a similar nature which have appeared in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, which is commonly regarded as the authoritative publication of The Presbyterian Church of America.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recommend to the editors of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN that such statements hereafter be stricken from the manuscripts or that an editorial note be appended immediately following such statements which will make it clear that such a view is the private view of the author of the article and in no wise represents the official position of the Church.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this protest go to THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN together with our request for, and expectation that, it will be

published with a statement from the editors which will afford perfect satisfaction to those Premillennialists among us who feel that a grave misunderstanding has arisen.

Passed by the Presbytery of California on October 21, 1936.

WM. HARLEE BORDEAUX,
Stated Clerk.

The Overture

The Presbytery of California

of
The Presbyterian Church of America

October 22, 1936.

The Presbytery of California respectfully overtures the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America, meeting in Philadelphia in November, 1936, as to eschatological freedom.

Despite the fact that our Presbytery is nearly unanimously premillennial in its personnel, it would be farthest from our desire that The Presbyterian Church of America close her doors against all who disbelieve in the premillennial return of our Lord. To do so we are convinced would displease Christ. We recognize that brethren who are post-millennialists or a-millennialists may, and many of them do, equally love our Lord's appearing.

We regret the occasion necessitating that editorial, namely, "Pre-millennialism" in *The Christian Beacon* of October 1, 1936, but nonetheless, we are in perfect agreement with the sentiments contained therein. With all our souls we are averse to any hyper-dispensationalism which would proclaim salvation as possible in any age apart from God's redemptive work wrought out on Calvary. We think it, therefore, decidedly unfair to confuse the issue and make every pre-millennialist to be a hyper-dispensationalist.

Such strength of language as has lately been hurled against pre-millennialists by some who have been thought to speak in the name of The Presbyterian Church of America is proving hurtful here. Thoroughly evangelical pre-millennialists are singling out such sentences as proof texts to show the anti-pre-millennial disposition of The Presbyterian Church of America.

Therefore, we earnestly and prayerfully appeal to you (and to all other Presbyteries, if God wills it, to join us in our plea) that definite, emphatic, and unambiguous eschatological liberty be written into the constitution of our beloved church.

Yours respectfully,
The Presbytery of California
of

The Presbyterian Church of America

WM. HARLEE BORDEAUX,
Stated Clerk.

Reply by The Presbyterian Guardian

In reply to the resolution of the Presbytery of California calling upon us to repudiate the statement of Professor R. B. Kuiper designating as being contrary to the Reformed system of doctrine, "Arminianism and the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible", we desire to outline our position as follows: