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Recent Developments at Princeton

AN EDITORIAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

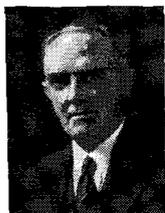
THE NEW PRESIDENT

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

A Good Book on a Great Theme

A Review by the REV. PROFESSOR R. B. KUIPER

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH? by William Childs Robinson, A.M., Th.D., D.D., Professor of Historical Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga. — Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., \$1.



Mr. Kuiper

IN THIS very readable little volume of a hundred and seventeen pages, the latest from the facile pen of Dr. William C. Robinson, he continues his defense and promulgation of Christian truth, which for him—and for the present reviewer—is synonymous with the Reformed faith.

Dr. Robinson would have the reader distinguish carefully between the question *What is the Faith?* and the question *What is Faith?*—in other words, between the content of faith and its nature;—in still other words, between “the faith which is believed” and “the faith with which it is believed.” In this book he is dealing with the latter rather than the former. However, he is well aware that the two are inseparable, and that the content of Christian faith determines its nature. How evident, and withal how significant, a fact! Christian faith is faith in the God of the Bible. Faith in any other object, for instance in man or in another god than the God of the Bible, is a different sort of faith, so wholly different that it in no wise deserves to be named Christian. Therefore it is not at all surprising that the book under review says a great deal about the content of Christian faith. It was inevitable that it should.

There are three chapters presenting as many theses.

The first chapter is entitled *Christian Certainty: The Lost Chord in Modern Thought*, and sets forth the thesis *That Christian Faith is not a man-made conjecture, but a God-given certainty.*

The theme of the second chapter is *Christian Faith: A Work of God, Not a Mere Wish of Man*, and its thesis reads: *That since its relation to God is of the essence of Christian faith, therefore any definition of faith which leaves God out is inadequate and erroneous; or, that a true doctrine of faith involves a theology of faith, and*

not merely a psychology of faith.

Thirdly, under the title *The Faith of Abraham: The Faith of All Those Who Believe*, the thesis is amplified: *That Abraham is the Scriptural exemplar of faith; hence everyone professing faith ought to compare his faith with that of the father of the faithful in order to ascertain whether his faith is of the type that will be reckoned for righteousness.*

These titles and theses make it clear that the author holds to the orthodox, the historic Christian, the Reformed, the Biblical, conception of the nature of Christian faith and aims to set forth that conception in positive fashion as well as to defend it against the corruptions of present-day liberalism. Both these aims are accomplished admirably, for which the author deserves warm commendation and his book hearty recommendation to the reading public.

The following are characteristic sentences of the first chapter: “The loss of certainty is the result of a progressive transference of Gospel emphases from God to man. Calvinism is a concentration of thought and life upon God. Modernism partakes of the humanistic concentration upon man. Man is uncertain, changeable, multitudinous; God is one, eternal, certain” (p. 21). “In diametric opposition to Kant we maintain that Christian faith is not a less certain knowledge than the knowledge of things we see, but a more certain knowledge” (p. 31). Quoting Thornwell, “No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining upon the Word” (p. 32).

It is heartening to observe that in the second chapter the author combats not only the thoroughly naturalistic conception of faith’s origin espoused by William James in *The Will to Believe*, but also that compromising view which is proclaimed as gospel truth by any number of preachers and evangelists who style themselves Fundamentalists: that the natural man can of his own unregenerate volition believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and that the new birth is not the cause but a consequence of faith (p. 46). The

teaching of Scripture that faith is a gift of God the Holy Spirit before it becomes an act of man is driven home, and thus the precious doctrine of salvation by grace is upheld.

As telling a statement as any in the last chapter is this: “God is the author of the covenant which He made with Abraham. God must needs be the author of any covenant bringing man into fellowship with the Most High” (p. 91). Precisely to the point is the remark: “The whole modern idea of preaching Jesus, but preaching Him without a creed, is not only theologically, not merely Scripturally, but psychologically impossible in itself” (p. 95).

Because the content of the book is in the main so very excellent, the pity is all the greater that it should be marred by inaccuracies. Typographical errors are so numerous that we must decline to hold the author responsible for them. The frequent use of the archaic *hath* for simple *has* is annoying. Confusing is the sudden change of metaphors in the sentence: “As I climb the ladder of faith leading up to the gates of God, I rejoice that God has not given me a mere tight rope” (p. 61). In view of the fact that faith owes its origination to the Holy Spirit alone, the phrase “God’s part in establishing faith” (p. 49) is misleading. One wonders at the coördination of “providential instruments” with “the Word” as means by which the Holy Spirit works faith in human hearts (p. 103). One cannot help placing a question mark in the margin alongside Principal McIntyre’s words, which Dr. Robinson thinks beautiful: “If our Lord died in a sorrow which none can name, how shall we speak of the pain of God when He turned away His face from the Son of His love?” (p. 99). Does the latter half of this sentence teach patripassianism or must it be interpreted as anthropathism? In plain words, does the author actually mean to ascribe pain to the Infinite, or is he speaking figuratively of God after the manner of man?

Though admiring Dr. Robinson’s wide reading, we must express sincere regret that he has not exercised greater care in the choice of citations to bolster up his argumentation. His frequent quotations from Barth and Barthians may easily leave the impression with the reader that Barth and his followers hold a sound view

of the Christian faith. But as a matter of fact they do not believe *all* that God has revealed to us in His Word. That, of course, is extremely serious. And, while the first stanza quoted on page 57 is indeed beautiful—

“O gift of gifts! O grace of faith!
My God, how can it be
That Thou who hast discerning love,
Shouldst give that gift to me?”—

in view of every man's utter unworthiness of the grace of God, the second stanza deprives the hymn of much of its “greatness”—

“How many hearts Thou mightest
have had
More innocent than mine,
How many souls more worthy far
Of that sweet touch of Thine!”

Dr. Robinson's book would have gained in practical value if in it he had dealt more fully with the problem of subjective assurance of salvation. Is the Christian believer always certain of his being a believer and consequently of his salvation? If he doubts these things at times, does it follow that he is not a believer? Though faith itself is supremely certain, is it not a fact that, in the soul of the Christian, belief and unbelief keep battling with each other? Granted that faith invariably gives its possessor a measure of assurance of salvation, is full assurance essential to Christianity? Many of Christ's little ones would greatly appreciate light on these questions. It is clear that Dr. Robinson did not intend to deal with these questions at any length in this volume. Let us hope that he may at some future time answer them more fully. The volume before us gives abundant evidence that he is eminently qualified to do this.

The Christian world owes Dr. Robinson a debt of sincere gratitude for his most recent book. It is a forceful reminder of which the church of our day, with unbelief rampant in its very pulpits, has dire need.

More than once Dr. Robinson lauds the heroic faith of the late Dr. J. Gresham Machen (pp. 80, 109). We cannot refrain from expressing the fervent wish that Dr. Robinson, and many with him, may follow Dr. Machen's example to the extent of carrying the fight for the faith into the courts of the church, and there fighting for it to a finish.

The Progress of Home Missions

By the REV. ROBERT STRONG

General Secretary of the Home Missions Committee



Mr. Strong

IT WAS mentioned in the February issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN that the Committee on Home Missions had requested its missionaries and aid-receiving pastors to engage

in an intensive campaign of home visitation. We are able to report the first returns from this special effort. Some items have proved such interesting reading that we cannot do better than to let the missionaries speak for the most part in their own words.

For example, one working in the east tells us:

For the month of January I made 27 separate calls on people who are not members of our church; some I called on twice. From these calls I estimate that there are about 19 likely prospects. The results of these calls are, so far, 15 new children attending Sunday school; one person who will join the church in March after catechism instruction; five adults who attend occasionally; one adult who has expressed her desire to join the church. This latter person had been coming occasionally; regularly of late. On last Thursday an elder and I went to her home and talked with her husband about salvation and uniting with the church. She had said that she wanted to wait until he decided, but now she wants to join anyway without waiting for him. We have several cases like this.

A missionary who is working hard to establish a church in a middle western city tells of how, when the outlook seemed dark, friends were found in sufficient number to organize a particular church of The Presbyterian Church of America. With four families that are well grounded in the Reformed Faith the missionary well asks if that be not a good nucleus for a real church. Others have since affiliated with the new church, which is to be established permanently in a relatively unchurched, attractive, residential district.

Another missionary in the middle west writes:

During the course of the month of January I made 71 calls. I found eight who I think may be considered likely prospects. Definite results secured thus far are these: general interest in the work

we have undertaken; promises to attend our meetings; the presence of seven strangers at our service last Sunday.

From somewhat farther west comes this word:

Thanks to the exceptionally mild weather of January I am happy to report about 30 calls within a radius of 20 miles of our home. All of these were unchurched families, but only in one or two cases was the call received with indifference. I know that you will rejoice with me that enough interest was shown to make bright the prospect of opening another preaching point, which will make three points in this charge. For last October the Lord led in opening up a door to the gospel in a school ten miles to the northeast. The attendance sometimes runs as high as 45. And in our local church the attendance has reached almost a new peak. Many non-members are regular in attendance. In Christian Endeavor we are studying the Shorter Catechism, and many of the young people are proving themselves Berean Christians in searching the Scriptures daily. Some of them have been led to confess Christ for the first time.

Speaking of recent developments in the work a missionary writes that in January he made 39 calls on unchurched families. He adds, “Here I hesitate, for ‘Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart’; a number of children have professed Christ; and three women and three men, of whom I believe we have a right to record that they have been really regenerated by the Holy Spirit.”

One missionary in the course of his special calling effort was able to present the issue of separation from apostasy to a family belonging to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., with the result that this man and his wife have had their names removed from that body in order to join The Presbyterian Church of America.

From the east we have this additional word:

I've been greatly encouraged in the last few weeks. Our services have been well attended, and the spiritual life of the members seems to be better. At the last communion service we received four new members, two on confession and two on reaffirmation of faith.

The letters from which we have quoted tell a story of progress at many different home mission points. Undoubtedly the work is moving for-