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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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think of Him as the Ground and Source of all that we call mind in the universe."
 "I think of God as Spirit and as the ideal-making Mind of the universe."

Dr. Jones, in spite of his definite rejection of the pantheism of Spinoza seems plainly infected with that error. For his God does not seem to be separate from and above the universe but a part of it. In fact, Dr. Jones seems in some passages to uphold an idealized and spiritualized form of Christian pantheism. In other passages he definitely denies the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, so dear to the hearts of all Calvinists, and even doubts a future resurrection and life everlasting:

"Self-giving, not sovereignty, is the mark and badge of the Divine Nature."
 "Even death may well be one of His ways forward into fuller life."

George A. Buttrick

George A. Buttrick, pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, another of those taking part in the Preaching Mission, while a true gentleman and altogether a likable man personally, is certainly to be looked upon by the Bible-believer as a poor guide in things spiritual. For, even in his apologetic for Christianity, from a modernist point of view, he denies the inerrancy and hence the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. This is shown in the following quotations taken at random from *The Christian Faith and Modern Doubt*.

"It is no use our evading or trying to hide Bible inconsistencies. They have been found; and if they had not been found by the many, the few who knew and hid them would by that evasion be cankered in character. Literal infallibility of Scripture is a fortress impossible to defend: there is treason in the camp. Probably few people who claim to 'believe every word of the Bible' really mean it. That avowal held to its last logic would risk a trip to the insane asylum."

"The Bible writings are obviously . . . the work . . . of men like ourselves. They were sometimes mistaken."

"Its [the Bible's] science passes as does all science. It is not a book of science or history."

"The argument for the Virgin Birth is persuasive but the argument against it is strong. An honest verdict might be: we do not know, and do not need to know."

Bishop Moore

One good quality will have to be conceded to all the men we have discussed so far. Each one made his position perfectly clear and stood upon the truth as he understood it. Unfortunately as much cannot be fairly said

of another speaker participating in the National Preaching Mission, the Rev. James M. Moore, D.D., a prelate of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who undoubtedly did much good work as bishop of Brazil, who has aroused interest in mission work especially in Roman Catholic lands and whose writings possess many excellent qualities. Unfortunately he has shown a disposition to obscure the difference between truth and error and often avoids taking a definite stand for the truth revealed in God's holy Word. This is best illustrated by quoting extracts from a published sermon of his on "The Commanding Certitude."

"The untutored have had their suspicions aroused. They fear that the Bible is being destroyed, that their faith is being undermined, and that they are in danger of having their precious heritage taken away from them."

"The scholar is often looked upon as the enemy of religion rather than as a friend, and he is all but an unwelcome guest in the house of faith."

"On the other hand men of scientific mind, method and attainment are dead set against Christianity by the crudities and intolerance of ecclesiastics and exponents of its doctrines."

He then speaks of the "Back to

Christ" movement, and unloads the following as his "solution" of the difficulties of the situation:

"Neither a domineering dogmatism nor illusive liberalism can furnish the remedy. One is as incompetent as the other. They both lack the necessary life emphasis. There must be a new positiveness of faith, but it can be based only upon personality with all the life elements which it involves. Personality is Christianity's solution to the world's problems, personality at its highest and best, and the religion of Christianity has its true meaning and redemptive power in the person of Jesus Christ."

All of this is very vague and unsatisfying. There is nothing in it to guide the man floundering in the morass of doubt to the firm ground set forth as the gospel by the apostle Paul and by all the writers of the Old and New Testaments. There is nothing in it to point the lost sinner to the way of escape from sin. It fails to show that the only hope for man is the gospel of Christ and Him crucified.

If these men are representative of the personnel of the mission as a whole, and certainly they are not the least prominent, can we possibly look upon the mission as truly evangelistic and truly evangelical?

A Calvinistic Exposition of the Atonement

A Review by Professor JOHN MURRAY

VICARIOUS ATONEMENT THROUGH CHRIST, by Louis Berkhof, B.D., Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1936. 184 pages. \$1.50.



Mr. Murray

IN THESE days of loose thinking and widespread unbelief it is not often that there issues from the press a book on so central a theme as the substitutionary atonement that one can wholeheartedly recommend to both cultured and uncultured readers. We are happy, however, to be in that position with respect to this volume by Professor Berkhof. In taking up the volume we had every expectation that we would not be disappointed. Within the last few years several books have come

from the pen of the same author, and through them the acquaintance we have formed with him has led us to expect that the same ripe scholarship, Reformed orthodoxy, and wholesome piety would come to expression in the volume now before us.

This book is in the true sense of the word a popular book. The method and style are such as make it suitable for the lay reader. In this respect it admirably supplies a need as no other with which we are acquainted. Particularly may it be placed in the hands of young people and recommended to them with full confidence as setting forth by way of exposition and defense what is cardinal in our holy Faith.

It is a book thus to be commended, however, precisely because it is written by an earnest and accomplished student of holy Scripture and of his-

tory. Only such a student could write a book of this quality. And for that same reason it may without apology be placed in the hands of the learned. Even those who are hostile among such will have to concede, if they are fairminded, that the evidence for the doctrine of penal substitution is marshalled and argued in masterly fashion, and the treatment of all opposing theories accurate in analysis and cogent in rebuttal. It is, therefore, an apologetic that effectively meets the need created by unbelieving attack.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters. The first deals with the eclipse of this central doctrine, the second with historic theories, and the remaining eleven develop the Biblical doctrine according to coherent and logical plan.

Professor Berkhof is thoroughly acquainted with his theme. He brings to bear upon his treatment the combined qualities of historian, exegete, and systematic theologian to a very remarkable degree. Consequently historical perspective, accurate exegesis, and systematic formulation are everywhere apparent. The feature that has made its appeal to the present reviewer, perhaps more than anything else, is the way in which, in a style perspicuous to all, the erroneous theories are ever kept in view, their fallacy ever and anon exposed, and the truth of the Biblical doctrine always presented in contrast with counterfeit. The sympathetic reader rises from the perusal of this volume not only grounded in the truth of the gospel but informed of the futility of every attempt to undermine or overthrow it.

It will have become apparent that the view presented and established in this book is that of penal substitution, that Christ in offering Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God bore vicariously the legal and judicial penalty of the sins of His people. "The penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement," he says, "proceeds on the assumption that sin is in its very nature a transgression of the law of God and thus renders man guilty. For that very reason the remedy proposed for it must be first of all a *legal* remedy. The point calls for particular attention because of its widespread denial. The forensic nature of the atonement finds no favor with the advocates of the Moral Influence, or of the Mystical Theory, because it does not fit in

with their fundamental thought. . . . When the Bible represents sin as a transgression of the law, as it repeatedly does, the idea is not that it is simply an infraction of some positive enactment of God, which served a merely temporary purpose and could be changed at any time. The law to which it refers is God's moral law, which is as to its essence grounded in the very nature of God and is therefore necessary and immutable. It is a law which God cannot simply ignore or set aside at will, since it is the expression of His very Being. . . . The law is a transcript of the will of God for the regulation of the lives of His moral beings, and the will of God is not an arbitrary will, but a will which is determined by and is in perfect harmony with all the divine perfections. . . . Another point which requires special emphasis is that every law given for moral and responsible beings necessarily carries with it a penal sanction. Such a law calls for obedience and, in case of transgression, for the infliction of a penalty. The justice of God which guarantees rich blessings to those who obey the law, *necessarily* inflicts due punishment on transgressors" (pages 59-62). And so in accord with the dictates of inherent justice and the uniform testimony of Scripture as to this necessity "Christ bore a *full equivalent* in the strictly legal sense for the sins of His people" (page 64).

It is frequently objected to this view that it is purely legal, and therefore entirely removed from the ethical requirements of life. This objection is adequately answered when it is not only stated but demonstrated that, "it is of the utmost importance and indeed quite essential that the doctrine of the atonement be considered in connection with other closely related doctrines. The common objection to the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, that it is purely legal and has no ethical bearings, would hardly be raised, if it were clearly understood and acknowledged that the atonement effects reconciliation, and reconciliation, in turn, carries with it the assurance of complete and perfect redemption" (page 67). This is shown more fully in the chapter entitled "The Subjective Effects of the Atonement" (pages 139-147).

In evangelical circles the aspect of Reformed doctrine that calls forth more protest than any other is that of

the restricted design, or what is more frequently known as Limited Atonement. With that topic Professor Berkhof deals in the last two chapters of the book. In view of the widespread misunderstanding and misrepresentation on this subject within nominally Presbyterian and Reformed circles, not to speak of broader evangelical circles, there is no part of Professor Berkhof's book more worthy of commendation and studied consideration. The real point at issue is well stated and the Calvinistic position succinctly yet adequately argued, and the objections urged against it effectively answered. Two brief quotations will illustrate. "The real point at issue in the controversy that has been carried on for centuries pertains to the design or purpose of the atonement. Did God in sending His Son into the world to be the Saviour of sinners, and did Christ by taking upon Himself the work of redemption, intend to save all men, that is, all the individuals of the human race; or did they intend to save only the elect whose representative Christ became in the Counsel of Redemption? Lutherans and Arminians take the former position, and Calvinists the latter" (pages 151, 152). And after treating of the various theories of universal atonement he proceeds: "All these views have one element in common: they assume that there is a difference in extent between the design of God's atoning work in Christ and the result actually attained, between the objective atonement and its subjective application. In opposition to all such theories the Calvinist holds that the design of the atonement was limited, that is, that God sent His Son into the world for the purpose of atoning for the sins of the elect; and that Christ gave His life only for those who were given Him by the Father. Moreover, they believe that the atonement is effectual in the lives of all those for whom it is made. It necessarily carries with it all that is needed for the application of the work of redemption. Christ not only made salvation possible, but actually saves to the uttermost, everyone for whom He has made atonement. God's designs do not fail through the failure of men to meet the requirements of the gospel" (pages 155, 156).

We accord this volume, then, the highest commendation and plead for it very wide reading and careful study. At a few points we may differ with

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.