

The Presbyterian Guardian

December 25, 1943

VOLUME 12, NO. 23

J. Gresham Machen
Editor 1936-1937

One Year—\$2.00

Published Twenty-three Times a Year

Ten Cents a Copy

1505 Race Street
Philadelphia 2, Pa.

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Christmas in Korea

By the REV. FLOYD E. HAMILTON
For More Than Twenty Years a Missionary to Korea

CHRISTMAS! Whose heart does not beat a little faster at the thought of the birthday of the King? But Christmas in far-away Korea! Do they celebrate His birthday there too? Yes, indeed! In fact, in Korea there is a real celebration of Christmas, in the way in which it ought to be celebrated, not primarily as a season of getting Christmas presents, but as a season of giving—a truly “white” Christmas, when every Christian brings to the church his gift for others who are too poor even to know about the Saviour’s birth. Let me tell you the story of a typical Christmas in Korea, in a little church that I helped to found, on the banks of the Potong River, on the edge of the city of Pyengyang.

Christmas really began several weeks before December 25th, when the Sunday school teachers made a survey of the whole district along the river bank that was named “West City Village”. They found all the homes where there was little fuel and almost no food, or where there were tiny children without cold-weather clothes (the small children usually don’t wear any clothes during the summer). Then, on the Sunday before Christmas, an attempt was made to collect enough food and pine branches and clothing to supply the needs of all the desperately poor in the district. The missionaries took up a collection of money and old clothes, while on Christmas morning each Christian brought something—a bag of rice or millet,

squashes or bags of soy beans—gifts that were truly like the widow’s mite, for they often meant a real sacrifice to the dear people who gave out of their own poverty.

Mrs. Hamilton and I made up over two hundred bags of candy and fruit to give to the Sunday school children, and that took hours of time during the busy Christmas week. They were all ready the day before to take down to the church for the Christmas morning celebration at eleven o’clock.

About five o’clock on Christmas morning we were awakened by carolers underneath our window. The choirs of the city usually stay up all night on Christmas Eve, starting out about three o’clock in the morning to sing Christmas songs at the various homes in the city, and the group outside our window was from our own church in West City Village. They didn’t expect a “handout”, but simply showed their love by singing outside the door. We greeted them with the customary Christmas greeting, and by that time our own kiddies were awake and clamoring to take down their stockings hanging by the fireplace. The missionaries themselves always preserved the American Christmas customs in their own homes, but Christmas usually lasted at least through the first week in January, for the mails were usually late and every package from America had to be opened by the customs officials in the post office. The nicely wrapped parcels would be all undone, the tags

The Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly

By the REV. JOHN MURRAY

Professor of Systematic Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The reader may refresh his memory of foregoing articles in this unusual series in celebration of the tercentenary of the Westminster Assembly by referring to the following issues of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN: June 10, 1943; July 10, 1943; and September 10, 1943.)

IN THE records of the Westminster Assembly we find a great deal of debate concerning catechism long before the date upon which the Assembly actually turned to the composition of the two Catechisms with which we are familiar. This prolonged study of catechism was not, however, lost labor; in very admirable fashion it fitted the Assembly for the framing of the Catechisms that were finally adopted.

It was early in 1647 that the Assembly addressed itself to the composition of the two Catechisms we know as the Larger and Shorter. On January 14th of that year it was ordered "that the Committee for the Catechism do prepare a draught of two Catechisms, one more large and another more brief, in which they are to have an eye to the Confession of Faith, and to the matter of the Catechism already begun". From April 15, 1647, a good part of the time of the Assembly was devoted to debate on the Larger Catechism.

It was on August 5th that a committee was chosen to take in hand the matter of the Shorter Catechism. On August 9th we have the first mention of report on the Shorter Catechism. There are several references to the Shorter Catechism in the course of the next two months. On October 25th we have reference in the Minutes to debate on the Shorter Catechism. Considerable speed must have been made after that date, for on November 15th the Shorter Catechism was read as far as the fourth commandment and was ordered to be transcribed.

On September 10th Mr. Gower made report on the last questions of the Larger Catechism. Several minor changes were made after this date but on October 15th the Larger Catechism was completed and it was

ordered to be transcribed so that it might be sent to both Houses of Parliament. On October 22nd it was ordered to be sent.

Not later than November 25th the Shorter Catechism was completed, for on November 26th the prolocutor of the Assembly reported that the Shorter Catechism had been delivered to the House of Commons the preceding day and that the House extended its special thanks to the Assembly for its care and pains in the preparation of the said Catechism.

Some of the foregoing facts, especially the dates, may appear uninteresting and unimportant. They are, however, necessary in order to correct some misapprehensions. For example, legend has for long associated the name of George Gillespie, the brilliant young Scottish Commissioner, with the answer to the fourth question of the Shorter Catechism, "What is God?" Gillespie took his leave of the Assembly on July 16, 1647. He left, therefore, before the Assembly began its work on the Shorter Catechism but only after the Assembly had completed a great part of the work on the Larger Catechism. It may be that the legend has some element of truth in it. On some occasion or other, Gillespie may have uttered in prayer the words that finally were given as the answer to the question, "What is God?" But there appears to be no evidence to support this supposition and the terms of the legend itself are completely disproven by the chronological data.

In no country has the Shorter Catechism exercised a greater influence than in Scotland. Yet the evidence requires the conclusion of A. F. Mitchell that "though in Scotland, as elsewhere, this catechism has been, and deservedly so, the most popular of all the productions of the Assembly, it was the one with the elaboration of which the Scotch (sic!) Commissioners had least to do" (*The Westminster Assembly*, London, 1883, p. 429).

This conclusion must not, however, be allowed to obscure or minimize the importance of certain other facts.

The Shorter Catechism was completed on or before November 25, 1647. On November 15th the Catechism was read as far as the fourth commandment and was ordered to be transcribed. It was only six days earlier that Samuel Rutherford took his leave of the Assembly. Rutherford was, therefore, at Westminster until the greater part of the work on the Shorter Catechism had been performed and for three weeks after the Larger Catechism had been completed. In this connection the minute of October 15th is full of interest and significance. After the Larger Catechism was ordered to be transcribed, we find that upon motion by Mr. Rutherford it was ordered to be recorded in the Scribes' books that "the Assembly hath enjoyed the assistance of the Honorable Reverend and learned Commissioners from the Church of Scotland in the work of the Assembly; during all the time of the debating and perfecting of the 4 things mentioned in the Covenant, viz. the Directory for Worship, the Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, and Catechism, some of the Reverend and learned Divines Commissioners from the Church of Scotland have been present in and assisting to this Assembly". It would, therefore, be going too far to say that the Scottish Commissioners exercised no influence in the preparation of the Catechisms. Rutherford may have exercised considerable influence in the preparation of both Catechisms. And Gillespie may have exercised considerable influence in the preparation of a great part of the Larger Catechism. Besides, it must be remembered that the Scottish Commissioners took a very active part in the prolonged study of catechism that antedated January, 1647, when the Assembly addressed itself to the task of preparing the two Catechisms finally approved. Even though, as A. F. Mitchell points out (*op. cit.*, pp. 414f.), the Scottish Commissioners in these earlier discussions favored a method of catechizing different from that followed in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, it is nevertheless impossible to believe

that the influence, theological influence at least, of the Scottish Commissioners has not left its mark upon both Catechisms. Furthermore, we must not forget that the order of January 14, 1647, directing the Committee for the Catechism to prepare a draft of two Catechisms, instructed the Committee to have an eye to the Confession of Faith and to the matter of the Catechism already begun. Though it is true, then, that the Scottish Commissioners had less to do with the preparation of the Catechisms than with the other documents, there are also several considerations which prevent us from concluding that their influence was negligible.

From December, 1647, to April, 1648, considerable time was devoted to the preparation of the Scripture proofs for both Catechisms. By April 12, 1648, the proofs for both had been completed, for on that date the proofs were ordered to be transcribed and sent to both Houses of Parliament.

On July 20, 1648, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland approved the Larger Catechism and on July 28th the Shorter. The two Catechisms and the Confession of Faith as well as the acts of approbation of the General Assembly were ratified and approved by the Convention of Estates of the Scottish Parliament on February 7, 1649.

The Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly were, of course, intended to serve a different purpose from that of the Confession, and any comparison of the Catechisms with the Confession should bear this in mind. It should be said, however, that the formulations of the Catechism, especially of the Larger, are at certain points an improvement over the formulations of the Confession. It is altogether natural that the greater maturity of thought attained at the time the Catechisms were prepared should have had this effect. For example, the formulation of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace found in the Larger Catechism is more lucid and felicitous than that found in Chapter VII, Section III, of the Confession. A comparison of this section with Questions 30 to 32 in the Larger Catechism will readily show what is meant. Again, the definition of the sinfulness of the estate into which the fall brought mankind, given in both Catechisms, is in at least one respect more

adequate than Chapter VI, Sections I to IV, of the Confession. This concerns the question of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin, a doctrine distinctly asserted in the Confession (Chapter VI, Section III) but not clearly grounded in the covenant relationship between Adam and posterity, as is done in the Larger Catechism, Question 22, and in the Shorter, Question 16. Well-grounded may be the surmise of William Cunningham that the discussions taking place in France in connection with Placcæus' doctrine of mediate imputation and the decisions of the Synod

of Charenton (1644-1645) had become better known and their implications better understood when the divines prepared the Catechisms. In any case, greater precision is manifest in both Catechisms than appears in the Confession. Examples like these show how necessary it is, in determining the position of the Westminster Assembly, to consult the Catechisms as well as the Confession, and in the matter of the subordinate standards in Presbyterian churches a great deal is to be gained by the inclusion of the Catechisms as well as the Confession.

The Parable of the Tares

A Meditation on Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

By the REV. LAWRENCE B. GILMORE, Th.D.

Stated Supply of the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati

IN HIS *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan portrays a scene in the House of the Interpreter wherein Christian beholds a man rising out of bed, who, as he puts his raiment on, shakes and trembles. The man explains his trembling by recounting his dream that the judgment day had come with lightnings, thunderings, flames, and the resurrection of the dead. The dead were judged by One who sat upon a cloud with a book open in His hands. A voice was heard saying, "Gather together the tares, the chaff, and stubble, and cast them into the burning lake". When this was done, it was also said, "Gather my wheat into the garner". Then many were caught up into the clouds, but in his dream the man was left behind, his conscience accusing him of his sins. With that he awoke, to tell Christian of the dream, and the telling put Christian in a state of hope and fear. So may our meditation on the parable of the tares likewise bring us anew into a state of true assurance and real reverence.

The Setting of the Parable

The parable of the tares is found in Matthew only, in the great series of parables in chapter thirteen concerning the kingdom. We should again recall that in our Lord's kingdom teaching there is first the idea of a present, inwardly-spiritual develop-

ment, and secondly that of a future catastrophic consummation. The present kingdom, moreover, up to its final consummation remains subject to imperfections. The final glorious kingdom will be entirely perfect.

The internal spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of grace, is the church invisible, consisting of those truly born again by the Holy Spirit, and thus united to Christ by faith. The church invisible manifests itself in the world in a society which we call the church visible. But imperfections appear in the church visible, as our parable teaches us.

The Parable Itself

The kingdom of heaven is compared to this situation: A householder sowed good seed in his field, but, while men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat came up, the weeds came up too. The servants of the householder wanted to know how the weeds came there, and the householder replied, An enemy hath done this. So the servants then and there wanted to pull up the weeds. But the householder calmly said, No, for you are likely to pull the wheat up with them; let both grow till harvest time, when I shall tell the reapers to gather first the weeds in bundles to burn them, and then to gather the wheat into my barn.