

The Presbyterian Guardian

September 10, 1943

VOLUME 12, NO. 16

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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A Princeton Professor's View of the Cross

By the REV. EDWARD J. YOUNG, Ph.D.

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WHEN the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died on the Cross, what was He seeking to accomplish? To this question many answers have been given. The question may rightly be answered in different ways, as various aspects of Christ's saving work are stressed. Essentially, however, all these aspects center about one basic fact, namely, that our blessed Lord by His death reconciled God to the sinner. But any answer which is incongruous with or contradictory to that one basic fact is incorrect.

In short, this is the gospel. Man, through Adam's transgression, is born into the world in an estate of sin and misery. Since man possesses a sinful nature, his every act proceeds from an evil heart, and naught that he does can please God. His sin leads to everlasting death. Because he has offended God, man cannot receive divine favor or blessing, unless satisfaction be first rendered to God's justice. No mere man can make such satisfaction. But Jesus Christ the Lord has fully satisfied God's justice by the shedding of His precious blood upon the Cross. "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission", the Bible asserts. The blood of the Lamb of God, however, has been shed and, upon the basis of this glorious fact, God may, in perfect justice, freely pardon the sinner.

This is the plain teaching of the Bible. When our Lord died, He died to reconcile God to His own. The atonement is an offering primarily unto God and not

to man. He "gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2) and He "offered himself without blemish unto God" (Heb. 9:14).

Furthermore, according to the Bible, Christ is our great High Priest, and He has performed the work of a priest. Now, a priest is a mediator between God and man. He represents man before God. He acts to procure the favor of God for sinful man. So Christ as a priest once brought an offering to secure the favor of God for mankind. It is as a priest too that He now lives to intercede before God on behalf of His people. In fact, it is only through Him that men may draw nigh to God.

The sacrifice which Christ presented was a sacrifice of infinite value. It was Himself. He brought His own most holy and precious blood. This as our High Priest He offered unto God, not unto man. He "gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for an odor of a sweet smell" (Eph. 5:2).

Christ is also set forth in the Bible as performing a work of propitiation. That is, He has done all that which was necessary so that God, in perfect consistency with His nature, might pardon and bless the sinner. Hear the words of Scripture: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might

docked in the east and is scheduled to sail about September 1st. Mr. Duff will proceed to Lisbon and then, unless passage can be secured by air or through the Mediterranean, he will be compelled to go via Portuguese East Africa and from there proceed by way of coastwise shipping to a port nearer the entrance to Ethiopia. The journey will not be without hazards, but Mr.

Duff and his family have faced these dangers as good soldiers of Christ. On August 26th the congregations of the Philadelphia churches united in giving Mr. Duff an informal send-off. A delightful evening of prayer and fellowship was held under the auspices of the Mediator Church at its Germantown Avenue location.

—ROBERT S. MARSDEN

The Work of the Westminster Assembly

By the REV. JOHN MURRAY

Professor of Systematic Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary

THE Westminster Assembly convened, in accordance with the Ordinance of the English Parliament, on July 1, 1643. For the first three months a good deal of the Assembly's time was devoted to the revision of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England. Some historians have regarded this part of the work of the Assembly as of little account. But Dr. S. W. Carruthers, who is probably the most competent student of the Assembly at the present time, shows that there was sustained interest on the part of the Commons in this part of the Assembly's work.

An examination of the revisions of the first fifteen articles will disclose some very interesting facts. Perhaps the most interesting is the revision of Article III which deals with the subject, "Of the going down of Christ into Hell". The original Article reads as follows: "As Christ died for us and was buried; so also it is to be believed that He went down into Hell". The Assembly revised this Article by omitting the title, "Of the going down of Christ into Hell", and by changing the Article itself to read as follows: "As Christ died for us and was buried; so it is to be believed that He continued in the state of the dead, and under the power and dominion of death, from the time of His death and burial, until His resurrection: which hath been otherwise expressed thus, He went down into Hell". The effect of this revision is too obvious to need comment.

Perhaps the two most important events during the course of the first three months were the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant and the arrival in the Assembly of three of the commissioners elected by the

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

The Solemn League and Covenant was drafted by Alexander Henderson in Scotland and was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on August 17, 1643. It was then taken to England and after some slight changes it was adopted by the House of Commons and the Westminster Assembly on September 25th. It was then sent back to Scotland and was adopted, signed and sworn to by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Committee of the Convention of Estates of the Scottish Parliament and was sent throughout the country to be subscribed by the people.

It was in answer to a request of both Houses of Parliament in England that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland elected commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. On August 19th the General Assembly elected Alexander Henderson, Robert Douglas, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, and George Gillespie, ministers, and John Earl of Casils, John Lord Maitland, and Sir Archibald Johnston of Warriston, ruling elders, with commission and power to them, or any three of them, whereof two shall be ministers, to repair to the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster. On September 15th three of these—Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie and John Lord Maitland—were admitted to the Assembly. Others arrived in London later and were also admitted to the Assembly. By far the most important for the actual work of the Assembly were George Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford, Alexander Henderson and Robert Baillie.

On October 12, 1643, while the Assembly was working on Article XVI of the Thirty Nine Articles, there came an order from both Houses of Parliament that the divines should forthwith "confer and treat among themselves of such a discipline and government as may be most agreeable to God's holy word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the Church at home, and nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and other Reformed Churches abroad". It was in pursuance of this order that the Assembly entered upon prolonged debates on the question of church government throughout the succeeding eighteen months. The divines were also instructed at the same time to prepare a Directory of Worship or Liturgy for use in the church.

This order the Assembly fulfilled and the result is the documents known as "The Directory for the Publick Worship of God" and "The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government". These two documents form two of the four parts of uniformity in which it was so ardently desired that the whole island should be united. In the Directory for Public Worship we have one of the finest parts of the work of the Assembly and, in its own place, it lies on a plane of excellence not any lower than that of the Confession and Catechisms. It is to be regretted that many of its admirable directions and counsels have fallen into desuetude in Presbyterian churches. Those who are jealous for the decorum appropriate to the public worship of God and have not yet made the acquaintance of this masterpiece should at the earliest convenient date take advantage of the great delight awaiting them.

On August 20, 1644, a committee to join with the Commissioners of the Church of Scotland was appointed to prepare matter for a joint Confession of Faith. The subsequent history of the Assembly witnesses to the care and patience with which the divines attended to this undertaking. There were, of course, delays that were irritating to some members of the Assembly as well as to others. But the protracted period over which the Confession was in the making served all the more to demonstrate the patience and perseverance with which they addressed themselves to the task, and no doubt the length of the period of gestation was the means by which in

God's providence enduring excellence was imparted to the Confession.

It was not until September 25, 1646, that the first nineteen chapters of the Confession were completed and sent to the House of Commons. On October 1st a duplicate was sent to the House of Lords. On December 4th the remaining fourteen chapters were completed and it was resolved that the whole Assembly present the whole Confession to both Houses of Parliament. On December 10th an order was brought from the House of Commons for the printing of six hundred copies. This was the first edition of the whole Confession.

The Confession as completed on December 4th and as printed in the first edition did not, however, contain proof texts. The Assembly, strange as it may seem to us, was reluctant to comply with the request of the House of Commons that proof texts be appended. The reason for this is quite understandable. It was not that the divines had any fear of being unable to support the propositions of the Confession by Scripture. The reason was rather that a complete presentation of Scripture proof would itself require a volume. One cannot but admire the force and reasonableness of this plea. They were well aware that the Biblical support for the system of truth set forth in the Confession could not adequately be provided by the mere citation of the most relevant proof texts.

However, at the insistence of the House of Commons, the Assembly undertook to add proof texts in the margin. On January 7, 1647, we find the Assembly entering upon the debate of proof texts. For the next four months a large part of the time of the Assembly was occupied with the consideration of these. On April 29th this work was completed and on that date the Confession of Faith with Scripture proofs cited on the margin was presented to both Houses of Parliament. The House of Commons instructed that six hundred copies of the Confession with proofs be printed. This was the first edition with proofs.

The Confession of Faith as framed by the Westminster Assembly was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on August 27, 1647. The act of approbation stated that "the said Confession being, upon due examination thereof, found by the Assembly to be most agreeable

to the Word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk . . . the Generall Assembly doth, therefore, after mature deliberation, Agree unto and Approve the said Confession, as to the truth of the matter, (judging it to be most orthodox, and grounded upon the Word of God;) and also as to the point of uniformity, agreeing, for our part, that it be a common Confession of Faith for the Three kingdoms." The General Assembly also added, however, the following rather significant qualification: "But lest our intention and meaning be in some particulars misunderstood, it is hereby expressly declared and provided, that the not mentioning in this Confession the severall sort of ecclesiasticall officers and assemblies shall be no prejudice to the truth of Christ in these particulars to be expressed fully in the Directory of Government. It is further declared, that the Assembly understandeth some parts of the Second Article of the Thirty-One Chapter only of Kirks not settled or constituted in point of government; and that although in such kirks a synod of ministers and other fit persons may be called by the magistrate's authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about matters of religion; and although likewise the ministers of Christ, without delegation from their churches, may of themselves, and by vertue of their office, meet together synodically in such kirks not yet constituted, yet neither of these ought to be done in kirks constituted and settled; it being alwayes free to the magistrate to advise with synods of ministers and ruling elders, meeting upon delegation from their churches, either ordinarily, or being indicted by his authority occasionally and *pro re nata*, it being also free to assemble together synodically, as well *pro re nata* as at the ordinary times upon delegation from the churches, by the intrinsical power received from Christ, as often as it is necessary for the good of the Church so to assemble, in case the magistrate, to the detriment of the Church, withhold or deny his consent; the necessity of occasionall Assemblies being first remonstrated unto him by humble supplication." The General Assembly was obviously jealous to guard against any Erastian abuse of Chapter XXXI, Section II.

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