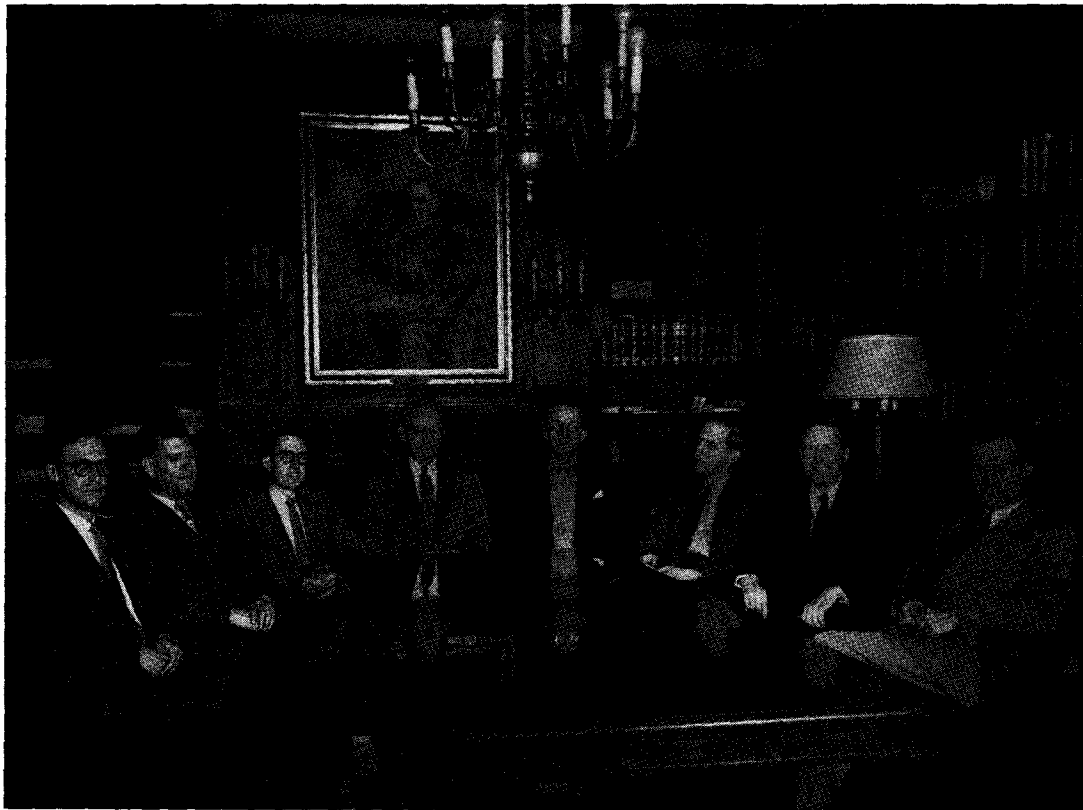


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The Presbyterian **GUARDIAN**



FACULTY OF WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Left to right: Mr. Clowney, Dr. Young, Professor Woolley, Dr. VanTil, Dr. Stonehouse, Professor Murray, Professor Skilton, Mr. Kline. Portrait is of Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, Professor of Old Testament 1929-30.

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THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN

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Happy Anniversary

IN September, 1929, fifty young men looking forward to service as ministers or missionaries in the church of Jesus Christ, entered the as yet untried school of theology known as Westminster Seminary, located in one of a series of row houses on a not too high class street less than a mile from the heart of Philadelphia.

These students used to joke about their campus—a brick paved area surrounded by a wooden fence and containing a lone and not too healthy tree. They joked even more about their dormitory rooms, singles, doubles and suites in hotel of rather ancient vintage and plumbing.

But there was one thing they could not joke about. That was the academic quality of the teaching which went on in the classrooms from day to day. The subject of theology and the related subjects of a theological curriculum were set forth by men who knew their material and were technical experts in dealing with it. These men used the ordinary aids of the classroom—textbooks of various kinds. But they were not bound by the textbook. Competent in their field, they used the textbooks as servants and instruments, not as the final word.

Such handling of classroom material was not common in classrooms of the time, especially classrooms of theology. It was too easy to follow the crowd, to accept the latest fad, to be bound by the most recent textbook or expression of opinion, to go along in uncritical aping of the people referred to in such expressions as "they say," or "everyone is agreed," or "scholars have decided." It was too easy to "shirk the difficult questions," to be superficial and anti-intellectual.

But no one who attended the school of the prophets that was Westminster could afford to be superficial. The difficult questions were not shirked. The historic Christian faith was deserving of and capable of receiving a scholarly and competent defense and exposition. And at Westminster it did enjoy such treatment.

However Westminster did not believe in compelling men to accept in personal belief what it taught. The very discovery of a scholarly handling of theo-

logical questions itself encouraged rather than discouraged independent thought, analysis and research. Men came from differing backgrounds, theological and ecclesiastical. They left to enter a variety of churches. Some indeed, and the number was not few, found that the doctrines set forth in Westminster classrooms were the only ones that honest study of Scripture supported. There were some conversions.

But there were others who left in the same tradition in which they had entered. Even so, however, they had breathed the fresh air of vital, solid scholarship. And wherever they went they could not shake the influence of the Westminster classroom. Many of them are today leaders in their own circles. They may not accept—they may even strenuously oppose—some of the doctrines which are precious at Westminster, but into their own faith they have brought a new vitality and earnestness which is in no small part due to their experience in scholarship.

Twenty-five years have passed since that September in 1929. The number of those who have spent time in the classrooms of Westminster has increased year by year. The campus, the dormitories, the classrooms themselves are better now. Undoubtedly the teaching is also better. Twenty-five years can mean a lot in the life of a school. There have been changes in the faculty. Some who once sat at the class desk now preside at the instruction stand. The world moves on. So do schools, churches and seminaries.

But at Westminster there is still today that high concept of teaching. The word "expert" may be coming into disrepute, for special reasons, but the training at Westminster is still provided by men who are "expert" in their field in the general realm of theological science, and their training is directed to nothing less than that those who go forth from their classrooms shall be experts, handling aright the Word of God, to the honor of His Name and the extension of His glorious kingdom.

May Westminster have many more happy anniversaries!

L. W. S.

California Conferences

By Robert E. Nicholas

The Fourth Annual Family Conference conducted by the Presbytery of California was held again this year at Camp Sierra, with a total registration of about 150. The teachers and preachers at the Camp were ministers of the Presbytery. Topics treated in the various lectures were Christ in the Psalms, the Christian Hope, The Christian Family, and Studies in Acts. Evening messages were on the theme, Doctrines that Live. There was also a laymen's discussion period, on the general subject, How can I help my pastor and church extend the Gospel?

A camp especially for young people's groups in Southern California was held the last week in July on Catalina Island. The Rev. Dwight Poundstone of Los Angeles was dean of this camp. Nearly 100 persons attended. It was the 14th annual Y. P. Conference for this area.

Wisconsin Camp

By Henry D. Phillips

Bright and early Monday morning, August 16, cars began to arrive at Calvin Camp in the heart of Wisconsin, on the shore of green Spencer Lake. This was the annual Young People's Conference conducted by the Presbytery of Wisconsin. The Rev. John Verhage of Oostburg was director, and over 100 persons attended the camp. In addition to churches of the Presbytery, delegates were present from the Christian Reformed churches of Sheboygan, Racine and Waupun.

Class sessions included a discussion of modern "isms" by the Rev. Lawrence Eyres and the Rev. George Marston; studies in the life of Christ by Mr. Oppewall of Racine and Mr. Eyres. Chapel services were conducted each morning. In the afternoon there were games and sports. The delegates trounced the staff 13-1 in a soft ball game, but the staff won in volley ball. At the Saturday afternoon water meet there was a race of inexperienced rowers—the boats didn't all manage to go in the same direction!

Mrs. Oscar Holkeboer of Waterloo, Iowa, directed activities for the under-age children who were present. The whole conference was climaxed on Sunday evening with a message on The Great Missionary Challenge, by the Rev. Henry Phillips of Gresham, Wisc.

A generous supply of cabin accommodations made it possible for families from the nearby churches to be over-

night visitors. Many enjoyed this opportunity, and it proved a pleasant feature of the camp.

The Revision of the Form of Government

First in a series of articles

by members of the Revision Committee

By JOHN MURRAY

THE committee on revisions to the Form of Government and Book of Discipline, elected by the General Assembly of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has drafted *A Version of a Form of Government*. That *Version* is now being studied by the sessions and presbyteries of the Church. The committee is undertaking further revision of that *Version*, but it is presumed that when the committee presents its final report and recommendations the *Version* which it will present to the General Assembly will be substantially that which had been circulated under the date of January 9, 1954.

A study of this *Version* will show that there has been considerable revision of *The Form of Government* which is at present the standard of government in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Very little has been written so far by members of the committee in elucidation and defence of these changes. Some of the changes are, of course, minor, and a great many of these will readily commend themselves to any one who takes the trouble to compare the old *Form* with this new *Version*. A goodly number are in the interests of clarity and consistency. But there are some major changes, and the committee owes the Church some explanation. This article will be somewhat introductory. Other articles by members of the committee will follow in subsequent issues of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN.

It will be noted that a new chapter called "The Preface" has been inserted at the beginning. This preface, with slight modification, is taken from *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government* adopted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines. No apology needs to be made for this addition; it is a scriptural and eloquent statement of the headship of Christ over his church. Any form of church govern-

ment that aims to be scriptural must have as its starting point the sole headship of Christ. All government exercised by the church is derivative and ministerial.

Chapter I is concerned with basic principles. The change of title from "Preliminary Principles" to "Basic Principles" has some significance. The committee considered that the principles to be set forth in this first chapter should be the principles directly relevant and basic to church government and not principles of a more general character. This may explain the omission from the *Version* of some admirable statements of the present *Form*, as, for example, some of those in Section 4.

The other changes made in this chapter are quite extensive; in the esteem of some they appear radical. Why did the committee revamp this chapter in this fashion? It should be noted that the committee has not discarded everything that appeared in the old *Form*. Certain principles enunciated in the old *Form* are indispensable to any formulation of basic principles and they have been incorporated. Some of the language also has been retained. The committee gladly admits its indebtedness at such points.

It is to be conceded that the old *Form* contains eloquent statements which the committee has rejected, and its substitutions do not stand favourable comparison in respect of eloquence. Indeed the committee's revision may sound rather prosaic, perhaps even pedestrian, when placed alongside of the other. And no doubt these statements of the old *Form* have a significant history and are framed in terms which betray the issues of liberty and spiritual independence for which our presbyterian forebears had to contend. It is no wonder that the discarding of such dignified and eloquent utterances should elicit regret and, perhaps in some cases, keen

disappointment. The committee is well aware of the objections that may be urged on such accounts. Why then did the committee propose the kind of revision presented?

One reason was that there was woven into the texture of the old form of this chapter quite a number of statements which the committee considered to be of a distinctly rationalistic tendency. It appeals, for example, to the "universal and unalienable" "rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion" (section 1) and maintains that "in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church . . . is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion" (section 2). It also makes its appeal to "the approbation of an impartial public." Now the inability of the committee to incorporate such statements into its own formulation of basic principles is not because there is no truth at all in them but simply because they are introduced in such a way and in such contexts that they impart to the formulation an orientation decidedly tinged with a rationalistic or deistic bias. The committee did not think that a formulation of the basic principles of presbyterian government should be tinged and prejudiced in that way. We hold that the basic principles are to be derived from the revelation of Scripture and that no support is gained from arguments of common right or the universal rights of private judgment.

The committee, also, was not persuaded that some of the sections were distinguished by logical coherence or development. An examination of section 7 will probably serve as a good example. In any case, the present writer is at a loss to understand the import of the second half of section 7. To say the least, this part of the section would require radical revision to be easily intelligible.

The main reason for the extensive revision of chapter I is that in the old *Form* there is no adequate enunciation or vindication of the most basic principle of all in connection with presbyterian government, namely, that it is of divine right and that it is the only form of government for the church perpetual that has the warrant and authority of the New Testament. This is just saying that it is the only scriptural polity for the church of Christ. This principle the committee has in-

corporated in its statement of basic principles in no uncertain terms. The *Version* proposed by the committee reads: "We believe that the government which Christ has ordained for the church is the presbyterian form of government, to wit, that the church, in its particular congregations and in its total unity, is ruled by presbyters, commonly called elders, who are set apart for this purpose by solemn ordination and who exercise this authority by delegation from Christ. Such presbyters perform this function of government jointly and on a parity with one another. Inasmuch as other forms of church government are without warrant or sanction from the Scripture, we do not believe that they are founded

THE Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government and Book of Discipline of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church submitted to the General Assembly and distributed in the church a copy of the proposed Form of Government. However, it was not ready, at the time of the Assembly, to recommend the adoption of this revised form, feeling that there should be some public discussion of the suggested changes. The members of the committee agreed to prepare a number of articles on this subject, for publication in the Guardian. Articles or discussion of the proposed Form by persons not members of the committee will also be gladly accepted, for use as space is available.

upon or agreeable to the Word of God" (section 3). Anything approaching to such a forthright assertion of the presbyterian principle we do not find in the *Form* we now possess. It is surely apparent that there is a serious hiatus in a formulation of basic principles if this principle is omitted and that there is a fatal weakness to any form of presbyterian polity which does not proceed on this assumption.

In enunciating this cardinal principle of presbyterian polity the committee is not taking the position that all the details of the government of the church are prescribed in Scripture, either by express statement or good and necessary consequence. The committee's *Version* proceeds to say also: "While we recognize that the principles of presbyterian church government are of divine institution and are therefore prescribed in Scripture, yet we also recognize, in accordance with the Confession of Faith of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, that there are certain

circumstances of the government of the church 'which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed'" (section 5). The principle on which we need to be insistent is "that the church, in its particular congregations and in its total unity, is ruled by presbyters . . . who exercise this authority by delegation from Christ." This form of government alone can plead the authority of the New Testament. We may not hold that a variety of forms is founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, and we may not be content with the weak position that presbyterian government is merely expedient and agreeable to Scripture.

Principally for these reasons, therefore, the committee felt constrained to present this extensive revision of Chapter I. When the committee set itself to the task of revising the chapter, it found that the faults and defects of the old *Form* were so bound up with its total structure that it was impossible to make a patchwork revision; it had to be revamped from beginning to end. That is the explanation of this revision.

There is a simplicity about the revised formulation. In that respect it may appear undignified in comparison with the old. Perhaps so. But what of it? It is intentionally framed in these terms. When we deal with the basic principles of presbyterian polity what we need most of all, particularly in these our days, is simplicity, forthrightness, and decisiveness. In the judgment of the present writer, the old *Form* conceals its greatest weakness behind the accents of its apparent eloquence.

A few remarks may be added respecting principles which have guided the committee in its work of revision.

The committee has endeavored to carry out the presbyterian principle consistently. If the presbyterian form of government is government by presbyters, then all who are presbyters in the New Testament sense exercise this function of government on a parity with one another. The teaching elder, often called the minister, does not have any priority or superiority in respect of ruling in the church of God. Ruling elders and teaching elders have equal authority in this matter of rule. This is exemplified in the committee's version by the provision stated expressly in Chapter IX, Section 3: "it is not re-

quisite that the pastor should be moderator of the session." The committee seeks to guard against an unwholesome clericalism which has frequently crept in and which has tended to rehabilitate practical hierarchicalism even in the presbyterian tradition. This emphasis upon the parity of presbyters in the rule of the church should minister to the correction of a widespread evil, the failure on the part of ruling elders to appreciate and perform the responsibilities that are theirs in the government of the church. This applies within the session oftentimes but it is particularly apparent in the higher judicatories. This emphasis also ministers to a deeper recognition of the qualifications that are necessary for the ruling elder. But, of course, the main interest in this emphasis upon parity is the scriptural principle itself—all other considerations are subordinate to this primary one.

The principles which have guided the committee cannot be characterised as democratic versus republican or republican versus democratic. Neither can the product of the committee's work be called government from the bottom up or government from the top down. These are utterly misleading slogans; they are totally inappropriate in assessing the character of this new *Version*. In a certain and all-important sense church government should be from the top down. In this sense it might be said to be hierarchical. But only in the sense that Christ is the head and all government is derived from him and his institution. When we are thinking of the government exercised by the church and discharged by presbyters, it is erroneous to ask the question as to whether we start with the church as a whole and proceed to the local unit in the congregation or whether we start with the local unit, the congregation, and then proceed upwards to the total unity represented in the general assembly. It cannot be too strenuously insisted that these are false contrasts.

It is indeed true that the thinking of some has followed the line of such contrasts and there has been an insistence upon one line of thought as the proper one in construing the nature of New Testament church government. But this writer maintains that the antithesis is false and leads us into grave difficulties. We do not have that contrast in the New Testament. What

we have is unity and plurality, totality and particularity. It is not the one to the exclusion of the other but both together. Hence when we are thinking of church government we must not set up one to the exclusion of the other and make that one which we set up the directing principle in our conception of church government. That would be an abstraction and would soon falsify our construction of the church's polity.

The writer believes that the committee has sought to avoid any such false antithesis in its revision of *The Form of Government*. It has sought to take into account the church in its total unity

and the church in its particularity; it has recognized that there are the churches and that there is the church. And it has recognized that there are the churches and that there is the church at one and the same time. The *Version* of a form of government presented seeks to conform to that principle. We may not have been completely successful; discrepancies, no doubt, still persist and they should be corrected. The committee welcomes intelligent criticism and suggestion. But it trusts that such criticism will not be in the form of false and misleading slogans.

Questions

By PAUL WOOLLEY

IT is generally agreed that if history is useful, it is because it has something to teach. One of the things it teaches is that when the time for an idea has arrived, that idea will catch fire and spread rapidly through the culture. This theme is presented by Paul in a personal fashion when he says, "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). History has taught how effectively God had prepared the time for the spread of the teaching of Christianity.

Karl Marx taught that when the time for an idea has arrived, that idea will be presented and spread. Paul declared that God sent forth his Son at the right time. Marx said that the occasion would bring forth the idea and the persons to propagate it.

The present age seems to be the time for the concepts and ideas of communism in much of the world. They are warmly welcomed in many places, much more warmly welcomed than Americans are willing to allow themselves to admit. In gratitude to God, we may acknowledge, however, that it is not yet apparent that the time of communism in America has come. Instead there seems to be a much greater interest in religion than there was twenty-five years ago. That means an opportunity. It is cynical to scorn it and say, "Religion! what religion?" This may be the time for Christian advance in America.

The advocates of genuine Christianity seem to me to be in part missing

the tide. Nothing is to be accomplished by talking and acting just as our fathers did. Their speech and their actions were those of another tide.

It is not my field, or my business, to tell Christians what *methods* to use in setting forth their ideas. What I am interested in is the ideas themselves. What ideas are Christians telling people today? Sometimes what they say sounds more like mechanical rote learning than like ideas of any kind.

The only way to give people ideas is to talk about things in which they are interested. There is no question but that they are interested in science. Americans really want to know how God and science are related. They want to know concretely. The ideas of Isaac Newton and of Michael Faraday were related to Christianity in their day. How many elders and laymen are telling people how the ideas of Edward Teller about the lithium atom are related to God today? Perhaps it is time that, in addition to the Bible, they read the three recent books about science of James B. Conant, for example, and then say something intelligent about Christianity in its bearing on this science. Not everybody needs that. Elderly people who are satisfied to sit at home and read only the Bible may do so. That is fine. But the college and university population of the United States in 1954 is 900% larger than it was in 1900. They do want to know what science and God have to do with one another.

Most Christians work for a living.