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THE SESSION OF GRACE CHURCH, WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

Front: Robert Kramm, clerk, George Hobart, Edward Haug, and Richard Barker.

Rear: Robert Atwell, pastor and moderator, Lyman Parks, William Cox, and Patrick Width.

The Session of Grace Church had overall responsibility as the Committee on Arrangements for the 35th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church meeting in Westfield in mid-May. In its 32-year history the congregation has had only fifteen ruling elders, including the seven who are presently serving. Two other elders in the church, Donald Robb and Bert Roeber, are not at present on the Session.

Grace Church was organized with

twelve members on September 22, 1936 and elected J. Enoch Faw and Hillis Partington as ruling elders. Mr. Faw served continuously on the Session until his death in 1961. Mr. Partington served likewise until he left Westfield in 1956 to accept a position at Gordon College. He is now an elder in the First OPC of Hamilton, Massachusetts.

Two other former elders, James Harkema and Enno Wolthuis, are now

(continued on page 45)

# So Late the Springtime

R. K. CHURCHILL

I stepped from the pulpit on the last night of the Calvinistic Conference, a little weary; and more than a little conscious that I had failed in expounding my theme of "A Modern Awakening," or "How Shall We Receive the Breath of God?"

After meeting old friends, some new eager faces appeared and words came, rushing and intense. Different denominations were mentioned, so that I wondered why we had appealed so to United Presbyterians. These people had attended most of the week-long meetings held in different churches in the southern California area. "We heard the first two messages," they said, "and we were sure that the high quality of the sermons could not possibly be sustained each evening. But we think this was actually the case: never have we attended such a series."

Another couple was from a Methodist Church. They had traversed the twilight nebulous zone of liberalism, but now — how genuine was their enthusiasm!

A woman told an experience so common in church. A former minister had preached the Word, and tried to hold back the floods of unbelief; when his health was undermined, the liberals took over and the church split. The new group hopefully called a fundamental minister, but the new church had gone off on the freedom kick, and extreme right wing politics had taken the place of the Word. "But," said she, almost threatening, "why did I sit in the choir of those churches and keep my family there for fifteen years when all this was going on?"

Others spoke thus—their surprises showing: "We can't get over it. We heard ministers of some scholarship who believed the Scriptures with all their heart; we heard them love that Word and preach it in such dead earnestness and power. We just didn't think this could ever happen today."

That week also, I heard of a couple from Europe searching for a church in a California city. By accident, they came to our Orthodox Presbyterian

*Here are some reflections on a week-long conference in southern California March 17-24. Mr. Churchill was one of six speakers. Meetings were held at seven locations.*

Church meeting in a restaurant. They described their visiting of American churches thus: "We came to the conclusion that Christians were no longer rational beings."

"I went from chaos to order, from Pablum to steak," said another, "when I came from another church to this one."

As we talked, we moved to the book table with its large display of Puritan reprints as well as some modern writers. Westminster Seminary authors were prominent. Discussion was lively: what a hunger to know, to make up for lost time!

## Why?

Standing there with those strangers around me, as I had on previous nights, I think I heard the harbingers of another springtime of grace. But there was also an undertone of sadness, or perhaps it was tragedy.

The *Why?* had in it a deep frustration and almost sobbed for an answer: Why was I so long in finding this? Why so late when the children are grown and have missed these shaping truths? Why a whole generation of young people left to go their own way without ever seeing "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? Why our best years gone and only now we come to know the expansiveness, the undergirding, the quickening and humbling of the Word of God? In the church we have been shortchanged all our lives and now we come to a great God, to life's full dimension. *Why?*

I went to this Calvinistic Conference in the Los Angeles-San Diego area well fortified with misgivings. I feared it might be too negative — an expert diagnosis of our ills without the Balm of Gilead. Or perhaps it would be mere lectures on Calvinism,

a mile high and wonderfully erudite. If so, where would I come in, preaching on Ezekiel crying, "Come from the four winds, O breath of God"?

But early in the week I heard the Rev. Al Martin, saw the sweat and heard the roaring, and the lightning left the sky and rolled along the ground where people sat. It was the preached Word.

Next day I heard of Dr. Clowney's sermon on "The Prodigal Son." Pastors shook their heads slowly. Never had they heard the grace of God so expounded and proclaimed. Then I knew that we were off, running with the Holy Spirit.

Did we see signs of a spiritual awakening? And were they genuine, and did the Cross appear? There was wonder and there was enthusiasm; and some were stricken by the Word and pastors spoke of wanting their churches to come into the O.P.C. So heart-warming it was. Some churches were too empty; and in some, the people crowded singing from *Trinity Hymnal*, the great hymns bursting forth. One pastor went at six to meet his young people and none came; but for some a new planet swung into view; and a minister's wife said, "But we don't both get discouraged at the same time."

The Meilahn family singing at an Easter sunrise service at Immanuel Church, Bellmawr, New Jersey.



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## BEHIND THE STUDY DOOR

JAY ADAMS

*Mr. Adams, who is assistant professor of Practical Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary, serves as director of educational services for CCEF — the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation.*

**W**hat goes on behind your pastor's closed study door? Perhaps this is more than an academic question for you. Possibly you've been considering having a talk with your minister about serious trouble in your marriage, about an inexplicable feeling of deep depression, or about some other problem which distresses you. You ask, "Can he really help me?" You wonder, "What would happen if I asked for an interview? What would he want to know? What would he expect me to do? How long would it take?"

*I wish I could tell you step by step what to expect, but I can't. It is impossible to predict what may happen. Almost anything might occur, and in some cases nearly nothing will. Clearly situations vary in ways that make all specific predictions hazardous. Much depends upon the concepts of counseling that your pastor has adopted (if any) and how seriously he follows them in actual practice. And of course much depends upon you: your motivation and willingness to obey God.*

*Some ministers themselves may be curious about what is going on behind other study doors. They feel a sense of dissatisfaction with their own counseling. For both counselees and counselors in the articles to follow I hope to discuss a few things which should be taking place.*

\* \* \*

**H**ow about your ironing?" With that question the initial interview took a turn. Before she could reply, Sharon Whitman's face registered the painful amazement that the two counselors sitting across the desk by now had come to expect. "How did you know?" she asked.

"There's no mystery about it," replied Jim, the counselor in charge. "Few women seem to enjoy ironing and when they get as depressed as you they begin to neglect unpleasant household chores."

Sharon broke in: "I don't **feel** like ironing when I'm depressed; I just **can't** iron, even though I know I should."

The other counselor, a ministerial trainee named Bill, explained: "That's exactly the point; you're caught in a cyclical problem. Once you get depressed over something you

don't feel like assuming responsibilities, so you let your ironing go. But when you get behind in the ironing this bugs you and you feel worse. And the worse you feel the less you want to iron so the pile grows larger and you become more depressed. Before long this momentum snowballs to other responsibilities like dishwashing, cleaning the house, and making the children's lunches. The first thing you know you are wasting away whole days irresponsibly lying around on the sofa—depressed, feeling guilty, and sorry for yourself." Jim interjected: "How far has it gone with you, Sharon?"

What you are sitting in on is a small slice of what happens every week in the counseling rooms of the Christian Counseling and Educational Centers of Short Hills and Ridgewood, New Jersey and Hatboro, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> Sharon Whitman — a fictitious composite of a frequently encountered problem type — is a Christian woman who will discover very shortly that she has been depressed because of unscriptural ways of life. In her case she will find that failure in handling anger (which she allows to turn into long-term resentments) is one of the basic patterns she must be taught to overcome by God's grace. Sharon came to the center because she felt depressed. But that depression had developed from guilt arising out of a long-standing inner feud she had been carrying on between herself and her mother-in-law.<sup>2</sup> This had recently erupted

NOTE 1: The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation was begun in 1966 for the express purpose of developing counseling procedures based upon biblical principles; and for the purpose of training ministers to counsel scripturally. The centers seek to be service agencies to the church. Counseling on a limited basis is now offered in the Philadelphia area as well as in the original New Jersey centers.

NOTE 2: Not all problems have an interpersonal base. Some, of course, develop from organic causes: e.g., brain damage, glandular or other chemical imbalances. There is also a gray area of problems which are of uncertain etiology.

into open hostilities. By neglecting her ironing and other duties (because she rightly felt guilt-depression over her sin) Sharon had turned a bad depression into a severe one.

The depression would lift slightly when she began to reassume her responsibilities as a homemaker and mother, but she would find complete relief only when she finally confessed her sinful ways to God and asked her mother-in-law's forgiveness. Beyond that, Sharon had to set about building a new Christian relationship between herself and her mother-in-law. In addition, she had to learn to replace sinful patterns of response with Biblical ones.

Since the problem of resentment extended to many areas of her life, she found it necessary to straighten out some matters at her church. These efforts went a long way toward healing a grievous division among the women of the congregation.

From the outset the help of Don, Sharon's husband, was enlisted. Don attended counseling sessions along with Sharon and stood by her in all of this. His help and encouragement was a valuable day-by-day adjunct to the weekly sessions and was a major factor in the dramatically rapid changes which occurred.

During counseling Don saw that there were areas of his life that needed

attention too. The changes he made also strengthened their marriage. Because Sharon was willing to adopt Biblical life patterns in obedience to God, she "graduated" from counseling in 7-12 weeks. Sharon and Don were "debriefed" to help them understand the dynamics of their problem, how they were helped, and what to do in the future when new difficulties arise.

The object of the debriefing session was to show them how to handle their own problems scripturally so that there will be no need for them to return for future counseling. They were taught God's ways of responding to life's problems and what the Bible says to do when they fail.

They will return for a six-week checkup, at which time if all is still going well counseling will be terminated. Over the counseling period they studied the Scriptures in relation to themselves. They took home written materials and a personalized workbook to which they may refer in future crises to remind them of the principles they learned in counseling.

\* \* \*

*Anyone familiar with prevalent methods of counseling will notice serious differences between them and the brief sketch above. This counseling is directive, rather than non-directive; it is rapid, lasting only a few weeks; it*

*involves others beyond the usual one-to-one counseling relationship. In several articles to follow, I shall attempt to state clearly why these and other changes need to be made.*

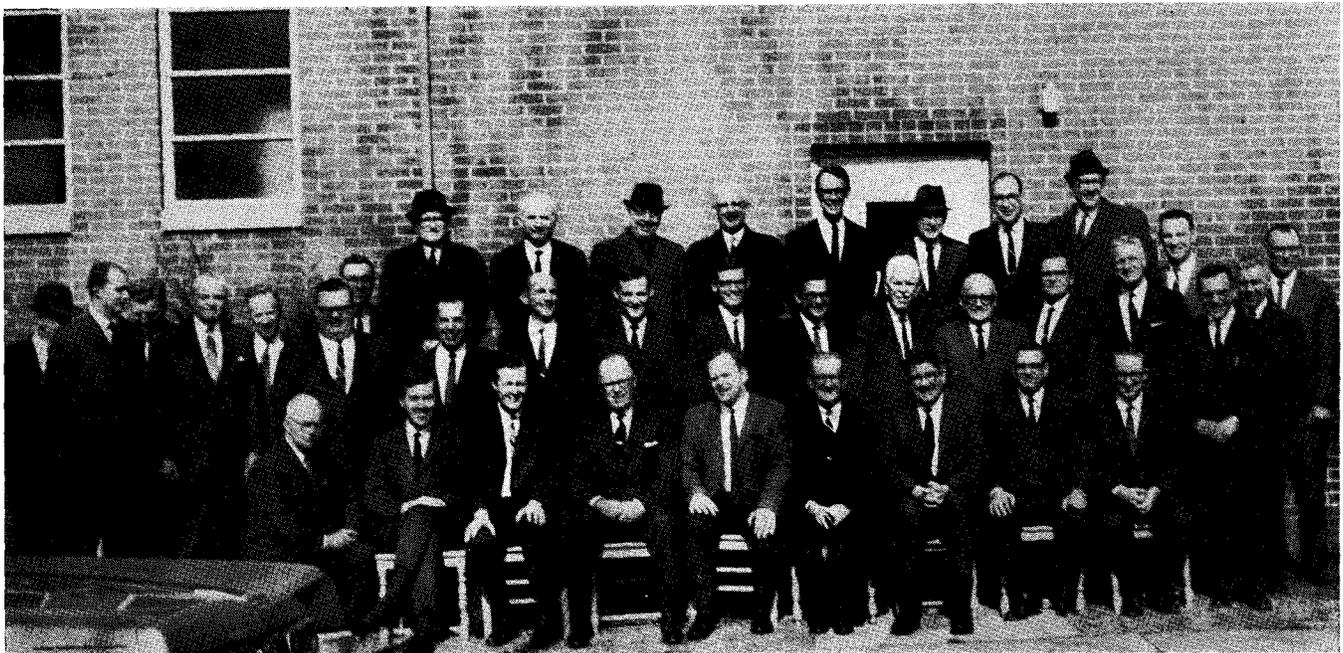
## Westminster Seminary Commencement

Dr. Robert D. Preus, professor of Systematic Theology in Concordia Seminary of St. Louis, is to give the address at the thirty-ninth annual commencement exercises of Westminster Seminary on May 22. His topic is "Christ's Power Today." In addition to 23 seniors who are to receive the bachelor of divinity degree, there are five candidates for the master of theology degree and three for the doctorate.

Professor Norman Shepherd, dean of the faculty, is preaching the baccalaureate sermon on Sunday afternoon, May 19.

The annual Westminster banquet is scheduled for Tuesday evening, May 21, at the Sheraton-Penn Pike Motor Inn in Fort Washington. Korean missionary Bruce Hunt is to speak. The luncheon of the Women's Auxiliary takes place at the Casa Conti in Glenside on the day of the commencement exercises.

THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW JERSEY MEETING AT GRACE CHURCH, TRENTON, IN FEBRUARY.



# The Adiaphora

## — part 1

The word "adiaphora" is the plural form of the word "adiaphoron." An adiaphoron is something that is indifferent. In its Christian use the word refers to that which falls within the scope of Christian freedom, so that in a given situation it is indifferent whether one takes a particular course of action instead of another because both of them fall within the scope of what is approved.

Care must be taken, however, in using this word. It does not have a Christian origin. If the word is used at all, its meaning must be carefully defined. Furthermore, the entire body of Christian truth must be kept in mind which makes any reference to a realm of adiaphora meaningful.

In a most important sense, nothing is indifferent to the Christian. He confesses that God is the Creator and Governor of all things and that all things are revelatory of his power and glory. He also understands that God has placed man as his vicegerent or deputy at the head of creation, and has given him dominion over it to subdue it. He also confesses that salvation in Christ has liberated the entire creation from the bondage of sin. In a most significant way, therefore, nothing is indifferent to the Christian. He is called to glorify his Creator in everything he does. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he should do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31).

### Pagan Origin

Originally the idea of a realm of adiaphora arose out of the Cynic notion that only virtue had any worth. Whatever fell outside the scope of virtue was inferior and not worth striving for. A great number of things were therefore indifferent, in the sense that they had no reference to moral excellence and were not even worth the effort it would take to attain them. The idea of adiaphora was further developed by the Stoics, who distinguished a middle realm of things that were neither good nor evil and which were therefore indifferent.

Because of its pagan origin the term "adiaphora" must be used with care.

*Here is another "preliminary paper" submitted to the 34th General Assembly by a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Robert Knudsen that has been studying various aspects of the general subject of guidance.*

It might suggest that there is a class or classes of actions which are neither right nor wrong in themselves, or that some sphere of things falls so far short of what is morally desirable as to be altogether indifferent to the concerns of moral beings.

Such notions do not really square with sound Christian understanding. The Christian may not act indiscriminately, without being conscious of whether his action falls within the scope of what is allowed by God. Nor may the Christian tolerate the idea that any part of the creation is removed from God and from his self-revelation, so as to fall outside of the sphere of significant Christian activity.

### Christian Freedom

If one is to arrive at a Christian idea of "adiaphora," he must understand the Christian view of freedom. On no level of his freedom whatsoever does the Christian have to do with things that are neither good nor bad in themselves. Nor does he even have to do with things that are simply good in themselves, as if they belonged to an order of nature that need not be referred directly to the one who is its Creator and whose glory it manifests. In the deepest religious sense nothing is indifferent. Everything depends upon God.

No action may be undertaken in isolation from the sovereign Lord. No freedom may be exercised without the awareness that it is a freedom that is present because of God's gracious approbation. At every moment the Christian should be filled with a profound sense that he is in communion with God, that he is guided in all things

by God's almighty hand, and that what he is performing is being performed in faith, in the confidence that it is in accordance with God's holy will.

### The Christian Sense of Adiaphora

With this understanding it is possible to speak of adiaphora in a Christian sense. The adiaphora then are things which, for whatever reason, fall within the scope of the freedom of the Christian and are yet not expressly commanded by God.

When speaking of the freedom of the Christian, one must always keep in mind what makes this freedom possible. The Christian is free with respect to the entire creation, because he confesses that God is its author and that it reveals him as its Creator in every part. His conscience has been freed from the bondage of superstition. He will no longer fear part of the creation because he believes that it is controlled by demonic powers. Other things will be possible for the Christian because he has entered into the freedom of the new dispensation of the covenant of grace.

Whatever the reason may be that the Christian has freedom, the things that fall within the scope of his freedom are indifferent, except as they may be specifically commanded by God. That is to say, neither their performance or non-performance itself constitutes disobedience to the will of God. As the apostle Paul writes, "All things are lawful unto me . . ." (I Cor. 6:12).

### Range of Freedom

For the Christian the new life in Christ establishes the scope of the above statement. When Paul says that all things are lawful for him, he describes the range of freedom which he has obtained in Christ Jesus. Obviously this freedom cannot extend to those things which are out of accord with this new life in Christ. "All things" cannot refer simply to any thing whatsoever. As Paul says elsewhere, ". . . old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

The apostle himself indicates that even within the sphere of his freedom

*In the deepest religious sense nothing is indifferent. Everything depends upon God.*

*Christian freedom should be the expression of the new life which is in Christ Jesus.*

there are certain limitations. These limitations show that the entire question of the nature and of the scope of Christian freedom depends upon certain preliminary considerations.

Paul writes that all things are lawful for him, but that not all things are convenient (I Cor. 6:12). Even within the scope of his freedom in Christ Jesus there is a criterion by which the Christian must judge what he may do. There are certain considerations of a most profound character that must never be lost to sight in the exercise of Christian freedom. One consideration is the central commandment to love and to serve God at all times. Another is the commandment to love one's brother as himself.

### **Its Limitations**

In the same passage Paul expresses another limitation of his freedom. In all of his actions he must respect the position that God has given to him as the vicegerent of the creation. All things are lawful for him, Paul says; but he will not be brought under the power of any (I Cor. 5:12). In whatever he does he must retain his position as the head of the creation, subjecting it to himself and not allowing himself to be subjected to it. Created things, which should act as a support for his life, should not be allowed to tyrannize over it, no matter how good they may be in their own right.

In short, Christian freedom has meaning only within a framework. It has meaning only on the background of what makes it possible. It may be expressed only with proper regard for the Creator and for the relationships which he has established in the world. It should be the expression of the new life which is in Christ Jesus.

Within the scope of this new life in Christ there is a wide range of things which can be done without violating its spirit. Are these things then indifferent? Within the narrow scope of this particular question the answer must be in the affirmative. That some things are done or not done by the Christian is of no consequence, in the strict sense that neither their performance or non-performance itself constitutes disobedience to the will of God.

### **Biblical Cases**

A striking example in the New Testament of the Christian position concerning adiaphora is Paul's attitude towards circumcision. In its religious meaning circumcision signified that one attached himself to the Jewish people and obligated himself to observe the entire law. From this bondage the New Testament believer had been set free. Because of this new freedom, circumcision no longer retained the significance it once had. For Paul therefore it was indifferent whether one was circumcised or not. To him, he said, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision meant anything, but a new creature in Christ (Gal. 6:15).

Because for him circumcision no longer touched on the deeper issue of salvation, Paul had Timothy circumcised. Being the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, Timothy was not wholly a Jew. Having him circumcised would give him an entree with the Jewish people. For the sake of the gospel, therefore, he was circumcised, without implying that he assumed a religious obligation to observe the Jewish law.

Later, however, when Paul was asked to have Titus circumcised, he refused in the most definite fashion. In this case circumcision was not an indifferent matter. Here the religious meaning of the rite was involved. His refusal came, he says, because of certain false brethren who had entered in among them in order to spy out the liberty that they had in Christ (Gal. 2:4). These brethren insisted that it was necessary to observe the rite of circumcision if one was to be saved. In the face of this assault on the liberty of the Christian in the gospel, there was only one thing to do, namely, to resist in the most uncompromising fashion.

Thus Paul admonished the Galatian church not to be led astray by Judaizing Christians. They were not to be swept away by a message which paraded as the gospel but which in reality was not the gospel at all. "Stand fast," he says, "in the liberty where-with Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). An assault on

this freedom was an assault on the gospel itself and had to be rejected as such.

### **Meats for Idols**

Another celebrated case concerned the meats which had been offered to idols and which were afterwards sold in the marketplace. The defeat of the superstitious idol worship of the heathen by the gospel had freed the Christian conscience with respect to these meats. Because the Christian understood that these idols were nothing at all but lifeless and powerless products of deluded imagination (I Cor. 8:4-6), he had no superstitious fear of the meats which had been offered to them, as if they possessed some magical power. They could be eaten or not eaten as it seemed convenient. The Christian conscience was able to discriminate, seeing in faith that these were nothing before God.

The awareness that these were indifferent would also be decisive in the event that a weaker brother, whose conscience had not yet been liberated from superstitious fear, might not be able to eat them in faith (I Cor. 8:7). In such a case, the indifferent status of such meats would also allow them to be put aside out of concern that the weaker brother not be brought into a position where he would stumble (I Cor. 8:8-9).

*(to be continued)*

### **AFTER HIGH SCHOOL—WHAT ?**

**W**hat are you going to do after high school? This question is constantly being asked of young people. Today's fast moving world requires engineers, scientists, mechanics, but what about Christian workers?

The church of today is suffering from a lack of ministers, missionaries and Christian School teachers. Why should a Christian youth wonder what to do with his life? Opportunity is unlimited in the field of Christian service. If a person doesn't think he has the ability to preach he can assist in any number of part-time jobs in the church.

Why not give your life in service to the One who has done so much for you? Remember, the fields are already white to the harvest. Are you prepared for the task?

**STEVE FIKKERT,**  
Cono Christian School Junior

Photos on pages 38, 40, and 46 by Sam Parker.

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# The Presbyterian GUARDIAN

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EDITOR

ROBERT E. NICHOLAS



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## Church Meetings

Spring is the season for ecclesiastical assemblies. Each season seems to bring a number of far-reaching decisions. A year ago, the United Presbyterians adopted their Confession of 1967. As another instance, the Christian Reformed Synod reached a compromise solution in the so-called Dekker matter, and decisively rejected the idea of membership in the World Council of Churches. Already this spring the Methodists and the United Evangelical Brethren have merged to form an eleven-million-membership United Methodist Church.

While not all assemblies are of special interest, there are always some worth watching. The Presbyterian Church U.S. faces several overtures urging withdrawal from COCU and a proposal to revise its church order so that local property of a church that withdraws will revert to the presbytery. Both the Southern Presbyterians and the Reformed Church in America are to consider a proposed plan of union this spring. The latter body is now a member of COCU.

The Consultation on Church Union (COCU) — representing ten denominations of over 25 million members — at its March meeting in Dayton speeded up its timetable by directing a commission to present a definite plan of union by 1969, or 1970 at the latest. We are preparing an analysis of the COCU proposals for a future issue.

Orthodox and Reformed (ES) Presbyterians, of course, have scheduled pre-Assembly conferences on matters of divergence as well as on the programs of their several agencies, about which we hope to report in our next issue. The general assemblies

meet in Westfield, New Jersey, and Wilmington, Delaware. Our usual full write-up of the OPC Assembly is scheduled for the June *Guardian*.

Later in the summer significant meetings are to be held in Europe: the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden and, of more concern to us, the Sixth Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which is to convene in Amsterdam in August. It will be preceded by the RES Baarn Missions Conference, also in the Netherlands. In forthcoming issues we expect to comment on these and perhaps other significant gatherings.

— R. E. N.

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## EDITOR'S MAIL BOX

Dear Sir:

A year ago while on furlough in the U.S.A. I attended a Westminster Seminary alumni banquet. Following the meal and challenging message, it was my privilege to talk for some time with the late Dr. E. J. Young. We reminisced about his visit to Eritrea some years ago. As a seminary student Dr. Young had seriously considered the foreign mission field among Moslems. While God had led him into another sphere, he always had a keen interest in missions to Islam.

This interest led to the visit of himself and his gracious wife to Eritrea, a visit none of us will soon forget. Some of his lectures and sermons given in Asmara I have on tapes and still enjoy. Several days the Youngs were guests in our home. He gave the closing address of our Senafe Christian Day School on the occasion of the graduation of my son John from high school and of David Bird from grade school.

I recalled our visit to the Debra Damo Coptic Monastery. While Dr. Young had wide talents, mountain climbing was not one of them! The climb, even with the aid of ropes, up the sixty-foot perpendicular side of the mountain was almost too much for him. He was more at home on top where he perused an ancient parchment book in Ethiopic which contained a discussion of the Arian controversy.

After mentioning trends in some of our sister churches here and in the Netherlands, I expressed my fear that some of the same spirit of challenging the full authority of God's Word was

beginning to creep into our own movement. I remarked that on this past furlough I sensed an attitude toward Scripture in some circles that I had not observed previously.

In reply Dr. Young expressed to me his own deep concern lest our church and seminary go in the same direction. From his profound knowledge of God's Word and his unre-served devotion to his Saviour flowed a vital concern for the purity of the church he loved. There was a sense of concern lest we turn in the direction being taken by other reformed churches and institutions of learning today where the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis was being challenged, the doctrine of definite atonement and other teachings questioned, and the full and final authority of God's infallible Word being called into doubt in many ways.

Many of us who had the privilege of studying under this erudite scholar and student of Scripture, who have read his many books and heard him lecture and preach, have had our own ministries deeply enriched as a result. Many have received encouragement by his example of a gracious, humble, and yet militant defense of our reformed heritage in the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and of the Bible as the infallible Word of God and our standard.

Those who knew him well were also impressed by his love for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Seminary he so faithfully served. It was this love that stirred his heart to deep concern lest we abandon this rich heritage that is ours.

Many have lost a friend; the church has lost one of its ablest servants. Few who have been profoundly influenced by him have been given the rich gifts that he possessed. Yet if God uses the loss of this stalwart soldier of Christ to stir to greater vigilance those who share his deep concern as to the direction in which we may be heading, perhaps this very loss in God's providence may prove a means of delivering us from the growing apostasy of our times — an apostasy that is striking at the very roots of our reformed heritage. May we never forget a central conviction that permeated his life, a conviction that found expression in the title of one of his books, *Thy Word Is Truth*.

FRANCIS E. MAHAFFY  
Senafe, Eritrea, Ethiopia

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God has figured prominently in the faith and testimony of Westminster Seminary, the *Presbyterian Guardian*, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We praise God for this, for it is an extremely important aspect of the truth as given in Scripture and set forth in our doctrinal standards.

In a way it all goes back to Dr. Machen and those associated with him, and their faith. To cite a single piece of evidence with respect to Dr. Machen, we notice the opening chapters of his *Christian View of Man* which treat of the living God, of his decrees and the doctrine of predestination.

There is one work, however, which we can only regard as preeminent among all that might be mentioned, a work which still merits our special attention. It is John Murray's booklet, *The Sovereignty of God*, published by the Committee on Christian Education in 1943 (reprinted 1965, Great Commission, 7401 Old York Rd., Phila., Pa. 19126, 25¢).

In this work, and at this stage in his teaching and preaching career, the beloved author laid down the guidelines for his entire ministry of the Word among us. Every aspect of the doctrine is dealt with briefly but most effectively. Not to become involved in any survey of the contents, our own opinion is that it deserves an honored place on every reading table in the church.

The subject of the sovereignty of God should be dealt with carefully, which is all very well; and yet are we not always on holy ground in all our Christian thought and life? After all, the doctrine is only the truth of God come to its rights. Without it we have no real God at all. A few thoughts, old or new, may be of service.

### All-pervasive

First among these is the thought that nothing ever transpires except at the express command of God. This is the idea embodied in the language of "the decrees of God." Nothing is or comes to pass except as God orders and ordains.

It was so with regard to the creation. The record states that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Elsewhere this is interpreted to mean that "he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). Following on in the

## Thoughts on God's Sovereignty

# The Wonder of His Greatness

JOHN RANKIN

creation account we read how "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." "God said" — and so it was for each of the days of his work of creation.

A similar assertion appears in connection with the preservation of the world. God, in the person of his Son, it is stated, "upholdeth all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3).

It is so also with regard to God's work of redemption. As the Savior said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth these also doeth the Son likewise." And again, "As the Father gave me commandment even so I do" (Jn. 5:19 and 14:31).

This, it may be said, represents the Savior's voluntary submission to the Father's will. The fact is, however, that it reflects the deep underlying conformity of all things to the eternal will and purpose of the everlasting God and Father. In due time the Father sent the Son and the Son of Man came down from heaven into the world. So the lesson runs through all the works of him who is at once our Creator, Preserver, Lord and Savior.

### The Little Things

A second thought is that the all-pervasiveness of the sovereignty of God is especially impressive in its relation to little things. The Lord our God "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth" (Ps. 113:6). Only by dint of infinite condescension does he concern himself with anything that he has made. How much less comprehensible that his active interest and attention should extend to every little thing!

Yet so it is and again and again our attention is directed to it. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength" (Ps. 8:2). The Lord Jesus himself came to earth by way of conception and birth. At a

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*The Rev. John Rankin, retired pastor, continues to write in Worcester, New York.*

certain high point in his life he said: "I thank thee, Father, . . . because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mt. 11:25).

It isn't only that the hairs of our heads are all numbered and that not a sparrow falls without our Father. These sayings are only indications of the total truth. For instance, God knows, as he has preconceived and foreordained, the innermost being, nature, structure, capability and action of every atom in the universe, as also all of the possibilities that await their use. Yes indeed, his active interest and attention extends to everything.

### Possibilities

Speaking of possibility it is well to remember that God has foreordained and knows not only all of the actual, but also all that is possible. We often speculate concerning the possibilities for otherness in ourselves and in the world. However, infinite wisdom has planned and infinite power forever executes one single course for everything and everyone. Precisely as things come to pass, so it is and so it was in God's plan.

God knows the way he takes and he will follow his own course. Does anyone know better than he, or have better objectives, or a better overall end in view? His wisdom is infinite and perfect. Therefore his way is best. So it is the part of wisdom on our part to say, "Thy will, not mine, O Lord, be done."

From our human point of view there is not a life ever lived but that could have been lived a great deal better. God knows that all men—that is to say, all but one of the children of men—have made a dismal failure of life except as God has intervened. How awful sin is; what havoc it has wrought every life!

On the other hand, think of what God has so far done and is ever doing with human life. Think of what he did with Abram of Ur, with Simon of Capernaum, with Saul of Tarsus—and of what even yet he may do with you and me.

## Our World

One further thought has to do with the greatness of the created universe in its bearing on our concept of the greatness of God. As we look out of the windows of our souls upon the world what do we see? That depends upon what sort of world we live in and what kind of person that we are.

It might be well to ask what a newborn baby sees? Whatever it is, we know it is a realm of loving arms and smiling faces. Later it is a floor to play on, a house to explore. And so from day to day his world develops and enlarges.

But as we grow out of babyhood into adulthood what do we see? It is spring, and I look out on earth and sky. I see green hills and vales by day, the moon and stars by night. I see a flock of sparrows feeding, butterflies and bees at work among the flowers. I meet and converse with man and woman, boy and girl. This is just our ordinary everyday experience and observation.

But as we dig deeper and explore further what do we see? What world, of all the many different kinds of world that go to make up what we call our world, is your specialty? To what extent have you mastered the fields of your particular concern? Don't we see that whatever it is that claims our attention, we see it only superficially and that there is always immeasurably more than what we see?

## Our Finitude

Nothing in this world exists in isolation from everything else. The world is not only a compilation of existences, it is a complex of relationships. All of God's creatures and all of their actions unite, combine and work together to constitute the world as we see it. And, come to think of it, how many atoms are there? And how many living cells? Sometimes we think we know it all. But how much do we really know? How much do you know in the realms of art, science, literature, history, philosophy, theology, sociology, economics, politics, business, industry, modern technology?

So we come to that which is high and lofty, which transcends and overshadows all. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps.

115:3). We of the true faith never see the world alone but always only God and his world. And this very world of his creation, preservation, revelation and redemption is itself of immeasurable, incomprehensible greatness. Such being the case, how much greater he who is infinitely greater than all his creation's greatness! "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory" (Ps. 72:19).

God has revealed himself in the

## GRACE CHURCH (from cover)

elders in Christian Reformed churches in Michigan. Former elder Nicholas Hornsby, retiring in 1954, returned to his native England, where he died in 1967. Another former elder, Samuel Pitt, is retired and lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

As with many an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation a home — that of the Faws — served as the original place of worship. After a few months the place of meeting was moved to an American Legion hall, then in 1938 to the Y.M.C.A. for five years. In 1943 the church purchased a building on Westfield Avenue that was used both for services and as a manse for nearly a decade. Following a few months in the Lincoln School the congregation moved to its present site on the Boulevard in October of 1953. An addition to the building was completed in 1956 and the present further enlarged structure was dedicated in March 1963. A new manse facing on the Summit Avenue side of the property was occupied in 1960.

Grace Church has had the quite unusual experience of having two of its pastors serve on two separate occasions. The first pastor, who came as a seminarian and was later ordained, was Donald Graham. Leaving in 1940, he returned for three years in 1947 after serving in the chaplaincy. He is now pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Alabama. The present pastor, Robert Atwell, also ministered from 1943-1946, and was preceded by John Galbraith, now general secretary of the denominational Committee on Foreign Missions.

President Edmund Clowney of Westminster Theological Seminary, was pastor of Grace Church in 1950-52. The longest pastorate was that of Leslie Dunn, from 1953 until 1962, when he accepted a call from Second

world and in his Word. And by his Word and Spirit we know him as our holy, sovereign, triune God and Father whom alone we worship and adore. God help us to believe, to love, to serve and to trust him in humble and full subjection to his Word.

**"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
And his greatness is unsearchable."**

— Ps. 145:3

Parish Church of Portland, Maine. He was followed by Jay Adams, now teaching in the practical theology department of Westminster Seminary. Mr. Atwell took up his labors a year ago after a five-year pastorate in Galway Church, Miami, Florida.

## Church in Neptune

The membership of Grace Church as of December was 186, of whom 55 were baptized children. Two years ago the congregation was divided in connection with the formation of Good Shepherd Church in Neptune. Prior to that time members of the congregation in Neptune had carried on as a chapel under the Westfield Session and the ministry of Rollin Keller, now pastor of Emmanuel Church, Wilmington, Delaware.

The present pastor in Neptune is George Cottenden, a 1967 graduate of Westminster Seminary, who was or-

## Four generations with Pastor Cottenden holding his son, David.



dained and installed as pastor by the Presbytery last fall. He and his wife Barbara (daughter of Pastor Lee Benson of Calvary Church of Amwell in Ringoes) moved to Neptune last summer when George began his work as stated supply.

Good Shepherd Church became self-supporting last October when the financial assistance of Grace Church given over the previous six years on a decreasing scale was terminated as planned. A manse was built on the church property four years ago. The congregation meets in a small (30' x 40') building that was converted from a fruit stand! Now construction is about to begin to provide an additional 1500 square feet for a new auditorium as well as more classrooms for a growing Sunday school with attendances in the 70's. Three classes have had to meet in the manse. Average attendance at morning worship is approaching 60, with communicant membership 25 besides 26 covenant children. Elder B. R. Robinson is being joined by elder-elect Jerome van de Sande on the Session.

One of the original congregations in the Presbytery of New Jersey recently rejoiced in the ordination and installation of its new pastor after a two-year vacancy. Elsewhere is a photo of the participants in the December service which constituted a pastoral relationship between Immanuel Church of West Collingswood and Allen Curry, another 1967 Westminster graduate.

All the churches of the Presbytery except Garfield now have pastors, and it is reported that Community Church has voted a call to Lester Bachman, who recently resigned as pastor in Kirkwood, Pennsylvania. Garfield's former pastor, Gordon Mouw, was installed in Grace Church, Trenton, earlier this year. Another ordination that took place at the close of 1967 was that of Andrew Wickholm in Faith Church of Pittsgrove. Half the congregations of the Presbytery have had pastoral changes within the past couple of years.

#### TOUR CANCELLED

Due to surgery and a prolonged convalescence the Rev. Robert H. Graham has had to cancel plans for a proposed Bible Lands Tour in September. Tentative plans are in the making for a similar tour in September 1969.



Messrs. S. Phillips, R. Keller, L. Oliver, Allen Curry, A. Olson, H. Coray, and K. Meilahn at the ordination of Mr. Curry in December.

*Vignettes of J. Gresham Machen*

## Captain with the Mighty Heart

Chapter 8

THE PREACHER

HENRY W. CORAY

I recall first having heard Dr. Machen preach in the summer of 1926 in Orange, New Jersey. I am forced to confess that I was not too impressed. This is not an indictment of his preaching. The fault lodged with the listener. In that segment of my life I was not interested in Christian doctrine nor in the issues confronting the Protestant church. Consequently the minister, as we say, "went over my head." His sermon was Biblical, scholarly, well organized, and delivered with unaffected seriousness. It simply did not register.

I am persuaded that as time marched on and as Machen became more and more involved in the struggle against unbelief in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., he grew increasingly effective in the pulpit. The agony of conflict drew out the wonderful latent powers of expression God had endowed him with. Indeed, under the pressure of mounting hostility to almost everything he stood for in the church, Toynbee's theory of "chal-

lenge and response" took on visible form. Those who heard him when the warfare was hottest can testify that he was capable of truly powerful preaching.

#### Minister of the Word

Several characteristics of his pulpit work stand out. Consistently, of course, he was committed without reservation to the Bible as God's inerrant and trustworthy oracle. You may examine his sermons — scores of them are in print — and you will not fail to see how sharply this lofty view of Scripture shines forth.

Having been nurtured on the Bible from childhood, like Timothy, and having saturated his mind and soul on its oceanic contents, he loved to unfold its glowing doctrines, often with delight, always with devotion, always with profound reverence for the text. He was essentially a minister of the Word.

Moreover, he was steadfast in his allegiance to that pattern of doctrine

sometimes knows as Reformed theology. Prior to his death, he was engaged in delivering radio messages over a Philadelphia station. The series follows, in outline form, the development of those teachings spelled out in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It is a masterful exposition of the noble redemptive truths hammered out by the Westminster divines, doctrines now rarely proclaimed from American pulpits.

He emulated the example of Paul in repressing the urge to impress congregations with his learning, "lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect." In his sermon titled "Is the Bible the Word of God?" he says:

**I must resist the temptation of exhibiting my eloquence. That is just too bad! But I do not think I can estimate my self-sacrifice in this particular too highly. You see, I am greatly assisted in my battle against the temptation of exhibiting my eloquence by the fact that I have no eloquence to exhibit.**

Not a few of his hearers would have difficulty accepting the allegation. It was, nevertheless, refreshing to hear him make it.

### Clarity of Style

People who listened to Dr. Machen without prejudice were struck by the clarity and dignity of his diction. In an age when "shirtsleeve English" — a shoddy, sometimes vulgar, kind of vocabulary — had begun to color (or discolor) public utterances, it is noteworthy that he maintained a high-level style of speech. Here are examples. From his message, "God the Creator":

**Others may heed those voices that bid us lose confidence in the power of our God, but as for us Christians, we will say still, though ten million times ten million universes unloose against us all their mighty power, though we stand amid the fall of crashing systems and contemplate a universal ruin—we will say still that it is God's world which He can create and He can destroy, and that through Christ's grace we are safe forever in the arms of our heavenly Father.**

In the sermon, "The Bible and the Deity of Christ," he closes off the message with gentle compassion:

**Do you belong to that great army of persons who stand outside the household of faith and look longingly at the warmth and joy within? Are you hindered from entering in by gloomy doubts? . . . We pray God that you may be led to**

## refrigerated pews . . .

**If ye love them which love you,  
what reward have ye?  
Do not even the publicans the same?  
And if ye salute your brethren only,  
what do ye more than others?  
Do not even the publicans so?  
Be ye therefore perfect . . . (Matthew 5:46-48)**

Strangers coming inside our Reformed communities often complain that they are left alone. They hear a good message, they say, and therefore sometimes they try again, and maybe once more, but then they often throw in the towel, brassed off because no one shakes their hand after a service, and nobody takes them along for coffee, or to get acquainted. Each is busy with his own friends, or his own arguments about the sermon, or his own pre-occupations with business for Monday . . . Oh, there are bunches of buddies a-plenty, and clusters of coziness all around, but do *you* know what it feels like to see that going on around you — and be left out yourself? Do you know what it feels like to be left out . . . unwanted . . . uncared for?

One knew! He is the Speaker here in this text. He had no form or comeliness that we should have wanted him (Isaiah 53) and we made that plain enough! When he was small we only had a crib for him made for beasts, and when he was only thirty-three, a cross, that pushed him off this world, that made him the Outsider, the unwanted Stranger . . . The churches of the Pharisees and of the Saducees had cozy groups of friends and cobbers, but him they did not want. Yet he had no chip on his shoulder, and he didn't run away from his church, angry, disappointed, brassed off. He stuck to us, to death, yea to the death of the cross. But then he has the right to speak, yes, also to us . . . He has the right to say: What about your refrigerated pews? Oh, they feel nice and warm to you and your cronies, but do you know what it feels like to be an outsider, unasked, unwanted, unloved, yet seeking me?

It is striking how often the Bible says that we must love *hospitality*. And he knows surely, that this is not easy. To receive sinners in his Father's home cost him his blood. He knows that to have an open house and an open heart is hard. Yet he asks of you to do away with the refrigerated pew, to look out for the stranger and not rest till he's at home with you, and with your Father in heaven. He says that when your church is no more than a club, it will stand condemned, for all its purity of doctrine. For faith without these works of hospitality is dead, too, and a church that does not graciously lure the poor wandering sinner into listening to the beauty of the gospel will be burying its treasure in the ground.

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say at least: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." If you do say that, the Lord will help your unbelief as He helped the man who said that long ago, and will bring you into the clear shining of faith.

In a closing address to one of the graduating classes of Westminster Theological Seminary be counseled:

Remember this at least — the things in which the world is now interested are the things that are seen; but the things that are seen are temporal and the things that are not seen are eternal. You, as ministers of Christ, are called to deal with the unseen things. You are stewards of the mysteries of God. You alone can lead men, by the proclamation of God's Word, out of the crash and jazz and noise and rattle and smoke of this weary age into the green pastures and beside still waters; you alone, as ministers of reconciliation, can give what the world with all its boasting and pride can never give — the infinite sweetness of the communion of the redeemed soul with the living God.

### The Issues Joined

Not the least of his gifts was his ability to join issues. One is tempted to say that this is a lost art, even in Reformed circles. But it was not a lost art in the ministry of the mighty spokesmen of Scripture and of church history. John the Baptist defined issues before Herod — and it cost him his life. Our Lord thundered against the hypocritical leaders of his day — and was crucified. Paul's epistles were written to correct errors and deficiencies in his beloved churches, but at the bar of Caesar he stood alone: "At my first defense no man stood with me."

Athanasius challenged the violent Arians and won a smashing victory for the cause of truth. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Spurgeon were churchmen who wielded the sword of the Spirit against unnumbered foes, and came off with the fruits of victory because they were not afraid to join issues with the enemies of Christ.

Machen took his place in their line of descendants. He had the discernment to ferret out and expose treason in the high councils of the church, and for it suffered the loss of ecclesi-

astical rewards. Of him the world was not worthy. In his great sermon, "The Good Fight of Faith," preached to seminary students at Princeton in the spring of 1929, he said:

Where are you going to stand in the great battle which now rages in the church? Are you going to curry favor with the world by standing aloof; are you going to be "conservative liberals" or "liberal conservatives" or "Christians who do not believe in controversy," or anything else so self-contradictory and absurd? Are you going to be Christians but not Christians over-much? Are you going to stand coldly aloof when God's people fight against ecclesiastical tyranny at home and abroad?

Are you going to excuse yourselves by pointing out personal defects in those who contend for the faith today? Are you going to be disloyal to Christ in external testimony until you can make all well within your own soul? Be assured, you will never accomplish your purpose if you adopt such a program as that. Witness bravely to the truth that you already understand, and more will be given you; but make common cause with those who deny or ignore the gospel of Christ and the enemy will forever run riot in your life.

Within a month after he preached that sermon, Princeton Seminary fell before the assault of the liberals.

### CEDAR GROVE ORGANIST HONORED

Getting to know some people is like receiving a Christmas gift which you keep on unwrapping through the years. I remember the pleasure when we first came to the Cedar Grove Church and discovered a church organist and choir director who was not only a fine musician, but also one who understood almost instinctively the requirements of a Calvinistic ministry and what would undergird it and give it wings.

It was not long before I discovered that through her teaching Antoinette Dirkse had changed the cultural climate for a large part of a generation of young people. Perhaps there were no Biggs or VanClibourns created, but into many a youth there came a sensitivity, expansiveness and beauty which could never have been there otherwise.

The most original artist is the one who walks with the great artists and masters of the past. Thus it was that Miss Dirkse brought to a small farming community the works of Bach, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Handel, Mozart, Stainer, Haydn — a whole galaxy — as well as a touch of the modern composers. So to our beloved homes and churches was brought that wealth of great spirits which cannot be exchanged in the coin of any realm.

We learned to appreciate the dependability, the faithfulness of Miss Dirkse; and about this we could write much. But there was always about her work that something extra, a quality beyond the ordinary. It may have been a prelude, a choir number, an offertory; but how often it was something more than this. For there comes a time when we feel our lives washed by a light from beyond the hills — a kind of timeless breakthrough when a Glory enflames all the chords of being.

**"For we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" II Corinthians 4:7.**

ROBERT K. CHURCHILL

\* \* \*

*Miss Antoinette Dirkse, organist and choir director at Calvary Church of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, was honored at an open house on March 2 after a third of a century of service. The Rev. Robert K. Churchill, a former pastor, wrote this tribute.*