

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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Editorial Notes and Comments

A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANS

WE WALK by faith, not by sight." The words just cited are taken from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. The context makes clear that the "we" of this affirmation is inclusive of all those who share Paul's attitude toward Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

What did Paul mean when he affirmed that Christians are those who walk by faith not by sight? Obviously no one has a right to attach a meaning to this affirmation other than Paul himself attached to it—and at the same time hold Paul responsible for the sense in which they employ it. All interpretations worthy of the name are historical as well as grammatical, *i.e.*, they not only attach a meaning to words and phrases they are capable of bearing but that particular meaning that was attached to them by their author. This means that the Christian life is a walk by faith rather than by sight only when taken in the Pauline sense of the words.

There are those who interpret this affirmation on the assumption that knowledge is confined to "things we see." If that be the case faith and knowledge stand in such contrast that where the one is the other is absent. It is not surprising that such decry any living by faith since in that case faith deals only with suppositions, not at all with assured knowledge. Hence these tell us in effect that our ambition should be to walk wholly by sight and not at all by faith. Faith is well enough for children, they tell us, but when we become men we should put away childish things. Many never grow up. Hence many continue to believe in the existence and presence of unseeable realities, but those who really grow-up realize that we have no actual knowledge of such things; and hence that it is more or less irrational and superstitious to permit such beliefs to exert any controlling influence over our lives.

It may seem superfluous to some to pay any attention to so gross a misunderstanding of this affirmation of Paul's.

None the less this alleged contrast between faith and knowledge meets us so frequently in current literature and seems to be the source of so much mental and spiritual uneasiness on the part of some that it may be well to say something concerning it. It ought to be clear to all, though apparently it is not, that this alleged contrast is based on superficial knowledge. No one who looks below the surface of things can possibly suppose that where faith is knowledge is not or *vice versa*. As a matter of fact the dictum, "He who believes nothing knows nothing," is strictly true. Wherever there is knowledge there is also faith. Faith is an element, an inescapable element, in all our mental processes.

Wherever we turn we find illustrations of the fact that where there is no faith there is no knowledge. We cannot obtain assurance even of our own existence apart from faith. We cannot "prove" our own existence; we can only accept it on faith. Descartes' famous syllogism, "I think, therefore, I am" is based on an assumption. When we say, "I think," we assume the very thing we seek to prove, *viz.*, our personal existence. What is true of this primary bit of knowledge is true of all subsequent knowledge. Much of our knowledge comes to us through one or more of our five senses. Yet if we do not have faith in our senses as conveying to us a true representation of what is outside of ourselves, we can obtain no assured knowledge by means of them. Some people are color blind. This means that they cannot trust their eyes as far as color is concerned. If they are to have any accurate knowledge of colors they must trust the statements of others. We are constantly associating with others. Yet ordinarily we have knowledge of others only as we have confidence in our sense of sight and hearing. Or again consider the axioms that lie at the basis of all our reasoning. We cannot prove them. We can only accept them on faith. And yet without them we cannot reason at all. Much of our information comes from those long dead. Only as we have confidence in the general trustworthiness of those who have written our books or inscribed our monuments can we place any dependence on such information. No doubt we all believe in the existence

DEVELOPMENTS AT PRINCETON SEMINARY

RECENT developments at Princeton Seminary—were mean since the inauguration of PRESIDENT MACKAY—have not been altogether encouraging to those who still cherish the hope that despite its reorganization in 1929 it will continue, broadly speaking at least, along the lines marked out by its founders.

In the first place DR. ROBERT E. SPEER has been elected to succeed DR. WILLIAM L. McEWAN as President of its Board of Trustees. This would seem to indicate that the Board of Control of Princeton Seminary still holds that adherence to the doctrinal position of the institution does not necessarily carry with it disapproval of the Auburn Affirmation. We use the word "still" in the preceding paragraph advisedly as it will be recalled that while at its first meeting said Board asserted its determination "to continue unchanged the historic policy of the Seminary and to do nothing whatever to alter the distinctive traditional position which the Seminary has maintained throughout its entire history" yet that it also issued a statement to the Alumni in which a lengthy paragraph was devoted to an attempt to show that the presence of two Auburn Affirmationists on the Board, with the approval of its other members, had no significance for the doctrinal position of the Seminary. If the word "still" were no longer applicable in this connection it is hardly likely that the Board would have elevated to its presidency one who less than three years ago stated in writing that the fact that there are signers of the Auburn Affirmation among the missionaries supported by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. does not prove that "the Board of Foreign Missions has sent out or retained in its service missionaries who do not believe the doctrinal teachings of our Church" (Memorandum in reply to an Overture adopted by the Presbytery of West Jersey, Jan. 15, 1935). It may be added in this connection that DR. SPEER, if we mistake not, is the first layman to be made the President of the Board of Control of the educational activities of Princeton Seminary. Precedence would have dictated a minister for the position.

In the second place, and more particularly since this action affects directly the teaching of the Seminary, the Board at its meeting on October 12th elected the REV. DR. E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN to succeed the late HAROLD L. DONNELLY as Professor of Christian Education. DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN is at present pastor of the Carrollton Avenue Church (Evangelical and Reformed) in Indianapolis and Lecturer on Church History in the College of Religion of Butler University. Such knowledge of DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN's theological position as we possess is derived almost exclusively from his book, "Christianity in America": *A Crisis* (reviewed in these columns in our July issue, p. 69). The opening paragraph of that review follows:

"Dr. Homrighausen is one of the leading exponents of Barthianism in America. In this thought-provoking book he applies the Barthian emphasis to the Christian situation in this country. It is a book for the times that we hope will be widely read and pondered especially by the liberals and by those among the more orthodox who are disposed to rest

content with things as they are among the churches of America. While far from an orthodox book from our Presbyterian viewpoint, it seems to us a book that is bound, for the most part at least, to exert a wholesome influence."

The above citation will suffice to indicate that we have a high opinion of DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN's ability. This is not to say, however, that we are convinced that he is qualified to occupy a chair at Princeton Seminary, provided the institution is to adhere to "the distinctive traditional position which the Seminary has maintained throughout its entire history." DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN's emphases, as we have pointed out, are those of the Barthians. It was not these, however, that we had particularly in mind when we spoke of his book as "far from orthodox" from our Presbyterian viewpoint. These of themselves would hardly justify such a judgment as they are, in large degree at least, Scriptural and in harmony with the system of doctrine set forth in our Confession of Faith. We had in mind, more especially, his view of the Bible. That, if we interpret his statements aright, is in harmony rather with the view of the Auburn Affirmationists inasmuch as he seemingly regards belief in the Bible as infallible not only as contrary to fact but as harmful. These statements include the following:

"The old idea of an infallible Bible, inspired in every jot and tittle, which is often associated with preaching, has run its course" (p. 105). "While in many respects that scholarship (critical) has been destructive, in a much larger sense it has liberated us from all these notions of an infallible book" (p. 118). "Few intelligent Protestants can still hold to the idea that the Bible is an infallible book; that it contains no linguistic errors, no historical discrepancies, no antiquated scientific assumptions, not even bad ethical standards. . . . Some might still claim for the 'original copies' of the Bible an infallible character, but this only begs the question and makes such Christian apologetics more ridiculous in the eyes of sincere men" (p. 121). "The Bible is not the actual Word of God, but merely a human witness to what the Word of God did in and with men and history. . . . The words of the Bible are not to be believed because they are in the Bible. . . . In reading the Bible there comes to me a strange language, there confronts me a real God, and there emerges before me something about life that I do not discover anywhere else. It is because the Scriptures do this that they are 'sacred.' Not all the Bible does this for me. There is much in the Bible that is like chaff, or, rather like the seemingly insignificant parts of a watch. . . . There is a residue in the Bible that remains intact in spite of all its inaccuracies, its antedated cosmology and science" (p. 136).

Other statements of a similar tenor might be cited. It is true also that other statements of a somewhat different tenor might be cited indicative of the unique significance DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN like Barthians in general attaches to the Bible. But with these statements before us, it seems difficult if not impossible to suppose that DR. HOMRIGHAUSEN holds that view of Holy Scripture to which each and every member of the Board of Trustees and Faculty of Princeton Seminary is required to subscribe. Possibly he has modified his views (he is still a young man, born in 1900) since "Christianity in America" was written. If not, it would seem not only that he will have difficulty in making the required pledge (in case he desires to accept the call) but

that the Board of Trustees when it called him to this responsible position did not (as it declared in 1929) "feel that it has a solemn mandate from the Assembly to continue unchanged the historic policy of the Seminary and to do nothing whatever to alter the distinctive traditional position which the Seminary has maintained throughout its entire history." There is also the question, Dr. HOMRIG-HAUSEN'S view of the Bible being what it seems to be, whether the General Assembly would confirm his election.

We sincerely hope that a satisfactory explanation of the Board's action will be forthcoming. In the meantime there would seem to be occasion for considerable misgiving on the part of the Alumni and friends of the institution.

ABRAHAM KUYPER CENTENARY



ALVINISTS throughout the world, particularly those of Dutch extraction, are observing the centenary of the birth of ABRAHAM KUYPER. It is altogether fitting that they should do this. Born on October 29, 1837—he died in his 84th year on November 8, 1920—KUYPER is widely recognized as the greatest of all modern Calvinists.

Through the courtesy of the REV. DR. JOHN H. DE VRIES, who has made so many of his writings available to the English-speaking world, we have been privileged for some months to publish for the first time in English certain of his remarkable devotional meditations—a privilege we hope to continue to exercise for many months to come. But while KUYPER'S devotional writings—he is said to have left approximately two thousand meditations—are sufficient of themselves to warrant the observance of the centenary of

his birth yet they were only incidental to his achievements as a whole. He was equally eminent as an editor, educationalist, statesman and theologian. His achievements when we consider the quality as well as the quantity of his labors were nothing less than phenomenal. Editor of a religious weekly as well as editor of the leading daily paper of Holland, founder of the University of Amsterdam in which he taught for years, a theologian who ranked with WARFIELD and BAVINCK, central figure of the anti-revolutionary political party he not only dominated it for half a century—he was Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905—but left it so firmly established that one of his followers, DR. HENDRIK COLIJN, is today not only Prime Minister of that land but recognized as an outstanding statesman and economist. It is safe to say that there have been few figures in history who rank with him in genius and versatility.

KUYPER'S basic convictions are set forth succinctly but comprehensively in the Stone Lectures he delivered at Princeton in 1898—a new edition of which has recently been published by the Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Co. of Grand Rapids. Calvinism for KUYPER is not merely a theological system but an all-inclusive world and life view. At the same time he stressed the antithesis both in thought and practice between the Christian and the non-Christian. He was among the first to insist on the fact so fruitfully developed by the late DR. MACHEN, viz., that Christianity is today engaged in a life and death struggle with Modernism. We commend the October issue of *The Calvin Forum* to the attention of our readers. It is largely devoted to the life and labors of DR. KUYPER.

War Death Never Earns Heaven

By the REV. ALFORD KELLEY



WAR now exist in various parts of the world, many nations are expecting and preparing for war, and the signs of the times seem to indicate the possible approach of "the battle of that great day of God" at Armageddon.

On one day late in July the Japanese, in an air raid on Tientsin, North China, ruined a university, municipal headquarters, railway administration buildings, customs offices, freight yards and warehouses, ruining a large area of the city, China's second largest trade and commercial metropolis, while thousands of non-combatant men, women, and children were estimated to have been killed. Such scenes may be expected to be duplicated, when various countries are arrayed against each other in the final catastrophic conflict, as some think it will be, and the wicked rulers of the world, dictators, and their cohorts, ranged against God Almighty and His people, will be totally destroyed.

It is well, with such possibilities before us, to recall that, in the World War, it was believed by some persons that combatants killed in battle won Heaven. Even some chaplains, at the time, disregarding the fact that only Christ's sacrifice makes possible our salvation, declared their belief that this "Supreme Sacrifice" of men on the battle field, was a passport to eternal life, though the previous career of the contestants had, possibly, been a very sinful one.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross was to satisfy divine justice, not for His benefit, but to reconcile mankind to God through His substitution for them. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Such a false doctrine as getting to heaven through death in a battle is based on the idea that the enemy's weapon can blot out temporary life on earth and open the way for a sinner to eternal life into the presence of a Holy God,