

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

PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

IN OUR February issue we advised our readers that we were considering the advisability of publishing CHRISTIANITY TODAY as a bi-weekly but that this could not be done without doubling the subscription price. Believing that such a step should not be taken without consulting our subscribers we requested them to express their approval or disapproval—a request that was repeated in our March issue. The returns indicate that approximately two-thirds of our subscribers favor such a change. However, so many of the one-third that expressed disapproval of the change did so on the ground that they could not afford the added expense that we have decided to hold the matter under advisement in the hope that conditions may soon be such that the change, if made, may be made with the approval of practically all of our subscribers. In the meantime CHRISTIANITY TODAY will continue to appear monthly and the price will remain \$1.00 per year.

THE MACHEN VERDICT

THE case of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. vs. J. GRESHAM MACHEN has been adequately reported in this and preceding issues of this paper. On another page may be found in full the Opinion and Judgment of the Special Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in this case. It may not be superfluous to offer certain comments.

The verdict was almost precisely as we had anticipated in view of the composition of the Court and the attitude it had displayed toward the defendant since its inception. The only question in our mind had to do with the question whether the judgment of the Court would go into effect immediately or whether its execution would be suspended, in whole or in part, until it had been affirmed or dismissed by a higher judicatory. As we understand the matter DR. MACHEN is not forbidden to approach the Lord's table but is forbidden to exercise any ministerial functions such as administering the communion or officiating at a wedding or voting in Presbytery until the appeal is finally decided. Obviously the verdict in the case of DR. MACHEN is not as immediately serious as it would be if he were the pastor of a church. We suspect that the considerations which led the Court to "show him mercy so far as at all possible"—to cite its own words—were not so much the ones mentioned in its Supplementary Statement as (1) its desire to stir up as little sympathy as possible for the defendant and (2) its doubt as to its own jurisdiction over the defendant. It is plain that not only the Court but the Presbytery of New Brunswick

would appear in a particularly ridiculous light if after pronouncing and executing its full judgment, a higher judicatory should decide that New Brunswick Presbytery had no jurisdiction over DR. MACHEN at all. That the Court had at least good reasons for doubting its jurisdiction in the matter is made abundantly clear by DR. O. T. ALLIS on other pages of this paper.

The verdict is based on the assumption that the case of the Presbyterian Church against DR. MACHEN is a purely administrative case. It is true that the case is administrative in form. It is true also that it is an overstatement to say, as some of the less judicious defenders of DR. MACHEN and the Independent Board have said, that DR. MACHEN was arraigned before a Court of the Church *merely* because of his loyalty to the Bible and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (including its form of government as well as its system of doctrine). But while the case is administrative in form it involves doctrinal issues to such a degree that in reality it is as much (or rather more) of a doctrinal than it is an administrative case; and hence a case that it is impossible to judge on its merits without taking doctrinal matters into consideration. Is it not a doctrinal question to ask whether the authority of the General Assembly is superior to that of the Word of God? Are doctrinal matters not involved when it is asked whether the Board of Foreign Missions is pursuing a policy friendly to the Modernist Auburn Affirmation? When therefore the Court refused even to consider the doctrinal issues involved it was a foregone conclusion that its judgment would be at least an imperfect judgment. The cry "the issue is administrative not doctrinal" is the same false cry that was raised in the Princeton Seminary case and even more misleading in this instance than in the former.

The verdict is also based on the assumption that the Mandate of the last General Assembly relative to the Independent Board is constitutional. If such is the case DR. MACHEN is unquestionably guilty as he freely admits that he disobeyed that Mandate. It is his contention, however, that that Mandate is unconstitutional and as such null and void. When therefore the Court ruled that it would not even consider any arguments questioning the legality or validity of that Mandate there was necessarily nothing left for it to determine except the nature of the penalty it would mete out to the defendant. A more amazing or less defensible ruling it would be difficult to imagine. This Mandate, be it remembered, is a mere deliverance of a General Assembly and as such no part of the Constitution of the Church (compare what is said in the accompanying editorial entitled *The Authority of the General Assembly*) and yet the Court ruled that it had no right to sit in judgment on its legality or validity. Surely the Court would have a right to do that even if this Mandate had been adopted by the presbyteries and so a part of the Constitution of the Church. Moreover it would be its bounden duty even then to declare it unconstitutional in as far as it might be in any wise in conflict

Some Recent Books on the Second Coming, With Comments

By the Rev. Samuel G. Craig, D.D.

IN THE course of the last few months, a number of books having to do with the second coming of our Lord have been sent us with the request that they be brought to the attention of our readers. They include the following: (1) *Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism*, by Abraham Kuyper (Zondervan Publishing House); (2) *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfilment*, by M. J. Wyngaarden (Zondervan Publishing House); (3) *The Second Coming of Christ*, by Henry W. Frost (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.); and (4) *The Second Advent*, by Gerrit H. Hospers, of East Williamson, N. Y. (privately printed as yet in mimeograph form only). To these may be added *The Principle of Spiritualization in Hermeneutics*, by Gerrit H. Hospers (also privately printed), a fifty-two page examination of Dr. Wyngaarden's book mentioned above, and broadly speaking, *World Prospects*, by Arno C. Gaebelein (publication office of "Our Hope"), and *Studies in the Gospel according to Matthew*, by E. Schuyler English (Fleming H. Revell Co.).¹

The books by Drs. Frost and Hospers have been written in exposition and defense of Premillennialism. This point of view also underlies Dr. Gaebelein's book and Mr. English's exposition of the Gospel of Matthew. It should be noted, however, that while Dr. Hospers is content to defend generic Premillennialism, Dr. Frost, Dr. Gaebelein and Mr. English are explicit in their advocacy of Premillennialism of the dispensational type—Dr. Frost being what is known as a Post-Tribulationist and Dr. Gaebelein and Mr. English Pre-Tribulationists. The books by Drs. Kuyper and Wyngaarden, on the other hand, are definitely anti-Premillennial in their teachings or at least their implications. While both Drs. Kuyper and Wyngaarden are, if we mistake not, non-millennialists, yet these particular books contain little or nothing that would not be acceptable to a Post-Millennialist. Dr. Wyngaarden's book is aimed primarily at the Premillennial method of exegesis while Dr. Hospers' is particularly concerned to defend that method.

Dr. Kuyper's book (or rather booklet, for it only contains 36 pages), translated from the Dutch by the Rev. G. M. Van Pernis, like everything from his pen, is masterful. Dr. Frost's book sets forth the Premillennial view of our Lord's return with much ability and attractiveness and in a manner that will prove helpful to all. Dr. Hospers' book contains one of the ablest expositions and defenses

of the Premillennial view that we have seen, certainly the best that we have seen from the hand of a Dutch scholar and theologian as most such are staunch defenders of the a- or non-millennial view. Like Dr. Wyngaarden's book it deals largely though not so exclusively with the principles of Biblical interpretation.

The book by Dr. Wyngaarden comes to grip in a more thorough way than any book we have seen with what is perhaps the determining issue as between those who accept and those who reject Pre-millennialism, viz., the question of the right interpretation of prophecy. Dr. Wyngaarden accepts while Dr. Hospers opposes what is known as the spiritualization of prophecy. He maintains that Premillennialism obtains its plausibility from its failure to recognize that degree of spiritualization of interpretation that is latent in the Old Testament and evident in the New Testament. He holds on the basis of an extended study of the Biblical material that ample evidence exists for the spiritual interpretation of the entire typical kingdom, including such elements as Israel, Zion and Jerusalem, the Promised Land and the Old Covenant, and that this consideration undermines the foundations of Premillennialism. It cannot be reasonably denied, it seems to us, that Dr. Wyngaarden has made an exceedingly important contribution to the literature dealing with Biblical prophecy. While not what might be called a popular book, its contents are easily within the comprehension of all real Bible students and cannot wisely be ignored by future students of prophecy. Dr. Hospers' *The Principle of Spiritualization in Hermeneutics* is a critical examination of Dr. Wyngaarden's book that may profitably be read in connection with its study.

Dr. Gaebelein's book deals with the prospects of Jews, Gentiles, the Church and Christendom from his well-known pre-millennial and dispensational point of view. It is a companion volume to *The Conflict of the Ages* previously noted in these columns. Mr. English's book is a popular exposition of the Gospel of Matthew from a point of view similar to Dr. Gaebelein's rather than an exposition and defense of Dispensationalism. Whether or no the reader approves of its Dispensationalism, or even its Premillennialism, he will find it pervaded by an adoring attitude toward Christ as Lord and Saviour and an earnest desire that its readers become the recipients of His grace.

It is worthy of note that Dr. Kuyper, and we judge Dr. Wyngaarden, hold what Dr. Hospers calls the Non-millennial view of our Lord's return (called by others the A-millennial view). This fact would hardly call for comment in Europe but strange to say in America a great many still seem to think that there are only two chief views, viz., the Pre- and the Post-millennial. This argues an amazing ignorance of the history of thought on the

¹ Since writing this article we have received *The Key to the Book of Revelation*, by the late Erik Thompson, edited by his son (Zondervan Publishing House). Mr. Thompson was an outstanding Lutheran layman who had given much attention to eschatology. It was Mr. Thompson's contention that the key to the Book of Revelation is to be found in Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24: 3 to 25; 46) and his book contains a detailed exposition of this discourse as an introduction to a contemplated larger work based on the book of Revelation to be called *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. It is an interesting book. Mr. Thompson was a Premillennialist.

subject, to say the least, since as Dr. Hospers points out, it is the view of "Standard Reformed and Lutheran Theology." It is, perhaps, especially surprising that such disregard of the A- or Non-millennial view should be prevalent in Presbyterian circles when it is the view that is implied if not openly expressed in the Westminster Standards. But whatever may be the explanation of the disregard of what Dr. Hospers refers to as "this European view" on the part of Americans in the past, it is today a view that can no longer be disregarded even by those who confine themselves to American thought on the subject. It is the view advocated by Geerhardus Vos, Professor-emeritus of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary (in his book *The Pauline Eschatology* as well as in his article *Eschatology of the New Testament* in the International Standard Bible Encyclopædia), by Louis Berkhof, Professor of Theology at Calvin Seminary (in Volume II of his *Reformed Dogmatics*), by William Masselink (in *Why Thousand Years?*) and, not to mention others, by Philip Mauro (in *Of Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass*).

At present there seems to be developing a tendency among Bible-believing Christians in America at least to disregard, or at least treat as moribund, the Post-millennial view of our Lord's return. We know of no very recent book the chief purpose of which is to advocate this view. Because a modification of it is advocated by Modernists, there seems to be a growing tendency on the part of both Pre- and Non-millennialists to assume that it is no longer held by those who accept the Bible as their supreme standard and who would immediately repudiate any view they might hold if they were persuaded that it was not the Scriptural view. In our opinion, this tendency is not well-informed. This view still has able advocates among Bible-believing Christians. It is advocated, for instance, by Professor Loraine Boettner in his able volume *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (pp. 132-143). More significant still, it is the view that was held by that master exegete and theologian, the late B. B. Warfield (*Biblical Doctrines*, pp. 601-663)—the man who has written the most scholarly and exhaustive volume of which we have any knowledge in defense of the full trustworthiness and divine authority of the Bible (*Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 456). It is the view, moreover, not to mention others, held by the most erudite of our living American Presbyterian theologians, Professor Caspar Wistar Hodge, of Princeton.

We have made no attempt to enumerate the leading defenders of the Non-millennial and Post-millennial views of our Lord's return (still less of the Pre-millennial) but we have said enough, it seems to us, to make clear that all of these views have able and scholarly defenders among Bible-believing Christians.

We are well aware that there are many professing Christians who look only for a spiritual return of our Lord in the sense that the day is coming when His aims and ideals will have become dominant in the thoughts and lives of men. It is perfectly clear, however, that according to the Bible there is to be a personal and visible return of our Lord

as literal and objective as was His first coming. There should be no hesitation, therefore, in saying that such a view is an un-Christian view and that those who hold it have, to that extent at least, departed from the faith. Logically if not actually such a view involves the rejection of all that is most vital to Biblical Christianity.

We do not mean to imply that it is a matter of indifference whether we hold the Non-millennial, the Pre-millennial or the Post-millennial view of our Lord's return. We think the differences between them highly important. Our conception of the nature and function of the Church and of our obligations and tasks as individual Christians as well as our whole conception of the future this side of the eternal state is largely colored if not determined by our view of our Lord's return. Moreover while freely admitting that each has its able and scholarly defenders among Bible-believing Christians we are far from supposing that the Biblical evidence that is adduced in behalf of each is at all equal. In the nature of the case, if the Bible be indeed the Word of God, it is not possible to suppose that all of these views are actually taught in its pages. What we mean is that at the present stage of Biblical knowledge these differences should be considered such differences as may exist among brethren. Serious as are the differences between the advocates of these in important respects diverse views, it should never be forgotten that what they hold in common is far more important than what they hold severally. This comes out very clearly in connection with the reading of Dr. Frost's fine-spirited book, referred to above. Though Dr. Frost is a Dispensationalist as well as a Pre-millennialist—and so the advocate of Pre-millennialism is one of its least acceptable forms as far as Post- and Non-millennialists are concerned—yet most of what he presents as "a review of the teaching of Scripture concerning the return of Christ" will be found acceptable to both Post- and Non-millennarians. Important, then, as we think these differences to be we think it still more important that they be not permitted to become divisive issues, especially in view of that encroaching Modernism that threatens the destruction of any and all belief in the return of Christ. We think, therefore, that the advocates of these views should feel free to do everything in their power to persuade others of the soundness of the view they have embraced. But in exercising this liberty we think it exceedingly important that they keep constantly in mind that they are dealing with a difference that is a difference that may exist among those who stand unitedly around the Cross and join in common praise of Christ as their King.

In view of the fact that most of our readers will be Presbyterians we should, perhaps, add that when we stated above that the Non-millennial view of our Lord's return is the one implied if not expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms we did not mean to imply that only Non-millennarians can consistently accept these standards as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. If the ordination vow of Presbyterian ministers and elders required them to accept everything taught or implied in the doctrinal standards of our Church,

it seems to us that Pre- and (to a lesser extent) Post-millennialists would have difficulty in taking such a vow. That vow, however, while it requires acceptance of the Bible as the infallible Word of God merely requires acceptance of the Confession of faith only as "containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." Pre- and Post-millennialists could be considered as unorthodox from the Presbyterian viewpoint, therefore, only if it could

be shown that they are inconsistent with the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith, viz., the Reformed or Calvinistic system. That, however, is something, we believe, that cannot be done. In harmony with this belief we find that as a matter of fact many of the ablest as well as most outstanding advocates of the Reformed or Calvinistic system of doctrine have been, and are, either Pre- or Post-Millennialists.

The Wisdom of Coercion

By the Rev. William Parsons, D.D.

(In our last issue Dr. Parsons was by an inadvertence set forth as "John Parsons." We are glad to acknowledge the error and make the correction.)

SINCE the regrettable action of the Cleveland Assembly in which it began its policy of coercion in relation to the Independent Board of Foreign Missions the discussion has centered largely in the constitutionality and legality of its action. Such is the doubt and confusion in this matter that in attempting to carry out the injunction of discipline, the presbytery of Olympia referred its case to the Judicial Commission for a ruling upon the legality of the Assembly's action, the presbytery of Chester has flatly refused to prosecute, the presbytery of Lackawanna has extended this injunction to cover the employees of the Independent Board as well as the members of it, and the presbytery of Philadelphia has given the church an exhibition of worldly maneuvering for factional advantage which would be hard to surpass and which certainly will not look well on the pages of history.

This whole coercive movement is beginning to look so much like persecution that old fashioned, Biblically minded presbyterians are becoming painfully ashamed of it. The question of its wisdom and spirit are raised entirely apart from its constitutionality. The conclusion is growing that the whole process is unnecessary, futile and unChristian.

There is no fundamental necessity of enforcing either unity or uniformity in this work of Foreign Missions. Other churches have variety of organization. The Church of England has five distinct organizations. The Church of Scotland has more than one. So does the Northern Baptist church and several of the Continental European churches. At the Reunion the church expressed the conviction that one Board was the wiser policy but allowed the churches to work through the American Board. In the proposed union with the United Presbyterian church the Woman's Board of that church was to have continued as a separate agency. What then is the necessity of denying this right and privilege to a minority in our own church?

But even granting the necessity of unity in this part of the Church's work this drastic action of the Assembly was entirely unnecessary. Had the General Council assumed its power to supervise the spiritual affairs of the Board and put it in line with the historic position of the church; had the Board of Foreign Missions frankly renounced its inclusive policy both as to its membership and the personnel of its employees; had it definitely accepted its respon-

sibility for the orthodoxy as well as the Christian character of all of its missionaries; had it agreed to withdraw from all union enterprises where Modernism had found lodgment; had it agreed to be more careful in blue penciling this Modernism from its own publications and decidedly more chary in recommending the books of its study courses, there never would have been any Independent Board and assurance that all this would be the policy of the future would have reabsorbed this Independent Board in a very short time. But none of these things were done in more than a half hearted fashion and a large element of doubt was left in the minds of many as to whether they would be done effectively in the future. The forcing of this coercive action in the face of this doubt was anything but the part of heavenly wisdom.

Moreover this action was pitifully futile. It cannot bridge over the gulf between Modernism and orthodox Calvinistic Christianity which we all know exists. It will not make conservative presbyterians swallow the inclusive policy. It cannot suppress the discussion of this matter on the part of those who are determined to preserve the historic faith of the church. It cannot compel those who are dissatisfied with the policies of the Foreign Missions Board to send their offerings through this agency. There are too many agencies outside the church. Attempting to meet this phase of the question by the unified budget will simply react unfavorably upon all of the agencies of the church. Nor will it be able to enforce this doctrine of "trust funds" for all money pledged under the unified budget system. The sessions know too well that they are trustees for the local church and not for the Boards.

Many who have watched this controversy with little but academic interest up to this point, have strongly revolted in their minds against this evident persecution. One expressing himself recently said, "I am loyal to the Board and to the Assembly, but my loyalty to the constitution of the church comes before both of them and my loyalty to Christ takes precedence to them all." Another said, "On what bread doth this our Caesar feed that he hath grown so great?" My own initial feeling upon learning of this action was, "There is too much of Hampden and Pym in my blood and too much of Calvin and Knox and Kuyper in my spiritual makeup to swallow that." And I know