

# The Princeton Theological Review

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REFORMED THEOLOGY TODAY\*

MR. PRESIDENT, GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FATHERS AND BRETHERN :

I have a very profound sense of unworthiness in taking up the duties of the Chair to which you have called me—a Chair made famous by the illustrious men who have preceded me, and whose labours have helped to give Princeton Seminary a fame throughout the world for sound learning and true piety. We think today of Archibald Alexander, that man of God, the first Professor in this Seminary; of Charles Hodge, whose *Systematic Theology* today remains as probably the greatest exposition of the Reformed Theology in the English language; of Archibald Alexander Hodge, a man of rare popular gifts and of unusual metaphysical ability; and last, but not least, excelling them all in erudition, of Dr. Warfield, whose recent death has left us bereft of our leader and of one of the greatest men who have ever taught in this Institution.

I would pause a moment to pay a tribute to his memory. He was my honoured teacher and friend. For twenty years I had the privilege of helping him in this department, and drew inspiration from his broad minded scholarship. At the time of his death he was, I think, without an equal as a theologian in the English speaking world. With Doctors Kuyper and Bavinck of Holland, he made up a great trio of outstanding exponents of the Reformed Faith. His loss is simply irreparable. But he has gone to his reward, to

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\* An Inaugural Address delivered by Caspar Wistar Hodge on the occasion of his induction into the Charles Hodge Chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology, Miller Chapel, October 11th, 1921.

Christ dishonoring system like that of Rome or the far worse infidelity of Unitarianism. The title "From Authority to Freedom" is misleading. It might better have been called "From Authority to Agnosticism."

So far as Professor Jacks appears in the pages of this book his speech, when not in the nature of a eulogy upon the morality and sincerity of Roman Catholics as against Protestants—Unitarians excepted—is to the disparagement of the grand and simple doctrines of the Christian religion. Sin, eternal retribution, conversion, atonement, these doctrines which Hargrove damns as the beliefs of the Plymouth Brethren, apparently mean little to Professor Jacks. He names them as preposterous and outworn articles of a dead church. The book is a sad one. The struggles of doubt are always sad, especially when they lead first to refuge of lies and superstitions, and then to infidelity tinged with morality and ethics.

*Philadelphia, Pa.*

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY.

*A New Mind for the New Age.* By HENRY CHURCHILL KING, D.D., LL.D., President of Oberlin College. Fleming H. Revell Co. 1920.

This book contains the six lectures delivered by Dr. King on the Cole Foundation at Vanderbilt University. Much of the material in the book is a reprint from a book by Dr. King which was distributed among the soldiers during the war. This accounts for much that sounds stale and platitudinous. Although the addenda to the book after the War speaks much of disillusionment and relaxation one cannot avoid the conviction that he is listening to a man who still holds the belief that was shared by so many as the war drew to its close, viz., that the old world order was giving way to a new and better order. Hardly any one feels that way now. For this reason Dr. King's book sounds more like a pamphlet for the existing days of the war than a sober judgment after the war.

The title, *A New Mind for the New Age*, will raise a question in many minds: Save in a sense of time, is there any such thing as a New Age? What is new about it? What new hopes are there? what new fears? what new graces? and what new vices and sins and perils? The book ought to demonstrate this, if it is to justify its title. We do not feel that it does. There are many helpful and suggestive sayings about an active and positive Christian civilization which does not wait for calamities to happen, and then apply its healing philosophy, but takes steps to so order human affairs that such offenses shall not come.

The book has an unfortunate and offensive reference to what is called the Old Testament idea of religion as one of those things the falseness of which had been taught us by the war. Nothing could be further from the truth. If any book came out of the fiery furnace of the great conflict with unreduced authority, and with a new majesty and awe about it, that book was the Old Testament, the book which tells us that God is the moral governor of nations and societies as well as of individuals; the book that tells us righteousness and judgment are the habitation of

His throne; the book that tells us that the great cities, nations and empires are but the "brief embodiment and transient realization of His desires." That any book should speak disparagingly of the Old Testament idea of religion or Christianity will be sufficient to discredit it in the minds of many readers.

*Philadelphia, Pa.*

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY..

*The Portrait of the Prodigal. Life Stories in Experiences of the Prodigal Son.* By JOSEPH NELSON GREENE. Methodist Book Concern. 1921. Pp. 215.

The most obvious defect of the treatment of the story of the prodigal is that it is rather philosophic and analytic than dramatic and picturesque. Much that is interesting and true is told us of the younger son, but he is not set vividly before our eyes. Both style and matter are for the most part rather common place, and little that is fresh or striking is presented.

The doctrinal teaching is thoroughly Pelagian. "Repentance and confession are the Scripture's biggest words, aside from faith, in the plan of redemption" (p. 190). "The terms of salvation are man's repentance and confession on the one hand, and God's pardon and cleansing on the other. . . . Primarily then a man's salvation rests with himself. The only thing that stands in the way in his unwillingness to repent and confess. . . . When he can so master himself as to come with the prodigal to the point of repentance and confession his salvation is assured" (p. 191). "The message, then, is outstanding in the story of the prodigal, that salvation is merely a matter of man's coming back to God with penitence in his heart and confession on his lips" (p. 192). This is far removed from Paul's teaching that salvation is of grace and not of works. Pardoning grace is here, but for redeeming grace no place is found. There is no need of atonement; no room for the cross of Calvary, on which the Lamb of God is offered for the sins of men.

Why Christ died we are not told, but it was not to redeem men from sin. "If God ever needed to be propitiated—which may well be doubted—it was all accomplished in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But God needs no reconciliation in his relation to the sinner. The only possible barrier to reconciliation is man, not God" (p. 208).

The ultimate ground of salvation is not the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, but the sinner's conquest of himself. God does not save him, but he saves himself with such help as God may give.

The writer has thus gone far astray from the teaching of the New Testament, as so many others have done, because he mistakes a part of its teaching for the whole. If this parable be taken as exhibiting the whole truth of the relation of God to man, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are excluded, and the doctrine of redeeming grace is torn up, by the roots. Here as always if we would speak the truth as it is in Jesus we must heed to his words, "It is written again."

Attention may be called to some matters of minor importance. The