

# CHRISTIANITY TODAY



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## The 158th General Assembly: An Interpretative Report

The 158th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. met in Atlantic City, N. J. on May 23, 1946. For the first time since 1942, war restrictions having been removed, the various presbyteries sent their full quota of commissioners.

The morning session of the first day was confined, as usual, to worship, a sermon by the retiring Moderator, and the observance of the Lord's Supper. Taking as his theme "Choose Your Verdict" (text, Matt. 25:21 and 26) Dr. William B. Lampe addressed the Assembly in a manner that was at once searching, challenging and forward-looking. His concern was that the Church so use its vast resources as to gain the verdict passed on the faithful servant.

### Dr. Frederick W. Evans Elected Moderator

The afternoon session of the first day of the Assembly was devoted to the election of a Moderator by the Assembly as a whole and of the members of the Standing Committees (except their chairmen who are appointed by the Moderator) by the 22 electing sections into which the Assembly had been divided as provided by its Standing Rules.

The Rev. Raymon M. Kistler of the Presbytery of West Jersey was nominated by the Rev. E. Lansing Bennett of the same Presbytery and his nomination seconded by the Rev. Albert G. Butzer of the Presbytery of Buffalo-Niagara. The Rev. Frederick W. Evans of the Presbytery of Troy was nominated by the Rev. R. Lewis Jones of the same Presbytery and his nomination seconded by the Rev. Alfred Lee Wilson of the Presbytery of Chicago. Of the 830 votes cast Dr. Evans received 464 and Dr. Kistler 366.

The result of the election was something of an upset. Apparently it was a surprise even to Dr. Evans. His election was due in large measure, if we mistake not, to the manner in which his sponsors

took advantage of the strategic error of Dr. Kistler's sponsors. Dr. Bennett made out a strong case for his nominee—too strong a case in fact as he gave the impression that Dr. Kistler is something of a superman. We would not be understood as implying that Dr. Bennett exaggerated in describing Dr. Kistler's qualifications for the position but he did open the way for Dr. Jones to commend his nominee, not as a superman but as an average working pastor, a sort of "Abraham Lincoln type of a man" and with a sly dig at what some would call the "Church Bureaucrats" said that it should not be held against him that he had not been a member of any of the big boards or agencies of the Church—a representation which made an obviously favorable appeal to the commissioners. This favorable impression was greatly enhanced when Dr. Wilson stressed the fact that Dr. Evans had expressly forbidden any pre-election solicitation of votes by his friends either by mail or by personally contacting the commissioners—a statement that was the occasion of Assembly applause. Due to the fact that the Assembly had again voted that the seconding speeches should be in reverse order of the nominating speeches—an arrangement that ordinarily gives an unfair advantage to the first nominee—Dr. Butzer's speech followed those of Drs. Jones and Wilson. He, however, could do little or nothing to counteract the affect of their speeches. He made a strong appeal for his nominee but was unable to reverse the sentiment for Dr. Evans that had swept the Assembly.

No doctrinal issue was raised in connection with the election. The fact that one of Dr. Evans' sponsors thought it advisable to say that he had never been aligned with any separation movement would seem to indicate either that he had been or was in danger of being represented as having been sympathetic with

the late Dr. Machen and others who left the Presbyterian Church. We do not know that there was any warrant for such a thought but, if so, there must be some who were somewhat relieved when they learned that five of the fifteen chairmen of Standing Committees, appointed by Dr. Evans, signed the Auburn Affirmation. It is quite possible that he appointed them without knowing they were signers—we were not aware of it until we had checked the list—but, be that as it may, it is obvious that doctrinal issues did not figure in the election. However, there is reason to think that Dr. Evans belongs to the more conservative element in the Church and we anticipate that the outcome of his election will be wholesome. We are particularly pleased that the new Moderator is a working pastor rather than a college or seminary president, board secretary or church executive. It is the rank and file pastors who do the main work of the Church, and it is always fitting when one of their number is elevated to this high office. Many of them are well qualified for the position but not being widely known throughout the Church they are at a disadvantage as candidates as compared with their more widely known brethren.

#### Church Cooperation and Union

The report of the Department of Church Cooperation and Union included reports concerning the Federal Council, the World Council of Churches, the Western Section of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, the Lord's Day Alliance, the proposed highly questionable merger of eight Interdenominational Agencies under the name of the "National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States," and the negotiations looking toward union with the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Protestant Episcopal Church—all of which were approved by the Assembly practically without question. This is not to imply that there was not a lively interest in its report. There was, particularly in the matter of Church Union. Some of the commissioners manifested marked impatience with the Department's failure to report tangible results. The statement by Elder Charles J. Turck, President of Macalester College, as Chairman of the Special Committee of Laymen: "We want action and we want it in our lifetime. We believe some kind of union can be worked out in the next two years" was enthusiastically applauded. The Rev. Morris C. Robinson of Minneapolis offered a resolution, which the Assembly immediately adopted, that the Department be instructed to seek to enter into negotiations, looking toward organic union, with at least one church with which negotiations are not now in progress—a resolution in harmony with an overture from the Presbytery of Detroit that the efforts to achieve union with other Protestant denominations be intensified.

This impatience is easily understandable in view of the fact that twenty-six years have elapsed since the Department achieved any tangible results. This failure has not been due, it seems to us, to any lack of zeal on the part of the Department. It has been due rather to the attitude, the lack of responsiveness on the part of the churches with which they have carried on negotiations.

Take the case of the United Presbyterians. The negotiations looking toward union with that Church received a severe set-back in 1942 when its Assembly rejected a resolution proposing the appointment of a committee "charged with the specific task of entering at once into active negotiations with the proper representative of the Presbyterian Church U.S. and of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and together with them work out a suitable basis of union of our various bodies"; and ended, for the time being at least, when its 1944 Assembly did not include our Church among those which it authorized its Committee on Church Relationships to seek union.

The prospect of anything like early union with the Protestant Episcopal Church vanished recently in Philadelphia. This matter did not figure largely in our Assembly, partly because the revised plan of union had not yet been issued but more particularly because the extent to which the matter would continue to be a live issue in our Church would depend upon the action taken by the Protestant Episcopal General Convention to be held in September. As is now well known the Commission on Approaches to Unity of the Protestant Episcopal Church presented both a majority and a minority report to their General Convention and that said Convention did not adopt the recommendation of the majority report that the Plan be referred to the dioceses and parishes of the Church for three years of study but merely authorized its Commission on Approaches to Unity to continue negotiations with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. This means that such negotiations as have been in process for nine years will be the same in character for another three years, if they are continued at all, inasmuch as the General Convention meets triennially. It may be going too far to speak of the proposal to unite the two Churches as a dead issue. It seems obvious, however, that it is suffering from a species of arrested development that threatens its life. It seems moribund if not dead.

Whether the negotiations being carried on with the Presbyterian Church U.S. will end differently remains to be seen. While the Department of Church Cooperation and Union reported that these negotiations were making "excellent progress" it felt the need by way of caution to direct attention to the fact that a group of ministers and elders have been organized in the Southern Presbyterian Church to oppose union with our Church. "Reliable reports," the Assembly was told, "are to the effect that sentiment for reunion has grown steadily. Whether it

has yet reached a proportion large enough that three-fourths of their Presbyteries will ratify a plan of reunion cannot be definitely estimated. That a large majority of our Church desire reunion with the Southern Church appears to be true; whether an equal majority will approve a specific plan to which the Southern Church will agree likewise cannot be definitely estimated. But that a way to reunion within these next years may be found is the prayer of multitudes in both Churches." Obviously our Department is not very confident of a successful conclusion of its negotiations with the Southern Church. We are of the opinion that if the representatives of the two churches agree on a Plan of Reunion, and this Plan is sent down to the Presbyteries, it will be approved by more than three-fourths of our Presbyteries but we are by no means sure that the Presbyteries of the Southern Church will do likewise. The group of ministers and elders organized in the Southern Church to oppose union with our Church, referred to in the report of the Department, is apparently a growing group and one with whose aims there is evidently much sympathy in the Southern Church as indicated by the growth in circulation of its organ, "The Southern Presbyterian Journal" from 720 in 1942 (when it was established) to more than 10,000. At a meeting of this group, held at Montreat, N. C. on August 8, 1946, it approved the following statement:

1. "We remain opposed at present to organic union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. because doctrinal differences present a serious obstacle. So far as the creedal statements are concerned the differences do not appear to be significant, but there is manifestly a radical difference in viewpoint in the two churches as to the interpretation and administering of the standards.
2. "We are also concerned about serious differences in church government and of order, as well as in principles and methods of administration.
3. "Recalling that when our Church came into existence, congregations, presbyteries and synods exercised the right of self-determination with regard to their property, we stand unequivocally on this principle, believing it to be consistent with the best of our Presbyterian tradition."

It should perhaps be added that the group also reaffirmed their loyalty to the following convictions:

1. "The entire trustworthiness of the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
2. The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.
3. The fact of the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, His substitutionary atonement to satisfy divine justice, His mighty works and miracles as recorded in the New Testament, His bodily resurrection, and His sure return in power and glory."

It will be seen, therefore, that the Auburn Affirmationists and their sympathizers in our Church constitute the primary (see Dr. Robinson's article on another page) though not the only obstacle in the way of reunion with the Southern Church. And yet it was alleged when Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin was a

candidate for Moderator that his election would be in the interest of hastening reunion with the Southern Church!!

### The Restoration Fund

The Assembly, as was expected, featured the Restoration Fund. It will be recalled that the 1945 Assembly, after much debate, fixed the goal of the Fund at \$27,000,000. This year there was no debate, no questioning of the wisdom or practicability of last year's decision, only a manifest desire on the part of all to do everything possible to reach the goal. The Church has been and is being circularized concerning this Fund to such a degree that we need do no more than mention it here. Suffice it to say that Dr. George Emerson Barnes, chairman of the War-Time Service Commission—henceforth to be known as the Presbyterian Restoration Commission—reported that approximately \$4,440,000 had been raised, largely from individuals, and that the outlook was encouraging that the full amount would be pledged when the matter was brought to the attention of the various congregations. November 3rd was designated as Restoration Fund Sunday by which time it is hoped that every Presbyterian will have been asked to contribute. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. has the distinction of having set its Restoration Fund goal the highest of any of the churches—though its membership is far from the largest—but none of the commissioners seemed to think that it is higher than it should be nor beyond realization. They seemed to think rather that it will be a reflection on the Church if the final total does not exceed \$27,000,000.

### Support of Conscientious Objectors

The Restoration Fund was indirectly involved in the sharp debate that arose concerning the support of the conscientious objectors. Its occasion, as in 1945, is the fact that the "peace churches," such as the Friends, Brethren and Mennonites, have spent approximately \$125,000 for the support of Presbyterians in Civilian Public Service who were unable to pay the \$30 a month living expense which the government imposed. It was felt by many, rightly we think in view of the various pacifist resolutions approved by past Assemblies, that our Church is under a moral even if not a legal obligation to repay this amount to the "peace churches." The 1945 Assembly rejected the recommendation of its Special Committee that unallocated funds of the War-Time Service Commission be used to meet this "obligation" because it was held that many would not contribute to the War-Time Service Fund at all if they thought that any portion of it was to go to the support of conscientious objectors, and contented itself with authorizing its committee to receive funds for this purpose from churches and individuals. Dr. George A. Buttrick, chairman of the Special Committee on Presbyterians in Civilian Public Service, reported to

this year's Assembly that about \$45,000 of the amount spent by the "peace churches" for Presbyterians remains unpaid and urged that some way be found to cancel this "obligation." Various suggestions were made and rejected by the Assembly, the most explosive of which was the one by Dr. Howard Wells of Cleveland that the \$45,000 be taken from the undesignated portion of the Restoration Fund. This was vigorously, and successfully, opposed on the ground that it would endanger the Restoration Fund, even though but a moiety of the whole. Dr. Stuart Nye Hutchison, who spoke as a member of the Special Committee on Presbyterians in Civilian Service, while opposed to Dr. Wells' motion favored the appointment of a committee whose task it would be to raise this money and offered, in case the Assembly so desired, to head such a committee. The final outcome was the acceptance of Dr. Hutchison's offer by adding the following to the report of the Standing Committee on Social Education and Action: "That the General Assembly accept the offer of a former Moderator, the Rev. Stuart Nye Hutchison, minister of the East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., made by him during the Assembly, and instruct the General Council to surround him with an adequate committee to raise the money needed, and that the raising of this fund begin at the earliest moment consistent with the judgment of the General Council." It was understood that this would be done as soon as the Restoration Fund had been raised.

We think that the Assembly acted wisely in keeping the repaying of this "obligation" to the "peace churches" separate from the Restoration Fund in view of the somewhat violent difference of opinion that exists among Presbyterians relative to conscientious objectors. We could wish that the Assembly had acted with equal wisdom in the matter of the support given the Federal Council of Churches. No doubt the amount given to the support of the Federal Council is small (three-tenths of one per cent of the total benevolent budget) but it has led many to support independent boards and agencies rather than the official Boards and agencies of the Presbyterian Church. Many Presbyterians are as unsympathetic to the Federal Council of Churches as others of them are to conscientious objectors.

#### Church Paper

The 1945 Assembly authorized the appointment of a committee composed of "ministers and laymen and lay women, the majority of the laymen being men now engaged in publication, newspaper, magazine, or advertising work" to "study and explore the whole field of modern journalism and publicity" with the end in view of presenting a definite plan of procedure and of action for the establishment and publication of a Presbyterian Church paper. In harmony with that action the Moderator appointed the following committee: Rev. Wm. T. Hanzsche,

Chairman; Mr. Herbert H. Smith; Hon. Charles A. Sprague; Mr. Hugh Arthur; Mr. Paul Hinkhouse; Rev. E. W. Stimson and Rev. W. L. Jenkins with Mrs. Winona Reeves as an advisory member.

Dr. Hanzsche reported that PRESBYTERIAN LIFE had been tentatively chosen as the name of the proposed publication and asked that the committee be continued with authority to employ a staff and make contracts when a minimum of 100,000 subscribers had been secured. He reported that 31,000 subscribers had been secured—much increased since—and that the committee hoped to secure 100,000 by the first of 1947. On recommendation of the committee the Assembly requested Synods, Presbyteries and other Church organizations to permit its representatives to present its cause at their regular meetings. This means further Assembly approval of the proposed paper. It does not, however, necessarily mean that the paper will ever become a reality. Many Presbyterians do not feel the need of such a paper—a paper which in the nature of the case must either be doctrinally colorless or reflect the views of element dominant in the control of the organization of the Church. Be that as it may, it will be admitted by all, we think, that the committee having the matter in charge is a thoroughly competent one which may be depended upon to translate its plans into reality if that be at all possible.

#### Public Relations Department Proposed

The Presbytery of Troy overtured the Assembly to take the initiative in bringing it about that an interdenominational Public Relations Department be established in connection with the Federal Council which will give "adequate and worthy publicity to the Protestant cause." On recommendation of its Committee on Bills and Overtures, however, the Assembly favored the substance of an overture from the Presbytery of Morris and Orange that the General Assembly establish its own Public Relations Department. The General Council was instructed to consider what may be necessary to establish such a Department, including the manner in which the cost may be met, and to report to the next Assembly. The action taken contemplates the establishment of a central bureau of publicity for the entire Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. that will coordinate the various existing publicity organizations.

#### Form of Government Amended

The presbyteries voted overwhelmingly in favor of amending Chapters XIV, XV and XVI of the Form of Government—chapters having to do with the licensure and ordination of ministers. Practically the same amendment failed of adoption in 1944 by two votes except that as first proposed it required candidates for ordination to answer affirmatively the following question: "Do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of the system of doctrine

you will of your own initiative make known to your presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?" The deletion of this question (required in the Presbyterian Church U.S.) lacks large significance because it merely calls attention to an already existing obligation. Common honesty dictates that he do what the question explicitly requires.

### Women Ministers Proposed

On behalf of the General Council its chairman, Dr. Lampe, moved that the Committee on Bills and Overtures be asked to submit to the Assembly an overture providing for the admission of women to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. This motion having been adopted, the Committee on Bills and Overtures "took the matter under consideration" and at a later session submitted the following report:

"Whereas women in our churches are continuing to render helpful service in all areas of our Kingdom, and

"Whereas an increasing number of other denominations and groups are using their abilities and talents in proclaiming the gospel and performing other ministerial functions, and

"Whereas our General Assembly has already extended to women the primary privileges of ordination as ruling elders and deacons, therefore, be it resolved:

"That the 158th General Assembly submit to the Presbyteries the following Overture:

"Shall the Form of Government, Chapter III, Section II, be amended by the addition of the following words: "These officers may be either men or women, and wherever this provision is applicable, directly or impliedly, there the terms employed are to be interpreted in harmony therewith," so that the Form of Government, Chapter III, Section II, shall read as follows:

"II. The ordinary and perpetual officers in the Church are Bishops or Pastors; the representatives of the people, usually styled Ruling Elders and Deacons. These officers may be either men or women, and wherever this provision is applicable, directly or impliedly, there the terms employed are to be interpreted in harmony therewith."

It should be noted that this overture was initiated not by a presbytery or presbyteries but by the General Council. While the Committee on Bills and Overtures was asked to prepare the overture we are disposed to think that it had been written previous to the Assembly. What is worse, the General Assembly did not give the proposed overture the serious consideration its significance called for. There was no debate. The vote in favor of sending it to the presbyteries was by no means unanimous but it was not close enough to call for a division. It is true of course that the overture will not become a part of the law of the Church unless and until approved by the presbyteries. Nevertheless it seems to us that the Assembly acted hastily and unadvisedly in voting to send so questionable an overture to the presbyteries without letting it lie on the table for a while that the commissioners might have time to consider it. The considerations urged by the chairman of the

Committee on Bills and Overtures in its favor were not particularly weighty. It is common knowledge that women are rendering helpful service in many areas but that does not necessarily warrant the notion that their area of service should include the ordained ministry. It is true also that women are already eligible for election as Ruling Elders in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. but that is a valid argument for making them eligible for election as ministers only if it can be shown that their election as elders is Scriptural. What if it goes beyond "the things which are written" for them to function in either capacity? No attempt was made to show that the ordination of women as ministers is Scriptural. However, even if it could be shown that the ordination of women as ministers is not unscriptural—we do not think that it can (see II Tim. 2:12; Titus 2:5; I Cor. 14:34-35; Eph. 5:22)—it does not follow that it is advisable. Its tendency would be to effeminize the ministry somewhat as teaching in our public schools has been effeminized. It should also be clear to all that the adoption of this overture will place another obstacle in the way of union with the Southern Presbyterian Church even more serious than that already placed by our ordination of women as elders.

### The Marriage of Divorced Persons

The General Assembly on recommendation of the General Council voted unanimously to authorize the Stated Clerk to send a letter to all the ministers of the Church reminding them of the law of the Church in the matter of remarrying divorced persons. Violations of the Church law on this matter on the part of some Presbyterian ministers has become a "scandal on the name of Christ and the church" Dr. Lampe, chairman of the Council, affirmed. Presbyteries were directed to take disciplinary action in cases of violations of this law. That law as quoted in the letter authorized reads as follows:

"All ministers who are requested to marry divorced persons should exercise great care lest they join together those whose marriage the church cannot approve. Upon satisfactory evidence of the facts in the case, they may remarry the innocent party to whom a divorce has been granted on Scriptural grounds, but not until assured that a period of one year has elapsed from the date of the decision allowing the divorce.

"They should also refuse to unite in marriage any member of any other denomination whose remarriage is known to the minister to be prohibited by the laws of the church in which such person holds membership, unless the minister believes that in the peculiar circumstances of a given case his refusal would do injustice to an innocent person who has been divorced for Scriptural reasons. In case a minister be in doubt as to the propriety of a proposed remarriage, he may seek the advice of the Presbytery through its Moderator or through a committee appointed for that purpose."

### Auburn Seminary Recognized

The 1945 Assembly received a communication from the seventeen presbyteries of New York Synod

in control of Auburn Seminary requesting that "the Board of Directors of the Seminary, or a committee of the same, be recognized as the official representatives of these presbyteries in their relation to the General Assembly" and that "the Board of Directors be allowed to make an annual report to the General Assembly for its information in the same general form required of the seminaries officially recognized as fully under the immediate oversight of the Assembly." This communication was referred to the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries which recommended the following action:

"While sympathetic with the purpose of this Communication, the Committee felt that the past status of Auburn Seminary, as an institution which the General Assembly of 1940 had recognized as completely independent from the control of the General Assembly, and the present status of Auburn in its relationship with Union Theological Seminary, raised questions which needed more careful study than our Committee was able to give.

"We therefore recommend that Communication No. 24 be referred to the General Council for careful consideration and recommendation to the next General Assembly."

This year's Assembly, on recommendation of the General Council, granted Auburn Seminary's request. This request was granted with few of the commissioners knowing its significance. The recommendation of the General Council had not been published in the Blue Book—as Standing Rule No. 29 requires. The only allusion to the matter in the Blue Book was the statement on page 67: "Reference II (Communication 24, 1945). The General Council referred this Communication to a Special Committee for study and report, and a report of progress was made to the General Council at its March meeting"—an allusion which in the nature of the case meant nothing to the average commissioner. In our opinion the action of the General Council merits strong condemnation. Whatever the merits of Auburn Seminary's request, it was too significant to be approved in this more or less clandestine manner. Auburn Seminary is for all practical purposes a part of Union Seminary of New York City. Since Auburn Seminary has been given official recognition by the General Assembly, it can now be argued that there is no good reason why Union Seminary itself should not be given the same recognition. Probably that is what is in the offing. If such is the case, it is at least hoped that the Assembly will not grant such recognition without knowing what it is doing.

#### Miscellaneous

The Assembly voted, on recommendation of its Special Committee on Pastoral Relocation, to send down to the presbyteries an overture which, if adopted, will establish a Department of Ministerial Relations. It voted to send down an overture which, if approved by the presbyteries, will authorize the granting by presbyteries of local commissions to lay

preachers (both men and women) without the right to administer the Sacraments and perform marriages; also to re-submit to the presbyteries what was section XVI of Chapter XV of the Form of Government—a section which for some reason was omitted from the overture sent to the presbyteries by the 1945 Assembly—and which deals with the terms and conditions under which ministers from other churches may transfer to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

The Assembly recognized the new Book of Common Worship as an official publication of the Church; protested against the continued official relation between our Government and the Vatican; and, among other things, registered its conviction, based on the reports of numerous chaplains, that during the War a large percentage of the Commanding Officers of both the Army and Navy had been indifferent to or ignorant of their responsibility for the moral and spiritual welfare of the men under their command and recommended to the secretaries of the Army and Navy Departments that there be included in the curriculum at West Point, Annapolis and service schools definite training in the nature, problems and duties of Commanding Officers relative to the moral and spiritual welfare of their men.

It will be recalled that the 1945 Assembly laid on the table the proposal to change the method of electing a Moderator until there be a full-sized Assembly. The proposal was taken from the table, put in the hands of the Committee on Bills and Overtures and its recommendation of no action adopted.

#### Conclusion

Too much of the time of the Assembly is taken up, it seems to us, with the reading of printed reports of the Standing Committees and listening to speeches by representatives of the Boards. Whether intended or not, this prevents commissioners from doing what they are commissioned to do, viz., "to consult, vote and determine" all matters brought before it. It is quite impossible for "the floor" to give anything like adequate consideration to lengthy reports with numerous recommendations in the twenty-five minutes allotted it under Standing Rule No. 17. The report of the Standing Committee on Social Education and Action, to take an extreme example, takes up some thirty pages in the Minutes and contains more than thirty recommendations—a number of them having to do with highly debatable matters.

The reports of the Standing Committees together with those of Special Committees may be found in full in the Minutes. They direct attention to much that is encouraging in the life of the Church and their recommendations are, for the most part, commendable. It is regrettable, it seems to us, that they express little or no concern about the modernism and doctrinal indifferentism in the life of the Church. The Assembly, for instance, approved without ques-

tion the election of Auburn Affirmationist Iliot T. Jones and Dr. John Wick Bowman as professors in San Francisco Seminary though the latter's book *The Intention of Jesus* has been characterized as an attack on Christianity by no less a person than Dr. Wilbur M. Smith (*Therefore Stand*, pp. 45-50). Further, the Assembly, on recommendation of its Committee on Foreign Missions, expressed approval of the appointment of Auburn Affirmationist Henry Sloane Coffin as Cook Lecturer under the auspices of the Board to interpret Christianity to India, China and Japan. It may be added that the Committee on Christian Education expressed no concern over the books being published under the auspices of that Board. Surely *none* of the books published under the Board of Education should advocate views clearly hostile to basic doctrines of the Standards of the Church. However, some of them do. Avoidance of doctrinal issues by the Assembly may be fitted to create an impression of unity but it does not make for the best interest of the Church.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, was chosen as the meeting place of the 1947 Assembly.

## The Reorganization of "The Presbyterian"

The event which we here chronicle was preceded by a dissolution. The old Presbyterian Publishing Company has been dissolved and new company, bearing the same name, organized to take over its assets and liabilities. This new company not only operates under a new charter and a new Board of Control but is committed to a somewhat different aim. The new editor is Dr. Jarvis S. Morris, educated at Park College, Princeton and Union (N. Y.) Seminaries and until recently President of the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico.

It is true that all the members of the old Board, with one exception, are also members of the new Board of Control. It is also true that certain members of the new Board who were not members of the old Board are of at least equal repute with them as conservatives. The new Board, however, taken as a whole differs markedly from the old. The old Board was composed exclusively of those reputed to be conservatives but the same cannot be said of the new Board. The latter is "inclusive" in the sense that it contains representatives of nearly every shade of belief found in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., including a signer of the Auburn Affirmation together with others who have manifested sympathy if not agreement with Auburn Affirmationists or worse.

To perceive that the aim of the newly established company is different from that of the company it has

supplanted we need merely compare its statement of policy with that of the old company. Until recently "The Presbyterian" carried on its editorial page the following extract from the By-Laws of the old Presbyterian Publishing Company:

"The religious journal published by this company shall be one whose teaching and influence shall be in accord with the Confession of Faith and Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

"The policy and influence, both direct and indirect, of the paper shall always be to emphasize what are known as the fundamental doctrines of Evangelical Christianity, such as the integrity of the Bible as the Word of God, the true humanity and true deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, the necessity and validity of the Atonement as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, the resurrection and personal return of our Lord and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ."

For the statement, just cited—a statement that could be amended only by a 90% vote of its stockholders—the following has been substituted:

"THE PRESBYTERIAN shall be unreservedly committed to the interpretation, propagation and application of the historic Christian faith, in accordance with the Reformed tradition and the confessional standards of the Presbyterian Churches. It shall aim to unfold the everlasting truths of the Gospel, and shall strive at all times to deal with contemporary issues in church, society, and state from the viewpoint of God's revelation of Himself in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. THE PRESBYTERIAN shall be in all respects an independent journal. It shall be an organ of Evangelical Christianity, owned and edited by men who seek, above and beyond every other interest, the glory of God, the salvation of men, the unity, peace, purity and edification of the Church, and the increase of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth."

It may seem at first glance that there is little difference between the two statements. To examine them more closely, however, is to perceive that the new statement is vague and indefinite as compared with the old. It, unlike the old statement, is capable of being interpreted in a manner acceptable to both conservatives and liberals. It will be noted that it does not repudiate, either directly or indirectly, the Auburn Affirmation contention that such doctrines as the full trustworthiness of the Bible, the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of our Lord, and of the death of Christ as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, are not essential doctrines of the Word of God and of the Standards of the Presbyterian Church.

It looks as though the editor of *The Presbyterian Tribune* was not far wrong when he expressed the opinion (May, 1946) that *The Presbyterian* "will continue in name only." We hazard the prediction that the new Presbyterian will resemble the old somewhat as the new Princeton Seminary resembles the old. If such proves to be the case it may have many excellences, may even be the best periodical in the Presbyterian Church, but neither in what it commends nor what it condemns will it be all that such a paper should be.

## The Liberal Attack Upon the Supernatural Christ

By DR. WM. CHILDS ROBINSON

*This article first appeared in The Southern Presbyterian Journal in its issue of May 1, 1946. Its author is Professor of Historical Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary, one of the leaders of the group in the Presbyterian Church U.S. who are opposed to union with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. as matters now stand. The article set forth what he regards as the main obstacle in the way of the union of the two churches. The article has been widely circulated in the Southern Church and is deserving of an equally wide circulation in the Northern Church. Its factual statements are, we believe, beyond informed dispute.*

In articles appearing in the *Christian Observer* of March 13th and in the *Presbyterian Outlook* for April 8th, Dr. Walter L. Lingle paints the Auburn Affirmation as a constitutional protest against an effort of the USA General Assembly to set up new doctrinal standards. No doubt the constitutional claim caught many of the unwary ministers of the USA Church and led them to sign the Auburn Affirmation. But when Dr. Lingle goes on and cites with endorsement such a "liberal" leader of the movement as Dr. Henry S. Coffin when he says that "our objection was constitutional not doctrinal" we must demur. On the contrary it is the contention of this article that these "liberal" leaders in the USA Church had and have as their aim the opening of the doors of Presbyterian ordination to men who do not accept the supernatural Christ in His preexistent Deity, in His Virgin Birth, in His substitutionary atonement, in His bodily Resurrection and in His personal Return in glory. In support of this position we set forth the following facts.

(1) The trouble in the USA Church did not start where Dr. Lingle begins with the action of the 1910 USA Assembly in passing a resolution setting up five points as necessary for ordination. The trouble began with candidates for licensure and ordination who were unable to accept the Virgin Birth and the bodily Resurrection in New York Presbytery. Objection of these ordinations were filed before the General Assembly and an effort made to bring the recalcitrant presbytery to book. But moderate men in the USA Assembly urged milder measures and the "five points" were passed as such a compromise measure. It was hoped by conservative members of New York Presbytery that the simple enunciation of the fact that the General Assembly regarded these points as among the teaching held necessary for ordination, without sharp action against the individuals or against their presbytery, would be sufficient to deter any additional ordinations of the kind. When the first kindly effort was not successful, the same action was repeated in 1916 and again in 1923. The USA "liberals" made no

Auburn Affirmation against either the 1910 or the 1916 action, as they would have done had their interest in the matter been wholly constitutional. They quietly bided their time, getting their men ordained and into prominent churches and no doubt happy that the Assembly was content with such mild measures. It was only after the third action when they could not expect further patience from the General Assembly for their wilful defiance of the Church and when they felt themselves strong enough to strike that they drew up the Auburn Affirmation late in 1923.

(2) The Auburn Affirmation itself is not a mere constitutional protest, but it is a doctrinal attack upon the supernatural Christ. The Auburn Affirmation, Dr. Coffin's letter and Dr. Lingle's article all cite the second ordination vow without reference to the first vow on which the second depends and which gives to the second its true doctrinal import. Isolating the second from the first permits men to think that they themselves or others who give a kind of adherence to this isolated vow are doing all that is required for Presbyterian ordination. Because in the first vow we accept the Holy Scriptures as being the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; therefore the second vow obligates us to accept the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession as being the true system of doctrine and our own faith.

Again, Dr. Lingle has dismissed the charge that the Auburn Affirmationists stigmatize such facts as the Virgin Birth as "theories" in too facile a fashion. He has cited one only of the four sentences in which the Affirmationists repeatedly describe the five points as "theories" and he has cited that one which is susceptible of the most favorable interpretation. The first sentence which gives meaning to the whole paragraph and to the following uses of the theories is: "Furthermore, this opinion of the General Assembly attempts to commit our Church to certain theories concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and



the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now this sentence does label the Virgin Birth a "certain theory" of the Incarnation, and it labels the statement of the Priestly work of Christ in our Shorter Catechism a "certain theory" of the atonement, and it labels the bodily Resurrection of Christ a "certain theory" of His Resurrection. Repeatedly to stigmatize the great facts of Christ's mission as "certain theories," as "particular theories," as "not the only theories allowed," as "whatever theories they may employ" is to minimize the doctrinal assertions about these facts of the faith.

The real nub of the controversy was the effort of the USA Church to make these doctrines stick as necessary for licensure and ordination. That is the sense in which the Assembly used the word "essential." This usage goes back to the Adopting Act of 1729 which gave the courts of the Church the right to decide concerning any scruple that any minister had against any statement of the Confession, as to whether such scruple concerned a matter necessary or essential to the system of doctrine and hence to ordination. There was no intention to treat these five points as of the *esse* of the faith above other facts and doctrines. And the real drive of the Auburn Affirmation was to set aside these five points as unnecessary to ordination and to allow candidates to hold to "whatever theories they may employ to explain" the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection. And concretely that means liberty to explain away the Virgin Birth, and the Atonement as a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God, and the bodily character of the Resurrection of Christ.

(3) The declaration of nullification read by Dr. Henry S. Coffin in the face of the General Assembly of 1925 shows that his purpose was not merely constitutional but doctrinal. That Assembly examined into the case of Mr. Cedric Lehman and Mr. Henry P. Van Dusen, two candidates licensed by New York Presbytery even though they could not accept the plain historical statements in Matthew and Luke on the Virgin Birth of Christ. It declared that the Presbytery erred in licensing these two men and remanded the case to New York Presbytery for appropriate action. This act of the General Assembly was not based on "the five points" nor on the second ordination vow which the Auburn Affirmation cites without setting forth its relationship to the first vow. The act of the USA General Assembly was based on the first ordination vow, or the first question for licensure which uses the same language. The Assembly held that being unable to accept the teachings of Matthew and Luke on the Virgin Birth—an article of faith—they could not properly answer the first constitutional question asked for licensure in the affirmative. That is, they could not affirm their acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as being the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Therefore, their licensure was improper and the Presbytery was directed to correct the same. But Dr. Coffin arose, took from his pocket a typed statement, and read this declaration refusing to obey the mandate of his General Assembly and declaring the same null and void. Can Dr. Coffin say that this declaration of nullification "was constitutional and not doctrinal"?

This act and the immediate support for it from Auburn Affirmationists saying that they would split the Church if the action was enforced led the Moderator to offer a compromise. The effect of the compromise was that the acceptance of the Virgin Birth was not required for ordination. Dr. Van Dusen continued in good and regular standing despite his doctrinal views on the Virgin Birth and as the successor to Dr. Coffin in the "liberal" leadership has put out a view of Christ which makes Him not the true and eternal God who became also man for us men and for our salvation, but only a human temporal person in whom God was as personally present as He could be in a man of Galilee in the period of the Roman Empire (cf. *Liberal Theology: An Appraisal*). Other men who could not accept the Virgin Birth were ordained and also advanced to posts of honor and authority in the USA Church. Among them, Dr. Cameron Hall was a U.S.A. Board secretary until the Federal Council recently called him to a similar task in that body. Dr. Ilion T. Jones after denying the historicity and the objectivity of the Resurrection of Christ was made Chairman of the USA Committee on Theological Curriculum and later Vice-President of one of their theological seminaries (cf. *The Presbyterian Tribune*, March 30, 1939).

(4) Dr. Henry S. Coffin's treatment of our Declaratory Statement of 1939 when that was regularly brought before the USA Assembly of 1941 in the Cedar Rapids Overture shows that Dr. Coffin's objection to the doctrines of the supernatural Christ is not merely constitutional but doctrinal. Our statement does not use the word "essential" and is couched exclusively in terms of the Confession and Catechisms which the Church accepts as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice. Cedar Rapids (USA) Presbytery asked their General Assembly to concur with ours in the following language, to wit: That the General Assembly declare that it regards the acceptance of the infallible truth and Divine authority of the scriptures, and of Christ as very and eternal God, Who became man by being born of a virgin, Who offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God, Who rose from the dead with the same body with which He suffered, and Who will return to judge the world, as being involved in the ordination vows to which we subscribe.

Dr. Lingle states that our US General Assembly voted down the effort to put through doctrinal tests similar to "the five points" in the Assemblies of 1923, 1924 and 1928. This statement leaves the impression on many readers that we have never passed doctrinal tests. But our Assembly of 1939 unanimously passed the resolution given above, it reiterated the same interpreting it as an *in thesi* deliverance in 1940, and re-endorsed it in passing the Lilly Resolution in the 1942 General Assembly.

What did Dr. Coffin as Chairman of the USA General Assembly's Committee on Bills and Overtures do with the Cedar Rapids Overture? To have adopted the overture would have been to have condemned his earlier act of nullification and the candidates he had engineered through the USA Presbyteries. Accordingly, Dr. Coffin entirely rewrote the Cedar Rapids Overture and professing to affirm it made it say the opposite of what the overture asked. He rewrote it so as to make it say that the ministers and elders of the USA Church are loyal to their ordination vows, thus making the action requested unnecessary.

Dr. Coffin could not attack our declaratory statement as he did the five points on the alleged ground of constitutionality and so he turned it completely around and professing to accept it completely rejected it. If this is not a fair statement let Dr. Coffin and his colleagues even now pass our Declaratory Statement by their General Assembly, write it into the printed Plan of Reunion and sincerely stand for the faith of the Son of God which it is designed to safeguard and we are willing to let by-gones be by-gones and unite with them. We do not enjoy having thus to rake over the ashes of the past—but we are set for the defense of the Gospel.

(5) The current attack upon our Southern Presbyterian ordination vows as they are written into the Plan of Reunion by the "liberal" *Presbyterian Tribune* shows that the "liberal" leaders are not interested in constitutional matters. When the Plan of Reunion was published with our ordination vows in them containing the promise that whenever one finds himself out of accord with the system of doctrine in the Standards he will of his own initiative notify his Presbytery *The Tribune* vigorously objected. We deeply regret that the joint committee of the two churches has accepted the "liberal" objection and has stricken out this section of our ordination vow from the printed Plan of Reunion. Can Dr. Lingle or Dr. Coffin say that this action is also only constitutional and not doctrinal? The "liberals" are in the prominent places in the USA Assembly and they have no intention of putting their necks under a vow which would make every man who does not accept the supernatural Christ moment by moment a liar until he notifies his Presbytery and thus risks

deposition. Their position is understandable but it is doctrinal and not merely constitutional.

(6) The Claim of Dr. Coffin that "there was no one of us who prepared that Affirmation who does not accept *con amore* the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and who does not accept the Scripture as the Word of God the only infallible rule of faith and practice" is not substantiated by Dr. Coffin's writings. A full study of these writings in their contrasts to the Presbyterian doctrines has been presented by Dr. S. G. Craig of the USA Church. I shall point out only one item of this contrast.

In his *The Meaning of The Cross*, pages 118-121, Dr. Coffin writes: "Certain widely used hymns still perpetuate the theory that God pardons sinners because Christ purchased that pardon by His obedience and suffering. But a forgiveness which is paid for is not forgiveness . . . There is no cleansing blood which can wipe out the record of what has been . . . The Cross of Christ is not a means of procuring forgiveness."

In the sharpest possible contrast to Dr. Coffin's Socinian doctrinal attack upon the atonement stands the teaching of our Confession: "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. Yet in as much as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God, might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

In full accord with the Confession and in strict opposition to Dr. Coffin, the Word of God says: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth a mercy-seat."

We would close our statement with our invitation to Dr. Coffin and the other "liberal" leaders to unite with us in the Cedar Rapids Overture as that overture was presented to the USA Assembly of 1941. If Dr. Coffin is sincere in saying that his objection was constitutional not doctrinal, let him lead his "liberal" wing of the USA Church to accept our Declaratory Statement which has substantially the same doctrines as the five points but which is so stated that it is not open to the "constitutional" objections that the Auburn Affirmation brings against the five points, let the Joint Committee put this into the Plan of Reunion, restore to the Plan our Southern Presbyterian ordination vows, and the other difficulties can be ironed out and the Plan of Union accepted.

# The Revised Standard Version of 1946

## A Review

By REV. OSWALD T. ALLIS, Ph.D., D.D.

A SIGNIFICANT feature of our time, in the religious sphere, has been the increasingly frequent appearance of revisions and new translations of the Scriptures, prepared by individuals or groups of men acting on their own initiative or under the authority of some society or organization. Recognizing that the King James or Authorized Version of 1611 has been for 300 years the Bible of English-speaking Protestantism, these translators have stressed two matters especially in justification of the new versions: the necessity of replacing the old-fashioned phraseology of the early 17th century by the English of today, and the importance of making use of all the information which has come to light, especially in recent decades, regarding the text and the original languages of Scripture. That these arguments are too weighty to be ignored, is not to be denied. There is no such thing as an infallible version; and even if there were, the most ardent admirers of the AV<sup>1</sup> would hardly claim this for their beloved translation.

Against these arguments in favor of the new versions, there are counter-arguments which merit careful consideration. First and foremost is the fact already mentioned that the AV has been, for centuries and is today the Bible of English-speaking Protestantism. The sales of this version far outnumber the combined totals for all other versions in English. The ERV and the ARV have been on the market for decades and have been extensively advertised. Yet today the issues of ERV by the British and Foreign Bible Society and of ARV by the American Bible Society are relatively few compared with those of the AV. The sales of some of the more recent versions, notably the Goodspeed, are reported to have reached quite impressive figures. But the AV is today still *facile princeps* among the versions. Despite the use made of the word "standard" by the promoters of ARV and RSV, there is only one *standard* version for English-speaking Protestantism, the King James Version.

This fact is of great significance. The general use of the AV has undoubtedly been a link which has served to unite English-speaking Protestants throughout the world. Despite denominational differences, they have had, broadly speaking, one thing in common, the same Bible translation. The beautiful diction of the AV has taken deep roots in our English literature and has done much to form and unify it. Furthermore, it has fostered the memorizing of verses and chapters of the Bible. This practice used to be far more common than it is today. Children were taught to commit Scripture to memory; and the version which they learned was, of course, the AV. Just to what extent the multiplication of versions, especially the printing of AV and ARV in parallel columns in Sabbath School quarterlies,

has contributed to a situation which we deplore today, it would not be easy to say. But if parents and teachers do not know which version to tell the children to memorize, it is very likely that they will memorize no version. Why commit a verse to memory *word for word*, if there are a half dozen or more different renderings of the verse to be memorized?

Today, the common bond and the great advantage of the one version is seriously threatened, not only by the existence of these new versions but even more by the manner in which they are being promoted. Most, probably all of them, are copyrighted versions. This was notably true of the ARV which was copyrighted by the Thomas Nelson Co. and extensively advertised as greatly superior to the AV. Nelsons also publish the new RSV. In large letters on the jacket stand the words: "The Most Important Publication of 1946." This is not a statement of fact. It is wishful thinking. It is a publisher's device to put a volume in the "best seller" class. This is not all. The jacket proceeds to tell us the publisher's estimate of the version: "The result, critics agree, is a Version of the New Testament more accurate in translation than any previous and, because of its beautiful modern English, more useful, understandable, and pleasurable to the twentieth-century reader." The copy of this version from the jacket of which the above quotation is made, was a pre-publication copy, which came to the writer with the request that he make no public use of it until February 11, 1946, the date of "publication." Who, then, are the "critics" whose authority is quoted for the enthusiastic statement on the jacket? Unless they are the revisers themselves, they are friendly critics who were given a pre-view, before the general public and scholars in general were permitted to see it, not to say, comment upon it.

Closely related to the evil which may result from the active promotion of competing versions is the further fact that multiplication of versions tends to emphasize and exaggerate differences and to encourage translators to make an effort to secure variety, even novelty, in rendering. Each new version must justify its existence. Consequently, each must exhibit some new, distinctive, and even startling features. Otherwise it may fail to attract attention or be speedily forgotten. When the differences between Bibles were confined to type, style, format, binding, references and helps, the rivalry was relatively harmless, in some ways quite wholesome. When they consist in various readings and renderings of the text itself, the situation is different. It is safe to say that not one of the newer versions confines itself strictly to really necessary changes. Each contains special features which represent more or less clearly the personal opinions and even the idiosyncrasies of the translators.

All this is especially regrettable because the average reader for whom these new versions are primarily intended, is not in a position to test the correctness of the claims which are so confidently made in their favor. He is not an expert on NT Greek; he has little or no knowledge of, not to say first-hand acquaintance with, the ancient manuscripts and versions; he does not have access to the papyri. About all that the vast majority of those who are expected to read these versions can do is to accept them on the basis

<sup>1</sup> The only abbreviations used in this article which may need explanation are: AV for the King James Version; ERV for the English Revision of 1881-4; ARV for the American Revision of 1901, called by the publisher "The American Standard Version" (ASV); RV for both ERV and ARV, when they agree; RSV for the Revised Standard Version of 1946. The page references which are given are to the *Introduction* to RSV prepared by the revisers.

of the claims which are made for them and because they like them and perhaps also because, like the Athenians, they are always in search of something new; or else reject them because they feel that the old is better. For it would require a volume several times the size of every new version to explain and justify the changes which appear in it.

Lest the reader should infer from what has been said above, despite the *caveat* in the opening paragraph, that the writer is opposed to all revision of the AV, let him state once for all that he is in favor of such a revision of the AV as will correct it where it followed a clearly inferior or demonstrably incorrect text, and one which will remove expressions which have a different meaning today from that intended by the 1611 translators. He is not in favor of a revision which will radically change the style of the AV or of one which represents a different standard of accuracy in the matter of translation. A revision which makes radical changes in the historic AV should not be called or claim to be a *revision* of the AV; it should be called what it really is, a new version. Finally, in view of the great prestige and world-wide use of the AV, a revision should be made by a group of scholars sufficiently large and sufficiently representative to command the respect of all who love and still use the AV.

Having said this, we pass on to consider the merits of the *Revised Standard Version* of 1946. To quote once more from the jacket, "This Version embodies the accuracy of the American Standard Version along with the enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty of the King James Version." Now, if this is a correct statement RSV is a notable achievement; and we would be quite ready to accept it as "the most important publication of 1946." But, is the statement correct? This question may well be a matter of interest and even of great concern to a multitude of people who read and love the Bible of their fathers and want to be sure that the new is better before they lay aside the old. In attempting to answer the question we shall consider the two matters which are mentioned, and in the order of mention: accuracy and style.

Accuracy is the first requirement in a version. What the reader wants to know is what the author actually said, not what the translator thinks he should have said or what he thinks he meant by what he said; and since an author's style necessarily colors everything he writes, he wants the translation to be as nearly as possible in the way the author said it. So we note that the new version is said to represent "unflinching effort for accuracy." But what is meant by accuracy? It is admitted that ARV and ERV aimed to be accurate versions. That was supposed to be their great superiority over AV. Now they are denounced as "mechanically exact, literal, word-for-word translations, which follow the order of the Greek words, so far as this is possible, rather than the order which is natural in English." This Dean Weigle declares to be "the major defect" of these versions. What is needed, he tells us, is that the Bible be cast "in enduring and simple diction which is worthy to stand in the great tradition of Tyndale and the King James Version."

The ideal just quoted is undoubtedly a high one. If it simply means that the NT is to be rendered into English that is "not stiff, strange, or antique," that is one thing. But we reject the notion that it is the function of the translator to rewrite the original, or to improve on it in respect to intelligibility or beauty. Accuracy comes first. That the primary aim of the AV and its earlier Revisions, the ERV and ARV, was to secure accuracy of rendering is indicated by a feature which is common to all three: the use of different type (usually italics) to mark the words which are not in the text but are supplied to clarify the meaning. For example, in Matt. 20:12 the literal rendering is "These last have wrought one hour." AV renders "These last have wrought *but* one hour" (RV, "These last have

spent *but* one hour"), using the italics because the word "but" is not in the Greek, although implicit in the complaint. When we compare Matt. 25:14 in AV, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling . . .," with RV, "For it is as *when* a man, going . . .," it is quite clear what words are in the Greek text and which are not. From the italicized words the reader of AV and RV can learn much as to the difference between the original text and language and the appropriate form of expression in English. ARV and ERV differ somewhat as to the extent to which italics are used. But both maintained the principle that a distinction should be made between words which are in the original text and words which are not, but which are supplied to give a meaning which may be regarded as more or less interpretive. The use of italics has been objected to on the ground that it is confusing since italics are ordinarily used for emphasis. But it would be a simple matter to place on the back of the title page of Bibles and Testaments a brief note calling attention to this special usage. Or, a different, or smaller, type might be used. It has been suggested that half-brackets be used. There are several ways in which this important difference could be indicated.

The complete absence of italics from the text of RSV is one of the most significant changes introduced in this revision. The change is all the more significant because RSV uses far greater freedom in rendering than we find in either AV or RV. The passages, mentioned above, read in RSV "These last worked only one hour" and "For it will be [not, 'it is' as in RV] as when a man going . . ." without taking any account of the distinction observed in AV and RV. A few further examples will serve to make the difference still clearer. In Lk. 20:37 we meet the words "even Moses shewed at the bush." RV regarded this as obscure and rendered by "in the *place concerning* the Bush," marking the explanatory insert by italics. RSV reads simply "in the passage about the bush." Rom. 12:19, "give place unto wrath" (AV), receives in ERV the margin, "Or, the wrath of God." ARV reads, "the wrath of God," with margin, "Or, wrath." RSV reads, "the wrath of God," no note, no italics. Heb. 13:24, "They of Italy" (AV and RV). ARV adds a margin, "Or, The *brethren* from, &c." RSV text reads, "Those who come from Italy," no italics, no margin. This is noteworthy because these words have an important bearing on one of the problems of this epistle, Was it written from Rome? According to Robertson, "it is uncertain what standpoint the writer takes." RSV settles the question by inserting the words, "who come" ("those who come from Italy"). In Rom. 5:2 AV and RV read, "in hope of the glory of God." RSV reads, "in hope of sharing the glory of God," leaving the reader to judge for himself whether "sharing" is supported by ancient manuscripts and papyri or is simply an interpretive addition of the revisers. In the list of the apostles in Lk. 6:14f. one is called "Judas of James." AV renders "Judas the brother of James," RV "Judas the son of James" with "Or, *brother*" in the margin, thus indicating that "of James" is ambiguous. RSV reads "Judas the son of James" and places "Or *brother*" in the margin. This is misleading and incorrect, since it implies that the Greek word for "son" is in the text and that "son" may also mean "brother." "Thou art Simon the son of Jona" (Jn. 1:42, AV) becomes in RSV, "So you are Simon the son of John?" The "so" makes it not merely a question, which is of course quite possible, but a rhetorical question.

A very obvious reason for the failure of RSV to indicate its interpretive additions by italics is that its renderings are often so free that italics would not suffice. Only variant or "literal" renderings in the margin would serve this purpose. E.g., Lk. 7:40, "And he saith, Master, say on," becomes "And he answered, 'What is it teacher?';" Rom. 4:11, "that he might be the father . . ." becomes "The purpose was to make him the father . . ."; 1 Cor. 10:1, "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant," becomes "I want you to know, brethren"; 1 Cor. 1:30, "But of him are ye

in Christ Jesus," becomes "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus"; Gal. 3:17, "This I say," becomes "This is what I mean"; Eph. 5:32, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church," becomes "and I take it to mean Christ and the church," which suggests rather plainly that Paul was not very clear in his own mind what he was talking about.

A further reason for not using italics in RSV is that they would not indicate the omissions which occur quite frequently in this version. This could only be done by marginal readings. Sometimes such margins occur, but they are few and far between in proportion to the changes. Thus, the word "flesh" is omitted in the expression "one flesh" in Mt. 19:5, Mk. 10:8, 1 Cor. 6:16, Eph. 5:31. In all of these passages the words are in a quotation from the OT. The word "flesh" is in AV and RV because it is in the Greek. It is in the Greek because it is in the Hebrew. RSV adds a margin to the first two passages, none to the other two. Elsewhere, the word "flesh" is very variously rendered in RSV.

"And it came to pass" has a familiar sound to the reader of AV and RV. It is nearly always omitted in RSV (not in Lk. 9:18, Acts 28:8). Professor Burrows tells us: "Some of the Semitic coloring of Biblical language which was still discernible in the older translations has disappeared from our revision. The formula 'and it came to pass' has simply been omitted." Obviously true! Things have a tendency to "disappear" when they are "omitted." This particular omission is rather striking. For this example of "Semitic coloring" is an expression which occurs hundreds of times in the OT. Are we to infer that it is also to disappear from the OT when the revisers have finished their work? This phrase interests us particularly because the great majority of its occurrences in the NT are found in the Gospel of Luke and in Acts. Luke was not a Jew; he was a Gentile. Yet Luke the Gentile apparently liked this OT phrase and employed it frequently. To Luke the Greek *Koine* was a living tongue. A. T. Robertson has said of him: "He was a man of the schools, and his Greek has a literary flavor only approached in the NT by Paul's writings and by the Epistle to the Hebrews." Yet RSV regards Luke's style as too "Semitic" and carefully edits it.

The same Semitic coloring likewise appears in other expressions. "Answered and said (or, saying)" occurs frequently in the Gospels. In John it occurs 32 times, while "answered" is found 45 times. RSV renders both by "answered," thus obliterating the fact that two different expressions occur frequently in this Gospel. Professor Burrows tells us that "answered and said" becomes "replied" or the like in RSV. In John, "replied" occurs only once in RSV. About 70 times "answered" represents both "answered and said" and "answered." By what law of philology or of common sense have the revisers reached the conclusion that these two expressions are so strictly synonymous that it is proper to allow the difference to "disappear"?

The rendering of Col. 1:19-20 is a good illustration of the insertions and omissions in RSV and of the frequent failure of the marginal notes to throw any light on them. RV, following the Greek order more closely than AV, renders: "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." RSV renders: "For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." Here the words, "of God," are inserted and the repetition of the words, "through him," which is clearly emphatic, "disappears" in the rendering. If this disappearance is due to textual considerations, a marginal note would certainly be in order. The RV rendering, which

includes them, represents the "primary reading" of Westcott and Hort. If differences in text are to be noted at all, this variation certainly deserves the marginal note, "Many (or, some) ancient authorities read . . ." (cf. margin at Col. 1:7, 12) This passage is interesting also because it is an example of the rejection by the revisers of the rule that in doubtful cases the harder of two readings is to be preferred.

The liberties which the revisers take in rendering the NT text are especially objectionable where they deal dogmatically (as in Heb. 13:24) with passages the meaning of which has been a moot question with interpreters for centuries. In giving the qualifications of a bishop 1 Tim. 3:2 states that he shall be "the husband [man] of one wife [woman]." There are three possible meanings of this injunction: (1) that a bishop should be married and not a bachelor (cf. vs. 4), (2) that he should have only one wife, (3) that he have been married only once. The first interpretation would be directed especially against the celibacy of the clergy, the second against polygamy which was more or less common in the pagan Greco-Roman world, the third against remarriage after the death (or divorce?) of the first wife. All of these possibilities are suggested by the rendering of AV and RV. RSV summarily eliminates (1) and (2) by rendering "married only once." In view of the fact that there are not a few bishops (i.e., ministers or presbyters) and deacons (cf. vs. 12), office-bearers in Protestant churches, who are in "good and regular standing" in their respective communions, despite the fact that they are living with "number two" or even with "number three," the dogmatism of this rendering is amazing.

1 Thess. 4:4 contains the expression, "to possess his vessel" (AV); "to possess himself of his own vessel" (RV). This becomes in RSV, "to take a wife for himself." Two questions are involved in the rendering of this expression. (1) Does "vessel" refer to the man himself or to his wife? 2 Cor. 4:7 might seem to support the former meaning, 1 Pet. 3:7 the latter. Both show that, like the word "temple" (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19), "vessel" may be used of a human being. (2) Can the rendering "possess" be justified? The Greek verb occurs elsewhere in the NT 6 times. In most of them the idea of "getting" is clearly indicated. In Lk. 18:12, 21:19, AV renders by "possess," but is not supported by RV. The same Greek verb renders in the Septuagint a Hebrew verb which usually means "acquire" or "buy." But in Gen. 14:28 "possessor of heaven and earth" seems the only suitable rendering. The fact that in the perfect tense the idea of "acquire" may pass over into that of "possess" is perhaps not without significance in this connection. Like 1 Tim. 3:2 this verse has long been a *crux interpretum*. Yet RSV does not even inform the reader that the literal rendering of the Greek is "vessel." It simply renders it by "wife" appealing first to 1 Cor. 7:2 which speaks of the wife in unambiguous language, and then to 1 Pet. 3:7 where it renders "vessel" by "sex" ("bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex"). There is nothing to suggest the ambiguity of the word "vessel." In fact the word "vessel" does not appear in RSV. Observe how different is the treatment of this passage in ARV. There the word "vessel" of AV is retained in the text. The first cross reference is to 1 Pet. 3:7 which is rendered, "weaker vessel." This informs the reader that "vessel" may mean "wife." The second reference is to 2 Cor. 4:7 where "earthen vessels" refers to any Christian regardless of sex or social status. If these cross-references reflect the judgment of the ARV revisers, the placing of 1 Pet. 3:7 first would seem to indicate their preference for the meaning "wife." But they leave the question undecided. RSV does not even hint that there is a question to decide. Similarly, in Rev. 19:7 the regular word for "wife" (or, "woman") is rendered "Bride" in RSV; and no marginal note calls attention to this or to the fact that the regular word for "bride" occurs in 18:23 and 21:2, 9, 22:17. Yet eight times in Hebrews 8-9 the margin calls the attention

of the reader to the fact that the word "tent" of the RSV text may be rendered "tabernacle." And at Acts 19:35 where AV and RV render, "and of the image which fell down from Jupiter," RSV has "and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky" and adds the marginal comment: "The meaning of the Greek is uncertain." Such meticulous accuracy would be more helpful if it were not so occasional!

Since the revisers in commending RSV do not hesitate to criticize the AV and RV quite severely, it will be well to look at several of the points which they mention. Dr. Craig accuses the AV of a "carelessness or freedom (whichever we prefer to call it)" which "gives an inaccurate picture of the underlying Greek text," because "they did not feel bound to a single rendering of the same word" in cases where the meaning was clearly the same (p. 19). It is undeniable that the AV erred not seldom in this regard. But those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. If AV sinned RSV is in the same condemnation. There are some Biblical figures which are so familiar that it would seem natural and almost necessary to retain them even in the most "modern" of translations. One is the word "walk" as used of human conduct. AV uses it as the rendering of the same Greek word in 92 of its 95 occurrences, which total includes both the literal and the figurative sense. RSV renders most frequently by "walk," but also by "live" (13 times), "follow" (5 times), "lead a life" (4 times), "conduct selves" (twice), "act" (twice), and once each by "observe," "behave," "go," "(refuse to) practice," "command (respect)," "prowl around." This certainly reminds us of the AV at its alleged worst. Why should we read "walk" in Eph. 2:2, 10; 5:2, 8, 15, but "live" in 4:17? Many similar examples might be given would space permit.

These various renderings may have at times important doctrinal implications. "Worship" is in AV the rendering of the same Greek word in 59 of its 60 occurrences. In 14 or 15 (Lk. 24:52?) of these it describes an act rendered to Jesus. Here RSV renders by "kneel before" in Matt. 8:2, 9:18, 15:25, 20:20. The last of these (Matt. 20:20) is especially noteworthy since it refers to an act rendered to Jesus as the Messianic King by the mother of two of the most prominent of His apostles and near the close of His earthly ministry. Such a rendering indicates that RSV prefers to err on the safe side, to impute too little significance to the act rather than to run the risk of imputing too much. This attitude appears even more clearly in Rom. 9:5. The AV rendering, "who is over all, God blessed for ever," which clearly ascribes Deity to Christ, is relegated to the margin; and the rendering, "God who is over all be blessed forever," becomes the reading of the RSV text. This is a definite triumph for the Unitarians who have long contended that these words must be regarded as a benediction to God and not as ascribing Deity to Christ. The Unitarian interpretation found a place only in the margin of RV. The Trinitarian rendering is a perfectly natural one. Many competent scholars regard it as the only natural one. Here again RSV prefers to "play safe," to attribute to Paul a low view of the person of Christ rather a high one.

One of the severest criticisms of the earlier Revisions made in the interest of RSV is that "They are mechanically exact, literal word-for-word translations, which follow the order of the Greek words, so far as this is possible, rather than the order which is natural in English." In view of the strenuous efforts which were made from the day of their publication to persuade the Bible readers of England and America that they should favor ERV and ARV because of their superior accuracy, there is a touch of humor, to say the least, in the situation which now requires the discrediting of these two highly praised revisions and for this very reason. The words, "so far as this is possible," in the above quotation are not to be overlooked. The earlier revisers were not blind to the fact that broadly speaking a translation cannot be both idiomatic and slav-

ishly word-for-word. They recognized also that a word-for-word translation may be misleading for the very reason that it is not "natural," not idiomatic. But they did hold that the style of the Greek should be retained "so far as this is possible." This whole article might be devoted to the discussion of this one question. We must confine ourselves to a single example which shows the liberties which RSV allows itself with a view to making its rendering "natural."

Eph. 5:18-21. A feature of Paul's style to which the revisers object is the tendency to string together participial clauses. Here we have two antithetic imperative clauses in the Greek followed by four participial clauses: "speaking . . . singing and making melody . . . giving thanks . . . submitting yourselves. . . ." The syntax is crystal-clear in the Greek and also in AV and RV. The final participial clause is general and comprehensive and invites elaboration: "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ." So Paul proceeds at once to apply this general principle or rule to the relation of husband and wife. He says simply: "Wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The connection is so close that the word "submit" is omitted. (AV apparently followed a text which included it; hence no italics in AV.) RSV does not, of course, use italics. So we infer that they insert the verb as do RV. Now the point of special interest is this. ERV and ARV begin a paragraph with vs. 22: "Wives, *be in subjection* unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." This is quite natural since they begin other paragraphs with: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (6:1), and "Servants, be obedient" (6:5). But their use of italics in vs. 22 indicates the close connection with what precedes. RSV simply cuts away the last of the four participial clauses ("submitting yourselves," etc.) from what precedes, makes it *begin a new paragraph* and renders as follows: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord." Now it may be a debatable question whether this is an improvement on Paul's way of putting things. That it is not what Paul said is obvious. Paul connected verse 21 with verses 18-20 because all are general statements which apply to all Christians alike. With verse 22 he begins the application of the last exhortation to special relationships. He aims to connect it closely with what precedes; and the omission of the verb in vs. 22, if correct, makes this especially plain. A paragraph at vs. 22 impairs, to some extent, the continuity which Paul plainly intended. But, if there is to be a paragraph it should certainly begin with vs. 22 (so RV) and not at vs. 21 where RSV places it. To cut away a concluding phrase from a sentence and make it begin a new paragraph is very drastic editing. When they were schoolboys or even freshmen at college, some of the RSV committee may have had their compositions somewhat drastically edited by their teachers of English. We wonder how they would like it if some self-appointed critic were now to edit their carefully prepared "Introduction" to the RSV. Yet they have not hesitated to edit the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Would space permit, we should like to discuss in some detail the claim that "the enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty of the King James Version" are preserved in RSV. We must confine ourselves to a single example. The familiar phrasing of 1 Cor. 13 in AV has been little changed in RV, the most notable changes being "love" for "charity" and "if" for "though." Verses 4-7 are almost identical in AV and RV. These verses contain 15 verbs. RSV has changed 8 of them (7 out of 8 in vs. 4-5), and of course eliminates the rhythmic ending "-eth" which occurs 11 times. The "enduring diction" of AV suffers here a decided eclipse. It would be better in many ways if RSV were simply called a new translation and no attempt made to connect it with the AV. It practically amounts to one.

We shall doubtless be accused of being quite blind to

the excellences of the new version. Such is not the case. We could easily point out renderings which we regard as a definite improvement on AV and RV. But we cannot devote space to pointing out the merits of a version of which considered as a whole we cannot approve, when the space at our disposal is inadequate for the discussion of its very serious defects. We believe, and we think we have proved, that RSV represents a radical departure from the high standard of accuracy in translation which was set by AV more than 300 years ago and which ERV and ARV felt called upon to maintain. We cannot escape the conclusion that the standard of accuracy represented by RSV is quite a different one. "New manuscripts," "papyri," "better understanding of vernacular Greek," "necessity of modern diction," and the like, may be responsible for many of the changes to be noted here. But most influential of all in determining the character of the version has been, we believe, the determination of the revisers to establish their right to exercise a freedom in the rendering of Holy Scripture, which might be tolerated in dealing with many books of merely human origin, but which is quite incompatible with the divine origin and authority of the Bible. Plenary inspiration, an inspiration which extends to the words of Scripture—this is the only inspiration which gives the Bible real authority as the very Word of God—has accuracy of translation as its necessary corollary. The freedom with which RSV treats the text of Scripture indicates the low conception of its inspiration entertained by the revisers. It is this more than anything else which makes the RSV "important." It represents a type of translation which, certainly in the case of a "standard" revision of the AV, would have aroused a storm of protest fifty years ago. Should RSV attain to anything like the popularity which its publishers anticipate, this will be indeed an important event. It will be a signal triumph for Modern Liberalism.

## Book Notices

**THE INFALLIBLE WORD.** By the Faculty of Westminster Seminary. The Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation. \$1.50.

This book both refutes and confirms. It refutes those who allege that all scholars deny the infallibility of the Bible for it is written by a group of scholars some of whom at least can hold their own with the best. At the same time it confirms the faith of those who believe that the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It consists of seven chapters: The Attestation of Scripture by John Murray; The Authorship of the Old Testament by Edward J. Young; The Authorship of the New Testament by Ned B. Stonehouse; The Transmission of Scripture by John Skilton; The Relevancy of Scripture by Paul Woolley; Scripture as the Basis of Preaching by R. B. Kuiper; and Nature and the Scripture by Cornelius Van Til.

This book supports the claim that Westminster Seminary is carrying on the tradition of Princeton Seminary previous to its reorganization in 1929 at one significant point at least. Previous to that reorganization its faculty were unanimous in maintaining the infallibility of the Bible. That, sad to relate, is no longer the case. We heartily commend this book.

**BREAKFAST TABLE AUTOCRAT.** By Richard Ellsworth Day. Moody Press. \$3.00.

This attractive, profusely illustrated volume contains the life story of Henry Parsons Crowell, most widely known as the head of the Quaker Oats Company and as the man who was largely instrumental in making the Moody Bible Institute what it is. Mr. Crowell was a Christian business man who throughout a long life—he died in his 89th year

—conducted himself as few men of great wealth have as God's steward in the use both of his time and his money. Until within two years of his death he was an outstanding Presbyterian layman. When in 1943 Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin was elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., after his nomination had been seconded by his pastor, Dr. Harrison Ray Anderson, Mr. Crowell felt impelled not only to resign his membership in the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, of which he had long been an elder, but to sever all relationship with the denomination as a protest against the modernism that dominated its councils. Such an event would ordinarily have received wide publicity but as our author says, Mr. Crowell "never spoke of it to others and his Church concealed it." The story of his resignation, not omitting the letter of resignation he addressed to Dr. Anderson, has been made available to the public for the first time in this book.

**TRUTH VS. DOGMA.** By J. C. Macaulay. Moody Press. 125 pages, \$1.25.

**ROMANISM AND THE GOSPEL.** By C. Anderson Scott. The Westminster Press. 202 pages, \$2.00.

The purpose of both of these books is to make clear the extent to which Roman Catholicism is a corruption of Christianity. Both cover much of the same ground—the first in a more popular, the second in a more scholarly way. Only the first, however, written by the pastor of the Wheaton Bible Church, can be commended without important qualification. The second—it was first published by the Church of Scotland Committee on Publications—in opposing the Roman doctrine of the Mass repudiates the idea of Christ's death as an objective propitiatory sacrifice for sin. In order to break the force of the Romanist appeal to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament its author alleges that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was "absolutely repudiated" by the prophets and that Christ attached Himself to the prophets. Dr. Scott admits that the view he repudiates is taught in the Reformed Confessions, including the Westminster, but holds that the theologians of the Reformation were not infallible and that the view is not held by the "adequately Christian." This is a clear case of throwing out the baby with the bath. If to refute the Roman doctrine of the Mass we repudiate the notion that Christ's death was a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God we do not argue as Christians but as non-Christians. And yet this book has been republished in this country by the Westminster Press, a subsidiary of the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.!

**THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.** By Floyd E. Hamilton. Harper & Brothers. \$2.50.

This is a book of proven value. First published in 1927, it was revised in 1933 and now more thoroughly in 1946. It contains a "Modern Defense of the Christian Religion" (its sub-title) that is at once scholarly, comprehensive and readable. The book is particularly full in its discussion of evolution and the trustworthiness of the Bible. We share the author's hope that the book may continue to be used to bring those "whose faith in Christianity has been undermined by a non-Christian educational system back to a living faith in Christ as Saviour, and in the Bible as the Word of God."

**SNOWDEN-DOUGLASS SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR 1947.** By Earl Douglass. The Macmillan Company. \$1.50.

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