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NED B. STONEHOUSE

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THOMAS R. BIRCH,
Managing Editor

THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

WE ARE looking forward to the second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America with profound thankfulness to almighty God. Very wonderful has been His goodness to us during the past months. When we think of the loyal groups of Christian people who are keeping aloft the banner of the Cross in many places throughout the length and breadth of our country, when we think of the loyal pastors who have for the sake of Christ faced the loss of all that the world holds dear, we thank our God for His favor so wonderfully given to His children. He has brought us through many troubles, and has placed before us a door of glorious opportunity. We call upon all that is within us to bless His excellent name.

A DANGER TO OUR CHURCH

At the same time we are perfectly aware of the fact that a danger faces our Church. That such dangers should arise is only what was to be expected. They have often arisen in similar situations. Ask anyone who is familiar with the early days of the reform movement under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands, and I think he will tell you that there were violent disputes among those who at first came with the orthodox and truly Reformed church. But God brought that church through all those early troubles. Those who were not really heart and soul with the movement did not finally go with it; the others put petty jealousies aside and were used of God in the building up of a great church. So we trust that it will be with these early troubles in The Presbyterian Church of America.

THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE

The root of our present trouble is found in those ancient enemies of Christian fellowship—misrepresentation and consequent suspicion. It is the purpose of the present editorial to correct the misrepresentation and allay the suspicion. We shall not be content with doing that in any partial fashion. This misrepresentation must be eliminated *radically*. The last vestiges of it must be removed if our Church is to go forward with full blessing and joy to the accomplishment of its great task.

What is the misrepresentation of which we speak? We can answer that question very simply. It is the misrepresentation that there are some persons at Westminster Theological Seminary or in The Presbyterian Church of America or on the editorial staff of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN who are unwilling to concede the right of their brethren who hold the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord to a place in the ministry of The Presbyterian Church of America.

This misrepresentation has been spread particularly by an editorial which appeared in the October 1st number of the *Christian Beacon*, a paper edited by the Rev. Carl McIntire, who is a member of the Presbytery of New Jersey in The Presbyterian Church of America. The editorial attacked in very vigorous language the Rev. Professor R. B. Kuiper, Professor of Practical Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary, and asserted that in his article published originally in *The Banner* of the Christian Reformed Church and reprinted in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN of September 12, 1936, he had declared or implied that the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord is contrary to the Reformed Faith.

There was nothing whatever in Professor Kuiper's

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article that justified any such interpretation of it. On October 6th Professor Kuiper sent to the *Christian Beacon* a reply to this attack and asked that it be published. Whether it was worthy of publication let every reader of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN determine for himself by turning to pages 54 and 55 of the present issue. We think every unprejudiced reader will hold it to be just what is to be expected from the pen of so distinguished a scholar and preacher.

Yet the editor of the *Christian Beacon*, despite earnest remonstrances from Professor Kuiper himself and from the senior editor of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, has persistently refused to publish it. Finally, after irreparable harm has been done by the long delay, he merely publishes, in his issue of October 29th, which has just come into our hands, a statement *by him* regarding what Professor Kuiper's letter contains. He still does not publish the letter itself, nor does he indicate to his readers even that Professor Kuiper has insisted upon the publication of it.

The result is that which is nearly certain to come when an editor refuses to give to a person whom he has attacked the right to reply—namely, a rising tide of suspicion and injustice. The suspicion and injustice due to the original misrepresentation culminated in the attack which has been made by the Presbytery of California against certain persons in The Presbyterian Church of America and particularly against THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN (see page 55 of the present issue).

We lay no claim to any Stoic apathy in the presence of this attack. On the contrary, we are very deeply grieved. In all these long years of struggle, when many attacks have come from many enemies, we do not remember ever having received a blow that has hurt us much more than this unjust charge which has been brought against us by our California brethren.

But the important thing is that the misrepresentation on the basis of which the Presbytery of California has acted should now be corrected once and for all. Be it said therefore with the utmost plainness and insistence that never have we or to our knowledge has anyone else in The Presbyterian Church of America or in the Faculty of Westminster Seminary asserted or implied in any way, shape or manner that the holding of the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord is incompatible with maintenance of the Reformed system of doctrine or that it prevents a man from subscribing honestly to the doctrinal standards of The Presbyterian Church of America.

In our last issue we stated our position on this point. If anyone should say that that statement was dragged out of us or represents any concession on our part only recently made, that would again be a complete misrep-

resentation. On the contrary we have always held just exactly the position which is stated in that last issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN. If we have not stated it before, that is because we supposed that everyone would take it for granted. We are truly amazed and grieved that it became necessary for us to state a thing which should have been so obvious.

THE DISPENSATIONALISM OF THE SCOFIELD BIBLE

In attacking the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible, Professor Kuiper was not attacking in the slightest, as being incompatible with the Reformed system, the Premillenarian view of the return of Christ; and we cannot detect the slightest color of justification for such an interpretation of his words. There are surely many persons who, though they hold to the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord, reject the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible. We agree with these Premillennialists and we agree with Professor Kuiper in such rejection. The Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible seems to us to be quite contrary to the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards.

We do not mean, of course, that everyone who uses the Scofield Reference Bible is to be excluded or deposed from the ministry or eldership or diaconate of our Church or other truly Reformed or Presbyterian churches. It is quite possible that many persons know and love the Scofield Reference Bible without really agreeing with the false teaching that is in it. By a salutary misunderstanding or ignoring of Dr. Scofield's notes they may be prevented from taking into their souls the errors that those notes contain. Moreover, we certainly do not mean that everything in Dr. Scofield's notes is erroneous. Of course we recognize that many things in them are true. We do not even deny that some of the worst things in the notes are actually contradicted by other passages that the notes themselves contain. By a happy inconsistency Dr. Scofield is prevented from drawing fully the disastrous consequences of his theory as to the history of God's dealings with men. We gladly recognize all that.

But we do mean very definitely that if a man really does accept all the teaching of those notes, according to their real meaning, he is seriously out of accord with the Reformed Faith and has no right to be a minister or elder or deacon in The Presbyterian Church of America.

The Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible is characteristically expressed, for example, in Dr. Scofield's notes on Matt. 5:2 and Matt. 6:12. In the course of these notes it is said:

"For these reasons the Sermon on the Mount in its primary application gives neither the privi-

lege nor the duty of the Church. These are found in the Epistles. Under the law of the kingdom, for example, no one may hope for forgiveness who has not first forgiven (Mt. 6:12, 14, 15). Under grace the Christian is exhorted to forgive because he is already forgiven (Eph. 4:30-32)."

Similarly, in the note on Matt. 6:12 it is said, regarding the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors":

"This is legal ground. Cf. Eph. 4:32, which is grace."

Again, in the note on Luke 11:1, after the strangely inconsistent assertion that "in the so-called Lord's prayer Christ gives an incomparable model for all prayer," Dr. Scofield goes on to say:

"Used as a *form*, the Lord's prayer is, dispensationally, upon legal, not church ground; it is not a prayer in the name of Christ (cf. John 14:13, 14; 16:24); and it makes human forgiveness, as under the law it must, the condition of divine forgiveness; an order which grace exactly reverses (cf. Eph. 4:32)."

These notes, separating between the teaching of our Lord and the teaching of the Epistles of the New Testament, and holding that a petition in that blessed prayer which our Lord taught His disciples is "on legal ground," are at the heart of the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible, and at the same time they are seriously against the Word of God. They are heresy of a very terrible kind. Rather than that The Presbyterian Church of America should knowingly tolerate such heresy in its ministry or eldership or diaconate, it would surely seem better that it should be divided or dissolved.

Certainly The Presbyterian Church of America cannot tolerate such heresy if it is to be true to the Westminster Standards. No less than nine of the one hundred and seven questions in the Westminster Shorter Catechism are devoted to the Lord's Prayer, and the answer to the introductory question among these is as follows:

"The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *The Lord's Prayer*."

Then, in six of the other answers, it is said that *we* actually pray the various petitions in the Lord's Prayer. Plainly it is meant that the Lord's Prayer teaches us something *directly*. What becomes here of the notion in the Scofield Bible that the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, including the Lord's Prayer, is not, in its primary application, for the guidance of the Church? A man may hold to those notes in the Scofield Bible or he may hold to the Reformed Faith, but he certainly cannot hold to both. He must make his choice.

Here is what the Shorter Catechism says about that fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer, which Dr. Scofield says is "on legal ground":

"In the fifth petition, which is, *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, we pray, that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others."

Where is the legalism in that petition, so interpreted? And is not that interpretation plainly the right interpretation? Can any man who has ever prayed that prayer from his heart, as it is interpreted in the Shorter Catechism and as it is plainly meant in the Word of God, ever be content with the dismemberment of the Bible which is involved in Dr. Scofield's Dispensationalism and which finds such distressing expression in that note on the Lord's Prayer?

God grant that The Presbyterian Church of America may get the Shorter Catechism down from the shelf and may again give it its rightful place in the nurture of the children of the covenant! God grant that it may encourage a widespread return to the grand simplicity of that account of God's dealings with His people which is presented in the Word of God and so wonderfully summarized in the Westminster Standards!

THE MILLENNIAL QUESTION

Having done our best to clear away misconceptions of our position, we shall now endeavor in a word or two to set forth more positively what attitude we think The Presbyterian Church of America ought to take regarding the important matter of the differences of opinion which prevail among us about the time of our Lord's return.

In the first place, we think that any attempt to deal with these matters in the Constitution of the Church would be nothing short of folly. The doctrinal standards of the Church should be simply the historic Westminster Standards. This is not a creed-making age, and we certainly have not the ability to formulate doctrine. There is hardly the remotest chance that we can agree upon anything—any statement of our attitude toward our Lord's return or anything else—except what is hal- lowed for us by its inclusion in our grand historic Confession of Faith and Catechisms. For the reasonable interpretation of these Standards, and in particular for the reasonable interpretation of the meaning of the ordination pledge, so far as the time of our Lord's return is concerned, we must have confidence in our brethren. Unless we have that mutual confidence, it would have been better that we should not have attempted to form a church at all. But it is the opinion

of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN that such mutual confidence will be shown actually to exist.

In the second place, we are not at all certain that even a mere statement of the General Assembly on this matter, as distinguished from any attempt to include something about it in the Constitution—which would certainly be folly—is either necessary or wise. We did not particularly favor originally the issuance of the statement by the Presbytery of Philadelphia which will be quoted below. All that we did was to help the presbytery to formulate and pass the *right* kind of resolution when once it had made evident the fact that it was determined to pass *some* resolution. Of course the resolution so passed had no constitutional or legally binding force whatever. It was simply an expression of the opinion of the presbytery.

In the third place, we are opposed to all unnecessary "counting of noses" on the Premillennial question. We are opposed to the forming of two lists among our ministers—a list of Premillennialist ministers and a list of anti-Premillennialist ministers. We are opposed to any elaborate diplomacy as between these two groups. We are opposed to any notion that the election of a Premillennialist to any office has to be balanced by the election of an anti-Premillennialist, or *vice versa*. Instead of all that we favor being really in earnest about our view that this question, though certainly important, is yet not important enough to divide a church into two opposing camps.

In the fourth place, we favor the same liberty for individuals within congregations regarding this matter as that which we favor for individuals and congregations within the church at large. That is the reason why we favored the third part of the Philadelphia resolution, quoted below, which states that it "should be regarded as improper for congregations to erect into a position of constitutional fixity (by inclusion in their charters or otherwise) any doctrinal requirements or standards other than those of the church at large."

CONGREGATIONS AND THE MILLENNIAL QUESTION

Suppose the principle in this paragraph were violated. Suppose some congregation had in its charter or in its constitution a provision that only a Premillennialist should be elected as pastor. Suppose then that some layman, a member of The Presbyterian Church of America, should go to live in the community where that congregation was, and suppose that he became a member of the congregation, with the notion that it was a congregation of his own church, The Presbyterian Church of America. Suppose then that the pulpit became vacant and a congregational meeting were held to

call a pastor. Suppose then that the layman whom we are taking as our example arose in that meeting and nominated some minister for the pastorate. Suppose that minister happened to be not a Premillennialist.

What would the Moderator be obliged in that case to say? Why, he would be obliged to say to our layman friend: "You are out of order; you have nominated a man who is not a Premillennialist, and the constitution of this church requires that only a Premillennialist shall be pastor."

"But, Mr. Moderator," our layman friend might then say, "is not the man whom I have nominated perfectly orthodox and a minister in good and regular standing in our church, The Presbyterian Church of America?"

"Yes," the Moderator would be obliged to say; "your candidate is orthodox in The Presbyterian Church of America; but he is not orthodox in this congregation; for this congregation has an additional doctrinal requirement, the requirement of Premillennial belief, which is not in the requirements in the constitution of the church at large."

"But, Mr. Moderator," our layman might then say, "I believe that the great majority of the persons here present in this meeting want to have my candidate as their pastor."

"Never mind," the Moderator would be obliged to say; "even though not only the majority but all of us who are here present at this meeting wanted that man as our pastor we could not have him, because the constitution of this congregation limits the freedom of the majority; we have been appealing for funds with the assurance that this congregation will always remain a Premillennial congregation, so that no matter how much we may desire to have that candidate of yours as our pastor we cannot honestly have him."

That would be the situation that would logically arise if congregations should include in their charters doctrinal requirements that go beyond the requirements in the constitution of the church at large. Would it not be an utterly intolerable situation? Would it not utterly destroy the Presbyterian character of our church government? Would it not also make into a meaningless form of words all our talk about liberty in this matter of our views as to the time of our Lord's return?

No, we must carry out this principle of liberty all the way down if we really mean what we say when we insist on it.

Does that mean then that congregations have not liberty to prefer a Premillennialist pastor to one who is not a Premillennialist? No, it does not mean that at all. Certainly they have that liberty. What it does mean is that a congregation may not give up its liberty in this matter by determining now what it must do in the

future. A present majority of a congregation may act as it pleases in this matter, but it may not attempt to take away the liberty of future majorities.

Perhaps some one may ask then whether we think a congregation ought to have the right under our system of government to label itself a Premillennial congregation or an Amillennial congregation by inclusion of those words in its church calendar or in some other similar way.

We answer that a congregation might conceivably do that; provided it should be made perfectly clear, every time that is done, that the congregation is assuming no responsibility as to what stand it will take on this question in the future. But it is hard to see how that condition can very easily be met. Therefore we think it would be a very serious evil for congregations to label themselves officially either Premillennial congregations or Amillennial congregations. To do so would certainly be very offensive to brethren who might desire to worship in the congregation or to be members of it and yet did not agree with the majority about this point.

We said above that we are opposed to "counting noses" on this question among individuals. We are still more opposed to "counting noses" among congregations. If we are going to have the congregations of our church divided into two rival camps—the Premillennial congregations on the one side and the Amillennial congregations on the other—then we think we ought to be divided into two entirely separate churches at the start. That would certainly be far more conducive to brotherly feeling than any hardening of opinions on this matter practically into the fixity of dogma by the labeling of congregations one way or the other within the limits of what purports to be the same Church.

In short, there is room in The Presbyterian Church of America for Premillennial congregations, but we do not think that there is room for congregations who practically even if not theoretically erect the Premillennial view into one of the essentials of their faith. As for the labeling of congregations as Amillennial congregations we should be opposed to that also, with all our might and main.

To sum up what we have been trying to say about this important matter, we shall now quote in full the resolution of the Presbytery of Philadelphia on the question:

I. The question whether or not our Lord's bodily return is held to precede the "thousand years" referred to in Revelation 20 is, in our opinion, despite its importance, not to be regarded as a test whether a man does or does not adhere to the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Cate-

chisms. A man may, we think, answer this question in the affirmative or answer it in the negative, and still, if his convictions otherwise are satisfactory, be ordained and received as a minister or elder or deacon of The Presbyterian Church of America.

II. A congregation that desires as its pastor a man who holds the view of our Lord's return described above should not be prevented from having such a pastor, neither should a congregation that desires as its pastor a man who rejects this view be prevented from having him, provided that in each case the pastor has subscribed *ex animo* to the system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

III. It should, however, in our judgment, be regarded as improper for congregations to erect into a position of constitutional fixity (by inclusion in their charters or otherwise) any doctrinal requirements or standards other than those of the church at large.

We do not favor the adoption of this resolution by the General Assembly. The best thing, we think, would be the adoption of *no* resolution on the subject at all. But if any resolution is adopted, we think it should be like this one.

THE 1903 AMENDMENTS

We desire to say again that we think it to be a matter of central importance that the 1903 Amendments to the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. should be omitted from our Standards. Those amendments are extremely bad in themselves, and they were adopted by the U.S.A. Church in the interests of indifferentist church-unionism.

We are glad to observe that the Presbytery of California, though severely critical of us on another matter, is with us in this matter.

Finally, as our last word of all in these somewhat protracted editorials, we desire to say that we cherish the very lively hope that when our California brethren know all the facts they will agree with us also regarding the matter about which they now seem to differ from us. We do hope and pray that suspicion and distrust may be removed and that we may go forward joyously and unitedly in the great work which God has so wonderfully placed before us.

We should express no such hope if we thought that there were real divergence of principle between those brethren and ourselves. We have always abhorred with all our souls a "peace-and-work" program that covers up real doctrinal divergence. But then, you see, a peace and work program is very different when it is advocated over against Auburn Affirmationists from what it is when it is advocated over against brethren who bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus and have shown very plainly that they are not ashamed of Him.

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THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

THE outstanding action of the Second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America, which met in Philadelphia November 12-14, was the adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as the doctrinal standards of the church without the compromising amendments and Declaratory Statement which the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. adopted in 1903, and without any new declaratory statement on the subject of Premillennialism or on any other subject. This action was taken by an impressive roll call vote of 57 to 20.

A proposal to adopt those doctrinal standards *with* those 1903 amendments, and merely to recommend that the 1903 Amendments be eliminated by the presbyteries or (after discussion) by the next General Assembly, was rejected. So was a motion made by a member of the Presbytery of California "that a Declaratory Statement be appended to the Confession of Faith to this effect, that The Presbyterian Church of America does not interpret any part of the Westminster Confession of Faith or Catechisms as being opposed to the Premillennial view."

These and other proposals being in one way or another rejected, the Assembly proceeded to adopt, by the roll call vote mentioned above, the exact form of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms which was proposed by the Committee on the Constitution elected by the last General Assembly. That form is the form in which the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. existed in 1902 before the objectionable 1903 amendments were adopted, except that

two brief statements—one declaring the Pope to be Antichrist and the other declaring it to be sinful to refuse an oath when the civil magistrate requires it—are omitted. Thus the doctrinal standards of The Presbyterian Church of America have taken over from the 1903 amendments only *omissions*. They contain not one word which those amendments *added*. The result is that The Presbyterian Church of America stands at the beginning on an absolutely square doctrinal basis—the basis of the historic Westminster Standards alone.

It is, we think, not at all correct to say that this action was hasty. On the contrary it is the action really not of one General Assembly but of two. The June Assembly definitely ordered the Committee on the Constitution to present to this November Assembly for adoption as the doctrinal standards of the church the Westminster Confession and Catechisms in the form which they possessed in the 1934 edition of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. without any changes whatever except the elimination of those 1903 amendments. The question whether those amendments should be eliminated was referred to the Committee, but no other question whatever regarding the doctrinal standards was referred to it. Thus not only the proposal to adopt all the rest of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms without change, but also the question whether those 1903 Amendments should be eliminated, has been before the whole Church ever since the time of the June Assembly.

It would have been a calamity if the adoption of the standards had been further postponed, and it would have been a still greater calamity if those highly objectionable 1903 Amendments had been adopted in

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any way whatsoever. For The Presbyterian Church of America to have had those compromising amendments as part of its doctrinal standards, no matter for how short a time, would have been a very serious lowering of the flag.

As for the refusal of the General Assembly to "write eschatological liberty" into the constitution of the church, that was also a great victory for the Reformed Faith. In saying that, we do not for one moment mean that there should not be liberty for those who hold the premillennial view of the return of our Lord to enter into and remain in the ministry. Such liberty already exists, and it has never, so far as our knowledge goes, ever been denied by any human being in the church. But to put into the doctrinal standards such vague terms as "eschatological liberty" or "the premillennial view" or the like would be to insert something utterly incongruous with the whole underlying character of the rest of the standards and indeed would be to advertise to all the world that The Presbyterian Church of America has very little notion of what doctrinal standards are.

Our guiding star in this whole matter ought to be the determination to stand on the basis of our great historic standards pure and simple. This is not a creed-making age, and if we try to tinker with the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms we are pretty sure to mar the witness of our church to the things for which those great instruments stand. When the Christian Church really proceeds to define doctrine, it does so in a very different way from the way which would be followed if we should perpetuate the present unfortunate misunderstanding and suspicion in any addition to the constitution whatsoever. The proposed "liberty" planks are not only entirely unnecessary but would tend to divide the church permanently into two hostile camps. They would, moreover, be only the entering wedge for all sorts of queer excrescences and vagaries.

As it is, the Westminster Standards have been adopted in all their purity. The Presbyterian Church of America stands forth before all the world not as some strange new sect but as a true exponent of the Reformed Faith. Thus one of the commonest pitfalls into which new ecclesiastical bodies have fallen in our day has been avoided by our church. That is cause for profound rejoicing and for profound thankfulness to almighty God.

THE BUSINESS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Certain striking differences appear between the method of doing business which was followed by this General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America and the methods to which many of us have

grown accustomed in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The Moderator, Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., President of Wheaton College, did not make partisan "speeches from the throne," but left the chair in parliamentary fashion when he desired to make a proposal to the Assembly. He did not engage in attacks upon anyone in the church. He did not breathe out threatenings of ecclesiastical discipline against those who might be in the minority in ecclesiastical councils. He did not try to be a kind of moderatorial toastmaster by making jocose remarks when commissioners arose to speak. He did not use the weapon of ridicule against speakers who might arise to oppose measures which he favored. He did not, in short, employ any of the moderatorial methods which have attained such a painful vogue in certain ecclesiastical bodies of the present day. On the contrary, he conducted his office not only with the dignity and fairness which was to be expected of so distinguished a Christian leader, but also he endeared himself yet more to his brethren in The Presbyterian Church of America who already held him in high respect and warm affection.

The Assembly itself also exhibited characteristics that were markedly different from the characteristics of certain other Assemblies that might be mentioned. Discussion of dangerous and possibly divisive questions was not postponed until the late afternoon (when everyone could be counted upon to be too tired to attend to them), but began in the freshness of early morning and went on, if necessary, straight through the day. Speeches were not limited to five minutes, or to any particular number of minutes. Commissioners were not prevented from speaking a number of times on the same subject if they had anything to say. In other words the Assembly was a truly deliberative body. An honest effort was made to let everybody have his say; and if at one point certain commissioners did not get a chance to say what they wanted to say about treatment of oaths in the Confession of Faith or about other points, we feel sure that that happened not of set purpose but because the Assembly really thought that full opportunity for debate had been given.

All that is very refreshing. It may be wearisome to listen to brethren who *will* be foolish enough not to recognize the complete and final wisdom of views that you and I personally hold; it would no doubt be refreshing if everybody would say only what you and I personally want him to say: but in the long run truth, we are convinced, will flourish only if there is the utmost freedom of speech. May the General Assemblies of The Presbyterian Church of America always be truly deliberative bodies as this one unquestionably was.

Of course this General Assembly did unquestionably

exhibit certain faults. It did seem at times as though certain commissioners, in their effort to be democratic and avoid centralization of power, were a little lacking in a brotherly recognition of what has actually been done. In their reaction against letting a "machine" do everything, it did seem as though they were inclined to be unwilling to let anybody do anything. One wondered how, on the principles enunciated by some commissioners, any business could ever by any possibility be carried on.

But such was not the attitude of the majority; and in general the faults of this Assembly were youthful faults. It must be remembered that most of these commissioners have been in a hopeless minority in the church to which they have hitherto belonged, and thus have had little opportunity for practice in carrying on administrative enterprises. They will unquestionably learn, and we may well hope that when they do learn the business of the church will be conducted in a manner both efficient and democratic.

THE PRESBYTERY OF CALIFORNIA AND THE "CHRISTIAN BEACON"

IN OUR last issue we expressed the view that the actions of the Presbytery of California of The Presbyterian Church of America regarding supposed attacks upon Premillenarians by the editors of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN and others grew out of the editorial in the October 1st issue of the *Christian Beacon* criticising a paragraph in the article of Professor Kuiper which appeared in the September 12th issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN. The reason why we expressed that view was that both the California actions mentioned the editorial. As a matter of fact, however, we were in error. A later communication, signed by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of California (see p. 82 below), states that the misunderstanding of Professor Kuiper's article by the Presbytery of California was entirely independent of the editorial in the *Christian Beacon*.

We are glad to point that out in justice to the *Christian Beacon*. The editorial in that paper has plainly been not the only cause, even though it has certainly been a very important cause, of the spread of this serious misunderstanding throughout the church.

At the same time, while we say that gladly, we are inclined to take a rather serious view of the widespread state of mind which this whole episode reveals. According to the latest communication from the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of California, there are a very large "number of persons throughout the nation" who arrived at the same interpretation of Professor Kuiper's words as did the editor of the *Christian Beacon*. What

does that mean? It means that a great many people think that "Premillennialism" and the "Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible" are the same thing, so that when Professor Kuiper declared that the "Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible" is an anti-Reformed heresy he was also declaring that Premillennialism is an anti-Reformed heresy.

In view of that fact, one of the pressing needs of the hour is the sharp separation between these things that are so sadly confused. The Premillennial view of the time of our Lord's return is not an anti-Reformed heresy. A man may hold to it and be a minister in a truly Reformed or Presbyterian Church. But the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible is, we are convinced, just as Professor Kuiper says it is, an anti-Reformed heresy indeed. It is quite out of accord with the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

As we say that, we are afraid that many of you who are our readers will be offended. Many of you use and love the Scofield Bible, and you are grieved by even a breath of an attack upon it.

But we beg you, brethren, to look at this question calmly and clearly. Dr. Scofield's notes are not Scripture, are they? They are not sacred. They represent just the attempt of a fallible man to interpret the Word of God—no doubt a truly Christian man, but still a man who was subject to error as other men are. Well, then, if that is so, is it right to regard those notes as being above criticism? Is it right to resent every adverse opinion regarding them as though it necessarily meant an attack upon the orthodoxy of all the users of the notes? Is it not better to give patient consideration to any criticism that may be offered?

We, for our part, think the notes—though of course they contain many things that are fine and true—are in important particulars and in their underlying structure untrue to the Word of God. You, on the contrary, think they are true. Well, if that is the situation, will you not be willing at least to listen to what we have to say? If you become convinced that we are right about those notes, then you will use them—if you use them at all—with great caution. If, on the other hand, you are convinced, after careful examination of our arguments, that we are wrong, you will return to the notes with all the better conscience and with all the clearer understanding of what the notes mean. Whichever one of us is right, earnest discussion of these things can hardly be amiss. No human book should be put on a pedestal. Every human book should be ready to justify itself ever anew by a comparison of it with the one infallible Standard—namely, God's holy and unchanging Word.