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Clarence Macartney and the Presbyterian Controversy (Part 1)

by Mark Sidwell

Clarence Edward Noble Macartney (1879-1957) was a man of no little accomplishments, although his fame has faded since his lifetime.[1] He is best remembered—when he is remembered—as a master of the pulpit. The majority of his books, all popular sellers, were compilations of sermons he preached during his long ministries at the First Presbyterian Church of Paterson, New Jersey (1905-14), Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia (1914-27), and the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh (1927-53). His book *Preaching Without Notes*, whose contents apply to preaching more broadly than the title might indicate, is still read with profit by homiletics students.[2] In 1999 *Preaching* magazine chose Macartney as one of the ten greatest preachers of the twentieth century, along with—ironically—his arch nemesis Harry Emerson Fosdick.[3]

Next to his preaching skills, Macartney is best remembered for his role in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in the 1920s and 1930s.[4] With J. Gresham Machen and William Jennings Bryan, Macartney is rightly regarded as one of the leaders of the Fundamentalist side (although *Fundamentalist* was a label he and some other Presbyterians often wore uncomfortably). He took the lead in voicing protest over the presence of liberal Harry Emerson Fosdick in a pulpit of the Presbyterian denomination. During this battle, his election as moderator of the Presbyterian Church marked one of the high points of the conservative cause. Later he supported J. Gresham Machen in Machen's struggles against the Presbyterian hierarchy, although he stopped short of the actions that ultimately led Machen to break completely with the denomination.

The story of the Fundamentalist controversy among the Presbyterians has been well reported, and Macartney's role has received its proper place.[5] Rightly historians have regarded his solid commitment to conservative theology, in which he was nurtured and which he imbibed at Princeton Theological Seminary, as the

motivation for his actions. But the controversy also reveals a struggle, a shifting struggle, within Macartney. He had to devise and apply a coherent ecclesiology that would provide him a framework for supporting his theology while remaining loyal to the Presbyterian tradition. As circumstances changed, Macartney's approach to the doctrine of the church changed, or to put it more fairly, was altered. Ultimately, Clarence Macartney came to a view of church fellowship that was a compromise, in some ways an inconsistent one, to accommodate conflicting pressures.

The Fosdick Controversy

Liberal Baptist Harry Emerson Fosdick fired the first shot in the Presbyterian theater of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy on May 21, 1922. Stepping into the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New York City, where he was filling the pastorate while teaching at Union Theological Seminary, Fosdick delivered a sermon titled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"[6] In that message, Fosdick decried the insistence by some conservatives on certain teachings wrongly labeled (according to Fosdick) "fundamentals of Christianity": the virgin birth of Christ, His vicarious atonement, and the inerrancy of Scripture. Rather than insist on such dogmas, the church needed to speak to modern men in ways they could understand in order to enroll them in the cause of Christianity. In a rousing conclusion, Fosdick insisted that no "Fundamentalist" was going to drive him and like-minded men from the pulpits of the Protestant churches.

On hearing of Fosdick's sermon, Macartney shortly thereafter entered his pulpit at the Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and delivered a riposte: a sermon titled "Shall Unbelief Win?" He then published the sermon (as Fosdick had done with his), first in *The Presbyterian* magazine and then as a pamphlet.[7] The title is significant. Whereas Fosdick spoke of his opponents as *Fundamentalists,* Macartney labeled the position of Fosdick *unbelief,* leaving no doubt of how Macartney classified Fosdicks's theology. As J. Gresham Machen did in his classic *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), Clarence Macartney viewed liberalism not as another form of Christian belief, however flawed, but as another faith of a different kind.

Macartney devoted ample space in his sermon to refuting Fosdick point by point. He answered him on the questions of the virgin birth, inspiration (where he accused Fosdick of erecting the straw man of dictation), the Second Coming, and the atonement. This last point Macartney treated as the foremost fundamental: "Our chief complaint against the rationalist and modernist is not their writings and sayings about the Deity of our Lord, the Bible, the Second Advent, but their rejection of the one great truth of Christianity, that through His death we have remission of our sins and are justified with God."[8]

In connection with his defense of the physical Second Coming of Christ,

Macartney made observations significant to the history of the Fundamentalist controversy. Early in the sermon, commenting on Fosdick's title, Macartney said of the label *Fundamentalist,* "It is a grand name, and the man who claims it certainly puts the burden of proof on those who differ from him. But in recent years the name has come to be applied to a group, who indeed hold to conservative views, but whose chief emphasis is upon the premillennial reign of Christ on this earth. In this sense we are not interested in the controversy, for we do not believe that any opinion, conviction or expectation as to the time of the second Epiphany of Christ is a fundamental of the Christian faith."[9] Later, when dealing with the Second Coming in the body of his sermon, he chided the premillennialists again, revealing his own postmillennial leanings,[10] but added, "But there is one thing about the premillenarian concerning which there is no doubt, and that is his loyalty to the Person and the claims of Jesus Christ. However much he may be tempted to write history before it has been made, his absolute loyalty to the Deity of Jesus, His Atonement, and His reign of righteousness and judgment, is never questioned. This is far more than we can say about the rationalists. And the modernists."[11]

Macartney's ambivalence toward the title *Fundamentalist* illustrates the hesitation of some Presbyterian conservatives to embrace the term. In his memoirs, written years later with a greater perspective, Macartney was somewhat gentler but still protested that he identified Fundamentalism as a premillennial movement.[12] One can find the same protest even more sharply uttered by J. Gresham Machen.[13] Presbyterian Fundamentalism had, at the very least, its own distinct flavor—or at least its own combination of flavors.

More to the point, one must note what Macartney saw as the solution to men such as Fosdick, a solution that lay with his Presbyterian background. For Macartney, the basis for approaching the problem of Fosdick, a liberal Baptist in a Presbyterian church, was to apply the Westminster Standards. Macartney said, "Dr. Fosdick is not a Presbyterian, but he stands in a Presbyterian pulpit and gets his bread from a Presbyterian congregation. In view of this fact how can his holding the purely naturalistic account of the stories of the birth of Jesus be in harmony with his preaching in the pulpit of a Church whose Creed, never revoked, declares ..., 'The Son of God—when the fulness of time was come did take upon Him man's nature—being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance'? ... it is a solemn declaration of the Church from which Dr. Fosdick takes his bread."[14] In his conclusion he said,

> I believe that as long as the Presbyterian Church has not abandoned and repudiated its Confession of Faith, any man in any of its pulpits holding and declaring the views of Dr. Fosdick occupies an anomalous and inconsistent position. Their "New" Theology seems to carry with it a "new" morality also. As for putting them out, that could easily be done, for they are a small minority in the Church; although at present the *vocal* minority. But I am coming to think less and less of excision and excommunication as means of preserving the

> Church from false teaching, not because of any base and ignoble fear on the part of those who might so proceed of being called "heresy hunters," "medieval," etc., but because I am convinced that the far more useful course to pursue is to declare the whole counsel of God so clearly and fearlessly that the whole world may know that there is a difference between what is Christianity and what is not Christianity.[15]

Despite this somewhat irenic conclusion, Macartney did in fact lead the effort to oust Fosdick from the Presbyterian Church. He took the course outlined earlier in his sermon: "I believe that in this day one of the greatest contributions that a man can make to the success of the Gospel is to contend earnestly and intelligently and in a Christian spirit, but nevertheless, CONTEND, for the faith."[16] He offered an overture to the church, challenging Fosdick's right to stand in a Presbyterian pulpit with the views he pronounced. The result was a heated controversy. According to Macartney's sister, in the middle of the conflict, even Macartney's mother felt some sympathy for the liberal Baptist and asked her son, "Can't you leave poor Fosdick alone?" He replied, "No, I'll not leave him alone."[17] Finally, in 1924 the General Assembly asked Fosdick either to accept Presbyterian ordination (and thus become subject to its confession and church discipline) or to surrender his pulpit. Fosdick resigned and took the pulpit of what became Riverside Church in New York, an ostensibly Baptist congregation. The action was not exactly what the conservatives wanted, for it did not actually pronounce against Fosdick's views and level discipline against him. But Fosdick was gone.

The Challenge of the Auburn Affirmation

The same 1924 Assembly that dealt with Fosdick also elected Clarence Macartney as moderator—by a slender margin. Yet things were not going so well for conservatives as it might appear on the surface. Macartney's position as moderator was mostly honorary—a visible sign of conservative voting strength but an office whose power lay more in intricacies of parliamentary procedure than in enforcing discipline on the denomination. Furthermore, confronting the church was a protest issued a few months earlier, the so-called Auburn Affirmation.[18] A group of Presbyterian ministers, eventually numbering over a thousand, protested the actions of previous General Assemblies in establishing a doctrinal test. Specifically the PCUSA had in 1910 listed five essential doctrines that all prospective candidates for ordination must affirm: the inerrancy of the Bible, Christ's virgin birth, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection, and the historical reality of His miracles. Twice, in 1916 and 1923, the General Assembly reaffirmed this position.

The "Affirmationists," as the signers were called, objected to this act. A mixture of liberals and tolerant conservatives, they insisted that "we affirm and declare our acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as we did at our ordinations, 'as containing the doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture.'"[19]

Essentially their arguments against the five points were as follows. The five-point standard was an unconstitutional addition to the Westminster Confession. Furthermore, the Adopting Act of 1729, one of the foundational documents of American Presbyterianism, allowed dissent of conscience on disputed points. Third, only the General Assembly and the presbyteries together could enact binding standards, and the General Assembly had acted unilaterally on the five points. Finally, the church could not require subscription to "theories," but only to "facts," and these points represented only theories. The only point they expressly rejected was inerrancy.

In his memoirs, Macartney called the Auburn Affirmation "a Christ-dishonoring proclamation, if there ever was one,"[20] Even before his election as moderator, Macartney had spoken out against the Affirmation. Drawing on imagery from the Civil War, he preached a sermon in Pittsburgh on February 5, 1924, titled "The Irrepressible Conflict."[21] This conflict, he insisted at the outset of his message, was *"the presence in the Protestant churches of two groups, calling and professing themselves Christians, who hold views as to Christ and the Scriptures so divergent and so irreconcilable as to constitute two different religions."*[22] After reviewing the controversy over the five points, Macartney rejected the Affirmationists' claim "that the Assembly has no right to say what doctrines are essential." He replied,

> *But this is contrary both to law and to common sense.* Every government, civil or ecclesiastical, must have a body which interprets with authority the laws. In the United States this is the Supreme Court; in the Presbyterian Church it is the General Assembly. ... The General Assembly is given the power to reprove and rebuke errors in doctrine. But how can it exercise this power without at the same interpreting with authority the Standards of the church? Moreover, the Assembly of 1910 prefaced its declaration by referring to the Adopting Act of 1729 [to which the Affirmationists appealed], which calls upon the candidate to state his scruples as to doctrines, and calls upon the highest judicatory to state whether or not the doctrines questioned are essential to the system of Doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith.[23]

He then cited a 1904 case in which the denomination asserted the General Assembly's right "to interpret its doctrinal standards." He noted the Assembly's "Portland Deliverance" (1892) in defense of inerrancy and pointed out that the body had expressly declared that inerrancy was not a new teaching but the historic teaching of the Westminster Confession. Macartney brushed aside Affirmationist appeals to the Old School–New School reunion of the nineteenth century and the union with the Cumberland Presbyterians in 1904. Those cases, he said, actually proved his point, for the constitutional basis of the church remained unaltered even in merger. "Never, in all its history since the Adopting Act of 1729, has the Presbyterian Church stood upon any basis save that of the Confession of Faith, unabridged and unaltered."[24] (One must note that Macartney appears to ignore the 1903 revisions of the Westminster Standards made in order to accommodate

the Cumberland Presbyterians.) As to the claim of "theories" versus "facts," Macartney asserted that the Westminster Standards represented the official "theories," the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, which were its heritage and glory and marked the church's link with historic Christianity back to "St. Paul and St. Peter and St. John."[25]

Underlying Macartney's argument is the claim that the five points express the teachings of the Westminster Standards. Therefore, rather than being a new confessional standard, the points simply outlined the official teaching of the church. The General Assembly was fully within its rights, indeed fulfilling its responsibilities, in enforcing the points as tests for ordination. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of Macartney and others, the General Assembly did not agree with this interpretation. In 1927 an overwhelming majority voted for a report accepting the argument of the Affirmationists. The five points and similar pronouncements by the General Assembly could not be binding without the approval of the presbyteries. The Assembly itself could rule only on cases presented to it by the presbyteries and could not preemptively establish standards for doctrinal orthodoxy. Macartney's efforts at a solution to the Presbyterian controversy by church discipline had failed.

Notes

[1] On the career of Clarence Macartney, see his autobiography, *The Making of a Minister* (Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1961). The only critical biography is a short one found in C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), pp. 190-211. Also of great value, and used for this study, are the Clarence Macartney Papers housed in Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. This article is a revision of the paper "Defending and Defining the Church: Clarence Macartney and the Presbyterian Controversy," delivered at the Bible Faculty Leadership Summit, Maranatha Baptist Bible College, Watertown, WI, July 31–August 2, 2003.

[2] Clarence Macartney, *Preaching Without Notes* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946).

[3] Michael Duduit, "The Ten Greatest Preachers of the Twentieth Century," *Preaching*, November-December 1999, pp. 6-16.

[4] Macartney also enjoyed a minor "second career" as a historian of the Civil War through popular works such as *Grant and His Generals* and *Mr. Lincoln's Admirals*. On Macartney's Civil War writings, see Robert James Havlik, "The Lincoln Civil War Books by Clarence Macartney: A Re-evaluation of the Works of a Popular Lincoln Author and Civil War Buff," *Lincoln Herald* 102 (Spring 2000): 12-18.

[5] The best account is Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). His portrait of Macartney is especially good; see pp. 104-27. The classic account is Lefferts Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954); he considers the outcome of the conflict a positive step in the development of American Presbyterianism. From within the conservative party, and still very useful, is Edwin A. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (1940; reprint, Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1992). A recent study stressing the determinative role of the moderate middle is William J. Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism: Competition in a Protestant House* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997). One should also note Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996); his thorough coverage and conservative outlook is unfortunately offset by his utter disdain for objectivity and willingness to assign the worst of motives to figures with whom he disagrees.

[6] The sermon has been often anthologized. See, e.g., Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" in *American Protestant Thought: The Liberal Era*, edited by William R. Hutchinson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), pp. 170-82.

[7] Clarence Macartney, *Shall Unbelief Win? A Reply to Dr. Fosdick* (Philadelphia: Wilbur Hanf, n.d.), p. 5. Quotations are from this pamphlet version of the sermon, which is expanded from its form as originally delivered. It is also available online at *http://www2.bju.edu/resources/library /research/fund_file/unbelief.html*. On the whole controversy between these men, see Mark Sidwell, "Did the Fundamentalists Win? The Clash of Fosdick and Macartney," *Biblical Viewpoint* 32, no. 2 (November 1998): 87-95.

[8] Ibid., p. 22. [9] Ibid., p. 6.

[10] Macartney's apparent postmillennial views are evident in his comment that "when we hear our premillenarian brethren dwell with more emphasis and zeal upon the mechanism of the temporal kingdom that is to be set up here upon this earth than they do upon the redeeming love of Christ and the conquest of human nature through the mild reign of the Holy Spirit, we are tempted to become impatient with them and to cry out as the princes of the Philistines did, when, about to campaign against Israel, they saw David and his men in their ranks, and said to Achish, 'What do these Hebrews here?'" (Ibid., p. 16).

[11] Ibid. [12] Macartney, *Making of a Minister*, pp. 183-84.

[13] On Machen's relationship to Fundamentalism, see Mark Sidwell, "Was J. Gresham Machen a Fundamentalist?" *Biblical Viewpoint* 31, no. 2 (November 1997): 71-80.

[14] Macartney, *Shall Unbelief Win?* pp. 12-13. [15] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[16] Ibid., p. 5. Emphasis in original.

[17] Wilhemina Guerard, "Clarence Macartney: Biographical Notes" (typescript), p. 59. Clarence Macartney Papers (hereafter "Macartney Papers"), Geneva College Archives, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA.

[18] For the text of the Auburn Affirmation, see Rian, pp. 205-8.

[19] Rian, p. 205. [20] Macartney, *The Making of a Minister*, p. 191.

[21] Clarence Macartney, "The Irrepressible Conflict," reprint copy from *The Presbyterian*, folder: "Presbyterian Church Controversy," Macartney Papers.

[22] Ibid., p. 6. Italics in original. The pagination in the reprint follows that of the published article.

[23] Ibid., p 7. Italics in original. [24] Ibid., pp. 7-8. [25] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

*A Reader's Guide to Literary Analysis and Christology in Revelation**[1]

by Brian Hand

Everyone tries to see a more fantastic shape in a cloud than his friend sees, but this does not change the nature of the cloud. Ingenuity does not always equal reality. The same observation holds true in the field of theology. Recent interest in the book of Revelation has produced a wide range of novel, but mutually exclusive, interpretations. Often these newly emergent theories obscure basic themes of the book. Although they sound creative, they should not be accepted without critical evaluation of their validity. In an attempt to discover the future (or deny that Revelation pertains to the future), many interpreters have made Christology take second place to eschatology or other concerns. In an attempt to justify a particular millennial position or theology, others have set aside a natural reading of the text in favor of complex or convoluted theories. A careful application of the principles of literary analysis can reverse this trend and affirm the primacy of Christ as the central figure of Revelation. Literary analysis offers insight on Revelation through its examination of several important aspects of the text.

Literary analysis first classifies the piece of literature. Regardless of scholars' respective interpretations of the genre of Revelation, they concur that the book is essentially a narrative, which exhibits stock features including time, space, characters, and plot. Narratives often utilize figures of speech and always bear some major theme or purpose. In a step of further classification, literary analysis examines the form, content, and function of a work of literature in order to ascertain its specific genre.

Many commentators simply assume that Revelation is an apocalypse. However, literary analysis postulates an alternative—prophecy. Although several colloquiums have debated the subject, and many articles have sought to define *apocalypse* and *prophecy*, no consensus in definition exists.[2] Analysts who claim that biblical literature merely mimicked the literature of its day assume that Revelation is an apocalypse. Others who note the connections between Revelation

*An dissertation abstract of a doctoral candidate in the Seminary and Graduate School of Religion.

Sutcliffe, E. F. "1 & 2 Paralipomenon" in *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture.* Ed. Bernard Orchard et al. London: Nelson, 1951. 6 p.

Thompson, J. A. *1, 2 Chronicles.* The New American Commentary. 36 vols. Ed. E. Ray Clendenen et al. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000. 411 p.

Clarence Macartney and the Presbyterian Controversy (Part 2 of 2)

by Mark Sidwell

Debating Tactics with Machen

The decision of the 1927 General Assembly forced Macartney to pursue a different strategy. It was now highly unlikely that the PCUSA, as it was currently constituted, was going to enforce a doctrinal uniformity that would exclude liberalism. Therefore, Macartney lent himself to efforts designed to recapture the leadership and to rouse the rank and file of the Presbyterian Church. He found an unwelcome opportunity to pursue this course with the reorganization of his alma mater, Princeton Theological Seminary, in 1929. Long the bastion of rigorously conservative Old School Presbyterianism, Princeton was key to the conservative cause. Conflict, however, between conservatives and moderates at Princeton plagued the institution throughout the 1920s. As Ronald Clutter has noted, the battle at Princeton was not so much conservatives against liberals but rather staunch conservatives against "inclusivists," a mixture of liberals and tolerant conservatives who wanted Princeton to represent the range of Presbyterian opinion (including more liberal views) along with the conservative views.[26] After much skirmishing, the inclusive faction pushed through a reorganization of the board of Princeton Seminary that guaranteed a broader theological representation. J. Gresham Machen, the focal point of the controversy, left Princeton, taking with him three other faculty members (Robert Dick Wilson, O. T. Allis, and Cornelius Van Til) and a portion of the student body. Together they founded Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1929.

Although not ousted with other conservative board members at Princeton, Macartney resigned, after some hesitation, from that board and accepted a position on the board of Machen's new seminary. He hoped, along with other supporters of Westminster, that the school would, as he put it, "pour a stream of evangelical

belief and teaching into the Presbyterian ministry."[27] By this means the conservatives could maintain Princeton's testimony to orthodoxy and lay the basis for the later recapture of the denomination. That reform and not separatism was Macartney's goal is indicated by the fact that in 1931 he joined the Presbyterian League of Faith, an organization dedicated to defending orthodox Christianity within the Presbyterian Church. It was in many ways the forerunner of contemporary evangelical reform movements in the mainline denominations, such as the Presbyterian Lay Committee in the PCUSA, although a portion of the League followed Machen after his expulsion.[28]

Macartney's stand alongside Machen came to an end with the next stage of the controversy. Machen was clearly moving toward a conflict and schism that would result in the formation of a confessionally pure Presbyterian church. Macartney was still thinking along the lines of Puritan reform from within. The break came over foreign missions. Machen launched an attack on liberalism among the missionaries of the PCUSA, criticism that conservatives applauded. The slowness of the denomination to respond led Machen to a more drastic step, the formation of a separate, orthodox mission board, the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM) in 1933. Such a step was arguably irregular according to strict Presbyterian practice, as even Machen's defenders note.[29] Macartney later noted, "If he had named it the Independent Board for Foreign Missions, or the Evangelical Board for Foreign Missions, or some similar name, the result might have been different. But when he called it the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions he gave his enemies an opening of which they at once availed themselves. The General Assembly declared this Board to be schismatic, and ordered all members of the Board who were Presbyterians to withdraw from it or stand trial. This, in my judgment, was a most unjust action."[30]

Longfield maintains that Macartney, unlike some of Machen's distressed supporters, did not think the IBPFM was unconstitutional, only unwise.[31] Macartney wrote to Machen concerning the matter in 1935 at the request, he said, of "our strong Conservative men." Noting the likelihood of discipline against members of the IBPFM, Macartney pointed out the potentially deleterious effect on the ordination of Westminster graduates into the PCUSA. "This is not what you had in mind when you led in the establishment of the Seminary and of the Independent Board," he told Machen, and then he asked, "Have you given thought to the possibility of a dissolution of the Independent Board and its reestablishment in a way that will place its members beyond the charge of rebellion and beyond the reach of prosecution? or do you feel that it would be a surrender of principle, and that your conscience could not approve?"[32]

Machen replied, "I am bound to say very plainly that if I voted for the reorganization of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions in some way that would enable its members to avoid the ecclesiastical displeasure which the enemies of the gospel of Christ are now venting upon them, I should regard

myself as having denied my Saviour and Lord." Of Westminster Seminary Machen said that the school must maintain an evangelical testimony against Modernism or "far better that it should close its doors at once!"[33] Macartney, however, could not bring himself to back Machen on the new mission board, which he regarded as a tactical error. In the jousting that followed, Westminster ousted Macartney and other trustees (along with one faculty member) who would not support the IBPFM.[34] Soon the Presbyterian hierarchy moved against those associated with the IBPFM as violators of church order. Some, under this pressure, resigned from the mission board. Others, including Machen, refused. As a result the denomination suspended Machen and six other ministers.

Macartney opposed the suspension of Machen. "His expulsion was, as I see it, one of the darkest blots on the history of the Presbyterian Church."[35] He offered to serve as counsel for Machen during his church trial, but Machen turned him down, in part because he expected to be convicted and saw such an action as a vindication of his principles. These events effectively split the conservative forces into separatists and "puritans" and diminished hopes for Macartney's strategy of recapturing the church.

Macartney and the Church

As the dust settled, the outcome of the Fundamentalist controversy among the Presbyterians presented Macartney with several options. First, he could follow J. Gresham Machen's course. Before his expulsion, Machen wrote to Macartney, "I have in my soul a longing for a real Presbyterian Church."[36] After founding what became known as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Machen declared that "we became members, at last, of a true Presbyterian church."[37] Macartney, who had professed an honest desire to see the Presbyterian Church disciplined by the Westminster Confession, could have joined a church with all the confessional rigor he could desire, a stance that the OPC has generally maintained since its inception. On the other hand, Macartney could have followed the path of Merril T. MacPherson, pastor of the Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and vice president of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. MacPherson, although suspended along with Machen, did not follow him into the OPC as most of the others did. Instead MacPherson and the bulk of his congregation formed an independent, dispensationalist Bible church, the Church of the Open Door of Philadelphia, and aligned with the nascent Independent Fundamental Churches of America.[38] In fact, MacPherson's course is probably that considered most typically "Fundamentalist"—a break from a mainline denomination in favor of relative independence with an interdenominational premillennial fellowship.

Macartney followed neither of these courses. Instead, he remained in the PCUSA. Why did he stay in? Lacking express testimony from Macartney himself, historians have offered different conjectures. Under the heading "The Eloquent

Preacher Who Shut Up," Gary North gives his somewhat brutal and unsupported view—that Macartney was simply unfaithful, charging him in part with surrendering in order to protect his pension.[39] More cautiously Longfield suggests that Macartney desired to maintain a position of influence on the church and culture.[40] This is not to say that Macartney necessarily sought personal glory but that he sought a means of communicating his message to the largest possible audience in order to preserve, as Longfield puts it, America's "Christian civilization."

Some evidence supports Longfield's analysis. Although Macartney found the leaders of the OPC "sincere and courageous," he described them as "only a handful" and called their movement "abortive."[41] Likewise Macartney showed his evident concern for the church's impact on society in his comments on the historic Southern Presbyterian tenet of the spirituality of the church, calling it an "extreme position ... that the field of the church is purely spiritual, that its sole business is to save souls, that ecclesiastical action with regard to Bible Societies, Temperance, Colonization, Slavery, or the Slave Trade, and all Church Boards, is unlawful."[42] It may indeed be that Macartney could not conceive of ministering from the margins.

Macartney, however, could not remain purely negative in his approach to the church. After he chose to stay in the PCUSA, he stated a rationale to explain his position. In 1939 *Christian Century* invited him to contribute to their series "How My Mind Has Changed."[43] Doctrinally, Macartney said, his mind had not changed at all, and he took the opportunity to state his opposition to Modernism, the growing ecumenical movement, and the social gospel. What did change was his view of the church and its ministry. Macartney had begun to despair of a denominational witness for the gospel, of a whole church confessionally united in its stance for the truth (which was more Machen's ideal). Instead, he argued that "for the true witness to the gospel and the Kingdom of God we must depend upon the particular local church, the individual minister and the individual Christian." Such churches, pastors, and laymen could "reach over the separating walls of denominational barriers" and find "voices of mutual encouragement" with like-minded churches, pastors, and laymen.[44]

The ramifications of this stance are worth noting. For one thing, Macartney probably underestimated the difficulty of pursuing such a course in a strongly connectional denomination. After reading the article with approval, a Methodist pastor in Memphis wrote to Macartney wondering how he could lead his local church as Macartney was suggesting:

> The New Testament churches were local congregations—and they were powerful. Connectionalism and ecclesiastical organization grew out of them. But in this day, when all our churches are geared into our denominational machinery, can a local church function powerfully? Can a local church believe its task is to redeem the city or community in which it is located and accept this responsibility with little regard for our other churches that might be in the same community? And what shall be the relation between a local church and its denomination? Can we support our denomination programs in a sort of passive way—without enthusiasm, reserving our major efforts and most enthusiasm for the work of the local church is doing [sic] in the community? You see, I do not know how to think my way out of this question.[45]

Macartney's reply has apparently not survived, but the fact that he saved the letter indicates he was sensitive to the quandary.

Historically, Macartney's stance also reflects what one might call a position of "independent Fundamentalism" as it existed in the 1930s and 1940s.[46] Although not an outright separatist like Machen or MacPherson, Macartney still reflects what Joel Carpenter has identified an attitude of "de facto separation."[47] Such Fundamentalists might, like Macartney, maintain official ties to an established mainline denomination, but their real circle of fellowship was with the network of conservative evangelicals who opposed Modernism. Fundamentalists uniformly opposed liberalism, but official church ties involving liberals remained a disputed question. A classic example is the contrast between two Baptist groups. The General Association of Regular Baptists (founded in 1932) forbade membership in the Northern Baptist Convention or similar body as a condition of membership. The Conservative Baptist Association (founded in 1947) permitted dual membership in the CBA and NBC. Yet both were regarded, in that era, as "Fundamentalist."

The "de facto" position collapsed in the 1950s with the controversy over Billy Graham. When Graham began to invite liberals as sponsors of and participants in his crusades, he displayed a positive embrace of liberals in clear distinction from the opposition (in whatever form) that had characterized Fundamentalists before that time. Graham polarized Fundamentalists by his methodology. In that atmosphere, breaking all ties of any kind with liberalism became a tenet of militant Fundamentalism. From the late 1950s, clear-cut separation from any official ties to liberalism characterized the Fundamentalist position.[48]

The Graham controversy took place during the twilight of Macartney's career, during his retirement, and it appears to have affected him little. He died in 1957, the year of Graham's New York Crusade that established his inclusive policy, so Macartney was never forced to take sides in this conflict. In fact, Macartney maintained ties with people on both sides of what would become the Fundamentalist–New Evangelical divide. He spoke at the Commencement of Bob Jones University in 1953, for example, while agreeing a couple of years later to serve as a contributing editor to the newly founded *Christianity Today* magazine.[49] He died, however, before taking up this duty. Interestingly, Harold Ockenga, the father of the New Evangelicalism, served as Macartney's assistant for a time in Pittsburgh and Macartney preached Ockenga's installation at Park Street Congregational Church, but perhaps one should not read too much into that circumstance.

Conclusion

Through the Presbyterian controversy, one can trace an evolution of sorts in Clarence Macartney's view of the church. First, in the Fosdick conflict, he sought to use confessional discipline to purge the church of false teaching, the means that had been used in the heresy trials of the late nineteenth century to eliminate false doctrine. When the signers of the Auburn Affirmation challenged this basis for discipline, he argued for the right of the Presbyterian Church to determine and to enforce its doctrinal standards. When stymied by the vote of the General Assembly to abandon that disciplinary power, Macartney was forced to seek to build by tactical means a new majority that would favor the orthodox position and would enforce discipline. The failure of these efforts, embodied in the break between Machen and Macartney, finally led Macartney to advocate ignoring official church ties in favor of fellowship with those truly of the body of Christ regardless of their denominational affiliation.

It is fair to say that Clarence Macartney was likely not conscious of how circumstances hammered his view of the church. He was far too busy standing for central doctrines such as the deity, resurrection, and virgin birth of Christ and the inerrancy of Scripture. His commitment to defend these ideas forced him into practical alteration of his ecclesiology. Macartney was far from a pragmatist, shaping his doctrines to the situation, but he could not balance all the conflicting pressures. To some teachings he held fast, but his doctrine of the church was not one of them. Eventually Macartney concluded that spiritual ties are most important and physical ties are indifferent in the true church. He saw the validity of spiritual fellowship among true Christians across church boundaries, seeing the Church Universal as superior to earthly churches. But he underestimated the spiritual impact of earthly associations and did not pursue the best course to ensure the continuance of the witness of his own congregation. For whatever reason, Clarence Macartney did not offer the same clear testimony concerning the nature of the church that he did for the fundamentals of the faith he defended.

Notes

[26] Ronald T. Clutter, "The Reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary Reconsidered," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (Fall 1986): 179-201.

[27] Macartney, *Making of a Minister*, 188.

[28] Rian gives a good, if unsympathetic, summary of the Presbyterian League of Faith, noting Macartney's role, 183-90. It is Rian who says that some members of the League left with Machen, forcing a reorganization (186), but he does not give any numbers.

[29] See, e.g., D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), 30-31. They admit that "the establishment of what was essentially a parachurch organization for the work of missions was an anomaly at best" in light of Machen's Presbyterian principles.

[30] Macartney, *Making of a Minister*, 188.

[31] Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 295 n. 14.

[32] Clarence Macartney to J. Gresham Machen, 26 June 1935. J. Gresham Machen Papers (hereafter "Machen Papers"), Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA.

[33] J. Gresham Machen to Clarence Macartney, 28 June 1935, Machen Papers.

[34] "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary," 7 January 1936. Machen Papers. This action followed a vain appeal by Macartney not to force Westminster board members to choose between the seminary and the IBPFM. Clarence Macartney to the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, 11 November 1935. Machen Papers.

[35] Macartney, *Making of a Minister*, 188-89.

[36] J. Gresham Machen to Clarence Macartney, 28 June 1935, Machen Papers.

[37] Quoted in D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994), 158. For a full discussion of Machen's view of the church, separatism, and confessional integrity, see Kevin Bauder, "Communion of the Saints: Antecedents of J. Gresham Machen's Separatism in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge and the Princeton Theologians" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001).

[38] MacPherson recounts his story in "Paving the Way for the Exodus," *Voice*, July-August 1998, 12-16. This article was reprinted from the April 1945 issue of *Voice*, the organ of the IFCA.

[39] North, *Crossed Fingers*, 749-52.

[40] See particularly Longfield, 116-25, 215-17.

[41] Macartney, *Making of Minister*, 189.

[42] Clarence Edward Macartney, "The Presbyterian Church U.S. (South) and Its Answer to the First Overture for Union" (typescript), 3, folder: "Southern Pres. Church Overture," Macartney Papers. The article was printed in *The Presbyterian* 16 Aug. 1945, 3ff.

[43] Clarence Edward Macartney, "Warm Hearts and Steady Faith," *Christian Century*, 8 March 1939, 315-19.

[44] Ibid., 317.

[45] Norman M. Lovein to Clarence Macartney, 4 October 1939, folder: "Christian Century Article," Macartney Papers. Lovein was pastor of St. Luke's Methodist Church in Memphis.

[46] I use this terminology and classification in *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998), 80-82.

[47] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53-56.

[48] One should note how the Graham controversy affected the two Baptist groups mentioned above. The GARBC, with its stance against inclusion, sided with the militant Fundamentalists against the Graham policy. The CBA, on the other hand, shattered. The majority sided with Graham's approach while the Fundamentalist minority split off into groups such as the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship and the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches.

[49] See J. Marcellus Kik to Clarence E. Macartney, 16 January 1956. Macartney Papers, folder: "Autobiography – Letters."

*The Doctrine of Rest in Hebrews 3–4 and Its Implications for Liberation Theology's Use of the Exodus**

by Russell E. Miller, Jr.

Liberation theology is an attempt to harmonize Christianity with various movements that seek to liberate people from economic, social, or political oppression. It originated in the Latin American Catholic Church in the 1960s but has since spread across cultural, ethnic, and denominational lines, attracting adherents as diverse as Marxists, Catholics, and gay activists. Despite the fact that it is almost fifty years old, many of its advocates and critics alike believe that the movement is yet in its formative stage.

Liberation theologians believe that they offer a more relevant message than traditional orthodox theology has offered. They believe that although traditional theology acknowledges that God is present in this world, it has failed to recognize that He identifies in a special way with the oppressed and that He acts in their behalf. Liberation theologians believe that traditional theology overemphasizes human depravity, blinding the Church to the dignity that the Bible ascribes to man as the pinnacle of God's creation. They accuse traditional theology of focusing on the individual nature of sin and ignoring its collective manifestations. Finally, they believe that traditional theology has neglected the implications that the gospel has for man's present, earthly existence. They insist that theologians must stop proclaiming only the other-worldly, eternal aspects of salvation and include the message of political, racial, and social liberation in the preaching of the gospel. Liberation theologians argue that as long as the Church refuses to acknowledge the shortcomings of traditional theology, its influence on society will continue to diminish and may eventually disappear altogether.

In their attempt to present their conclusions as biblical, liberation theologians frequently appeal to Israel's exodus from Egypt. The account includes many elements that appear to support liberation theology's message: an oppressed people, God's calling a deliverer, His accompanying judgment on the oppressors,

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