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Vigilantism
An American Menace

The Galilean Conquers
Greek and Christian Ethics

Reinhold Niebuhr's Ethics
An Exposition

Cross-Centered Preaching
The Testimony of History

Falstaff in Geneva
Calvinism and Humor

News and Views
Books Reviewed

Letters
Verse

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The Menace of Vigilantism

UNLESS all indications deceive, the menace of vigilantism is at our doors. Last year's "Black Legion" in Michigan and "Black Legs" in Kentucky may only have been the forerunners of a new epidemic of this peculiarly American disease. Vigilantism comes in pious garb. It speaks honeyed words of "defending the Constitution," "100% Americanism," "fighting subversive influences," and the like, but let America beware! Communism is not successfully fought by the weapon of fascism or vigilantism, any more than scarlet fever is successfully fought by smallpox. There may be ever so much in the alleged provocation of the weakening of the stand of the government for law and order, there can be no national salvation in plunging into the abyss of vigilantism. Vigilante organizations may be ever so well-intended and intentioned, they inevitably turn loose upon the country a secretly organized group that takes the law into its own hands, and if it does not begin with hooded night riding it almost inevitably winds up by so doing. Vigilantism, stripped of all its allegedly patriotic accoutrements is insurrection, rebellion, because it means the taking of the law into its own hands on the part of a certain organized group of citizens that no longer has faith in the efficiency of the government to maintain law and order. If America wants to introduce a dictatorship, there is no better way of doing it than by hugging vigilantism to its breast. The seriousness of this menace of vigilantism should not be underestimated. Our country is peculiarly susceptible to precisely that sort of organized terror. Primitive demagoguery seems to find a congenial soil among certain groups of our land, especially when the proper flamboyant battle cries are employed. The K.K.K. with its glorification of the "white, Protestant, Nordic" stock in our national life, its secret pass words, its night riding and terrorist activities must be viewed as a serious symptom of a disease that may temporarily have been checked but of which the American body politic is far from cured. We must not forget that this peculiar brand of terrorism associates itself quite readily with the frontier spirit, and—repeated contradictions notwithstanding—the frontier spirit is still very much with us. Besides, our country with its utilitarian attitude toward law and order has never exhibited a great degree of respect for government and the officers of the law as such. If government does not work one way, we are quite ready to try it another way. And last, but not least, lodgism, so deeply entrenched in American social life, will ever prove fruitful soil for the seed of vigilantism and terrorism. There was undoubtedly a deeper significance than he himself surmised in a sentence spoken by a member of Kentucky's "Black Legs" when he testified before the officers of the law about the doings of the terrorist organization against which he offered to turn State's evidence. Said he: "It was a sort of lodge affair."

C. B.

Two Birth Control Decisions

RECENTLY two decisions have been reached on the professional and legal attitude toward the dissemination of birth control information which may prove to have a far-reaching effect upon public opinion in the matter. The one is a court decision, the other a resolution of the American Medical Association. The former was the outcome of a case which was argued extensively for weeks before the Canadian court. It hinged on a charge against a social worker who had passed out contraceptive information to a certain French-Canadian woman in a town in the vicinity of the Canadian capital. The case for the prosecution was handled by the Crown Attorney, the case for the defense by the Secretary of the Social Service Council of Canada. No less than 45 witnesses were examined. Finally the case was reduced to the question, not whether contraceptives are desirable or not, but whether the social worker who had passed out contraceptive information to certain French-Canadian women in a town in the vicinity of the Canadian capital was a sort of terrorist organization against which he offered to turn State's evidence. Said he: "It was a sort of lodge affair."

C. B.
on the part chiefly of the Roman Catholic element in the association. Such an organization as the Catholic Physicians Guilds has been strenuously fighting the stand now taken by the A.M.A. It is now reported that plans are made under Roman Catholic auspices to organize a “Legion of Decency” to boycott doctors who approve contraceptive measures and drug stores which furnish contraceptives. Meanwhile the American birth rate is again at a record low set during the depression. From figures recently released by the U. S. Census Bureau it appears that the birth rate in 1936 shows a decrease of 2%. One may gain a clearer picture of the declining birth rate in our country by calling to mind that in 1862 Abraham Lincoln estimated that by the year 1930 our country would have a population of over 251 million. He based his estimate upon the rate of population increase in his day. The actual population of our country on July first of this year is below 130 million.

C. B.

German Church Heroes

In these days when we Americans treat our religion as a rocking-chair, radio-entertainment affair and the note of sacrifice seems all but faded out of the picture, it is refreshing to turn the gaze to Germany. God is raising up martyrs in the country of Luther. Persecution is the acid test of the Christian Church, and the German Protestant Church is now in the crucible of a real persecution. Leaders of the Confessional group have stood foursquare against the paganizing of the Church and the tyranny of the Hitler regime. Two outstanding leaders in this movement are Martin Niemöller and Friedrich Dibelius. Now, finally, Niemöller, the intrepid commander of German submarines in the World War, has been arrested and imprisoned by the German authorities. It is becoming clearer than ever that Karl Barth was right when he interpreted the whole issue before the German Protestant Church to be that of choosing between loyalty to the gospel of Christ and surrender to a pagan ideology in theology and church government. Barth is now no longer in Germany, having been forced to leave the country. Now the outstanding leader of the party of the opposition in the church has been clapped into prison. But if the persecutors had hoped that this would be the end of the opposition they were apparently mistaken. According to reliable reports Dr. Friedrich Dibelius has publicly announced to the very congregation to which the Rev. Dr. Niemöller ministered that the fight will go on. The fight must go on. It cannot be that in the country of Luther the gospel of free grace is publicly ridiculed and the church that preaches it crushed without an outcry of protest. God will not allow his church to be destroyed in Germany. There is a marvelous revival of faith and a deepening of spiritual conviction apparent in the midst of this persecution. Listen to these words of Niemöller, spoken from his pulpit before he went to prison. “But surely it is of the greatest importance whether the will of God has so much power over us that, regardless of the danger which may be involved, we let ourselves be posted as watchmen on the ruined walls, and, caring nothing for the hatred and enmity of men, bear witness to what we are commanded to proclaim in the name of Jesus, through whom God opens up our way to repentance and faith.” In order that this message may be made known by us, the Lord has promised that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church. In order that we may not keep this word of God silent, the pledge has been added that Jerusalem will be established and made a praise in the earth.” That is the spirit of the Church’s testimony at its best. May God continue to raise up defenders of the faith—nay rather, witnesses, martyrs for the faith. And let us not fail to remember in our intercessory prayers these struggling, persecuted children of God.

C. B.

Continuing the American Presbyterian Tradition

The Presbyterian Church of America bids fair to become increasingly the true continuation of the best in the American Presbyterian tradition. For those who go by surface phenomena there may be much that appears perplexing and disappointing in the recent vicissitudes of this new Presbyterian body. However, a deeper study combined with a long range view of the situation will, we are confident, produce an entirely different appraisal. The real issue that has just been settled—and let us hope settled once for all—at the recent General Assembly is whether a genuinely Reformed Theology can be combined with such a form of Premillennialism which either is blissfully ignorant of the menace of Dispensationalism or actually caters to it. When Dr. Machen led the opposition against Modernism in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., it was perfectly natural that all who were aware of this modernistic menace should back him up and, in a sense, this was the case. However, there is another danger threatening the Christian Church today, and it is only because it cannot begin to compare in seriousness with the humanizing thrust of Modernism that this danger is frequently underestimated in the historic Protestant Church. If Premillennialism means no more than a certain belief concerning the order of the events connected with the Second Coming of our Lord, there is no reason why it cannot, without serious consequences, be held by those who believe in the historic Reformed Faith. But if such Premillennialism is but the initial step on the road of what for lack of a more accurate term we may well call Dispensationalism, the matter comes to stand in an entirely different light. Dispensationalism puts in the center of the Christian view what does not belong in the center. It denies the essential unity and continuity in the history of revelation between the Old and the New Testament dispensations. It has a thoroughly distorted and un-Reformed view of the place and significance of God’s law in the life of the Christian. It assigns many passages of the New Testament to the Judaistic waste basket as far as their significance for the New Testament Church is concerned. It sets up a divorce in the New Testament dispensation between the Kingdom and the Church which is subservient of numerous Bible truths. And—to mention no more—it repudiates the recognition of a full-orbed Christian moral life with responsibilities in
Looking Forward

At the beginning of the third year of our magazine we pause to express our heartfelt appreciation of the reception which our journal is receiving from its subscribers. As we labor gratuitously and happily for a great cause, it is heartening to notice the response of our readers. There is not only a fine appreciation of the work we are doing but also a real determination to share with others what our magazine has to offer. Recently there came to our desk a letter proposing the resolution: "Let us all make it a point to get one subscriber for our good CALVIN FORUM, so that there may be a sound and worthwhile magazine for our younger generation." Another letter, coming from a pastor at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, reads: "One of my members came to me and had a couple of dollars to spend for a brother of his in the old country in the line of reading matter. Naturally I just recommended THE CALVIN FORUM, and so here you’ll find the necessary Two Dollars. Kindly enter this as a year's subscription to . . .” Again, the Rev. Mr. James Henery of Winchester, Kansas, recommended our magazine “highly” to a colleague and friend of his in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and, a few days after sending this party a sample copy, we received a message stating: “Your June issue of THE CALVIN FORUM came and I like it very much. I am enclosing $2.00 for a year’s subscription.” Signed, C. T. Carson, Sociology Department, Sterling College, Sterling, Kans. We mention these incidents to show the fine spirit of our subscribers. No doubt there are many others who would be glad to speak a word for our magazine to friends when the opportunity presents itself. Our paper is being read every month not only in the United States and Canada, but also in China, Japan, and Korea; in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales; in South Africa, the Belgian Congo, and Egypt; in the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Switzerland; in Iraq, Arabia, and Ethiopia; in India and Brazil; in the Dutch East Indies and on the island of Ceylon. The fellowship which we thus enjoy with brethren in the faith as we together wrestle with the problems of the day in the light of God’s blessed Word we prize highly. We crave your support and your prayers. The task we have undertaken will tax our best efforts, and that increasingly as the years go by. We propose to continue facing the issues and events of the new day. We propose to do so with unbounded faith in the Reformed, the Calvinistic interpretation of biblical truth, and with a deep sense of the crying need of living out Calvinism in every sphere of life as well as thinking it out and preaching it. Will you not introduce us to some of your friends who might be benefited from joining our fellowship? Thank you. C. B.

THE GALILEAN CONQUERS

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The Greek moral ideal was arrived at through a study of man in his conduct and constitution. With Socrates the knowledge of the virtues was arrived at through induction and definition. They were distilled from observation of his own experience and that of others. Through an analysis of practical conduct he aimed at arriving at ethical concepts universally applicable.

Pagan Virtues and Christian Love

Plato proceeded more psychologically. He discovered man to consist of body, spirit, and soul. The virtue pertaining to the body is temperance, that pertaining to the spirit is courage, that pertaining to the soul is wisdom. The harmonious working together of these three produces that smooth cooperation which is called justice. Temperance affects moderation in all things, Courage nerves men for every difficulty, Wisdom discerns and practices the truth, and Justice causes each one “to have and to do what belongs to him and is his own.” These virtues cover the whole range of moral endeavour and are obligatory on everyone inasmuch as they are rooted in the very nature of man.

In this list of virtues the Christian notices at once the absence of that supreme virtue in which Christ held the whole law to be summed up. Love as an affection of the heart was conspicuously absent from Greek morality, not only because theirs was a rationalistic ethics (the head, not the heart, being the primary ethical organ), but also because true love involves the self-denial to which the Greek self-assertion was antithetically opposed. Love, moreover, comes to best expression when it defines the relation between God and redeemed man. There is divinity in love. But the Greek knew no personal God. There was therefore no call upon the human soul to love him as such. And where there is no love to God, there love to man is weak.

It was Christianity that introduced Love into human relations by preaching a God and Saviour...
who supremely loved men and enabled them to love and be lovable. With Christianity the Golden Rule became determinative for human relationships, and the essence of that rule is Love. It is but further indicative of pagan lovelessness that Greek ethics arrived at only a negative construction of a similar rule. Justice there forced out Love, and the Christian synthesis was never achieved. The old Greek notion of justified requital, repudiated by the Christian Golden Rule, is voiced by Aristotle when he says that the man who hurts because he has first suffered and is merelyrequiting the same, is not thought to act unjustly, i.e. unethically.

The Doctrine of the Mean

Aristotle liked to consider virtues as “means” between two excesses. One’s estimate of the doctrine of means depends, I suppose, upon its pretensions. If it is meant to preach a general rule for the moral life it is perhaps a fairly trustworthy guide. It suggests the importance of giving each its due. Men are prone, in their devotion to one virtue, to extend it beyond its legitimate province and to trespass on another. Each virtue finds its perfection in its extension to the borders of the other, and no farther. And that restriction is inviolable. A rededication to this truth would rid us of the indifference and the fanaticism which alike dog man’s attempt to be virtuous. But if the doctrine purports to be a universal law finding its ground in the very constitution of man and God, it is unacceptable. It is based on a quantitative interpretation of human phenomena. To do or feel the right “amount,” the rightness of that amount to be determined by the particular situation—that is held to be virtue. Christianity does not so consider the matter. It insists on the qualitative character of virtue, on the attitude of the heart and the direction of the purpose. It has, for example, been unable to see an excess in the love of God.

Virtue and Knowledge

Pagan ethics has been much criticized for its identification of virtue with knowledge, interpreted to mean that if one only know what is the right thing to do in a given situation one will do it. There is doubtless room for the criticism. Such a reading of the Socratic dictum is consistent with the Greek notion of the essential competency of man, and with the exaltation of Wisdom or Knowledge as the supreme virtue. Yet the identification of knowledge and virtue, as popularly understood, is not prominent in Greek ethics. Aristotle openly repudiated the notion. Socrates himself liked to believe it but hesitated when he saw informed men acting wickedly. Plato adopted the theory but put new meaning into it. In the early dialogues Socrates is engaged in urging that theoretically all the virtues are knowledge and yet practically unteachable, while knowledge is teachable. The paradox confounds him. Plato suggests a solution by making the identification on a higher level. He distinguishes between two types of virtue and two types of knowledge. On the first level virtue and opinion may be identified; on the second, morality and knowledge. Although Plato doesn’t distinguish in nomenclature, he does distinguish in thought between these two. Virtue, as practical right action, may be taught, as Socrates desired to believe. But morality cannot be taught. Morality is to be identified with a knowledge (Gnosis) that is an Intuition, and which comes only to those enjoying the favor of the gods.

The defect lies therefore not in the identification of virtue and knowledge. Christianity makes a similar identification, or so St. John seems to say when he affirms, “This is life eternal that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send.” The fault lies rather in a failure to recognize that such knowledge is derived only through an immediate objective revelation of a personal God; that its object is not an Idea, but a Person; and that its apprehension comes only through a renewed mind.

Self-Realization — Greek and Christian

It was typically Greek to regard virtue as an excellence, an aptitude, or a skill. This was especially true of the Sophists and Socrates, and accounts for the reasonableness, from their point of view, of its being learned. Although the teachableness of virtue was repudiated by later thinkers, it was still common to regard it as a skill or art, proficiency in which depended on persistence and practice. With that notion Christianity has little sympathy. Not only is virtue no acquirement, it is infinite. It is never completely learned. The ethical task is eternal, and the moral ideal recedes as we advance. Its quest will never cease and will doubtless be the Christian’s chief employment in heaven, as it is on earth.

The non-divine, human character of virtue according to the Greek is illustrated by Aristotle’s application of his evolutionistic principle to the ethical life. Virtue for man lies in his achieving his end as man. Man is an organism. An organism, in distinction from inorganic matter, has its end internal to itself. That end is virtue or excellence. It lies as a resident potentiality within. The ethical task consists in actualizing it, in making explicit what is implicit. To be good, therefore, is simply to be or realize oneself. Christianity also advocates the realization of self, but achieves it through renunciation. What is nonsense to the Greek is to the Christian the profoundest truth. He knows it to be undisputably true that life is gained through losing it.

The Pagan-Greek Ethical Motive

One could have surmised that the man-centered ethics which the foregoing sought to delineate would also find its motive in man. The impulse and justification of virtue, as well as its principles and materials are internal to the ethical agent. Aristotle may be taken as a typical representative of the Greek point of view. He regards virtue or goodness as proceeding from a motive of honor. By this he does not mean that men should be compelled to good deeds by a consideration of the acclaim and admiration that will accrue to them. That would make virtue a means, and Aristotle everywhere insists that virtue is an end in itself and its own justification. The honor he speaks of is an internal motive. Having no awareness of sin and depravity, he places a high
estimate on the natural man, and regards the essential dignity of man a sufficient motivation for the virtuous life. It should be a point of honor with man not to do the wrong. A man ought always to be on good behavior, to remember and not deny his manhood.

It cannot fairly be said that the desire for Happiness was regarded, in the best Greek tradition, as a motive for virtue. The Epicureans were, of course, an exception. Pleasure was for them the end and purpose of life, and every alternative was chosen or rejected with reference to its ability to bring pleasure. This was not so with Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno. With pleasure, as differentiated from happiness, they would have nothing at all to do. This is especially true of the Stoics, and describes a persistent strain in Plato. In his earlier dialogues he seems to reject all pleasure as evil, and to advocate a sort of asceticism. Later he seems to have modified his opinions somewhat and to have admitted pleasure as a psychological motive for action, both good and bad. But never did it become an ethical motive. Neither did happiness—although both he and Aristotle maintain throughout the inevitability of happiness in the life of the good man. It is an invariable concomitant of the good life. It attends virtue like a shadow an object in the sun. Yet it is never advanced as an inducement to good conduct. Virtue is sufficient unto itself. It is its own reward. It has its own blessedness. It needs nothing to commend it, and ought never to be regarded as instrumental. Happiness is simply an accompaniment, not an end. It indicates that the World Reason sanctions virtue, that the universe is hospitable to goodness.

Neither were the threats and promises of an after life very determinative for the ethical life. Socrates and Plato stood alone in their belief in a future retribution, and Plato's doctrine of reincarnation and probation took the teeth out of the coming judgment. Aristotle, consistent with his doctrine that the human soul or spirit is an abstraction non-existent without the body, denied an intelligible immortality. What lives on is taken up into the World Intelligence, and individual consciousness is lost. All personal awareness must cease with death. Individual immortality was, of course, also denied by both the Stoics and the Epicureans, inasmuch as they were materialistic in their metaphysics, in so far as they had a metaphysics at all.

Sanctions and motives for the good life were found below. Aristotle found them in the native dignity of man, resident especially in reason. Epicurus likewise found them in man although he differed from Aristotle in considering man's capacity for enjoyment of his distinguishing trait. Zeno was browbeaten into virtue by the imperious sway of inexorable law in his inward parts. Plato was constrained by a transcendent Ideal Good, but it never got far beyond a mental construction or logical abstraction.

**The Christian Ethical Motive**

Here again the Christian distinguishes himself from the Pagan. For Plato's compelling Ideal he substitutes a Father's constraining love; if Aristotle worships virtue, he worships Him than whom no other is good; if Epicurus would take the cash and let the credit go, he would heed the rumble of the distant drum—but unafraid; for Zeno's stern duty he substitutes a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light. Here, as elsewhere, he interprets the ethical life in terms of the divine. He finds the motive for virtue not in himself, but in God. Not what he is but what God has made him challenges him to goodness. Not what he may become through the development of his potentialities, but what he already is forensically impels him forward. He is not compelled by law, but propelled by gratitude.

That the Greek could, of course, not feel. Only he that is forgiven much loves much. Of gratitude as a mode of love they had no conception. Never having been lost, they were never saved. They were the Whole, for whom the physician did not come. They remain on and of the earth. The Christian strides two worlds like a colossus. He operates with a love that is divine and made in heaven. Ethics becomes with him indissolubly united with religion. He is thus endowed with a power greater than that of man and with an animus that o'erleaps all obstacles. For a temporary happiness Christianity substitutes eternal felicity. For prospective extinction it proffers life, and that more abundantly.

**The Ethical Arena**

It may be set down as on the whole true that the Greek regarded the state and society as indispensable to the ethical life. The individual was generally regarded as by nature social and political. Yet the Sophists at the beginning of the ethical period were pronounced individualists, opposing *Phusis* to *Nomos* and advocating individual expression without respect to the institutions and customs of society. The same individualism recurred in the Hellenistic period, after the disruption of the Greek state. Confidence in the city-state as ethically helpful vanished and Stoic Cosmopolitanism ensued, which, rightly considered, is individualism in disguise. For the cosmopolitan there is no custom, institution, or society with a prior claim. All stand before the bar of the individual judgment. The cosmopolitan to no less a degree than the confessed individualist tears himself free from his peculiar *Mores* and determines himself what his ethical context will be.

With both schools Christianity is in disagreement. Recognizing the worth of the individual it asserts as well the necessity as the ethical helpfulness of social connections. Morality is not to be achieved apart from, but in and through fidelity to, one's background. In so far as a man cuts himself loose from his ethos he is held to cut himself loose from himself. Here Conscience begins to operate, which, if it is the voice of God, is that voice mediated through the background, experience, and social context of the individual. The mere individual is an ethical abstraction, morality is in its essence social, there is in every choice a reference to a larger whole, goodness is achieved not in violation of conscience but in conformity to it, and conscience is God and Society speaking to the individual.

Yet individualism is not typical of Greek morality. Both Aristotle and Plato highly exalted the state. Plato insisted that the individual needs the state to
be fully virtuous. The state was regarded as an indispensable ethical instrument. Combined with this was the notion that the state itself should be interpreted ethically, and that institutions are not necessary evils. With this, I think, Christianity is in agreement. For the Christian, too, state and society and institutions are "goods." They are established by God. This is most vividly illustrated in the Christian conception of the Church, which is regarded not as a mere expedient, but as a God-ordained instrument for good. And Christianity holds up the Kingdom of God as the highest and most ultimate expression of the social life, in which goodness will be most perfectly achieved.

**The Individual and the State**

It was therefore not in his regard for the state but in his disregard for the individual that the classic Greek errored. The individual tended to lose his identity in the whole. Ethics was reduced to politics. Aristotle, regarding activity in the state as part of man's essential function, thought of the state as the "form" and the individual as the "matter." The destiny of the individual was thus of little importance; the state was the thing. The same conception is illustrated in Plato's Republic. Individuals are classified not on the personal plane but on the political. One is not first of all a man, but a laborer, a soldier, or a ruler. The consequences of this setup were readily evident in practical ethics. The Greek saw nothing incongruous in slavery. What mattered the individual as long as the work of the state went on? What mattered the death of warriors as long as the city-state was maintained? What mattered the rulers' neglect of home and family as long as they were thus better qualified to govern the state?

To this the Christian replied that the state is the instrument of the individual and not *vice versa*. Christianity reasserted the claims of personality. Salvation was held to be not social but individual. So likewise, Sin and Guilt and Judgment. It was in Christianity therefore that morality became the great leveller. Greek ethics had been essentially aristocratic. Aristotle had acclaimed the "high-minded" man. Distinctions had been drawn between ethical and dianoetic virtues—the former for the common man, the latter for the philosopher. Only the latter were really good. The common man was therefore not damnable—simply pitiable. He was merely without philosophical acquirements through a constitutional lack. His pretensions to goodness were commendable, but its attainment quite impossible.

**God's Unmerited Grace**

This conceit Christianity blasted. It made all men equal—Jew, Greek, or Barbarian. Goodness was possible to all because it was made to depend not on natural endowments but on the unmerited grace of God. Worth ceased to be determined solely by individual achievement. It came to be grounded in supernatural justification irresistibly effected. Thus all men became candidates for the realization of the ideal. Day-laborers and Kings would sit together in Abraham's bosom.

Christianity is now two thousand years old. Twenty-five years after its birth it had leavened the whole Mediterranean basin; two hundred and fifty years later it encompassed the Empire. Ever since it has given new life to thousands. Greek ethics in its florescence appealed only to the select few, and these it left without salvation. With the fall of Athens its structure collapsed. Some of its elements live on, but only as foreign and irreconcilable injections in the Christian scheme. Resuscitated in Humanism, it exhibits the same reformatory impotence of its former existence. Lacking religious motivation and spiritual dynamic it fails to make men good. That men must be *made* good is the Christian teaching; that it makes men good is its power. Here again the Galilean conquerors.

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**MOSES, MOSES, MOSES**

Those Moses-saturated Jews
Who loaded down our Lord with grief!
Oh, how our Jesus-passion spews
Upon their unbelief.
On changeless creed Gibraltar-set
The Moses-way to serve and live,
They killed our loving Lord;
And yet . . . .

Were they not quite conservative?

— ALBERT PIERSMA.

---

**STRANGE SONG**

I will sing of strange things done by God,
Of harsh buffetings as blessings in disguise;
It was good for me to have known tears—
In the path of suffering we shall rise
To a newer concept of our Lord,
To a truer value of His love,
That endured to death upon the Cross—
Learning of the Christ we are made wise.

I will sing of strange transcendant joy
For each lesson learned at Jesus' feet;
Though He led me by a girded way,
He has turned each bitter into sweet
As I tasted of the living Bread,
As I from His fountain had supply,
I will gladlv go on by His side—
Only there in Him is life complete.

Yes, my song has strange and mystic notes—
Only in a spiritual key
Shall the pianissimos be heard
And the great crescendoes jubilee
In a shout of triumph, with this strain:
Nothing I, and everything my Lord!
Losing all and finding life increased—
This is its mysterious melody.

—JOAN GEISEL GARDNER.
THE ETHICS OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR
E. F. J. Van Halsema, Th.M.
Minister North Side Christian Reformed Church, Passaic, New Jersey

BLUE-EYED, erect, slender, in the prime of life, of youthful appearance, Reinhold Niebuhr, professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary of New York City, is a friend of youth. Of penetrating vision and keen analysis, thoroughly at home in the modern world, he occupies a position of leadership, his counsels are widely sought, and his influence on the younger generation is said to be very great. Numerous articles from his pen, not to be confused with those of H. Richard Niebuhr, his brother, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School, have appeared in leading periodicals. He is the author of five books. Does Civilization Need Religion? appeared in 1927, to be followed at short intervals by Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic (1930), Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932), Reflections on the End of an Era (1934), and An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (1935). Critics have commented that his works are "courageous, often profound, and in the main free from illusion," giving "sound criticism both clarifying and exciting, the product of a candid mind and vigorous forthright thinking." Of his generation he has been called "the most sought after and most influential speaker to students." It would seem to be well worth our while to familiarize ourselves with his ideas.

Niebuhr's Background

Reinhold Niebuhr is spiritually related to Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch, earlier advocates of social Christianity in America. A survey of the religious history in our country during the last forty years, as in Gaius Glenn Atkins' Religion in Our Times, shows how at the turn of the nineteenth century a change was taking place. The spirit of Jonathan Edwards, who brought the liberty-loving pioneers in the colonies face to face with God; of Whitefield who was "ranging and hunting in the American woods after poor sinners"; of Moody whose sermons stirred two continents—the spirit of these men, with its methods of revivalism and its emphasis on an "ego-centric" and "excessively individualistic" life, was giving way to the spirit of social Christianity. William James' psychology of religion with a conversion "entirely Human-natural" instead of "altogether supernatural"; the advance of evolution and higher criticism; the rise of industrialism with its growing labor class and its centralization of wealth, shifted the emphasis from the individual to the group. The church "whose supreme concern had been to seek and save the lost, comfort the troubled, answer from the Bible the questions which the mystery of life in Carlyle's star-domed universe raised, keep alive a faith in a God who ordered the lives of the devout with justice, love, and wisdom, and assure the dying Christian of a blessed immortality," began to readjust itself. The influence of John Ruskin, who had seen English rivers polluted by industrial waste and who said that treasures "might be as heavy with human tears as ill-starred harvests with untimely rain," made itself felt in this country.

The social conscience awoke and Gladden and Rauschenbusch became the foremost exponents of social Christianity, the former rejecting the laissez-faire philosophy of the orthodox political-economist, the latter seeking to recast theology so as to furnish a support for a social gospel. Rauschenbusch "recalled prayer from its easy confession of unitemized sins, its self-centeredness... to a travail of the spirit for the sorrow and weariness of our common humanity. He suggested new kinds of sins for which forgiveness should be sought, sins which had ever masqueraded as virtues." The influence of these men was seen in the "social creed of the churches" adopted in 1908 by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, a creed which emphasized equal rights, good labor conditions, safety devices, arbitration, and the abolition of poverty. The curricula of theological seminaries caught the spirit of the times. Social statistics took the place of Hebrew tenses; social ethics, very rare in the nineties, began to claim a prominent place on theological schedules; hymns preferred "we" to "I" and sang of "crowded ways of life, where sound the cries of race and clan." Legislation corrected human wrongs and protected human rights. Though the war brought disillusionment and a temporary reaction, the post-war period applied itself with renewed fervor to "the social ideal of human well-being."

In the vanguard of this social movement stands Union Seminary which "seems almost to specialize in social ethics." Among its men of learning Reinhold Niebuhr occupies a prominent and influential place. Delivering the Rauschenbusch Memorial lectures in 1934, Niebuhr called Walter Rauschenbusch "not only the real founder of social Christianity in this country but also its most brilliant and generally satisfying exponent to the present day." One trying to account for Niebuhr's place in the American theological world should remember that Rochester is not far distant from New York.

Niebuhr the Critic

A cursory glance at Niebuhr's works will impress one with the fact that this New York Professor is extremely critical of the efforts of the church to ameliorate conditions in human society. He minces no words to give expression to his convictions. The liberal as well as the orthodox church is the object of his criticism.

Niebuhr cannot share the optimism which characterizes liberal Christianity. Liberal Christianity, interpreting history in the light of evolutionary progress, believes that man, endowed with reason, will gradually solve social conflicts. Man has but to
know better and he will do better. An effective pedagogy will correct the social ills. The church should continue to preach a more equitable distribution of income, more international accord and the dreams of universal peace, of harmony between classes, of international reciprocity will come true. This superficial optimism of the modern pulpit Niebuhr cannot accept.

Liberal christianity, according to Niebuhr, is blind to the facts of human existence. It has neither height nor depth. Its ideal is not high enough. Its conception of sin is not deep enough. Liberal culture is “defective in both religious profundity and political sagacity.” When it avers that reason can control impulse, that it can “adjust life to life and interest to interest,” that it is able to “conquer and restrain the anarchic impulses which express themselves in man-as-nature,” the power of reason is overestimated. Egoistic impulses are not so readily conquered. They constitute a formidable foe. Liberal christianity does not understand “the powers and persistence of irrational egoism in human behavior, particularly in collective behavior.” It fails to see “with what stubborn inertia life-as-impulse defies the obvious imperatives of life-as-spirit.” The wise men of our age do not understand the strong men. “They do not know to what degree the impulses of life are able to defy the canons of reason and the dictates of conscience.” If the maldistribution of wealth is the cause of many of our troubles “capitalists should be intelligent enough to avert disaster.” This, however, is an uncritical optimism which assumes that men will remove the wrongs as soon as they see them. Human nature is such that reason, instead of conquering anarchic impulses, may even become the servant of impulse by contriving instruments which will protect vested egoistic interests.

Considering this, there is no basis for the utopian dreams of liberal christianity. In spite of all mechanical progress there is still oppression. “No feudal squire ever beat down his rebellious serfs more ruthlessly than the industrial oligarch does when he finds his reign imperiled by the men who run his machines without respect for or loyalty to his power.” The leopard does not lose his spots. Our commercial age is at heart selfish though it may boast that it desires to serve others. Its imperial impulse, instead of having disappeared, merely asserts itself in another way. When the banker and industrialist send their families to Palm Beach while they pay their working men starvation wages, reason has evidently not succeeded in conquering their lust for power.

Liberal culture is building its hope on an illusion because it has been “completely oblivious to the anarchic, demonic, primeval in man’s collective behavior.” History proves this. The age of liberalism and optimism was ushered to its close by a world war which excelled in “the effectiveness of its lethal instruments, the universality of its destruction and the super-plausibility of its various moral justifications.” Niebuhr published his Reflections on the End of an Era, in 1934, to show that the liberal culture of modernity was “quite unable to give guidance and direction to a confused generation.”

Seeing the “predatory self-interests,” the “stubborn inertia and blindness,” the “irrational egoism” in human behavior, especially in man’s collective behavior; being convinced that men “will pursue their own interests even if these are proved to be in conflict with a more general interest”; convinced that the true picture of men is seen in the parable of the jungle, Niebuhr prefers the moral pessimism of the rigorous moral idealists of the christian tradition to the easy optimism of the modern church whether it preaches the goodness of man, as Rousseau; the harmlessness of man, as Adam Smith; or the prudent selfishness of man, as John Stuart Mill.

One should not conclude, however, that Niebuhr feels at home in the orthodox church. The liberal church may have lost the distinctiveness of the christian message because it “hid its light under the bushel of the culture of modernity,” the orthodox church is as little able to cope with the modern situation because it has nothing to offer to a confused world, but “a petrified dogmatism and irrelevant puritanical precepts.”

Both Lutheranism and Calvinism are placed under Niebuhr’s loupe. Lutheranism is called a Weltfeind­lich, quietistic religion, which emphasized “the King­dom within” and paid little attention to the social situation. Calvinism is Weltfreundlich. It influenced politics and economics, made “a valuable contribu­tion to social progress” and became “the spiritual foundation upon which the whole structure of modern civilization has been built.” It knew how to create self-respect but lacked “the imagination to inculcate a religious respect for others.” “The love and reverence for personality which is the basis of the ethics of Jesus,” Niebuhr claims to be totally lacking in Calvinism.

Niebuhr the Physician

Human society is afflicted with many ills. As Niebuhr, a specialist in social therapeutics, offers a diagnosis, prescribes a remedy, and gives expression to his expectations, we shall gain first hand information concerning the ethical ideas of Niebuhr the physician.

The physician is shaking his head.

There is something radically wrong with his patient.

Society does not function as it should. Niebuhr entertains no hope for our present social order. It must die of senility and sin. The wages of sin is death. Our social system cannot mend the order of its ways. It fears war and yet it is powerless to avert it. It suffers from the maldistribution of wealth and yet it cannot change it. “The enterprises of collective man, his social orders, his empires and civilizations must die a sanguinary death.” Fascism cannot endure. The modern industrial and commercial oligarch cannot endure. The businessman’s regime came into power by the productivity of the machine, it will decline because of the overproduction of the machine. The process of decay will be hastened by the mechanical character of our civilization. Mere mechanisms of production and communication are unable to hold society together. The ultimate crisis, however, may not arrive until the end of the century.
Niebuhr attributes the ills of society to the sin of man. Though man is endowed with reason and is free to choose the best, he chooses what he thinks is best. He is always trying to make himself God. That is his sin and guilt. Sin, according to Niebuhr, is rebellion against God. Man is morally responsible. His acts are not simply the inevitable consequences of antecedent impulses but the results of his choice. The author of Genesis makes this very clear in the story of the Fall. This story with its interpretation of the facts of human nature is a profound contribution to moral and religious history. History proves its correctness. Man's rebellion against God is a tragic reality. Moderns steeped in evolutionary optimism may consider this view "morbidly pessimistic" and "unpalatable," the great mistake of liberal christianity is that it does not do justice to the tragic fact of sin.

This, then, is the diagnosis. Society is desperately ill. The cancer of sin is gnawing at its vital organs. Impulse struggles against reason. Reason imagines itself God.

The Remedy Prescribed

We now face the question what remedy Niebuhr proposes, what kind of ethic he advocates. He prescribes an ethic which aims at doing justice to the pessimism of reality and the optimism of the ideal. He finds his solution in Christian Theism with "its conception of a transcendent and immanent God, a conception which can never be fully rationalized but which does justice both to the moral necessities of human life and to the actual facts of human experience."

First, Niebuhr demands that the Christian ethic be independent. It must rest in the transcendent God. Ethical fruitfulness is determined by the quality of tension between the historical and the transcendent. It was the weakness of orthodox christianity to identify the will of God with canonical moral codes and of liberal christianity to invest the relative moral standards of a commercial age with sanctity. In both cases religion failed because the ideals were identified with historical situations. Although Marxian catastrophism with its clear conception of evil in human life is better, in Niebuhr's opinion, than the superficial view of liberal christianity, it, too, must of necessity fail, because it is naturalistic and enter­tains utopian fantasies. Any ethic which leans on natural idealism, whether liberal or radical, is limited by the corruptions of its subjects. The Christian ethic rests in the transcendent God Who is described in the Old Testament as Creator and Redeemer. Evil is not identified with matter and life. This world is a world of coherence and purpose because all facts are related to a central source. An ethic which rests in God will not be identified with the historical process. Only an independent ethic is capable of dealing adequately with the moral and social problems of the age. It does justice to mundane reality and the transcendent ideal.

Second, the ideal ethic is the ethic of love. We must love because God commands us to love. Love transcends life and is immanent in life. It sets itself against the egoism of man. Jesus' ethic is neither ascetic nor prudential, it is absolute. It does not take into consideration circumstances, it makes no con­cessions. It sets itself against man's self-regarding impulses. Though the modern pulpit has preached the love ethic, it has not suggested "the impossibility of these ethical demands for the natural man." Prophetic religion demands a love which transcends actual conditions, a love which conforms to the will of God. Such a love is an impossible possibility. The Kingdom of God is coming but is never here. True, Christian ethics tries to bring about tentative har­monies in a given situation, but its ideal is never reached. The peace of the world is never the ultimate peace of God.

The remedy prescribed by Niebuhr is a return to the faith of prophetic religion, which does justice to the vertical as well as to the horizontal aspects of human life. Only the love ethic of Jesus meets these requirements.

The Physician's Expectations

Niebuhr expects the ethic of prophetic religion to be effective, at least in a measure. He states that the truth of prophetic religion "must survive the temp­ests of a dying civilization as an ark surviving the flood. At some time or other the waters of the flood will recede and the ark will land." Although Nie­buhr is of the opinion that our present social order will die since there is little hope that our contem­porary life will allow itself to be influenced by the ethic of Jesus; although the ideal will be realized in the coming reign of the proletariat as little as it was in the waning day of the aristocrat and merchant; although there is "no hope of salvation" for collective man, prophetic religion must apply its ethic in the hope of approximating the ideal as far as possible in the actual situations of history. Impulses must be checked. Reason must be disciplined. Men are in need of the knowledge of the true God. Only such a knowledge will save them "from the impiety of making themselves God and the cruelty of seeing their fellow men as devils." Only thus can our sick civilization ever hope to achieve "any measure of health."

Should one object that the ethical ideal is irrelevant to actual life in view of the fact that it can never be attained, Niebuhr insists that as an impossible ideal it is relevant. In this connection he takes the orthodox church to task for its "enervating pessimism" and criticizes the liberal church for its "sentimental illusions."

The orthodox church was actuated more by the principle of order than by the ideal of love. It was complacent towards injustice. Guided by the jus gentium, it did the best it could in an imperfect world in which coercion, slavery and conflict simply could not be avoided, but it made no attempt to approach the ideal. It was satisfied with the status quo and justified its attitude by an appeal to "creation ordinances," neglecting to subject the loyalties of family, race and nation to the criticism of the ideal. Niebuhr states that no passage has had such a fateful influence on political thought as Romans 13:1, which was used to acquiesce in injustice and preserve the status quo.
Liberalism Too Optimistic

Although it was the great merit of the Age of Reason to revolt against the identification of life and love, the liberal church with its emphasis on reason has been too optimistic in its expectations. It proceeded on the assumption that the people had but to be taught to love in order to love. Economic and political techniques could be dispensed with. By this attitude liberalism revealed that it had more moral idealism than religious realism. To correct bodily ills more is necessary than good will. To rectify the ills of society more is needed than good intentions. Social mechanisms enforced with moral power cannot be dispensed with. For that reason Niebuhr advocates a radical political theory, realistic enough to "bring the most effective social check upon conflicting egoistic impulses in society" and idealistic enough not to regard "a given political and social order as divinely ordained." In regard to property he holds that we are in need of a change and that Marx has not been successfully challenged. If one should object that violence may be resorted to, Niebuhr answers that one cannot be absolute ethic by disavowing violence. When truth is at stake one may have to do what the surgeon does when health is endangered: cut deeply. Prophets may criticize statesmen for this, but statesmen know the world they are living in.

Against the pessimism of orthodox Christianity, against the optimism of liberal Christianity, of naturalism and radicalism, Niebuhr maintains the relevance of the impossible ethical ideal. Perfection may not be realizable in history but a dynamic love ethic which demands conformity to the will of God will prevent the sanctification of class interests. Prophetic religion cannot condone tyranny or any form of injustice and inequality. It demands a change when love requires it.

If you ask what the love ethic can do for the individual, Niebuhr answers that love, and love only, can make him good. What reason cannot do, love can. Love comes to the heart from God as the fruit of grace and faith.

The choicest fruit of Christian ethics is the spirit of forgiveness. Only when one has learned to depend on "the realm of transcendence" is one able to forgive. Though forgiveness, which excels tolerance, remains an impossible ideal, it can mitigate the struggles of life. Theism, not humanism, safeguards the rights and happiness of man.

[This exposition of Reinhold Niebuhr's ethics will be followed by a criticism in the next issue.—Editor.]

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

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When a protestant approaches the study of the mediaeval and modern catholic churches he has to guard against the assumption that because he differs with these churches on many things therefore they are erroneous in all matters. Even Calvin declared that in some things the Romanists are our allies. Forsythe assures us that the mediaeval church was not only the church of the papacy, but also the church of the mass; and that just because enshrined amid serious errors of the mass there was a preaching of the centrality of the Cross that church was reformable. "But a church that renounced universally its atoning redemption would not be reformable. It would be extinct."

The Cross in the Catholic Churches

The Church of the Middle Ages had its Anselm whose Cur Deus Homo? was pronounced by Denney "the greatest and truest book on the Atonehment that has ever been written." Bernard of Clairvaux, sometimes designated the oracle of Western Europe, writes: "three principal things I perceive in this work of our salvation: the pattern of humility in which God emptied Himself; the measure of love, which He stretched even unto death, and that the death of the cross; the mystery of redemption, in which He underwent the death which He bore. The two former of these without the last are like a picture on the void." In the later middle ages John Gerson of Paris declares "my hope is the cross of Christ." The mediaeval church taught dying men that their hope was to place the death of Christ between themselves and their sins, between themselves and the wrath of God, between themselves and the punishment they deserved. And that the Roman Catholic Church, the Church which glories most in the middle ages, still has scholars who cling to the Cross is shown in these weighty words of Karl Adam: "Christianity is nothing else than the gospel of our redemption by the Cross of Christ, by the death of Jesus for our salvation, by Christ's expiatory blood." Similarly, Kattenbusch insists that the Eucharist is the act of foundation of Christ's Church, the meal at which the New Covenant was founded, and that this is so sub specie mortis Christi.

If one turns rather to the Orthodox Church which is rising from the ashes of Russian persecution, Arseniev writes: "His death is and remains fundamental and decisive: 'ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come.' 'This is My Body which is given for you,' 'this is My Blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many—that is decisive for the Eastern Church. His death, His sacrifice on the cross, is contacted as a heart-shaking, ever-present, ever-living reality. The whole Christian philosophy of salvation is concentrated here as in a focus... We are lifted up into the presence of His eternal Sacrifice, Rev. v. 5, 6, 11-12. This glorified Lord, this Lord Jesus Christ who has fully measured the cost of suffering, in His human flesh and blood, in His human soul, down to
the very deepest depths, now offers it to the Father
in the eternal Present." As a matter of fact the worship of every liturgical branch of the Christian family clusters close about the Lamb for sinners slain. Whether one studies the Greek Eucharist, the Roman Mass, the Episcopal litany, or the Lutheran sacrament of the altar he hears the refrain:

Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of
the world, have mercy upon us.

**Calvary's Cross in Protestantism**

That this thought is not less precious to the heart of the Reformed may be conveniently seen in the words of John Knox in the Scots' Confession, in the recent writings of President J. O. Buswell, Jr., and does have for the Protestant Reformation even more central place and import than in the Roman or Orthodox Catholic Churches. The implication of justification by faith alone is that the whole and sufficient work for our forgiveness and justification was completed on the Cross. Faith alone is sufficient only because Christ's atoning work for us is sufficient. In his active and passive work which culminated on Calvary's Cross, Christ became the end of the law for the justification of the believer. When He died crying "it is finished" the work of objective soteriology was accomplished. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised for our justification; so that everyone who trusts in the satisfaction and merit of that death is forgiven and accepted as righteous. Hence, Luther insisted that present Christian theology is a theology of the cross, rather than a theology of glory; and that there is enough of the revelation of God in the Cross of Christ to last a man all his days. "Therefore this text—He bore our sins—must be understood particularly thoroughly, as the foundation upon which stands the whole of the New Testament or the Gospel, as that which alone distinguishes us and our religion from all other religions. For Christians alone believe this text. Therefore, whosoever believes this article of faith is secure against all errors, and the Holy Ghost is necessarily for him."

In accord with these words of the father of the Reformation, Emil Brunner writes, "the whole struggle of the Reformation for the sola fide, the soli deo gloria, was simply the struggle for the right interpretation of the Cross. He who understands the Cross aright...understands the Bible, understands Jesus Christ." Everything in the Scriptures spirit crucem. "All Christ says and does should ultimately be understood sub specie crucis if it is to be understood at all—or it will not be understood...The Cross is the total expression of the life of Jesus." "Justification means this miracle: that Christ takes our place and we take His. Here the objective vicarious offering has become a process of exchange...Justification cannot be separated from the objective atonement, from the expiatory sacrifice of the Mediator."

Likewise a British scholar, who personally differs widely from the Reformation, rightly recognizes that Luther presented the death of Christ as the sole and adequate penalty for human sins and that "the Reformers agree in accepting the penal view of the Cross as being the sole and sufficient cause of reconciliation between God and man." Sin deserves punishment, but all punishment has been transferred to Christ. Hence man is entirely free from its penalty apart from priestly absolution or good works if he will only receive the atonement. Or, to return to Luther, Christ assumed our guilt in order to confer His blessing upon us.

**Since the Reformation**

From the Reformation onward the Cross has been the heart of evangelical preaching, and it is a misnomer to call any other preaching evangelical. The Protestant faith began in Scotland with Patrick Hamilton's declaration, "Christ is the Saviour of the world. Christ is our Saviour. Christ died for us. Christ bare our sins upon his back. Christ bought us with His blood. Christ washed us with His blood...Christ was the price that was given for us and for our sins." Knox adds that "He was wounded and plagued for our transgressions; He being the clean and innocent Lamb of God, was damned in the presence of an earthly judge, that we might be absolved before the tribunal of God." The saintly McCheyne insisted "Live within sight of Calvary and you will live within sight of glory." Indeed, whenever it has been apparent that

"There's nae gospel noo, lassie,
There's nae covenant blood,
There's nae Lamb o' God.

There's nae Chalmers noo, lassie,
There's nae guilt McCheyne,
And the dear, dear Cross is gane.

Fold dinn a want the Cross, Lassie,
They've cutten doon the tree,
And nanebody believes in't,
But rules like you and me"—

when this seems to be the situation in a Presbyterian household of faith, history shows that some who are willing to be fools for Christ's sake will "come out" and established a "re-formed" fellowship for the preaching of "the foolishness" of the Cross.

The Moravian revival with its magnificent missionary emphasis began with the contemplation of the thorn-crowned Head, and never forsook the wounds of Christ. John Wesley's dying cry was "There is no way into the holiest, but by the blood of Jesus." Toplady and the Wesleyans differ in some doctrines; but he and Charles Wesley vie with one another in seeing which can make the Cross more central in their great hymns, Rock of Ages and Jesus, Lover of my Soul.

If you will allow a word from my own communion, Dabney, Thornwell, Plumer, Palmer, Strickler, Baker have plowed the cross deep into our hearts and lives. The position of the last named is well seen in his letters to his son, a young minister:

"My son, whilst others make a parade of learning, and boast of their knowledge of German literature, be it your praise that in scriptural language, and
with simplicity and power, you preach Christ and Him crucified, as the world's last and only hope."

"Remember, my son, this saying of your father, that the sermon that does not distinctly present Christ in the beauty and glory of his mediatorial character, is no better than a cloud without water, a casket without a jewel, a shadow without the substance or the body without the soul. You ask why my preaching is so much blessed. If it will throw any light upon the subject, I will tell you that my plan is incessantly to preach Christ and Him crucified."

That this is still the preaching of many of our pulpits may be seen, for example, in the case of Brother Bryan of Birmingham in the home church, and of Evangelist George Hudson in China.

**Twentieth Century Witnesses**

Nor should it be forgotten that the twentieth century hath had and doth have able and scholarly defenders of the central import of the Cross of our blessed Lord, James Denney, P. T. Forsythe, Alexander Whyte, Daniel Lamont, Abraham Kuyper, A. T. Robertson, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, W. Elert, Barth, Thurneysen, Brunner, Heim, Adam, and not least the able work of Professor Louis Berkhof. Introducing a series of sermons on the cross by Professor Heim, Pastor J. Schmidt rightly insists that "the strength of Christianity is in the Cross." Heim declares that he can be helped only by the imputed righteousness of Christ (aliena justitia Christi) of which Luther speaks, and further magnifies the Cross by endorsing these words of Pandita Ramahai: "I looked upon the holy Son of God, who was lifted up on the Cross, and who there suffered death in my stead, that I might be freed from the bondage of sin and the fear of death, and might receive life. O what love to me, the lost sinner, this inexpressible love of the Father, who gave His only begotten Son, to die for me! I did not deserve such love, but just for that reason He showed it to me."

Read Thurneysen's *Significance of the Reformation*, Brunner's *Mediator*, and Barth's *Credo* and you see that the theology of crisis is becoming more and more the theology of the Cross. Even certain Auburn Affirmationists (such as Henry Sloan Coffin and George A. Buttrick), realize that the Cross ought to be central since "it has provoked and kept alive theology" and "has been the fountainhead of heroic devotion." After these men have affirmed that the biblical doctrine of the atonement, the only thing which can keep the Cross as the pivot of Christian thought, is unnecessary they vaguely and vainly seek to make the Cross the crux of life.

In view of the central place of the Cross in the New Testament, in view of the way in which the Cross has kept its place or returned to its saving center in the life of the Christian Church it were, indeed, an audacious man who would set himself against the concensus of the apostles, the fathers, the martyrs, the Reformers, the true evangelicals—the Church of the Ages—and maintain that this verdict of the primitive community and Christian centuries is wrong. The speaker is entirely convinced that the faith of the ages is right in the fundamental place which it gives to the Cross.

**Cross-Centered Preaching**

And we can keep the Cross in its rightful place only by preaching and teaching a doctrine of the crucifixion which is adequate to place the cross in the forefront, among the first principles, of our Christian education and great enough to keep it in the center of our thought. Puny concepts of the Redeemer and His work will not do. Only a great gospel can and will keep the Cross at the center.

As one reviews the history of Christian thinking he finds that men have dwelt on three great magnitudes of the Cross: who the Crucified was; what He did; and how He did it. The fathers were amazed at the wonder of the Person of the Redeemer. They could never get beyond the astounding fact that God Himself undertook this awful task for us. Though it shook the Mediterranean world to its foundations, it shook the Western world at its foundations. Thus when Christ in His human nature died for men infinite merit—the merit of the Creator—was measured with infinite debt—the infinite demerit of sin. This great truth has never been lost, but is one of the presuppositions of Anselm, of the Reformers and of the great hymns of the Cross. It appears in the lines:

> "When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride."

and

> "Well might the sun in darkness hide, And shut his glories in, When God, the mighty Maker died For man, the creature's sin."

The Greek Church ever lifted her eyes to the heights to contemplate the glory of the Saviour. And the beholding of His glory who was crucified for us is a proper task that has engaged great Christians from John to B. B. Warfield.

**The Cross and God's Justice**

However, the Church especially from Anselm through the Reformation added to this heart-moving truth the further study of what Jesus did on the Cross. The necessity of the expiatory Cross is seen in the very character of God as holy and just, and in the awful nature of sin as the transgression of the law. The essential nature or character of God requires that He punish sin. True justice is only satisfied when justice is done. Only the Cross of Christ, our penal substitute, shows God to be just when He justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus. The Cross is not a compromise, but a substitution; not a cancellation, but a satisfaction; not a wiping off, but a wiping out in blood and agony and death.

Paul presents Christ as our legal substitute who satisfied the precepts of the law by His obedience and endured its penalty in His death (Rom. v. 12-21; Col. ii. 14); who gave Himself a substitutionary ransom (I Tim. ii. 6), being made sin (II Cor. v. 21),
and a curse (Gal. iii. 13) for His people that they
might be made the righteousness of God in Him and
receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Through the
death of Christ God reconciled us unto Himself, that
is, God changed the status or relationship of enmity
that existed between the holy God and sinners to
one of peace by imputing our trespasses unto Him
(Rom. v. 6-11; II Cor. v. 18-21). Thus Christ’s death
as our penal substitute vindicates God’s justice in
forgiving sinners and sets Christ forth as the mercy
seat where alone can sin be forgiven (Rom. iii. 21-6).
Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul has
expounded in its fuller implications the doctrine of
Jesus, of John the Baptist, of Isaiah, and of the Old
Testament sacrificial system. This great Bible doc­
trine is that guilt has been expiated in an act of
worship. As the High Priest Jesus offered Himself
a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice by bearing the
penalty we deserve.

And just this thought of Jesus as our Highpriest
which looms so large in Hebrews points to the third
great magnitude in the Cross, that is the spirit, or
motives which prompted our Saviour to make His
great sacrifice. We are saved by the will of a priest,
the most noble and sublime spirit which actuates
the heart. Recognizing this modern emphasis the
First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta portrays Jesus
rising from prayer in Gethsemane in the window
which looms so large in Hebrews points to the third
principle which our James Henley Thornwell
has reflected in the Son. The piety of the Priest flows from
the source and center of the cosmic energies
of the universe was sufficient to rescue sinners from
its eternal destruction.

Dr. Thornwell’s New York Sermon

But that we may not assume that the loftiest con­
templation of the way in which Jesus died, in the
least militates against the full appreciation of the
work which He did on Calvary and the infinite worth
of the Mediator I want to call to your attention the
combination which our James Henley Thornwell
made of these three great doctrines which correctly
apprehended set forth the magnitude and pre­
eminent centrality of Calvary. Realize who suffered
there, what His suffering accomplished, how, or in
what a spirit of love and worship, he suffered and
you can again never place the Cross on the periph­era,
you must keep it at the center. It is, perhaps, ap­
propriate in any case that I refer you to this classic
statement in the sermon which Thornwell preached
to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church,
U. S. A. in the First Presbyterian Church of New
York. Using John x. 17-18 as his text, Dr. Thornwell
spoke of the sacrifice of Christ as the type and model
of mission effort. The doctrinal part of this great
message clusters about the thought of Christ’s work
as a priestly act, an office of devotion. “Jesus appears
as a worshipper of God, burning with zeal for the
Divine glory and compassion for the souls of men.”
But the very contemplation of this spirit of worship
guilds the terrors of Calvary and makes us absolutely

certain that there was no undue severity, no
suspicion of injustice in that act of worship whereby
Christ offered Himself to cover our sins. “The
strongest argument to me for the necessity of the
atonement is that Jesus died in the spirit of devotion.
When I consider His soul as a pious offering, and
then reflect that He celebrates the grace and con­
descension of God in accepting the gift; when I con­
sider the extent and severity of His sufferings, and
then remember that all were endured to express to
the universe His sense of the Divine holiness, I ask
no more; I am satisfied that it must be—that without
the shedding of blood there could be no remission.
So intense was His conviction that His death was in­
dispensable to the righteous pardon of the guilty
that He seems to have coveted the Cross, and to have
been straitened for His baptism of blood. He could
not brook the thought that man should be saved at
the peril of the Divine glory ... Our finite minds
are incapable of conceiving the extent to which the
principle of holiness, the principle of supreme regard
for the character of God, energized within Him when
He made His soul an offering for sin; and when I
figure to myself the scene, and undertake to penetrate
into the workings and emotions of the Saviour’s
heart, I am irresistibly impressed with the conviction
that nothing short of the Divine nature could have
been the dwelling place of such zeal. I see not so
much an admiration of the holiness of God as the
energies of that holiness itself. I see the Father re­
lected in the Son. The piety of the Priest flows from
a fountain of inexhaustible fullness.” “Here His
Deity appears in full-orbed radiance as Deity in
action. Nowhere else can the Son be seen in all the
intensity of His glory.”

The Coronation of the Lamb

Lo, Heaven’s doors lift up, revealing in the midst
of the Throne and of the four living creatures and
in the midst of the elders of the Church, the corona­
tion of the Lamb. The sceptre that ruleth in the
armies of heaven and among the children of men
is the throne of God and of the Lamb. The King of
Kings and Lord of Lords wears a garment dipped in
blood. Sin is such an awful deflection from the path
of rectitude, such a heinous transgression of the law
of God, that nothing less than a Cross that springs
from the source and center of the cosmic energies
of the universe was sufficient to rescue sinners from
its eternal destruction.

The sooner our land of boasted freedom replaces
the Cross in the center, the sooner will revival supplant depression in
the churches, righteousness overtake crises and
collapses in morals. We cannot expect Heaven’s
blessing when we forget the Cross, remove it from
the focus of faith, or deny his holy efficacy, its re­
vealed meaning. God has placed the Lamb in the
center of His throne and given to the Cross a sig­
ificance that keeps it central. Dare sinners do less?
PITY the poor Calvinist. He has been hounded by thinkers, ridiculed by novelists, made sport of by poets, and clothed in sable by philistines to illuminate a modern holiday. Within the past year one critic has wished Pittsburgh well by suggesting that the best interests of that city would be greatly enhanced by the burial of John Calvin's spirit so deep that it would never rise again to disturb contemporary life. Another has laid all the pathos or tragedy of Rembrandt at the door of Calvinism. One is reminded of the cry of the populace in Roman times when Christians were held responsible for whatever calamities befell the superstitious and ignorant mob. From all this it is evident that the "one-hoss shay" is still extant, and that it is still a contender on the turf of this generation.

The well-known case against Calvinism can perhaps be summed up in one argument, that the Genevan system lacks humor. Calvinism has been identified, wrongly I am sure, with Puritan sternness and austerity, with Hebraic gloom as to the diesseltig, with Sunday blue laws and the contempt of joy. The wearisome, age-old and fuzzy argument about Servetus' death goes a long way toward establishing the accusation, and if more concrete and conclusive evidence is necessary, there is always the portrait of John Calvin himself with the long face and woolen cap and ear muffs. And to those who love Sunday baseball, fan-dancers, radio banalities, and brothels which specialize in the delirious "poetry" of bare facts what could be more joy-killing than Jonathan Edwards' picturesque speech about sinners dangling over flames?

This article is in part the story of a Calvinist who can laugh, and who thinks that laughter is a tonic against sincere fear and the insincere gibberish of certain contemporary anti-Puritan writers who are more gloomy than a whole convention of Puritans. He has heard that laughter makes one fat but accepts his dimensions with placidity, comparing himself to a perfect syllogism because of his well-distributed middle. There is logic in this statement.

The wanderings of this man began in the Netherlands. For four years he was a little Dutchman but never realized it until he came to America where people never failed to mention it at least once a day for years. As a result he continued to be a Dutchman until he could defend himself with silence and reserve.

This boy's life began at least forty years before forty. I am inclined to think that it began long before that time. The youngest twig has the sap drawn from old roots. Well, this lad had a great-grandfather who was a miniature Paul Bunyan. Long, long ago this man in a fit of anger had thrown a man over a ship and over a canal. It takes a sense of humor to do that. There is nothing more prosaic than pummeling your enemy in a three-foot circle or a canvass prize ring. The lad also had a grandfather, a skipper, who in his romantic years carried a knife in his belt and walked fifty miles to woo a girl in a hostile village. One day the wife of an innkeeper told him that a gang whispering at another table were laying for him. He rose slowly, roared out a challenge, and plunged his knife to the hilt into the crack between two boards of the table. The gang never molested him; and they never heard his chuckle which alone might have disarmed them.

After passing middle age this grandfather came to America with the boy and his parents. On board ship he was the life of the party. He ate heartily, shook his head at ice cream and bananas but enjoyed them, and like a good skipper stayed on deck during the storms when the water rolled from stem to stern. After the family was once settled in America the old man walked the streets in brown skipper trousers and a faded black coat with two grave buttons at the back. As the years moved on he leaned more heavily on his cane, chewed immense quids of tobacco, exchanged pleasantries, and preached to all comers including ministers. Occasionally on Sunday evenings he electrified a mixed group at some parsonage with his readings. At times he chose his own compositions secretly written. Once one of his sons surprised him in an attic and received a reprimand for breaking the thread of an idea.

It became one of the old man's hobbies to make weekly trips to the gravel pit where he sought little white stones. These he took home and washed carefully. Then he laid them in rows on the window sill, and every morning put one in his mouth because they were less transient than Dutch bobbelaraars. He continued to be his own dentist by plucking his teeth with tar.

He often amused the children by pulling faces and alternating each attempt with the utmost gravity. Here were comedy and tragedy all in one, an introduction to the muses. It was a veritable cinema for young lives that were not exposed to the movie house by parents. It was a perplexing yet gratifying introduction to the sense of awe and wonder in contrast with the ludicrous.

But in order to grasp the significance of the children's delight it is necessary to appreciate and to love noses. Only a man with a sublime nose can pull faces that reflect the stage where comedy and tragedy walk. The Dutch boy who came to America at the age of four inherited such a nose from his grandfather and father. Now as a boy in growing manhood never gets from behind such a striking object, he of necessity must study its structure and contemplate its meaning. Before his own nose was little more than a wart he had before him the living
reality in the noses of his sire and grandsire. Here was the Platonic ideal to which his own appendage must approximate. As the long thoughts of youth expanded into the longer thoughts of maturity, he began to appreciate more and more both the philosophy and the nose of Socrates. All suggestion of Silenus fell away before the classic example of a nose that looked like an awning on a fruitstand. It was a man with a face like that who could walk with gods and talk with men and jest in the face of death.

It is small wonder that Cyrano de Bergerac should appeal so strongly to this Calvinist now in his thirties. Rostand's presentation of a nose with a poet's soul behind it dries any tear before it falls. And the success is due to the perfect balance of humor and pathos which makes for the abundant appeal so strongly to this Calvinist now in his thirties. Rostand's presentation of a nose with a poet's soul behind it dries any tear before it falls. And the success is due to the perfect balance of humor and pathos which makes for the abundant life. To that fact the Calvinist reacts favorably because he is fond of equilibrium.

I am told that a few years ago our young Calvinist visited the Getz farm on the shores of Lake Michigan. He was standing before a cage of a hippopotamus and was studying the massive face, mostly nose, through the bars. From the beady eyes two tears were furrowing down the huge cheeks. After a silence a bystander heard the young man quoting from Marlowe:

> "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And touched the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss."

But we must have no more of this lest it appear that a man's passion for noses make him appear frivolous rather than philosophical.

At the risk of appearing pedantic and therefore humorless to those of our generation who have lost faith in sound laughter as well as in seriousness, I want to draw a lesson from the lives of this young Calvinist and his ancestors. If I were a novelist and this were a novel, it would not be right to do this although some novelists do that very thing either by screaming or by playing the flute. I am sure that Mark Twain did it in The Mysterious Stranger. I am sure that Ernest Hemingway does it in his presentation of a frustrated post-war generation. And there are evidences of it in Santayana's fine book, *The Last Puritan*, in which the author quietly and beautifully draws Oliver Alden to life, or shall I say, to death? Some day the Calvinist will make use of this privilege and present in novel form a case for Puritanism and orthodoxy and Calvinism. There are enough serious-minded and laughing followers of John Calvin to furnish the material. Until that time the critical essay, as usual, precedes the novel.

The characters of a story are usually more or less superlatives. But as exceptional they prove the rule. An author pulls his characters not from but above humanity. He singles them out to prove a thesis that has larger implications. So the young Calvinist into whose life I am dipping represents rather well a great number of people who cling to an old tradition without denying its progressive significance, and who far from being bound by frozen austerities can laugh at many things from the breeches of Rabelais to the ear muffs of Calvin.

A person who adheres wholeheartedly to the Calvinistic system is by no means joyless for this life. It is positively a misstatement to include the Calvinist among those who look only to the beyond and ignore the wealth of human values in the present. The Calvinist is not a rabid fundamentalist who frowns on the joy of church suppers, social gatherings, and wholesome entertainment. He has a world and life view that includes humor as an essential utterance of humanity. I have been toastmaster at a dinner at which the late Dr. J. Gresham Machen gave what he called a "stunt," in this instance an impersonation of a boy in trouble. Mark Twain himself could not have improved on it. And after the dinner Dr. Machen gave an address on one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. The two performances did not at all clash.

There are those who maintain that Mark Twain rebelled against the parental faith and found refuge in humor. During the last year I have read almost all of Mark Twain's writings. It can not be denied that he rebelled against the Calvinistic system. But it is his pessimism, not his humor which discloses that. I am inclined to believe that he became a humorist not in spite of his mother but because of her. It was only a woman with a genuine sense of humor who could say of her son, often nearly drowned, that a man destined to hang need never fear the water. Mark Twain's pessimism often wove itself into his humor, but it need not have done so. The humor would have been good without it.

Mark Twain is great because of his ingenious characterization of the universal boy shorn of all the angelic trappings with which writers had clothed him before. Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer are the first flesh and blood presentations of that great host of rascals put to bed by loving mothers and doting aunts, and put to grief by the proverbial slipper. With Mark Twain the world becomes a stage not only for men and ghosts and the determinism of the gods but also for boys with patched and unpatched breeches, and tousled hair, and propensities for mixed comedy and tragedy. Unaware of the possible fact that "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting" they have their backyard visions and clandestine plottings, their perennial taste for sweets, their innocent love Affairs with candy sticks for love missives, and are ready at all times to apply pocket knives to all visible objects from mahogany tables to cork legs. "Here is God's plenty" in the field of youth.*

Of course, there are shadows. Mark Twain's boys are wrapped around with romanticism and realism. That is true-ness to life. The Calvinist will admit that; and for that admission he is often roundly criticized. Both Mark Twain and the Calvinist see the gloom, but the latter sees the glory beyond the gloom. Therefore he accepts the humor against the dark background; but he dismisses the pessimism as unessential. He feels that *The Mysterious Stranger* and *What Is Man?* did not contribute essentially to the high art which gave us the Boy and his tragi-comedy. Mark Twain is the peer in the field of

*This paragraph is lifted bodily from a previous article.*
humorous art in spite of his pessimism. The Calvinist accepts that fact because he goes beyond pessimism.

IV

But to return to the young man whose story will not let me go. He has sought the fulfillment of his religious and cultural life in college, theological seminary, and university. He has enjoyed the challenge of conflicting views; but his experiences have not brought about the disillusionment that came to Henry Adams and to Oliver Alden. The heritage of his ancestors from noses to first principles has enabled him to accept life calmly in its shadows and brightness. The bending he has gratefully taken as his share of education; the breaking he has spurned as unnecessary. He has been an assistant pastor in a progressive church; he has taught school in the metropolitan area of New York where “life has loneliness to sell” and bitterness to apologize for. If we may still be sentimental enough to speak of devotion, he now as minister and teacher devotes his life to the furtherance of religion and culture in his study, the pulpit, the class room, and his little world which is each man’s privileged acre. Not a day goes by in which he does not laugh uproariously with his people and his students. Life offers riddles enough, to be sure. But knowledge and faith and humor aid him much. His library includes Calvin’s Institutes, much maligned but little read by many, the complete works of Plato, whom a leading Dutch theologian has called “the divine Plato,” the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare, the writings of Homer and Sophocles and Aristophanes, rows of poetry, many novels from the delectable Tristram Shandy to Gone With The Wind and The Outward Room, and Pilgrim’s Progress which book he hopes some day to finish reading, though it will take a real girding of one’s loins.

When he is not reading, he is writing. To make for altitude and facility at the typewriter he is often perched on two colossal volumes: The Pilgrim’s Progress and The Whitehouse Cook Book. Whatever ideas seep through the seat of his trousers by a process of osmosis will undoubtedly find expression in the product of his modern pen.

It should be remembered that this man is a Dutch Calvinist and not a New England Puritan. He belongs to that movement which in the last fifty years in the old country has founded schools and universities, established newspapers, and sent men to high office in parliament. The movement in this country has expressed itself in the founding of primary and secondary schools and several colleges and seminaries. The florescence of all this is expressed in a progressive world and life view that takes into account “the flower in the crannied wall,” the rings of Saturn, the revelations of science, and the temporal significance and eternal destiny of man. Perhaps this is why the young man has escaped the gloom of Hawthorne, the bitterness of Melville, the sterility of Oliver Alden, and yet relishes much of their humanity. Perhaps this is why he has been shaken but not disillusioned along with so many of the post-war generation. Perhaps this is why his merriment is not a whistling past cemeteries, and his laughter is not hollow but soulful. For he still believes in the soul and looks upon it as the spawning ground of truth, goodness, and beauty.

V

He does not deny the sternness and the discipline of the Calvinistic system even as he does not deny the sternness of the Supreme Court and the inviolable sacredness of the American flag. To him cosmos is far more satisfying than chaos in his relation to God and man. The doctrines he accepts are as old and as new as eternity. He has compassion on those who sincerely hold that Whirl is King. He pities those who like Vera Brittain have lost faith in God because of man’s treachery. And if he is at times angered by his critics, he is also often highly amused by evidences that would have made Voltaire laugh. There is for instance the pose of young iconoclasts in the old temples of faith. A situation replete with humor may arise when our friend buttonholes some male sceptic or co-ed (if she is still in need of buttons and buttonholes) and discovers how easily a respectable ism is confused with blue laws that aim to prohibit flippant flipping of cigarettes by unpractised fingers and incontinent “guzzling” by boys who strain themselves to be hard. He may find that the knowledge of religion often reduces itself to mere memories of fragmentary remarks made by well-meaning but ill-prepared Sunday school teachers. Or such knowledge may have been gained from attending a church where after singing Christian hymns the congregation must listen to a minister who reads the Scriptures, announces his text, and then very un-exegetically talks miles away from that text about everything from Machiavelli to Henry Ford. The Calvinist can smile with the rest at three hour sermons, but he is highly amused at pulpitering that might better be lecturing in the Town Hall.

To the young Calvinist life is a serious matter. But against the background of that seriousness his laughter has meaning. He understands the light and shadow effect of Rembrandt’s canvases and knows that both elements are essential to express the fullness of reality. The burden of the mystery may be great, but he relieves the tension of sublimity with an expanding chuckle that rolls like Irving’s thunder in the Catskills. If Anatole France beheld life and laughed, and Thomas Hardy beheld it and wept, he like Sophocles sees life steadily and sees it whole; and taking a hint from the old Greek comic writer, he graciously hangs his criticism in a basket to vaporize among the clouds because they deserve it more than Socrates.

I HAVE TRIED THEM

I have tried them all — the ways of the world:

The cultured refined things so good;
But now I go back to the primitive
To children and motherhood.

For the simple life that the Lord endows
With faith and health and work
Is better than aught that the world can give
In its effort the truth to shirk.

— JOAN GEISEL GARDNER.
NEWS AND VIEWS

By the Editor

• Atheism Has Not Banished Religion

RUSSIA has banished God and put forth a desperate effort to annihilate the church. That is, official Russia. But God is not so readily banished, nor is the church of God uprooted quite so readily as the Soviet orders would have it. The Russian Orthodox Church was a corrupted church, but, after all, it was part of the church of Jesus Christ. It needs reform, but it still has a right to earnstly hope and trust that it will come forth a renewed church out of the fires of the present persecution. Meanwhile, the religious authorities of the Soviet state are coming to the discovery that the Christian religion and the Christian Church have more vitality and have been imbedded more deeply in the heart and life of the Russian people than they had hoped or expected. In the face of this situation the widow of Lenin offers some very illuminating advice to the Russian authorities. A recent bulletin of the International Christian Press and Information Service (Geneva) informs us:

In the Moscow daily paper Izvestia, it was recently stated that the influence of religion, the influence of the churches on the wider masses of the population, is stronger than ever. The latest census clearly showed that the population, especially the women, answer the question whether they believe in God or not, with hesitation. Many of those who no longer follow church practices did not venture to describe themselves as "unbelievers," but put themselves down under the heading in question as "believers." Lenin's widow, N. Krupskaja, writes in this same paper at the end of April that "the children who go to the churches are neither better nor worse than their older associates, who do not go to church." This "disturbs the parents, who do not know how they ought to bring their children up." The certainty that the natural sciences would make for the undermining of religious convictions has not been confirmed. Natural sciences or astronomy may in earlier times have contributed to this purpose, but today it is no longer so. On the contrary, workers coming out of a lecture in the Planetary have been heard to remark that "one may still reflect how wisely God has 'arranged' the world." In the view of Frau Krupskaja, the primitive form of the anti-religious propaganda is to blame. The person who attends services has been referred to in the Godless propaganda as an 'impostor.' "We forget that the Church has also organized social work, such as the public ministering to the sick, care for children, etc., while we have not always realized the necessity of including all grades of the people." "The church is strong because it is rooted in the people and in the history of the people." The way in which the Church is bound up with the history of our country has not always been recognized by the party leaders, because the teaching of history in Soviet Russia has fallen into the background in a way which must have a negative effect on anti-religious propaganda." Frau Krupskaja closes with an appeal to fight the influence of the churches and begs the Soviet authorities to give the young not only educational training but a practical ideology as well.

• Rotten Burlesque and Louse-Opera

It is not the duty or the privilege of any government to legislate people into moral living. But it is the God-given duty of any government to maintain to the best of its ability general standards of public decency for the well-being of the community. Recently the government of some of our larger cities has had occasion so to do. The smut and filth of the burlesque theater was beginning to cry to high heaven. Mayor Wilson of Philadelphia recently had a show closed because of its indecency and, with the approval of Mayor LaGuardia, the Commissioner of Licenses of New York City refused a renewal of licenses to no less than 14 burlesque theaters in that city. Apparently the fight is on. Speaking of the rottenness of these burlesque shows Mr. Westbrook Pegler, a well-known journalist, as quoted by an editor of The Messenger, writes:

When rates are allowed the free run of a neighborhood for any length of time they grow as bold as tomcats, and that is what has happened in the case of the burlesque branch of the drama. Intimately known to the trade as louse-opera. Cardinal Hayes and many other religious leaders in New York have protested against this filth, and far from sinking back into the sewer from which it came, burlesque is making a show of defiance and talking about its rights, as though disease had rights. This form of vice has spread over much of the country, but New York, as usual, seems to have been the point of infection. There were a lot of old, seedy theaters in town which weren't earning their taxes, and the promoters began in a small way with a few limp and listless hags who performed with all the animation of a night watchman. The scenery was old and dirty and the dialogue of the comedians even more so. Naturally the shows made money. Any time a showman is allowed to display naked women he can make money, and it wasn't long until burlesque crept into town to occupy a number of theaters which had been dark for years.

From New York the naked-woman shows spread out, and when Dr. Kraemer was in Chicago, in the summer of last year, he went through with a world fair planned in the reckless days of the boom it was not art or science or culture, but lust that saved the venture. The girls in some of the more pretentious exhibitions were pretty and artful, but there were others on display at so much per peak in the fair grounds and in back room dumps around town who were tramps. Texas then adopted violations of decency, and anti-Semitic revues and in the murde innuendoes of the whispering of the Gospel and the Globe. This form of vice has spread over much of the country, and the burlesque show has become standard entertainment in many cities, big and little.

The nakedness of the females is just that, and all talk of art in connection with the strip-tease is obvious ballyhoo, but even the appeal to the lust of the customers is less rotten than the remarks of the males who are listed as comedians. The humor in the main has to do with sexual depravity, a topic which has been made almost a household word through repetition in the more or less pretentious revues and in the murde innuendoes of the Gospel and the Globe. Any time a showman is allowed to display naked women he can make money, and it wasn't long until burlesque crept into town to occupy a number of theaters which had been dark for years.

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Word has been received from the Netherlands that Dr. Hendrik Kraemer, who recently made a visit to America speaking as an authority on Islam and Missions in the Dutch East Indies, has been appointed by the crown as Professor in the History of Religions and the Phenomenology of Religions on the Theological Faculty of the historic University of Leyden. As such he succeeds the late Professor Kristensen. Dr. Kraemer took his doctor's degree at Leyden in 1922 writing on a Javanese subject. Since that time he has served as missionary and scholarly adviser for mission societies in the Dutch East Indies under the auspices of the Netherlands Bible Society. He was recently given the honorary doctor's degree from his alma mater. Dr. Kraemer, while in our country recently on a tour under the auspices of the International Missionary Council, delivered some scholar-
ly addresses in Chicago, at Western Seminary (Holland), and at Calvin Seminary (Grand Rapids), and the moving missionary address of a popular nature delivered by him at the First Christian Reformed Church at the time will not be easily forgotten. The appointment of a scholar with a deep love for the gospel and a live interest in the missionary enterprise to this chair at Leyden is a significant indication of the direction in which the wind is blowing at present in the Dutch theological world.

- **Christian Burial in Japan**

Recently an interesting discussion was aroused in the religious press of our land on the expense of funerals. We may thank this discussion for giving us the following picturesque account of funeral customs and arrangements among a Christian group in Japan. The writer of the account (which appeared in the *Christian Century* of June 2) is William Merrill Vories of the Omi Brotherhood, Omi-Hachiman, Japan. Alluding to excessive funeral expenses as the “high cost of dying,” he writes:

Much has been said about the “high cost of dying” in America, but there are few measuring the situation who are not being pressed very generally. Perhaps the Japanese Christians have come the nearest to a satisfactory funeral. When death comes to the household of any church member, the friends come at once to lend their help. There is no need for an undertaker. While a local carpenter is making the plain pine or cypress coffin, with a small glassed opening in the lid above the face, intimate friends of the deceased prepare the body. They place it in the coffin, upon a white silk cushion, and fasten on the lid. There is a religious service connected with this act of placing the body in the coffin. The friends stay on, in relays, to take care of the family. They prepare the necessary meals, or bring them ready-cooked from their own homes. They meet the various callers and business people who come to the house. They make the funeral arrangements, in conference with the responsible head of the house. They receive and make a list of all gifts of flowers, foods, and messages of condolence.

There is no expense for hearses, pallbearers, or rental of mortuary chapel. The coffin is carried by friends of the family, and in some cases the church owns a simple wheeled cart upon which the coffin can be borne. They will find the friends who join the procession to the crematory walk. There is no expense for carriages or autos. In cities, where distances are great, these may be needed; but they are ordinary conveyances which are hired at ordinary rates.

The plain wooden coffin is covered by a heavy black silk mantle, with a white cross on each side, which belongs to the church and is not burned at the crematory. This gives ample dignity and richness to the coffin, and eliminates any imitation of competition in funeral display, since the same pall is used for all members.

This simplified funeral practice seems to provide all the essential elements. In the first place, its being entirely removed from any association with wealth as a condition precedent, adds to the religious significance. As to the sympathy of friends, here is a complete demonstration of that form of consolation in both theory and practice. And as to the matter of expressing respect for the dead, certainly this voluntary offering of their time and efforts on the part of the neighbors bespeaks a real and spontaneous affection and honor which no display engineered by a funeral “director” and paid for by the family can begin to equal.

When the last rites are over and the ashes have been deposited, in a simple urn, in a simple mausoleum or crypt of the church, the total expense will be not more than a tenth what a reputedly “inexpensive” funeral in America would have cost. And the feelings of the bereaved family are certainly not less soothed than if the outlay had been ten times as great.

Speaking of cremation, we have been promised an article on this subject, which we hope to be able to place before our readers some time this fall.

- **The Author of "Belly Fulla Straw"**

Just recently an Eastern daily ran this story about David Cornel De Jong, Calvin College, and the Grand Rapids Calvinists. From a passage not included in the quotation it appears that the reporter’s story is based upon an interview held with Mr. De Jong himself in the Houghton Mifflin offices at New York. We quote:

David Cornel De Jong, a young red-haired Dutchman, who took his literary work up after spending his hand at grave digging, soda-jerking, and teaching, has received one of the two annual $1,000 fellowships of the Houghton Mifflin Company, it was announced yesterday. . . . Mr. De Jong will do a novel about Wierum, a North Sea fishing town where he lived before his parents migrated to Grand Rapids, Mich., to escape compulsory military training for their four sons.

When the De Jong came to Grand Rapids in 1917 they were absorbed by a straight-laced little settlement of Dutch Calvinists where no funerals were permitted on Sunday. Motion pictures were forbidden on week days and so were novels. Presently young David rebelled. He went to a museum. Even today Mr. De Jong is filled with the story of the young Calvinist scrupulosity. He writes home once a week, quoting in great detail the text of the sermon he was supposed to have heard on the preceding Sunday. A great deal of practical measures has been taken to get rid of the trouble. For Mr. De Jong has been unable to find a Christian Reformed Church in the neighborhood.

He recalled that his first real chance to escape came when two American officers offered to pay for his preparation at prep school a year, during which he taught in a small town high school. The offers came from Illinois, Virginia, and Duke. He picked Duke because it was farthest away from home.

He stayed at Duke two years, winning his M. A. on a thesis composed of his own short stories. Then he went to Brown University and was working for a Ph. D. when his first novel, *Belly Fulla Straw*, was published in 1934. The novel portrayed the Dutch settlements of Michigan in a none too complimentary manner, and a subsequent magazine article was viewed by the Dutch as a satire of their own folk. Perhaps it was no wonder that Mr. De Jong was given up as a lost soul and was virtually ostracized by the Grand Rapids Dutch.

So runs the story, written for the edification and information of the public in New York’s metropolitan district. Of course, one desires to make full allowance for shading and spice introduced by a press reporter eager to get out a juicy story. But when due allowance has been made for this reportorial element, it is clear that the actual content came from no one but Mr. De Jong himself. One cannot help wondering about the strange mixture of fact and fancy which this unrealistic bit of newspaper fiction offers to the public. Not that one needs to worry so much about the reputation of Calvin College. That reputation is well-established. There are too many graduates of this small but virile Michigan college, recipients of scholastic honors and university fellowships in Philosophy, Literature, Divinity, and Science, who stand ever ready to uphold the reputation of their Alma Mater in the scholastic world and who have nothing to apologize for when they think of what they owe to this Calvinistic College.

Rather, this story makes one wonder at the ethics of the gentleman who furnished the material for this sketch of his own “emancipation” and raised from obscurity to fame. What must Mr. De Jong think when he reports that novels are forbidden “on week days” in the “straight-laced little settlement of Dutch Calvinists” in Grand Rapids? What must one think of the man when he reports that “he found life there [i.e., at Calvin College] ‘unmentionable.’” (The word ‘unmentionable’ is placed in quotation marks by the reporter, implying that it was taken from the lips of Mr. De Jong himself.) And what must one think.
of the ethics of a man who reports that he does "a
great deal of creative writing" when in writing home
to his God-fearing parents once a week he quotes in
great detail "the text of the sermon he was supposed to
have heard on the previous Sunday?"

We prefer to let the reader answer these questions
for himself. If this whole story, broadcast as it has
been to a large section of New York's metropolitan
population, should prove to have been mostly
"creative writing" of the reporter, it is high time Mr.
De Jong repudiates it publicly. But if the story is a
fairly reliable report of information furnished by
Mr. De Jong (as no one has grounded reason to doubt
on the face of it), it must be said that it casts a
disappointing sidelight on the author of Belly Fulla
Straw.

● Fiction with Christian Idealism

There is a crying need in our day for Christian
fiction. The market is flooded with "realistic"
tendenz-novels. And many of them are either subtly
or brazenly and openly subversive in spirit and
tendency of Christian truth and Christian morals.
Again and again the claim of objectivity, true-to-life
writing of these "realists" is belied by the propa-
gandistic thrust of these novels, and the propaganda
is almost invariably of an anti-Christian cast. In
the face of this situation Christian writers ought to be
encouraged to develop their talents. We have
enough cheap Sunday-School-library stories of the
morAListic, goody-goody type on the one hand, and
more than enough of the pagan realistic novels on
the other. What we need is fiction, well-written,
true-to-life, yet full of elevating Christian idealism.
"Belly Fulla Straw" only re-emphasizes this need. In
his worthwhile article, "Life is Raw," the Rev.
Watson Groen of Lynden, Wash., wrote a paragraph
or two last fall in The Banner which is worth repeating
here. Said he:

Among those whom the Lord has redeemed there must be
some to whom He has given the ability to write tales. To
those possessing this talent has been given a great public,
because people will read stories much more eagerly than
essays and sermons. There must be in fiction a Christian
idealism which shall protest vigorously against our decadent
culture. I summon the departments of literature of all of our
Christian colleges to prepare men and women who can
earn fiction permeated with this idealism. Must those who have
talent always be lost to the real realism that rules American
literature? Tales can be told about the Christian home, about
Christian love, about the triumph of Christianity over illness,
poverty and crime, about Christian courage even in the pres-
ence of death, and about the coming of the kingdom of our
Lord. Such tales will lack none of the qualities of human
interest.

A Christian idealism in literature cannot but portray the
times honestly and will evaluate fairly the currents of thought
that strive for mastery. Nevertheless, it will behold visions
of righteousness, purity, joy, power, and glory. Guided by
these visions of Christian idealism, a Christian literature will
be written to the glory of Jehovah, who is God of the things
as they should be.

● Protestant Missions in Ethiopia

It looks as though it will not be long before the
Italian authorities will have banished all Protestant
missions from Ethiopia. For a while the American
missionaries especially enjoyed the favor of the
authorities and were given the assurance of continued
freedom of action. However, all this has changed
when on February 19 last a group of natives hurled
bombs into a group of Italian dignitaries wounding
Marshal Rudolfo Graziani. In retaliation the Italians
have massacred hundreds (some say three thousand)
natives and the attitude of good will has been greatly
impaired. On April 9 the American legation in
Ethiopia was closed, and the reason given by the
Associated Press was that "American interests no
longer require such consular services." The Rev.
James L. Rohrbaugh, missionary under the Inde-
pendent Board for Presbyterian Missions, is at pre-
sent on furlough from Ethiopia in this country. He
blames the change in the attitude of the Italian
authorities toward Protestant missions largely to the
irreconcilable attitude of the natives. He summarizes
the prospect for Protestant missions in Ethiopia in
these words:

"Protestant Missions, which reached their heyday in Ethiopia
less than three years ago, are now rapidly disappearing from
the land. Many missionaries have returned home for reasons of
health or because furlough was due and replacements have
not been made. The Swedish Missions and the British Bible
Churchmen's Missionary Society have been expelled, the
property of the Sudan Interior Mission has been requisitioned,
and according to the papers three American Independent mis-
sonaries, too have been expelled. The Giornale d'Italia—
 Mussolini's own paper—has carried a front page story pre-
dicting the end of Protestant missionary work.

● Christian Attitude Toward Public Schools

In the recent Graduation Number of Western
Christian High (May, 1937), p. 8, we read the follow-
ing:

One often wonders why so many of our people willingly
provide for Christian schools upon the mission fields and
neglect the education of their own children; yes, even pro-
viding for High schools there and not at home. .. . May a
Christian be hostile towards the public schools? We think
not. But who will contribute an article on the attitude of the
Calvinists toward the public schools? Please, somebody...

To the first of these statements your editor would
reply with a hearty "Amen!" And in reply to the
second, we may possibly be permitted to remark that
such an article may be found in the Year Book—
Convention Book 1927-1928) of the National Union
for Christian Schools (pp. 90-106).

● An Open Letter to Hitler

Under date of June 2, 1937, the Rev. Charles S.
Macfarland, widely known as a former general sec-
retary of the Federal Council of the Churches of
Christ, has addressed an open letter to Chancellor
Adolf Hitler in which he has given expression to his
depression appointment at, and disapproval of,
the stand of the chancellor in the matter of race
discrimination and persecution of the church leaders
of Germany. The letter, copy of which may be found in
The Living Church (Episcopalian, Milwaukee) of
June 19, reminds "your excellency" of the friendly
relations between him and the writer, of the visits
made by Dr. Macfarland to Germany, of the inter-
views he has had with Herr Hitler, of the repeated
promises made by the latter that there would be no
racial discrimination and that the Church itself
would have the last word in all ecclesiastical matters,
and of the friendly nature of the book written by
Dr. Macfarland on the German Church situation in
1934. He then goes on:
What now are the results of my continued study and how do they appear in the light of your earnest assurances?

(1) Instead of unifying the Church you have divided it between those who comply, those who are neutral, and those who courageously oppose your domination.

(2) Instead of regarding the "confession" of the Church as sacred ground, you have endeavored to crush out its basic doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind.

(3) Instead of doing justice to the Jews, you have permitted them to be harassed and despised. Your treatment of them has been ruthless, without the slightest appearance of mercy, even reminding one of the infamous edict of Herod, in which he made use of violence to the littlest child.

And then after recounting a number of striking instances of the cultivation of the art of the German government of the spirit of hatred against other national and racial groups and calling attention to the inhuman attitude toward Christian refugees, he closes his communication with these ringing words:

"In the four years you asked, whatever you may have done for the economic life of Germany, you have wrecked its foundations. As the conclusion of my study, I can only say that you have, by consenting or approving, permitted the desecration of ideals of honor, integrity, truth, and humanity associated with the Germanic tradition of my student days, and that you are forfeiting the respect of the civilized world and that you are leading your adopted nation to an abyss, for you cannot build an enduring nation upon force and hate. Our history knows it is not possible. All that you can do is to adorn the spirit in which it is written. I cannot now believe that you have discerned the infectious, deadly nature of the sinister forces you have let loose. I yet hope that I may live long enough to see the restoration, in moral terms, of the Germany of my teachers of more than 40 years ago, a Germany once more respected by the civilized world and the Christian Church.

A Peaceful Discussion on War

Mr. Amry VandenBosch, Ph. D.,
Lexington, Ky.

My dear Cousin: The Managing Editor, Dr. Bouma, our mutual friend, has given me permission to write you a letter and publish it in the FORUM. I have discovered that you are a distant cousin of mine. That will doubtless help to make this purposely printed letter a goodly pamphlet—a goodly article under the caption, "War, Peace, and Neutrality" (June Issue), free from animosity. Permit me to offer three peaceful observations for your reflection as I place myself as inspector above your production.

1. It is very apparent to you—pardon your cousin for his brutal frankness—that either you have not studiously read my pamphlet, "Philosophical and Biblical Reflections on World Peace," or that you failed to grasp the intended thrust of it. It pains me to apply the lancet in this manner, but criticism is a kind of surgery, merciful and merciless, yet at times imperative.

It amazes me that you can so complacently quote from my pamphlet and disregard the context. To accuse you of doing this purposefully savors of uncharitableness; I may not do that. However, you have failed to get down to bed-rock, dear cousin. May I remind you that my pamphlet is written from the viewpoint of Reformed Theology and not from that of political science. You have failed to interpret my pamphlet as I intended, and I write this to give you your last chance. If you do not discuss the matter from the standpoint of human reason, and in thinking. I cannot of violence to the littlest child.

And then after recounting a number of striking instances of the cultivation of the art of the German government of the spirit of hatred against other national and racial groups and calling attention to the inhuman attitude toward Christian refugees, he closes his communication with these ringing words:

"A very logical paper presenting facts concerning world peace. The writer points out that world peace in the present dispensation is impractical from the standpoint of human reason, and impossible in the light of Divine revelation. He is an A-millennialist and sees the hope for peace in the return of Jesus Christ." Somewhere, somehow, dear cousin-critic, you have gone far from the main theme and went off on byways, tangents.

2. I shall not attempt to refute the challenging arguments you bring up by quoting from my pamphlet (too much at this point), but I would have included a copy of that pamphlet, "Philosophical and Biblical Reflections on World Peace," or that you failed to grasp the intended thrust of it. It pains me to apply the lancet in this manner, but criticism is a kind of surgery, merciful and merciless, yet at times imperative.

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If I had had the material at the time when I wrote my pamphlet that I have now, I would have included the findings of Prof. Pitirim A. Sorokin, Head of the department of sociology at Harvard. Briefly stated, Dr. Sorokin proves that the contention or belief that civilization advances war will disappear is not justified by facts. According to data collected by him, the average man of the 13th century had 6,500 more chances to avoid death on the battlefield than his modern descendant. Dr. Sorokin has completed a research covering a period of 2,500 years of wars and revolutions. A pessimistic view? Well, fact is more than fancy!

Now as to your problem concerning a possible war with Japan, involving the attitude of Japanese Christians. Dear cousin, I assure you that I sympathize, and that he and his father threatened with the possibility are utterly loss for that which is not a greater problem behind this: Christianity vs. Shintoism? And is there not a tendency today on the part of the Japanese Christian Church to give too much place to emperor worship? This, in a word, is the basis of the nations, respectively, is of primary consideration. Your oratorical exclamations, "What a noble Mr. Bovenkerk gets us into!" is a bit sourcifful; but let me frankly tell you that in my way of thinking the League of Nations has failed miserably to give Japan a sound latching at the time of the Manchurian invasion, having the evidences of foul play in its possession."
What Do You Think About It?

THE CALVIN FORUM
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Sirs:

Having read THE CALVIN FORUM from its inception, I feel free to voice my appraisal. It found that every issue of it stimulates my mind. It refreshes my soul, and challenging to the will. I read it from cover to cover, many of its articles are timely, thought-provoking and really enlightening. If it has any weakness it lies just here that undesignedly, perhaps, but nevertheless unmistakably it has the "earmarks" of being not exactly just another denominational weekly—for its plan and scope are obviously broader—and yet is it wholly free from such limitations? Yes, I have read and seen the splendid articles by Dr. A. Pieters and Rev. John Bovenkerk of the Reformed Church, and the splendid articles by some of our leaders of other communions. In my judgment, however, if THE CALVIN FORUM is to be a real Voice in this world of confused thinking and utterances; if it seeks to be, as those beyond its own denomination, the Editorial Committee should be enlarged to embrace the names, services and contributions of the truly Calvinistic denominations. That in my humble judgment will strengthen the most excellent efforts and will be in my opinion a wholesome proof of confidence in the brotherhood and the possession of the spirit of co-operation.

Sincerely yours,
JOHN S. TER LOUW.

First Reformed Church,
South Holland, Ill.

P. S. Am enclosing two dollars ($2.00) for the subscription already overdue.

[Note of Editor: The suggestion of the Rev. Mr. Ter Louw was in the mind of some of the founders of THE CALVIN FORUM from the very beginning. At the time its realization did not appear feasible. In the growth and expansion of our magazine, the possibility of a broader editorial staff is not at all ruled out. What do our readers think of the suggestion? Drop us a line if you have an opinion on the subject.]

Common Grace

Dear Dr. Bouma:

Enclosed find two dollars for renewal of subscription. THE CALVIN FORUM has become a welcome monthly paper in our home. A certain amount of controversial material by our best Reformed thinkers is very instructive. I understand that the aim of the FORUM is to give positive Calvinistic leadership.

By the way, it is refreshing to see one of our young theologians, Mr. Stob, in a July contribution, refer to "Common Grace." In our circles, which I sometimes like to call "a remnant of the Reformed (Calvinistic) branch," this great truth of Common Grace is, in my opinion, sadly and detrimentally neglected.

No one, in my judgment, has a right to call himself a Calvinistic Scientist, without a sound grasp of and love for this mighty truth. As far as I am concerned they can talk and write all they please on the first of these, but as for the second one, I mean Grace (and I mean Grace), will our Christian Men of Science be able more fully to explain the Universe, inter-relation of Human Society, the Church, and the relation of all this to God?

D. T. PRINS.

Holland—Picturesque But Police-Ridden

Dr. C. Bouma,
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Brother:

Five weeks ago we arrived in the Netherlands, the land of contrasts, of painters and paintings, and of freedom. The contrasts we discovered are, for example, in the political. Voters who cast their ballots either for freedom, that is constructively, voters who never were Christian or who have broken with Christ and His teachings. Candidates for office are either candidates for freedom, or candidates for the opposite. Which are clearly defined, and the Christian element has a well-worked-out program. In this respect we can learn a good deal from our Dutch fellow-Christians.

Holland is a land of paintings and paintings. To me this seems quite natural, for the following reason. The Dutch landscape is ever changing. It may change ten times in ten minutes. One may travel one page through one forest, and in a few minutes later the blossoming heath invites his attention; the next minute he passes through a district of splendid homes, each dwelling resting serenely upon an architecturally arranged plot of grass and flowers, and surrounded by stately trees and ornamental shrubs. As you travel a bit further, you may come to some ancient village consisting of farmhouses whose beauty you appreciated in the Dutch paintings.

What is more, there is nothing drab about the color scheme of the Dutch scene. Sometimes the colors of the landscape stand out in bold contrast; at other times they harmoniously blend into a grand unity. But the colors are always rich, clear, and pleasing. Anyone having a little ability and urge to handle a brush feels constrained to perpetuate on canvas these delightful scenes. And so it comes about that Holland has many painters. And so, too, it happens that every home which I observed has one or more paintings, original paintings. In business establishments I have seen hundreds of good paintings. And in the States as in the Netherlands, the Dutch are big supporters of painting. In the United States pay for wall decorations, commonly called "pictures."

Holland is the land of freedom. In times past it has fought valiantly for freedom, or in the cause of freedom. Freedom is Holland's cherished possession. But there is something about Dutch freedom that does not impress the visitor very favorably. For example: the words "Verboden Toegang" (admittance forbidden) occur on every hand. We in the United States have occasionally our "No Admittance." It is a mere statement. But in Holland the case is different. They say: "admittance forbidden" and threateningly add, according to such and such an article of the penal code. Do they mean business? Most assuredly. It was my desire to take our children to the Zuidze beach. To get there you take a road leading through pastures. Right at the road's beginning occur the ominous words, "Verboden Toegang," etc. Well, we drove on. But soon there approached a gentleman (the first six letters of the word "gentleman" I have added for the sake of freedom) who loudly protested that "Verboden Toegang" meant admittance forbidden. What is more, he damaged the road; not because we damaged the beach, or might interfere with the water level, etc., but simply because it was forbidden. Permission could be gained in a distant city, for an insignificant fee.
to the car and away we go, "paid" in front and rear. The Dutch motorist also pays his tax, but receives, not plates, but a slip, marked off the complaint of the driver to stop and produce his slip!! In "De Courant" of July 6th occurs the complaint of an automobilist who had been stopped by the police five times in one day for this praiseworthy reason. Well,—if law-observance is the essence of freedom, then the exercise of freedom is a bit difficult in Holland.

But enough for today.

Yours very cordially,

J. G. VAN DYKE.

July 7, 1937.

BOOK REVIEWS

**DR. PIETERS ON REVELATION**


The number of volumes written on the Apocalypse of St. John is legion. In the volume before us we have another exposition of this most colorful book of the Bible. There must be some real merit to justify this addition. I believe such merit to be in this volume.

The writer adopts the position somewhat similar to those who advance the so-called synchronistic interpretation. His own words on this matter will suffice. "My own decision is to the side of the Preterists, for the most part, by mixing in, to a considerable degree, the views of what I have called the Philosophy of History School." That is to say, the lessons of St. John were real lessons to the people for whom he wrote and are applicable to every age.

Dr. Pieters has wisely and persistently refused to be intrigued by the many interesting details to be found in this great Book. He frankly admits his ignorance on these points and is equally frank in contending that these details are not of great significance in the interpretation of the general thrust of the pictures. He is probably justified in passing them up since he positively rejects the literal interpretation and adopts the position that we are dealing here with symbols.

The book is not written primarily for scholars. They will, however, do well to read it. It will give them a survey of the field and an appreciation of what has been done. The writer claims that he stands as a middle man between the scholar and the layman. He occupies this position well. Any intelligent person can read the book with pleasure and profit. I have read the work through with sustained interest and considerable more agreement than expositions on the book of Revelation usually allow me.

The author has given us in this work of his a fair representation of all the important interpretations of the cardinal themes of this Book. He has added pointed critical comments. His criticism is to me almost invariably convincing. It is much stronger than the positive considerations adduced for his own position. That is not unusual with interpreters. They often come to what is for them a convincing position by the process of elimination.

The work is not a commentary in the usual sense of the term. There is no verse by verse explanation. It is an unfolding of the main thrust of Revelation. It helps one to get a hold of it, so that he develops the courage to preach on this book of the Bible. Many ministers have often wanted to preach on this book but never really dared. This volume may cultivate the necessary confidence.

I should add one more item. There is for those who wish to make a more extended study of this Bible book an excellent bibliography appended. It is classified, and enriched manifold by pointed comments and evaluations.

H. S.

**HOMILIES ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**


Here are twenty meditations breathing the spirit of genuine evangelical Christianity. The book gets its title from the first chapter which reflects upon Paul's self-portrayal as found in II Cor. A chapter on God's gracious Covenant informs us that it contains a promise of divine presence, provision and performance. Not a very capable discussion of the significance of the Covenant, but nevertheless a warm and reassuring presentation. There is also a captivating essay on Nathanael, which is entitled the Holy Watcher. There is also a popular defense of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In the main, however, these homilies deal with the problems of practical Christian life.

The author is an English preacher. He has made many contributions to such Pre-millennial magazines as The Moody Monthly and The King's Business. However, this book of sermons must not be regarded as a propaganda attempt for the Pre position. It is not interested in a definite theological position but rather in the distribution of spiritual values of a practical Christian type.

H. S.

**DOCTRINE IN SIMPLE FORM**


This volume could be well called a syllabus of Christian Doctrine. It contains a discussion of almost an hundred topics, and each topic is elaborated upon in the form of theses. The number of theses presented under each head will average about a dozen.

It is really a job well done. It will serve unquestionably for the purpose for which it was written, to wit, to instruct young Christians and those new to the Christian faith. The book is lucidly written and the problems of doctrine and life boldly faced. There is in the introduction an apology written as follows: "More matured Christians therefore are asked to look leniently upon the volume both as to its framing and wording." This can be omitted. The book will stand on its own merits.

The discussion on Inspiration deserves fuller treatment. It is at this point where men break with the Old Faith. A careful statement to the effect that Inspiration is verbal and organic would help to clarify the exact form of Inspiration as taught in Scriptures. The defense of the tripartite composition of man is a strong one, but it will hardly suffice to convince a bipartist of the error of his position. The doctrine that God selects or elects those whom He foreknew would be choosers of the Christ is too readily assumed. This has a distinct Arminian flavor. In the discussion about interpretations and prophecies, the author reveals himself to be a cautious dispensationalist.

H. S.