Pearl Harbor  
Unifying Bombs

Facing Our Task  
World Strategy

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Art and Calvinism  
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Voices  
Verse

Letters  
Reviews

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The Bombs of Pearl Harbor

As the year 1942 slips across the threshold of time, it finds almost the entire world engulfed in war. A titanic struggle of unprecedented proportions in human history is on. Also America now is in the war. The Japanese bombs which fell on that memorable Sunday morning on Pearl Harbor did not only explode in the Hawaiian Islands—their explosion took place also in continental United States. They blew to bits not only some of our weapons of warfare and the bodies of some of our gallant men—they also blew to bits the erroneous assumptions and distorted views of those political orators in our country who thought this war was only a European issue, who told Americans that their country was being dragged into an alien war, and who ridiculed those far-seeing leaders that were seeking to arouse our nation to the menace threatening every liberty-loving country on the globe. The voice of these political orators has been silenced; silenced not by any outward compulsion or government decree, but silenced by the bombs which rained treacherously from Japanese planes on our unsuspecting fleet Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. The facts have silenced them.

It is well thus. A serious argument has now been settled, once and for all. Every sincere American, even the most outspoken pre-war isolationist, now knows who are the war-mongers. Every sincere American, even those who once applauded a Lindbergh and a Wheeler, now knows where the real threat to our freedom lies. Every sincere American, also those who apparently had more faith in Hitler’s than in Roosevelt’s words on the score of the alleged Axis threat to the security of America, now knows the American ship of state is not only in safe but also in intelligent hands. The bombs of Pearl Harbor have welded this nation into one unit, with one determination, with one will, with one goal. The unification of America has come at last. At last we know that the menace all liberty-loving countries have been facing these years is our menace; that the future of all who cherish the democratic way of life wherever they live on the globe and under whatever flag, is our future; that the arch-lair of Berlin and Berchtasgaden for once was speaking sober truth when he averred that there can be no room for both democracy and his “new order” in the same world.

Let there be no “I-told-you-so” argument in this solemn hour. Whether it took some of us longer to see the real issue than others may have made some difference for the past—it can make no difference for the momentous future we are facing. Our task is clear. We now know who our allies and who our enemies are. We now know that as we are fighting our own battles, we are fighting also the battles of the decent, the liberty-loving nations of the world. We are standing by the side not only of powerful Britain, but also of martyred China, of betrayed and down-trodden Holland, Belgium, Norway, Poland—to mention no others—and of all the persecuted minorities of the world.

Our Attitude Toward Jews

The Jew has always been unique in the history of humanity. Wherever he has gone he has been different. Among whatever nations he has made his abode, he has been treated uniquely, differently. In our day the Jew is again in the limelight. The attitude non-Jews have assumed toward him is equally unique. Friend and foe have felt that this race, which ethnologists tell us is no race, that this nation, which in no sense is a nation, is different, challenging, at times even baffling. There are apparently today two attitudes toward the Jew which must both be avoided. The Jew is hated and persecuted by those who would fasten blame for their own or the world’s ills upon some scapegoat. It need hardly be said that this cannot be the attitude of any decent person, least of all of a Christian. There is, however, another attitude, quite the opposite, which though not as contemptible as the first, is equally erroneous. There are those who glorify the Jew, hold him to be the representative of a people that is still enjoying special divine favor. And even seem to go so far as to think that in some future age Jews will be saved because they are Jews. The intelligent student of Scripture will avoid both extremes. Neither attitude finds any basis of justification in Scripture. The Jew has had a unique history. He still today possesses some marked characteristics that set him off from other racial and social groups. But there is no ground either to despise or to persecute, to glorify or unduly to exalt him. He is essentially just a human being, and a sinner by nature in need of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This twofold fact ought to determine our attitude toward him. We stand related to him as fellow human beings in human society, and we stand related to him as bearers of the message of salvation through the Messiah whose coming is announced in the Old Testament as well as the New.
Every Jew, whether he be a Christian in religion or not, is our fellowman. In human society, in the realm where common grace operates, he is to us a fellowman, a fellow-creature of God, made in His image. As such we should not single him out for special treatment, whether mean or otherwise. He is just a common human being, “fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is.” He is entitled to the same human consideration which we owe any other mortal and which any other mortal owes us. But we stand in another relation to him also. If there is a realm of common grace in which we meet the Jew in human society as a human being, we have also a duty to bring him the gospel and to seek to lead him into the realm of God’s special, saving grace. Many who are Jews racially are no longer Jews religiously, having been converted to Christ. Some of the greatest Christian leaders were Jews. In these days when the Jew is greeted by persecution on the one hand and by adulation on the other, let us more than ever seek to bring him to the Christ, the Messiah of the fathers, without whom his self-righteous soul can not be saved any more than that of any other mortal.

C. B.

Acknowledging Almighty God

In these dark days the mind of many people is under pressure turning to God. Prosperity and luxury encourage the spirit of self-sufficiency in man. Hardship and adversity often set him to think upon his ways and to remember his frailty, his insufficiency, his dependence. The blood and the tears of this war may in God’s providence serve a beneficent purpose. For one thing, there seems to be a deeper note in the prayers of many people. God is coming to mean something real and vital to some who had allowed their religious attitude to deteriorate into form and routine. It is refreshing especially to see the recognition of God in the words that come from the lips of the leaders of the nations of the world. Holland’s heroic exiled Queen Wilhelmina broadcast a Christmas message to her subjugated but unconquerable people across the North Sea, in which she praised them for their resistance to “the evil power which would like to poison us with their rottenness and vices and would like nothing better than to rob us of our pure, clean consciences.” Speaking of the spiritual aspect of the battle she stated that “this victory is as necessary as victory over the opponents of our fighting forces, if we are to see the dawn of that better future in which we claim the right to serve God freely without restriction as our conscience bids us.” And then she eloquently voiced their dependence upon God in this sentence: “In this distress and in this struggle, everything in man cries out for inner support from God, toward whom he reaches.” It also does the Christian heart good to read the proclamation of President Roosevelt designating New Year’s Day 1942 as a day of prayer. There is a deeper note in this proclamation than we are wont to find in the usual Thanksgiving Day proclamation from our chief executive. After having spoken of the struggle in which we are engaged, the President continued: “Therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, president of the United States of America, do hereby appoint the first day of the year 1942 as a day of prayer, of asking forgiveness for our shortcomings of the past, of consecration to the tasks of the present, of asking God’s help in days to come.” And then the document closed with this sentence: “We need His guidance that this people may be humble in spirit but strong in the conviction of the right; steadfast to endure sacrifices and brave to achieve a victory of liberty and peace.” May this note continue, and may it swell to a chorus in the hearts of the American people.

C. B.

Three Leaders Retire

U AN DELLEN, Keegstra, and Van Wyk, all of whom have recently retired from the active pastorate in the Christian Reformed Church, all held positions of leadership in their communion. All three of them have served as moderators of the highest judicatory of their Church. All of them have ever enjoyed the confidence and esteem of their confrères. Their counsel and guidance was valued and sought. This trio is also typical of the communion which they served in the ministry for a period of forty to forty-five years. The Christian Reformed Church is an immigrant church. All three of these men are themselves immigrants, having come to this country as young men in the nineties. All three of them passed through the process of Americanization, as did their Church. All three of them imbibed from their Dutch antecedents a knowledge of and love for the best in the Reformed theology of the Netherlands. All three of them knew their Bavinck and their Kuyper, the great Calvinistic theologians of Holland at the turn of the century. On the works of these men their souls were nurtured and in their thought their minds were disciplined. One of them, Van Dellen, himself sat at the feet of Bavinck at Kampen in the early nineties. Also in this love for and devotion to the Reformed Faith this trio reflects the spirit and attitude of the Church which they served. Thoroughly American in language and outlook today, the Christian Reformed Church is still spiritually in close touch with the best that the Reformed leaders in the Netherlands of recent years have to offer. The leadership of men like Van Dellen, Keegstra, and Van Wyk has made no small contribution to the esteem in which the Reformed Faith is held in the
Christian Reformed communion today. These men not only exhibited a genuine devotion to Reformed doctrine, but also evinced a true appreciation of the Scriptures, both exegetically and devotionally. Not one of the three was an orator, but all three were preachers, real preachers. They loved the Word. They served the Word. They knew that their glory was to be Verbi divini ministri. And so they cultivated the exegetical as well as the doctrinal element in their preaching. And all three of them were churchmen with vision and outlook. At no time were they hidebound or conservative for mere conservatism's sake. They have combined a deep love for the living principles of the Word of God and the Reformed Faith with a wholesome, fresh, forward-looking, optimistic approach. They have served their day and generation well and have set an example which the next generation may well strive to emulate.

**Our Need of Christian Fiction**

Every novel to be worthy of the name should be a work of art. A Sunday School story that "preaches" and lays its moral thick upon the conversation of its characters may serve a good purpose, but it is not a work of art. It would, however, be quite misleading to conclude from this that a real work of fiction should not and does not have a message. It does. Cast in artistic form the novel is one of the greatest influences for the cultivation of moral convictions and attitudes. Though indirectly, all the more significant novels inculcate some philosophy of life. In this sense of the word, every novel "preaches" after all. It cannot help doing so. Some novels are great sermons.

Christian people should become increasingly aware of the value and influence which fiction has upon the mind of the rising generation. With the raising of the level of culture and the deepening of literary appreciation among Christian people, there should be an increased recognition of the role which fiction may play in instilling Christian attitudes and evaluations in the mind of young and old. We need Christian novelists. The art of writing should be cultivated among our educated youth. We must learn to make also the realm of art subservient to our King. Fiction is one of the most valuable forms of such artistic enjoyment, and because it depicts the life and thought, the ideas as well as ideals of men in actual life situations, it offers a wonderful opportunity of inculcating true Christian idealism and a genuinely Christian attitude toward life and its experiences.

But we shall not promote the production of Christian fiction unless Christian people become interested in it enough to read it, recommend it, and buy it. Christian people should develop discrimination and a taste for such literature which combines art with truth and purity. We should on the one hand outgrow the type of story which, though it is religious and "preachy," "sound" and harmless, is entirely devoid of artistry and literary merit; and, on the other hand, we must be constantly on our guard against the encroachment of fiction which, though rating high as literature, is anti-Christian in teaching, spirit, and thrust, or morally debasing. Under the false motto of art for art's sake, a good deal of filth cast into beautiful form is put on the market under the caption of literature today. And a good deal of propaganda against the Christian faith and assault upon the verities of the Word of God is dished up today by novelists and placed on the market in novels of artistic merit. Against this Christian people should be on their guard. We should read fiction with discrimination, and recommend not only with a view to literary qualities, but no less with a view to the teaching and thrust of the book, both religiously and morally.

Take, for instance, a book like that of Cronin, *The Keys of the Kingdom*. This book is morally clean and of a high type. You will find on its pages none of the filth so commonly peddled out in novels today and condoned under the label of realism. But its teaching on Christ, Christianity, and the way of salvation is thoroughly unbiblical and anti-Christian. The author makes the leading character say (and what he says on this score is but the articulation of the thrust of the entire story): "Don't forget what Lao-tzu said—'Religions are many, reason is one, we are all brothers.'" (p. 239) "No one in good faith can ever be lost. No one. Buddhists, Mohammedans, Taoists... the blackest cannibals who ever devoted a missionary... If they are sincere according to their own lights, they will be saved. That is the splendid mercy of God. So why shouldn't He enjoy confronting a decent agnostic at the Judgment Seat with a twinkle in his eye: 'I'm here you see, in spite of all they brought you up to believe. Enter the Kingdom which you honestly denied.'" (p. 216) This sort of thing harmonizes pretty well with the teaching of *Rethinking Missions*, of a Pearl Buck in her missionary novels, and of Professor Hocking in his recent *Living Religions and a World Faith*, but it is diametrically opposed to Scripture and implies the repudiation of the very heart of the Christian Faith.

Or take a book like David DeJong's recent *Day of the Trumpet*. The theme of this novel is appealing; its psychological analysis at times beautiful; its style, diction, and descriptive power artistic. But the book is marred in at least two ways. Its attitude toward religion, particularly historic Christianity and the church, is hostile, bitter, at times venomous. The church people in the story are bigots, hypocrites, lacking in the finer human qualities. It does not require an inside knowledge of Mr. DeJong's personal relations with the Church to discover that he is using his novels (for this is not the first nor, possibly, the worst on this score from his pen) to air his peeves against the very religious group in which he himself has been reared. The unfairness of the
delineation of his "religious" characters is apparent to all who know the sterling qualities of the Calvinistic Dutch, qualities deeply rooted in and nourished by their religious convictions and attitudes. No one will deny the presence of an occasional hypocrite in any religious group, but the painting of such hypocrisy as typical of the group as a whole, is quite unfair and untruthful. Such propaganda can only serve to poison the mind of the reader against the church and against historical, biblical Christianity. The other black blot on the book is its suggestiveness and filth. Like Old Haven, wenches and harlots, bawdy houses and bedroom experiences are exploited. Part IV is clean and a beautiful description of the German invasion of Holland, but the rest of the book delights in adultery and fornication. Part IV might appropriately be covered with the title of the book, but the rest of the story might with equal propriety be called, Days (and Nights) of the Strumpet.

Possibly some readers ask: But what can be recommended under the name of Christian fiction? That is a legitimate question. Librarians, teachers, parents, and those who have the fine custom of buying books as gifts for their friends, repeatedly ask this question. There is a great deal of fine fiction that is clean and uplifting and not marred by hostile thrusts against the Faith we hold dear. Just now we are happy to be able to point to at least one such book, a recent publication that is both artistic and uplifting, religiously and morally. I refer to Kruithof's Instead of the Thorn. (Publishers: The Half Moon Press, 156 Fifth Ave., New York. Price $1.50). It is a 1941 publication which is already beginning to make a good sale. It was reviewed by Professor De Graaf of Hope College in the November issue of The Calvin Forum. Here is Christian fiction. The author gives fine glimpses into the soul of the same intensely religious Dutch with whom DeJong deals, except that he lays the scene among the Holland-American immigrants of the state of Michigan. But what a difference between the soul canvasses of DeJong and those of Kruithof. There is no preaching here and surely no attempt to make people appear religious. His etchings are true to life and therefore he has succeeded in showing the beauty and strength of character produced by the faith of these sturdy Calvinists. You rise from the reading of a novel like Kruithof's not only artistically enriched but also spiritually refreshed.

C. B.

The Task We Face

Henry J. Ryskamp

WHAT was just a small cloud on the international horizon when Nazism and Fascism arose in Europe has become a storm of world proportions. The storm that we thought could never reach here or that would pass us by has struck.

We have been told of one man's planning for Germany and for Europe, we have had his book to read and the teachings of his advisers, particularly in the field of geography or geopolitics, explained for us, but we regarded his schemes as fantastic, his time table as amusing, and the tenets of his advisers as being as unrealistic as many of the theories advanced during the thirties for the ending of the depression. Now the parts of the picture so roughly sketched in at first are beginning to stand out. Or, to change the figure, the picture on the screen which was so badly blurred has suddenly become clear, as suddenly as if the lens of the projector had been adjusted and the confused lines and shadows had been brought into brilliant focus.

The Great Pincers Movement

There are now two centers of world disturbance the one in Europe and the other in the East. Though it would seem almost impossible that there could be a relation between the two it now appears that political and military phenomena are no stranger or, if studied carefully, no less understandable than the meteorological. Germany in Europe and Japan in the Orient have both regarded themselves as late-comers in a world in which the claims had already been staked out by others. Recognizing these claims as having been made in the first instance on the basis of superior force, and maintained in large measure in the same way, they have sought a means of circumventing established authority by a power of their own that would completely displace the old, vested interests. Both of these countries need resources and both have been thwarted in their attempts to get them thus far, not only by their own high-handed methods, but also by the superior strength of the possessors, especially by the strength represented in naval power sufficient to hold far-flung world resources in the hands of the present owners.

Germany's strategists, although not by any means disrespectful of the value of naval combat, have up to this time placed especial emphasis upon gaining resources by land and air attack and thus making sea-power ineffective. If Germany should succeed, or had succeeded, in getting most of Russia, the near East, and North Africa, England's reliance on her fleet to hold back Germany would be futile. And if Japan should be able to complete her conquest of China, the Malay peninsula, and the islands of the

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Pacific, England would indeed be held by a strangle hold.

War bulletins have so popularized the pincer movements of the German army that all who hear and read must know what these encircling movements mean in the way of cutting off armies, supplies and geographic areas. It now seems that Germany and Japan are attempting to complete a vast pincer movement that would give them the continent of Europe and Africa on the one side and Asia and the control of the Pacific on the other. Completion of such a movement would have a very obvious meaning for England, and for this country as well. It would mean domination of all exports from these areas to our western hemisphere, and would therefore, unless we could assert ourselves as powerfully or more powerfully than they, mean that they would control our trade also. That, apparently, is what our government realized in its conduct of our foreign affairs, and that has now suddenly been brought home to us by the attack upon us.

Totalitarian Designs and their Implications for Us.

We now know how extensive the planning must have been and how huge the preparation for aggression actually has been. The intensive internal organization effected in Germany we have not been unaware of, but we tended to doubt its effectiveness. The motivation we were inclined to regard as beyond or below that which human beings would long permit to move them. We know now that all this has actually been accomplished. Germany and Japan have given us striking examples of successful planning, careful organization, centralized authority sufficient for the execution of plans, domination of all people and materials covered by the plans, slavery even for those who opposed or were regarded as worthy of no better lot. We have fortunately not been caught altogether unprepared. But we are, in the main, ignorant still of the great movements afoot and of their implications.

One thing is obvious, the thinking and the planning of the aggressors had a sweep far greater, if not grander, than we believed them capable of devising. Responsible as we ourselves have been in the past for this direction which the forces of history have taken, we must now both because of our own sins and because of the viciousness and the extent of the attack upon existing human relations oppose the forces that have been set in operation. Recognizing a greater directing hand than that of a Hitler we must with clear eyes, with purified hearts and minds, with prayers on our lips, and with hands that are willing to give all in consecrated endeavor, accept the task that has been given us, that of fighting to re-establish and to maintain a greater measure of justice in the relations between men.

It is clear now that our concerted effort of the last few years in fighting the forces of the depression must be turned toward meeting the challenge of war. It is not a hasty, unfounded opinion that the carrying on of this war may be a matter of years. Germany and Japan have already had a war economy for a decade and it would seem that we must prepare for a period at least half that long. Thoughtful men have anticipated this shift of emphasis in world history. Texts on the economics of war are beginning to appear, and we shall do well to be carefully advised by them and to move slowly into, through, and out of the war period. This fight is not just a matter of "licking" somebody, but of carefully considering and seeking to achieve all the broader ends involved.

Organizing for the Conduct of the War

We shall have to settle back into our military harness for the long hard pull instead of waiting impatiently to hear that the attack on Pearl Harbor has been immediately avenged. We have still to mobilize our man power, selecting those whom we need for military duty and assigning the others, women perhaps as well as men, to the equally necessary tasks behind the lines. Too rapid preparation and mobilization of an army, navy, or airforce would quite certainly be disastrous, as the experience of Russia in the first world war taught us. We must still build plants for the production of war materials. (How fortunate that we have already spent a year in building some of the most marvelous plants in the world). We must assure ourselves of raw materials, and in some instances, as in the case of rubber, we may have to build plants to manufacture substitutes. We must be certain before we risk the lives of our boys at sea, on land, or in the air that we can support them with what they need. That means very efficient transportation of goods, and, what is more important, equitable distribution of goods between the military and civilian population. To provide the sinews of war we must supply the government with money in sums that will make the "astronomical figures" of government finance of the thirties look insignificant. If we do not want our financial structure to topple during or after the war we must provide much of the money in what is rightly called "the heroic way," that is by means of taxation. But to provide much of what we need by taxation for a government that may require, not the 35% of the national income that it required in 1918, but a possible 50% of the national income to carry on its ordinary and extraordinary tasks will not be easy. All of us will be affected and will have to assume our burden, if not voluntarily then by compulsion. Democratic governments are not as aggressive, it would seem, and may lose many a battle for lack of preparation, as we have learned. They too must resort to centralized control and to coercion of various kinds to get us, the lovers of freedom, to cooperate. The government will have to insist on priority in the use of raw materials for military and other essential purposes, and certain of our consumer goods industries may have to close down.
Consequently we shall have to get along with less. And this “getting along with less” will mean rationing to bring us all into line.

All of this will mean a radical change in our economy. For the duration of the war the old liberal capitalism will be almost completely “on the shelf.” Everything will, of course, not have to be controlled. Industry is by no means under complete government control in England. But more industries will be operated by the government, and a larger number, especially the basic industries, will be more fully regulated as to working conditions, hours, wages, and prices.

**After the War**

During the depression, and now again during our preparation for defense, men have expressed very real concern that our liberal political and economic order would pass with the new measures put into operation in order to meet “the emergency.” Our old familiar political as well as economic organization started with the individual and moved outward in ever broadening spheres of influence. It was this that stirred men’s souls and ambitions, that led to noble endeavor, but it was this also that frequently resulted in ignoble pressures upon men.

It was pressure of this kind that led to the discarding of many of the capitalistic forms of organization within the nations of the old world and that caused such a decided reaction in this country after 1929. Pressure groups within nations squeezed out, used pincer movements on, old established interests and unsatisfied desires, long repressed and suppressed in a supposedly free world. The new movements carried within them evil and good forces. And whereas the old order had ostensibly been an expression of personal initiative and freedom, but actually a manifestation of frustration of personal needs of the many by the selfishness of others, so the new order in the totalitarian states raised the impersonal state as the ideal and sacrificed not only the selfish individual but human nature itself. Writing in *Harpers Magazine* for November 1941 H. W. Weigert informs us that, “The most important conclusion to which a study of German geopolitics leads is that in many thousands of pages, written with all the skill of geopolitical training, reverence for the dignity of human life never appears—not even between the lines.”

Now these forces which men the world over have set into operation are encircling us as if they were the claws of a great pincer. They happen, at the moment, to be the claws of the German and Japan­ese war machines, but these are but the symbols or the manifestations of forces which, having issued from within us as self-satisfied individuals, unresponsive to our duties to each other and our God, have come back to harass us through the impersonal god of the totalitarian states. Weigert writes, “The Weltanschauung of geographic materialism is but a dynamic nihilism which can flourish only in a nation which has buried its Gods and which instead is worshipping Mars.”

We must seek to break the claws of this great movement. To do so we must meet the enemy within us as individuals and as a nation first. We must learn to cooperate in a way that we never have before. Wallace Brett Donham, Dean of the Harvard School of Business, writing in *Harpers* for January 1942, urges careful individual preparation for life as the first great challenge to the colleges of today, but after this challenge has been met he insists, “every effort should be made . . . in order to condition our youth for cooperative life in a democracy.” “Is freedom worth systematic efforts to rebuild the habit of cooperation with other men which this country once had in high degree?” he asks. “If not, even fighting for freedom can lead only to some type of autocracy.”

We must use means to accomplish our immediate ends in the present crisis which many of us undoubtedly fear, even the use of an almost all powerful state. And if we really fear such concentration of power we should remember, as Donham reminds us, that Lincoln and Wilson had similar powers. We might when looking into the future reflect on his statement that, “If we lose our freedom after this emergency it will not be because of power granted as a defense measure to the chief executive, but because we individually have lost the loyalties, the love of country, the acceptance of voluntary disciplines, the willingness to work, the courage to face the future, and, above all, the habit of cooperation without which a free democratic nation cannot exist.” As concerns the international crisis we may add that unless men learn to extend the habit of cooperation to the relations between nations, the “war gods” will raise their heads again and the dangerous encircling movements will be renewed.

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**Courageous Doing**

It takes courageous doing to build what was thrown down.

Around me is a lot of wreckage strewn.

Here are the splintered rails time has outgrown—

Flotsam and jetsam of a life’s mad spume.

Yet, as upon the old debris I frown,

I see therein a pattern incomplete.

It beauty bears, though sweetness it has none.

It brings the challenge that with love replete

These tools in hands now somewhat gentler grown.

May yet by grace of God defy defeat,

And build a structure that our pride may own.

It takes courageous doing—but we’ll never say: retreat.

And as we work together, we will find the doing sweet.

—J. G. G.

THE CALVIN FORUM • • • JANUARY, 1942
A Proposed Ecumenical Synod

I. Van Dellen
Redlands, California

It is a pleasure indeed to note the ecumenical spirit of The Calvin Forum. How refreshing it is to read articles and letters of brethren who subscribe with us to the same great truths of our Reformed faith, though they belong to other denominations and live in distant countries. When reading their contributions our oneness in Christ is felt. This experience has something in common with the one of the apostle Paul on the Via Appia near the city of Rome, when, seeing the brethren, he took courage. One is inclined to feel lonely and forsaken in the midst of the American church world with its superficiality and its confusion of tongues. It often seems as if the little group or church to which we belong is left alone. And it is such a comfort to discover that there are still the seven thousand who do not bend the knee to the idols of Arminianism and Modernism.

We should cultivate this ecumenical spirit for which our monthly is standing. And in doing this we should not for a moment give into a movement fostered by the Modernists of various shades, who claim to be broad and open minded, and who try to evaporate the fundamentals of Christianity. As the spiritual issue of John Calvin we should be and become more distinct and definite. That will not prevent us from coming closer together. To the contrary. The clearer our insight into the truth which we confess, the more we discuss the great fundamental truths if we do it with understanding. That will bring us nearer to the time when we shall know as we are known, and when the general assembly of God’s elect shall forever rejoice in the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

In view of these considerations I deem it a privilege to have been requested by Dr. Bouma to write on our ecumenicity.

Planning an Ecumenical Synod

Under date of June 30, 1930, “Die Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid Afrika” sent a communication to “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland” and to “The Christian Reformed Church in America” requesting those churches to consider the calling of an ecumenical Synod.

Both churches acted upon the request of the South African church, and in conjunction with this church began to plan for such a gathering.

It was understood that “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland” should take the lead in this movement by inviting various churches to meet with them at the appointed place in their country.

The General Synod of “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland” in session at Arnhem in the year 1930 stated that it favored an ecumenical synod of churches which are one in the Reformed faith, and that it was willing to call such a synod. The committee for correspondence with churches in other countries (Buitenlandsche kerken) was instructed to make a thorough study of the possibility of such a synod, and of its character and constituency. This committee should also consult with sister churches with which “De Gereformeerde Kerken” officially correspond.

Meanwhile the world-wide economic depression put a damper on the plan. Action was postponed but not indefinitely deferred. The three churches originally interested in the plan kept corresponding. The result was that “Die Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid Afrika” and the Christian Reformed Church in America each sent two delegates to the synod of “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland” meeting at Sneek, 1939, to consult about this plan.

This time much headway was made, and it seemed that the ecumenical synod soon would become a reality. But then—the terrible war broke out. We lost contact with the churches in the Netherlands, and at present the ecumenical synod belongs to the pia voto.

However, we must not lose courage. We should keep the ideal alive hoping and praying that in God’s own good time we will reach it.

More than ever the Reformed churches in the world and in our own country should live in intimate relationship with each other. We need each other in our fight against the common foe. Our problems are great, the temptations are many, and they become more international and universal. We need to strengthen each other while the enemies of our common faith grow in might and power. We must also warn and correct each other in these days of apostasy lest we lose the faith of our fathers, and do not keep our lights burning expecting the Bridesgroom.

The Character of an Ecumenical Synod

The synod of Arnhem (1930) stated that an ecumenical synod, as desired, would be a synod of the Reformed churches of the various countries, which churches are one in the Reformed faith. (“Een Synode van de gereformeerde kerken uit de onder­scheiden landen die één zijn in de gereformeerde belijdenis”).

This is a carefully worded definition.
It is a synod of the Reformed churches. Not of some of them but as far as possible of all the Reformed churches found in the various countries. No Reformed church and no country is excluded. But there is one limitation. The churches must be one in their faith (belijdenis). We translated the word "belijdenis" by "faith" because the meaning is not that all those churches must have the same confession of faith. They may have different standards, as the Belgic confession and the Westminster confession, but they should be one in the Reformed faith to which they give expression in their respective doctrinal standards.

The assembly of these churches is called an ecumenical synod.

Does this synod, this ecclesiastical gathering, have the same authority as the particular and general synods or assemblies in our Presbyterian system of church government? The church order of "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" (art. 36) says: "The Classis has the same jurisdiction (zeggenschap) over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular." Does the proposed plan contemplate adding a new clause to this article stating: "And the Ecumenical Synod over the General Synod"? Will this ecumenical synod be the broadest assembly, or as some prefer to say, the highest church court?

The answer is decidedly negative.

There is no specific ecclesiastical connection (kerkverband) between those various denominations which plan to meet in an ecumenical synod. The churches meet upon invitation, and are not under obligation ecclesiastically to take part in this assembly. These various denominations do not stand in the same relationship to each other as do the churches of the same denomination. But can such an ecumenical gathering then be called a synod? The answer must be: Yes, for we have here an assembly of churches and not of persons, who meet as mere individuals to confer with each other. Various churches or denominations come together through their representatives as is also the case in classes and synods of the one denomination. Hence this assembly is an ecclesiastical body, called synod.

It stands to reason however that this synod has not the same jurisdiction or authority as synods within a denomination. In art. 31 of the Church Order of "De Gereformeerde Kerken" it is stated of the meetings of ecclesiastical assemblies: "Whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding." But the pronouncements or decisions of such an ecumenical synod cannot have such a binding character for the various churches which constitute such a synod.

The decisions of such a synod can have only such authority as is given to them by each participating denomination.

In general such a synod would bear the character of a conference, especially at first. But this does not mean that such a synod cannot be of very great significance. There are many questions on which the various churches should come to an understanding.

It will be very difficult to decide which churches are truly one in faith with the true Reformed churches. It is not sufficient of course that the church just nominally subscribes to its Reformed standards. It must also maintain what it officially confesses. It must be loyal to its confession in doctrine as well as in life. The confession must be more than an antique stored away to be exhibited only on solemn occasions.

The Netherlands synod of Sneek (1939) has also considered this difficulty but it is probably better at present not to enter upon this subject.

Those who wish to study the plan of "De Gereformeerde Kerken" in an ecumenical synod might study the report of its committee found in the acts of the synod of Sneek, 1939, appendix LV.

Ecumenically Minded

Does such a movement appeal to us?

Seemingly THE CALVIN FORUM proves abundantly that we are ecumenically minded. Think for instance of the articles on Ecumenical Calvinism edited by Dr. J. T. Hoogstra. The aim of THE CALVIN FORUM evidently is through its pages to bring leading Calvinists of various countries into closer contact. And not only through THE CALVIN FORUM but also otherwise as in Calvinistic Philosophy Clubs men of learning of the Reformed persuasion meet to exchange thoughts so that they may come to a clearer understanding of the truth.

All this plainly shows that our group endeavors to cultivate the ecumenical spirit.

And this is something for which we should be very grateful, for it indicates that there is among us a revival of Calvinism.

History teaches us that the more virile we are in our holy faith and the deeper and stronger convictions we have, the more we seek to manifest our unity. On the other hand, when the churches become lukewarm, and lose sight of the great fundamentals, they have a tendency to become separatistic. They then become provincial in their fight for a mere organization instead of for the truth, and sectarian by emphasizing non-essentials or things on the periphery, which become their shibboleths.

It has ever been true of the church that the higher it stood, the more it strove to manifest its catholicity.

We see this in the church of the first centuries, which was still outwardly one and hence could meet in its great ecumenical councils, to which we owe our ecumenical creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. In the days of the reformation of the sixteenth century this ecumenical spirit was also clearly seen. Think of the reformer of Geneva, who was as it were in his person the embodiment of true ecumenicity. He was standing in living contact with the Reformed churches of the world, and...
also in this respect reminds us of the apostle Paul. The only time when the Reformed churches approached the ideal of an ecumenical synod was when they met at Dort in 1618-19. And that was during their golden era, when they bore such a wonderful testimony to God's sovereignty, and when in their "Canons," or "Five Articles Against the Remonstrants" they gave to the doctrine of election its proper place as the cor ecclesiae.

It almost sounds paradoxical but the secessions of the nineteenth century showed the same tendency to unite with all true believers. Hendrik De Cock stated in De Acte van Afscheiding en Wederkeering, (the official document by which he with his congregation separated from the established church and returned to the historic Reformed truth): "We desire to have communion with all true Reformed members of the church, and to unite with each assembly which is founded upon the infallible Word of God at whatsoever place God has gathered the same."

And Dr. Herman Bavinck, probably the greatest "son of the secession," about half a century afterward delivered his first official oration as professor of the theological school at Kampen on: The Catholicity of Christendom and Church.

The great leaders of Reformed thought in the Netherlands, in Scotland and England, and in America sought each other. Kuyper and Bavinck crossed the Atlantic to lecture at the Princeton Seminary, where they rejoiced in the fellowship of true Calvinism with men like Warfield, the Hodges, Vos and others. And at the present time we try to contact the Reformed people in Hungary and Australia, in France, and all around the globe.

How to Prepare for an Ecumenical Synod

We take for granted that many readers of The Calvin Forum hope that in the near future many Reformed churches can meet in an ecumenical synod.

But can we at present do anything to promote this great cause? We lost contact with the churches in the Netherlands and in continental Europe. Is it not best to wait till the curtain is lifted, and our God permits us again to have free intercourse with the Reformed churches of the world?

It is evident that as long as this war lasts a truly ecumenical synod cannot meet. But we could prepare for such a synod by drawing closer together as Reformed churches in our country and continent. Apparently the churches in South Africa are already moving in that direction, and it would be well for us to follow their example, and at the same time to seek closer contact with the Reformed churches which can still be reached.

It is of great value that we meet as individuals in clubs and that we discuss our problems in periodicals like The Calvin Forum. But all this is not sufficient. The Reformed churches need each other. We should try to find the reasons why we do not live together in the same church home; and whatsoever is in the way, because it is contrary to the truth, should be removed. This can only be accomplished by meeting as Churches to consider what separates us, and above all to strengthen as one man the walls of Zion against the common foe.

In pleading for an assembly of Reformed churches in our country we do not in the first place aim at church union. Union with all those who stand with us for the same Reformed truth certainly must be sought, but that does not mean that the organizations as they now are constituted, can unite or should unite. But we firmly believe that the churches which profess adherence to the Reformed faith have a great responsibility toward each other. Far be it from us to say: Am I my brother's keeper?

It is not at all sufficient to send fraternal delegates to greet each other. That in itself is a beautiful gesture. But it profits little. We must meet as churches to help each other, and to correct each other, and to find each other.

Much could be said on this subject, but we must limit ourselves to what has been remarked.

May we expect the reaction of brethren of various churches?

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Lines for a Friend

It is not enough to say
With smiling lips, or jovial glance,
"Farewell, dear friend, and prosper thee."
No glance, no smile, no word sufficient is
My mind, my wish, to speak with ease.

The best farewell, it seems to me,
Is no farewell at all—is this—
That just as verdure comes with spring—
As loveliness is never always dead—
That just as beauty finds its worshipers,
  My thought of you—
Uncrushed throughout the years,
Untouched by disappointed memories—
  Survives, now hidden, now recalled—
A blossom in the breeze,
Soon scattering, breathing forth
Its seed for new array of memories.

Now surely you must know that
Memories of you are firmly twined
Within the beauty in my mind.

—C. V. Z.
Why Art for the Calvinist?

Henry J. Van Andel

The spheres of religion, politics, education and economics have generally received close attention in Calvinistic circles. But art has often been treated like a stepchild. Not long after Abraham Kuyper had delivered his rectoral oration on Calvinism and Art, his colleague Geesink remarked that this “marriage” had been annulled on the day of the wedding. There must be something in the traditional Calvinistic way of living—not in the Calvinistic life and world view, we believe—that is an obstacle to art. Is it perhaps the Puritanic tradition, so ingrained in England because than the life to come? Is it perhaps the Genevan cause the notorious Libertines abused their privileges? Is it perhaps the Dutch tradition of strictness and severity, so strong because there is so much in the world of art that is forbidden fruit for a sincere Christian? Is it, because the world of higher culture seems to be in the clutches of Satan more than any other realm?

What Art May Do

However this may be, the abuse does not abolish the good use of art, and certainly not, when Calvinists of all generations insist, perhaps more than any other group, on education. Education, once engaged in, drives us on, inexorably, to the consequences of art. We cannot stop to educate our children in religion, politics, sociology, economics, history, philosophy, and the natural sciences, and leave literature alone, and music, and the drama, and architecture and sculpture! We may make an exception for one category of art, because it is so very hard to keep it pure from the contaminations of the flesh—we mean dancing and the ballet—but the exception will then affirm the rule. We had better make up our minds that we are going to do justice to art, and to perform in such a way that we do not have to compromise with our principles of good and evil. For it is no longer possible to exclude art from our lives, if we have the ambition to found Christian high schools and colleges, where our youth is trained in the other categories of life.

Of course, not every one is artistically inclined. But it is remarkable how easy it is to raise the standard of life to interest the general public in good books, in good performances, and in art galleries, once they have cultivated a taste for the beautiful. Art does not only enrich the life of the artist, and the life of those who enjoy art with an inborn instinct, but art is also a powerful factor to lift the masses to a higher level, to fill the minds of the people with worthwhile things that are not of the ordinary.

Moreover, if there were more art in our lives, there would be less opportunity for strife and jealousy, more happiness and contentment, more harmony. This holds so much the more for the Christian. If art is part and parcel of life, a Christian will not succeed in slighting it with impunity. Artless lives must necessarily be poor lives. Poor lives are unbalanced and disharmonious. Lack of harmony disturbs our lives and the lives of those whom we meet. And this is no fiction! In his pamphlet, De Wereld en Wij, the Rev. Veltkamp, of Sneek (Netherlands) points out that there are two great public sins among us Calvinists. (They may be the result of our historical lack of interest in art). They are quarreling and calumny. It is a terrible indictment. But we had better face the facts. The author of this pamphlet has also the audacity to say that this is worse than the external worldliness of the young people who visit doubtful amusements. He points out that the Apostle calls these two sins adultery. And in prophetic fashion he warns the older generation that all their zeal to warn young people against worldly amusements will not be of any avail, as long as the older ones insist on fighting and backbiting. Indeed, let there be more art in our lives, and less ugliness. Let there be more moderation, and less deviltry, more harmony and less friction.

Art a God-Given Creation

But there are also positive reasons why Calvinists should insist on art in their lives. Art is more than a stopgap, a futility, a plaything, a toy, a lollypop to keep children quiet. Art is a Godgiven creation. God himself is the perfect artist, and He wants us, all of us, to be creative artists, each one according to his make-up. It may be true that many of us will not emerge beyond the stage of crude, or even refined primitivism, but that does not excuse us. And, moreover, if we are not all creators and poets, i.e., makers, or even imitators, our Heavenly Father has endowed us all with a sense of beauty. Some of us have an exquisite taste in certain lines. But even if we are not aesthetes, fijnproovers as the Dutch say, we all have the artistic instinct in some measure. This is part of our mental system. And, if it is, we have no right to neglect it. We can stop, look, and listen. We can visit art galleries. We can attend concerts, dramatic performances, special exhibits,
provided they are within certain bounds. We can educate our young people in the arts of drawing, singing and playing. We can promote bands and orchestras of our own. We can encourage our choir-masters and organists by rewarding them decently instead of treating them like unpaid mission-workers. We can open our schools for art and music teachers of our own religious convictions instead of entrusting our children to outsiders who are liberals or semi-liberals. Why be so favorable to our future teachers and preachers, doctors and lawyers, and so partial to our lovers of art? Out of Zion God appears in his beauty! This has been called the classical text quoted by Dr. Abraham Kuyper in his rectoral oration on Calvinism and Art. The religious argument for art is certainly the strongest. Art is a gift of our Creator. Art is included in the "eleventh commandment," the common mandate, as Professor Schilder has called it. Art is part of the life task of mankind, even in a measure of every individual. Art is part of the treasures of the Kings of the earth. True art will enter heaven, not through a back door, but as an integral ingredient of the life that is redeemed by Christ.

Art is the Flower of Life

A second reason why we should give art the rightful place in our lives is that art has great values of its own. I do not mean only what I pointed out in a preceding paragraph, that art is an excellent means in our lives to deliver us from narrow-mindedness, quarreling jealousy, excessive piety, intolerance, imposition, dogmatism, self-righteousness, and all the vices that accompany the hyper-puritanical tendency of Christian life which makes us a nuisance to others and an enfant terrible for the church and the community. But I want to refer now to the fact that art is the flower of life. Art makes life pleasant, joyful, quiet, soothing, mysterious, uplifting, sweet. The Apostle Paul refers to this when he admonishes us to seek all that is lovely. When he warns us that though every good thing may be allowable, that it is not therefore expedient. We must not only be righteous, but we must also be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. This cannot mean that we must be angels, spirits without bodies, but it does mean that our lives must be harmonious, orderly, peace-loving, balanced, beautiful. Puritanism, which I would define as an over-emphasis of the serious side of life and as a misdirected effort to reform others according to our streamlined model, is apt to rob us of the joy of life. It makes us tense, over-critical, uncharitable, and even imperious. But whoever allows art the rightful place in life will seek to make life more pleasing to others, and to self.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever, said Keats. This holds also, and more so for the Saints. The stars are beautiful, because they please everyone, while no one wants to possess them, remarked Schopenhauer. We can fill our lives with beauty not only by making color trips in the fall, and in the spring, but also by finding comfort in pictures, in musical records, in poetry, in fiction, in dramas. Not to make all those elements of life substitutes for religion. Not to rule out meditation and prayer. But to make our lives rich with the things that God has made beautiful, and with the best products of the geniuses whose Creator is the God of beauty. If art begins to take the place of religion—as it does in the catholic and modernistic churches—it is out of the evil one. If we enjoy art to escape, or to drown the voice of conscience, and to deprive the Lord of our hours of prayer and worship, we sin against our Covenant Lord, and we are covenant breakers. But we must not forget, that the Old Testament Jews repeatedly broke the covenant though they were little interested in culture and art. They were simple farmers, and later incipient merchants, but by setting their hearts on their work they became idolaters, or pharisees. It is not art that is dangerous. It is the sinful heart that leads us astray. Art is not satanic by nature, but is a creature of God. Its main function is to enrich life, to perfect it, to make it a profounder joy by putting on the finishing touches. Whoever banishes art, banishes not only comfort and convenience, but the noblest and the most unselfish blossom of the arboretum of human existence.

Art as Life’s Mirror

Finally, art is not only a legitimate outlet of a creative instinct, and a garden which makes our lives and the lives of others a great paradise, but art is also a faithful mirror of life. It has ethical values. There is nothing that reveals more what is in man than art. Real art is no camouflage, but a revelation. In every field of human endeavor there is a gigantic effort to cover up mistakes, and even corruption. But real art is frank. This does not mean that all frankness is art. An artist is bound by the same laws of decency as any human being. He ought, therefore, to practice restraint, reserve, suspense. But within these limits a writer and a painter, a dramatist and an etcher can say more than a pulpiteer, a statesman, an educator, a leader of labor or capital. That is also a reason why it is necessary to read up-to-date books (which takes less time than to mingle with the crowd). If ministers and educators, if leaders in state and society want to be effective, they will have to read novels and dramas, listen to music, and visit art galleries. For, how can we influence others, if we do not know what is going on in the world below the surface? Art discloses the subconscious. Art shows up the hidden motives, the secret thoughts of mankind. Art is the most intensive of the so-called humanities. It enables us to get acquainted with the moral fiber of humanity.

In doing this we must be critical. We must distinguish between good and evil, but it is not sufficient to be either abstaining, or to be selective, i.e., to
avoid the doubtful and the bad, and to limit ourselves to so-called good art. For even in good art, even in Christian art, there lurk both the Puritan and the Libertine, as they lurk in every human heart. The solution is not so simple as it appears. The "last Puritan" did not die at Harvard when Santayana became emeritus. Puritans and Stoical Humanists are bedfellows, and of libertines the world is brimful. We must forever then be on our guard as faithful watchmen against both extremes. We may enjoy God's world, but we must never forget to remain balanced and critical, for the world is not only God's cosmos, but the world can also be the world of evil. We must not be over-critical, for then we must go out of the world. We must not be uncritical and indulge in sin under the cover of a wrong interpretation of Christian liberty. But we must be discreet and moderate. This is not synonymous with total abstinence, the much advocated remedy of our sincere moralists, nor with external selection, the panacea of our artistically inclined young people. Real criticism is akin to the Greek word from which it is derived, which means to distinguish, and, therefore, to be distinct.

**Abstention or Selection?**

Scripture suggested two ways, each in its own place, time, and manner. (Cf. Calvin's Institutes, Book III, Chapter XIX, pp. and 15.)

Total abstinence may be the safest way in times of total corruption, or, if certain institutions are on the verge of moral bankruptcy, but the principle of genuine, spiritual selectiveness has its right when God in his common grace restrains the world, and makes it possible for us to enjoy in a measure some of the things which the unbelievers or half-believers offer. No one will avoid the universities of our land, though the professors in their great majority fail to recognize God in their teaching. We may have to avoid the "philosophers," because they are the most fanatic crew of the ship of learning. But in the other subjects our young students ought to have enough Christian stamina, if they have been trained in Christian institutions, and if they receive the spiritual care of intelligent ministers while attending the university. In the realm of art we may have to avoid several things because they are corrupted by their environment. We may have to discard certain magazines and books, because our children are too young to be exposed to any profanity or sexuality, but this does not mean that grownups should be treated like adolescents, that college students should be held to the same restrictions as high school students, or that people who believe in the principle of total abstinence should impose upon the conscience of those who believe in a different mode of conduct.

In Reformed circles the world over, and as far as the history of Calvinism goes back, there have been "abstainers" and "selectors" in regard to the good and decent things which are offered by the world. There should be no disagreement as to the bad, and even the doubtful in art. *In twijfel onthoudt u, in doubt abstain*, has always been an efficient rule. But when it comes to the good and the excellent things in the realms of science and art, there might be a little more consideration on the part of those who have for themselves conscientious scruples against any modern literature and art. The principle of total abstinence, if carried to its logical conclusion, will lead to the closing of any Christian college. It is impossible to keep away from our college students all the literature and art that is contaminated by sin. It is impossible even to live in this wicked world, if we want to be conscientious abstainers. Even the Bible pictures the lives of the wicked. Let us leave room for a little Christian liberty of conscience, and not condemn indiscriminately what does not suit our particular taste.

But this is necessary. Because life has been contaminated by sin, we must hold up art, the mirror of life, to the mirror of the word of God. No artist has the right to trample the principles of art and morality under foot on the pretense of frankness. This very frankness, honesty, insight into the depths of human nature, makes real art not only a garden of beauty, but also a document of sinful human experience. And this calls for a criterium of superhuman origin, which every adult Christian ought to apply for himself with a free conscience.

**Workshop — Garden — Mirror**

Let us keep the threefold character of art in mind. Art is an outlet for the creative instinct of the individual. Art is also bound to please self and others, and it is to reveal the secret motives of the human heart. Art is the workshop of life, the garden of life, and the mirror of life. It is a task, a joy, and a revelation. Art is creative, idealistic, and realistic in nature. Art must strive to fashion a whole, a harmonious whole, that was Plato's find. Art must also be true to life, that was Aristotle's maxim. In all three aspects, as a creation, as a perfection, and as a revelation, it must obey the laws of the all-wise Creator. In the light of the Logos we see the light. No art is genuine, full-orbed unless it obeys God's laws for the true, the good and the beautiful. It is these three qualities of art, the workshop, the garden, and the mirror; the practical, the ideal, and the real; the creative, the romantic and the realistic (in the good sense of the word); that make art such a valuable asset if it is used right. On the one hand we cannot enjoy life to the full, if we leave beauty out whether we make or absorb it; on the other hand we do not know life in its intimacies, in its profoundest mysteries, if we forget that art is documented experience. We shall, therefore, have to take the sorrow with the joy, the strife with the harmony, the crisis with the epos. Socrates pointed this out in the hour of his death. Solomon expresses the same sentiment in the words: Whoever gathers knowl-
edge, gathers sorrow. The minor chords are mixed up with the major chords.

"Op den bodem aller vragen
Ligt der wereld zondeschuld."

At the bottom of all questions is the sin of mankind, as the great Dutch poet Isaac De Costa put it. As long as we are in this life, we shall have to cope with sin and its consequences. We cannot evade sin and misery in art either. Our problem as Christians is not how to escape from the world of sin and misery, but how to stand in our liberty and how to meet the temptations of life squarely. In the realm of art this means that we shall have to be on our guard, perhaps more than anywhere else, but it does not mean that we have to forego all of it. As a workshop of life, art ought to keep us busy in a pleasant and useful way, but to the glory of God. As a mirror of life art ought to make us critical. As a garden of joy it ought to make us grateful and enthusiastic. Everything—also art—is ours, but we are Christ's.

Back to the Crossroads
A New Year Cartoon in Words

In the center of our cartoon we sketch a man with a large round head, criss-crossed by lines. Yes, we recognize him, he is The World. The World is standing on a road, overlooking a landscape of wild confusion, tangled thorny briers and thick undergrowth combine to make a black impenetrable mass. Above the tangled blackness, we set in large letters the growls of wild beasts as they burst up from below. It is literally a "howling wilderness."

Behind The World as he stands before that wilderness stretches the road. Far back down the road we see the point at which it branched off from another road, and at the fork stands a sign board. We can just manage to read the lettering. One arrow of the sign-board points up the road and says, "To Paradise, Bad Road Ahead." The other arrow points up the road that The World has taken and reads, "To Paradise, New Super-Highway." Is it any wonder, then, that The World now stands confused and cranes his neck to see a way over the wilderness to which the "Super-highway" has led him?

Just now The World is beginning to expostulate with another man who stands before him, urging him on along the impossible road. The man is dressed in, yes, the shiny new robes of The Church. The World is really inclined to believe him when he insists that Paradise must surely lie somewhere out beyond these briers and wild beasts. "After all," he urges, "look at the fine super-highway that has been laid. Surely all the time and effort expended on that was not for nothing." But even as he says it, the churchman's eyes cloud over with a measure of uncertainty, he is really beginning to doubt it himself. There surely is no denying that the super-highway has led them to a wilderness of wild beasts.

With a few swift strokes we sketch the last figure in our cartoon. It is a little man, also dressed in the robes of the Church but they are not new and expensive, they are older and just a least bit worn. The little man seems really a little timid, and yet he is persistently tugging at The World's coat-tails, he is expostulating in a voice all too timid and thin, "Go back, go back!"

At last The World, confused by the wilderness before him, unconvinced by the frankly puzzled optimism of the other churchman, now turns to meet the expostulation of the little man behind.

"Ah world," says the little man now, as he gets his breath, "ever since you left the road back there to take this new super-highway I have been hanging here to your coat-tails, trying to save you the necessary embarrassment of having to go back. I knew all along that this highway could only lead to where you are now."

"Yes, but, my old conservative," now interjects the other churchman, "you must admit that this highway is a fine one and it is not likely that it has been laid here for nothing."

"I am not objecting to human progress and the development of science, I am only saying that that alone will lead nowhere but to destruction. Human progress always lays its super-highways in the wrong direction!"

"That may be," says The World, "but the sign-board says that the other road is a bad road."

"If you mean by that a hard road, that is correct. There is no smooth easy road to Paradise. That has always been a hard, narrow road. But it is the only road there is, until the time comes when the Lord Himself shall make a highway over the desert that shall be the greatest of all. For that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low." But if you are going to stand here on this highway until that one is laid, you are going to miss it. Now is the time to make the choice, and you are not at the crossroads, you are not in the crisis now. You were once, and you chose the wrong road then. There is nothing to do now but go back and take the other road."

"What do you mean, when did we take the wrong road?" ask both in one voice.

"You took the wrong road in the eighteenth century when you adopted Rationalism instead of Revelation. Surely it was the road of human progress and science and human exaltation. But what good was it? It only brought you the sooner to the brink.
of this wilderness of self-destruction. What good is human invention if it only succeeds in inventing a gun that explodes into the face of him who holds it?"

"But, old conservative, I much prefer the offer of my friend, here. He spoke of himself as a Modernist. I too love modern things. He spoke of being a Liberal, I too would like to be free from the shackles of an old cobwebby theology," says The World a little plaintively.

"That depends upon what Christianity is. If it is a system of ethics or philosophy that needs to be rediscovered constantly, then Modernism and Liberalism would be the right way to understand it. But in view of the fact that Christianity is, believe it or not, a matter of historical revelation, the only way to understand it, is to go humbly back to it."

"I know the road back there is not an easy one. You will not be able to run, nor even to walk proudly upright. You shall have to be content with traveling a good deal of the time... upon your knees! But the choice is yours. Into the future, and you see what it is, ‘On your own,’ or into the future, no matter what it is, ‘In His arms’?"

"You cannot make a New Year’s resolution to take the right road. You are not at the crossroads. Your resolution should be to go back to where you can again see the right road, and then I will guide you!"

ALA BANDON.

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The Antidote

The greatest burden that we bear
Is sinful inclination.
Our worries and our fret and care
Are oft imagination.
If we more fervently would pray,
And fill our hearts with joy each day
In thanks for God’s salvation,
The devil wouldn’t have a chance
To poison with his wicked lance,
And we would have elation.
The sinner down upon his knee
By God shall soon exalted be,
And He will bless his ways.
God will reward him with the strong,
And for his sorrow give a song—
O let us pray and praise!

—J. G. G.

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Possessing All

“As having nothing, yet possessing all,”
I sat within the room. The faded wall
Merged in the faded carpet. Every chair
Was marred and valueless. Not one thing there
Could beauty claim, or tempt my heart’s desire.
And yet my soul was strung as to a waking lyre!
It was not longing that was in my breast,
But I was lost in panoramic rest
Of charming, changing scenes. There came to mind
The cultured touches in a lovely home
—There yearning gazed and beauty satisfied—
Fine textures, carven woods, rare covering,
Soft lights, rich color, music hovering.
I could not buy them, but I heard their call:
“As having nothing, yet possessing all.”

—J. G. G.
Theocentric or Christocentric?

The very first sermons ever delivered were preached by the greatest of all preachers—preachers who never die, ever lived and live forever. They are also of the same age, altho Father and Son; while the PERSONALITY of their breathing (Ps. 33:6) delivers the application (filiouque).

Those first sermons necessarily must be the model after which our sermons are to be shaped.

The first sermon mentioned in Holy Scripture is to be found in Gen. 3:

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and it (he: R. V.) shall bruise thy head.”

The question has been asked whether our sermons ought to be Theo- or Christo-centric (may I add Spirit-centric—cf. the Greek Church?).

Was the first sermon (Gen. 3) Theo-centric or Christo-centric? It seems to me that, basically, it was Theo-centric. In other words, it is God Himself, the great I AM, who speaks, “I will put enmity . . . .” But, as to contents, it undoubtedly was Christo-logical. Is not the cardinal point of the Gospel the seed of the woman, His suffering work and worth, etc.? It should be far from us to glory save in the Cross of Christ, or, rather, the Christ of the Cross, the God of Bethlehem, the God of Golgotha, the God of Olivet, the God at God’s right hand, to be praised above all, forever.

Our mistake may be that we make and bake an antithesis where there is no anti- but only synthesis. Cf. John 3:16. God, the eternal I AM, sends His Son into this world that the world might be saved in the way of repentance, faith and charity.

Basiclly it is God who sends or gives, but the main content of the Gospel is Christ Jesus, who also said: Go and preach the Gospel, bring the good spell (good news) to the world, all creatures. What that Gospel or good tidings is Luke 2:11 tells us: “The Savior is born.” That is the cardinal point of the angelic sermon.

We should not forget the breath of His mouth (John 20:22). He breathed on them, saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” No one ever could say from the heart that Christ Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit, Who also is the “breath” of God’s mouth (Ps. 33:6). In this connection we might also refer to the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 6:33) where we read: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God (i.e. Theos) and His righteousness . . . .”

But what and who is our righteousness, our glorious dress, our safety and our beauty? Answer: THE LORD (Jesus) our righteousness. Again it is Christ Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.

My conclusion, therefore, is that, generally speaking, our sermons must be trinitarian—the HOLY ONE IN THREE. But as to PROMINENCE, let us give the PRE-EMINENCE in our sermons, as Paul said at Athens and Corinth, to JESUS and the RESURRECTION, Christ and His Cross. “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Christ Jesus our Lord.” A good sermon must place Christ in the foreground, must be Christo-centric.

The man in the pulpit, in my opinion, must say and pray: Fac ut Jesu demonstrare Quam sit dulce TE amare TE cum flere TE cum stare TE cum semper conguadere.

Grant, Lord, that I may show how sweet it is to love Thee, to weep at Thy feet, to abide in Thee, to be forever with Thee in everlasting joy.

Kalamaazoo, Mich.

J. Keizer.

Experiencing God’s Sovereignty

To Mr. Bouna,
1511 Seminole Road, S. E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan. U. S. A.

Dear Christian Friend:

Our friend Mr. Williams has kindly sent me a copy of THE CALVIN FORUM, and it has been the means of some joy of heart, especially in reading “Rediscovering the Sovereign God.” We often have to mourn in sadness of heart as we feel the solemn truth that the true God—the Creator of all things is still (generally speaking) the unknown God. Instead of vital godliness, forms and ceremonies with creature doings and creature praises take the place of the true worship of God, which is in Spirit and in Truth. Only Heaven-born souls can truly worship God, and their worship grows more fervent with increasing knowledge of God in Three—Father, Son and Holy Ghost: and, Three in One—Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Eternal—each one Person of the Trinity, being Co-equal, Co-eternal and indwelling each other in the perfection of Holiness, as human language can never describe. When the character of God is discovered, we finite creatures must lose all hope of contributing to the salvation of our precious soul, by any effort of our own. “Salvation is of God alone” and we can neither help or hinder it. We are as clay in the Hand of the Potter. There is a great awful solemnity, when the Lord in Wisdom, Love and Compassion leads a soul down to the Potter’s House. Jeremiah 18: “And the vessel of clay was marred in the Hand of the Potter. So, He made it again another vessel as seemed good to the Potter to make it.” These words call my mind to the First and Second Covenants—“In Adam all died, in Christ shall all be made alive,” that is, all the children of God. So, the two great mysteries—the mystery of Iniquity and the mystery of Godliness—are felt in Redeemed Souls: however, we have an invincible Captain, who will bring us off—“more than Conquerors” through Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” And,

“He, Who has made our Heaven secure, Shall He not, here, all good provide?”

God is inaccessible except through the only Way: Jesus says: “I AM”—“the Way, the Truth and the Life,” “No man cometh unto the Father, but, by ME.” He that rejects the Son, rejects the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jehovah does not commit His Work into the Hand of any creature: but, His Grace and Mercy are such that He condescends to creature instrumentality: but, “By their fruit shall ye know them.” The Holy Spirit beareth fruit unto righteousness—sanctified to the Glory of God and the good of Spirit-quickened souls. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but, according to His Mercy.” Amazing Grace!

JANUARY, 1942 • • • THE CALVIN FORUM
Hungary’s Paradoxical Position

Dear Dr. Bouma:

I think you are fully entitled to an explanation as to why I was so silent for months.

The first main reason was that somehow I always found myself literally swamped with things to do, affairs to arrange and meetings to attend. For a while even the dust seemed to change into work to be done.

But an even weightier reason, I guess, was the way in which the veritable ideological earthquake produced by current events and trends affected me. Rightly or wrongly, I just felt that all the presuppositions of sound logic are gone, and that the best I can do is to be found at work on the field which nobody could question but regard as my primary concern. I mean my pastoral charge and nothing but that.

Little by little, however, another experience began to assert itself. Our resources of strength are not linked to the world. Come what may, our refuge is God; spiritually, ideologically, physically and materially alike. And my typewriter is there. 

By way of trying to be of help as to one’s searching for at least a partial orientation concerning the chaotic world of today, first I propose to shed some light upon Hungary’s position. As Calvinists, I think, we all should be interested in Hungary’s fate. She is the homeland of one of the most tried and still one of the largest and most vigorous branches of Calvinism. She is both the historic and historical homeland of Magyar Calvinism. That fact, I think, makes it permissible to say something about Hungary’s position today to the readers of THE CALVIN FORUM.

I do not claim to be an authority on the subject. Our connections with our folks and brethren in Hungary are almost equal to nothing. Your writer for example had not received a letter from his own mother since early February. But a closer study of news-reports, plus a better knowledge of the country than the average non-Hungarian can command, lends us some ground to speak informatively on things Hungarian. Hungary is enmeshed in the war today. It is the very situation which she wanted to avoid above all. How did she nevertheless get into it?

As I can trace it, and explain it to myself, it was something like this.

“Ah! but for free and sovereign grace, I still had lived estranged from God, till hell had proved the destined place of my deserved but dread abode. But O, amazed, I see the hand that stopped me in my wild career; a miracle of grace I stand;

The Lord has taught my heart to fear, to fear His Name, to trust His Grace, to learn His Will be my employ; till I shall see Him face to face, Himself my heaven, Himself my joy.”

Here “He reveals Himself through a glass darkly.” Yet, just a glimpse is overwhelming to our small capacity, and, to our finite understanding will ever remain incomprehensible through everlasting and ever increasing glory in a never-ending Eternity.

“Eternity! Eternity! dreadful sound
To guilty sinners doomed to die:
But, Oh! if Christ and Heaven be mine,
How sweet the account, how divine!”

“Yes! I shall see Him in that flash on which my guilt was laid.”

Praise the Lord: Praise Him in the Highest—

“Unto Him, who hath loved us, and washed us from Sin: unto Him be the Glory for ever.” Amen.

G. W. Pray for us, Pray for our nation.

Pray for sailors, soldiers and airmen who shelter may be found under the wings of the Almighty. May the Lord grant wisdom to all in authority in our land and others struggling under the oppression of the wicked one.

The Lord still reigns, and manifestations of His preserving mercy are not wanting, which encourages us to believe that He will in His own time and way bring us safely through: although we are so sadly in arrears with our thanksgivings and praises.

With Christian desires for your well-being and all in America who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

Elizabeth A. Astbury.

From Our Correspondents

From World War I to World War II

After the first world war Hungary lost more than two-thirds of her former territories; partly on account of allied vengeance and partly on account of internal upheavals. This enormous loss was always felt and held by the Magyars as an utterly unbearable moral, historical, political, ethnographical, economical and geographical injustice. They lived to see this injustice corrected. Their very spirit of revisionism made them disposed friendly toward all who could appreciate at least their feelings, and much more so toward those who professed to help them attain their aspirations.

For two decades the Hungarians were literally begging the English to help them. Of no avail. Great Britain thought that she could withdraw herself from the seemingly smaller problems of Central Europe as the United States thought that she could withdraw herself from the great problems.

In Munich, Great Britain and France had their last chance to assert themselves as factors in Central European matters. The Hungarians were frantic about inducing the Four Power Conference to consider Hungary’s claims also, which at least historically were even better substantiated than the claims of Germany upon the Sudetenland, because that territory never formed an historical part of Germany, whereas Hungary was asking for territories which she held and defended for over a thousand years.

But Chamberlain and Daladier went home without delving into the Hungarian quest. It was entrusted to the discretion of Germany and Italy. And thereby Hungary was made a vassal to the Axis Powers. By Great Britain and France, mind you. All that Hungary got, came to her as the gratuities of the Axis Powers, and willy-nilly they were forced, by the very nature of the situation, to celebrate these powers also when they were jubilating the partial realizations of their irresistible aspirations. You may believe me, that most Hungarians would have been much more gratified if these territorial revisions would have come to them through Anglo-Saxon intervention or mediation. The Hungarians are a politically seasoned nation, and they most certainly sensed the dangers inherent in a situation that made them obligated to the Axis. But it was beyond their reach and power to change that situation. The Axis was made Hungary’s granddad by Great Britain and France.

Then the Axis, and especially Germany, began to work on Hungary. Demands upon demands began to come. Always more and more; always sharper and sharper; always more and more.
more entangling; and always more and more jeopardizing to the neutrality and independence of the country. The government tried, amidst sweats and despair, its best both in respect of avoiding an open break with such an irresistible and already all-enveloping neighbor, as Germany became after the conquest of Poland, and in respect of maintaining at least a nominal independence and an acceptable non-belligerent status of Hungary. This tightrope dancing policy seemed to work for a while. In fact, much longer, than anyone of us would have dared to hope.

Next, Hungary found herself compelled to officially join the Axis camp. Then we, American Hungarians, began to shout already. Again for a while it looked as if we shouted too soon, and Hungary would muddle through this war without actively participating in it.

Then finally came the demand that Hungary should let German troops attack Yugoslavia through Hungary, too. As we understand it, the Hungarian cabinet under the chairmanship of Premier Count Paul Teleki gave an evasive answer which in effect was a refusal. Shortly after the meeting, however, Premier Teleki was informed that German troops crossed the borders of Hungary on the basis of an accord made behind the back of the cabinet between the German military authorities and the Hungarian army chief, who—quite significantly—was a descendant of German settlers in Hungary, and since then relieved of his command.

For Count Teleki, the premier, whom I happened to meet and could not help but come to respect and appreciate in 1938, it was the end. He shot himself. He was a deeply religious man. A credit to his denomination, the Roman Catholic Church. As I figure it, he must have remembered Christ's blood sacrifice, and he thought of making his blood the Abel-blood for Hungary, hoping that it will speak better for his nation than any man. A credit to his denomination, the Roman Catholic Church.

The Yugoslavs and later on the Russians did not try to make things easier for the Hungarians. They both bombed Hungarian cities and towns in order to get at marching German columns while still on Hungarian soil. Thereby they took away the last remaining argument from the Hungarians opposed to the German demand for armed intervention. Hungarians also took part in the campaign against Yugoslavia, and a Hungarian army contingent is also fighting in Russia. That's the chain of events and circumstances that dragged Hungary into World War No. II.

The Fighting in Russia

This war on Russia, too, leaves the Hungarian mind in a divided state. Territorially or otherwise the Hungarians have no claims upon the Russians. In fact, there is a distinct liking for the Russian people itself. And most Hungarians would fain see the whole Hungarian army sitting at home and keep its powder dry. The deep penetration of the Hungarian army into Russia does not arouse an unmixed joy in Hungarian hearts. They look at it this way: the deeper they march into Russia, the farther away they get from the homeland, the protection of which is the main concern of all Hungarians.

But, on the other hand, Hungary has quite a lot to settle with an established Russian policy and with Bolshevism, the political backbone of which is Russia.

The Russians are a very bad lot for neighbors. The good neighbor policy did not seem to affect them, at least not as far as Hungarians could see. The governments of Russia, czarist or communist, always kept Hungary in a constant state of unrest through intriguing with and inciting the numerous nationalities living in an otherwise peaceful symbiosis with the Magyars within Hungary's natural and historical boundaries for centuries. To see Russian influence and pressure in the Danubian Basin lessened and eased is a natural effort and part of an historical policy on Hungary's part.

The fact, that modern Russia became the homeland and political and military exponent of Bolshevism, served only to increase Hungary's desire to push this undesirable neighbor as far away from herself and reduce its military potency as much as possible. Hungary had a taste of bolshevism in 1919. She got rid of it at the cost of more than two thirds of her former territories. Namely, to a great extent Hungary blames her ill-remembered bolshevik regime for losing so much of her territories, because it was bolshevism that finally disorganized the country and served as a pretense for land-hungry neighbors to overrun Hungary. And, to follow the vicious circle, it was revisionism necessitated by such an enormous loss of lands and resources, coupled with the difference of the Western Powers, that threw Hungary into the arms of the Axis. If they must vent their feelings on somebody, the Russians are about the most deserving, beside perhaps the Rumanians, who still cause them trouble and anger.

Then, Hungarians hate Communism wholeheartedly; politically and ideologically alike. They know what Communism is. They know it from a painful, shameful, and sorrowful experience. They want none of it. As we want democracy to reign, so do the Hungarians want Bolshevism to fall. They know what it is for a way of life, and they know what a regime constituted upon bolshevism means for a neighbor. It means eternal intrigues, unrest, and an almost utter impossibility to maintain decency, law and order, and constitutional, democratic processes in government and administration. To Hungarians who experienced bolshevism at work and in charge of their country it is an unsoluble enigma to figure out as to what extent and in what respect life after this war can be any more beautiful than it proved to be after the first world war, if bolshevism receives an all insured place, role, or political existence in it.

They are convinced that postwar life cannot be more beautiful with Communism made secure than with Nazism coming out all-victorious. One of these evils, Nazism, they cannot fight now for self-evident reasons. So, once they must fight, they fight the other one, Bolshevism. And I am sure, and convinced, that they feel to the nails of their toes, that they are doing a service to Christianity and humanity at large, while doing it.

I am sure, that in this respect they feel themselves in perfect harmony with their blood-brethren, the Finns, with whom they cultivate their relationship more assiduously than ever before. Incidentally, to the best of my recollection, this is the first time in the long history of the two peoples that they are fighting the same enemy, considered mortal by both of them. And still, there is the desire by both of them alike not to go too far away from the home front, not to weaken themselves too much, but to leave as much strength as possible for the final outcome of this whole terrible mess.

An American-Hungarian View

To us, Americans of Hungarian descent, the whole situation boils down to something like this: The Anglo-Saxon world (and those allied with it) considers Nazism as the prime evil, because it is nearer and as far as they are concerned it is more imminent. Whereas the Hungarians, and for that matter also the Finns, could not help but take the view that as far as they are concerned, Bolshevism and bolshevik Russia is the first evil they can help to dispose of. The difference between the Anglo-Saxon and the Finnish-Hungarian point of view, we think, is only a matter of strategy, immediacy and possibility, and not one of evaluation or of principles.

Thinking Hungarians recognize that the Anglo-Saxon community peoples is rendered serviceable to humanity by doing its best to break the power of Nazism. But thinking members of this community should equally recognize that those Hungarians and Finns, too, who are not guided by any power-politics, but by creating of a peaceful existence for themselves from all disturbing elements only, are rendering an equal service to humanity by doing their share in breaking the power of political bolshevism.

JANUARY, 1942 ** * THE CALVIN FORUM
Later Postscript

Great and dramatic events took place since my Hungarian Letter was written in the early part of November. As a historical presentation of Hungary's case I regard it just as true now as when it was written. But I can assure you and all the readers of THE CALVIN FORUM that, now that America is involved in this war, we Americans of Hungarian origin are solidly on the side of America. Whatever could be said on behalf of the country of our origin will have to be said after the outcome of this crisis. The mere fact that we thought it advisable to put down Hungary's case, as we saw it, is proof in itself that we have no doubt whatsoever which side of the conflict will come out victorious.

We regard it a privilege and a blessing that through the pages of THE CALVIN FORUM we can speak to our Calvinistic Brethren in many lands, including the Anglo-Saxon community of nations, and tell them the truth as it appears to us. In the readers and influence of THE CALVIN FORUM Hungarian Calvinism has something it did not have during and after the crisis preceding the present one. The time for talking politics is over, but placing Hungarian Calvinism under the moral protection of International Calvinism is not politics, only a detailed task of safeguarding the whole body of Calvinism, all parts of which must be equally dear to the heart of any and all full-blooded Calvinists. Let my previous letter serve no other purpose than this. To my mind it would not be a bad idea for the leaders of International Calvinism to gather all possible information about the different branches of Calvinism and prepare themselves for the task of seeing Calvinism as a whole through this crisis and be on guard in its behalf when the time for reshaping the world arrives.

Yours cordially,
DR. CHARLES VINCZE.


Canada in War Time

Editor, THE CALVIN FORUM.

GREETINGS from Canada!

Dear Sir:

We are still on the map. That is something to be appreciated. Down here on the Atlantic seaboard there is, of course, considerable military activity; constant patrol of the waters, and many other activities constantly reminding all Canadians that they are in the conflict. Casualty lists for Canada have not been great, and hence a great many homes have been spared the sorrow of being informed of the death of their loved ones in battle.

On the background of the past twenty-five years coloured so strongly with the dark colours of moral retrogression and a plain religious apostasy, it would seem this world conflict so soon upon the last, would awaken the lethargic, shake the un­saved out of their sleep, and generally stir men to faith in Christ and God. But nowhere is there a general return to the Lord. After the first few months of the outbreak the spirit of religion soon faded away again.

There are incidental affairs that cause attention occasionally, such as special Sundays and Weeks for Empire Prayer and Reconcetration. Some time ago a rather strange royal order came down from the Government at Ottawa. Some ministers received it from municipal mayors, others from other municipal officers, or citizens. Many did not receive a copy of it at all. Of course, pertaining to a religious service no minister is bound to carry out Government Orders. They may request us to hold special services. No one objects to pray for King and Empire. That is plain. And when the circumstances are grave no one objects to holding special services for Prayer. One is inclined to object to the overwhelming number of times one is asked to set aside a “Special Sunday” for this, that and the other cause. The Church makes a good advertising and propaganda agency for many movements that otherwise do not desire the interference of the ministers.

Many did take objection to the order of some weeks ago, how­ever, on the grounds that it did not mention the name of the King, either in the prayer or in the Reconcetration Pledge; it did not intercede for victory; was grammatically incorrect, etc. It was so vague, many wondered to what we were called to reconsecrate ourselves. It was plainly of Romish construction. Most of the quasi-religious services that are national in character, if suggested by Protestants are constructed, or toned down, by the Romish people.

The most disconcerting part of the entire Reconcetration Services, was that while the Prime Minister of Canada read the Scriptures in St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, on Sunday, the Roman Catholic Church celebrated Mass under the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings in the presence of a huge assembly in the large grassy common in front. The Protestant service was subsequently held on a Wednesday night in the same place. All this leaves no doubt who engineered this display of religion.

We appreciate a Government that realizes the importance of Prayer to God in behalf of the nation. On more than one
From the Northwest

T he Northwest is a relative term. Any point on the globe is northwest to any point located southeast of it. By instruction from the Managing Editor of The Calvin Forum my sphere of hope for usefulness as one of his correspondents must cover the northwest regions of the North American continent,—vast enough, it would seem, to satisfy any ambition.

The indulgent editor did not instruct me to deal exclusively with the *fata et facta* of this *Ultima Thule*, but gave me enough rope to rope (a good western U. S. vocable) any topic under or above the sun as long as the letter conveying the results bore the Calvinistic hallmark and the postalmark of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

May this initial notice suffice, and explain or condone the contents of my letters.

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“For east is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet” may sound a hackneyed adage of Rudyard Kipling’s, but its inherent truth, at least for the first half, has been so often and so universally attested that the reader will not be astonished to be informed here that it also applies to America and even to Americans; the twain often do meet, although the co-ordination between east and west does not easily eventuate.

Both the United States and Canada stretch from the Atlantic to the Far West, though some of the western belt must be regarded as more than three thousand miles, “as far as east from west is distant.” Nor is the separation merely geographical. The wandering tourist notices over these vast tracts striking human contrasts. The east is nearer to Europe, was first colonized and the impress of Europe in culture, language and habits is stamped indelibly. New England and Boston cling longest to the European style in living, thinking and outlook, in manners, fashions and dress. After a family quarrel with the nephews across, the Easterner became thoroughly autochthonous. His roots bored deeply into the soil on which his great-grand-parents were born and instinctively he continued the conservation attitude of his forebears.

The Westerner on the other hand was more of a free lance. He was impetuous in his desire for expansion into regions unexplored. His love of adventure and mental conquest, his westward, made him subconsciously obey the divine injunction placed upon him, immediately after his creation, to replenish the earth and subdue it. In little more than half a century, he lorded it over the uncharted interior and was stopped only by the western seashore.

* * * * * * * * * * *

History presents many parallels. None could be more striking than the development which opened up the vast plains of South Africa.

Commercialism had planted colonies on Manhattan Island (1625) and other parts of the east coast of North America and subsequently planted one on the shore of Table Bay in South Africa (1652). In both cases it was Dutch commercialism that did it and in the time when Calvinism in the Netherlands was at its zenith. Two or three generations were needed for the newcomer to identify himself with the new land, but as soon as the colony complex had evolved into love of native soil, the memory of the old country across the seas faded into oblivion, and the beckoning future obtained a stronger hold on the settlement’s imagination than the gloried past.

The old folks nurtured a sentimental longing for Paradise Lost, but youth had discovered and physically and mentally assimilated a Paradise Regained. Effete nations in Europe may brood in melancholic strain over past glories,—vigorous young nations had sprung to birth in the emancipated new countries. Repristination made room for visions of a fascinating future, as well in New Netherland as at the Cape which proved to be one of Good Hope.

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This process of rejuvenation keeps moving, first materially, next mentally, socially and economically. As long as there were untrodden soils and untroubled horizons, the young folks continued restless until the money order had the old established eastern families grown rich on the fat of the land and become stereotyped in their views and their means of making a livelihood, than the rousing call of distance became a summons; unruly and realistic youthful enterprise was captivated by smiling prospects.

The pioneers in America and the Voortrekkers in South Africa have seen the promise afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them and became strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. They desired a better country and God had prepared for them a city.

Under divine providence the Afrikaner *Voortrekkers* with his Book, his gun and ox-drawn covered wagon,—the American pioneer with his wife, his blanket and hatchet, proved nation-builders, misunderstood by their contemporaries, but justified by history as children of obedience.

The hunter, explorer, prospector and adventurer supplied the dynamic element of this great *trek*,—the farmer who followed in their wake the static element: stable, responsible, consistent. The man who breaks new soil is the more valuable colonist of the two.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Once the northwest of the U. S., and Canada west of Winnipeg, had been subdued and tamed by the hatchet, the plow and the railroad, once homes and schools and churches had been built, and police, representative institutions and politics had been introduced, a new type of citizen evolved in those parts. The Westerner is independent, resourceful, kindhearted and averse to social distinctions and niceties. As, under God, he is the maker of his own country, he is proud of his handiwork. The Old-Timer sets the standard in his surroundings. The democratic spirit is strong, so is the fame for his offspring.

The amount of energy spent by him in opening up the country seems in no few cases to have exhausted the family supply. In sparsely populated districts there is little opportunity for youth to increase its scope socially and mentally; it is void of -ologies and -isms; its grammar is shaky, its vocabulary significantly limited. Yet, it is fine material physically; a goodly heritage is theirs, morally and materially.

Yet, one should not be too exacting and rather take the broad view.

The success achieved or better: the blessing received in two generations is amazing considering the circumstances. A serious impediment is the conglomeration of nationalities. In Canada there are, according to statistics, 24 language groups
with 40,000 as a minimum. These have to be molded into one nation of good Canadians. The problem is rendered more difficult by the racial fact of whites and colored and by the political fact of constitutionally safeguarded equality of language rights for English and French speaking Canadians. Further a numerically strong Slavonic and Latin stock among the whites,—Indians, Chinese and Japanese among the colored, all with large families, do not work for rapid unification ethnologically. The national educational system provides at least one initial postulate, although only for the greater, the English speaking half of the nation,—the acquisition of a common language medium.

Under these Babylonian conditions it was my privilege to become somewhat intimately acquainted with the farming population of Dutch extraction in certain localities in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, and in the State of Washington. Through hard work under many difficulties farmers’ settlements were founded during the last forty years, some almost exclusively by immigrants fresh from the Netherlands. And they have gone a long way to realize their prospects. Apart from the material progress made, the interested observer is especially struck by their spiritually flourishing condition. A numerous young generation, brought up as Covenant children far from the sinister allurements of the State of Washington. Through hard work under many obstacles, the children of the farm-lands stock in very many other walks of life as well.

That the sons of more than seventy families in one (and at that a model) Canadian Dutch settlement should one and all take up grain farming was probably never intended by nature nor ordained by grace. Man nor Canada can live by bread alone. I know that training for a diversity of occupations as avenues of both celestial and secular value and usefulness depends on opportunities within reach, yet hard thinking, working and praying ought to co-operate to the solution of the difficulty.

A well thought out combination of Reformed home, church, school and professional education ought to help find and supply ways and means to secure that besides highly honorable agricultural activities, also the trades and professions become accessible to the rising generation, qualified thereto by careful apprenticeship, even if living at a distance from towns and cities presents obstacles.

The near future should endow the Northwest, even more than at present, with young men and women, also of Dutch descent and well founded in the doctrine and practice of sound Reformed principles, all properly equipped and qualified, as full-fledged farmers, artisans, mechanics, technicians, dealers, merchants, teachers, nurses, artists, scholars, journalists, lawyers and doctors, good wives and model husbands,—all to be exponents in that wide variety of all imaginable spheres of usefulness which make up modern society in which each and every one can serve his or her Creator and Preserver and in Him their fellow men. If some should elect another vocation and should enter the civic sphere or even representative legislative bodies,—even people of Calvinistic training might prove a leaven to promote the honor of God in walks of national life where such witness is sorely needed today.

Bearers of Dutch names have graced and are gracing today the seats of the mighty on this continent, they should henceforth be drawn also from the Northwest to the glory of the Name which is above every name.

Vancouver, B. C., Canada.
December 11, 1941.

G. BESSELAR.

Around the Book Table

BERKHOF’S “SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY”


A WORK on the entire system of Christian doctrine written from the Reformed point of view, comprehensive enough to be put into one large volume; a work written in the language which is not only our vernacular but the vehicle of thought and discussion of millions of people throughout the world; and that work offering a treatment that is up-to-date, abreast of the literature of the day, clear in its presentation, consistent in its conception and the execution of its task, and biblically sound throughout—who would not welcome such a work? That and much more than that Professor Berkhof offers us in the 759-page volume under review. Every student of theology, whether he shares the author’s Reformed standpoint or not, will acknowledge the great service which this volume can and will render to clarify and stimulate theological insight into the great verities of the Christian Faith.

For some time comprehensive works on the field of Reformed Dogmatics were getting scarce. At least in English. In the Dutch language there are the works of Ravinek (Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, 4 vols. Second edition: 1906-1911), of Kuyper (Dictaten Dogmatiek, 5 vols. Second edition: 1910 ff.), and, more recently, Honig’s one-volume Handboek van de Gereformeerde Dogmatiek. But in our own language comprehensive treatments of the subject went back to the Hodges and to
Shedd. Now both Charles Hodge (Systematic Theology, 3 vols.) and Archibald Alexander Hodge (Outlines of Theology) wrote in the seventies of the previous century, even though the latter work has been reprinted from time to time. And Shedd's two volumes entitled Dogmatic Theology date back to 1886. That means that these classics of Reformed Dogmatics are from 50 to 70 years old. Berkhof's work belongs in this tradition, but he has made it an up-to-date treatment that lives and moves and has its being in the theological atmosphere of 1941.

Of course, the treatment of the subject is not as exhaustive as that of Bavinck, or of Kuyper, or of Charles Hodge. The work corresponds in size and set-up very much to Honig's work. Perhaps this is just as well. Three-volume works can not readily be used as text-books in seminary courses. By a reduction in the number of volumes, the changes and the content, as well as the disposition of the material is such as means in the same place or work, the same. This means that these classics of Reformed Dogmatics are from 50 to 70 years old. Berkhof's work belongs in this tradition, but he has made it an up-to-date treatment that lives and moves and has its being in the theological atmosphere of 1941.

As has already been suggested, the standpoint of the author is that of the Reformed Theology, as grounded in Scripture; as first developed by the great minds of Augustine and Calvin; as continued in the great creeds of that day; as continued in America by Thornwell, Dabney, the Hodges, and Warfield; and as having enjoyed its most fruitful, scholarly, and up-to-date exposition in the great Dutch theologians of recent date: Kuyper and Bavinck. In more than one sense Berkhof stands upon the shoulders of all these men. He owes a great debt to all of them, as he acknowledges himself. In the preface of the first edition he also made mention of the work of Dr. Geerhardus Vos on Systematic Theology, which—as, regrettably, so many of the fine writings of this Reformed theologian—has not appeared in print, being available only in mimeographed form.

The reviewer is speaking of this work as though it is new, and so it is. In its present form and under its present title it appeared in 1941. However, it is also the second edition of a two-volume work whose first edition was put on the market in 1932. Berkhof, Reformed Dogmatics, was, in the first edition, in name as well as in content, almost just one in speaking of this as a new work. A wealth of new material not found in the 1932 edition has been included now. By the use of smaller type and a narrower margin it was possible to offer much more than was contained in the first edition's two volumes in this one, well-bound, buckram volume of the second. It is not too bulky to serve as a student text, nor too condensed to serve as a valuable reference in any theological library.

Professor Berkhof comes to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to this chair he spent in teaching Old and New Testament subjects at the same institution. He is grounded in the best of Reformed Theology through wide reading and sympathetic understanding of the great writers in this field. He knows not only the great Dutch scholars in this field, but also the American, and—though not in the same degree—the Scotch. This wide reading is apparent in the names and titles appearing in the text, the foot-notes, and the bibliographies throughout the work. Whoever studies this manual will not only become acquainted with the works and views of Augustine and Calvin, but also of Brunner and Barth; not only of Mastsricht and Perkins, but also of Orr and Warfield; not only of Dabney and Thornwell, but also of Brightman, Harry Elmer Barnes, Bradley, Shailer Mathews, Leuba, Gerald Birney Smith, George Buttrick, and Austin. Some of the latest works, such as for instance Niebuhr's Gifford Lectures, are included in the bibliography. There is nothing musty about this volume. The author quotes the most recent among theologians as well as the older Reformed scholars who wrote in the 17th century.

It is a delight to study as well as to read this book. The set-up and treatment is logical, clear, thorough, and the organization as well as the disposition of the material is such as to make the whole in the highest degree. The paragraphs of text fall into separate chapters, even though the numbering of the chapters is not continuous. Fourteen of these chapters are devoted to the Doctrine of God; fourteen to the Doctrine of Man in Relation to God; thirteen to the Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ; eleven to the Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption; nine to the Doctrine of the Church and the Means of Grace; and nine to the Doctrine of the Last Things. This disposition of the material combines the advantages of brevity and serviceability with those of the completeness and logical character inherent in the system. The use of captions and subcptions is very helpful. The type, though smaller than in the first edition, is clear and a delight to the eye. At the close of each chapter is found a stimulating list of Questions for Further Study, as well as a list of references to definite parts of the appropriate literature. The last twenty pages of the work offer a good Bibliography and a helpful Index of Authors as well as an Index of Subjects. Even though it might be more complete, is excellent as far as it goes.

There have been some changes from the first edition. The changes seem warranted. To be sure, Berkhof blazes no new trails. He has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped. Since 1925 he has taught Reformed Dogmatics at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the twenty year period preceding his appointment to his task well equipped.

The printer has done a neat job. Proof-reading has, on the whole, also been well done. However, there are a number of small errors that might well be corrected in a possible new edition. The following Latin words or terms are incorrect on the pages designated: aedificium (p. 30); acquisita (p. 56); causaliatia (p. 59); essentia (p. 101); De Civitate Dei (p. 211); Purilioris (pp. 343, 355, 476, 739); sed, for: sub (p. 446); De Consummatione Saeculi (p. 666). Under "Literature" the designation Ibid is used repeatedly where Id is intended. Ibidem means in the same place or work, idem means the same author. This mistake occurs also in the Bibliography at the end of the
A NOVEL ON HOLLAND’S INVASION


A DOCUMENTARY account of the present-day great catastrophe, the German invasion of Holland is skillfully built up from the personal experiences of David Cornel De Jong, a Dutch American who had returned home to join his native country in its struggle for survival. Mr. De Jong was born and reared in the Netherlands, lived among immigrants from the low countries in the United States, revisited the land of his birth in 1938, and has carried on correspondence with friends and relatives there. His interpretation, therefore, of life in the Netherlands can well be taken seriously, and his definite talent for writing makes a consideration of what he has to say worthwhile, if not altogether of the highest importance.

Day of the Trumpet takes place, for the most part, in Daverdam, an old city of North Holland, once on the Zuider Zee but now separated from it by fertile fields reclaimed from the sea. Here Mevrouw Haming manages efficiently her historic house and shop, her husband Hendrick, and her married sons and daughters and their families. It is a peaceful little world of canals, bridges, narrow courts, towers, and city gates; but there are also the new defenses which Hendrick anxiously prepares for the coming day of disaster.

The characters are drawn with masterful strokes, all surprisingly individual and human. Little Dirkje is the son of Margriet, Mevrouw’s favorite, artistic, impractical daughter. Dirkje is always going somewhere, but the world is so full of wonderful things that his getting there is really unimportant. There are Gisela’s children—Katrien, adolescent, full of desire but also of misgivings concerning Hans, her young German tourist friend; Rensel, never at peace with himself or the world, unconventional, seeing more than some in the military preparations of his country; and self-righteous Ernst. In the river bottom estates are Moente the mocker, his church-going wife Vogeltje, and their vivacious, radical daughter Liesbet. A sense of premonition, of coming disaster, is skillfully built up. The hateful Goessen woman houses German tourist-spies. Germany invades Poland and Norway. Rensel and Ernst enter the army. Katrien breaks with Hans. Vladimir attempts to kill De Jong, the young German tourist when he sees him making sketches of Dutch defenses.

Suddenly the storm breaks at Haveland, in Daverdam, in Rotterdam. The last section of the book, entitled “Walls Falling,” is a masterpiece. Among the powerful scenes are the fleeing from Haveland where the dikes have been opened; Grandmother Haming and Katrien quietly killing a paramilitary in the court; and Margareit running, stumbling, blindly forcing her way through the awful carnage in Rotterdam, all the while clutching the book she had purchased for Dirkje and frantically searching for Mathys. Through it all the characters rise to heights of courage and strength, patriotism, and personal love and loyalty.

Mr. De Jong still feels it incumbent upon himself, although he has expressed the same ideas in all his previous books, to settle a few personal accounts that he seems to have with a certain type of Calvinistic minister and church-goer and the Heidelberg Catechism. He is also still in the habit of drawing not just a scene of sordidness, which might conceivably bring nobility into bolder relief, but a long and not thin line of suggestive allusions. Just why this artistic writer, sensitive to beauty and so capable of translating it into words, cherishes these characteristics is not apparent.

“I wrote about Humanity at its best and simplest, and that betrayed,” says the author. In so far as his energies are directed to this purpose, Day of the Trumpet is, I believe, a strong and beautiful story of the betrayal of the Netherlands by the Nazis, and a real contribution to the literature of the war.

Grand Rapids.

WILHELMINA VERBRETS.