Man Worship
Its Futility

Democratic Philosophy
of Education

Progressive Calvinism
Suggested Fronts

Christian Belles-Lettres
A Plea and a Plan

Middle Class Centennial
and the Common Man

Hermetic Christianity
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Correspondence
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The CALVIN FORUM
Published by the Calvin Forum Board of Publication

VOLUME XIII, NO. 6 JANUARY, 1948

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Humanity Discredited

The optimistic, evolutionistic concept of man as a being evolving toward moral perfection received a serious jolt in the year that has come to a close. If there is any one thing on which there is a growing unanimity among men of every color it is this: one cannot put his trust in the homo sapiens. That is a matter with which the Biblical theologians ages ago made acquaintance. They have been reëchoing the precept found in the Scriptures: "Put not your trust in man." However, in our overweening self-confidence we had hoped that somehow we could expect salvation from man. We deified man, and worshiped at his shrine. We made our own little gods. Man-made gods were they. In the image of man we made our gods. But the man-made gods "let us down." They have not brought salvation to us. They have brought us down to the brink of extinction.

One of the great freedoms that we fought for was the freedom from fear. We thought that if we would crush the Germans and the Japs, fear would vanish from the face of the earth. So we, gods that we are, concentrated in our own way to banish fear for all time. We tried it with the lethal weapons of war. We tried it by crumbling to the dust the civilization of scores of centuries. We tried it by placing millions of the best of humanity on the altar dedicated to Mars. We failed tragically because our methods were the methods of hate. We had not learned that perfect love casteth out fear.

Philosophers and theologians sing in unison today the gloomy song of man's policy of self-destruction. A successful diplomat committed suicide because the world situation appeared to him as being beyond redemption. And he was correct—correct in this sense, that there is no possible world redemption at the hands of men. The scientists have discovered the atomic bomb, and they are now asking whether it would have been better not to have discovered it. In the hands of men it may destroy the world. They see that the scientific developments have greatly outstripped man's moral growth. Man is now fearful of the works of his own hands. A Californian judge declares that "man is unfit to survive, degraded and decadent." He asks, and thereby expresses the sentiments of millions of others: "Is there any possibility ahead other than extinction?"

Americans placed a great deal of faith in the United Nations. But with increasing clarity it is demonstrating, week by week, its futility as protection against another war. This mood of hopelessness is spreading like the cholera in Egypt, and bids fair to develop internationally into a cynical fatalism.

This seems a bit disheartening at first glance, but the hope of the future may lie, humanly speaking, in the growing recognition of the sinfulness of man and the hopelessness of every attempt to lift himself to higher ground. When man loses hope in himself and in his fellowman, he is very near to the Kingdom of Heaven. And until this discrediting is carried through so that man is compelled to look elsewhere for salvation, it may not be amiss that it be cherished. After all, men come to God not because they want to, first of all, but because they have to, or they perish. The peoples of the nations of the world are now ripe for that pronouncement of salvation from God. Let His people not withhold it.

H. S.

Education for Democracy

Scores of volumes have been written in the defense and propagation of the democratic ideal in American education. The democratic way of life is heralded by American educators as the inclusive purpose of American education. The achievement of democracy through education is considered to be the most urgent and the most intensely practical problem facing our teaching profession.

In the face of such pronouncements a few questions are pertinent. What is democracy? What is meant by the democratic way of life? How must the slogan "the democratic ideal in education" be interpreted?

An examination of the voluminous literature on the subject fails to give a conclusive answer to such questions. There is a startling vagueness in the explanation of the desired goals. The result is a considerable degree of confusion as to the formulation of the democratic creed.

This indecisive anarchical state of affairs is disturbing to those educators who seek to develop a consistent philosophy of life and education. Among these is Boyd H. Bode, a disciple, though not a meek one, of John Dewey. (See TIME, November 24, 1947, p. 73). Accepting the democratic ideal in education, he courageously and consistently de-
develops this ideal in terms of pragmatism in his book *Progressive Education at the Crossroads*. He leaves no doubt as to the meaning of democracy as he conceives of it.

In the preface to the volume referred to he contends that "Progressive Education must either become a challenge to all the basic beliefs and attitudes which have been dominant for so long in every domain of human interest, or else retreat to the nursery. If progressive education is to fulfill its promise, it must become consciously representative of a distinctive way of life." This democratic way of life consists in admitting "the common man to the status of full recognition." This means more than an extension of privilege. "As applied to organized religion it means a shift of emphasis from eternal salvation to progress through social control."

Elaborating on the meaning of democracy, he urges that "a democratic program of education must necessarily rest on the perception that democracy is a challenge to all forms of absolutism, that it has its own standards, ideals, and values, and that these must pervade the entire program from end to end."

In another connection in answer to the question, What is democracy?, he suggests that "perhaps the best way to find an answer to this question is to consider the nature of an educational system which centers on the cultivation of intelligence, rather than submission to authority. Such a system recognizes no absolute or final truths since these always represent authority in one form or another."

Such language is unambiguous and unequivocal. To accept the democratic ideal in education, one must bid adieu to all authority and all final truths. The democratic way of life thus interpreted is essentially antithetical to the Christian way of life. (Does not the expression "way of life" connote a religious attitude?) Belief in the "sanctity of each individual personality" and "the worth and dignity of every man" divorced from the Christian religion with its insistence on the absolute character and authority of truth inevitably leads to anarchic individualism. Democracy thus conceived becomes a false religion. As Mortimer Adler has so aptly stated, "The religion of democracy is no better than the religion of fascism. One is the idolatry of individual liberty as the other is the worship of collective might."

Much has been written in our day about the trial of democracy. If democracy is to be saved, it must be saved from the irrationalism and relativism of the pragmatist. It must be defensible and defended because it is right and good. Only the truths of the Christian philosophy and religion can serve as a basis for the defense of democracy. We cannot reasonably hope to preserve our democratic traditions if we deny Christian philosophy and religion their rightful place in our system of knowledge. L. J. F.

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**Palestine — The Pawn of the Nations**

The "hottest potato" now blistering the hands of the United Nations is Palestine. It is located at the crossroads of the nations.

For centuries, even long before Christ, the nations to the north and to the south crossed and recrossed it with unending streams of caravans carrying their merchandise. They have fought their battles on that sacred soil. In more recent times it sat squarely across the eastern and western routes. Great Britain regarded it as a priceless possession for military purposes. From this territory the Suez Canal could be guarded and the trade routes of England to and from her far-flung subjects could be safely utilized for both military and commercial purposes.

The Balfour Declaration announced during the first World War opened the country to Jewish people scattered throughout the world. The Jews always laid claim to Palestine even though they had forsaken that poverty-stricken land for spots where gold flowed more freely. They were businessmen, and preferred living in the great commercial centers where their special business acumen could be used to best advantage. However, during the years and even centuries when the Jewish people had forsaken their homeland to live in the more opulent sections of the world, the poor Arabs moved in and settled it. The right of the Arabs to this country was not seriously questioned until the mighty wave of anti-Semitism began to roll its fatal way across the face of the globe. The Jews had no national home of their own and therefore looked for refuge in their ancient country, which they had once forsaken. It seems to me that Great Britain made a tragic mistake in opening a land by military force that was occupied by the Arabs who moved in after the Jews moved out. At least it gave the occasion for one of the world's greatest headaches. Great Britain herself has avowed that she, in the near future, will disown any further responsibility for that fateful land.

An attempt is now being made to solve the Palestinian problem by partitioning the land between those who claim the country by occupation and those who claim it by virtue of an earlier possession. The solution is doomed to failure. Just a glance at the picture of the map of the divided Palestine is enough to cause every interested party to shake his head dubiously. What strange carvings! The boundary lines bulge this way and that just to include or exclude a city, a fertile field or a seaport. There are no straight lines. It seems as if the authorities had cut the country into small parcels and then determined by count where the greater number of Jews were and ascribed the territory to them. It is not surprising at all that this small country is becoming a sea of blood. It is obvious that the partitions will not stand without a
formidable force estimated at at least 100,000 men. Great Britain does not want the expense of such an occupation force. Neither do the Americans who, the British insist, must take over. This is probably not so much because England has so much confidence in America, but because she fears Russia more, who seems ready at any time to accept the invitation to take over this unpleasant task. Palestine has become the pawn of the nations. The nations of the world are watching this narrow strip of land and saying, in effect, “I do not want it, but you can’t have it either.” It looks as if Palestine will continue its bloody strife for some time. The land that once rejected its Messiah is now rejected by the nations. No nation is ready to sacrifice in her behalf. All nations seem ready to sacrifice her in their own behalf. The land from which the Christian spirit sprang is in desperate need of that Christian spirit, but there is none willing to extend it.

H. S.

Military Training and Education

There seems to be little doubt in the minds of those who have followed recent trends but what, in the near future, every young man, and perhaps even young women, will be forced by law to spend part of the best time of their lives in military training. The militarists are still in the saddle. They are directing the policies of our land. And many of our people, especially in these days of warmongering, are perfectly content to let them do so. Newer and more devastating implements of war are being rushed through the factories. Plane bases are being established at all strategic points. Critical materials are ever more difficult to secure. It is generally assumed that this is due to the channeling of critical materials into a war preparedness program. When you have these two factors; to wit, a military control of the country and the fear of war in the hearts of men, it is not difficult to determine in what way the vote on universal compulsory military training will go.

It is well for the educators to discontinue hoping that this will not come to pass. It is the part of wisdom to make some provision for it. Undoubtedly the government will make some arrangement to carry on the education for these young people while they pursue their school work. Something akin to the Reserved Officers Training Corps will be utilized. These courses will probably be given at government expense. If that should eventuate, the young men and women would naturally gravitate to such schools as have some sort of military training program. If Christian colleges expect to serve their constituency in the sphere of higher education when the military training becomes compulsory, they must now look forward to some such project. And if there is any time in which young Christians need Christian training it is when military training is imposed upon them.

H. S.

Perspectives for Reformed Advance*

Mr. Chairman, Alumni and Friends of Calvin:

During the past summer I have here and there spoken about what lies behind me in the Netherlands, and about Africa where my future labors will be. Tonight I wish to speak about ourselves—about our churches, our schools, our Reformed life. With us as alumni and friends of Calvin lies the responsibility of being not only interested in but also of helping to stimulate Reformed activity in America. It may strike you as strange but it is nevertheless true that my present burden of concern is not: what will happen in Africa? but, what will become of the home base? This concern is the product of a long period of observation and it has been accentuated by my recent period of study in the Netherlands where I could observe at first hand the intense and varied activity of the Calvinistic segment of the population. It is impossible to suppress the question: Why do we fall so far, so very far, behind, we who spring from this stock and are children of this tradition?

Dutch Calvinism and American Calvinism Compared

A comparison between Dutch Calvinism and ours easily becomes uncritical and therefore tends to result in unfavorable judgment on the American groups. Perhaps the unfavorable judgment will have to be made in any case, but it is important that our last conclusions take due account of all the factors involved. It is always stimulating to
see what others have accomplished and it is instructive to observe where they have failed, but the value of both the stimulus and the instruction depend on our ability to discern the differences in milieu that obtain between the groups that are being compared.

The chief and most practically significant point to which I wish to allude is the circumstance that Calvinistic thought in the Netherlands is a factor which the national community cannot possibly ignore, whereas in America the position which Calvinists take in a given matter is of virtually no moment so far as public opinion or reaction is concerned. Since the days of William of Orange, Calvinistic thought has been a great, possibly the chief, molding influence in Dutch history. This influence, though much rejected and criticized, is recognized and respected by all classes of men. It is an essential and inescapable element in the Dutch tradition, a living and virile force at the present moment. Two mutually complementary factors account for the strength and influence of the Calvinistic segment of the population. The first is the constant insistence on regarding life and the questions that arise within it in the light of fundamental principles that are rooted in religious conviction and are elucidated by competent men in the spheres where their application is called for or their validity challenged. The second factor is the physical numbers that stand behind these principles—about 15% of the national community. A substantial, intelligent and vocal minority standing behind a world and life view for whose defense and perpetuation they are ready to strive and sacrifice constitutes a power to be reckoned with in any nation.

In the United States Calvinists find themselves in quite a different situation. The religious tradition of the country is predominantly Methodist. New England Calvinism stands discredited. The Calvinism of the large Presbyterian denominations, such as it is, has reference only to a theological conception. It has never attained the majesty of a view whereby life in all its facets is interpreted. In this latter sense of the word the Calvinists in America are not only very much fewer in number than in the Netherlands, but this small number is almost lost to sight in the large American population among which they are scattered in many communities.

In sketching this brief comparison nothing that is new is presented, and yet, if we would understand why American Calvinism is not more aggressive in comparison with the Dutch we simply cannot ignore the difference in situation. The Dutch Calvinists stand in the midst of an old and rich European culture. Nearly all the great influences that have gone into the making of the old world find substantial expression in the Netherlands. The movements and forces that at present agitate the theological, social and political structure are represented there by large and influential groups. The Socialist, Communist, Liberal, Catholic, Barthian and Calvinist elements meet and clash with one another within an area about one-sixth the size of Michigan and within the relatively large population context of nearly ten million. The heart-to-heart meeting of antagonistic spirits and forces is inevitable and constant. The Reformed element in its religious, political, educational and other expressions is the permanent object of sharp and competent attack. With so many and adverse influences impinging on the Calvinists there is only one alternative to being swallowed up or pushed aside and that alternative is: forceful exposition, development and defense of the spiritual heritage that is theirs. This situation, not alone but certainly in large measure, accounts for the alertness of the Dutch Calvinist mind and for the stream of books, newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets that flow from the presses into the hands of the masses.

**Appraisal of American Calvinism**

In America the Calvinists are living their life largely without the encouragement and stimulus that spring from opposition and criticism. Such activity as we engage in has to spring almost solely from our own inner resources. To the extent that this is true our task will, in a sense, be more difficult than that of our Dutch brethren. The compulsion of opposition and adverse circumstances has always been a strong factor in eliciting the best in an individual or a group. At the present we constitute not only a minority, a very small minority, but an ignored, a not-reckoned-with, an unknown minority. Until this situation changes, the strength of an ideal alone must drive us forward. The question is: have we been so driven? Have we succeeded in developing our talents in spite of an indifferent environment? Have we not helped to create the indifferent environment by hiding our talent in a napkin? Have we earnestly striven and seriously attempted to create, outside of our circles, a body of opinion that believes it worthwhile to take note of what we write and do? No honest observer will be able to give an enthusiastic affirmative answer to these questions. On the contrary, I greatly fear that we are gradually being absorbed by the American activistic spirit, by what the Germans somewhat contemptuously refer to as “Amerikanisches Aktivismus”—the rut of activity, doing, organization, without adequate reflection on ultimate bases and ultimate ends, and on means growing out of the first and suitable to achieve the second. We have built buildings—churches, seminaries, colleges, high schools, grade schools, hospitals—but when we contemplate the writings of the ministers, professors, teachers and doctors who

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give leadership in these institutions we can register only keen disappointment, a disappointment but little soothed by the few exceptions that accentuate the rule. It is well to realize this keenly and honestly in the year wherein we celebrate the centennial of the cultural center of America’s Holland-Americans. We do not write. We do not write books, we do not write significant pamphlets or brochures, we do not even write articles that contribute to the sciences in the pursuit of which our professional lives are being spent. Our literary activity is confined to occasional contributions to religious household periodicals—contributions, therefore, which are always limited by the restrictions imposed by space and the need of popular exposition. That we are not a national force in political and social thinking, that we do not dominate or very materially influence American thought and culture leaders and reflecting laymen in the Netherlands understand, but that we do not write is something they cannot understand.

However we may account for our lethargy, the fact is that we must change if our institutions are to retain their Calvinistic character and if they are to take a vital place in the American structure which is, after all, the condition of their service in our national community. Our Calvinism and our Americanism are indissolubly united. Where Calvinism lives it does not do so as an abstract principle but always as principle applied to situation. As holiness always finds embodiment in a life, beauty in a physical framework, harmony in music or color, so true Calvinism is principle concretized in given life situations. The American scene differs altogether from the European. Our mentality, our culture, our education, our religion bear the stamp of our history. It will be a great and energy demanding task to make Scripture and, in its light, Augustine, Calvin and Kuyper speak to our time in our country. It is so urgently necessary that this be done. The generation that is preparing to assume leadership in our circles is bound to the Dutch heritage by no more than a vague tradition. The average student at Calvin or Hope knows less about Dutch language or history than he knows about German. There is being discovered in unexpected quarters an alarming ignorance as to what Calvinism really is and implies.

How shall the trend be turned and a more vital era in American Calvinism be ushered in? When we reflect on this question thoughts and possibilities multiply themselves. They suggest activity especially on two fronts—fronts on which, so far as the development of Reformed significance for them is concerned, we have done almost nothing, but with respect to which we think that we are the people and that wisdom will die with us. I refer to the fields of Theology and Education.

Reformed Advance in Theology

American Calvinists of Dutch extraction manifest a sense of theological superiority that would not be so irritating were it not so complacent. Modernism, Pietism, Fundamentalism, Barthianism—all are dismissed with a wave of the hand as saying nothing new or as saying a lot that is either old or untrue. But when it is asked: What have you said that is both new and true or, how and where have you, in the light of American needs and conditions, restated old truths? the answer singularly evidences embarrassment and fumbling. One of the most embarrassing questions that can be and often is put to us is suggestive of a direction in which the hope for a more vital theology can be realized. The question is a natural one to ask of those who take pride in their theological heritage and knowledge. It is: In which journal do you grapple with the theological problems of the day? It is not very pleasant to have to confess after all these years that there is no answer to this question. However suitable The Banner, De Wachter, the Church Herald may be for their purpose, they are not and do not claim to be theological journals. The Calvin Forum does not meet the requirement either, nor does it pretend to. It is a paper of general cultural interest written chiefly for the more educated Reformed layman. The Westminster Theological Journal is such an organ and thorough and scholarly it is. My question, however, is directed to the much larger body of Dutch-American Calvinists, the group that stands most intimately related to the well-developed Reformed life in the Netherlands, the group with whom the fate of American Calvinism is intimately bound up, the group that claims to be the perpetuation of the Augustine-Calvin-Kuyper tradition in America. It is this strategic and potentially influential Reformed segment in America that is, mirabile dictu, without an organ for the expression and development of its theological thought.

This thing ought not so to be and it need not so be. I am persuaded that some of our ministers and professors have made discoveries in the course of their studies that are worthy of being shared by their colleagues. I am also confident that excellent papers are read at ministers’ conferences and Calvinistic philosophy clubs that should enjoy a wider appreciation. These should be published in a journal that meets the requirements of theological scholarship and bears the stamp of Reformed thought. Four specific questions come to mind, the open discussion of which can be neglected only at the price of making ourselves guilty of sidestepping issues that stand prominently and concretely before us. 1) Is the eschatological question going to die with our esteemed Kromminga? As a mad world hastens frantically and pell-mell to its dark destiny should we not renew our study concerning God’s message about the eschatos? 2) Has the last
The fear has been expressed that discussion of these issues will plunge the church into unhappy controversies. What? Is the prophet's office and voice to be restricted by such unworthy fears? Are we so weak and timid that the theologian dare no longer be theologian free and unfettered to shed public light on problems that stand in the midst of the church? Will God Who would have His revelation unfolded bless with peace in Zion silence in those who are called to explore His Word? Let us study and write. Let us fear only this—that we shall fall short in our duty as free Reformed theologians. Thus we shall serve and strengthen the Calvinistic mind in America and at least make available to theologians of other persuasion and to the world at large the content of our deepest commitment in its theological application. So far our attitude to theology in America has been a negative one. We have spent our energies in pointing out where, and to what extent, and in which way the currents of theology that flow and swirl about us differ from the pure waters of the Reformed faith. The time is more than ripe to put at least one foot on the positive path and add contribution to criticism. Let us strengthen ourselves and let us inform theological America that we exist by sending forth our message. The founding of a high standard quarterly is the sine qua non of such an effort. It will be a step which, with our sincere exertion under God's blessing, will lead to greater things.

Positive Calvinism and Education

In the field of Education a similar situation exists as in that of Theology which, again, cannot be attributed to lack of numbers or inadequate tradition and history. Before entering upon a discussion of this topic, it is both fair and profitable to note what has been accomplished. The small group of Christian Reformed Calvinists in America, unsupported and sometimes opposed by fellow-Calvinists outside their denomination, have brought into being quite against the current of American thought and practice a number of high schools and grade schools in which the teaching complements that of home and church. These schools are supported by large financial sacrifices, their number is growing and their name is good in the communities where they stand. This has been done and it is no small achievement. But, still, this whole painfully constructed edifice does not, it seems to me, stand on a secure foundation. Not that the buildings will not remain or that they will not continue to have an attendance of pupils and staffs of teachers. My fear is both more fundamental and more alarming. It is that we are losing our understanding of what Christian Education is all about. It is the fear that parents and especially teachers, board members and ministers will begin (if they have not already begun) to regard the Christian school as an average public school in charge of Christian people. We are fast falling into a state of being intensely Christian-school-minded without having a genuine theology formed and informed by a philosophy of education to give direction to our support, our prayers, our superintendence, our teaching. Our appreciation for the principles, methods and purposes of the Christian school does not begin to compare with our enthusiasm for physical plant and organization which are, after all, no more than means to the great end in view. More than one teacher has been heard to remark, 'If the home performed its task we wouldn't need Christian schools,' or 'If the Bible were taught in the public schools we wouldn't need Christian education.' In what soil do such thoughts root other than that of vague and poorly understood Reformed educational theory?

The Christian school movement will not long be the product of a spiritual dynamic unless the study of Biblically and culturally grounded educational principles begins to occupy a larger place among us. Such study, however, should have a solid center in the way of a work on Reformed educational theory. Here we touch upon a lack in our educational world that is even more surprising than the absence of a journal in the field of theology. We are confident that our schools are the God-willed answer to the educational problem, that we provide a scriptural and practically realizable alternative to the Progressive muddle in America. On no subject are we more vociferous than on the inadequacy and Christianity-undermining character of the public school system. And yet, when some interested inquirer asks—where can I find an exposition of your views on education? we have nothing that is adequate or satisfactory to offer. The most lamentable thing is that our own people have no basis for orientation or study. The Union of Christian schools has put out some good tracts, but no movement that is carried forward by a particular view of man, his
purpose in life and his preparation to achieve that purpose can get along on tracts. We have Dr. Jaarsma’s book on the educational principles of Dr. Herman Bavinck but here we enter the Dutch milieu of forty years ago which in the nature of the case did not take account of American educational thought that is impinging so very really upon us today. A standard work including a positive exposition of Reformed educational principles and a criticism in their light of current American educational thought is an indispensable requisite for the Christian school movement. Such a book would give line and purpose to our own thought, it would integrate our efforts and give more unity to our striving. If its author were willing to be thoroughly American in his approach and treatment and not obtrude his Dutch antecedents or emphasize the Dutch origin of his thought beyond the requirements of honest and scholarly writing, his work would also do much to complement and give effect to the propaganda of the Union of Christian Schools and the speaking of our ministers and others in N.A.E. and similar groups.

**A Deep Concern**

You may say, Physician heal thyself. What have you done, and what right have you to lift up the critical voice? I have done nothing, and I am not sure at all that I can do anything. But I have one thing, I possess one quality which justifies me in my own mind in speaking as I do: I am disturbed, I am intensely concerned about the future of the church I love and about the Reformed life which it represents. What concerns me so deeply is the pervasive lack of concern about the dangers confronting our religious heritage not only among our laity but especially among large sections of our leadership, the being satisfied with a smoothly running ecclesiastical machinery, the much speaking but little thinking about our “Reformed Position,” the complacent resting behind the Maginot Line of our incomparable creeds while an insidious Fifth Column of indifference to it all is developing under our very noses. I believe it to be no small gain to be thus disturbed and to impart this concern to others. I am alarmed by the present growth and possible ultimate victory of what we may term Reformed Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is a movement or spirit becoming prominent early in this century which sought to unite all Protestants on a lowest-common-denominator platform. It sets forth such doctrines as the infallibility of Scripture, the deity and virgin birth of Christ, His vicarious atonement, the physical resurrection, the need of regeneration, etc., as an adequate Protestant creed. Nothing else mattered. On this as a basis Reformed Fundamentalism superimposes five other fundamentals—the so-called “Five Points” of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints. As Fundamentalism practically ignores the Scriptures that do not bear directly on its “fundamentals,” so there is growing among us a tendency to disregard the line of the Reformed conception and to project in its place these five peaks, and then they become all that matters. Emphasis on the development of all our resources—cultural, scientific, theological—is increasingly being relegated to the background. That is where our non-reflective activism is leading us. It is caused in large part by the theologically and educationally non-productive character of our Dutch-American Calvinism which will ultimately lead it to deterioration and to absorption by the vast and heterogeneous American religious melting pot. Whether we shall maintain ourselves as Calvinists in our religiously leveling environment, whether we shall discharge our obviously God-willed duty of witnessing theologically and culturally to the faith we hold depends, besides on an abiding devotion, on nothing quite so much as on our willingness to write, to write solidly, to write acceptably, to write frequently and much. Kuyper’s motto was “Let the presses groan.” That we have latent ability to do this I am persuaded. That American Calvinism has the drive, the life, the will to achieve this the concrete performance will have to show.
As every school boy no longer knows (what does a schoolboy know), Grub Street was the early eighteenth century address of struggling writers, famous and infamous both. Men of undisputed genius like Johnson, Goldsmith, and Defoe elbowed their way up from its dismal recesses after knowing poverty and social odium; numerous inferior poetasters and pamphleteers starved and froze there and are remembered today largely because Pope, who regarded them as a disreputable species of bug, embalmed them in the amber of his peerless satire. Grub Street shivered in its garrets while Addison lolled in the genteel coffee house of his day, Grub Street starved while great ladies flattered John Gay, Grub Street ground out its endless hack work —its pamphlets, textbooks, and historical digests —while Pope refined his couplets that boiled them in oil. Grub Street worked hard and long, had as a garment only a blanket through which it thrust its arms to write. Patronage was almost over and publishers had learned neither fairness nor charity. Unless you had a competence, were conveniently married to a rich wife, or met the restricted favor of the genteel, you had to have, if you wanted to be a literary man, a pachydermatous hide, and a spartan digestion. As Johnson said of one unfortunate hack, “The poor man did not know how to starve.” That was the know-how of Grub Street.

We often deplore the lack of a distinctively Christian belles-lettres in our day. More specifically, we deplore the absence of a belles-lettres with a Calvinistic atmosphere. It is, of course, an obvious and easy explanation to say the want is due to the lack of creative genius, to say where is your Frost, your T. S. Eliot, your Sherwood, and your Cather? Obviously, one cannot generate genius from horsehair. Obviously, too, I suppose, real genius would elbow its way up from Grub Street, and shoulder its way through prejudice and inhibition to give us a virile Christian belles-lettres in spite of ourselves. But a respectable and rewarding literature can be produced without the highest gifts, and even genius can be thwarted and made sterile. As a matter of fact, I believe the comparative literary sterility of our group is to a goodly extent our own fault; a young author who wants to live by his pen in our group has a street address perilously near Grub Street.

It is true that the production of literature, especially poetry, is a perilous way of bread-winning. Robert Frost, I suppose, is now able to live on his royalties, though during some twenty years he made $200 in all by his verse and lived on farming; and he is one of the few who has been successful. Many a promising poet has a hard time paying for his scratch pads and pencils. People are inclined to think of novelists in terms of the best-seller with his literary agents, movie-rights, and Book-of-the-Month Club sales. But the average novel sells well under 10,000 copies, and even such a sale will guarantee the author only about $4,000. Very few men have been able to produce a novel a year; a novelist is fortunate to produce one every two years, and $2,000 a year is a pitiful income today. The author of a volume of essays on the religious poetry of the seventeenth century would not have a hair-raising sale. He is probably on a university faculty and subsidizing the publication in the hope of a professorship.

If these conditions confront a writer appealing to the broad American market, it is doubly certain for one trying to dispose of his wares among us. It is hard to live by literature in America —and literature, of course, excludes pulp writing, textbooks, and most of journalism. It is harder to live by literature if one depends on a Reformed audience; and, by literature, I intend writing of distinction, intrinsically valuable. Such writing usually requires unremitting discipline and years of struggle before one achieves an individual medium. These have to be years of self-denial and probably poverty. If the writer has survived them, if he is not one of those of whom Gray said, Chill penury repress'd their noble rage, And froze the genial current of the soul, he has several manuscripts on hand. Now he must sell them. Since the work has been evolved from a Calvinistic consciousness, and expresses a Christian personality, he would like to sell them to us. Let us watch his efforts in the next paragraph.

His collection of lyrics are reflective and particularly sensitive to Michigan landscape and waters. They are not hobbling, sentimental ditties, obviously sincere, but devoid of art and guiltless of stimulating an esthetic emotion. They have a certain delicacy of perception requiring some sensitivity in the reader. Will a publisher accept them? If he
does, will they sell among our readers? In all honesty, I doubt whether either will occur. He might sell a few poems to The Banner which occasionally prints a poem of genuine poetic worth; he might donate a few to the Calvin Forum; but where will he sell the rest among us? His prospects are bleak. If he is to live by his verse, he will have to move over to Grub Street and learn how to starve, because there is no patronage available and no cultivated set to sponsor him.

Let us suppose he has written a novel instead. It is a substantial product, will print about five hundred pages and will cost $3.50. We shall assume it has all the conventional characteristics of a good novel, and that in addition it is saturated with a distinctively Calvinistic outlook. It is not a "formula" novel, that is, it does not aim at a realization of a series of "do's" or "do nots"; it does not cramp the experience and observation of a Christian consciousness within a set of external imperatives, and subdue and channelize vivid experience to a mechanical and obvious thesis. It is not a prefabricated creation. Rather, it gives us the honest vision of a sensitive spirit confronted by experience, and gives it with the restraint and selection inseparable from a Christian heart and mind. I believe such a novel might find a publisher. Would it sell? My answer to that can be, of course, only conjectural, but I sincerely doubt whether enough copies would be sold to encourage the author to write a second. Remember, it would have to sell at least twenty thousand copies to enable the author to write another, unless he has a rich wife, a large inheritance, or something similar. The closest approximation to such a book that I have read is "Instead of a Thorn" by Reverend Bastian Kruithof. Whatever its weakness, I found it both a rewarding and promising book, but I doubt if its proceeds have kept the author in cigars.

I see little future for the literary artist devoted primarily to our own group; our people by and large care little for literature. In that they are no different from other Americans. Even the sale of a best-seller is surprisingly small when one considers the prodigious English-speaking market. Yet we badly need and want a positive Calvinistic literary art. How shall we get it?

* * *

It does not seem to me that it will arise out of the support of our own group alone. That, however, does not necessarily doom it. The American publisher will buy a good story artistically constructed and take the distinctive Christian atmosphere with it, and if it is a genuine work of art, it will sell. You may say then, that we have no responsibility in the matter. Let the artist struggle till the Book-of-the-Month Club floats him into affluence. Then, we having taught him it is true, but having done little to guide or encourage him subsequently, promptly claim the author, and run his picture and an accompanying encomium in the Calvin Alumni Letter. If the plan I suggest had been made available to Mr. Feikema, his undisputable literary gift might possibly have been devoted to far nobler ends.

The suggestion I am about to offer may be merely visionary, but I should like to arouse more interest in the creation of a genuine Calvinistic art in our country. The following policy is offered in the hope that it may be succeeded by others more substantial or more practicable. I don't believe we will get such art by a policy of laissez-faire, by giving what discipline we can at Calvin and then turning the writer loose in the Welter and fury of literary competition abroad today. I should like to see sizable fellowships established in creative writing. If there is a young writer of genuine gift and pronounced promise, could we not make available to him a two-year grant that would release all his efforts for creative work? We would, of course, have to be assured both of his gift and the Christian character of his project. Such a policy would encourage the gifted to write, would assure them of our warm interest, would give them the lively encouragement important to creation. There may well have been "mute, inglorious Miltons"; had not his friends urged him constantly John Gay would have been sterile, had not Lowell urged Holmes to contribute prose to the Atlantic, we might very well have had but a few poems from his pen. When the literary project is completed, it would have the prestige of the grant that made it possible and might thereby more readily gain publication.

The Calvin Alumni Association seems to me to be sponsoring a splendid plan in hoping to make grants available to the members of the Calvin faculty who have a creative project in mind. This idea might be expanded to apply not only to the Calvin faculty but to anyone, whether young or old, who had a pronounced literary gift. Possibly the gift is being practiced surreptitiously, ground under cover by economic pressure. A year or a two-year grant might be a splendid investment in developing a Christian culture rooted in distinctive Calvinistic and Dutch antecedents.

THE CALVIN FORUM • • • JANUARY, 1948
E ARE facing another centennial year, one which possibly may not be observed in any organized sort of way. The only folk who may celebrate it demonstratively are the spiritual children of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who happened to sound their "Communist Manifesto" one hundred years ago. With these folk we will not commemorate 1848, because ours was a different cause when our forefathers attacked monarchy and nobility in February and March of that historic year.

The Effort

Few single years in European history have been characterized by disturbances so widespread as those of 1848. Previously in England there had been the Chartists, the British counterparts to the barricade builders on the Continents. Needless to say, the British in their characteristic way had gone about their "revolution" in a more prolonged, more deliberate, and more peaceful fashion. But they were successful. In Prussia in 1848 there was outright revolt; the proud Hohenzollern had to take off his hat when called upon to pay his respects to the civilians whom his soldiers had shot in the streets of Berlin. Throughout the Austrian empire there was stubborn, bitter, and prolonged revolt. Vienna, Hungary, Bohemia, and Venetia gave the Austrian generals, Windischgratz, Jellachich, and Radetzky, fierce resistance before capitulating. Metternich, the old Austrian statesman, fled to England never to return to power. In France King Louis Philippe had to abdicate and flee to the same refuge. In the Italles the revolutionists shook their clenched fists at the despicable Habsburgs and their puppets. Even the pope had to flee his domains temporarily. And in the north even the Netherlands did not escape embarrassment. Thorbecke's movement helped William II to decide to grant a better constitution. There were uprisings in more than a score of little and larger Germanies. Constitutions were liberalized, at least slightly, by the dozens. Only the crowns of Russia and Turkey were not actually tilted. It was a bad year for Europe.

The Troublemakers

You and I were among the men who revolted in 1848, we of the middle or lower middle classes. We are and were the small businessmen, the store-keepers, the artisans, the teachers, and in general the active and rather prosperous commercial folk. All of us conspired, actually or tacitly, to wring more liberal constitutions from the crowns who were still in alliance with the reactionary upper wealth, the landed nobility. Associated with us lower middle class folk were the workers of the cities, the common men. Also associated with us were the intellectuals who wanted the cause of progressivism to triumph. Both of these, the workers and the intellectuals, were more "advanced" than we. The workers were socialistic, especially in France, and the intellectuals tended to be a bit radical, but their aid was more than welcome in the opening stages of most of the revolts. Later on we had to disassociate ourselves deftly from these folk, and even suppress them where they threatened to seize control and move in the direction of collectivism and severe forms of equality. This was true especially in Paris. Our social ancestors were desperately jealous of private property and of free enterprise just as we are. Similarly, they were fearful for their churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic, which were becoming the objects of working class suspicion. They tended to believe as yet in state churches, and they tended to believe that poverty was essentially the fault of and the concern of the individual himself.

The Demands

What we or they wanted, broadly speaking, was a wider franchise and republican institutions. We wanted higher and more taxes on the upper wealth and lower taxes on ourselves. We wanted a significant voice in the legislatures. Mark you, we were the lower bourgeois who were revolting. We wanted a free press and the right of public assembly and the right to criticize. And we got these concessions. Some came shortly; some came gradually; but come as they did we remarked that the world was becoming a better place in which to live. Resulting from our emancipation, the industrial revolution revived, the standards of living rose, creature comforts multiplied, nationalism waxed, and imperialism became our handmaiden in the endeavors of commerce and industry. In short we became the custodians of the nineteenth century. We began to dominate it, and we held our favored position as we crossed the threshold of the twentieth century.
The Heirs

We of today, we conservative, orthodox Protestants, received a legacy from the men of 1848. Often since their day we may have questioned and debated the right of revolt and more particularly the legitimacy of violence against government, but we have never questioned the value of the privileges which were bequeathed us in the years that followed those revolutions. We take them for granted. Did we not observe as we wrestled in 1848 that even as the nobility had to wrest its liberties from the absolute monarchs of medieval times, just so we middle class folk were forced to wring our liberties from those nobles who were clinging to their position so stubbornly? Before 1815 political democracy as enjoyed by the middle classes was something which was only discussed, sought after, or yearned for. The years between 1815 and 1848 were years of transition. But in 1848 our ideals and aims were laid into molds which have since become permanent, or so we trust. Since those days the western world has experienced a golden age of material prosperity, of aggressive capitalist democracy which has stirred all students of world history.

Since 1848

From its very onset our middle class autonomy or supremacy has been challenged by proletarian hopes for collectivism. Eighteen hundred and forty-eight was the very year in which Marx and Engels attempted to fire the common man, the manual laborers, by means of the “Communist Manifesto.” “Workers of the world; Unite!” That call has not gone unheeded in our western world. The socialist movement has forged ahead tremendously, and even the blocks of reactionary fascism have been unable to hold the line against the demands of the common man, the proletariat. Two ways of life are at odds in national socialism and communism, and even though there are elements of collectivism in common, the situs of control differs in each. In communism the center of gravity is, or is intended to be eventually, with the working masses, while in a fascist scheme the military and the economically-powerful civilians fight desperately to retain autonomy above the masses. When the common man succumbs to fascism and shows enthusiasm for it, he is being taken in by sops that are thrown to him in the form of bits of economic security.

The Portents

The real struggle today is not between these two isms. Rather the struggle one hundred years after 1848 is between lower middle class political democracy and the mass social democracy advocated by Marxism. The basic class struggle of the future is between you, so to speak, and the materialistic, poor, common man in our industrial society. A century ago we displaced upper wealth and privilege. Are we to have our turn in being relegated to a lesser position in the political scheme? The common, manual, industrial worker has been herding successfully for the first time in history. His device in almost every case has been the labor union, not the political party. Labor organization has become much more effective than were the underground political societies of a century ago. Today the common man constitutes the strongest single bloc in society, strongest because he is more numerous than any other single class of economic beings. He is strong because he votes a vote of the same weight as that of the magnate. Right here is the suggestion that the struggle of the future will differ from that of 1848. Then the struggle necessarily went to violence simply because the offended did not possess the ballot to fight with as a peaceful weapon. But today the common man as a class may assume the reins in almost any legislature if only he cares to congeal as a group. The common man is equipped to overthrow middle class control with the very weapon which he received from the bourgeois after 1848. Examples of this type of peaceful struggle and this type of strength are abundant today in Eastern and Southeastern Europe where the Soviets are overthrowing middle class democracy without mass violence.

Tomorrow

Our point is that as 1848 marked the birth of middle class autonomy, so our era, these years, may possibly mark the opening of an era of the common man. Who is this common man? He is the industrial worker whom industry has traditionally submerged into practical anonymity. He lives in the low-rent districts, near the railroads or the docks, or in the designated suburbs which have rather fine-sounding names but ungraded streets. He tends to be of the rougher sort; he has beer at his picnics; he is profane, and he does not affiliate with a church. He is class conscious, and the class struggle is the struggle that fires him. He regards supervision in industry and the stockholders as being overpaid for their services to modern society. He is enthusiastic about most of the legislation of the Roosevelt Era.

Among us orthodox Protestants are thousands of these common men, but they differ from the rank and file in that they are restrained; they possess a conscience and are opposed to violence in labor crises. They are suspicious of the principles of class struggle and are fearful of collectivism. They adhere to their churches. Of them the enterpriser need have no fear. But they constitute only a small fraction of the whole because the Protestant churches have left the side streets of our big cities
and have hied themselves to the more attractive suburbs. Protestantism no longer exercises strong restraining influences on our electorate of this bracket. Maybe Catholicism is still holding the line of restraint in our slums, but in America that is the church of the minority.

If this is to be the century of the common man, as the last was the century of the middle class man, we must make the decision whether the most numerous economic group in society shall have control commensurate with its numbers. The answer will be simply Yes, if that element is able to give leadership that is mature and fair. There can be no other answer if we believe in the validity of majority rule in the framework of western ideals of political democracy. Certainly we do believe that voting should be by head rather than by wealth. The future suggests that we lower middle class folk may become uncomfortable. For example, if we are teachers, we are going to be supervised by government. If we are storekeepers, our enterprise is going to be channelized. If we are contractors, government is going to tell us what fair profits are. And if we are professional men, we may be coerced into somewhat inconvenient or irritating schemes for public betterment. Our common man is collectivistic, because living near the poverty line, he welcomes the economic boons that come with socialistic government. He likes prices fixed by means of government subsidy. He demands access to scarce items—rationing. He favors rent controls, and he insists that profits be modest. We can work with this type of individual, though we may have to force a compromise here and there. If we block him completely, there will be friction and struggle, and eventually we may find ourselves washed overboard in a wave of violent socialism. Short of that there is the last ditch possibility of creating a dictatorial, militaristic, fascist state. We prefer the first possibility, that of careful cooperation and compromise, and we believe that we should act in good grace and in good faith.

"Vacuum Packed" Christianity

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THERE are on the market today a number of brands of coffee, put up in tin containers and "vacuum packed." The vacuum packing, whatever it means, is supposed to keep the coffee free from contact with the air, free from moisture and free from dust. In this way, it is claimed, when we open one of these cans of coffee, it is always "roaster fresh." While this may be very good for coffee and like products, many Christians today, even Calvinists, think that their Christianity should be treated in the same way. We must pack our theology in a vacuum, let nothing get at it, keep it from any outside contacts, and in that way we shall preserve our "orthodoxy" and our spiritual vigor. Even those who theoretically reject such an idea as this, very frequently follow it out in practice. They are unwilling to bring their theology down into the market place. Instead they wish to live in their "vacuum packed" theological can, and have no dealings with either Jews or Samaritans.

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This attitude is fundamentally negative, one of the major mistakes of many modern evangelical Christians. The general tendency of thought is largely that we should merely pull down what is unchristian. This is of course necessary but it is not all. Destruction is certainly not the highest end in life. Yet so many Christians in their relations with the world around them are purely negative. They have their own positive views regarding Christianity, the plan of Salvation, etc., but when it comes down to having specifically Christian views concerning the world in which they live, they are terribly lacking. What is more, most of them do not want to be bothered. They feel that if they cling to theology alone, and its immediately related subjects, all will be well. They will criticize what is not Christian, but that is as far as they will go.

Negation, however, is not the principal idea of Christianity. We have not only a positive revelation of God's will for our salvation through Christ, we have even more. The whole drama of salvation is being acted before the backdrop of the world in which we live. Without the doctrines of creation and providence, as well as the Fall, there could be no redemption. God's saving work does not exist in a vacuum. It is not "vacuum packed." It is in the closest possible relationship to the world in which it operates. Because of this, before we can have a full knowledge of God's saving work we must have positive ideas about the world in which we live. We cannot adopt the monastic, indeed the old pagan view, that the world is evil and dominated by the evil principle, which demands the Christian's separation from the world. Instead we must realize that the world is ours to conquer, until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is King.
This lays a very specific duty upon Christians, particularly in this day when everyone has at least an elementary education. It means first of all that we must be prepared to reject, with good reasons, that which interprets the world in anti-Christian terms. But it requires us to go further. We must not only pull down. We must be prepared to build up. Christianity must replace that which it tears down by something positive in its place. This is probably the greatest weakness in Christian thought today. Young people go to school or college from Christian homes having been well warned against pagan thought. Yet when the issue is joined, they usually find themselves overwhelmed. Why? It is because they have nothing to put in place of that which they reject. They have been taught to disbelieve evolutionary science, Freudian psychology, Marxian economics and political science, yet they have been given nothing to take their places. Because of this they eventually succumb to anti-Christian ways of thought. If one is to stand for Christian truth, for an all-rounded Gospel witness, it is not enough to be negative. “Vacuum-packed” Christianity will never suffice. We must have a positive approach to all areas of human endeavor.

Because some people realize this there has long been current what might well be called “Biblicism.” If you talk about current problems, they immediately roll themselves up in the cotton batting of Biblical quotations which may mean little or nothing. Or some will even go so far as to say what we need to do is return to apostolic simplicity and poverty to solve our problems. This was the answer of Francis of Assisi. Such an attitude, however, does nothing but increase the vacuum with which the Christian may surround himself. We cannot in this day of machinery, highly developed natural science, complex economic relations return to an apostolic or Old Testament culture. What we must do is turn back to the Scriptures, not for a few catch-phrases, but in order to seek out their principles. These we should then apply to modern needs.

Right here, however, we must be on our guard. Such an idea as this is not easy of execution. In the first place we must determine exactly what the Scriptures do teach. This is going to mean that we must be prepared, if necessary, to reject some of the applications made earlier in the Church. This is a drastic step to advocate, but we must faithfully endeavor to determine whether past interpretations have been but tradition, or the real teaching of God’s Word. One example of traditionalism which comes to mind is Luther’s rejection of the Copernican idea that the sun rather than the earth is the center of the universe. Luther thought that he was remaining loyal to the Scriptures, but was he? Was it not that he was following Medieval tradition rather than the Scriptures? In like manner we must be certain also, as far as possible, that we are not merely repeating the words of church fathers, but are in truth thinking God’s thoughts after Him.

This raises a further question. Not only must we be sure that we have the Scriptural teaching, but we must also be sure that we have a clear understanding of that which we are attempting to accomplish. Very frequently the so-called conflict between scientific (I use the word very broadly) thought and Christianity has been caused by Christian misunderstanding. It is true that the “lunatic fringe” on the unbelieving side of the question may hail some discovery as the final blow at Christianity. But this is not true. Yet quite frequently as a result of such a claim, a perfectly reasonable statement or idea has been rejected by Christians. A case in point is Isaac Newton’s formulation of the laws of gravity. Newton never thought for an instant that his discovery attacked Christianity, but many lesser lights in the scientific firmament thought that it did. They exploited it to the utmost, making ship-wreck of some people’s faith and scaring Christians away from the physical sciences for the next two centuries. We must understand what we are trying to do; we must not look for unnecessary conflict between the Scriptures and the world’s theories, for God in His common grace has given knowledge and ability even to non-Christians; and we must be careful in our claims, a characteristic not always common among Christians.

At this point, it may perhaps be well to turn from talking in generalities to specific cases. What are specific instances of “vacuum packed” Christianity which are causing us trouble today?

The first example that comes to mind relates to the subject of biological evolution. Since the days of Darwin this has been a pet scientific theory. It has been taught throughout the schools and colleges of this continent and Europe for some sixty to seventy years. The result is that it is now generally accepted, and has become part of the pattern of modern thought. Yet we do find that there is not even complete agreement among the adherents of this theory. There are the geneticists who attempt to explain all of history in terms of evolution, and on the other extreme there are those who while accepting evolution bring it to a stop with man. These latter usually have some sort of god-concept, holding that God has used evolution under His providence to accomplish His own purposes. A personal acquaintance of the writer, who is a devout Christian, holds to this view, and is at present writing a book against the genetic concept of evolution. Therefore, we are faced with the whole question of evolution: what is it? How far do we accept its conclusions?
Even to raise such a question as this is of course in some circles enough to bring immediate condemnation. Evolution has been declared anti-Christian, just the same as Luther rejected the Ptolemaic helio-centric theory of the universe. Therefore, anyone who even suggests examining the evolutionary theory with anything but a hostile attitude is immediately ruled out of court. Then usually to bolster up one's opposition to evolution, one is advised to turn to a study of one of the numerous attacks on evolution made by a minister of the Gospel or some other amateur scientist. We are told if we do this we shall see that the Bible is correct. All of which sounds extremely orthodox and very "fundamental." The only trouble is, however, that we would not follow such tactics if we were faced with a major surgical operation. We would not be content in a case of desperate illness to allow a well-trained Bible student to operate unless we were sure that he was also a fully qualified surgeon. The truth of the matter is we Christians usually are adopting a thoroughly "vacuum-packed" attitude towards this whole question. We have not yet really tackled the problem.

We have to face the big question: when evolution is rejected what is to be put in its place? The answer immediately comes: Creation. But what do we mean by creation? What actually does the Bible teach us concerning creation? It is all very nice to turn the word creation lovingly over our tongues, but what does it mean in scientific terms? There is the big question. To say that Genesis I is enough, is not correct. While that chapter gives us a certain amount of information, it certainly does not give us a complete scientific system, nor does it even answer a great many questions which the scientist asks. At the same time, alongside Genesis I we do have certain proven facts in the field of geology, embryology, biology, chemistry, physics and astronomy. They are now set in a generally evolutionary framework, but if that is not the correct setting, what setting will we provide? That is one query that the average anti-evolutionist does not attempt to answer.

If we are going to escape from this vacuum we must change our attitude. We must be prepared to formulate a scientific doctrine of creation, in accordance with Scripture but also taking into account that which we have discovered by the usual scientific means. This, however, cannot be done by merely accepting a traditional and non-scientific interpretation of what Genesis teaches. We have got to get back to find out exactly what it does tell us. In the 16th century it was thought that the Scriptures taught the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, now it is not felt that this is so. We today must, therefore, get to work to find out what the Scriptures do teach about creation. Then we must be prepared to turn to the facts, not the theories, already produced by science; and we must bring the Scriptures and science together in a positive statement. Only when that is done will we be able to meet and defeat godless evolutionism. What the resulting systematic statement will be, we cannot now tell, but it is possible that it may alter some of our preconceived notions.

Another form of the same problem is found in the field of psychology. So many Christians today who go to college find the ship-wreck of their faith taking place in the psychology classes. What is the reason? It is simply that psychology (whether it be behavioristic, Freudian, pragmaticistic, or any other type) is taught from a fundamentally materialistic point of view. Now any Christian can see that there are many things in the teaching of these psychological schools which are anti-Christian; and usually the result is that the Christian has his faith rather badly knocked about, or he simply retires into his vacuum-packed tin and will have nothing to do with such a thing as psychology. Usually the latter action results and a completely negative attitude towards psychology is developed. But that is not what should happen. The Christian as well as the unbeliever must investigate the world and all that is in it, including man. Therefore, he must tackle the problem courageously. He must be prepared to bring together that which has been found to be true concerning man's psychic existence and the teachings of the Scriptures. He may find as a result that a certain amount of traditional teaching does not fit in with the facts and that when the Scriptures are interpreted in a somewhat different manner they and the known facts come together. The result is then a positive statement of a Christian psychology.

Probably even more than in either natural science or psychology, the need for a positive statement is to be found in the social sciences: economics, sociology, political science and history. Here again we are finding that man's sinful heart is leading him to attempt to set up a completely godless system of thought. He has discovered many facts relating to man in society and man's activities. At the same time he has attempted to give an ultimate explanation to this whole question of man in society on a purely materialistic basis. In this he comes up solidly against the strong supernaturalism of the Scriptures, the emphasis upon sin, incarnation and redemption. This the Christian believes to be wrong and false, yet what are Christians doing about social theory?

About the only thing that the Christian is doing today in answer to the Marxist, the Keynesian, the sociological, and most other attempts to interpret man's relation to society is criticizing. This is not enough. What is necessary is a positive statement concerning man and his relations to society. Quite recently considerable publicity has been given to Arnold Toynbee's great attempt at a complete syn-
thesis of history, and while there is much in his work which must be rejected, at the same time he has done a very considerable service. What we need is a Christian statement of that type. We have to take the facts which have been discovered and bring them together with the Scriptures, setting forth a resulting Christian interpretation. Again this may require us to modify our interpretations of the Scriptures in certain points, but such a change will only be for our own profit, and our Christian strengthening.

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In matters connected with religion we face the same situation. Here, of course, the Christian in a sense is on home territory. He has tended to enter positively into the religious discussions which arise periodically. Yet even here, the result has not been satisfactory. Again there has been too much "vacuum packing." There has been too much of the attitude that as long as one is orthodox, one need pay no attention to others or seriously examine their views. Such people often forget that in 1535 John Calvin, to the Roman Church, was exceedingly unorthodox. It is not always the man who talks in terms of old "orthodoxy" who is farthest from the Word of God. We must never refuse to examine in the light of Scripture what anyone teaches.

One of our biggest weaknesses as Christians, however, has appeared in the field of "Comparative Religion." Not infrequently we are inclined to look at those who tell us that "all religions are ultimately the same" as people who are so far off the track, that discussion of their views is unthinkable. Yet it is out of this relative idea, that the so-called "Comparative Religion School" has arisen. Those who are of this way of thinking claim that if we make a comparative study of all religions we shall find religion's true origin and lowest common denominator. When faced with this theory, most Christians become very much incensed and then usually retire to their "vacuum packed" can, refusing to consider such a thing. They are not prepared to face the facts of the ethnic religions and attempt to give an explanation of how and why they exist. It is not enough to say that others are wrong, we must in a positive sense produce a "comparative religion" theory which will fit the facts, while giving a Scriptural explanation.

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At this point, however, no doubt some readers will be having very grave doubts about the writer's own orthodoxy. He has repeatedly said that a real attack upon some of these problems may demand a changing of Scriptural interpretation. This is dangerous, it is unorthodox. Yet is it? When the Puritans left Holland for America, Robinson, the Puritan minister, said that he believed that there would yet come forth much new light from the Word of God. It is still possible that new light will be shed abroad; and this means that traditional interpretations may have to be modified or discarded completely. One example has already been mentioned: Luther's view that the earth is the geographic center of the universe. Another is to be found in the Reformer's rejection of many of the theological doctrines, as well as economic and social theories of the Medieval Church. The "only infallible interpreter of Scripture is Scripture." Tradition is useful, but it is not infallible. Therefore, in the light of the Scriptures we must "try all things and hold fast that which is good." This is the Christian's constant duty.

It may be objected at this point that such re-interpretation might destroy such doctrines as the sovereignty of God, the substitutionary atonement, and other doctrines of the faith. If, however, we allow the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by the Scriptures this danger is obviated. What is needed is the same positive statement of Christian views on such things as creation, society, etc., as are to be found on theological matters in systematic theology. At the same time, such positive views cannot be developed in a vacuum. We must take into account the world with which they deal. This means that we must attempt to bring Scriptural teachings on these matters into relationship with the facts. Just because a man has memorized Genesis I, does not mean that he knows all there is to know about creation. We have got to unpack our views and bring them into fruitful contact with the actual life about which they are attempting to theorize.

Yet here, some may object that the writer has actually gone so far as to say that we should try to reconcile the facts of science with the Scriptures. We should try to set forth an interpretation of the facts in accordance with Biblical teaching. Indeed, this is what we should do. If we believe that God is the author of Scripture and is also the author of every last fact of creation, then it is our duty to bring the two together. When we do this we shall be giving the only true interpretation of the facts—God's interpretation. In this connection we must, however, be extremely careful that we do not accept human speculation about the facts, as though they were the facts themselves. Nor must we, simply because some have used the facts to bolster up an anti-Christian theory, declare that the facts are bad. The facts are God's possession. Properly interpreted they lead to God, wrongly and sinfully interpreted they lead in the opposite direction. It is our duty, as far as possible, to give a Christian interpretation—the proper interpretation.

* * *

At this point, however, we must again be on our guard. We are only fallible, sinful human beings.
Consequently we cannot know the ultimate in truth, for only God can do that. Thus while we strive to bring the facts of experience into proper accord with Scriptural teaching, we cannot hope to make the accord absolutely one hundred per cent perfect. Neither nature nor the Scriptures are completely amenable to man's rationalization. This we must expect. God alone has the full and proper interpretation. On the other hand we must do our utmost to satisfy the demand for a Christian interpretation by bringing the two as far as possible into accord with each other.

This is our greatest need today. The Church of Christ is faced on every hand, in every area of thought, with inextricable confusion. The scientist, the politician, the economist, the artist, the historian are all in chaos. The thinking of western civilization is in solution. The only answer is to be found in Christianity's world and life view. Yet what do we offer this topsy-turvy world? Nothing but negative criticism. All that we give to it is a rejection of its pet theories with nothing to take their places. It is a desperate situation, due large-

ly to the "vacuum packing" in which Christians have lived for the past two hundred years. It is a desperate call from Macedonia, and we are not ready even to leave Troas.

This means that we must, by the grace of God, get back to the Scriptures. We must dig forth from its mines of truth, the true interpretation of this world and man. Then we must not be content to criticize this or that theory, saying that they are wrong. What we have got to do, is get down to business, applying the Scriptures to our facts, and presenting to the world the Christian point of view in every field.

Such action as this is not going to be easy at first. Many people will prefer to sit around, discussing minute points of theology, Biblical exegesis, etc., rather than how these things can be applied to problems of economics, history, science. It may even mean the rejection of some cherished theories but it must be tackled, humbly yet courageously. This is our duty in the present age, and the only hope of the world for generations to come.

From Our Correspondents

STIRRINGS IN THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

Dear Dr. Bouma:

SIGNIFICANT stirrings of vital interest to those who take seriously their commitment to evangelical Christianity and the Reformed Faith have been transpiring in the Reformed Church in America since the last letter appeared in these columns.

The Federal Council and the N. A. E.

Perhaps the best way to give the readers of the Forum an unprejudiced account of these developments is to quote from the "Report on the State of Religion" made by the retiring president of the General Synod, R. C. A., Dr. Harry J. Hager, to that body at its last General Synod meeting. At the conclusion of his able and careful analysis of conditions within our denomination, he said,

"This report, unfortunately, would not be complete if it did not take cognizance of the fact that in the midst of this encouraging year of United Advance there have also been some notes of internal unrest and dissatisfaction with some phases of our denominational life. Overtures from many directions regarding the Federal Council make it plain that Synod's decision of 1934 must come up for careful review at this present session. Feelings and convictions on this issue run high and are strongly conflicting in their nature. Let me only point out that we should approach this issue with a calm and prayerful spirit. Let us remember that ours is a church with a long and venerable history of peace without compromise of truth and conviction. We have ridden through many storms in the past and faced many issues with courage and quiet trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we are so sharply divided that majority opinion in one direction or another should prove to be but a Pyrrhic victory, it may be wise to remember that the great majority of denominations in America have not feared to shed seemingly essential to their denominational prosperity and kingdom effectiveness to belong to any interdenominational council whatever. It is too great a price for our relatively small fellowship to pay to have our internal unity and harmony disrupted or even repeatedly disturbed by any exaggerated emphasis upon an affiliation which to all practical purposes does not enter in any conspicuous way into the every day life of the rank and file of our constituency. I would recommend that if, after the question has been calmly but thoroughly debated in this Synod, no substantial agreement is reached, a representative commission be then appointed to make a thorough study of the Federal Council, its virtues and weaknesses, its advantages and disadvantages; that this committee also acquire more information regarding the more recently organized National Association of Evangelicals and report back to the next Synod its findings and recommendations for final determination of this thorny issue."

The report of the Committee on Overtures anent this matter, presented by the Committee Chairman, Rev. John S. Terlouw, and adopted by the Synod, recommends that "Synod, recognizing both the favorable and unfavorable aspect of the Federal Council, vote to continue for another year its membership in the Council with the avowed purpose of getting the Council to take positions doctrinally more consonant with Biblical Christianity," and that "Synod authorize the appointment of a representative committee which shall during this synodical year investigate both the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and the National Association of Evangelicals, discovering the pros and cons of both organizations, this Committee to bring its findings and guiding recommendations to the next Synod."

Dr. Hager also stated in his report that

"There are also among us the increasingly disturbing open charges of Modernism in both the Reformed and United Presbyterian Churches; also inferences regarding the complete dependability of our Boards and educational institutions. Some may feel prompted in this Synod to ignore or to hush these matters of unrest, others to initiate disciplinary procedures. We venture to suggest as Synod's chairman of the United Advance that we include in our United Advance program not only the financial goals that we are approaching with such blessing and the spiritual goals which we all so heartily endorse, but that in addition we have by Synod appointment, a not too large, but thoroughly representative committee, the personnel of which enjoys the confidence of all our constituency, charged with the task of attempting to effect by prayerful conference and counsel an inherent and internal unity of complete mutual confidence and understanding.

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Let us approach all of the problems of this crucial session prepared to humble ourselves much before our great Lord and Head of the Church, ready always to esteem one another highly in the Lord for the work’s sake, and with much prayer for unmistakable guidance in every moment of our deliberations and fellowship together.

As To Ordination Vows

Last month, there was published by Rev. Henry Bast, minister of Bethany Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a 90-page brochure on the subject of the “Ordination Vows of Ministers and Elders.” Perhaps your readers, Dr. Bouma, would be interested in reading the requirements of that vow.

“We, the undersigned, in becoming ministers of the Word of God within the bounds of the Classis of [ ], do by this our subscription, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare that we believe the Gospel of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as truly set forth in the Standards of the Reformed Church in America and that we reject all errors which are contrary thereto. We promise that we will exert ourselves to keep the Church free from such errors.

“We promise, that we will with all diligence and faithfulness teach the Gospel and defend the Standards of our faith, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by preaching or writing; and that we will set forth the Gospel as God may give us grace in our life and conversation without contradicting the same by word or example.

“We further promise that should we ever have any doubts as to this Gospel of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, or as to the Standards of our faith, we will neither propose nor teach the same, but will first communicate our views to the Classis to which we belong, and will subject ourselves to its counsel and decision, under penalty in case of refusal to be ipso facto suspended from our office. We do further promise to be always ready to comply with a requisition from Consistory or Classis for an explanation of our views respecting any particular article of our Standards aforesaid, under a penalty of censure or suspension from the ministry; reserving to ourselves, however, the right of an appeal to a higher judicatory, and, until decision is made upon such appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.”

Every time the minister moves from one classis to another, he must sign this formula again. The brochure is a clear, searching and scholarly study of the subject and is well worth reading.

“We, the undersigned, in becoming Elders of the Reformed Church in America, do by this our subscription, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare that we believe the Gospel of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as truly set forth in the Standards of the Reformed Church in America and that we reject all errors which are contrary thereto. We promise that we will exert ourselves to keep the Church free from such errors.

“We promise, that we will with all diligence and faithfulness teach the Gospel and defend the Standards of our faith, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by preaching or writing; and that we will set forth the Gospel as God may give us grace in our life and conversation without contradicting the same by word or example.

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As a lad of 16 I loved thrills and excitement, nor was I concerned about the company in which I found it. My parents were much respected and came of families, members of which on both sides had distinguished themselves in the services and on the stage sufficiently to appear in the D.N.B. But neither father nor mother had a personal knowledge of all who love the Saviour. Beside the noble exploits of the heroes of the church of God the spell of the most exciting novel pales into insignificance and God often uses the fire kindled by the writings of the saints to fan the flames of heavenly life and missionary zeal in the hearts of those who.

The Books Brave the Perils of War

At the outbreak of the late war it had grown to 25,000 volumes and the danger of destruction by enemy action became apparent. Some said, “Let us get all the books to the country and hide it underground,” but I wondered what would happen if God’s ministers were sent away and buried “for the duration”; and I decided the books must brave the dangers of battle and bear their witness amidst bullets and bombs. They even sailed the seas during the U-boat campaign without damage and escaped destruction when a flying bomb fell within a few yards and shattered their original home. Scarcely a volume was scratched. Transferred to London more bombs fell within a stone’s throw, yet again they were preserved by God’s providential care. Little by little the collection grew until it totaled 50,000 volumes and steps began to be taken to establish branches in the big provincial cities and in strategic centres abroad. You may well picture my thrill and how my heart went up in gratitude to God as these events unfolded and the library attracted service men and women of both British and Allied nationality, missionaries, ministers, nurses, students, Youth Clubs, Young Life Campaigns and last, but not least, little children. The youngest member is just four, the oldest is in her hundredth year! And now with a score of valiant voluntary helpers who seem to be given a share in my vision, we work with pioneer zeal and watch the wonderful hand of God and sense that

“One purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour.”

Young Christians the world over may now revel in the rich heritage of reformation literature and, for less than 2d. a week, benefit by the priceless pages of books which reveal a faith for which their forefathers dared to die and which enabled them to pass through floods and flames to the everlasting reward of all who love the Saviour. Beside the noble exploits of the heroes of the church of God the spell of the most exciting novel pales into insignificance and God often uses the fire kindled by the writings of the saints to fan the flames of heavenly life and missionary zeal in the hearts of those who.
the brakes entirely out of action came to a stand by the engine sinking into the ground. Amidst electric flashes and explosions, and with wheels crunching the sleepers, I drew my knees up and prayed as never before. With a terrible jolt the train stopped and I found myself in a carriage with no floor and a huge corrugated-iron sheet running from the ground to the top of the carriage within half-an-inch of my drawn up knees, and piles of brickbats and rubble all around me. I scrambled up placing one foot on each seat-frame and crawled through the window smothered in dust yet without a scratch, and then salvaged my papers, among which were the Trust Deeds of the Library. As never before did I praise God for preservation from death and sing with Charles Wesley:

"God of my life, Thy gracious power
Through varied deaths my soul hath led,
Oft turned aside the fatal hour,
Or lifted up my sinking head."

Yes, both my personal and library experience enables me to echo the words of the Psalmist, "Trust in Him at all times, ye people."

If this article whets your appetite to know more of The Evangelical Library, just drop me a line to our new premises at 78 Chiltern Street, London, W.I., and I will gladly send you full particulars and tell you how to become a member.


GEOFFREY WILLIAMS.

FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FRONT

Dear Dr. Bouma:

The year 1947 has also witnessed a reorganization of the Christian Schools. The broader organization was designed to promote the cause among those who have not yet accepted the Christian school as a God-required institution for covenant children.

The expanded program of the National Union demands an increase in personnel and facilities. Efforts are being put forth to secure a full-time promotion man. The association likewise anticipates the construction or purchase of a building to serve as headquarters. All this takes much money. The Union is launching a campaign to enroll 10,000 members who will donate $5.00 annually toward the financing of the program. The Union Office is located at 11106 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago 28, Illinois.

God has blessed the Christian day school movement far beyond our fondest expectations. May it be used richly for the extension of His kingdom.

Fraternally yours,

CORNELIUS ZYLSTRA.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

OD'S arm is not shortened. He is working mightily His wonders to perform. Who would have thought a few years ago that our larger cities would be united in a bond of Christian school activity! And yet this is now being realized.

A surprisingly large number of Christian schools have suddenly come into being. New Christian schools have been opened in such prominent centers as Boston, Washington, D. C., Des Moines, Denver, Seattle, Portland (Ore.), and in a number of places in California. All of these are less than two years old. Most of them started last September.

In a number of other key points in this country steps are now being taken to organize Christian schools—Worcester, New York City, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Kansas City, Lincoln (Neb.), and many other places. At the present rate of increase the number of these Christian schools in this country will soon run into the hundreds.

What Is Happening . . . and Why

In these days God is turning "the heart of the fathers to the children" and as a result we may soon witness a turning of "the heart of the children to their fathers." How sorely this is needed days!

True, we today are forced to act educationally. The pages of the history of the Judges is being rewritten these days.

The N.U.C.S. has big plans for the future. In his address at the 1947 convention of the N.U.C.S. Dr. Van Bruggen described a six-point program: "(1) A study program to learn more about the implications and applications of our Calvinistic interpretation of Scripture for our Christian Schools. (2) A conference program, to impart to Christian school supporters and workers a better knowledge of and greater devotion to the fundamental principles upon which our schools were founded. (3) A publication program, to publish books, magazines, and bulletins that can be used in teaching and stimulating interest in the cause of Christian education. (4) A service program, to collect and impart information that may be of help to teachers and Boards in bringing about greater unity in our schools. (5) A research program, to determine proper curriculum and methodology for our schools. (6) A promotional program, to promote the cause among those who have not yet accepted the Christian school as a God-required institution for covenant children."

The Union has already launched its program with vigor and success. Early in the school year there appeared the Course of Study for Christian Elementary Schools. It proved to be the book of the hour. It fell into a thirsty market. In less than two months more than half the copies of the first edition were sold.

As a part of its conference program Dr. Van Bruggen, and Dr. Jaarsma, of the Calvin College faculty, traveled to the west coast to address the teachers in that area. The expense involved was defrayed from a munificent gift of $1,000 from the Detroit Christian Reformed Church.

The year just past will no doubt be recorded as a turning point in Christian education. The reaction to a secularized system of education has gained momentum and it has finally taken the form of constructive action.

National Association of Christian Schools

The National Union of Christian Schools in convention at Pella, Iowa, in 1946, recommended the establishment of an organization to sponsor the Christian parental schools. The broader organization was designed to promote Christian elementary and secondary schools among all evangelical Protestants.

At the head of the N.A.C.S. is Mark Fakkema, who for more than twenty years served as director of the National Union of Christian Schools. His work is mainly of a promotional nature at present. The N.A.C.S. is envisioning a broad program for the future. The headquarters of the National Association of Christian Schools is located at 542 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago 5, Illinois.

Christian elementary schools are springing up throughout our nation. Schools have already been opened in several localities. Among these are Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; Wheaton, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; Vine- land, Bridgeton, and West Collingswood in Pennsylvania; Bos- ton, Massachusetts. These are just a few of which we have knowledge. There are undoubtedly more. Scores of communities are planning for the early opening of Christian elementary schools.

National Union of Christian Schools

The year 1947 has also witnessed a reorganization of the staff of the N.U.C.S. Dr. John Van Bruggen, formerly principal of the Oakdale Christian School in Grand Rapids, is at the helm. Assisting him as office manager is Andrew Blystra who for many years served the Christian School as principal.

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Educationally we have fraternized with the secularism of the Canaanites. As a result an educational oppression is upon us intellectually as well as morally . . . and we are forced to look to "the hills from whence cometh our help."

The lack of insistence upon fundamentals and the absence of objective moral standards have rendered much of our current education meaningless and purposeless. Having lost God our secular instruction has become a compass needle that has lost its polar attraction. Educationally we are spinning round and round in fruitless experimentation. Wherever these conditions obtain the school product has declined in both intellectual attainments and in moral character. As a result Evangelicals are beginning to turn from state-controlled secular instruction to privately controlled Christian schools.

Lest We Forget

It is one thing to start a local Christian school movement as a result of certain temporary unpopular practices of the local public school. It is quite another thing to undergird such a local Christian school project with truly positive Christian conviction which will render the local Christian school movement self-impelling, self-directive, and self-perpetuating.

It is one thing to glean teachers who are Christian from the field of public instruction and invite them to head the local Christian school movement. It is quite another thing to have a staff of educators whose preparatory training was calculated to produce truly Christian teachers—not merely teachers who are Christians.

It is one thing to put up a building and provide it with a sign reading "Christian School" and stock the building with public school texts. It is something else to assure oneself of the Christian character of the school by supplying it with truly Christian school books.

Our Christian School Program

It is the purpose of the N.A.C.S. not only to organize the scattered Christian schools in a united bond of Christian fellowship, but to undergird the various local school efforts with a Christian conviction which will make the Christian school cause what it really is—an absolute necessity, not an educational luxury.

In cooperation with other Christian school agencies, the N.A.C.S. will at the earliest possible date seek to solve our Christian teacher training problem and produce the much needed Christian school texts.

That the N.A.C.S. may rise to the occasion and guide our rapidly growing Christian school movement in this country to God's glory, the Board covets your prayers as well as your support.

MARK FAKKEMA, Educational Director.

Book Reviews

**MEDIEVAL THOUGHT**


This slight volume deserves only praise. In his Foreword Father Hawkins declares that it grew from lectures "intended to give its hearers . . . a notion of what medieval philosophy was about." It is not, he says, "a complete history nor the result of special research." The years it covers run from the breakdown of the Roman imperial system to the seventeenth century, and of course it refrains from telling the full story. As to the author's disclaimer of special research, this seems an understatement, not unexpected from an Englishman. The virtues of accuracy, unusual conciseness, penetrating interpretation, even of the subtlest matters, and of sound judgment on the significance of issues and doctrines, are so conspicuous as to argue that the author has gone painstakingly over the ground. The list of sources and interpretive studies Father Hawkins appends to the text is strong evidence of his competence; it is invaluable. I cannot name another book that does as much and as well in such brief compass; I recommend it to teachers looking for a basic text in medieval philosophy.

Since this book is not an argument but a history, I see no point in making a summary. Instead, let me call attention to topics of special interest to readers of the Forum. To those who concern themselves with the nature of philosophy and its relation to Christianity, I commend the analysis of the author, especially pages 13-16. The medieval figures worked out all the possibilities. They took positions ranging all the way from gnosticism to views holding that the two are irrelevant to each other or that philosophy has no title to distinct existence. The coordination adopted by such men as Albert and Thomas continues to impress me, particularly when I contemplate the spate of provincial modern dogmas about the function of reason and its enslavement to other powers, each of these views an irrationalism and some of them a sort of negative apologetic for specialized religious teachings. Perhaps the optimism of the thirteenth century leaders on this topic is not permanently tenable, but to make sure it is not tenable requires doing the philosophic job as earnestly as they did it.

Father Hawkins offers a shrewd analysis of the ontological argument, noting its incapacity to prove what Anselm intended to prove by it, but showing that it involves use of a valid principle. He writes with a firm grasp on the critiques of the empiricists and Kant, thus giving his discussion a value transcending that of an historical summary. There is careful exposition of the views of Bonaventure on the question whether finite collections, as of events or parts of time, can be known so conspicuous as to argue that the author has gone painstakingly over the ground. The list of sources and interpretive studies Father Hawkins appends to the text is strong evidence of his competence; it is invaluable. I cannot name another book that does as much and as well in such brief compass; I recommend it to teachers looking for a basic text in medieval philosophy.

Finally I note two items which ought to be better known than they are. Recent studies of what Duns Scotus did and did not write reveal that he is innocent of the charge of voluntarism in its customary acceptation. Also, St. Thomas has provided a teaching on the ground of political sovereignty and on the limits to rightful state authority which formed the background of the later arguments at the back of democratic conviction and which constitute a basic rebuke to the new excesses of state totalitarianism. Thomas defined the function and limits of state action in such wise as to leave "room for a private and individual life over which the state had no jurisdiction." And through his emphasis on "the human origin of political sovereignty . . . it became common doctrine that, although the institution of civil society and authority be-
longed to the law of nature which was the law of God, never­
thless the actual secular rulers owed their authority in some
way to designation by the people" (p. 140). These are valuable
insights. But to make a specific comment, I wonder whether
the Protestant reader of this discussion will not ask why the
followers of Thomas, who distinguished between the moral
basis of government as such and the popularly derived author­
ity of the particular ruler, do not make a like distinction be­
tween the Church as such, on one side, and a particular ecclesi­
asical organization on the other.

I pass to comments on the general value of historical books
like the one in hand. We are in debt to Father Hawkins for a
performance which can contribute to a richer appreciation of
the achievements of our culture. I desire to emphasize this
with a view to the tendencies of many Protestants. They are
prone to disregard a large aspect of their tradition—not the
theological development, of course, but surely other cultural
elements advancing in company with it; and especially the long
and fruitful medieval movement in philosophical analysis. They
tend to forget that at least in one respect culture is an organic
growth; that their theology grew up in union with philosophy,
and that to neglect the latter is to threaten the former. This
is one reason why the depth and stability of Protestant thought
are imperilled. Feebly instructed in the philosophy of the com­
non past of Christendom, Protestants are tempted into battle
comparatively unarmored; or they are drawn into the current of
a short-lived and essentially secular modern movement of ideas
and thus ensnare themselves to notions appropriate to only a
short-dated understanding of the problem. A devoutly and
judged cultural strategy is the training readily available in the
history of Western reflection. It is cultural carelessness to
neglect the philosophic labors and insights of the medieval
giants.

It goes without saying that medieval philosophy did not
face all problems. Father Hawkins mentions a few which it
partially omitted, among them the perplexing modern problem
of epistemology. But medieval thinkers settled some problems
so thoroughly that the best minds of today can only repeat
their performance. Those of our contemporaries who have
managed to grasp the intentional structure of knowledge and
to avoid the tangles of subjectivism do but restate, almost to
detail, the medieval analysis of the status of universals. There
is also some return to a finalist theory of change. I shall
merely mention the value for today of the medieval conception
of the complex functions of the self, of its rational dignity and
moral structure; we need this urgently as an answer to the
widespread cults of violence. The point is that the medieval
movement was a real success in vital areas, and that in case
we neglect its positive achievements, we deprive ourselves of
some of the substance of our rational life and confront a hard­
pressed world with a deficiency of ammunition.

JESSE DE BOHR.

University of Kentucky.

HANDEL: MAN AND MUSICIAN

HANDEL. By Herbert Weinstock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
Inc., 1946. 395 pages. $5.00.

It is not an inopportune time to consider a biography of
George Frederic Handel. During the late holiday season,
throughout the concert halls and churches of both England
and our own country, there resounded once again the music of
the titular oratorio, Messiah, from the reassuring warmth of
the tenor's "Comfort Ye" to the mighty cadences of "Worthy
Is the Lamb."

We would hasten to add, however, that to represent Handel
as composer of little else than the Messiah, plus, perhaps, an
occasional operatic aria, his "Water Music," one or two con­
certi grossi, and the "Largo," is sheer misrepresentation of
the actual facts. Suffice it to be said that his total musical
output almost equaled all that the world has of Bach plus all of
Beethoven.

Handel is the second biography to issue from the pen of
Herbert Weinstock, having been preceded by a volume on
Tchaikovsky. Weinstock, at present a music critic for both
the New York Times and Herald-Tribune, has succeeded, I be­
lieve in producing a thorough and detailed account of the in­
tensely active seventy-four years of the Italianate German
who became England's great composer. To do so was truly an
achievement for Handel left few letters and no self-revealing
documents.

The author has enriched his biography by weaving into its
fabric the shifting events and forces of Handel's era, first in
Germany, then in Italy, and finally, for almost fifty years, in
England. While Handel did not occupy himself seriously with
the eb and flow of political intrigues and the like, yet his means of livelihood, like that of all musicians of
his day, was definitely dependent upon the favor of the aris­
ocracy. Their prosperity, in a sense, was his prosperity.
Furthermore, we should bear in mind that all art, Handel's in­
cluded, is bound to the life it mirrors, is affected by the crises
through which the contemporary society is passing.

Of particular interest in the book is Weinstock's treatment
of the unfavorable criticism often laid at Handel's feet, on two
points, namely, that Handel literally stifled English native
music, and that he was guilty of plagiarism regarding some of
his compositions. The author rallies to the defense of Handel
on both charges. While his arguments for the first of these
are not new ones, those in defense of the second charge are
more satisfying.

Weinstock concludes his biography with a glowing plea for
a renaissance of Handel's music. We quote: "How long must we
look sharply to find one small hopeful sign that those who con­
sole the program of public music will offer us the whole, varie­
gated and wonderful repertoire of vocal, instrumental, chor­
al, and operatic music that lies—some of it unheard for more
than a century—in the volumes of Gesellschaft and other edi­
tions of Handel?" Perhaps he asks too much. If and when
that discovery takes place, "there will break anew on the musical
world," says Weinstock, "one of the most majestic, tender, and
human voices ever lifted in praise of life, of love, of beauty,
and of the art of music," and we might add, "in praise of God."

Weinstock recalls an interesting bit of coincidence between
Handel's death and his ever-popular Messiah. In April of 1759,
shortly before his decease, Handel, "terribly weary and blind,"
conducted the Messiah at Covent Garden. This was his last
musical act upon earth. Preparing to leave the hall when it
was over, he fainted. He failed to regain consciousness until
two days before Palm Sunday. When the dying man regained
consciousness, he expressed the desire to die on Good Friday,
"in the hope of rejoining the good God, my sweet Lord and
Saviour, on the day of His Resurrection." His physician stated
that Handel's wish was fulfilled. A further observation is this:
the day of his death marked the seventeenth anniversary of the
first public performance of the same oratorio.

We highly commend this biography to lovers and students
of music. While its scholarly style may disappoint those who
look for a flimsy volume of anecdotes and human
interest tid-bits, yet one will find the book a source of worth­
while interest and information about a great musician and his
music.

JAMES DE JONGE.

CLASSICS OF DEVOTION

DOCTOR JOHNSON'S PRAYERS. Edited with an Introduction by
Brothers, 1947. xxxix and 66 pages. $1.50.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (this is he of the Dictionary,
the Rambler, the Lives of the Poets, and Boswell's
Life) was surely, as we say, a religious man. He
was a man of reason, and was quite as worshipful of the rational
in terms of "natural law" as Voltaire, Gibbon, Franklin, or

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Paine; but, unlike them, he clung to the Bible as "the sacred volume in which are contained the revelations of God" and wrote: "Let not the contempt of superstition precipitate you into infidelity, or the horror of infidelity ensnare you into superstition." While reading William Law's Serious Call in early life he had what people used to call "an experience," and of this experience Boswell wrote: "From this time forward, religion was the predominant object of his thoughts." And, as Dr. Trueblood notes in his pleasant introduction to these Prayers, Mrs. Piozzi added that Johnson "paid no attention to the ordinary inhibitions of politeness when anyone depreciated religion or morality."

These prayers are in themselves good evidence of the sincerely religious in Johnson. There are an even hundred of them. Trueblood has arranged them by category: Amendment of Life, Words and Sayings, Family, and especially, in the scale of religious feeling. It is not that, in England at least, the poetry is not Christian. It is not even that the poets were not devout Christians: for a pattern of orthodoxy of principle, and sincere piety of feeling, you may look long before you find a poet more genuine than Samuel Johnson. Yet there are evidences of a deeper religious sensibility in the poetry of Shakespeare, whose belief and practice can be only a matter of conjecture.

So it is, precisely so, and this volume of prayers bears out the spirit and the thrust of it. The volume indicates two things: the one is that in point of "orthodoxy of principle and sincere piety of feeling" Johnson was second to none; the other is that in point of "range of sensibility" especially "in the scale of religious feeling," Johnson was oppressively limited. All the same, orthodoxy of principle and piety of religious feeling continue important, and Dr. Johnson's sure embodiment of religious charity and, especially, in the scale of religious feeling, Johnson was oppressively limited. All the same, orthodoxy of principle and piety of religious feeling continue important, and Dr. Johnson's sure embodiment of religious charity and, especially, in the scale of religious feeling, Johnson was oppressively limited.

Students of literature who cannot resist the appeal of the immensely fascinating Dr. Johnson will want it. And Christians who, like Johnson, know the ingenerate pervasiveness of original sin, and therefore know also that conscious care about the means and exercises of grace is needed to overcome spiritual inertia—they, too, will want it. These will not put the little volume into the study but into the living room where the whole family can have access to heartfelt worship in beautiful form.

HENRY ZYLSTRA.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE


In this book Professor Tindall of Columbia University has attempted a survey of the forces that dominated literature in England during the last sixty years and a grouping of the several writers that fell under the sway of these forces. Because the field is extensive and the authors are many, he was forced to reduce the magnitude of his task by recognizing ten different forces or schools and by discussing only those writers who are most clearly representative of each. Many a writer he merely mentions without discussing his work. Thus, for example, he devotes a chapter to socialism, or "The Swing to the Left," as he calls it, as a literary force, and records only the movements of Shaw and Auden, though he might have chosen still others. In discussing the stream of consciousness novel he selects Joyce and Virginia Woolf as typical, at the same time preparing the reader for an adequate understanding of the movement by a characterization of the philosophy of Henri Bergson and certain aspects of the fiction of Henry James. It is, to mention no more, in this way that he covers the field.

In the exploration of his field Professor Tindall chose to be guided by a number of general considerations. To begin with, he considers the modern period to be a part of the Romantic movement, which Victor Hugo described as "liberalism in literature." Next, he views the modern period as a unit in spite of the fact that writers present a bewildering variety in some respects. Again, he points out that what characterizes the modern period is complete emancipation from all supernatural authority and repudiation of the notion that faith in Christianity is necessary for a proper interpretation of human life and the cosmos. Men have sought satisfaction in taking refuge with their desires and aspirations merely in things mundane, even though at their best they occupied themselves with such mysteries as myths and symbols. Finally, he traces the connection between British literature and that of the continent, and in this way he gives us more or less valuable accounts of "Baudelaire, Zola, Henry James, Bergson, Freud, Kafka, the surrealists, and many others." All this we learn from the preface, and a reading of the book shows that he has faithfully followed his program.

But the preface of the book is also very important because in it he frankly expresses his fundamental convictions; in other words, he intimates what is the norm he uses in judging such writers as he chooses to notice. It is his conviction that not only is the contemporary scene important, but it is also superior to the Victorian. Writes he, "No Victorian novelist is as good as Joyce, and no Victorian poet as good as Yeats." Joyce is better than a Dickens or a Thackeray, and Yeats better than Tennyson! Such an evaluation at once marks the author as one who does not care for the moral and the social standards that still prevailed in Victorian authorship. If he does not ally himself with the art for art's sake position, he certainly regards morality and religion as forces which have nothing to do with the intrinsic worth of a piece of literature. It is precisely this indifference that causes one to question very seriously the validity of the "meanings and values" which are, according to his own explicit statement, his chief concern to express.

Professor Tindall has given us a book that contains a great deal of valuable information. He has read widely. However, as he himself tells us in the preface, it is intended for those who have done a certain amount of reading in the field covered. J. G. Vanden Bosch.

A BOETTNER VOLUME


The book now under consideration is a rather large volume, and contains several studies of the author on subjects of first rate importance, namely, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures", "Christian Supernaturalism", "The Trinity", "The Person of Christ", and "The Atonement". The first of these and the last two were formerly published separately, and were reviewed favorably at that time. To these three he has now added the additional treatises on "The Trinity" and "Christian Supernaturalism". It need hardly be said that all the subjects dealt with in this volume are of the greatest importance, and are particularly vital at the present time. Naturally, it is not possible to give a résumé of the contents.
of each one of these separate studies in a brief review. Neither does it seem feasible to sum up all the separate subjects with which the author deals and the particular problems which he discusses. A general characterization of the author's work in general seems to be of greater importance.

He first became favorably known in our circles by his work, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination. This work is far more comprehensive than the title suggests, since it contains a thorough discussion of all the so-called "Five Points of Calvinism". It at once marked the author as a thorough-going Calvinist, in full agreement with the deliverances of the famous Synod of Dort. In all the smaller works that followed this outstanding work the author ran and runs true to form as a staunch defender of the Reformed faith. The present collection of his most important later works would form a valuable addition to any of our church libraries, and to the libraries of our societies and Sunday Schools. Our Reformed people would greatly profit by the reading and study of these works.

The separate studies contained in the present volume are all of a popular nature. The writer avoids as much as possible the technical language of theology. They were not written primarily for theologians, but for all intelligent church members; and these need not be afraid that they will not be able to follow the author's line of thought. They who make a thoughtful use of this literature will find themselves enriched, and will become more efficient in fighting the battles for the Reformed faith, both offensively and defensively, in an atmosphere saturated with the errors of Arminianism. While these works are primarily constructive, the apologetic element is not wanting. They also deal effectively with many of the objections that are urged against the Reformed faith. This naturally makes them more vital than they would otherwise be, and will help the reader in putting on the whole armor of God.

The author deals rather comprehensively with the subjects of his various studies. He considers the various points which call for discussion with considerable detail, always bearing in mind, however, that he is not writing for trained theologians, but for a more general public. The ordinary reader will feel quite satisfied with what is offered here, and will be thankful that the author does not lose himself in all kinds of speculative and philosophical discussions, which he would not be able to follow.

It will favorably impress the readers that the author takes his stand without any qualifications on the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and regards it as the source and final standard of religious truth. The market is flooded in our days with a great deal of so-called religious literature which takes little account of the Word of God, but takes its cue from one of the many popular philosophies of the day. In view of this we are very thankful for these studies of Dr. Boettner. One may not agree with every expression that is used or every interpretation that is favored, but this is of very minor importance in view of the general excellence of the works. We do not hesitate to recommend this work strongly to our reading public, and trust that its study will yield rich spiritual fruits.

L. BERKHOF.