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Christianity and Politics
A Symposium

Thrift Outmoded?
Keynesian Youth

Bryant's Poetry
Puritan Strains

International Calvinism
California
France
Ethiopia
Holland

Books
Verse

VOL. XV, NO. 9  APRIL, 1950
THE CALVIN FORUM

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Contents

Articles

As to Calvinistic Political Action: A Symposium

W. Stanford Reid ........................................ 179
Gerald Monsman ....................................... 181
Rene de Visme Williamson .......................... 182
Richard Postma ....................................... 183

Is Thrift Outmoded? .................................. Henry J. Ryskamp 185

Puritanism in Bryant's Poetry ....................... Andrew VanderZee 188

From Our Correspondents

California News Letter ................................ 190

The Present Leaders of the "Société Calviniste de France" .......... 191

The Voice of Our Readers ................................ 192

Ethiopian Letter ....................................... 193

Netherlands Letter ..................................... 193

Book Reviews

Barth in a Nutshell .................................... 195

Principles of Christian Higher Education .......... 196

A Treasury of Teaching ................................ 196

The Freedom of Science in Russia ................. 198

Homer's Iliad ......................................... 199

The Challenge of Labor ................................ 199

Jesus' Trial ........................................... 199

The Church and the Ministry Today ................ 200

Verse

Earth's Awakening .................................... 187

Hold April Over ....................................... 189
As to Calvinistic Political Action

A Symposium

The following contributions continue the Symposium begun in the previous issue on "Calvinism and Political Action." As there stated, the discussion was ushered in by two articles which appeared in the February issue, the one by Mr. Lewis Smedes exploring possibilities of a concrete program for Christian political action along the lines of Calvinistic thought and practice, and the other by Professor Justus M. Vander Kroef, of the Department of the History of Civilization at Michigan State College of East Lansing, which attacked the entire idea of organized political action on a distinctively Christian or Calvinistic basis. These introductory sentences will furnish sufficient background for the reader who may not have read the first instalment of this Symposium, to appreciate the issues involved in the following discussion of the subject.

That those who are spiritual sons of John Calvin are not agreed on the right approach to and attack upon their Christian political task and strategy is quite apparent from this Symposium. There is even apparent a fundamental divergence on the question what the real thrust of Calvinism is and whether there is so much as room for a program of action that is distinctly Christian in the field of citizenship, politics, governmental affairs, or by whatever name you wish to designate this realm of human society. It is clear that there is great need for just such a Symposium as this. The real issues are just beginning to be uncovered. We hope to do our part in carrying this discussion forward and believe it will lead to greater clarity on the problem itself and on the duties which the Christian must face in this particular realm of human endeavor. We propose neither to cut short the discussion nor to allow it to bog down and are convinced great good can come out of an intelligent and fearless clash of opinion on the question under discussion.—EDITOR.

W. Stanford Reid
Assistant Professor
McGill University, Montreal

Messrs. Vander Kroef and Smedes have outlined some of the problems arising out of any attempt to establish a Calvinistic political party. Both of these articles are extremely interesting and stimulating; but neither seems to get down to the basic principles. They deal almost entirely with practical problems. There is little doubt, however, that many who read the articles will ask the question: But is it not our duty to organize such a party, no matter how small the chance of success? I would, therefore, like to set forth what I believe to be some of the fundamental principles involved.

In attempting to understand the problems we are brought face to face with the question of "the two realms." There is the Church, whose primary duty is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, leading men to salvation from sin in order that they may serve Christ as Lord and King. Those who so acknowledge Christ enter the realm of "Special Grace," for they believe only by the special grace of God. On the other hand, when we think of the state and politics we are thinking of a realm which is not limited to Christians. God has made it common to all men, and for its operation He has graciously supplied men generally with capacities and gifts. At the same time we must remember that these two realms are not mutually exclusive, but are connected. One reason for this is that Christians are involved in the political as well as all other phases of social life. What is more, Christ is made king over all things to the Church. (Eph. 1:22) For the benefit of the Church He is ruler even of the state. (Eph. 1:22) For the Church and the State are not absolutely separate.

This raises the question as to their proper relationship. As H. H. Meeter points out, there has been a tendency in the past when this matter of Christ's kingship over the state has arisen, to say either that the church is lord over the state, or that the state is lord of the church. (H. H. Meeter, Calvinism (Grand Rapids, 2nd ed.) pp. 110f.) The Scriptures, however, give no support to either view. Christ is Lord over the state (King of kings and Lord of lords) for the benefit of the church. This certainly does not put either organization above the other. The church has the duty of witnessing to the Gospel, but not of ruling men with the sword. The state, on the other hand, has the obligation of maintaining the fabric of society, but not of instructing, nor of forcing people to believe in the Gospel. Thus it would seem that an ecclesiastical political party,
for that is what a Calvinistic party would really be, is not exactly in accordance with Scriptural precept.

There are many who will take exception to the last statement. While admitting that the church as an organization may not, they will hold that the church as an organism should, organize a party. Or, it may be held that it is the church’s responsibility to bring the state to acknowledge in its constitution that Christ is king and to enforce His law. This might be termed “kingdom work” as over against specifically “church work.” But is this the duty of the church, even as an organism? Christ has been made the Lord over the state whether the state recognizes Him or not. Does the writing into the constitution that Christ is Lord really make the state Christian? To put it another way, can we establish the Kingdom of Christ by the action of a political party? This is the type of thing which we might expect the World Council of Churches to attempt. The plan to bring in the Kingdom of Christ by these means would seem to be contrary to His statement that His kingdom was not of this world, else would His disciples fight. (John 18:36). To point to the Old Testament theocracy as an example does not seem to answer the question, for we are living under a different economy. Church and state are not one. Christ’s rule is over all, but at present is recognized only by His people, the church. Men will never be brought to acknowledge Him by political action.

If then the bringing in of the Kingdom of Christ cannot be by political but rather by supernatural means, what is the purpose of a specifically Christian political party? The answer may be, that we may have decent government. (This will undoubtedly be the reply of those who do not support the government in power.) But if there is something wrong with the government, and there is with all governments, what is it? It would seem that generally there is something wrong because of the corruption of the society over which it rules. After all, in most cases a society only gets the government it deserves. That faces us with the question of what then is wrong with society in general? We know from the Scriptures that the answer is, sin. Can we deal with this problem in any other way than by the preaching of the Gospel? Not a political party is needed, but a more faithful presentation of Christ’s offer of salvation from sin, and a more thorough presentation of the “crown rights of Christ.” This is the only real cure.

No doubt some will say, and, as Vander Kroef has pointed out, are saying, this is all very well, but we must also have political action. We must endeavour to apply Christian principles to the country’s needs. This may be perfectly true, but does a Calvinistic political party have to be formed for that purpose? What would be its program? Whence would it derive its policies? From the Scriptures?

It would seem to be a very doubtful proceeding to seek direction from the Bible on whether General Chiang Kai Shek’s government should be given further American support; or whether and to what extent the farmer’s butter should be given a price floor. But then, Vander Kroef has explained the situation with regard to actual policy only too clearly. The party would have no real unity for any length of time, but would disintegrate on every issue.

What then must be done? First of all, what is needed is a clearer note from the pulpits of the land. Christ must be held forth not only as Saviour, but also as Lord and King. One of the greatest sins of so many fundamentalists is that they relegate Christ’s kingship to the future, and forget that He is now king “over all things.” Even some Calvinists, particularly those outside the Scottish tradition, tend to deny Christ any real kingship over the state. Consequently there is seldom, even from evangelical pulpits, a clear statement as to the responsibilities and obligations of the state to obey Christ. The church must teach its members that it is the state’s duty, and their duty as part of the state, to obey Christ. Yet even if this be done, men cannot even comprehend this obligation unless they have embraced Christ’s promises of salvation. The fundamental need then would seem to be sound preaching, rather than organized political action.

When Christians have obtained some idea of Christian political principles, then they should get into the existing political bodies and work to carry out Christian ideals. Some Christians will be Republicans, while others may be Democrats. Up here in Canada they may be Liberals, Conservatives, or even C.C.F.-ers. But the important thing is that they should get into the work where they can wield a very real influence as Christians. The Communist cell idea might well be employed. By persuasion they would convince others of the necessity of applying Christian principles in their political dealings. Christians will never all agree on policy. What with different social and economic backgrounds, coupled with original sin, each one will have his own particular political philosophy. But an influx of Christians into political life, prepared to practice their Christian faith, would bring about a virtual revolution.

Should there be “Calvinistic political action?” I do not think so. Much of the present day desire to organize Christian or even denominational societies in the realm of Common Grace, would seem to be largely owing to Christians’ fears and inferiority complexes. They know that something is wrong, but they are afraid to go in and try to change it. Such societies are often nothing else but means of escape from our Christian responsibilities in society. This may be all right for Roman Catholicism, which is an escapist religion; but for Calvinists this is not
the proper attitude. We must go forth under Christ to conquer. But we shall never accomplish this in our own army which never really fights the enemy. Only by getting into contact with others, working shoulder to shoulder with them, are we going to be able to make them see that only as we and they serve Christ can the political problems facing us be solved.

Gerald Monsman
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After having read the two contributions on "Calvinism as a Political Principle" and "A Calvinistic Program of Action" one is reminded of the line from the Song of Deborah to the effect that in the "divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart" (Judges 5:16). The first of the two articles, for all its evident scholarship, seems to me to breathe a spirit strangely unlike what I had assumed was the true spirit of Calvinism, i.e., a full-orbed acceptance and affirmation of life in the name of, and for the sake of, its Creator and Redeemer. The second of the two articles is so full of "searchings" that one can find no action.

Why all this theorizing? Why not take the American scene just as we find it and go to work in what seems to be the most practical and effective method, and then see where we come out? To start with, if we want Christian results, we shall need Christian action. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:16). Neither can we expect Christian products from non-Christian, "neutral" political action. Furthermore, we can expect no results at all, neither Christian nor non-Christian, unless we have concerted, united action. Therefore, to get Christian results we shall need concerted Christian action.

However, if we are to have influence in the political area, we should avoid fragmentation of our strength as far as that is possible. Now I should like to submit that when it comes to civic matters, we need not and should not follow the same divisions which mark us in the ecclesiastical domain. The divisions which grew up in the church are not necessarily relevant to the political arena.

We should, therefore, collaborate with our fellow Christians, whether of Calvinistic or of other persuasions. And all that pooled strength will be needed, if we are to achieve any tangible results.

Acting on these assumptions, an association known as the United Christian Citizens has been formed in Baltimore. Enlarging somewhat upon this organization is possibly the best way I can make my contribution to this symposium. The only requirements for membership in the United Christian Citizens are these three: (1) being an American citizen; (2) being a registered voter; and (3) accepting Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior. The statement of purpose of the organization states that it is an association of Christian citizens "who seek to make their faith effective in political affairs." To achieve that purpose the association's proposed activities include the following:

1. Working for full registration of the Christian vote.
2. Brining out that vote (a) Especially at the primaries, (b) But also at the final elections.
3. Getting the best persons, judged by generally accepted Christian principles, nominated and elected.
4. Having committees observe the records of elected officials — publicly supporting them when right; objecting when wrong.
5. Having committees study legislative programs in City Council, Legislature, and Congress; and recommend appropriate action.
6. To this end, the association believes, efforts should in time be made to make organization complete on all levels, to give Christians with Christian principles a recognized voice in political parties and legislative councils.

The association is now two years old, and is still in its formative stages. Nevertheless, the growth of the movement and the response which it has evoked give promise of success. The following characterizations may serve to delineate the nature of the movement more precisely:

1. It is a distinctly Christian movement, not merely a better government movement. American Christianity has in recent decades expressed itself in various causes, crusades and reform movements. Each represented but a segment of the total Christian social program. These movements tended to lose their distinctive Christian character by appealing for support on humanitarian, rather than on Christian grounds. One by one they lost their momentum, when they had lost their distinctiveness. What we need is a movement that is distinctively and positively Christian, which aims fully as much at long range Christian motivation, at the creation of a new sense of the dignity, the lofty, religious character of political action, as it aims at immediate results at the polls. The latter should be born of the former.

2. The movement is not a new political party, but a new technique for influencing the existing parties. Members are urged to share actively in the affairs of the party of their preference, but to do so as united groups, so that they can give each other support and expect results.

3. It is not an anti-movement. Too many Christian movements have had that character. The program hopes to be constructively and affirmatively Christian.

4. It is not a one-issue-movement. Too many of our Christian movements have also been of that character. That has been the strength of some, but also their weakness. It has often led to the equation...
of the sum total of the Christian social objectives with the single, solitary issue for which the movement stood. And either victory or defeat, more often defeat, on that one issue has meant the death of the movement. What is needed is a movement which concerns itself with the entire Christian program for civic life.

5. The movement will not try to write its own platform. The Christian church has expressed itself in a well-rounded program of guiding principles for social and political life. The records of church conferences are replete with findings, recommendations, and goals. Calvinists may believe that most of our denominations have been altogether too detailed and specific in their actions on these matters. Be that as it may, the guiding principles are there to be used by those who seek guidance. And there certainly can be no objection to the adoption of those guiding principles by non-church groups as their platform of principles. That is what the United Christian Citizens has done, or aims to do.

6. As a result of the immediately foregoing, the movement hopes to avoid becoming the vehicle of the individual predilections of any of its members, and to transcend any of those positions by accepting a forthright New Testament Christian position “as defined in Church official pronouncements.” We trust that an analysis of these pronouncements will disclose a greater degree of agreement than is usually assumed to exist.

Whether the assumptions on which the United Christian Citizens has been founded are valid, and will produce the results which we so sorely need, only time can tell. Present indications are favorable. There is further the testimony of those who have had occasion to observe that there is a “veritable ground swell” of discontent among our Christian public from coast to coast, especially among our laymen, with the small influence which Christian principles are exerting on civic life. If a successful mode of action is evolved in one area, it will no doubt soon be followed in many areas throughout the country.

This will, nevertheless, require the development of leadership. That, it seems to me, would be the natural opportunity for those who have a Calvinistic background. It offers an opportunity for action, not in isolation from one’s fellow Christians, but as a leader among them. Such action is, moreover, natural to the true genius of Calvinism.

The emphasis of Calvinism has always been on the Lordship of Christ. There is running all through the religious fabric of modern life an awakening to the significance of this Lordship. This is, therefore, the time to re-emphasize that Christ is Lord now, not only in some far off distant future, but now in the living present. That is the opportunity offered by Christian political action. For that reason it should evoke our ardent response.

There is abundant evidence that the fire of God has touched the surface of our lives in these matters, but it has not set us on fire. We shall not have done our duty by our God and by our country until we are “set on fire”, and until by the light of that fire men shall know that we have sanctified Christ in our hearts as Lord of all of life, including our civic life.

Rene de Visme Williamson
Professor of Political Science
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tenn.

I AGREE with Mr. Vander Kroef in doubting that Calvinism can offer “a well defined program of political conduct.” I further agree that Calvinism is “a mode of religious thinking.” However, I would strongly object to any attempt to confine Calvinism to the realm of thought. Spirit underlies and outranks thought, feeling, and action, giving them content, direction, and effectiveness. Our religion should not lead us into an irresponsible secession from the political, social, and economic issues of our day. Christ prayed that His disciples remain unspotted from the world, not that they be taken out of the world.

As citizens it is our duty to do what we can to solve problems like atomic energy, labor disputes, federal aid to education, and Soviet-American relations. It is obvious that we cannot do this without making mistakes. If we are Christians as well as citizens, however, there are mistakes that we shall not make and we have in our religion the spiritual resources to overcome the mistakes we do make and transform even disaster into triumph. To paraphrase the Marxists in reverse, I should say that all Christian movements carry within themselves the seeds of their own regeneration. That is why I can accommodate myself to the intrusion of socialism, capitalism, or sectionalism in the church—for we can survive and transform these and any number of others like them—but not to modernism which would rob us of this indispensable power of survival.

Our first and foremost task, therefore, is to remain authentically Christian. We must keep ourselves thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures, adhere steadfastly to the historic Christ of the New Testament, and cultivate the habit of yielding ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I think this task calls for a certain degree of separateness through such media as churches, discussion and study groups, summer camps, Christian colleges, and Christian publications like THE CALVIN FORUM.

That these should be Calvinist I am assuming because I believe the Calvinist form is the purest and most accurate form of Christianity, but of course other forms should be free to do the same. The
essential point is that we must remain Christ-centered and Christ-filled, otherwise we have nothing distinctive to contribute to the world.

We can be sure that individuals who are authentically Christian will be interested in the problems of our day and take an active part in the various movements and groups that are endeavoring to solve them. They should penetrate and eventually permeate all groups—business corporations, labor unions, college faculties, political party organizations. I would include the Communist party, for I cannot see how we can reach the Russian people unless we get individuals of our faith who have some standing in that country, i.e., individuals who are at the very least sympathetic to Communism and whose background is unimpeachably Slavic and Russian.

If it be objected that Communists would have to "interpret away" some of their principles and give up some of their methods, the only possible answer is: of course they would! Who wouldn't? Let us remember that there is no human organization—here or in Russia or anywhere else—which would not require plenty of housecleaning to be a fit abode for really Christian people. We have to start on the premise that not one of us is righteous and that repentance is a prerequisite for salvation for everybody. The Roman Catholic Church has entangled itself with feudalism and its very existence is threatened when feudalism is smashed as in Hungary. Our Protestant churches are presently endangered by a similar entanglement with western capitalism. Some few clergymen seem about to tie themselves up in an analogous manner with socialism.

It is a very human weakness to substitute means for ends and organizations or institutions for the causes which they serve or are supposed to serve. I think that this weakness was one of the reasons why Christ commissioned His disciples to go into all the world. He knew that among people who live in Christ and in whom Christ lives these weaknesses would cancel out. Christianity is not for lone wolves and hermits. It is not for people who fear guilt by association when their Master did not. We learn from each other by taking care of each other, and we are so constituted that we cannot save ourselves except as we save others. That is sociologically as well as theologically true.

Christians too believe in world revolution, a revolution whose end is the Kingdom of God over all the earth. They too believe they are striving for a cause that is bound to win through the agency of an irresistible power greater than themselves, but that power is not the Marxist determinism of blind social forces pushing from behind: it is the predestination the Calvinists talk about, which is the call from above of God Himself. The only thing that can pierce through the iron curtain which separates Communist from anti-Communist, stand-pat Republican from New Deal Democrat, big corporate capitalist from radical labor leader, Gentile from Jew, negro from white, is Christian faith on either side of all of these curtains. No curtain can separate men who are animated by the same Christian faith in a common struggle with environments which, though very different in many respects, are nevertheless the same in being non-Christian. The veil in the Temple can be broken again!

I believe this process of evangelization should be carried out by individuals in the name of Christianity, but they should do so either as individuals or in small groups (the more numerous the better) lest we confuse ecclesiasticism with Christian unity or be mired down by the vested interests of the secular organizations with which we are affiliated. If we Calvinists are to organize politically at all, then we should have several Calvinist parties lest we be tempted to substitute the commandments of men in the form of party platforms and programs for the commandments of God.

Richard Postma
Director
Young Calvinist Federation

THAT one who stands ready to exchange Calvinism for Barthian crisis-theology or already has done so does not admit the need and possibility of Calvinistic action, socially and politically, need cause no surprise. If it be true that man's first and last concern is with a possible place in the Kingdom of Heaven, it cannot very well be expected that one is greatly concerned about the laws of the King for the life of society and feels impelled to insist that these laws be brought to bear upon all realms of life. On this basis Christian action in the field of education, art, science, the press, economics and politics is out.

But this is not Calvinism. "Calvinism is not merely a soteriology. . . . it cannot pause until it places the scheme of salvation itself in relation with a complete world-view in which it becomes subsidiary to the glory of the Lord God Almighty. If all things are from God, so to the Calvinist all things are also unto God; and to it God will be all in all. It is born of the reflection in the heart of man of the glory of a God who will not give His honor to another, and it draws its life from its constant gaze upon this great image. And let us not fail punctually to note that 'it is the only system in which the whole order of the world is thus brought into a rational unity with the doctrine of grace in which the glorification of God is carried out with absolute completeness.'" (Warfield—Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism To-day, p. 27.)

This not only calls for contemplation. Calvinism is not only a doctrine, it also is a program. It is
dynamic. It calls for action. Calvinistic youth in demanding that its religion be brought to bear upon such a diversity of contemporary problems as the atom bomb, labor disputes, the race problem, science and art, is articulating the peremptives of the faith that is theirs. To signalize it as the belief that it is the social, not the supernatural aspect, of Christianity that possesses the solution of the tumultuous problems of our day, is unfair and unwarranted. To intimate that those who wish their religion to be made more dynamic, who deplore inadequate housing, are concerned with the problems of labor and management, and are disturbed by the race question, have already removed from their faith the deeply personal problem of man’s relation to God, is positing opinion for sound reasoning and legitimate argumentation. To older Calvinists the plea of young Calvinists for a more consistent and articulate and active Calvinism is a source of genuine satisfaction and the basis for a great hope. To them it is an indication that among the younger members of the Reformed churches there is a realization that in the Word of God are found the principles according to which the present conditions can and must be evaluated and that upon Christian citizens rests the duty to so labor that whatever in this world conflicts with the ordinances of the Lord be reconstructed in accordance with the expressed will of the Lord. Calvinists are those who desire to do the will of their Lord. They desire to be guided by what God has revealed in His Word. When, in obedience to that Word, they carry out their mandate they need not fear that they may be acting “contrary to the Divine Plan.” And thus they refuse to recognize in antithetical position the Christian social crusader and the kneeling Christian in the Church. They agree that the place of the Christian is on his knees in the Church. But rightly they claim that the place of the Christian is also on the battlefield for justice and righteousness.

Whether or not this should necessarily lead to the formation of a Calvinistic political party is a debatable question. Admittedly the situation in the Netherlands at the time when Groen Van Prinsterer and Kuyper gave leadership to the despised Calvinistic group and led that group to honor and influence was different from the condition under which a Christian party would have to struggle in the United States. It cannot be denied that the cultural background of the people with whom Kuyper labored is far different from that of the United States as a nation. Consequently the establishment of a Christian political party here could not be expected to follow in all details the pattern and form of such a party in another country. The fact that in the consciousness of the citizens of the United States there would not be that immediate response to the enunciation of fundamental principles such as was the case in the Netherlands would seem to give validity to the doubt regarding the possibility of accomplishing here what was so successfully accomplished elsewhere. On the other hand, to state that for Kuyper, Calvinism was rather the unique quality of the Dutch nation than a religious belief, is certainly not doing justice to the insistence on the part of this great thinker and leader on an understanding of the fact that Calvinism is international and has a meaning and message for every nation.

The question regarding the desirability and possibility of a Christian political party in connection with the broader concept of Calvinistic action is certainly worthy of serious consideration. Should the matter elicit further discussion—and we most certainly hope that this be the case—those participating in the discussion should not fail to take into consideration the “historically sanctioned dual party system of the United States”, and neither should they fail to recognize that changing conditions demand and justify changing approaches and emphases. It may not be superfluous to suggest that before any program of action can be agreed upon, there must be agreement on a program of principles. Principles do not change. They are rooted in the eternal Word of God. The application of these principles will always be affected by conditions and situations. Whatever the form of government under which a Christian lives may be, or whatever the economic system under which he operates may demand of him, he always is impelled to live in accordance with and in obedience to the laws of his Lord.

Consistent Calvinistic thinking and action today is imperative. The plea of Lewis B. Smedes who, in the February issue of the CALVIN FORUM is expressing the desires of himself and other young Calvinists, must be heeded. He and others like him “need a body of written opinion, a public meeting of able minds to help crystallize the answers to the questions” he has asked. It, indeed, would be a calamity, should these young Calvinists plead in vain.

THE CALVIN FORUM ** APRIL, 1950
Is Thrift Outmoded?

IN our post-war world of government controls, government supports, government insurance and pension plans, one frequently hears the lamentation that times are not what they used to be. Men are no longer inclined to give a full day’s work for a full day’s pay nor are they willing to forego satisfactions now in order that they may be assured of them in the future. According to a report in the Executives’ Digest for September 1949 “Prizes of $100.00 and $50.00 could not be awarded at one of our great state universities because none of the students turned in essays on the subject, ‘Is Individual Thrift Outmoded?’ It did not cost the university a cent to get the answer.”

In a reprint of the above quotation in another pamphlet the caption above the quotation reads, “Keynesian Youth.” As many a reader knows it is the thinking of John Maynard Keynes, the great English economist, that has been largely responsible for the inflationary and money spending policies of this and other Western hemisphere governments since the great depression. Our money spending government has frequently been dubbed as Keynesian, and now our youth are characterized in the same manner. That the youth of today spend freely, often let money flow through their fingers as if it were so much sand or water, is only too true. We as parents stand almost aghast at the way the younger generation carries on. And then when other words fail us we refer to them as “Keynesian Youth,” the implication being in many instances, “How can they be that way? Why aren’t they more like us?”

An article appeared in the Christian Century for October 5, 1949 which attracted so much attention that hundreds of thousands of reprints of it were sold. It was entitled, “Why Aren’t They Like Us?” and was written by Mary Elizabeth Sergent. It relates the experiences of a father and mother who were nominally members of a protestant church but who neglected almost every means offered by the church for them to nourish their own religious life and that of their children, but who apparently never realized what they were doing or what kind of example they were setting. When one of their children turned Catholic and the other a cynic, the father musingly remarks to the mother, “I can’t understand it; with all the advantages of a good home and a Christian community, why didn’t they grow up to be good, decent Protestants like you and me?”

Spendthrift Parents

As we must know, if we but stop to reflect, the Keynesian practices of our children are not so different from those of their parents. As a nation we have during the last ten years not only produced in a manner that has astonished the world, but we have also lived in a world of conveniences and pleasures that not even an Aladdin could have thought of as arising at his beck and call. Although we have had large groups throughout all this time whose poverty was shocking by contrast with our plenty, people generally have spent in a manner that causes many to believe that there must of necessity be a period of corrective if not punitive retrenchment and of self-denial. The free spending occasioned by unprecedentedly large incomes and by a desire to take advantage of the opportunity to charge such spending as business expense, must, it would seem, give the spenders frequent qualms of conscience. True, this was in part encouraged by governmental spending and waste. But, however we may rationalize our conduct, the fact remains that not only our children, but we the parents in this rich country have been spendthrift instead of thrifty.

Lest we be too hasty in our criticism, however, let us remember that in order to keep our peace-time industries operating during the war we had to spend much of our swollen war-time incomes. Let us keep in mind also that if we had not been able to spend freely after the war, for goods and services which were difficult to obtain during the war, our post-war economy would have collapsed, as many who could not anticipate the wave of spending, feared it would. If we had not spent as we did, we could not have made possible the building of the million or more of homes, and the provision of the wherewithal to make them habitable and comfortable that we now see in almost every part of this country, in almost every section of every community. The fact that men of all classes and of all ages have spent at about the same rate has provided tremendous impetus to production and exchange. The spending of one makes possible the income of another and thus makes possible the circuit flow of money.

Savings and Prosperity

Does this mean that we have not saved during the last few years? We know full well that all of
us were impelled to save during the war years when our savings made possible an all-out war effort. It may not be so well known that we continued to save after the war and that our savings in 1948 and during the first half of 1949 continued at very high levels. True, as I may be reminded, what we saved as individuals during the war was more than spent by our government. But we as individuals did save. The fact that we as a nation went into debt while we as individuals saved remains, however, a matter of deep concern. What has aroused further concern during the last half of 1949 is the fact that a rather large percentage of our lower income groups were spending more than they were earning, that is that they were eating up what little they had saved.

Before we touch further upon matters of common concern we should be reminded that in January of this year, before the great strikes in the automobile and coal industries, the prospects for economic prosperity for the coming year were considered excellent. Now that one of the great strikes has been settled and that the automobile industry, in spite of the continuance of the Chrysler strike, is still looking forward to a banner year, economic forecasts are again, or rather continue to be optimistic. The optimism, it should be noted, rests in part upon the hope that great work stoppages may be prevented from spreading and in a large part upon the hope that spending will continue, and will continue to be possible.

National Debt and Prodigality

The fact that our national debt is still increasing and that even in years of prosperity our government is unable to balance its budget continues to cause concern. Deficit financing has continued for so long a time that the mention of it no longer disturbs many of us. The problem of what to do with a budget surplus is so remote as to be unthought of. It is true, deficit financing does serve useful purposes. Where could our tremendous national savings, individual and corporate, go if they did not go to a great extent to finance this deficit? Government debt, our national debt especially, provides the safest opportunity for investment that we have at present. But unmanageable and overburden-some public debts have carried nation upon nation into ruin, destroying not only the confidence that was placed in their governments but dissipating the wealth that was intrusted to them as well. What guarantee have we that this may not happen here? It can if we do not manage our debt with great wisdom and with the greatest of concern for its size in relation to our income. If our income should suddenly drop, our debt might become a millstone about our necks.

Enjoying and accustomed to prosperity we are not over-anxious concerning the future. Of course, we should not fret over what may happen; we should not borrow trouble. But we may and should be properly concerned over what we are now doing to the conditions that may in a large part determine the future for ourselves and our children. In our spending, justifiable as it may seem from a financial point of view, we may be spending on goods and services that are harmful and that may make us less efficient in the future than we are now. We may in our eagerness to enjoy present satisfactions be destroying our resources. Much of the money which we are spending might perhaps be much better spent in building up and restoring our natural resources and in truly "recreating" our human strength and energy, than in using up what nature has so bountifully provided for us and in dissipating the strength of body and mind that has been vouch­safed to us.

Thrift as Necessary Today as Ever

There is obviously reason enough today for renewed emphasis upon thrift. People have been saving during the last few years but the pendulum is beginning to swing in the other direction. And many do not or can not save enough. When unemployment strikes, large numbers of people are almost immediately "hard-up." They have too little to fall back upon. This was especially true before unemployment insurance, old-age assistance, and pensions were made available for millions of our citizens. These aids, these forms of security, as they are called, provide a cushion which has already proved to be a means of relieving what would otherwise have been economic hardship for millions in this country. These collective means of providing economic security will not, however, long continue to make up for the individual's inability to provide adequately for himself, unless we all together exercise thrift in the use of the funds with which we hope to help the individual in time of need.

The individual must still save. He must not mortgage his future to such an extent that the least little economic disturbance jeopardizes his own and his family's means of subsistence. If he saves today, he must almost of necessity have his savings in the form of money or credit. Unless this money or credit is entrusted to banks for general use the very saving of the individual will withdraw money from exchange and, therefore, prevent it from performing its useful service. This means that if individuals are wise enough to save for a rainy day, or to provide capital for some business enterprise, the banks to which the money is entrusted must not be foolhardy in the uses to which they put it. And it means that the private and governmental bodies which supervise the banks must not only regulate banking and credit wisely but provide proper examples of wise use of money and credit themselves.
In the past thrift was often considered meritorious even though the exercise of it by the head of a family meant the forfeiting or sacrificing of his health and welfare or the sacrificing of the welfare of the members of his family. No one, today, would consider the conduct of a miser such as Silas Marner commendable. But what of the conduct of a parent who is so intent upon saving, or upon thrift as he calls it, that he is unwilling to spend the money that is necessary for dental and medical care for his children or that is necessary for their education and the enrichment of their cultural life? Such negative action provides us with a very limited and indeed a very wrong concept of thrift. Thrift implies much more than foregoing satisfactions, it suggests or should suggest wise and meaningful use of resources so that the best use of them can be made now and also in the future.

Thrift means much more than anxious provision for an anticipated rainy day. It means using whatever we have at hand, even rather boldly, to prevent the occurrence of the anticipated hard times. The thrift of the individual can certainly be implemented today by such means as man has devised in one or another form of insurance, group and social insurance, as well as other kinds. The use of thrift of every kind, as here suggested, is really a courageous method of attacking our problems of subsistence, and a forward-looking method of dealing with the mandate that is given to us as individuals and as society, to develop every resource within ourselves and in nature outside of us. Decadent nations sometimes pride themselves on the things they have saved from a rich and cultured past, but hesitate to engage in new enterprises. An Andrew Carnegie was really thrifty when he realized that machinery was obsolete even though it was not worn out. Our youthful and vigorous American people may indeed be thrifty, even if at times apparently wasteful, when they exploit and develop the wonders of creation.

If the individual farmer faces the future with little more than fear in his mind, he may not dare to plant enough potatoes to make a living. If he proceeds with proper confidence, he may at the end of the season be confronted not only with his own surplus but with that of thousands of others. Even if we tried by one or another cooperative means to avoid surpluses and waste, we may be faced on occasion, as we are in this country, with huge surpluses. That is to be expected, but it is not to be expected than an intelligent farmer or an intelligent nation would permit the same situation to continue year after year.

Thrift is indeed always necessary. It is, as most of us understand, not just a matter of refraining from the use of some of the goods that we have, but a matter of the wise use of all that we possess. It is not a matter of facing the future with fear and, therefore, of withholding effort, but rather a matter of trust based upon intelligent faith, and therefore a matter of confident and courageous use of all our resources.

Earth's Awakening

Awake, O earth, and hear the trumpet sound of spring!
Arouse your ice-bound veins, and with new vigor surge.
Though still the tattered shroud of winter coldly clings,
Time slowly moves her hand and seasons gently merge.
In God's own time spring's hidden fingers softly trace
A wealth of verdant green upon earth's dull brown face,
O God, give fruitage to the barren, wind-swept fields,
And may the furrowed vales abundant harvest yield.

—Elsie D. Kutzema
Puritanism in Bryant’s Poetry

Andrew Vander Zee
Northeastern Junior College
Orange City, Iowa

THAT nature extolls the majesty of God, the Creator, is a Puritan and Biblical concept which comes to its greatest expression in American literature in the poetry of William Cullen Bryant. Although the Puritans believed this life was but a pilgrimage to a better world, they were not blind to the beauties of this one. Perry Miller assures us that the Puritan “looked upon the physical world as the handiwork of God, and the charms of the universe as His creations.” John Calvin taught his readers that “Of his wonderful wisdom, both heaven and earth contain innumerable proofs,” and that one should survey the “workmanship of God” to “incite his admiration of the Divine Architect.” Jonathan Edwards looked upon the beauties of nature as “really emanations or shadows of the excellency of the Son of God.” The Puritans worshipped God through nature, and when Bryant majestically opens A Forest Hymn with the declaration that “The groves are God’s first temples,” worship of God is his theme.

Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns,
Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold
Communion with his Maker.
Grace, strength, and grace
Are here to speak of thee.

Toward the close of the poem Bryant tells us that tempests, thunderbolts, whirlwind, and tidal wave are here to teach Who rules the elements, but the forests impress us with His milder majesty.

Here is no absentee landlord of the Deists, nor the indwelling spirit Wordsworth emulates, although an occasional line seems to indicate Wordsworth’s influence. In this same poem Bryant describes the delicate forest flower as “an emanation of the indwelling Life,” but the next line calls it a “visible token.” From the whole poem it is clear that nature’s forms are symbols of God’s transcendent greatness. And that majestic power of God is celebrated in other poems. At the foot of Mount Blanc is a spot

Where with God’s own majesty,
Are touched the features of the earth.

The closing lines of A Hymn to the Sea contain the same Puritan idea found in Jonathan Edward’s Dissertation concerning the End for which God Created the World, where we find that God made the world for His own glory.

Thou dost look
On thy creation and pronounce it good.
Its valleys, glorious in their summer green,
Praise thee in silent beauty, and its woods,
Swept by the murmuring winds of ocean, join
The murmuring shores in a perpetual hymn.

The poem, Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood, expresses the Puritan theory concerning nature in a few lines. Historians generally accept the notion that John Calvin declared the universe to be “bad.” But Calvin does not mean that the fall of Adam affected the universe but only affected man’s nature. Bryant tells us:

The primal curse
Fell, it is true, upon the unsinning earth,
But not in vengeance. God hath yoked to guilt
Her pale tormentor, misery. Hence, these shades
Are still the abodes of gladness;

“Misery” is in the world because of the “guilt” of Adam, Bryant says here, not because God cursed the universe. So he will seek his joy in a summer ramble

Among the plants and breathing things
The sinless, peaceful works of God.

Bryant believed that God not only created the universe but also watches over the creatures that inhabit it with benevolent care. His early poetry did have a tinge of paganism characteristic of irresponsible youth. Tremaine McDowell, who made special studies of Bryant’s early education, gives us sure ground for the pagan quality of Thanatopsis. He cites various influences acting upon Bryant to cause him to maintain a somewhat pagan attitude toward death between the years 1811 and 1815. But as soon as Bryant encountered the necessity of making his first major decision in life and had to meet it alone, he reverted back to the basic tenet of the faith of his fathers. The Power that guided the waterfowl would surely care for him also.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

This idea of God’s providential care is also reflected in Bryant’s well-known poems about the lives of men in the city. In Hymn of the City sunshine, air, and harvests of ocean and shore are gifts of Him who keeps watch while the city sleeps. More specific is the close of A Crowded Street, where the poet asserts that each individual is held

In His large love and boundless thought.

In the poems thus far cited we have found a belated poetic expression of attributes of God that
were Puritan favorites—God’s omnipotence, omnipresence, and His omniscience.

Dozens of Bryant’s poems, whole or in part, deal with the somber theme of death. Emerson has often pointed out that obsession with death was “the ruling sentiment of the New England of his childhood.” But why was death such a favorite theme? Was it not because of the general belief in resurrection and the life everlasting which Bryant shared? The Puritans knew that after death they would have to face eternity. It is true that the theme of eternal retribution never comes into Bryant’s poems, but an emphasis upon leading the good life is ever present. In this respect he was more like the Puritans of the seventeenth century than an echo of The Great Awakening. Miller assures us that the ideal of conduct in seventeenth century sermons was definitely affirmative. “The application . . . of all doctrines in the sermons stress continually the note of hope.” That affirmative ideal of conduct and that note of hope are ever present in Bryant’s poems about death; a certainty that the good life will merit heaven.

I have in my files excerpts from at least twenty-five poems referring to the Christian heaven. Those written in earlier years mention heaven vaguely and in a line or two, but later poems even add detailed descriptions of heaven. Those references to life everlasting usually come at the end of eulogies to fine old men, noble women, and innocent children. Already in 1824 The Old Man’s Funeral expresses Bryant’s faith that moral goodness will merit heaven, a belief to which nothing substantial is added in later poems:

Meekly he gave his being up, and went
To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent.

True, the Puritan doctrine of justification has disappeared, but the doctrines of sanctification and glorification have not. In 1853 vague hints of heaven give way to the use of Biblical terminology, second nature to the Puritan:

But he whom now we hide from men,
In the dark ground, shall rise again.

And in the eternal glory stand,
Highest and nearest God’s right hand.

Bryant recognizes the sinfulness of mankind in good Puritan terms:

The world
Is full of guilt and misery.

He often fled from the cares of that world to find peace, solace, and recreation in communion with the visible forms of “sinless nature.” Furthermore, he praises the grim reaper, death, for holding evil in check. He also acknowledges the presence of sin in his own soul.

Salvation as a conviction of sin and the joy of deliverance from guilt through Christ’s atoning sacrifice is not found in Bryant’s poetry. Still in some vague way Christ’s resurrection seems to have earned immortality for those who follow his example:

As of the Holy One they think,
The glory of whose rising yet
Makes bright the grave’s mysterious brink.

This latter notion is similar to Unitarian Channing’s equally vague muddling of his inherited Puritan Christology when he declares Christ to be an angel or spirit of some sort, and that the immortality of the soul is “brought home to men’s belief by the resurrection of Jesus.” References to Christ who “gave his life” and the “Sinless Teacher, who came for us to die,” come into Bryant’s later poems. Perhaps he gives evidence here that he belongs to the older “orthodox” group of Unitarians like Channing who refused to follow the completely rationalistic tenets of the radical Unitarians.

Bryant’s Puritan heritage is clear, however. God, the creator of sinless nature, fatherly provider for his children, director of their lives, who held sin in check by the grim reaper, death, and rewarded the good life with life everlasting, is often honored by William Cullen Bryant, the belated Puritan.

HOLD APRIL OVER

Hold April over ‘till my heart is filled
With misted mornings, warm and silver-sweet,
With trees, green veiled, and dandelions spilled
Like golden Spanish coins along the street.

Hold April over. Spring is much too brief.
To touch each crocus cup, each sprig of clover,
To drink my fill of sun, unclasp each leaf.

Until I have enough of Spring, hold April over.

Grand Rapids. MARIE J. POST.
CALIFORNIA NEWS LETTER
1123 W. 80th St.
Los Angeles, Calif.
March 13, 1950

Dear Dr. Bouma:

Greetings from where mountains raise snowy heads over warm green valleys, from lands of palms and flowers and oilwells, from lands bounded by ocean and desert and Old Mexico.

Perhaps for these reasons, perhaps for others, Southern California and more particularly Los Angeles and environs, enjoys the doubtful distinction of being the destination of the greatest mass movement of peoples in history—anytime anywhere. Each month 10,000 people enter this area. If the United States is the melting pot of Europe, California is the melting pot of the States where the States seek a newer unity. What this means for overcrowded churches, new church construction, mission opportunities, and the problems of religious re-orientation is obvious to anyone who knows and loves the Church of Christ.

These conditions also constitute the religious problems and challenges of the Christian Reformed Church. This is true, first, because California is the fastest growing sector of the Christian Reformed Church, and second, because existence in this American religious milieu has awakened in us a lively sense of calling toward the non-churched and religiously up-rooted. Organization of new churches, new mission experimentation in constructing Calvinistic Reformed churches from non-Dutch, non-Calvinistic constituents, as is being done at Maywood and Bel Gardens, and new erection or expansion of Christian school facilities are energetically carried forward, without, however, keeping pace with need.

One cannot avoid fancying what the dimensions of this growth and expansion would be, were they not quartered and sometimes halved by the sad fact that many of the Christian Reformed families coming to the West Coast never re-affiliate with their own denomination. This is due in part to their scattered location over a wide area. Yet due recognition of this leaves unexplained another fact, equally true. Many such families living within reach of Christian Reformed churches affiliate with other churches of various brands, without any apparent sense of loss or regret. There are, for example, according to the estimates of those who have lived here long enough to know, more Christian Reformed families than inside the Los Angeles Christian Reformed Church. The failure of large numbers of Christian Reformed families in the city of Los Angeles outside than inside the Los Angeles Christian Reformed Church. The failure of large numbers of Christian Reformed families from the Mid-West and East to affiliate with their denominational home, should rouse all our churches to critical self-examination. It should cause us to re-appraise our alleged strength.

Is our grip on our people nearly as strong as we suppose? Is our Calvinistic hold upon our membership as formidable as we like to imagine? If it is, how shall we explain the fact that hundreds of our Christian Reformed members, once out of their home-situation, so easily lose themselves on the West Coast to other churches or to no church at all? The cohesion of our church members in their home situation is admittedly strong. Is it, however, primarily a religious or social cohesion; an affinity of deep-wrought religious conviction, or a matter of conventional pressures and parental respects? Statistics would seem to indicate that “the tie that binds back home” is too frequently a social rather than religious tie, a matter of prudent adjustment to environment, allowing for easy re-adjustment and transfer of affections when the environment changes. How else can it be explained that so many Calvinists adjust themselves to the thinner air of non-Calvinistic churches without experiencing a shortening of breath? We can well afford to check our methods of inculcating love for the Reformed truth, and check again our standards for measuring success. The latter apparently are too easily bent to give the complimentary results we desire.

Although it affords small comfort, this tenuous quality of denominational ties is also characteristic of people of other denominations. There are many Christian people here who belong to no church at all. Such weak church ties, or complete absence of them, account for the expansive reception given to religious revivals in this area. The revival of Billy Graham in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, with its attendance of five to eight thousand every night for six weeks running and its claim to six thousand converts, is evidence of a large number of religious people with unsatisfactory church relations. Many of these converts had substantial religious backgrounds. Conversion frequently consisted in a return to that to which they had left behind. The most celebrated of all Graham’s converts, Stewart Hamblen, man of radio and racetracks, gambler and “man about Hollywood,” is a case in point. Stewart had a much praying Christian wife, who gave open expression to her religious life and struggles at a recent N.A.E. banquet. And Stewart himself is a son of a Christian minister.

If this prodigal-son quality of many revival conversions is kept in mind, one can avoid the false impression, entertained by many, that this type of happy religious event occurs only in revivals through revivalistic techniques. After all, the churches too are constantly receiving back into their folds sons who have brought their spiritual life into order only after sinful wanderings. The only difference is that such returning prodigals have no stable of horses to sacrifice, no radio fame to incite press agents to give their conversion tall black headlines.

While one may be inclined to scale down the number of alleged converts and readjust the dimensions of their glory, one cannot simply write off such revivals as being merely bizarre. Bizarre they may be, but they cannot be written off in toto in such a cavalier manner. I attended one of the meetings in the Big Tent. I heard a sermon which, although Arminian in theology, was nevertheless a studied attempt to instruct the hearers in the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith. It was a “catechism” sermon. The eager receptivity of the audience to this type of preaching created the impression that here was a mass of people without a shepherd, a responsive mass largely untouched by the sedate methods of not-so-bizarre churches. I could not help but feel deeply disturbed that we who are Calvinist do not reach these same masses with equal realism but better theology, with a method and message that will drive them into the churches. Is the reason for our failure to reach them akin to, or perhaps identical with, our inability to hold the allegiance of many of our own members when “the pressure is off”? This too warrants examination of self and method. Surely Calvinism, with its insistence upon the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of God, should in these troubled times provide at least an equally powerful field of religious attraction as an interpretation of Christianity in which the movements of God are hamstrung by the machinations of men.
A few weeks ago I had for the first time the privilege of hearing the leader and moving spirit of the Christian Council of Churches, the Rev. Carl McIntire. McIntire spoke on the F.C.C. in the Church of the Open Door—a church of 4,000 members and as many seats. I went out of curiosity, but remained to be impressed. While I thought McIntire a bit too eager to pin the red badge on men like John Bennett, merely on the ground that they are willing to see some of the defects of capitalism as mirrored in the criticism of Communism—the only ground McIntire adduced—McIntire did show himself to be a man informed and of considerable ability. Dis­creetly, he made no mention of the N.A.E., but spoke on the F.C.C. with a wistfulness and with a disarming charm that wrought devotion with artistry. Armed with facts and figures, names and dates, he was devastation in eloquence. Fascinated, I wondered where were the Calvinistic voices, supplied not with the usual pallid generalities that never con­vince, but supplied with an arsenal of facts and figures, raised in the power of a crusading spirit to fight today's battle of the Christian Church?

Leaving this tremendous church, I happened upon a book store just around the corner, shrewdly located to catch the trade of the Church of the Open Door and of its Bible Institute students. There I found score upon score of small, inex­pensive booklets and pamphlets propagandizing a fundamen­talistic Christianity—Abraham Kuyper's meditations and Klaas Schilder's trilogy the only apparent exceptions. Open by day and open by night, the store enjoyed an ample share of customers. Again I wondered. Where are the Calvinistic writers who for the sake of sounding their Calvinism will write small inexpensive books and pamphlets on vital theo­logical and church-related problems? Such authors and their productions would not be banned for their Calvinistic vintage. Kuyper's and Schilder's presence were proof of that.

Have we, I wondered, misinterpreted the injunction, "Buy the truth and sell it not."?—

Sincerely,
JAMES DAANE

THE PRESENT LEADERS OF THE "SOCIETE CALVINISTE DE FRANCE"

Dear FORUM Friends:

I THINK it proper to introduce you to-day to the three men who at the present time are responsible for the direction of the Societe Calviniste de France, The French Calvinistic Society: the President, Professor J. G. H. Hoffmann, and the two Vice-Presidents, Dr. Andre Schlemmer, M.D., and myself.

President Hoffmann

Professor J. G. H. Hoffmann, born in 1906, in Lorraine, completed his secondary education at Belfort, and studied for his first degree in Divinity in Paris (1926-1930) and in Edinburgh (1930-1931), where he was curate of the French Reformed Church for a year. His first thesis was devoted to the following subject: La Theorie Calvinienne de la Sainte Cene dans ses rap­ports avec le rationalisme et le paralogisme (The Calvinistic Theory of Holy Communion with regard to rationalism and paralogism). He was then appointed pastor at Selonecourt (Doubs), where he stayed from 1932-1956, where he left for Sweden as pastor of the French Reformed Church in Stockholm. Here he remained for eleven years (1936-1947). Prof. Hoffmann led a most active life in Sweden. Besides looking after the French parish, he passed his higher degrees in Divinity. He presented a second thesis in 1945 on: The Reformation in Sweden (1523-1572) and The Apostolic Succession, and then in 1947 a third thesis for his doctorate, in the form of a new historical study: The Lives of Jesus written in French, by non-Catholics, from Ernest Renan to Charles Guignebert.

Moreover, being in touch with the professors of the Faculty of Upsala, and with the diplomatic circles of the Swedish capi­tal, Mr. Hoffmann was on several occasions entrusted with official missions during the Finnish war and the last world war. Subsequently he was called upon by the French govern­ment (December, 1945 till May, 1947) to co-ordinate the Swedish efforts towards financing the reconstruction of those French provinces devastated by the war and to represent their interests with the Swedish authorities. He distinguished himself in the accomplishment of these functions, and in recogni­tion of these services was created Officer of the Order of Vasa (1940), Commander of the Dolonie Restituta (1945), Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (1947), Officer of the Polar Star (1947).

Living in the capital of eumenicism, where the authority of Archbishop Nathan Soderblom made itself strongly felt, his historian's tastes and talents were turned to the study of eumenism and the use of the documentary sources which he found on the spot. He published several essays; Des Divisions de la Chrétien­te à la possibilité d'une affirmation de l'Unité (1937) (From the Divisions of Christianity to the Possibility of an Assertion of Unity) and Nathan Soderblom, Prophet of Eumenism (1948).

Being a witness of the resistance of the churches in the Scandinavian countries, Professor Hoffmann told the story of their struggle by publishing the following stirring books: The Church Lives and Does Not Surrender, which deals with Finland and Norway (1939-1942), followed by Evangelical Eu­rope in the Test of Adversity (1943) and Finland Loyal to her Soul (1944). Several of these works have been translated into Swedish and German.

On his return to France in 1947, pastor Hoffman was first appointed assistant professor of Church History at the Free Faculty of Theology in Paris; then, in 1948, titular professor of this chair.

It was as a divinity student that I made the acquaintance of Professor Hoffmann. We had one year's study together, and I learned to know and appreciate him. We became friends. It was in May, 1949, that we appointed him president of the French Calvinist Society, where an historian was badly needed. Professor Hoffmann's position at the Faculty of Theology brings him into contact with the students and permits us to make acquaintance with future pastors and to interest them in Cal­vinistic and truly Reformed theology. We are expecting a great deal from the influence exercised by our president. Prof. Hoffmann married in 1933, he has four children, of whom the eldest is my goddaughter.

Vice-President Andre Schlemmer

Dr. Andre Schlemmer, M.D., is Vice-President of the Calv­inist Society since 1946. He was born in Paris in 1890, (this being by far the oldest of the team), where he was educated and took his doctor's degree in 1914. Dr. Schlemmer is the kind of believer who has always known how to associate his religious activity in the church with his professional work, and to succeed equally well in both.

From the medical point of view, Dr. Schlemmer is a distin­guished representative of naturistic and vegetarian medi­cine. He was one of the brilliant pupils of Dr. Carton whose place he took in 1948 as director of the Revue Natuirste.

The religious activity of Dr. Schlemmer has been and still is varied. He is the chairman of several Reformed Church committees (music, moral and social action, liturgy).

Dr. Schlemmer has published numerous medical and reli­gious articles. His is a very cultured, fine, open mind, the mind also of an aesthetician, who tries to attain in his work and in his faith some kind of synthesis of man. We recognize in that one of the traits dearest to the hearts of true Calvinists. Among his varied works we find: Essay on Justice, The Knowledge of Man, Medicine and the Christian Faith, Art in the Christian's Life, an Essay on the Doctrine of Divine Wor­ship in the Reformed Church, Protestant Mysticism, Order in Private Life, the Respect for Human Life from Birth to Death,
The Body in Christian Life (Söma and Sarx), Is Spontaneous Prayer a Prayer, and so on.

Dr. Schlemmer knows foreign languages well. He is a delightful lecturer much appreciated in France, Switzerland, England and Holland.

It is to Dr. Schlemmer that we owe the recent publications of “Calvinistic Studies”, by Prof. A. Lecerf, and the editorship of the English translation of his Introduction à la Dogmatique (Introduction to Reformed Dogmatics).

Second Vice-President Marcel

Now follows yours truly. You will in this way learn something of the author of the letters from France, who hopes to remain for many years a correspondent of your remarkable magazine. You will understand that I am embarrassed at having to talk about myself.

In the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries my ancestors Marcel lived in France, in the region of Vercors, near Grenoble. They were landowners, who bred sheep and sold wool. In 1706, twenty years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, they fled from the persecution in France and settled down in French Switzerland, at Lausaune. The Marcols stayed in Switzerland for ten generations. I am the first one in the family, born in Paris, with a French mother, to have taken back French nationality. I was born in Paris in 1910, (the year of the Paris floods), and it was there that I completed my secondary and higher education. My religious instruction I received from one of the most liberal pastors in Paris, the Reverend Roberty of “l’Oratoire”, for my parents were very liberal. Strange to say, as soon as I began to study at “l’Oratoire”, even when I had not as yet read any of Calvin’s works, my fellow-students called me “the” Calvinist. I was by nature and temperament fundamentally orthodox. My comrades were not mistaken, for when I had read Calvin, I discovered that I was truly Calvinistic. Despite the liberal teaching, the Holy Spirit had been at work in my heart and mind. However, at the Faculty I experienced a feeling of great solitude as, out of the total number of students, we were only three Bible-believers. I attached myself wholeheartedly to him who was to become my dear leader, Prof. A. Lecerf. In my life he is the man to whom I owe most. He loved, helped and understood me, and I have an undying gratitude for his memory. I think of him nearly every day, and he follows me step by step in my career.

During my student days I worked very hard. I remember, not without satisfaction, that I had 20/20 for the written paper on dogmatics at the final examinations. I presented for my first thesis a work on: The Foundations of the Law and Moral Obligation in the Works of Thomas Aquinas, Duus Scotox and Calvin. (1936). My thesis was accepted with the mention “distinction”, which had not been accurated since 1905, and I felt an especial pleasure because, subsequent to this success, my father forgave me the sorrow I had caused him through wishing to be a pastor, and told me he thought I had chosen my vocation well. A fortnight later he was to die a most painful death, and I am happy to have had his forgiveness.

The rector of the Paris Academy arranged for me to receive a scholarship to go and study the philosophy of professors Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven at the French Institute in Amsterdam. It was then that I learned to read Dutch, and I brought back from Holland, together with a whole library, a deep-seated love of the country and of Dutch Reformed theology.

I began to prepare my doctorate in Divinity and held a temporary position at the “Eglise de l’Etoile” in Paris, when war broke out, and I went through the Belgian campaign in the Cavalry Corps. For nine months a prisoner of war near Berlin, I was repatriated in 1941. It was then that I met the most charming person in the world, when giving a lecture on “The Star of the Wise Men” at the club for girls belonging to the parish of the “Etoile”, and she consented to become my wife. (August, 1941).

I was next appointed pastor in St. Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, where I still am, overwhelmed by God’s blessings and happy among my parishioners. Aghast at the ravages of liberalism and modernism, and also at the lack of precision in the religious thought of many well-intentioned pastors, I have brought out the following two books: A l’Ecole de Dieu (1945) (In the School of God) and A l’Ecole de Dieu (Listening to God). Their aim was to serve as an aid in the religious instruction of catechumens of secondary schools, students and proselytes, and in addition to permit the protestors in the church to widen their knowledge, and to bring back to many colleagues the meaning of biblical religious instruction and the cure of souls.

Upon the death of Prof. A. Lecerf I was appointed secretary of the Calvinist Society (1942), and recently vice-president. The war and the duties which it occasioned in an important but poorly equipped parish, made it impossible for me to continue work on my doctorate for seven years, studies which I have now resumed.

Thus we are three of us, very different one from another in character, talents, and field of specialization. Prompted by a desire to bear witness to our faith and to overcome all difficulties, we are counting on your love and on your prayers so that our plans, of which I shall have the pleasure to write in a future letter, may be realized to the glory of God!

PIERRE CH. MARCEL
8 Rue de Tourville
Saint-Germain-en-Laye (S. & O.)
France

The Voice of Our Readers

Dear Dr. Bouma:

THANK you for sending the copies of THE CALVIN FORUM. Surely this issue is a splendid achievement. It carries me right back to those wonderful two days at Cincinnati.

I was very much interested in the letters of Pierre Ch. Marcel on the French Calvinistic Society. I wonder why no mention was made of Louis Gausser, Merle d’Aubigné, and Emile Doumercque. These surely were as certainly Reformed Theologians as Benedict Pictet (a Swiss). The complete absence of any reference to Doumercque is certainly surprising. I recognize that on certain matters, inspiration in particular, he does not come quite up to the standard, but that might also be true to some extent of Prof. Lecerf. Certainly Lecerf’s attitude of cooperation with the Reformed Church, the liberal group of France, is difficult to understand on the part of a true Calvinist! So the complete silence of the letter with reference to the author of the monumental 7-volume work on Jean Calvin, les hommes et les choses de son temps is almost shocking. The editors of the Princeton Theological Review, whose Calvinism is not open to question! had a different attitude toward this great scholar.

May the Lord continue to bless your work in His service.

Yours in Him,

ROGER NICOLE
Gordon Divinity School
Boston

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * APRIL, 1950
ETHIOPIAN LETTER

Feb. 18, 1950
Ethiopia.

Dear Dr. Bouma:

I

UST a few months ago we returned from our mid-term leave which we spent in Holland. We are sorry that we missed seeing you in Amsterdam by just one day, but we did hear you speak over the radio the opening night of the Ecu­

menical Synod. From some of the remarks we heard it is evi­

dent that in Holland as well as elsewhere there is need for a re-evaluation of Calvinism and its application to daily life. Some supposedly ardent Calvinists could see no reason for your enthusiasm over Calvinism as THE religion for all of life.

A Visit to Holland

We were very saddened by the condition prevailing in the Gereformeerde Kerk: the ‘scheiding,’ which was especially evi­
dent in the northern part of Holland. With friends and rela­
tives in both camps it was a little difficult to have such occasions as family reunions. It is difficult to realize the extent of the differences and the far-reaching effects of these differences in the family circle. Parents unable to associate with children and vice-versa, because of theological differences which seem so unrelated to the one important message of sal­

vation through Christ.

The conflict has even reached out to their mission fields in the United States of Indonesia where propaganda has been sown to follow this or that faction. I can imagine what re­
sponse such tactics would have here in our young Ethiopian Church and can envision no bright future for the church in Indonesia if the seed sown is allowed to take root. While in the midst of these differences and arguments, we could not help but wonder what the people here in Ethiopia would say if they knew that the white man at home was having such a bitter war in the name of religion. It gave us a certain sense of shame. May God work in the hearts of His people that such things shall no longer be.

We enjoyed worshipping in the fine old cathedrals of Hol­

land, each one of which seems filled with tales of ages past. Some we visited still had the cell blocks in the steeple with stocks and chains which spoke of martyrdom and persecution. Others with the shields and family coats of arms of centuries past decorating the walls of the chapel. And so many large churches! Nearly every village, no matter how small, will have its high church steeple gracefully towering above the sur­

rounding houses. And every steeple with its clock and chimes!

To stand next to the magnificent old bells of the Martini in Groningen while they pealed forth their melody was indeed a thrill.

Yes, Holland has many historic monuments, some of which speak of sacrifice and a firm maintenance in that which was of God. May the present chapter of religious strife not have the tragic ending of scorn and sorrow, but an ending of love triumphing into a reconciliation which will enable the testi­

mony of Christ to go forth without shame.

We also spent some days in Switzerland and of course in Geneva, that city which breathes forth so much of Calvin him­

self. The famous monument of the Reformation leaders, the church where Calvin preached for twenty-six years, his monument within the church were all of historic interest. The influ­

ence of this teacher of Geneva certainly spread far and wide.

Gospel Progress in Ethiopia

But now we are back in Ethiopia and the present. Here too are battles to be fought, by battles against forces of evil and super­

dition, and the devil himself. Here is also an ancient church, but this one with dead formalism and ritual which is unable to give the peace of Christ to its followers because it has no living message of complete atonement through Christ the Savior.

The new church, the Protestant Evangelical Church, is strug­
gling valiantly and is growing throughout the land. Our own group here in Western Ethiopia is healthy and awake. We have just had a very impressive and solemn time which was climaxd in the ordination of three Ethiopian ministers. For the past three years there has been a daily ministerial class under the direction of two of our missionaries, Rev. C. Kiss­

ling and Dr. D. Davies. After the three years of instruction and examinations these three out of fifteen men were felt to be eligible and were then examined by the general presbytery.

The ordination service followed, led by our blind Rev. Gedada who up to this time has been our only ordained man for eight­

een churches. Two of our missionaries gave the charge and the installation service was read. Then each man to be or­
dained knelt in the midst of all the elders and ministers, and while these laid their hands upon them, gave their promises of obedience and fellowship.

On the following Sabbath we had communion service led by these newly ordained men. At this same service over fifty new members were received here in Sayo, while in another area about forty miles away two hundred are waiting to join. Each one of these has to pass a rigid examination, which by the way is given before members of the church as well as the elders. The questions asked are by no means simple ones, and it is not at all unusual that an applicant will have to appear several times before he can be taken into a member of the church.

A weekly pre-communicants class is held which is much like our catechism class. All of this work is under the direction of the Ethiopians themselves. The church discipline, church government, catechism, church schools, etc., all is their own work and only when in dire need do they seek our help. It is certainly a church which is independent of the foreign ele­

ment and which with these people has been greatly blessed. It went through a period of vicious persecution and came out of the trial stronger in spirit and in number. The spirit is truly working amongst these people and daily the number is being added unto.

The Outlook

There are still many areas in Ethiopia where the gospel has not penetrated. As a mission we have been seeking en­

trance into these areas but so far we have been unable to secure the necessary permits. The command to bring the mes­

sage to every tribe and every people seems to become more difficult to carry out, not only here but in the neighboring Sudan and Egypt as well. People are eager to hear but gov­

ernments seem more rigid in opposition. It seems the day is not far off when the foreigner will not be able to come with the message. To be prepared for that day we must have the rudiments of a church which shall be able to carry on, not only in Ethiopia but in every area which has not heard and which can still be entered. The day grows short and the night is at hand, the night in which we can work no more.

Yours in Him,
F. W. BEN DULK, M.D.

NETHERLANDS LETTER

Groningen, Feb. 9, 1950.

Dear Calvin Forum Readers and Chief:

I

T IS always a pleasure to me to read the Calvin Forum, but I found especially the January issue very interesting. I am thinking especially of the article of Professor De Graaf of Hope College, partly about our Dutch school problem. I must say to Prof. De Graaf: You have described the situation with great accuracy. There are only a few points men­tioned by you which prompted me to ask the question whether they were quite correct. You seem to think that resistance against labor's demands for better housing, against reduction of unemployment, and against nationalization of industry is found especially with the Christian political parties. But this is not true. Of course, what you say may be found with some
suspicious Christian individuals, but it cannot be said of the Christian parties. Just what did you mean by that statement? The true state of affairs is quite the reverse. It is precisely the Christian parties which, under the leadership of such men as Kuyper, Talma, and Sikkel and many others, have promoted better housing conditions and similar reforms.

Christian Political Action

It is true that these facts are often misrepresented by the Socialists. I am therefore very happy to be able to announce the forthcoming publication in the near future of a splendid work on the history of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands. It will be published by one of my own elders, the head of the publishing house of Jan Haan, a person well-known also to your editor. The title of this work will be, Het Volk ten Baant (For the Benefit of the People), taken from a phrase which is found in the only poem which Kuyper ever wrote. In this work you will see a picture of the struggle which is now beginning also in America, viz., between school and state, parents and state, in short the entire complex of problems centering around Christianity and Politics. I would strongly recommend the study of this forthcoming work, especially to all who are interested in the educational problem, in the social problem, and in the question whether we need Christian political parties. From this book it will also be clear to Prof. De Graaf that precisely the Christian parties were the champions of social justice in the Netherlands. He will also see how much Christian statesmen like Kuyper and Talma have accomplished in this field.

Another point is what Prof. De Graaf tells the readers about the clash between the Nazi occupation forces and the spirit of freedom prevalent among the Dutch. You ought also to know about the struggle that had to be fought against the Nazis in behalf of the Christian schools. The occupational authorities wanted to force their appointees upon our Christian schools. What a struggle that was to resist and prevent them from accomplishing this end. How many secret meetings we held in those days in order to make a united front against this assault upon our rights as parents and duties pledged in our baptismal vows. I shall never forget this struggle. It is at such times that one really gets to the root of his problems and his convictions.

I sincerely hope God will give each one of you the opportunity to battle for this freedom of truly Christian education. Government schools with a thin veneer of Christianity, in which, moreover, the parents have nothing to say, readily become instruments for the de-Christianization of the nation. And, on the other hand, Christian schools, in which parents, in harmony with their baptismal vows, see to it that their children are given further instruction in the teachings of the Gospel, can serve as a mighty weapon for the Christianization of a nation and the destruction of the idolatry of totalitarianism, whether fascist or communist. (Free from Hitler, free from Stalin!)

United States of Indonesia

Perhaps one of the most striking happenings these days is the fact that in one stroke all discussion about our former Dutch East Indies has ceased completely, seeing the transfer of sovereignty has taken place so promptly. What is the new attitude on this score of the Dutch Calvinists? Since the transfer of sovereignty is now an accomplished fact, we must simply make the best of the situation. Many ask the question: Do we still wish to send our sons and daughters there? The Calvinists reply: Indeed. In fact, we ought to send the very best, in order to be of service and to help maintain the independence of this great country. Our Dutch soldiers, who for the last four years have maintained order there, have no more to say or to do now and would prefer to come home. But this cannot be accomplished at once apparently. You can well imagine how eager parents and wives are to see their sons and husbands again. At any rate, in the political sense one of the most difficult problems has now been brought to a solution. May it all prove to be for the best interests of the United States of Indonesia, and may it prove not to be a hindrance to the cause of Christian missions among the Indonesians, who now have the power in hand and consist largely (90%) of Mohammedans. As you know, in other Islamic countries such interference is not uncommon.

Communism a Menace?

And now another point. One of the readers of the Calvin Forum asked me to answer the following question: “Do you find Communism a menace to your group?” To this I must reply in the affirmative. The present writer, of course, does not belong to the Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk (the Dutch State Church), but to the Gereformeerde Kerken, which is the group supporting the Free University and the Theological School of Kampen, about which your editor wrote in an editorial of December. Now in these churches (and that answers your specific question) there is an uncompromising opposition against Communism. In the Established Church (Ned. Hervormde Kerk) this is also the case to a large extent. But among them are also found those who, in agreement with Karl Barth, seem to consider National Socialism a greater threat than Communism. Many in this Church support the so-called “doorbraak-idee,” by which is meant the position which repudiates the separate organization of Christians in education, politics, and industry. You can well imagine that those who maintain that Christians should organize into one political party with non-Christians greatly weaken their resistance to such a power as Communism.

You will be interested to know that the following question is beginning to be discussed in our country: Is it true that among the top figures in the World Council of Churches there are defenders of and propagandists for Communism? And then the next step in the discussion, viz., Is a Church which has joined such a World Council and accepts the leadership of such persons in a position to take a strong stand against Communism?, i.e., against its propaganda and its ideas? You will understand that Communism is in no sense dominant among us. If it were, conditions in and for the Church would be far from rosy. But even now there is great need of resisting the principles and propaganda of Communism. This, to be sure, is an urgent task for all Calvinists in all lands. We must refute error—also this great error—and we must preach the full-orbed Gospel. May God give us strength and desire so to do as long as it is day.

With cordial greetings.

PETER PRINS
H. W. Mesdagplein 2
Groningen

194 * THE CALVIN FORUM * *  APRIL, 1950
BARTH IN A NUTSHELL


This book is not, as the title might suggest, an outline of Barth's large Kirchliche Dogmatik. It is rather an exposition of the Apostles' Creed. Since, however, the concern of Dogmatics is with the Church's message, Barth's exposition of this classic text of the Church's message is necessarily a brief statement of Barth's Dogmatics. The title, therefore, is not inappropriate.

In his Foreword, Barth declares that readers of his Credo (1935) or his Confession de la Foi de l'Eglise (1943) will find little, and the readers of his Kirchliche Dogmatik nothing, that is essentially new. This indicates that Barth's theology, once self-styled as a "bird-in-flight," has for the last fifteen years found a resting place. This is heartening to the appraiser of Barth's thought; it is much easier to scrutinize a bird in the hand than one on the wing.

Barth prepared these lectures for a war-disturbed, non-theological group of European students. This perhaps accounts for the fact that this book is easy, though not light reading. For the first time in his life Barth lectured without a manuscript. This perhaps accounts for the clarity and directness of presentation.

While this combination of intention and method produced an easy to read book, it does not make easy the appraisal of the theological problems raised. I read the book both with delight and pain. With delight, for it is theology as can only be written by a genuine theologian; with pain for the theologian frequently slips out of cast into the role of philosopher. The reading of Dogmatics in Outline is an experience in the dialectics of pleasure and pain—so pervasive is the Barthian dialectic! The name of Karl Barth will undoubtedly be given a niche in the hall of the great theologians: he has written much that even orthodox thinkers can read with pleasure and profit. Yet it is none-the-less true, that this provocative and stimulating theologian has shaped and uttered much of his thought within a basic structure not fashioned according to blueprints of Reformed theology. And the ultimate influence and peculiar place of his theology will not be determined by his many acceptable insights and emphases, but by the theological structure in which they were shaped and in terms of which it becomes articulate.

For theology proper is not a matter of edifying utterances and wholesome religious emphases, but a structure of thought within and in terms of which the Church makes its confession and finds her edification.

The clearest evidence that Barth has not constructed his theology according to blueprints obtained from Reformed theology is the fact that Barth's theology ends in Universalism. Barth's theology leads directly to universal salvation as his treatment of the Final Judgment clearly shows. Barth apparently is reluctant to arrive at this position for he asserts, p. 136, that his thought on the last judgment "does not lead to Apokatastasis." Yet his position leads nowhere else, and his denial of the identity of his destination upon arrival is not reassuring.

Moreover, the danger of his basic universalism and its natural lack of Christian seriousness becomes painfully clear in his answer to a question which he admits was frequently put to him during the week in which these lectures were delivered, "Are you not aware that many are sitting in this class who are not Christians?" To which Barth answered, "I have always laughed and said: 'That makes no difference to me.'" And Barth adds, "It would be quite dreadful if the faith of Christians should aim at sundering and separating one man from the others." This is a far cry from the Biblical teaching on this matter. In spite of all the emphasis that Barth places on "decision," his conception of our decision for Christ lacks all the truly existential seriousness it possesses in the Bible. According to Barth the only decision that really makes any difference is God's decision made in Christ for us—all of us. This, of course, is an expression of his peculiar construction of that event of God's election and reprobation of every man in Christ, in which God's decision for us is the only decisive decision. Any theology which loses that truly existential character of personal faith given it in the Bible, is a theology whose structural framework is distorted, whose generative principle is unbiblical, and whose practical consequences are most dangerous. In spite of the inspiration of most theological applause today, it becomes quite clear after the applause has died away, that Reformed theology, because more Biblical, is after all, far more existential than Barthian theology!

Basic to any theology is its God-concept. And it is in Barth's conception of God, I believe, that one finds the matrix of his aberrations from Biblical thought. In explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed, Barth sets forth what he believes is the meaning of belief "in God the Father Almighty." God in His Oneness is Father. As Father (and it should be remembered that Barth prefers to speak of "modes of existence" rather than "person") God objectifies himself wholly in the Son, and thus the Son (Word, Logos) is other than, yet identical with the Father as God. God is also Father as creator. Barth would object to a reading of his theology which asserted that God and the created world are merely necessary ontological correlatives. Indeed, this would appear to be an over-simplification. For Barth explicitly and repeatedly contends that, "creaturely reality means reality on the basis of a creatio ex nihilO," that "creaturely nature means . . . existence with a beginning and an end," that it "becomes," though "once it was not;" yet it is also true that Barth contends, that the relation between God and the world is a "temporal analogue—of that event in God himself by which God is the Father of the Son," in such fashion that we must look upon "God's works as the essence of all that is possible and real."

Barth explains the "Almightiness" of God, as "might," in such fashion that "God is the essence of the possible." In this possession of the essence of all possibility, God has his Freedom and his Lordship. Apparently, to overcome objections that this is a return to Occam's conception of God as "indeterminate will," Barth insists that God's omnipotence must not be conceived abstractly—only in the abstract can one ask whether God can make square circles. When one conceives of omnipotence abstractly one reaches a Hitler, or a devil, but not God. God must be conceived concretely, in terms of his works, i.e., in terms of revelation (and creation). These works of God are the "essence of all that is possible and real," and as such lead directly to an "exhaustive revelation of God."

Barth would deny that these works are the necessary ontological correlatives of God, since these works are, Barth insists, events of God's freedom. Yet there does, none-the-less, seem to be a Something which stands over against God. This Something is defined by Barth (shades of Hegel) as non-being. Non-being is further described as "nothingness," "loneliness,""
In Barth’s thought both the trinitarian character of God and the created world are God’s answer to the abyss of threatening non-being. The Father’s production of Son and Spirit, and the Father’s creation of world are God’s way of negating in Himself . . . existence in loneliness.” The same assertion is made with respect to the procession of the Spirit. (Cf. Barth’s Doctrine of the Word of God). The same act of divine negation is associated with creation. Chaos, the tohu wabohu of Gen. 1:2, is that “which God in His creation has left behind Him, which He rejected when He created heaven and earth. That is the opposite of God; . . . it is the breaking-in, the offensive of this impossible possibility of free arbitrariness, which wishes to be just potestia in itself and to carry it out and as such to reign.” (p. 48.) In this connection, Barth’s insistence that the events of Genesis 1 and 2 lie outside of our historical knowledge becomes understandable. Original Sin is that Something, which arising out of the abyss finds expression in human life as Evil, Chaos, Devil, “indeterminate possibility,” as “power-in-itself.” Original Sin is not something to be defined in terms of a historical Fall, but as a something in the nature of things. This means, on the one hand, the inevitability of sin, and on the other, that it can only be overcome by God. (Here lies the matrix of Barth’s tendency toward ethical pacifism.) Since this threatening Something, “the offensive of this impossible possibility of free arbitrariness,” is a permanent, non-historical factor in the nature of things, God must be conceived activistically, i.e., as eternally active in its negation. This is the Lordship of God. The Lordship of God is His freedom, and freedom is the essence of the possible. Sin, i.e., “arbitrariness,” “power-in-itself,” is the essence of the impossible. With these definitions of God and sin, Barth can write, “God is the essence of the possible; but ‘power in itself’ is the essence of the impossible.” (p. 48.) Barth, and Brunner, and Kierkegaard before them, define both God and sin in terms of possibility (or impossibility). One cannot therefore discard the charge as absurd, as T. F. Torrance does in his review of The New Modernism in The Evangelical Quarterly (April, 1947), that in Barth and Brunner, God and sin are identical at bottom. Does not Barth say plainly that the Father by bringing forth the Son “negates in Himself [italics mine] . . . existence in loneliness”? Is this essential identification so surprising? Is it a matter of great surprise if sin, as “impossible possibility” and God, as the “possible impossibility,” turn out to be the same thing—held apart only by an existential dialectic? It has been done in grand style before—by Hegel. But Barth has too much wrought his theological thinking within the structure of the existentialism of consciousness philosophy. Consequently, Barth will never, as he hopes, overcome that modern theology which is of its lineage.

Los Angeles  
JAMES DANE

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION


Coetzee and Van Rooy have edited three volumes dealing with the general topic of principles and methods in the areas of elementary, secondary, and higher Christian education. This is a praiseworthy effort, put forth by several men who have dedicated their lives to the cause of Christian education among the South Africans. The work is and is highly necessary in order to awaken interest among the faculty and the supporting constituency of the schools headed by the university located at Potchefstroom. There is in the volume under discussion a great deal of valuable historical material, many philosophical observations and items of practical wisdom. Yet the volume as a whole is a bit disappointing. The various chapters have been written by several men, each one representing his specific field of interest. Some of the chapters are excellent and deserving of companions of a higher calibre. Others merit no place in a volume purporting to cover such important areas as principles and methods of higher education. Some of the chapters barely touch these two important aspects of education. They are but a description of what a given professor is offering or proposes to offer in his department. These chapters seem to give an answer to the question: “What are you doing in your department?” Hence they are almost exclusively descriptive in character. Such chapters would have been enriched considerably if the authors had insisted on depicting their ideals, both in the matter of the philosophy and methods toward which they are striving. If you wish to know what these men are doing, read this book. When we compare notes with the people in South Africa we are impressed with the idea that they have the same general objectives that we have and could be of immeasurable value to us. The language used in this book is called South African. It may be called a singular deviation from the Dutch (my apologies to the brethren in the lower part of the dark continent). Nevertheless it constitutes delightful reading for those who are somewhat acquainted with the language of the Netherlands.

I should like to take advantage of this occasion to call attention to the fact that about ten years ago the Calvin College faculty attempted to draw up a volume similar to the one under review. The attempt was crowned with the same kind of varied success. Some of the chapters were excellent. Others indicated that the writers were not especially adept at this sort of work. Most of the men were not at all enthusiastic about it. Efforts of this type call for a stern editor, one who can bring about some degree of unity in the various chapters, and who has the courage to order a re-writing of the sections that are not up to par. I have had repeated calls from educational leaders in this country and abroad for a copy of the documents drawn up by the Calvin men. Since I was not authorized to submit any of these for distribution even though some of them were of unusually high merit, I was constrained to turn down the requests. These essays had been written for a special occasion. The authors, therefore, quite justifiably asked that they remain the property of the institution and that they be not mailed out for general public examination. Personally, I am convinced that this study should be taken up again under effective editorship and published in book form. It may not be amiss for me to suggest that the teaching staff of the university at Potchefstroom and of Calvin College and others struggling with the same problem unite their efforts in trying to reach a solution. Christian education is planted in the midst of a hostile world. Practically all of the educational theories and practices are dead against the kind of education we represent. Christian education is still in the pioneering stage and far from having achieved a very positive and definite coloring of its own.

Calvin College  
H. SCHULTZE

A TREASURY OF TEACHING


The occasion for a review of this book at this time is that it can now be purchased not for the original price of five dollars, but for less than half that sum. The title derives from a sentence written by H. G. Wells, to this effect: “the teacher, that sower of unseen harvests.” Though the book will interest teachers most it is not meant for them alone. Everybody who remembers the dusty odor of chalk; everybody
The reviewer wishes to say in passing that some selections in this volume confirm him in a conviction reached long ago, namely, that way up into the nineteenth century there was vastly too much flogging in the so-called public schools (every last one of them private) of England. We are told in this book that the one-time headmaster of Eton, Doctor Keate, famous for having birched half of the cabinet ministers, bishops, generals, and dukes of the kingdom, ended a sermon on the sixth beatitude by saying, "Now boys, be pure in heart! For, if not, I'll flog you until you are." If that could happen at Eton then what could one expect of some Dotheboys Hall?

Probably the most valuable feature of the book is that it stimulates to further reading. The reviewer will need at least several years, should they be allotted him, just to follow up the reading suggested by this book. How can, for example, the serious reader read Mark Van Doren's profound and exceedingly stimulating essay on, "The Arts of Teaching and being Taught," without wanting to read the book from which it is taken? That holds for many another selection. Van Doren's chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Almost everything is in the book: broad humor, refined humor, sprightly humor; half and utter seriousness; pathos though no bathos; philosophy though no metaphysics. One thing you will not find—a single dull page.

Is it all praise then? No adverse criticism at all? Well, in the presence of so much that is eminently fine one is reluctant to criticise. It seems almost as ill-mannered as sitting down to a table burdened with the best of food deliciously cooked and well served and then complaining that though there is an excellent roast there is no steak. Who would do that?

Yet this is a review and it is the reviewer's task to point out defects as well as merits.

In the first place then, the reviewer is disappointed not so much with what he finds as with what he fails to find. John Amos Comenius is present as he should be. The compilers have chosen to represent him with a fragment from his, "Didactica Magna," a well-chosen fragment revealing the man's simple but deep pieté. Good. But where is the man whom Comenius was proud to call master? Where is Luther? In a new edition room should be found for the whole of Luther's famous, "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of the Cities of Germany," an historic document advocating a curriculum so advanced that it was not realized for another three or four centuries. One is surprised that it escaped the vision of two men who missed so little.

Of course, one is pleased to find the whole of Plato's "Apology," but one cannot help wondering whether the purpose of the book would not have been better served if we had been given instead an equally generous portion of Plato's "Republic."
Quintilian is represented by a single page. Surely, that is doing scant justice to that grand old rhetor. Bliss Perry is here and so is Irwin Edman. Properly so. But why omit Rufus Jones? Neither Perry nor Edman pays a finer tribute to former teachers, “sowers of unseen harvests.” A chapter from, “Finding the Trail of Life in College,” should adorn a future edition of the book. There is, of course, nothing from Rollo Brown’s, “Harvard Yard in the Golden Age,” for the very good reason that its publication followed that of Unseen Harvests. Somehow space for a chapter from the Brown book shall have to be found, so it seems to this reviewer, in a new edition.

“But,” I hear the reader say, “if anything the book is already too large.” Is it? Another fifty or hundred pages would hurt nobody. Furthermore, though the book contains no trash, all selections are by no means equally important. Let there be both elimination and substitution. If this were done room could be found too for something from the, “Hoosier Schoolboy,” or, “Hoosier Schoolmaster,” and also for something from the very interesting and historically valuable book of Kennedy and Harlow, “Schoolmasters of Yesterday.”

Enough of this. Fuss and Bosford undertook an almost impossible task involving a wide knowledge of at least two literary heritages. They had to pick and choose. They have acquitted themselves with distinction. Their work is out of the ordinary, a book to be read not in a week, but selection by selection with favorite passages checked so that they may be returned to again and again.

Every teacher should have a copy. If necessary one could wear a hat another season so that one could afford to own so splendid a treasure. We are told that when for Erasmus the choice lay between a new cloak and a new book he invariably chose the book. Probably not a bad choice at that.

It should be added that the compilers of the volume here reviewed are the distinguished headmaster (now retired) of Phillips Andover Academy and the chairman of the English department of the same school.

Calvin College

J. Broene

THE FREEDOM OF SCIENCE IN RUSSIA


F LATE years considerable research has apparently been done by Russian scientists in the Soviet Union. The results, however, have not always been accepted by scientists outside Russia. This is due in part to the intermingling of political dogma with scientific data. The work of Trofim Lysenko, A Russian geneticist, is typical of this. He has set himself up as a commander general of the forces warring against the capitalist geneticists. The controversy has to do with the nature of heredity and the forces involved in it. Lysenko, following the work of Michurin and Lamarck, claims that environment is the predominant factor influencing heredity. In general, non-Russian scientists, following the work of Mendel, hold that environment plays but a minor role with respect to heredity.

Julian Huxley, an English geneticist, has taken up the cudgels against Lysenko and his school in this book. In doing this, he states the issue with respect to genetics. But the scientific aspect of the controversy occupies but a minor part of the book. For Huxley in dealing with this problem, has found that the issue goes beyond the dispute in genetics. This controversy is typical. Typical of what is happening to the other sciences in Russia. Even typical of what is happening to music and letters in the Soviet Union. And it may be prophetic of what will happen to every other cultural and intellectual pursuit within that country.

The author does answer Lysenko with scientific results and data and he appears to have the better of the argument. He is fair in his criticisms and presents the Russian view sympathetically. As a scientist Huxley is interested in determining which point of view is more in accord with facts. He concludes that neo-Mendelism is by far the better interpretation of heredity. The grandiose results claimed by the Russian geneticists cannot be duplicated by others. The experiments seem to have been carried out carelessly with little attention paid to the control of variables. Huxley admits that the question is one of interpretation of the facts. But it is more than that. It is also a question of the facts themselves. There is considerable doubt concerning the validity of the Russian experiments. For these experiments seem to work only for the Russians.

In view of the overwhelming array of scientific opinion and interpretation against them, why do the Russians persist in clinging to the views of Lysenko? In answering this question the author must leave the area of science. The Russians seem to have championed the ideas of Lysenko—who seems to be much better at political conniving than at scientific experimentation—because it is the “party line.” Those in political control apparently have decided that Lysenko’s adaptation of the views of Michurin is a stricter interpretation of dialectical materialism and a better application of the doctrines of Marx and Lenin. Why this is thought to be so, Huxley does not know. But the why persists in the mind of the author and he gives what he thinks may be the answers to it. There may be a practical reason, Huxley believes. The Soviets want quick results, especially in the field of agriculture. Mendelism holds out no such hope. Furthermore, the theories of Lamarck and Michurin are rather simple and easy for the common man to follow. But the explanation undoubtedly lies deeper. Mendelism implies inequality. This does not exist, according to the Marxist, except it be imposed by man. Then, too, Mendelian heredity is rather rigid. It is an impediment to man’s desire to change nature. In fact it may be interpreted by some to mean that man is helpless in the face of genetic predestination. Then what can be the use of the Communist struggle? And thus Mendelian genetics cannot be Soviet genetics. It must be capitalist. Here is a repudiation of the inter-national and universal character of science. Of this repudiation Huxley says, “... to the extent that Soviet science manages to be separate and different from science elsewhere, it will fall short of its possibilities of usefulness and value, not only to humanity at large, but to the U.S.S.R. However, it will take time before these unfortunate consequences are realized in the U.S.S.R.: and meanwhile the progress of humanity at large toward greater knowledge and greater power is being impeded.”

But the Russians at least are consistent. They have one controlling principle or “world and life view.” Everything must be in conformity with it. If not, it cannot be accepted. So it is in literature. So it is in music. So it must be in genetics. If Michurinism interprets Marx and Lenin more correctly than neo-Mendelism, then Michurinism must be right regardless of the facts.

Huxley has no quarrel with those who have a “world and life view” and in the light of it try to unify the whole of knowledge in order that teaching and learning may be integrated. He makes a strong plea for just that. “... I ardently wish that the Western World had such a valuable auxiliary at its disposal.” He finds it definitely desirable. Why then take issue with the Russians?

The author contends that the Soviet scientists allow the “party line” to interfere with experimentation and the gathering of data. The Russian blantly ignores the data if they do not square with his doctrine. Huxley puts priority on the facts and maintains that theories must conform to them. The Russians emphasize the theories and only those facts are accepted which agree with the theories. Therein lies Huxley’s conflict with Lysenko, with Communism, and with the eastern views of heredity.

198
Then what does Huxley say of those who hold to the Biblical view? Huxley, a non-theist, has no fault to find with them, for “Plenty of good scientific work has been done by believers in a divine creation and by believers in scientific laws as something eternally given and merely waiting to be discovered.” However, Huxley dismisses religion as the unifying principle for the western world because “... religion is not only fragmented into many churches and sects but no longer provides a dominant appeal to the majority of people.” Thus Huxley seeks for a principle to unify all our living and thinking, not on the basis of right or wrong, but on the basis of what has a dominant appeal to the most people. And he finds that principle to be evolutionary humanism. He makes a strong plea for it.

Here is a book that is readable. I recommend it to those who wish to know more, not about genetics, but about the fate of science in Russia. It is also significant because in this book we hear the cry of modern man for integration. And in it we find what to modern man seems to be the only hope. That “hope” is held by a good many people today. It represents a philosophy of education that appeals to many in the field of science. It is an idea with which we must contend.

Calvin College

T. P. Dirkse

HOMER'S Iliad


The genius of Homer has been woven into the fabric of Western Civilization. For 3,000 years European authors have found in his writings a source of literary discipline, a model for the delicate art of prosody, and materials to nourish their own imagination. One does not review such a classic, but can only draw attention to features of a new translation or a new printing.

The story of Achilles is made available, then, in a most inexpensive yet sturdy edition of the Mentor Classics series. Rouse chooses to reproduce this epic in “plain English,” which he feels most closely approximates the Greek equivalent to what Homer’s audience heard at their banquets. He feels that the best way to convey the grand, rhetorical style of the original Greek to the modern reader is to express it with that natural simplicity and directness which make for true eloquence. Colloquial translations of The Iliad have also appeared; but Rouse’s translation is heightened sufficiently to suggest the richness of the original, and is therefore more satisfactory.

The Odyssey is also available in this series. These works possess the perennial fascination of the literary narrative. An imaginative genius is here at work. A vision of reality which touches the life of men at critical situations is embodied in them, and a sympathetic reading will provide a genuine aesthetic experience. The Iliad and The Odyssey may be the type of work that Calvin had in mind when he wrote in his Commentary on Titus, dealing with Chapter 1:12:

“They are supertitious who dare not borrow anything from profane writers. For since all truth is from God, if anything has been aply or truly said by those who have not piety, it ought not to be repudiated, for it came from God. Since, then, all things are of God, why is it not right to refer to His glory whatever can be properly applied to that end?”

If these books are not available locally, they can be procured by writing directly to the publishers.

Steve J. Vander Weele

THE CHALLENGE OF LABOR


This is not an objective book. It is a frank exposition and defense of British Socialism and in particular of the British Labor Party. The author is a leader of the New Fabian Research Bureau, an institution which was largely responsible for developing and codifying the socialist policy of the British Labour Party.

The reader of this little book cannot help but feel the dynamic force of history. One becomes aware of the social and economic circumstances which made possible the remarkable growth of socialism. At the same time one sees the great political weaknesses of the old parties and how the socialists capitalized on those weaknesses to gain political strength.

Any person who wants to know what practical socialism means should read this book. It is extremely educational, not only as to theoretical ideology, but even more as to practical politics, such as “stealing the opposition’s thunder,” taking advantage of opportunities, the necessity for thorough preparation and practical adaptation. At once it becomes clear that general pronouncements concerning such matters as “free enterprise” or “liberty” or “private initiative” do not have much political influence when opposed by practical, fact accomplished, measures based on a definite socialist political philosophy. For example, the British system of national health insurance based on the socialist principle of general welfare means more to the majority of citizens than any opposition contentions concerning “private enterprise.” There are two ways for the opposition to solve this problem; the one is to call social services by the government wrong, and that would be of course political suicide; the other way is to hold that different methods should be developed which do not require an invitation for totalitarianism.

To Americans this book is a challenge. We still have a capitalist system. If we want to survive a future depression we must develop practical, adequate and efficient alternatives to the socialistic solution. To Christians this book offers the challenge of producing, not theoretical speculation, but a practical synthesis of Christian ethics and human needs. And the answer must come now, because ten years hence it probably will be too late.

Willow Run
Paul C. Van Lankhuizen

JESUS' TRIAL


This book evokes interest because of the subject it treats and on account of the profession of the author. The author is reported to have had a wide experience in court matters, having served as Counsel at the Central Criminal Court, the London Sessions, and on the South-Eastern Circuit. Accordingly, he is a well-known English magistrate, and a member of the Middle Temple.

As a backdrop the author depicts the political and religious configuration of the life and times of Jesus and then proceeds to discuss the Hebrew and Roman trials of our Lord. Marshalling the facts he demonstrates that both trials and verdicts were palpably illegal and unjust. The book concludes with an account of the destruction of Jerusalem which the author relates causally to the preceding violations of justice and adds a brief appendix on the recent revival of the question of a re-trial of the case of Jesus of Nazareth.

The book has limited value and is sure to disappoint those who have pitched their expectations at a point worthy of the subject considered. This reviewer cannot share the author's evaluation of Judas Iscariot when he declares that Jesus surely included Judas in his petition when he prayed: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Jesus pronounced a justifiable malediction on the head of Judas, called him a devil, declared that it would have been better had Judas never been born, and inspired Peter by his Spirit to declare that Judas went to his own place, the place of perdition. One hardly looks for such subjective sentimentalism in a professively objective legal arraignment.

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * APRIL, 1950 199
Even in the face of the fact that the author is not a professional theologian, one might have expected an inquiry into the possibility of an appeal by Jesus to a higher court. Again, one might reasonably expect a wrestling with the legal and ethical aspect of Christ's submissive acquiescence in an illegal trial and an unjust verdict. The question might well have been asked how our Lord could escape the charge of co-responsibility for the injustice perpetuated upon him in the face of his demonstrated ability to overpower his captors and tormentors; and in posing the question, an excellent opportunity would have been given to delve into the deeper meaning of righteousness and the value of law. To say that this would be outside the purview of the writer is impertinent since the choice of a subject imposes rigid obligations on the chooser which in good conscience he may not avoid.

Most of the matter presented in this professedly specialized investigation has been amply treated by standard commentaries which reveal a deeper appreciation of the larger aspects of the tremendous subject. Even to entertain the possibility of a modern re-trial without condemning outright the effort discloses that the real issue has not been faced. The book adds very little and omits very much.

Calvin College  
John Weidernaar

**THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY TODAY**

**Pastoral Leadership, by Andrew W. Blackwood. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949. 272 pages. $3.00.**

The gospel ministry is a full-time task, arduous and difficult in our day, and therefore demanding the very best of those who enter it. Not only must the minister be a teacher and a shepherd; a good deal of his time will be taken up with administrative duties, in order that all things may be done decently in the church of God. His is a position of significant leadership in the community as well as in the church, and much of success or failure depends on his ability to cope with the countless round of problems which he must constantly face.

Dr. Blackwood of Princeton has again dipped into his rich store of experiences and contacts to write this book which is filled to the brim with suggestions for the inexperienced and sometimes bewildered minister.

The author stresses the necessity of high ideals, steady work and a definite plan. He discusses first of all the pastor as an executive, so that the machinery of the church may be well-oiled and smooth-running. Thereafter he considers the pastor as organizer, so that the facilities of the church may be made available for the largest number in the most effective way.

Although there is much here both interesting and helpful when facing certain practical problems, the basic treatment of the material is not satisfactory from a Biblical point of view. There is little if anything to indicate the true nature of the church of Christ and her spiritual mission in the world. Any minister with a liberal view of the church can read the book without taking the slightest offence. Although not denying the necessity of divine grace for the growth and welfare of the church, this is almost altogether obscured by the emphasis on ecclesiastical machinery. What is needed today is a book dealing with these practical matters on a soundly Scriptural basis.

**How To Increase Church Membership and Attendance, by Weldon Crossland. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949. 100 pages. $1.75.**

Here is a book similar to that of Dr. Blackwood. The same humanistic, this-worldly emphasis on the nature of the kingdom of heaven pervades the discussion. We need only call attention to what is said about Christ's ability and readiness to help those who turn to Him. (p. 34.) The emphasis is placed almost exclusively on the external machinery, such as rallies, bulletins, topical preaching, surveys, etc.

What the church of today needs, and needs desperately, is a strong dose of good old-fashioned gospel preaching. The Word must again speak from the pulpits to the people. As long as the note of divine authority and urgency is missing in the preaching, all the rallies and surveys will be of no avail.

We would not minimize the necessity of careful planning, accurate records, etc. The best is none too good for the cause of our Lord and Savior. And to help in these matters this book will serve a good purpose. However, all these externals should be the result of our devotion to Him, and our trust for the future of the church should be entirely placed in Christ and His Spirit to His church.


If anyone is interested in knowing what Protestant leaders are thinking about the ministry and its requisites today, here is the book to read. The editor presents this symposium of the various aspects of the minister's life and work in these trying times. Among many others such well-known leaders as Henry Sloane Coffin, Ralph W. Sockman, Joseph R. Sizoo, and D. Elton Trueblood discuss the several aspects of the ministerial calling. Differences of opinion as to the nature and purpose of this office are obvious to even the most casual reader. Much of what is written will prove helpful and stimulating to those who find themselves wrestling with the problems inherent in this calling. Although the reader may feel compelled to differ radically with the thrust of several of the contributions, the reading of this book will undoubtedly prove rewarding especially to those who are in the ministry of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter Y. De Jong.