Volume XVI, No. V
December, 1950

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The Advent Gospel in Isaiah

The court chaplain Isaiah, aptly called “prince of prophets” and “Old Testament evangelist without a peer,” living as he did some eight centuries before the dawn of the Christian era, trained his prophetic telescope on the future and saw, not with rare acumen but with divine illumination, not in mere silhouette but in clear perspective, the Promised Redeemer of mankind. Transposed as he was over the intervening centuries into the Advent era, he was able to discern clearly various aspects of the Redeemer’s personality.

A Universal Saviour

The Coming Christ was strikingly unique in that He was lifted out of the claims and confines of a particular Jewish home and family. There was no home monopoly here. Says Isaiah, “Unto US a child is born, unto US a son is given.” Other children would have strong blood and racial attachments to their own parents and belong in a very real sense to them, but Jesus was radically different. Joseph and Mary would have the great honor of supervising his preparatory years and to them He would render filial obedience, due respect and honor; but nonetheless they would have no exclusive claim to Him. Jesus is to be a public figure. He belongs to the Jewish commonwealth. His birth is to be an event of national significance. Not only that. It is to assume a significance of international proportions. Isaiah stands in the Abrahamic tradition and to Abraham had come the promise that in him “all nations of the earth” were to be blessed. Isaiah knew too that a Tamar, a Rahab, and a Bathsheba, Gentiles all, had at various points entered the ancestral line. And so this coming Redeemer is not to be monopolized by any set of human parents. He is for both Jew and Gentile. He is in very truth the Saviour of the world.

A Kingly Saviour

The court preacher sees in Him also a Kingly Saviour. Royalty is casting its shadows before it. He who knew court life at first hand saw a regal personage of whom he said, “The government shall be upon His shoulders.” The Redeemer was to be born a king. That truth, too, was imbedded in sacred tradition. In confirming the covenant promises to Jacob at Bethel on the return from Paddan-aram God said to him that “a King would come out of his loins.” And Melchizedek, the “mystery man of Genesis,” was, in his capacity of priest-king, an adumbration of the Messiah that was to come. David too, the first theocratic king of Israel, pointed to the illustriously unparalleled climax to his own ruling line when he said, “God will set His holy king on Zion.” This coming Redeemer is to be not only Divine Saviour; He is likewise Divine Potentate. He wields a sceptre. To Mary at the Annunciation came the message, “The Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall rule over the house of Israel forever, and of His kingdom shall be no end.” With Him kingship is inseparable from Saviourhood. This Redeemer will grant salvation but He will also demand obedience. And so the Messianic gospel of which Isaiah is an Old Testament propagator comprises not only the good news of salvation but the accompanying challenge of “salvation unto service.” For the cradled child of Bethlehem is truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

A Wonderful Saviour

Isaiah sees in Him also a Wonderful Saviour. “His name shall be called Wonderful.” And that attribute of “wonderfulness” would distinguish him preeminently when He parted the heavens, entered the stream of history, and lived His life-span here upon earth. Amazingly wonderful in character and achievement. Exempted as He was from all the taint and blemish that “mankind is heir to”; free from all selfseeking and pettiness of soul; energetic in His solicitude for mankind; and animated by altruism so that He summarizes His life by saying, “I am come not to be ministered unto but to minister and give my life a ransom for many”—here is a nobility of character that the world had never seen and that never again would the world have the privilege to see. And wonderful, too, would be His attainment and achievement. Not only in the pedagogical realm where it was said of Him that “He spake as man never yet had spoken”; and not only in His miracle-crowned ministry by which He exhibited sovereignty over every sphere of life. It was primarily in the climactic act on Calvary that His wonderful essence and significance is evident—in that by His atoning death God’s righteous de-
mands are satisfied, God's great love is displayed, and the blackout of sin is lifted by the glorious light of redemption. But that transaction involves the Passion of the Saviour and so Isaiah sees in Him also a Suffering Saviour.

A Suffering Saviour

What a touching pathos breathes in that magnificent 53rd chapter of Isaiah, when the prophet sees with his mind's eye the Redeemer being "led as a lamb to the slaughter!" What a commentary on the terrible sinfulness of the human heart when the Holy One sent from heaven is reckoned "a man despised and rejected of men" and so becomes "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief!" What an eloquent picture of heroic endurance when "as a lamb before her shearsers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth!" And yet withal what measureless love, for "he was smitten of God and afflicted!" And what superlative achievement in the passion of the Redeemer! For God in the person of Christ was laying down His life for the sins of the world. The Greeks may sneer at it superciliously and call it sheer folly; the Jew may furrow his brow at it and call it a "stumbling block" that cannot be squared with Messianic kingship; but we by grace call it "the power of God unto salvation," for "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and with His stripes we are healed." Others may see in the cradle of Bethlehem a little child who stirs up sentimental feelings and generates good cheer until selfishness and hard-heartedness reassert themselves; we, by the grace of God that is shed abroad in our hearts, see in it Him "who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus

THE whole Christian world has had its attention focused on Mary, the virgin, due to the announcement of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary on November first. Therefore it is most natural for us to reveal the Biblical teaching concerning the blessed virgin Mary. I wish to evaluate this dogma, so lately defined, for those who are Bible believing Christians.

A dogma is "a truth directly proposed by the church for our belief as an article of divine revelation." Thus a dogma is a doctrine of the church defined by a church council or by the infallible Pope since the year 1870. All Christians of Roman Catholic persuasion must believe such a dogma under the penalty of sin, namely the sin of heresy.

The church has numerous dogmas such as: the doctrine that the Roman church has the authority to interpret the Scriptures upon which the Roman Catholic rule of faith is based; the Pope is infallible when speaking ex-cathedra or from the chair; there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; Christ is God as well as man; Christ redeemed the human race from original sin; man's present life will end in heaven, hell or purgatory; salvation is accomplished by cooperation with divine grace; grace is distributed by means of the sacraments; the virgin Mary was immaculately conceived; etc.

The dogma of the assumption of Mary "asserts that Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was God, was taken into heaven body and soul at the end of her life here below." The proclamation of this dogma was made in the midst of the greatest pageant put on by the church since the announcement of the dogma of papal infallibility in 1870. It climaxed the holy year with a great convocation in Rome and with the announcement made by Pope Pius XII in the Square of St. Peter.

The New Dogma Announced

The announcement of the dogma was the conclusion of the doctrinal development within the Roman Catholic Church. In 1854 the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary was defined. This teaches that Mary "in the first instance of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." The virgin Mary according to the church (the Roman Church) lived in perpetual virginity and holiness. To such thinking it was repulsive that she should have been subject to corruption in death. Logic therefore demanded that these presuppositions be concluded from the dogma of the assumption of Mary's body to heaven at death.

This dogma is declared on the authority of the church, the spokesman of which is the Pope speaking ex-cathedra, and thus infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rev. Lawrence J. Riley, Professor of moral theology in St. John's Seminary declares, "To-day the question is settled for Catholics by the infallible pronouncement of the Vicar of Christ. To-
day it is certainly established, that the doctrine of the assumption, however vaguely intimated in the written documents of divine revelation and however tardily inscribed in the written record of history, was part of the original deposit of faith. The threads of tradition, which the instruments of scientific research can trace only imperfectly, lead back none the less to divine revelation of the doctrine of the assumption. The church through its highest authority has spoken; there can be no further reason for doubt.

By philosophical presupposition, we Bible believers will grant the possibility of such an event. We believe in the supernatural, that is, that God created this universe, that he sustains it and that he can interfere with the natural laws of the universe when he pleases to do so. We grant the possibility of Mary's assumption but we do not accept this dogma as consistent with Biblical truth or historical evidence.

Biblical and historical evidence is totally lacking for either the dogma of the immaculate conception or the dogma of the assumption of Mary. If God deliberately obscured the latter life and the death of Mary when they occurred before the New Testament was written and long before the writings of St. John the beloved, it must have been in accordance with a divine purpose namely that of preventing too great an emphasis upon Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus. Thus also the Bible obscures the story of the boyhood of Jesus. We have only one brief glimpse into his boyhood when he was twelve years of age. Otherwise from his babyhood until his manhood the life of Jesus is covered with obscurity. In divine purpose this no doubt was done to keep us from overemphasizing the human aspect of our Redeemer. Had God through His apostles desired us to give Mary such a prominent place in our thinking she surely would have had it in the teachings of the New Testament.

There is a difference in the authority for faith for Biblical Christians and the authority for faith for Roman Catholic Christians. The Biblical Christian acknowledges the Scripture only as the authority in faith and morals. He believes that revelation was completed in the Bible. All that is necessary for salvation and morals is contained in the Bible. Further light may come from continued interpretation of the Scripture but new revelation going beyond the Scripture is not practiced in the divine economy. To open the door for continued revelation is to open the way to countless dangers of undesirable aberrations or even authoritarianism. What does a Biblical Christian believe concerning Mary?

**Mary and the Virgin Birth**

Mary was the special object of the grace of God. The angel Gabriel saluted her with the words, “Hail, thou who art highly favored.” Elisabeth the cousin of Mary saluted her with the words, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

These salutations belonged to Mary by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They did not originate with the angel nor with Elisabeth, but came from God. From them we may witness the position, the privilege and the nature of Mary.

The virgin Mary's position is revealed by the words, “Blessed art thou among women.” The blessed Virgin was a woman like unto other women. She was so born, so lived, so loved, so suffered and so died. There is no Biblical ground for walling her off from other women in her birth and in her death. She was a woman blessed by divine grace. She was sovereignly chosen by the unmerited favor of God as the mother of the Messiah. This had been the hope of all Jewish mothers from Eve through Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the mother of Samuel and Elisabeth the mother of John the Baptist. The virgin Mary was a woman to be honored by men because of this high favor of God. She is, therefore, the most elevated of all women in honor, art, song and position.

The privilege of the Virgin Mary is expressed by the words, “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” How little Elisabeth knew of what she was speaking. Thus the prophets of old searched diligently what manner of time the spirit which was in them did signify when it testified of the sufferings that are in Christ and of the glory that should follow. As the prophets knew not of what they prophesied neither did Elisabeth. The angel Gabriel described the coming of that blessed Son in these words, “Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the most high; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father . . . the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the most high; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father . . . the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most high shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” The secret of the origin of her son was locked in Mary's heart until after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The testimony to the blessedness of that child was borne by the people of his day such as Mary Magdalene, Matthew, the man of palsy, blind Bartimaeus and multitudes of others, by the succeeding generations who have called him blessed because of his teachings, his life, his death, his resurrection, his intercession and his personal help and by all believers because he is blessed of all men as the Saviour, the only mediator, the prophet, priest and king.

The nature of Mary was declared by the words, “That the mother of my Lord should come to me.”
The circumstances of the birth of Jesus were supernatural, a supernatural religion. Mary, to Joseph, to Zachariah, to the shepherds and mothers in Israel, concerning Nazareth and concerning fulfillment of prophesy as all the promises made to Abraham and his seed centered in her son Jesus Christ. Christians must always take care never to exalt Mary to the place of Jesus so that she substitutes for him. The Bible shows this in Mary's own words of Luke 1:46-49 where she acknowledges that Jesus was her Lord, her God and her Saviour. If Mary needed a Saviour she was not without sin. Hence according to the Bible she was neither immaculately conceived nor would her body be without corruption and hence assumed into heaven.

The virgin submitted unto the will of God as revealed by the angel. She asked the question, "How shall this be?" Asking questions is not incompatible with faith, but seeking proof or a sign is. Sincere interrogation may bring us closer to the will of God, but Mary received the approbation of God because of her faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but Mary said, "Be it unto me according to thy word." She acquiesced in the divine will though the annunciation was a puzzling mystery to her. In obedience to the angel's command she arose and went to the hill country of Judea to visit with her cousin.

Upon arriving at Elisabeth's home and receiving the salutation of her cousin, she voiced the wonderful words of the Magnificat, in which she expressed true worship of a soul recognizing that it is the recipient of divine grace, true understanding of divine salvation through the meeting of holiness and mercy, and true interpretation of prophesy as all the promises made to Abraham and his seed centered in her son Jesus Christ.

The entire narrative of Scripture declares the supernaturality of the birth of Jesus. Christianity is a supernatural religion. On this Biblical Christianity and sacerdotal Christianity stand together. The circumstances of the birth of Jesus were supernatural. There were the appearances of angels to Mary, to Joseph, to Zachariah, to the shepherds and to the holy family at Bethlehem. There was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning a virgin bearing a child, concerning the weeping of mothers in Israel, concerning Nazareth and concerning Bethlehem. There was the coming of the star and of the wise men.

All this was appropriate to the supernatural event which was involved, namely, the incarnation, that God became man and dwelt among us, that he assumed human flesh, that the pre-existent eternal One emptied himself, became man and identified himself with our nature. This presence of the supernatural imparts glory to his person, so that he is called wonderful, mighty God, everlasting Father; it imparts value to his death revealing God redeeming man from sin; and it imparts reality to his continued life in glory.

Mary and Jesus

The Scriptures present a plain picture of Mary's historical relationship to Jesus. A Biblical Christian can accept nothing which contradicts this relationship. Three such narratives are given to us in the gospels.

First we see Mary and Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee narrated in the second chapter of John. This was a prototype of what was later to happen in the world. The wine for the feast failed. The people came to Mary with their need and Mary went to Jesus saying to him, "They have no wine." Jesus responded to her, "Woman, what is that to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." Then Mary said to the servants, "Whatchsoever he shall say to you do ye." Immediately Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they carried it to the governor of the feast and it was the best wine of all.

In like manner the practice of approaching the Lord Jesus through Mary as an intercessor or a mediator has become common. The entire sacerdotal approach is that Mary is more sympathetic, more understanding and more responsive than the stern, austere Jesus. The attributes of God are transferred to Jesus and rightly so, but simultaneous with this the transcendental nature of God has been transferred to Jesus so that people feel that he is afar off and that they need a mediator. This has eventuated in praying to Mary and worshipping Mary in substitution for the Lord Jesus.

Such practice is a perversion of the essence of Christianity, for the Bible says that Christ is the only mediator between God and man. He is our high priest. He has the succor for all believers. The writer of Hebrews says "He took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of his people. For in that, wherein he himself had suffered and been tempted, he is able to succor also them that are tempted." (Douay version). Notable is it that
the only rebuke administered by Jesus to his precious mother came in this case. He said to her, "Woman, what is that to me and to thee?"

The second place stating that relationship between Mary and Jesus in the gospel narrative is given in Matthew 12:46-50. Here the virgin Mary and "his brethren" attempted to intervene in what seemed to be his mad course of going on toward certain catastrophe and death. The Scripture says, "As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak unto him." The fact was announced to Jesus and he answered saying, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

Here Jesus announced that the spiritual family transcends all earthly relationship. Those who do the will of God are closer to him than his physical mother. This is the answer to undue emphasis placed upon Mary's intercession and it comes from the lips of our Lord. The humblest saint that does the will of God is on an equality with Mary in his power of intercession with God. Christians are a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests and they have access directly to God through the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ without need of coming to any other mediator.

The last gospel narrative of Mary's relationship to Jesus describes her at the cross of our Lord. Through the years she had pondered in her heart the events and the announcements that had concerned the birth of her son and also the teachings and actions of Jesus in the interim. She had come to a real faith in her own son. Mary's pure heart had believed on God's promise and in her own son as the God-Man and the Savior given to men through a virgin birth. Now as Mary stood at the cross Simeon's words, "A sword shall pierce through thy heart also" were fulfilled as in sympathetic suffering she was identified with him as he made atonement for the sins of men. It was here that our Lord spoke to John saying, "Behold thy mother" and from that hour the disciple took her to be his own.

Mary and the Church

The virgin Mary's position with John the beloved was established from that event on the cross. He cared for her as he would have cared for his own mother. Mary's other children had not believed on Jesus before his death. John specifically wrote in his gospel, "For neither did his brethren believe in him," John 7:5. Hence her committal to John by the commandment of the Lord Jesus. James the brother of the Lord did believe after the resurrection, but at this time there were no other believers in his family.

The New Testament describes the place which Mary took with other believers in prayer awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost. There is no record that the Lord appeared to his own mother except as she may have been with the other disciples when he made his eleven appearances after his resurrection. No distinction is accorded to her except that her presence is mentioned in this upper room as the disciples continued in prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no intimation that she did not need and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit along with the other disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From that moment on, the prominence of Mary in New Testament history is obscured. The entire New Testament was written after those events. Mary's death occurred before at least most of the New Testament was written. Why did not the beloved John record her later life, her death, and also her assumption, if her body was carried to heaven as we are now told? The conclusion is that God wanted her kept obscured lest men should elevate her as they are doing to-day, making her to substitute for the Lord Jesus as the mediator between God and man.

Our conclusion is that Mary is to be honored, revered, elevated among women as the chosen vessel to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the blessed virgin does not save, for she herself needed a Savior. Nor is she the mother of all Christians as a second Eve. Let us give the blessed virgin Mary all the glory and honor and esteem she deserves according to the Bible, but let us take care lest we do more and fall into the error of heathen cults which all had women prominent in their liturgy. With Mary we declare, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

We Wish You a Christmas with Christ in It, and a New Year in God's Favor

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * DECEMBER, 1950
HOWEVER much value we may attribute to the creeds and to the works of systematic theology, and for that matter to all commentaries on the Word, all together they have but a serving task and aim, they are all subordinate to the Word itself. The Word of God, the Scriptures as written and preserved for us in the Holy Bible is solely, uniquely, alone and wholly, the norm, the rule, guide, foundation, source and final judge in all matters of faith's expression. A creed or a systematic theology may be compared to a map by which the traveller is directed; it enables him to find his bearings; it assists the learner to find his way through the Scriptures; it promotes Bible study; lends coherence and proportion to the various elements of the total structure of the Christian's faith. These fallible productions of men and of the church of the living God, even though we have the promise of the guidance of the Spirit into all truth, can never, however, be the ultimate standard, nor infallible criterion for man's judgments. That place belongs uniquely and solely to the Word of God, the Scriptures.

How clearly the great Reformer, John Calvin, understood this and how clearly he articulated it. Listen to his words in the preface of his Institutes. Said he, “Now, my design in this work has been to prepare and qualify students of theology for the reading of the divine word, that they may have an easy introduction to it, and be enabled to proceed in it without any obstruction. For I think I have given such a comprehensive summary, and orderly arrangement of all the branches of religion, that, with proper attention, no person will find any difficulty in determining what ought to be the principal objects of his research in the Scripture, and to what end he ought to refer any thing it contains.” That every prophecy be framed “according to the analogy of faith,” Calvin claims that Paul has fixed an “invariable standard by which all interpretation of Scripture ought to be tried.” Calvin shatters the criticism levelled at him that his views were innovations. He does this by appealing to the fathers, whose writings he alleges “contain many wise and excellent things.” At the same time and in the same breath he warns against a slavish dependence on the writings of men, however venerable and scholarly they be. Says he, “But while we make use of their writings, we always remember that all things are ours, to serve us, not to have dominion over us, and that we are Christ's alone, and owe him universal obedience.” He warns over and again in his writings against arid disputations and frigid speculations. His works having abiding value, they continue to vibrate with life just because he passionately stood committed to the principle of the sola scriptura, tota scriptura, which could but issue into a presentation of the sola fide, sola gratia gospel.

That the Scriptures are the only source, foundation and rule of our faith is a principle to which those of Reformed persuasion have ever held. God alone can give sufficient and adequate witness to himself and to his will. Whatever knowledge we have of God we are indebted to revelation. God has revealed himself in two books but due to the darkening of man's mind by sin, we can only apprehend properly the revelation in nature when we are aided by his special revelation as deposited in the Holy Scriptures. The content of our faith is not derived from speculative thinking; it is not what we think, suppose, surmise or wish were true. No, faith is a certain knowledge; it is a conviction based on a testimony that God has infallibly given. This knowledge is of a wholly unique and singular kind. The Holy Spirit originates this faith, increases it by degrees. Were man not obstructed by the blindness and perverseness of sin, mere demonstration of the divine Word would be sufficient for the production of faith. But such is our dulness that we can never, by ourselves, discern the light of it. For that reason nothing is effected by the word without the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Faith, declares Calvin, is a singular gift of God in two respects; both, as the mind is enlightened to understand the truth of God, and as the heart is established in it. That the Bible has this sole, unique, singular authority is a persuasion wrought by the Holy Spirit; the creditation of this Word can only be secured by the secret testimony of the Holy Spirit himself. Professor Murray has pointedly remarked that “The ground of faith emphatically is not our ability to demonstrate all the teaching of the Bible to be self-consistent and true. This is just saying that rational demonstration is not the ground of faith... The nature of faith is acceptance on the basis of testimony, and the ground of faith is therefore the testimony or evidence.” Nor ought we to

* This concludes an article begun under the same title in last month's issue.—EDITOR.
stumble in this faith of accepting the Word as written, as infallible information and as naked truth, even though there are seeming discrepancies and unresolved difficulties. To quote Murray once more, "The questions are often perplexing. But they are more often the questions of adoring wonder rather than the questions of painful perplexity." Calvin warns in no uncertain terms, when he declares, what can be regarded as greater conceit than to raise one word against the authority of the Word of God? There is hardly a greater evil, says he, than to be drunken with curiosity; we ought to guard against it as against a fatal pestilence; the vain desire to become wise above that which is written is a devilish conceit, leading us into a labyrinth from which there is no exit.

As a creedal church we have clearly articulated the fact that the Word, and the Word alone, is the sole source and foundation for all the material content of our faith. We affirm in article 4 of our Confession: We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely the Old and the New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. In article 5 we declare: We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they carry the evidence thereof in themselves. And article 7 states even more explicitly that these Scriptures are sufficient as the only rule of our faith.

Granted that all this is most explicitly stated, fact is, this position has been and is now fiercely assailed and challenged. There is every reason for bringing up the question afresh. The question relative to the Word of God as written, its infallibility, inspiration, authority, is the burning question today. To compromise, yield one iota, to make the slightest reservation as to our position, would signify removing the pivotal hinge, the keystone of the arch. It would constitute severing the spinal cord, removing the vertebral column of the whole structure of our faith. So important indeed, is our position on this score that it might well be called the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae. A scholarship not committed to that position, the Higher Critics, the Liberals and Modernists, have attacked this fortress with every weapon which the fertile mind of man could devise. At first they removed a stone here and there; then by a more consistent application of the principles of evolution and Hegelian idealism to history, larger sections of the wall fell. A German scholar of the History of Dogma claims that the wall of the verbal, plenary inspiration theory of the Bible, that is that the Bible in all of its parts is infallible, authoritative and normative for man, is now completely broken down; that it is virtually leveled to the ground, so that it is even futile to hope for its repair. He contends that no scholar of name now contends for it; seminaries no longer teach it; in orthodox circles it is abandoned. This is a blunt, but far more accurate appraisal of the situation, than we should like to admit.

Our position that the Word of God as written is the sole source, foundation and rule for our theology must meet a more subtle foe today, namely the Barthian theology. This defection is the more subtle for it employs our terminology and was, in very fact, a reaction against the modern, subjectivistic theology that had reached its zenith a little more than two decades ago. Subtle the more for the Barthians are ever talking about the Word of God, the necessity of an active revelation, the absolute necessity that God reveal himself to man if God is to be known at all. So excessive is their emphasis on the Word of God, that Barth even disallows, repudiates the revelation of God in nature.

The greatest sin of Protestantism, according to the Barthians, is that it has identified the Word of God with the Bible, and thus it has become an object that man can manipulate. The Barthian operates with a speculative philosophical view of revelation and not one that is Scriptural. The Word of God as we have it deposited in the Bible is only a witness to the Word of God, the "vessel or vehicle of the Word of God to us." It is not actually what God said, but rather a record of what the prophets and apostles thought God said. Said Brunner, "He who identifies the letters and words of the Scriptures with the Word of God has never truly understood the Word of God; he does not know what constitutes revelation." Indeed Barth alleges that the Reformed view of Scripture suffers from docetism, since it makes the human authors infallible agents of the Holy Spirit. Fact is, claims Barth, they were only men, with all our human limitations. They did not know the difference between history, legend and myth. Even from a religious and moral viewpoint the Bible is assailable. The writers used the language and concepts of their day and were limited by them. The apostles and prophets were but fallible men, and were that, too, as they witnessed of God's revelation. They could err in every word and did err in every word.

The only real, primary, or original revelation is Jesus Christ. The high value of the Scripture as we have it in our Bible, according to Barth, is that it is the place where the miracle of the Word of God is likely to happen. As I listen to its proclamation, suddenly at the existential moment, the moment of decision and crisis, of the divine human encounter, Jesus Christ may speak to me. That moment is the moment of divine revelation, the
Word of God has come to me. Revelation is then conceived of as always and only active, and the Word of God is God in action. This concept is even extended to faith, so that faith never becomes a possession of man, that whereby I continue to apprehend and believe that this written document of the Scriptures is the Word of God. Faith only operates in the moment of divine-human encounter. After that moment of decision is passed the Word of God may again escape me. Revelation as deposited in the Scriptures is hereby definitely and emphatically denied; revelation does not exist in a historical datum; it never has “objective existence apart from the Speaker,” God. The Bible, as we have it, is not authoritative “antecedently and objectively” and therefore the Barthian never says that the Bible, as we possess it, is the Word of God, the source, foundation and rule for theology. The Bible, as we have it written, does not have binding and ruling authority by reason of what it is “objectively and inherently.”

That this view of the Barthians is far removed from the historic Protestant position should be obvious to all. And that their view of the Word of God offers a very uncertain foundation on which to build a theology ought to be equally apparent. Thankful indeed ought we be that the Barthians have again put emphasis on the Word of God. Thankful, too, that this movement is a strong reaction against the Modernism which had become so prevalent. Only sadly, it must be affirmed, that it is not a complete return, not a complete antithesis to the very modernism and subjectivistic theology against which it reacted. For in actual fact, Barthianism has not escaped the leaven of subjectivism and their theology is to that extent marred if not vitiated by that blemish.

What a different atmosphere we breathe when we read Calvin’s Institutes concerning his views of the Scripture. Said he, “When it (the Bible) is admitted to be a declaration of the word of God, no man can be so deplorably presumptuous . . . as to dare to derogate from the credit due to the speaker. But since we are not favored with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God, himself.” We cannot, to be sure, establish the truth of the authority and divinity of the Scriptures by rational argument. This conviction is wrought by “the testimony of the Spirit which is superior to all reason. For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely entrusted to them. . . . Let it be considered then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason, but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit.”

It would moreover appear that our very creed is calculated to meet this defection of the Barthians relative to their view of the Word of God. In article 3 of our confession we affirm: We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit, as the apostle Peter says. And that afterwards God, from a special care which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and he himself wrote with his own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

It is sadly true that this our position that the Scripture as written is the sole source, foundation and rule for our theology has been abandoned by many Protestants, and that many seminaries do not teach consistent with this position. We at our Seminary claim to be at least one exception. It is my personal privilege to labor with colleagues who one and all are wholeheartedly and without reservation committed to this fundamental position, that the Scripture alone, the Scripture in its totality, is the sole source of doctrine and the touchstone of truth. Gentlemen, my brethren the student body, it will be our conscious aim to direct you to this pure fountain of truth. Read it, ponder it, study it, drink daily from its crystalline waters! May we as instructors, by the Spirit’s enabling, with sincerity and enthusiasm, generate in your hearts a crusading conviction for this foundation truth, that the Scripture is the sole source, foundation and rule of our theology; and may by God’s grace this Seminary ever remain loyal, without the slightest deviation or compromise, to this position.
JOHN CALVIN defined religion as consisting in faith coupled with a serious fear of God and expressing itself in legitimate worship. Kolfhaus is saying that for Calvin, Christian faith means Christian activity, that the end of Divine election, of exposition and teaching of the Word is pious and holy living.* In his edition of *Instruction in Faith*, Fuhrmann writes: “The unflinching intention of Farel and Calvin, however, was to form again New Testament Christianity in Geneva, to restate it as Faith, to re-create it as Life, and to re-establish it as Church.”

This current recognition is not out of line with the great spokesmen of Calvinism. Kuyper attributes to Calvin a world and life view, an ethics and a Church order as well as a doctrine, and Warfield calls Calvin the creator of the evangelical ethic. But perhaps it is as well to remind ourselves of these broader interests when we try to organize Calvinism under an architectonic thought principle or two.

Lecerf gives the subjective principle of the Reformed Dogmatics as faith rather than reason. For him the knowledge of God is the revelation of the infinite, holy and incomprehensible God to finite, sinful creatures. Accordingly, Calvin’s system is “a synthesis of antithetical propositions” given in God’s Word. It is a synthesis of propositions not comprehensively known, so that our knowledge of God is more of certainty than of comprehension (*Etudes Calvinistes*). In similar fashion, for W. A. Hauch, Calvin is not so much the systematic thinker as he is the Reformer of strong faith, whose faith carries in itself the power to bear even the logical tensions of apparent contradictions without thereby breaking (*Vorsehung und Freiheit nach Calvin*, p. 39). In his study of Calvin’s *Doctrine of Man*, Professor T. F. Torrance of New College likewise finds unresolved tensions.

Without then essaying the difficult task of saying what is the organizing principle of Calvinism may we not go to Calvin and find some of the great emphases which he magnified for faith, for life and for worship? Without endeavoring to be exhaustive or exhausting, the writer would like to suggest a few.

First, the end of faith, life and worship is the glory of God, that is, *sola Dea gloria*.

Secondly, the motive power which incites to this end is the revelation of the goodness and grace of God in Christ Jesus. The mercy of God in Christ is the logic of the true religion, or, *sola gratia*.

Thirdly, the moving strength for faith, for godly living, and for worship is the power of the Holy Spirit. Human activism depends on Divine activism.

Fourthly, the fellowship of faith, life, and worship is the Church, the body of Christ.

Fifthly, the characteristic attitude of this faith, life and worship is self-denial.

Sixthly, the measure thereof is the Word of God, with particular reference to the law of God.

The first two of these will be found signally emphasized by Calvin in the Dedication of the *Institutes*, as the analogy of faith by which all Scripture is to be interpreted. They as well form the first two chapters in the Geneva Catechism. In the twelfth and thirteenth answers in this Catechism, Calvin tells us that everyone of us must be fully assured in his conscience that he is beloved of God, and that He will be both his Father and Saviour. This assurance comes from God’s own Word wherein He utters unto us His mercy in Christ and assures us of His love towards us.

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* Kolfhaus, *Vom christlichen Leben nach J. Calvin*, citing Calvin’s Commentaries on I Cor. 14:28; II Petr. 1:10; I Thess. 4:2; I Tim. 5:7.
The Republic has again weathered its elections. The party of the majority is apprehensive; the party of the minority looks with hope to 1952. The first or basic issues of the national elections should probably have been foreign policy and the war in Asia. But these matters were not seriously debated in the open. Instead, the issue in the minds of the unthinking elector was the matter of “good times” and “prosperity.” The masses of the American people continue to feel indebted to the Democratic Party for its social legislation, and in spite of alleged poor housekeeping within the administration these same people are hesitating about transferring their votes and loyalty to the opposition.

Deeper Issues

Below “free and easy money” was the problem of federal fiscal policies and the direction in which they are taking us. The party still in power argues that nothing is established by contrasting our present national debt and budgets with those of the past. They would argue that population growth, two catastrophic wars, the crises which are a product of the industrial revolution in this country, and rise in price levels—all these explain budget and debt. The opposition say that in spite of these factors, and maybe because of them, all fiscal prudence has been thrown to the winds.

A still deeper issue was the survival of the two party system. Those who are inclined to pessimism feel that the Republican party must have its innings sometime soon if it is to survive as a virile national organization—either that or the party must be taken over by new and stronger leadership. Actually there is no danger on this score of late as there possibly was in 1948. Nevertheless, the point is still made that if this country moves more rapidly into social legislation schemes and public benefit programs, the personnel that must be appointed to staff and administer the necessary bureaus will run to such figures that the party in power can almost perpetuate itself through the votes of such civil servants.

Majoritarianism

Still deeper among the issues of the recent elections was the problem of democracy itself. Democracy cannot be pure and direct in any large community. Therefore we set up a scheme of government which is known as a republic, in which representatives act for the voters. Both the representatives and the electors settle their differences by majority vote. Theoretically this means that a fraction of the electorate, larger or smaller, remains dissatisfied and imperfectly represented. Their spokesmen are not the men of their choice. This becomes a serious problem when differences are keen and also when the electorate is quite evenly divided. At such times the minority becomes critical of majoritarian rule.

The answer to this is that as long as a nation is reasonably well educated, and fairly mature politically, and at least superficially committed to a Christian conception of man and government—that such government is about as valid as can be hoped for in this life and world. But, too, most of us would say that if these prerequisites do not prevail, and a people becomes secular, selfish, grasping, and class conscious, then republicanism (indirect democracy) will have to come in for rethinking, revision, and maybe partial repudiation. We cannot have a democratic scheme that teeters on the edge of a drop-off into ochlocracy.

The Background

This large problem has its roots in the Renaissance with its call to individualism. Also the Reformation taught individualism, but in the large context of responsibility to God and to the neighbor. But gradually in the wake of the Renaissance and of Protestantism came the Industrial Revolution, and with the latter came the breakdown in goodwill and understanding between social classes. Today the man who was a serf casts a ballot which has the same weight as that of his employer. Republican institutions are being thus put to a crucial test. Common people are the most numerous people in the typical modern state, and the industrial workers constitute probably the largest fraction in our American electorate. It is these people who are in a fair way to capture their governments. Will they act in reference to the well-being of the whole community? Or will they want to legislate their economies into a welter of economically unsound projects which will make long-range double-entry bookkeeping impossible.
Other classes of people have misused government and have done it consistently. No one would grant however that \textit{therefore} the industrial laborer and his union have a warrant for doing the same thing now, if and when they can. Bad majoritarianism can be about as great an evil as absolute monarchy. Therefore we want strong political parties, and we want both parties to understand their responsibility first of all not to themselves but to the nation at large. Those in the electorate who are economically powerful must be taught by their party leaders that no country is healthy if it does not maintain purchasing power in the laboring classes by means of respectable wages and some forms of social insurance. And similarly the “less­favored” factions of our electorate must be made to see that not every social irritant can be remedied with social legislation. All in the community must bear their own burdens if the community is to be able to bear one another’s burdens. And individual freedom means the right of the individual to promote his own interests only when he is aware of his obligation to further “his neighbor’s profit wherever I can or may . . .” (Lord’s Day 42.) These concepts, freedom and obligation, must stand together within a Scriptural framework. Otherwise both are misunderstood by sinful and imperfect man.

**The American Way**

We do not have the impression that name-calling was exceptionally deplorable during the past election. There was at least one flagrant example, but one or even several examples are not basis enough for a generalization. We have had plenty of it in American history, and progressives have been about as guilty of it as conservatives. We can hardly expect political parties to be entirely charitable toward one another when each feels that the American way of life is safe only under its political command. It must be said, however, that labels are confusing and, what is worse, inflammable. They are used for their effect on the excitable, the prejudiced, and the un­educated. This whole business is best left to irresponsible politicians, and to the Communists, who can completely outwit their opponents in this kind of iniquity. Therefore the neo-liberals should cease using such terms as “reactionary,” “economic royalist,” “Fascist,” and similarly the genuine and sincere conservatives should disown and scorn the techniques of Mr. McCarthy.

**True Conservatism**

We Calvinists are the true conservatives in our electorate. We are all anxious and concerned about conserving all that is good in our system and way of life. No one stands to lose more than do we Calvinists if our government is overthrown. But a true conservative is not a person who necessarily opposes change. In fact he is willing and at times even eager to accept change if it means a larger degree of safety and stability for the economy and nation as a whole. Thus in the face of seething unrest in the 1930’s many of us welcomed unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and securities exchange controls. These sorts of solutions may not have been ideal but they were about all that was practicable at that time, and they should stand until something better is proposed. That legislation was conservative. There are going to be more crises which will call for changes or modifications on the periphery of our way of life. And when those crises occur, then the voter who insists on maintaining the precise \textit{status quo} is not a conservative at all. By default he is almost a companion to the individual who wants violence and complete overthrow.

The problem of what changes to endorse and what changes to block was something of an undercurrent in the past election, but neither party revealed itself very clearly. The Democrats were full of scorn for the Republicans, and the Republicans were exasperated with the Democrats—and this when there are elements in each party which practically endorse the general viewpoint of the opposite party! A big bit of the feeling was a matter of getting the “ins” out and the “outs” in. And so it happened that we elected a national legislature that is quite closely divided. We did not angrily expel, but neither did we in any sense enthusiastically endorse, the work of the Democracy. Voters were wary and chary.
EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The second annual meeting of the new Evangelical Theological Society organized at Cincinnati last year will be held this year in New York City during the Christmas holidays on Wednesday and Thursday, December 27 and 28, at Shelton College (National Bible Institute), located at 340 West 55th Street.

The tentative program is found below. The field of Theological Society is divided into four parts, in order to promote the interest of scholars who are working in specialized fields. Members are invited to participate in the discussions under the leadership of the men to whom definite parts have been assigned. Topics have been requested of these men in order that the discussions may be directed to some definite end, but the spontaneity of a free discussion will be preserved. Papers applying to the general subject listed on the program will be welcomed, but they should be brief. Members who have notified the Committee on Program and Arrangements will be given such opportunity to present a paper. There will be an assigned paper to open the discussion in each field, but there will be room for voluntary papers as well.

The Society will pass upon new members at this meeting. The Membership Committee, appointed at Cincinnati last year, consists of Professors R. Laird Harris (Faith), Kenneth S. Kantzer (Wheaton), R. B. Kuiper (Westminster). Chairman of the Committee on Program and Arrangements is Prof. Merrill C. Tenney (Wheaton). The other members: Prof. Frank T. Littorin (Gordon), Prof. W. Curry Mavis (Asbury). The Editorial Committee, which is expected to come with definite recommendations to the Society for publication plans consists of Prof. Burton L. Goddard (Gordon), Prof. Carl F. H. Henry (Fuller), Prof. J. R. Mantey (Northern Baptist), and Prof. Alexander Heidel. The Executive Committee is composed of the officers of the Society (Prof. Clarence Bouma (Calvin), President; Prof. Merrill C. Tenney (Wheaton), Vice-President; Prof. R. Laird Harris (Faith), Secretary; Prof. George A. Turner (Asbury), Treasurer; Prof. Burton L. Goddard (Gordon), Editor, together with the following four members at large: Prof. George T. Ludd (Fuller), Prof. Harold B. Kuhn (Asbury), Prof. Alva J. McClain (Grace), and Prof. Gordon H. Clark (Butler).

Accommodations of various types will be available. Shelton College can provide "barracks" accommodations for those who desire them. More comfortable rooms will be available at nearby hotels: Woodward Hotel, Park Sheraton Hotel, and Wellington Hotel. The meetings are restricted to a day and a half, in order that members may also participate in the meetings of other Biblical and Theological Societies meeting at this time in New York City.

The main theme of the program will be: The Authority of the Scriptures. The program follows.

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 27-28, 1950
Program Theme: The Authority of the Scriptures

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27
1:00 P. M. Call to Order: Dr. M. C. Tenney, Wheaton College, presiding
Devotional Service: Dr. Frank T. Littorin, Gordon College
Greetings: Dr. J. O. Buswell, Shelton College
1:30 P. M. Presidential Address, Dr. Clarence Bouma, Calvin Seminary

2:00 P. M. Business Session and Announcements
Report of Secretary
Report of Treasurer
Committee Reports
Appointments: Nominating Committee
3:00 P. M. First Period of Discussion
Panel Discussion on The Inspiration of the Scriptures
- Dr. K. S. Kantzer
- Dr. Harold Kuhn
- Dr. John Murray
Open Discussion: Implications for various fields
6:00 P. M. Fellowship Banquet: Dr. W. C. Mavis, Asbury Seminary, presiding
Devotional Address: "The Scriptures: The Seat of Evangelical Authority," Dr. Charles J. Woodbridge

Evening — Committee Meetings

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28
8:45 A. M. Devotional Service: Dr. J. B. Payne, Bob Jones University
9:00 A. M. Business Session
Reports of Committees
Election of Officers
10:00 A. M. The Interpretation of Scripture: Divisional Forums
- A. Old Testament — Dr. Allan MacRae
- B. New Testament — Dr. Ralph Earle
- C. Dogmatic and Historical Theology — Dr. Alva McClain
- D. Practical Theology
12:00 M. Lunch
2:00 P. M. Reports on Discussion of Fields
2:30 P. M. Presentation of New Projects
- B. Old Testament Archaeology — Dr. G. Douglas Young
- C. Recent Developments in Theology — Dr. Roger Nicole
- D. Practical Biblical Preaching and Teaching
4:00 P. M. Discussion of Program for next Biennial Period
Exchange of Suggestions for Work
Business
5:00 P. M. Prayer session and adjournment.

INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS

The Second General Committee of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students was held at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, England, September 2 to September 11, 1950.

The British Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions was host to the International Fellowship, entertaining delegates and visitors in Ridley Hall, one of the theological colleges attached to Cambridge University, which was founded in the last century by the great evangelical leader, the late Bishop G. Handley-Moule. Overflow observers and visitors were housed in Tyndale House, the Biblical research center of the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship, which is situated close to Ridley Hall. Members of the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship did yeoman service in attending to the physical arrangements and material needs of the conference.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of this General Committee Meeting was the spirit of unity and true fellowship in Christ between the national movements. Throughout the conference there was the feeling that the IFES had passed the stage of constitution making, and now was in reality a world fellowship of national Biblical student movements.

National differences, differences in ecclesiastical background and theological point of view, did not appear to be conscious
problems in the conference. The urgent call to world evangelism was constantly before the group, together with the pressing sense that 1950 is a moment of crisis in world history and that the time of opportunity might be short.

At these meetings the Swedish movement was welcomed as a member union and the Finnish movement was welcomed as an affiliate.

The feeling was expressed that the International Fellowship seems to be moving away from a highly centralized organization with responsibility for international action in the hand of a centralized international staff. In this connection the offices of Associate General Secretaries were not renewed for the ensuing three-year period, but rather various national movements assumed responsibility for unevangelized areas of the student work. The reasons were so that stronger national movements could aid weaker movements and could take the initiative for pioneer work in the unevangelized areas. In this respect it was felt that the function of the IFES would increasingly be one of counsel and co-ordination.

The dearth of satisfactory Christian literature in certain language groups for university students was fully discussed and a number of literature committees were set up for the purpose of translating and publishing needed books and pamphlets in French, Italian and German. The work of the IFES staff members, Dr. Hans Burki in Europe and Dr. T. Norton Sterrett in India, was commended and their appointments continued.

The question of Christian faith and political action was also discussed and the consensus was that National Evangelical Unions as such should refrain from political activity and propaganda and that today's pressing need was a world revival of Biblical Christianity.

The following officers were re-elected for the next three-year period: President, Prof. O. Hallesby of Norway; Chairman, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Great Britain; Vice-Chairman, Dr. René Pache of Switzerland; Treasurer, Mr. John Bolton, Sr., of the U.S.A.; Consulting Secretary, Dr. Douglas Johnson of Great Britain; General Secretary, Mr. C. Stacey Woods of the U.S.A.

The following countries are represented on the new Executive Committee: Australia—Dr. Paul White; Canada—Dr. Haakon Murray; Great Britain—Miss Meg Foote; The Netherlands—Dr. Jan Dengerink; New Zealand—Mr. Francis Foulkes; Norway—Rev. Sverre Magelsen; Switzerland—Dr. Homer Payne; the U.S.A.—Mr. Charles Troutman.

Short papers, followed by open discussion, were presented on the following subjects: Present Needs of the Student World; Evangelism—Do the Changing Universities Require Fresh Tactics? The Development of Activities for Christian Graduates; The Volunteer Needs of the Mission Fields; The Development of Christian Literature; The Value of Long Term Training Camps. The subjects of open Committee discussions included: Trends in the Ecumenical Movement; Trends in the Youth Movements; Trends in Christian Education; Trends in the Lutheran Churches; Trends in the Far East; and, Trends in the Calvinist Churches.

Special addresses were given by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Chairman of the IFES; the Rev. Alan Stubbs, Vice-Principal of Galashiels College, England; Dr. C. J. P. Van den Broek, Drama of the Reformed Church, U.S.A.; Dr. John Laitin, co-General Secretary of the Children's Special Service Mission of England; the Rev. Roy Hasegawa of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Japan; the Rev. Sverre Magelsen of the Norwegian Christian Student Movement; Dr. René Pache, Vice-Chairman of the IFES; Dr. Paul White, General Secretary of the IVF of Australia; Mr. Charles Troutman, Associate General Secretary of the I.V.F. in the U.S.A.; and Mr. David Adney gave a report of the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and of current conditions in Christian work in that land.

The IFES Executive Committee met at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England, from August 28 to September 2, 1950, at which time reports were received of the world-wide student ministry, and from these, recommendations were formulated which formed the basis of the General Committee action. The next meeting of the IFES Executive Committee will be in March, 1951, in England; the IFES General Committee will meet in 1958, but a location has not been chosen as yet.

DUTCH EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

Groningen,
October 1, 1950.

Dear Editor and Esteemed Readers:

This time I must speak to you about the matter of Dutch emigration, which is increasingly holding the attention of our people. As you know, in recent years many have left our native land, especially farmers, and their number is constantly increasing.

If you ask me what motive impels these people, it must be said that this is not first of all, nor chiefly, fear for the Russians. I am in a position to meet many prospective emigrants and to have conversations with them when they come to me for information. To be sure, among them there are some who have given up Europe and apparently wish to leave the sinking ship, as they put it themselves. But it must be remembered that this is a very small number, especially among Christians, who know that after all it is not Stalin who will ultimately determine their lot. Then why do these people leave their homeland and native country? Simply because there is no room nor future for the ever growing population. In many instances there is no land for the younger generation in an ever growing population. Also in other occupations and trades there still is a real unemployment, of which many fear that it will be greatly increased.

Now the immigration to Canada came largely from the rural districts and not so much from the cities. Of late, however, there has opened up a new field for immigrants, to which thousands are turning, viz., Australia and New Zealand. On this continent there seems to be employment for all kinds and trades and occupations. And so the attention is being drawn in this new direction rather than to America, whether North or South. With government help many of our unemployed in the large cities are now emigrating to Australia, and among these there are many Christian people, especially members of Reformed Churches.

In Australia these people meet with an entirely different situation than do the immigrants to Canada and the United States. In Canada the Christian Reformed Church has for many years carried on a fine piece of work for these immigrants, both in providing for them a church home and also in offering them the necessary social aid to get settled and adjusted in their new environment. But in Australia there is no such church which consists of people of Dutch antecedents (language and faith). The Dutch language is a foreign tongue to the Presbyterian Church in Australia, and this holds likewise for the smaller Free Presbyterian and Reformed Presbyterian group. This in itself is already a point of some significance for these immigrants. It makes the situation a much more difficult one, when their language is not used at all in the churches.

Also, the method of placement of these immigrants differs greatly from that pursued in Canada. They are not placed together in groups at places which in advance have been arranged for them by church leaders. In fact, they are scattered far and wide. They do not know or understand the people among whom they are placed, nor do they understand them. They have no churches in which they feel at home, nor do they find any Christian schools. The task to retain and develop the heritage of the fathers will be a difficult one. To be sure, there are also in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand by the grace of God many of His children and churches who strive to be faithful in maintaining purity of doctrine, the administration of the sacraments according to the ordinances of Christ, and faithful church discipline. But these are often not found in the areas in which our immigrants are placed. And how can con-

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * DECEMBER, 1950
tacts be established between such immigrant families and groups? These are some of the questions and difficulties that we must face.

The Reformed Churches, also the Hervormde Church, and, I believe, the Church known as the "Christelijke Gereformeerd" in our country, have each of them appointed a special commission ("Deputaten") for immigration to cope with these problems. But that is no solution. In fact, what is needed is ministers who are able to handle both the Dutch and the English language. Perhaps the Christian Reformed Church of America is willing to loan such ministers to us for this purpose. As you know we have a shortage of ministers. This matter is urgent. It will not do to postpone effective action for years, when the immigrants will be lost, having landed in churches that lack purity and soundness or possibly having been lost in worldliness and irreligion. How many of our Dutch people have not thus gone astray in the years when as yet the Christian Reformed Church had no missionaries for these immigrants in the field!

I could wish that we in Holland had a larger number of ministers and greater resources to make provision for this cause. Just imagine, the small Free Presbyterian Church of Australia has made an offer of payment of the salaries and half the traveling expenses of two of our ministers for this purpose. This is a splendid offer. Would it not be wonderful if also other Calvinistic churches throughout the world could aid this cause with their means and their man power. Would not this be a marvelous expression of Reformed ecumenicity? Our Immigration Commission (ecclesiastical) is at a loss with this situation. We are determined to do all we can to meet these problems and to do so thoroughly and promptly, but we feel need of making an appeal to all sister churches to aid us in this to the limit of their ability. Who will send some constructive suggestions? In the difficult problems of today we all feel more than ever how much we need one another. And I have only given you a little glimpse of some of our difficulties. Or should we rather call them our divinely appointed opportunities?

May I commend you to the Lord of the Church?

Yours with Christian greetings,

PIETER PRINS,
H. W. Meedagplein 2,
Groningen,
Netherlands.

SOUTH AFRICAN LETTER

University College,
Potchefstroom, S. Africa,

Dear Prof. Bouma:

I SHOULD begin this letter with a word of sincere thanks for your appreciative editorial in The Calvin Forum of Aug.-Sept., 1950. Your sincere congratulations to Potchefstroom on its becoming an independent university in the near future are very welcome, because this is an event of more than pure Potchefstroom concern. All our brethren over the whole globe should rejoice with us in our attaining independent status. Calvinistic universities are indeed rara aues. Are there any others except Amsterdam, yourself and us?

I may inform you now that our Minister of Education has appointed our day for March 17, 1951. On that day great things are going to take place over here in Potchefstroom. Since June of this year we have set about the necessary preparations for our independence festivities. Although university institutions in South Africa receive state aid, the state expects that every university should have a very large fund. The first step we took was to send our registrar into the field to collect such a fund. It might sound a small sum to rich America, but to us it is a very big amount. We are trying to get a sum of about £200,000 before March, 1951. Our registrar has been in the field now for some two months and I may report that he is making very good progress. Our supporters, who live over the whole Union of South Africa, are responding wonderfully. Even people who do not see eye to eye with us in matters of world view are cooperating freely to help us in arriving at our aim. I must say that all and sundry are contributing to our funds: Some because they are Calvinists, some because they are brethren in Christ, some because they appreciate our academic work.

I should like to correct one statement made by you in your editorial. Although the Potchefstroom institution for higher education developed from the Theological School of the "Gere­formeerdr kerk" of South Africa, the university and the theological institution are completely independent institutions. Our Theological School is an institution of our church, completely controlled and financed by our church. The University College is not controlled and neither completely financed by our Church. Our Church as the initial founder of the University institution has naturally a very strong interest in it and has been granted by our University Act a very strong representation on the Board of Control, while our Church gives a yearly, fairly large donation to the University, thereby gaining still further representation.

The future Council of the University of Potchefstroom will be constituted as follows. The Council by the way is invested with the government and executive authority of the University. It will consist of, (a) four persons appointed by the Governor-General of the Union as head of our State; (b) three persons selected privately by the donors and the Convocation of the University; (c) three persons appointed by the authorized agents of the original founders; (d) two persons appointed by the trustees, as long as the trustees contribute at least £1,500 per year to the funds of the University; (e) two members of the Senate of the University elected by the Senate; and (f) the Rector ex officio. Of the 15 members of the Council 5 will be appointed by our Church (c) and (d); 6 will be wholehearted supporters of our Christian principle, viz., (b), (e) and (f). The only members who might think otherwise are those appointed by the State, but our experience during the last 20 years has been that each successive government appoints only such persons as are sympathetic. In this way our new Act makes it possible for us to be assured as regards our future as a Christian institution.

The fact that our government appoints only such persons to our Council as are in sympathy with us answers another point raised by you in your leader. You state there: "We are not informed just how the provisions of this 'Conscience Clause' actually operated." I may state as a matter of fact that this Conscience Clause has not operated in South African education up to now. A similar clause has been inserted in our legislation for elementary and secondary education for more than fifty years, and during this whole period it has never been applied: no teacher has yet been affected, even in theory, by this clause. This is a rather curious position. Our schools are as a rule Christian in effect: every school day is opened by Bible reading, prayer and song; every day Bible history is taught as a subject of the school curriculum; nonChristians may, of course, absent themselves from these school periods: the only point in our school legislation is that no dogma or doctrine peculiar to any religious denomination or sect shall be taught in any public school. This "Conscience Clause" in our school legislation does not forbid Christian education on the broad Christian doctrines or dogmas, and all our teachers—I mean those of Christian conviction—have taught in all these years in accordance with the broad Christian principles of doctrine. In practice, we put the accent on the two words "peculiar" and "sect": the Christian Churches are not sects and teachers do not stress "peculiar doctrines or dogmas." This being so in South Africa our public elementary and secondary schools are in effect Christian schools.
But you may argue that the University "Conscience Clause" is something quite different, and I agree with you. And that is the reason why we at Potchefstroom have been up against this clause right from the start. Although we have been working for some 30 years under this clause, we have been teaching on Christian lines and have been appointing Christians on our teaching and administrative staff—and in all these years we have never been called to order. But the Clause stands, and although inactive up to now, it might at the most unexpected and importunate moment become active, as many a volcano does. The Clause has been inactive but never dead. We at Potchefstroom wanted it dead in so far as it concerns our own institution. And that is the main reason for our own Clause 31 (1)—this new clause replaces the old University "Conscience Clause" and guarantees that our institution will be an institution for Christian higher education and that our personnel will consist of convinced Christians.

Dear friend, this letter has exceeded a reasonable length—and still so much remains to tell you. The main event is the passing of General J. C. Smuts on Sept. 11—in a future letter I should like to return to this event. A second very important event is the latest declaration of Dr. D. F. Malan, our Prime Minister, on racial problems in South Africa. This matter must also be left over for a later letter.

With kind regards,
Sincerely yours,
J. CHR. COETZEE.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The three teacher training courses prepared by the NACS comprise 30 hours of teaching. Since the beginning of this calendar year these courses have been given in the following five localities and in the order presented: Boston, Mass.; Oakland, Cal.; Winona Lake, Ind.; Seattle, Wash.; Los Angeles, Calif. In each case local Christian colleges have given credit for work satisfactorily done. Those attending these courses are prospective Christian school (elementary and high school) teachers, professors of Christian colleges and Bible institutes, pastors, Christian school board members, and interested parents. The responses everywhere have been most encouraging. Last week we received a letter from one of our "A" students who had attended our course at Winona Lake. The close of this communication reads as follows:

"The current philosophy of education is fundamentally wrong because it is the outgrowth of a distorted psychology which fails to recognize the depraved and self-centered character of human nature, Prof. Fakkema's course never loses contact with the true Biblical psychology, and it therefore presents a Biblical philosophy of education which is theo-centric (God-centered) instead of anthropocentric (man-centered). The course is logically sound as well as educationally correct. Its purpose is not to deal with particular problems, but rather to establish a sound comprehensive viewpoint to which all these problems may be brought for their solution. This purpose the course achieves most admirably.

"I trust that the work which you represent will prosper under the hand of God and that I might have another opportunity to study with you in your field of teaching.

Yours in Christ,
[Name withheld],
Professor of Systematic Theology."

The Class at Winona

We have just completed giving the course—"The Philosophy of Christian School Teaching"—at Winona Lake School of Theology. In comparison with other classes, our Winona enrollment was unique. The students came from various parts of our country and Canada. The 33 members of the class represented at least two dozen different denominations—Baptist, Presbyterian, Monomie, Methodist, Free Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Holiness Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Assemblies of God, Brethren, Christian Missionary Alliance, Mission Covenant, etc. Compared with other classes the students were advanced in years, many of whom have seen Christian service for ten and more years. Besides ministers and teachers (of public and Christian schools), our class included instructors of philosophy, systematic theology, Bible courses, etc. In view of the institution served, our class consisted largely of men. A number of the students had two or more degrees. Because of the mature judgment represented in our Winona class, it is of interest to note the comments which have been received from the members of this class. We present herewith the following statements.

From a pastor we received the following:

"This course has helped me in understanding the real meaning of philosophy. I thought philosophy was a subject indulged in by mystics and hermits and dead scholars in their flight from reality. I have learned that it is the basic interpretation or the essential nature of things. "It has helped me in acquiring an over-all, all-embracing thought that doesn't supplant but rather interprets all subjects and things. It has given me a new appreciation of hundreds of verses in the Bible... It has lifted everything on a higher plane...

"It has transplanted the principles of Christian school teaching into my thinking and that has permeated every avenue of my life such as preaching, teaching, witnessing, living. It has taught me the true secret of humility. How could the reflection in the mirror become proud when all the original has to do is move away and the image is gone. So is the dependence upon God for all in life. "The cross of Christ has taken on a new holy glow as I see all of my life being drawn to that great magnet."—K.J.

A pastor for thirteen years (of the Reformed Church) writes:

"I believe this study to be basic to all other studies in the school curriculum and basic also to practical living. I know of no study that has contributed so much to me in so short a time as has this course in philosophy. It has interpreted Bible parables, Bible doctrine and related them to God and practical life in a way that even theology failed to do. I am greatly indebted to the Lord for making this course available to me.

"It has confirmed my conviction that born-again Christians who have been crucified with Christ add up the same in fundamental experience, regardless of denomination.

"We already have a private Christian high school in our town and in the light of this study I feel as evangelical Christians we ought also to have a Christian elementary school. The Christian school idea has captured me."—A.C.

An editor of a paper states:

"There is no field to which the Biblical philosophy which we have had before us does not apply. Each course of the curriculum needs the conditioning of this philosophy. Our study has demonstrated in a number of fields that are ordinarily considered to have no relation to religion that the subject matter literally comes to life when approached from the standpoint of the Creator-God relationship.

"Were I to return to teach in the week day classroom I am sure that there would be no neutral presentation of subject matter in any branch of study. It would have to be taught as of God, through God, and unto God. I would hold myself responsible as God's steward to do so."—L.R.

A teacher of a Bible College states:

"This course has shown to me that there is such a thing as real Christian philosophy which should be the very
THE IMITATION OF CHRIST


The problem of the authorship of De Imitatione Christi has provoked one of the most widespread literary and historical controversies which has ever been waged. Excluding the six thousand editions of the Imitation itself, the published materials on the question of authorship run into hundreds of volumes. Add to these the books which deal with the problem merely in passing and the number of references becomes legion. So voluminous was this treatment of the disputed authorship that bibliographies of Imitation of Christ materials have been published. A French author listing all the works in French dealing with the authorship of the Imitation from 1015, when the controversy first began, to 1877, when he made the compilation, was then able to cite 150 titles.

Up to the date of the appearance of the edition now being reviewed, the names of thirty-six writers have been advanced as authors of the Imitation of Christ. And now Albert Hyma, the great authority on the Devotio Moderna, adds a new name—Gerald Zerbolt of Zutphen. The chief contenders for the honor have been narrowed down to Thomas à Kempis who, although still defended by several able scholars, is now rather generally regarded as the compiler of the Imitatio rather than its author; Jean Gerson; John Gersen, Abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Vercell; and Geert Groote, the founder of the Devotio Moderna. The latter name was advanced in 1897 by John Malaise (Loyola University, San Francisco) who, adopting Professor J. Van Ginneken's (Nymegen University) findings, issued in English translation a book titled The Following of Christ: the Spiritual Diary of Gerard Groote.

Each new edition sporting the name of a new author is accompanied by a claim of achieving a definitive solution of the authorship problem. Professor Albert Hyma, in the latest edition of the Imitation of Christ, asserts that Gerald Zerbolt of Zutphen is the author of the original Imitation of Christ. In support of this claim Professor Hyma contends that the first book of the Imitation of Christ discovered in the Euten manuscript is the original work from which all later editions were fashioned. This original first book, states Hyma, was written by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen. The popularly recognized four-book Imitation of Christ with which the name Thomas à Kempis is associated is, according to Hyma, a copy and elaboration, far inferior in quality of style and content, however, to the Zerbolt original found in the Euten manuscript.

Professor Hyma does not disclose to the reader of this small volume his method of ascertaining its authorship. A discussion of his internal critical data will appear in a later publication—The Brotherhood of the Common Life, and in a forthcoming issue of the Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht. Should Professor Hyma's findings prove to be well substantiated, he will have made a most significant contribution to historical research.

A careful comparison of the text of the new edition with that of the usually accepted Thomas à Kempis version discloses some significant differences. Monasticism and anti-intellectualism are toned down considerably but not to the extent of Hyma's claim that "all the anti-intellectualism of Thomas à Kempis is missing for the first time." Ten verses in the first three chapters alone point to a definite anti-intellectual strain in the new version.

Calvin College.

RECENT DUTCH THEOLOGICAL WORKS

HET DOGMA DER KERK. Onder Redactie van Prof. G. C. Berkouwer en Dr. G. Toornvliet. Met Medewerking van Dr. A. De Bondt, Prof. Dr. G. Brilhoven Warth, Prof. Dr. K. Dijkstra, Dr. A. J. De Groot, Dr. K. G. Idema, Dr. H. A. L. Vander Linden, Dr. A. D. R. Polman, Dr. L. Pranama en Prof. H. N. Ridderbos. Publisher: Jan Huan, N.V., Groningen, 1949. 622 pages.

CHRISTUS DE HEILAND. Onder Redactie van Prof. Dr. F. W. Groshelle. Met Medewerking van Prof. Dr. G. Ch. Aaldering, Dr. A. G. Berkey Wolf, Prof. Dr. J. H. Babcock, Prof. Dr. G. Brilhoven Warth, Prof. Dr. K. Dijkstra, Dr. van Gemmen, Dr. N. J. Hommen, Roeland Konings, Dr. G. van Kuyk, Dr. S. O. Louie, Dr. R. Schoepgen, Dr. H. Smidde, Prof. Dr. J. Waterink. Publisher: J. H. Kol, Kampen, 1948. Price: Fl. 8.90.

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The treatment of this subject is throughout exegetical but cast in popular form. The work consists of two parts: the teaching of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament on the subject of the devil. In this study the personality of Satan is presupposed throughout. The various references to the personal power of evil in Scripture, as well as to evil forces and their relation to Satan, are taken up and given clear explanation. What in the Old Testament section is chiefly a study of terms, in the New Testament part of the book becomes in addition to a study of the terms used a discussion of a biblico-theological nature on the relation of Satan to Christ and on the place of Satan in New Testament eschatology. The temptation of Christ in the desert receives treatment. Also the binding of Satan and its relation to the consummation of the age. The author on this latter subject takes the position commonly adopted by the conservative Reformed theologians of the Netherlands. He is, of course, amillennial.

Clarence Bouma.

CHRISTIANITY AS COVENANTAL CONTINUITY


From the facile pen of the Head of the Department of Biblical History and Literature at the University of Sheffield in England comes this vividly reductive and intriguingly written set of self-designated “second thoughts on the origin of the Christian religion.” Tracing the roots of Christianity to the Call of Abraham which Dean Stanley called “the most important event in the history of mankind,” the author gives a sketchy yet eminently readable running account of the salient facts of Biblical history until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when Titus and his legions reduced the last suicidal defenders of the Holy City. Although Bruce makes a few concessions to the critics (as e.g. dating the Solomonic Psalm 17 to the exile) he takes pains to assure us that he is of conservative stamp and lineage. He insists that the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith and that the latter is no mere product of a “creative community.” He accepts without question the validity of the miracles of Jesus which prove his divinity in that he exhibited sovereignty over every sphere. He subscribes to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement and says, “The role which He (Jesus) was to fulfill was that of the Suffering Servant, obedient to God even unto death, and by His death the sin of many and achieving deliverance and victory for them” (p. 59) He hails the resurrection of Jesus as a glorious fact. Hence, even though the current reviewer questions his assumption of a late date for the Exodus (Rameses II, 1301-1264 being regarded as the Pharaoh of the oppression) and his judgment that “historical and archaeological evidence points to the conclusions that both Paul and Peter spent some time in Rome and died there,” he feels constrained to regard this little work as a very serviceable survey deserving of cordial reception.

John H. Bratt.

THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE IN POLITICS


And the presuppositions from which this book is written are those of the classical Christian tradition, as I understand it.” A book whose preface contains these words should immediately draw our attention. Few books in our time begin so pointedly.

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As the title indicates, this volume is an analysis of the "main currents in modern ethical thought". Historical events in recent years have made us more aware of the various schools of political thought and ideology. This is a textbook. It is designed to interpret the thought of the more important political philosophers of the modern period. Though "intended primarily for the student," this volume "will also be of interest to the general reader," the educated layman and the theologian alike.

The first chapters introduce us to the subject of political philosophy and draw the background for modern political thought. From Locke to the most recent forms of Fascism, the author makes a keen analysis of the content of each school of thought. Profuse quotations introduce the reader to the flabby style of the writer. The analysis is not one-sided; it is critical. The author applies the presuppositions of his position as stated in the preface and quoted above. There are pointed statements such as these:

"So closely does Hegel identify the State with God that he may justly be accused of raising false idols in the name of Him who is truly God and of substituting nationalism as the true religion for Christianity."  

"For the Marxist conflict is resolved through the medium of class conflict and the dialectical process of history as an immanent process, for the Christian, conflict is resolved on the Cross."  

"It has been suggested throughout these pages that the basic insights of the Christian faith provide the best insights we have into the nature of man and of the crisis in which we find ourselves... Only through a return to faith in God, as God revealed Himself to man in Jesus Christ, can modern man and his society find redemption from the tyranny of evil."  

In "Conclusion," the author writes:

"The modern world has lived for many centuries off its Christian heritage but with the decline of Christianity as a religion, the Christian conscience has progressively deteriorated. To those moderns who declare that they would like to preserve the Christian heritage, I must be replied that the experiment has already been tried and failed. Christianity is not, in any case, primarily or essentially a system of ethics. For it offers men, in its genuine, orthodox form, not moral advice, which is readily obtainable, but something even more valuable—assistance in doing that which men, for the most part, already know they ought to do. Christianity has a message not for men who are seeking moral advice but for men, who like St. Paul, cry out in despair: that which I would, I do not, but that which I hate, I do."  

This lengthy quotation seems to me to be an astute description of the aches and pains that rack the modern body-politic. It also seems to me that an author who can state the Christian position so pointedly ought to be read by Christians. I repeat, this is a textbook, designed for, and in use by university students. However, I do believe that this volume could do a lot toward clarifying the Christian position on political and social affairs. The Christian position must not be marked by confused thinking.

Ann Arbor, Mich.

ORTHODOX HERITAGE


T HE volume under review beyond question ranks with the very best of literature dealing with that central doctrine of the Christian faith, the Deity of Christ. Dr. B. B. Warfield was a giant in Biblical scholarship, who has enriched the field of orthodox religious thought as perhaps no other American theologian in the 20th century. His careful study of the Word of God and his convincing logic make his writings of permanent value for the defense of the historic faith of Christianity. It is especially for that reason that the cause of orthodox Christianity is rendered a real service through this reprint.

The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is being eclipsed in more than one way in our lifetime. Roman Catholicism veils it; Modern liberalism negates it; Arminianism compromises it; dead orthodoxy certainly loses the vision of it. In consequence the power of the Christian church and the Christian faith is dissipated. The church of New Testament times was dynamic and invincible because it believed in and had a vision of a Saviour who was very God. It is this truth which the brilliant author of this book so clearly unfolds as the scores of designations of the Saviour by the writers of the New Testament are examined. The arresting fact is presented "that the whole Christian community, and all from the very beginning, was firmly convinced that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh." The deity of Christ as an article of the Christian faith is not based upon a few isolated texts in which the truth is openly asserted, but is rather the uniform witness of every writer of the New Testament upon every page. It is impossible to read this book without catching anew or for the first time an inspiring vision of the glory of our Lord. That vision is the only effective answer to those trends in current theological thought in which the deity of Christ and His true glory is either denied or sadly compromised. The witness of the church will only be vigorous and dynamic in this present generation in proportion to its conception of the greatness of its glorious Head.

May this volume enjoy a wide circulation among the leaders of the church, both ministers and laymen.

In the opinion of the present reviewer, the value of this reprint would have been increased if it had been graced with an introduction by someone who is conversant with what has been written about the Person of Christ since the days of Dr. Warfield, and an evaluation had been given of the trends of current thought about this central doctrine of the Christian faith. The absence of such an introduction does not detract, however, from the intrinsic worth of the book.

JOHN C. VERBRUGGE.

Lynden, Washington.

TWO OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES


O NE of the encouraging signs in the religious world today is the indefatigable labor of Professor Aalders in the defense and exposition of the Old Testament. Whatever Dr. Aalders writes seems to exhibit the same high standard of scholarship, and the two present works are no exception.

Het Hooglied is a small brochure of only sixty-three pages. It is not written as a commentary, but rather presents a brief and clear discussion of some of the important problems which must be faced in the study of the Song of Solomon. This discussion is presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and the text is not cluttered up with footnotes. Hence, the book is just the thing for the average Christian. In fact, it would be a fine thing if more works of just this type were made available for Christians. We wish that the present work could appear in English, so that it would have a wider appeal. It is just the thing for the person who would like to begin a serious study of this particular Biblical book.

The author characterizes the Song of Solomon as "Een Bijbelboek, moeilijk voor de uitlegging," but he is very fair and convincing in his discussion of the difficult problems involved. Perhaps the greatest merit of this little work lies in its cogent refutation of the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon. Only at one point did we find ourselves in disagreement with the author. Dr. Aalders is unable to accept the Solomonic authorship of the book, whereas we believe that the title of the book intends us to understand that Solomon was

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the author. This does not mean, however, that the author accepts any of the modern critical theories of authorship. He does not. He believes that the author wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (p. 46).

The second work is the first in a series of new commentaries to be issued upon the various books of the Old Testament. Each verse of Ecclesiastes is translated, and this translation is followed by comments. We are happy to see that the author throughout makes a serious attempt to grapple with the Hebrew text and so to arrive at the true meaning of the book. In our opinion the exegesis is characterized by sobriety and sound common sense, and we feel that this is truly a valuable commentary.

There is a brief introduction to the book, in which questions of authorship, canonicity, etc. are capably discussed. Again, Dr. Aalders does not accept the Solomonic authorship, but here the case is different from that of the Song of Solomon, for here the word “Solomon” is not employed. A fairly extensive bibliography is given, although of course it makes no pretensions to being exhaustive.

There may be those who would criticize this work for not containing devotional material. But it is not the major task of a commentary to preach sermons. What is needed, and desperately needed today, is a commentary that capably discusses the meaning of the Hebrew text. If the minister, in his study of the Bible, will wrestle with the problems of grammar and exegesis, he will then be in a position to make the proper application in his preaching. We believe that this commentary, and more commentaries of this particular type, are urgently needed in the church of today. Our Bible study is too superficial and easy. If the people of God are to be fed the truth, we need to get back to the bedrock of the original languages. It is because Dr. Aalders seeks to do just that, and is also capable of doing just that, that we heartily commend these works to those who want to make a serious study of these particular books.

EDWARD J. YOUNG.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

While the venerable, and consecrated teacher of the Word of God that he is, delivers many a philippic in these pages against the religious liberal, the evolutionist, the carping critic and all who play fast and loose with the sacred Scriptures and when he warns against a mere theoretical acquaintance with its contents and pleads for concentrated and consecrated study of God’s living Word, we see “eye to eye” with him, laud his efforts to preserve historic orthodoxy and count him a kinsman in the faith. This work is based on the promise of the Bible as the very truth of God and it throbs with personal, virile faith. As such we heartily commend it.

The volume now under review is the first of two in a series and, as the subtitle indicates, it covers the historical part of the Old Testament. The key to the understanding of this history is expressed in this summary statement: “God’s way with our race is to let them try what they can do first, ere He brings in His own blessed plans of grace for the helpless.” (p. 277) According to Newell, it is a record of man’s repeated efforts resulting in man’s repeated failures and climaxed by God’s gracious intervention.

One of the serious faults of this work, in my estimation, is its undue spiritualizing and its over-serious quest for Biblical types. Although the author insists that the prophecies must be interpreted literally (hence his premillennialism) and deplores “the wretched modern device of ‘spiritualizing’” (p. 221), yet he does not hesitate to say that “in the double mark of the clean animals (Lev. 11) are seen the two proof-marks of the real Christian: 1) meditation in the Word (Ps. 119:97 and 2) a divided or separate walk” (2 Cor. 6:17); that “the silver trumpets are typical of the commanding voice of the Redeemer”; that “the twelve stones of memorial (Josh. 4) in the midst of the Jordan show us the cross, where Jesus has been for us, while those on the bank, the resurrection side, set forth where Christ’s people now are in him” and that “the old corn of Canaan typifies what the risen and ascended Christ ministers to us now by the Holy Ghost”. Naomi is typical of unfaithful Israel, Boaz of Christ and Ruth of the faithful remnant that some day will return to Palestine. Her gleanings in the fields of her prospective husband is typical of those who “seeking sustenances in the pastures of the Word of God.” Dr. Newell contends that in interpreting the Bible does not avoid the bane of arbitrary and fanciful interpretation.

It strikes me, too, that the reasoning of Mr. Newell is entirely convincing. He maintains that the Law was given to Israel in order to show her the futility of saving herself by works of righteousness and that having served that purpose it was absolutely abrogated and hence the New Testament Christian is “free from the Law.” If, however, the Law served that purpose in the Old Testament Dispensation and thus served to point the pious Israelite to the coming Messiah, why shouldn’t it function the same way in this Dispensation for the New Testament church? Newell is doubtless fearful of the nemesis of legalistic religion. He can rest his fears on that score if he will but construe the Law à la Calvin as a “mirror” exposing our shortcomings and as a “roadmap” charting for us the God-acceptable way.

Calvin College.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN


A CHATTERING magpie, a white cat with one blue and one green eye, and a “wise old woman” living all together in a lowly, thatched-roof hut whose only window faced the churchyard cemetery,—those are the elements which form the calm core of the story against which the turbulent forces of ignorance and superstition beat so vehemently, that, except for the “grace and goodness of God,” a helinous crime would have been committed which would have scorched an indelible blame and blot upon the name of the well-intentioned farming folk of the dune village at Katverloren.

This novelette is a fascinating “witch’s” tale. It is a tale woven about two lines of an “old sweet sleepy song” which Dutch grandmothers and nurserymaids sang to lull little ones into slumber.

“There’s a cradle, rocking, rocking,
There’s a cradle gently rocking in the sunlit sea.”

And at the climax of the story there is truly a cradle with a living baby and the “evil-eyed cat” rocking gently up and down, from side to side, slowly nearing the shore of the “sunlit sea.” It is only the “wise old woman” who can explain单单 the phenomenon to the hysterical parents and the fear-ridden crowd. The unusual spectacle has saved the old woman’s life from the burning stake, as well as the life of the baby from engulfing waves. No wonder she exclaims aesthetically, “It’s the beautiful, endless mercy of God.”

Because the tale is a witch’s tale the path of events is dotted with elements of superstitious inception. Crossed brooms are set up against the doors to ward off evil. There is the insane character, “Crazy Alice,” whom to befriend is to be condemned. There are old crones with “clacking” tongues whose unwarranted prophecy of infant death propels the parents into irrational behavior. There are thunder storms and lightning flashes and dark figures silhouetted for the moment against the white dunes.

The author has suited the tempo to the progress of the tale. He moves along leisurely at first, and one stops willingly to observe the old woman as she trains those natural enemies,
the magpie and the cat, to live peaceably together. But as the story develops the movement speeds up until, at the climax, there is a massing of events culminating in the wild little figure of the “dreamy little girl” coming, racing, screaming, and waving her hands frantically to the somber crowd around the stake on the village square.

The style, the words, are full of music and melody imitating in their tonal quality the sights and sounds, temper and tenet delineated in the story. The book is pleasant reading from that point of view. The content is worthwhile in the sense that it pictures vividly the baneful effects of ignorance and superstition.

The illustrations are whole-page in black and white, the strongly contrasting tones imparting a dramatic quality to each one of the pictures. The manner is expressionistic rather than realistic. There is however, a flavor, especially to the figures in the drawings, which suggests a French gracefulness rather than the Dutch sturdiness which we would expect to find in illustrations of a book of this content.

The volume affords pleasant reading for adults as well as for children.


It is a great book. It deals with eminent concepts of the inevitable realities, namely, God, man, and the world. Many works have been written on those Gibraltars of existence. But Miss Korfker’s volume is different. In it those colossal issues are set forth on the level of a child’s perceptual powers. Kindergartners can, by means of its expositions, catch clear glimpses of the light of truth concerning those eternal verities. That is a notable achievement.

The book is great because from the profuse elaborations on and the profound expositions of these basic doctrines about God, man, and the world, the author has selected those truths which form the root structures of Calvinistic fiber and which determine the nature of resultant teachings in their various ramifications. Consequently those reading the book receive a truly Biblical interpretation of these propositions at the very source of their conception which is unique as well as refreshing among the many erroneous ideas so prevalent in books of a religious nature written for children.

The book is great because it furnishes little children the information they need to lay the groundwork of their security, their trust, hope, and happiness in truths which shall never fail them. Not one of the teachings presented, as far as we can judge, need ever be changed for a so-called “other truth.” This last statement is also applicable to the many scientific facts about the animal, plant, and physical worlds which are given to questions the children themselves have asked. Each bit of information forms permanent material upon which to continue building.

Every adult who is interested in the training of little children will be benefited by owning a copy of this book. He is sure to be alerted by the types of questions answered, e.g., Where did I come from? Is it wrong to pretend? Is the world today the same as when God made it? Who is God and where is He? There are thirty-nine questions in all, each one of vital concern to the child. The reader will be pleased with the answers as well. They are given directly, simply, and tactfully as well as truthfully.

The format of the book is equally satisfying. The paper is rich and smooth to the touch. Charming photographs of real children in full-, half-, quarter-page sizes are placed informally together with the clear-cut, well-mounted type of the text. The shiny, royal blue cover with its design in contrasting white, will make the volume an attractive addition to any library, and the strong, durable binding will make it a thoroughly usable one for any children who can read.

HELEN VAN LAAR.

DENOMINATIONS, SECTS, CULTS, ORGANIZATIONS


This little book offers 125 pages on Church History from Jesus to the Protestant Reformation (included), and then 100 pages on the various denominations in the United States. It is all very brief and sketchy. Little chapters with helps for study at the close of each. As the title seems to indicate, the treatment of Church History up to the discovery of America appears to serve the purpose of furnishing background for the treatment of the American denominations in the latter part. Each of the latter groups receives brief treatment (very brief) in a chapter under a caption which is intended to typify the group. This, of course, has serious limitations, though it does serve to bring out a certain aspect of the group. And so we read of: the Church of Authority (Roman Catholicism), the Church of Beauty (Protestant Episcopalian), the Church of Duty (Presbyterian), the Church of Faith (Lutheran), the Church of Freedom (Baptist). It seems rather forced and meaningless to call the Congregational-Christian Churches the Church of Vision, and the Reformed Church the Church of Concern! And the Universalist Church becomes the Church of Harmony! This same superficiality is apparent in the indiscriminate use of the words churches, denominations, and sects. The standpoint throughout is thoroughly liberal. Sam Walter Foss is quoted as saying that the world’s true Bible is “the highest thought of man.” Tennyson with his broken lights and his little systems is also exploited. In another poem we are told the Church is wherever men grope Godward! Much of the informational material is helpful and up-to-date, though very brief and sketchy. Theologically the book is worthless.


In this book Dr. Braden, who is Professor of the History and Literature of Religion at Northwestern University, offers a careful and objective treatment of many of the sects and cults in the American scene today. He is especially interested in the newer movements and informs the readers that his study of Father Divine, of Robertson’s Psychiana, and of “the I Am movement” have received his special attention. His contribution on these three subjects he considers quite new and original with him, but recognizes that the material on most of the other groups is rather common property. He devotes over 75 pages to Father Divine, and about 50 each to the other two movements singled out. The others, each of which receives a careful treatment of from twenty to forty pages, include New Thought, Unity School of Christianity, Christian Science, Theosophy, The Liberal Catholic Church, Spiritualism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Anglo-Israel, The Oxford Group Movement, and Mormonism. There is a select Bibliography and in a Brief Dictionary of Modern Cults some eighteen more groups are listed in alphabetical order and given a half page discussion. The book is informative. It is written with a high degree of objectivity by one who is not writing a book in Reformed Polemics (or Catholic Polemics for that matter) but desires to convey within the compass of one volume as much information as possible for the serious student of these cults, who desires to draw his own conclusions and make his own evaluations. This is the value of the book. This, of course, is also its limitation. Sources are quoted in footnotes, which, however, do not weight down the work. A 15-page Index proves to be very serviceable.

A Faith for You, By Brooke Peters Church, Rinehart & Co., New York. 1948. 305 pages. $3.00.

After a chapter of about 75 pages on the historical background, in which the author in typically liberal fashion gives a brief account of Christianity from its Jewish roots to Ameri-

This is a revised edition of the work as reviewed in Vol. IV of The Calvin Forum (p. 68). Dr. Clark has made an exhaustive study of the small sects, and this revised edition will be welcomed by all students of the subject. The author emphatically sizes the distinctive features, doctrines, and practices of each one of a hundred of these sects, and in so doing he does not dwell on the general Christian beliefs which most of them have in common with others, nor does he, on the other hand, seize upon the eccentric, the bizarre. He is a student of psychology and his studies may be said to be psychologically-religious. The valuable element in his discussion (apart from the accurate information he imparts on them) is that he offers an ideological classification of these small sects. This is not only practically serviceable with a view to the classification of this mass of material, but it also challenges the author and his readers to see what religious interest and motivation must be held to have prompted the leaders of these sects or the group which constitutes it. Without saying that the author's classification is entirely satisfactory (there is, e.g., bound to be overlapping, to mention but one difficulty), the reviewer has found it valuable in his past studies of Polemics. Clark groups them into the following categories and devotes a chapter to each one of them: Pessimistic or Adventist Sects; Perfectionist or Subjectivist Sects; Charismatic or Pentecostal Sects; Communist Sects; Legalistic or Objectivist Sects. In Chapter VIII the author enumerates some interesting characteristics of the small sects. Indices and Bibliographies enhance the value of the volume.

A HANDBOOK OF ORGANIZATIONS. THEIR RELATION TO THE CHURCH. By Theodore Graebner. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1948. 368 pages. $4.50.

That the Masonic order and the whole Lodge system is a religious organization, and that its beliefs and practices do not accord with the Christian faith nor with Christian practice in harmony with the Word of God, is denied by many Christians but has been the unshakable conviction of many others and of certain definite churches. The incompatibility of membership in any lodge with membership in the Church of Christ is maintained by such denominations as the Missouri Synod Lutherans, the Christian Reformed Church, and others. The number of fraternal organizations is legion, and the same charge cannot be brought against them all. Hence an informative book on these organizations is very desirable. This we have before us in the above title: A Handbook of Organizations. It is a new and enlarged edition of the author's earlier The Secret Empire—a Handbook of Lodges. Professor Graebner is a lifelong student of these organizations and is a teacher of theology in Concordia Seminary of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. In Part One he treats of lodges, and in Part Two he takes up various other organizations, like Veterans Organizations, Railroad Brotherhoods, Farmers' Organizations, and the like. In each case he lists the pertinent information as to what obligations membership involves. Under Part One he lists no less than some 170 different fraternal organizations. All these are listed in alphabetical order and a general index facilitates the reference. This work is indispensable for all students of fraternal organizations and a copy should be in the library of every ministers and elder of the Church.

CLARENCE BOMBA.
Christmas Suggestion

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