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Calvin's Preaching
It's Theological Accent

The Second Letter
A Commencement Message

Revelation in Nature
The Use of Science

The Unity of the Church
Doctrinal Considerations

Letters

Reviews
THE CALVIN FORUM

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Address all editorial correspondence to Dr.
CLARENCE BOUMA, Editor THE CALVIN FORUM,
Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids 6,
Michigan. Address all subscription and cir-
culation correspondence to: THE CALVIN FORUM,
Calvin College and Seminary, Grand
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THE CALVIN FORUM * * * JUNE-JULY, 1951
THE THEOLOGICAL ACCENT OF CALVIN'S PREACHING

Harold Dekker

Of all the great theologians of the Church there is none who is more consistent with himself than Calvin. The basic structure of his theology underwent no change from the age of twenty-five when he wrote the first edition of the Institutes until the last revision was made at fifty. The same consistency is to be found between his dogmatics, his letters and tracts, and his commentaries and sermons. At the same time, however, it is worthwhile to notice certain theological emphases in the sermons which are characteristic of his preaching method and suggestive of his pastoral technique.

In reading a number of Calvin's sermons the present writer has made some observations which are recorded here without interpretation in relation to Calvin's other works. That would require more study than has been done and more space than these columns can provide.

Root and Flower

The most conspicuous theological feature of Calvin's preaching is its utter theocentricity. In itself this is certainly not surprising, but one is hardly prepared for the extent to which it goes. One can find a good many instances where Calvin preached day after day for several weeks without once mentioning a person of the Godhead specifically, but always designating the deity by the comprehensive term "God." Most of the Old Testament sermons make no mention at all of Christ. This is in sharp contrast to the sermonizing of Luther which has as its deliberate intent a Christ-centered exposition.

The preacher of Geneva seldom mentions one of the persons of the Trinity separately without explicitly placing Him in a dynamic relationship to the Godhead. To treat them separately is to hazard idolatry. He even hesitates to use the term "person," preferring the term "substance" ("hypostasis").

Calvin is intent not only to dispute the church-centered system of Rome, but also the tendencies among the sects to focus on either the second or third persons of the Trinity. Polemical passages in his sermons are always explicitly rooted in the doctrine of God. Every heresy is a heresy in the first article of the creed. He seems convinced that to be Spirit-centered is the first step to a fatal subjectivism, and that Christocentrism yields the first small inch to humanism. God Himself is both the root and flower for every sermonic stem.

The difference from contemporary preaching is unmistakable. Most of our preachers refer to the individual members of the Trinity in a wholly detached manner. The pulpit has slipped into a terminological tritheism, even if not actually into the monophysite heresy. Liberalism and Fundamentalism are almost equally at fault on this score, and a regular reading of Calvin's sermons should be a healthy corrective for many orthodox preachers who have unwittingly stumbled into this pitfall.

Theocentric Stresses

This utter theocentricity involves certain characteristic stresses in Calvin's effort to meet the spiritual needs of God's people. One of these is the stress on providence. The doctrine of providence is a staple in feeding the hungry of heart. It is balm for every wound. It enters into a large majority of the sermons. Calvin is nothing less than a magnificent preacher of providence.

Another such stress is that on divine incomprehensibility. The man in the pulpit at Geneva always stood like Job with his hand over his mouth, and urged his people to do the same. He did not trifle with rationalizing the perplexities of men or explaining away their grief. Not the revealed will of God but the unrevealed was for Calvin the final dimension of His sovereignty, and there was hardly a sermon in which this perspective did not appear. There can be no doubt that one of the most distinctive features of Calvin's entire pastoral theology is his accent on the hidden in God, and the final inscrutability of His dealings with His children. Calvin has no better comfort to offer to troubled spirits than the unrevealed purpose of a God of sovereign grace. The divine incomprehensibility in Calvin generally merits more attention than it has received, and will highly repay careful study. One suspects that many Calvinists by their small dealings in this doctrine betray the climatic influences of rationalism.

As a preacher Calvin used the doctrine of divine sovereignty primarily as a comfort to believers.
Sermonically sovereignty is never viewed in the abstract, or developed in the manner of dogmatics. It is never dissociated from grace. In a sense sovereign grace is the theme of every sermon, with constant overtones of election. Grace also is not a static idea but a most dynamic one. (There are many synonyms for it in the sermons.) It is not narrowly localized at the manger or the cross, nor is it mechanically fettered to an ordo salutis, but is as comprehensive and pervasive as God’s dealings with men. Neither is it limited to the processes of salvation, but comprehends also those of creation. Calvin takes up the whole of the believer’s life and views it in its totality as an act of God’s grace.

That makes election a broad and vital thing in his preaching. It is no segment of theology or fragment of the Bible. It is no single sermon in a catechism series or just one of five petals on a Reformed T-U-L-I-P. It is the very stuff of preaching for Calvin, and it has only one function—to comfort God’s people in their misery (those words with the full meaning of the Heidelberg Catechism). That election in its fullest connotations is for Calvin the very balm of Gilead has its obverse in the fact that reprobation, its counterpart in systematic theology, is seldom preached. An overwhelming majority of his sermons in no way mention or refer to it. It has for Calvin only occasional pulpit relevance. It may be that too many of his spiritual sons, taking brittle logical abstractions into the pulpit, have wrongly measured their sermonizing in election by that in reprobation.

Less of the Forensic

One of the most striking things about Calvin’s sermons, when compared to his systematic writings, is a negative consideration. One does not find what he might expect. A professor of mine once remarked, “Calvin studied law as a youth and he never got away from it.” He was wrong about the sermons. The legal framework is not present as it is in the Institutes. Forensic relationships are at a minimum. This is the living Word! It is genuinely existential, not stultified by legal abstractions. It deals directly in the spiritual and moral realities of the relationship between man and God.

The evidences of this are on every hand. The various covenants are not presented so much as juridical relationship but more as community life. Sin is more often described as pride than as disobedience. Forgiveness is first of all reconciliation rather than justification. The most common delineation of Christ’s work is in terms of His mediatorialship, with a large stress on that in respect to creation. Furthermore, the penal, substitutionary aspect of Christ’s work does not receive the specific emphasis that one might expect. And in the believer’s relation to Christ the mystical union has large prominence.

Neither is the legal element featured in the ethical passages of the sermons. Although as an advisor in civic matters he seemed to take a rather legalistic approach to the morals of Geneva, there is certainly no authoritarian legalism regarding the minutiae of personal morals in his preaching.

It would seem that many Calvinist preachers have not been true to their mentor in taking their systematic theology per se to the pulpit in a way that he never did. We will not have learned well of him until we have distinctly heard his pulpit accent as well as his accent in dogmatics. In many cases they are not the same. May his sermons in the course of time receive the kind of attention which his other writings have had. It should never be forgotten that in his own estimation he was first of all a preacher.
THE SECOND LETTER

* Address delivered at the Commencement of Calvin College and Seminary, June 1. Dr. Kruthof is pastor of the First Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and was recently the honored recipient of a Doctor of Divinity degree, conferred by Hope College of the same city.

R. VOLBEDA, President Schultzze, members of the Board of Trustees and of the two faculties of Calvin College and Seminary, graduates, students, and friends of Christian education, I must begin by congratulating you on 75 years of witnessing to the Christian faith and the Christian life.

I must congratulate myself on being the product of these joint institutions. Eleven years of my life were spent on your campus. (It took me that long.) Quoting from an old song, not found in the hymn books, “You made me what I am today. I hope you’re satisfied.”

This evening I am in hearty accord with being brief. I am convinced that, though eternity is the burden of all our witnessing, it must not be demonstrated on platform or pulpit.

* * * * *

God bless the man who first invented the alphabet. That has helped me considerably in choosing my subject: THE SECOND LETTER. We have come a long way beyond the three R’s. We have learned to place a W before ‘riting, an A before ‘ithmetic, although I fear there are too many people who still put an O before reading.

The alphabet has given us the word CHRISTIANITY. The second letter of that blessed word is H. That has set me to thinking.

This evening I want to speak on three concepts that begin with this letter: Humility; Honesty; and Humor. These three, and the greatest of these is Humility.

Humility

Be assured I am aware of Pascal’s warning that “few men speak humbly of humility.” Yet, the Christian alone can really do so.

We need not attempt to define humility. It is wiser and more rewarding to describe it. The words of John the Baptist are with me often. Looking to Jesus he said: “The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.” That strikes the keynote of our thinking. Moreover, this overshadowing Christ, whom John recognized, is the incarnation of our concept. It was Andrew Murray who wrote: “Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love clothed in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save.”

There are many reasons for humbleness of mind and heart. These reasons deserve our attention because we have been, and must continue to be, at school with the Lord.

Both the believer and the unbeliever are overwhelmed by the vastness of the universe. In Thomas Hardy’s novel, *Two On A Tower*, a man and a woman are looking at the heavens. The man says: “There is a size at which dignity begins . . . Further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on a size at which awfulness begins; further on a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe.”

That was in the 19th century. We know what man has done, and what has been done to man in the 20th century. Prometheus, chained to the rock, is less defiant and more pessimistic than ever before. Bertrand Russell long ago foretold doom. Theodore Dreiser said: “I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and I pass, quite as I came, confused and dismayed.” Herbert George Wells lived to admit man is at the end of his tether. William Faulkner, Nobel prize winner, would gather a few embers out of the dying fire when he says: “There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up?” He speaks of “the old verities of the heart—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice” and ends by saying: “I decline to accept the end of man.”

It is not my purpose this evening to castigate the unbelievers. We are believers and as such we need desperately the message of humility.

We too are citizens of a universe that looms so large. But like the psalmist we can and must see the living God above, beyond, and in all that is. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” The poet could say that because he experienced the great and good God in his heart.

To the believer, then, the universe is large and indifferent, but God is bigger and very much concerned. The redeemed man is humble, not before a thing, but before a God who is warmly personal. Emil Brunner puts it neatly in *Man In Revolt* when

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he says: “Man is no more lost in this bigger universe which we know than he was when he was first tied to this world. Our dependence on God is not affected by the size of the mundane world. If we are overcome by fear because of the vastness of the universe, it is because we have the wrong standing ground. Man, created in and for the Word of God, whose self is in the Eternal Son, is above the world. There is the ‘saving history’ which is not affected by bigness.”

The redeemed man is humble before the revelation of God in His world and in His Word. He is humble especially before Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. There is great faith and there is great knowledge bubbling from all this revelation. The Christian at his best must experience

“A Presence . . .
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.”

He must have his systems of thought, a heaven-storming theology rooted in the everlasting Word and fed also from God’s world. And in it all he must always remember he is but the microcosm under the macrocosm, the creature at the feet of his Creator.

In the Institutes Calvin, quoting Augustine, puts it squarely: “The first precept of the Christian religion is humility. The second is humility. And the third is humility.”

If it is hard for man to speak humbly of this concept, it is harder still for man to live humbly in its light. That is where our adventurous Christian living can become so very dangerous.

The unbeliever has no monopoly on pride. To us his secularism is “the refusal to let God be God.” But are we entirely free from that refusal? The great characters in the Greek tragedies were not irreligious, yet they were driven by hubris. The disciples of Jesus had surrendered themselves to their Master, yet quarreled about who was greatest. One thing they lacked; one thing they had to learn. So it may be with us.

What are some of our dangers here? Where does pride enter even into our humbleness? I am speaking to myself also, and think I am an ardent Calvinist who has been both praised and blamed for being that.

I think our pride creeps in and crops out when we clip the wings of our faith, when we narrow our learning to spite our faith, when practice violates creed, when sweetness does not pair with light, when humility before God bears little fruit in humility towards men, when we make hasty, snap judgments, saying wrongly with the psalmist: “All men are liars,” when we like Iago confess: “I am nothing if not critical,” when we remain complacent like Peer Gynt reciting the Lord’s Prayer while pushing a comrade off the swamped boat, when we label the men of the Renaissance as the proud ones and conveniently forget that we often go them one better, when we are so occupied with sin that we almost forget grace, when our humbling descends to humbug as Dr. Samuel Johnson implied when he roared: “Beware of cant.”

In this setting we may well ask ourselves what we are doing with our Calvinism. Are we really interested in its depth and in its wide reaches, or was it just a course in school?

We know what Calvinism has done for the world and for this country. Ralph Barton Perry in his Puritanism and Democracy pays a worthy tribute. Your two great institutions are not hid in a corner. Yet, there are searching questions we may well ask ourselves.

Are there some among us who are proud of this system, doing little with it except for ourselves, keeping it neatly on display? Recently I read of a mechanic who spent hours each day tinkering with an old Ford motor. When a friend suggested that he take the car out for a ride, he answered: “I don’t want to be on the road; I’m only trying to see how smoothly I can make this motor run.”

Are there some who prefer the intellectual aspect of our heritage, practicing logic more than morality? Are there others who prefer an emotional binge to what they consider frigidity above the shoulders? I think we can agree with Halford Luccock that “the chief end of man is his head, not his feet.” But I am sure that he would accept the rule of the burning heart over both head and feet.

We can all stand more of the personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Paul experienced it on the Damascus road. That way we can put our Calvinism into practice wholeheartedly and wholesomely always remembering that the final defense of Christianity is its complete practice. We can learn from what Paulsen implies in his Ethics that “it is not enough to know thyself but to know thyself in action.”

In this setting it is well to evaluate again and again this important truth of Scripture relayed in a hymn: “Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.” Certainly this puts man in his rightful position under God, but it does not give me the license to act like a pot. Pascal reminds us that man is a reed but a thinking reed.

As Christians we can not afford to believe and we can not afford to think if we want to remain the same, if we desire to be slaves of a system or a tradition. There is a wise old adage which runs like this: “A mountain shames a molehill until they are both humbled by the stars.” But the redeemed man must never succumb to an it; he must be humble only in loving first of all his personal God who treats him like a person, and in loving his neighbor as himself.
Am I hinting at that chilling phrase: the dignity of man? Yes, but properly understood. It is not humbleness of mind or heart that we bow before a system as it is not if we bow before a machine. It is part of the dignity of the Christian man, the image bearer of God, that he remaineth master of any system rather than become its mere servant. In that dignity lies genuine humility.

Christian humility, then, is the root of, and the best basis for, faith, hope, and love. It paves the way for that holiness with which God clothes His children now and forever. In the long pilgrimage humility increasingly unveils the dignity of sinners made saints.

Honesty

H stands also for honesty. Long ago we learned that honesty is not the best policy, that, on the contrary, it is a principle.

Honesty is at home with humility. In fact, they kiss each other. Honest living and honest thinking and honest believing can not begin without humility.

In Psalm 51:6 we read: “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” Honesty has a wide reference. We must be honest with ourselves, our neighbors, and our God.

Being honest certainly means paying our debts and doing what is right in business, but it implies basically that we honor divine truth in all our motives, in all our thinking and believing, in all our deeds and speech.

Chesterston was surely right when he said that a landlady should ask a prospective boarder what he thinks about God. We must ask ourselves that often.

We know we are a creedal people, and others know it as well. There lies our glory, but also our challenge and responsibility. We must honor our creeds both in truth and in practice. We must believe them more by understanding them progressively. It will not do to treat them like a moldy crust or a popsickle. (That is about as close as some folk come to licking a creed.) Let Dorothy Sayers advise us again that “the dogma is the drama” and that unless we have the steel girders of a wholesome theology, we can not begin to practice Christian ethics. But we must certainly practice the good life everywhere.

Surely we must not use our creedal papers as gummed labels to be placed on demijohns or demagogues. That is not “screwing our courage to the sticking-place.”

It is good at times to be needled by the satirical poetry of Emily Dickinson who rebelled somewhat against New England Calvinism. In four telling lines she says:

“Faith is a fine invention
For gentlemen who see;
But microscopes are prudent
For an emergency.”

We are apt to take that ill of her; but I wonder if she is not uncovering our worst selves to our better selves here. We too may occasionally lay our best creeds on the shelf while we act “prudently” without them. For example, we may well ask ourselves if our predestinarianism genuinely honors God or disingenuously gloats over any reprobate or non-conformist. In the field of argumentation we must distinguish between Christian love and a mild sadism which is more interested in getting our man than in knowing the truth which shall make us free.

At times it can be that we worship the goddess Success, forgetting that God does not ask us to be successful, but to be faithful.

Sometimes the children of this world seem wiser than we are. I have learned much, for instance, from Harry Overstreet, with whom I have a basic quarrel. He has reminded me, and I hope others, that man must get beyond adult infantilism to the possession and practice of the mature mind. Let me add that we must arrive at a mature faith.

In Ibsens’ play “Brand” the hero of that name is a living protest against commercial philistinism and spiritual pauperism. He wants a bigger church. But when the new building is completed, he turns the key in the lock, throws it into the water, and storms up the mountain, calling his people to follow him. They do for a distance. But someone in the crowd, using the strategy of this world, announces that the herring are in the bay. That does it. The people rush to their nets, conveniently forgetting the higher life, and dishonestly selling their birthright for a mess of fish.

Are we ever like that? As humble creatures before our Sovereign God we must be honest in all our believing, thinking, and living, honest with ourselves, our neighbors, and our Lord of Lords.

Humor

Now with an eye on time and on eternity I must say something briefly about humor. If humility and honesty have kissed each other, humor is their blessed offspring.

We Christians must honor that offspring more. The world does but not always too wisely and too well. It is a sad commentary on our country that in 1948 of the 730 million volumes which came off the presses 720 million were comics. Christian cultivation of the sense of humor must correct that at least for ourselves.

Humor is a gift of God.
At its best it is a criticism of life. As such it can be more serious than some kinds of seriousness. I have said it before, and I say it again: “Only the Christian can laugh; the rest merely giggle.”

Humor is humbly and honestly warm and kind. It is a take-off on self; it gets oneself off one’s hands. It laughs, not at people, but about them, and no one gets hurt. As a corrective it may spell the difference between health and illness, between unity and secession. It is that mellow.

What blessings for the home lie in the thought that it is better to have an adorable wife than an adoring one! What good fellowship there is in the remark of one of my friends who occasionally says: “You know I think you and I are just about tops, and sometimes I even wonder about you.” What rumblings there sound within me when a little boy comes home and says: “Daddy, I don’t wanna brag, but I made four baskets this morning.” And all along I know that too often his shooting is like “the desire of the moth for the star.” Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

It is salutary to evaluate even our schools with the seriousness of humor. They are not monuments. That reminds us too much of a petrified forest. They are not mausoleums. Remember the bitter immortality of the pyramids. Nor are they museums. Imagine a plaque on their walls recording: “Bastian Kruithof slept here,” though very likely he did.

No, our schools are the living embodiment of the Christian ideal.

Finally, it could be redeeming that on the program of any Synod there be the requirement that each delegate expose himself to the quietly smiling humor of the Bible and read something of Cervantes, Mark Twain, and Stephen Leacock. So the Agenda might even mold the Acta.

Followers of the cross of shame and of glory, especially you graduates who have ripened these past years in the schools we love and honor, take up the heritage of humility, honesty, and humor. Would you sit at the right hand of Jesus Christ? Then bow at His feet, crying with Thomas, soul bursting with wonder: “My Lord and my God.”

To A Cricket

A spark of song will flick and flare,
A whirring, humming from somewhere
And, cheerful as a gypsy lad,
He pulls my thoughts from being sad
Boldly claiming night will end,
Winter’s wind-torn hours will mend.
Three parts pest, one part delight
He flings his music in the night.

He weaves a web of notes for me
And then, with aggravating glee,
Sits silent, wings held to his lips.
The night is still. Then, then he trips
Bold beneath these floors of mine
Spilling his song again like wine.
Ignoring hunger, cold and fright
He fiddles loudly in the night.

Marie J. Post.
REVELATION IN NATURE

Enno Wolthuis

The Proper Perspective

In our previous reflections we sought to establish the thesis that a satisfying philosophy of science must appeal to an authority outside of, and beyond, the sciences themselves. Thoroughgoing and consistent naturalism cannot satisfactorily orient its body of knowledge within the total framework of knowledge without appeal to an authority more comprehensive and greater than its own. This authority, we have observed, is one which is trans-physical. As Christians we find it in God's revealed Word, the acceptance of which implies a redeemed soul. In the words of Van Til, "It is only when the Holy Spirit gives man a new heart that he will accept the evidence of Scripture about itself and about nature for what it really is. The Holy Spirit's regenerating power enables man to place all things in true perspective." Such a conception is entirely foreign and unreal to the naturalist, utterly unreasonable to the average person today. Nels Ferre aptly remarks, "An adequate interpretation of human knowledge points beyond itself for its truest perspective and fullest power. But actually to break away in our consciousness from assuming the self and process to be central to the recognition of God as central is hard beyond belief."

We must also insist that such an authority is not a derivative of the sciences. That is, although a serious consideration of the natural may excite one to postulate a spiritual force commanding, or unifying, it, this sort of god is not, and can never be, the God of the Scriptures. Neither Christianity nor any semblance of it can be derived from science, and the latter can never prove the truth of Christianity, simply because it transcends time and space. We must have done with such absurdities, very common in our day, as the statement, "Through a knowledge and appreciation of the divinity and majesty of the cosmic laws and their enforcement, we may arrive by way of a sane philosophy a reasonable religion, one that satisfies the ethical standard required by our highest spiritual and moral concepts, one in which God is revealed in a manner thoroughly acceptable to our intelligence."

The question then arises, "Is science, then, nothing but a handmaid of religion?" Does it have any authority of its own, and, if so, what is the nature of it, what is its domain?

Nature Is Revelatory

It has been remarked that nature must be viewed through the spectacles of God's special revelation, the Scriptures. Such a statement may be very misleading without further elucidation. And much abuse can be made of it. It seems clear to us that the Scriptures themselves clearly teach that there is a light in nature, per se, which cannot be, and is not, transmitted through the spectacles of the Word. If this were not so, how could the Scriptures say of those who have only the light of nature that "they are without excuse."? God's revelation in nature is in a very real sense independent of His revelation in His Word. Such knowledge as men derive from a study of the natural processes has validity. It must be so if it is to be a revelation at all, even though it is revelation in a limited and a convicting sense rather than a saving one. The spectacles of Scripture are necessary if we are to view the totality of our knowledge from the proper perspective and for what it was really intended to be, that is, within the framework of a satisfying philosophy or world view. But the fact remains—and, of course, we know this only from the Scriptures—that God does reveal Himself, even though incompletely, to men through the medium of natural processes, legible to all men who will read. Hooykaas aptly observes, "The source of knowledge for the natural sciences is the Book of Nature, which is given to everyone."

Its Content and Meaning

Practically speaking, we may, it seems, distinguish between the content and the meaning of the sciences, or, if you prefer, between the descriptive and the metaphysical character of our scientific knowledge. By content, or description, we mean the whole body of observations of natural phenomena, including the laws, theories and hypotheses which correlate these data. For many, perhaps the majority, of those engaged in scientific pursuit, this is the totality and goal of science. For these people the discovery of

1 Calvin Forum 16, (8), 100-102 (1951).
rationality among the facts of nature as observed is its own reward. For them life is to be found within the walls of a laboratory, romance only in controlled experiment. Nevertheless we must admit that these "slaves of the elements" are contributing to the building of the scientific structure. That their contribution is a real one we must agree, for we make use of their data and build upon their foundations in so far as we desire to extend our knowledge of the physical character of the universe.

But the thorough knowledge of the descriptive, or perceptual, character of a science is quite incomplete and unsatisfactory without a knowledge of its relationships to other sciences. An adequate knowledge of Biology presupposes an acquaintance with Chemistry and, in turn, of Physics, and an understanding of their interrelationships. Beyond that, one cannot reasonably evade the questions which pertain to the origin, purpose and meaning of that which one knows. All of which emphasizes the fact that, as rational human beings, rational by virtue of the fact of creation in God's image, we cannot be content with a science without a philosophy of science, with a description of fact without an explanation or evaluation of it. To attain to this we must be lifted above the natural process of which we are a part. As Christians we are committed to the position that this is possible only by a supernatural Power Who is pleased to lift us to the heights of redemptive knowledge, from which we can properly view the activities and boundaries of the areas of knowledge below. "What nature is to us is determined by what we think of God and who He is for us.—We may not think as we please, even scientific work has a moral character."**

There is a real danger that an emphasis on the metaphysical aspects of science may lead to a virtual disdain of genuine activity within the sciences. I am aware that we, particularly we Calvinists, deny the logic of such an inference. Yet there are unmistakable tendencies in this direction. The readiness with which some people seize on certain scientific discoveries to bolster their faith, and ignore or ridicule others apparently equally valid but not so amenable to this treatment, is one evidence of this trend. Such an attitude is basically dishonest and denies scientific investigation the authority which is its right. We must also guard against the notion that too much involvement in scientific pursuits is a hazard to our faith. How often we hear the expression, particularly in our day of atomic powers, "Now they are going too far," in comment upon the discovery of nuclear energy, for example. Again, we must be very cautious in evaluating the accomplishments in the natural sciences on the basis of Scriptural principles. History clearly shows how some of these "principles" have turned out to be only human fancies. This point is, I take it, the burden of an article by R. Hooykaas, entitled, "Dominees en Evolutie." He says, "The so-called conflict between the human science of nature and the God-given Scriptures is all too often a conflict between human science and human interpretation of Scripture. And then it is good reformed practice not to give one priority over the other, but to try, with critical eye, to examine both human interpretations, and, so far as possible, to listen to what God has revealed to us in nature and in Scripture."" (my translation—E.W.)

Having made these observations, it is proper that we consider the specific contributions which God's special revelation can make to our conception of the natural sciences. That the Scriptures have this authority no Christian can deny, and a recognition of its authority can be the privilege only of the redeemed individual. No amount of logic or persuasion can take the place of the grace of God in convincing men of the authority of the Word.

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The doctrine of creation is the logical starting point for our reflections. It appears to us that the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," have far-reaching implications for the sciences. We do not pretend to exhaust their meaning, but wish merely to suggest some of their import. As we see it, the doctrine of creation, together with the total Scriptural interpretation of it, has something to say to us about the nature, limitations, necessity and purpose of the sciences, because it defines the nature, limitations, necessity and purpose of the created world.

Although, as Haeckel has said, the problem of origin is not within the province of science, nevertheless no thinking being can escape the question. It seems strange to us that so many naturalists can so easily evade this question of origins. In solving any problem concerning the nature of an object, a very important consideration always is its origin. Our understanding of a phenomenon is not judged complete, or even adequate, until we have probed into its history. How much more folly it is to ignore so fundamental a question as that pertaining to the origin of our universe. The question of the origin of all that exists must always be embarrassing unless we seek its solution outside of the natural process. The first words of Genesis clearly announce the super-natural origin of our world. The Originator himself has revealed this fact to us. How else could it be known? We can have no part with naturalism as a philosophy, for to it the concept of creation is utterly repulsive. "What naturalism cannot accept is the idea of a God who stands outside Nature and made it."**

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7) Hooykaas, R., Revzinlin 5, (3) 76 (1950).
Nature of Created Reality

An acceptance of the creation account commits us to some fairly definite notions concerning the nature of the created world, and, therefore, of the sciences which explore it. In the first place we observe that created realities are finite. They possess the characteristic of time. The world as we know it had a beginning and will come to an end. Although such can be said of the creature, it can never be true of the Creator. Hence it seems entirely out of place to speculate, as Sir James Jeans does, that the universe is a thought in the mind of the Creator. We can never identify this finite existence with the infinite Creator, or with any attribute of Him, for He is infinite in all the characteristics of His being.

Furthermore, the created world possesses the characteristics of reason. Its multiplicity and diversity do not constitute a chaos but a cosmos. We find coherence and order because the individual facts are comprehended within a rational framework, a master plan. This rational character finds expression in the laws of nature, or natural law. Bavinck observes, “Abstracted from God as the lawgiver, the laws of nature are nothing but a human and ever fallible description of the way in which things operate.” When God created this world He imparted to it some marks of His authorship, and one of these marks is organization, or coherence. This is clearly implied, we believe, in the utterance of the psalmist, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” When God pronounced the creation “good,” we may be sure it was so in every respect.

It may be objected that we presume too much to think that our conception of what is good, or orderly, or natural law, is also God's conception of it. That is, how can we be sure that our reasoning about the observed world is identical with God’s? We do not insist that there be an identity between God’s evaluation and ours, for that would be to deny the Creator-creature distinction. But we believe that we must maintain that there is a real analogy between God’s concept, of natural law for example, and our formulation of it. That is to say, we cannot be content with the very prevalent notion that natural laws are only the fancies of the human mind, purely subjective in character, merely mental constructs without any objective reality apart from the mind. We come to this conclusion also when we examine a bit more closely the content of God's creation, or the orders of reality.

When we read the Genesis account we are impressed with the fact that there is order in the succession of events. First there appears all inanimate matter, then the animate creations. Again, in the creation of living creatures, we find the important distinction between animal and human being. Throughout the creative process we discern a progress from the simpler to the more complex. But, and this is extremely important, each succeeding order of reality is the product of God’s creative act. It appears very clearly that the final act of creation, the creation of man, climaxed it all, for of man we read that he was created in the “image of God.” To us this implies that man occupies a very unique place in this universe. This fact, too, has an important bearing on our conception of the meaning of the sciences, as we shall now attempt to point out.

As an image bearer of God, man is a creature not only of time but also of eternity. Though his soul also is a creation of God, it is not bound by the limits of the rest of the perceptible creation. In Calvin’s words, “the image of God includes all the excellence in which the nature of man surpasses all the other species of animals.” It is probably the consensus of Reformed opinion to say that the image of God constitutes the “essence” of man. If this is so, we err if we attempt to define man as a purely sensuous being, as pure mechanism. The human being is more than an aggregate of matter, and human behaviour more than mechanical response to stimuli. He is fundamentally a spiritual creature, not to be understood in terms of the physical, but rather the metaphysical. On this basis we must reject any psychology which is no more than a glorified physiology. Man’s distinguishing characteristic is the image of God he possesses.

Included in the image of God in man is the rational power of the human mind. It is this characteristic of the human being that enables him to escape the confines of physical laws and contemplate the spiritual reality which guarantees these laws. Man is, as it were, the liaison between the Creator and His creation. He has been endowed with the faculty of mind so that, even though he is a part of the total creation, he can, within limits, of course, interpret it. By virtue of his creation in God’s image, man is empowered to discover the unity underlying the diversity of natural phenomena, the laws governing the natural processes. These laws are identical in their formulation or physical aspects whether they are derived by a Christian or a pagan. However, it is only the Christian who can appreciate them for what they really are. That is to say, without an acceptance of the creation account, particularly the creation of man in God’s image, one cannot enjoy the confidence that the law and order in nature are objectively real, and not merely a figment of the imagination. God’s image in man is a prerequisite to communication between God and man concerning His creation, and a recognition of God’s image.

in man is the basis for the assurance that, with
diligent search, one shall find God's cosmos, and not
a chaos, among the natural processes. An acceptance
of the fact of God's image in man assures one that
God's wisdom is truly discernible in the things that
are made. In the words of Augustine, we are able,
to a degree, to "think God's thoughts after Him."

This is not to say that we can know comprehensively. We recognize that sin has darkened the
mind, and continues to becloud even the regenerate
mind, and continues to becloud even the regenerate
attribute this design to God rather than himself, and
only by the saving grace of God that one is able to
design to render him

glass

Limitations of the
Scientific Method

If one recognizes the orders, or levels, of created
things, it would also seem to follow that one must
be very cautious in transferring from one order to
the other the methods employed in examining each.
Particularly in the physical sciences there has been
developed a method of procedure known as the
scientific method. This mode of procedure—experiment under controlled conditions, precise observations, correlation of data by means of mathematical formulas wherever possible, etc.—has been
eminently successful in exploring the physical world.
So productive has it proved to be, that it is now
claimed to possess an authority to which it has no
right. Since exact quantitative measurement has so
profundly accelerated the pace of our material
progress, men have been inclined to accept measure-
ment of the criterion of truth. If this is done, we
may be sure that only the measurable characteristics
of a phenomenon will be recorded. In the light of the
creation account which posits an essential difference between the inanimate and the animate, be-
tween animals and man, we must be very careful
to recognize the possibility that the methods em-
ployed to explore the one may not at all reveal the
essence of the other order of reality. We may not
"limit a problem by reason of a method of attack," as Whitehead puts it. We must clearly recognize
the limitations of the scientific method as it is
operative in, and applicable to, a particular field of
study, lest we find only what we wish to find
rather than permit nature to speak to us as it really is. We are not prepared to say how far we
can trust the methods used in the physical sciences
to discover the facts, for example, of life, or mind.
But we may be sure that, as long as we confine
our attention merely to the physical aspects of these
realities, we shall never discover their true essence.

It may be well to emphasize again that one's
attitude toward the limitations of the scientific
method will be determined by one's philosophy of
science. The naturalist, who reduces all reality to
the natural, or physical, order, is quite sure that
the only reliable method is the experimental one
of the physical sciences. We have pointed out before
that the fundamental difference between the natural-
ist and the Christian position is one of authority to
which each appeals. And that authority, whether it
be the human self or God, is not such by virtue of
reason first of all, but it is an object of faith in
either case.

Necessity and Purpose
of the Sciences

It is quite clear from the first chapter of Genesis
that man from the beginning bore an obligation
toward God with respect to his relation to the rest
of creation. Man was created for a noble task. He
embarked on it with God's blessing in the words,
"Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it." Specifically, his task was to "have
dominion over the works of Thy hands." (Ps. 8:6)
Surely such dominion cannot be understood proper-
ly in terms of power only. Rather, I believe we must
conceive of man's task as one of ruling with full
understanding of that which is under his control.
Only such a conception is consonant with the true
nature of man as distinguished from the lower orders
creation. Hence we see here the command to
exercise our powers of investigation and of judg-
ment, the necessity for scientific activity.

This necessity for the sciences becomes more
evident when we consider the purpose of God's
creation. He intended it to be a revelation of Him-
self to man. Certainly Adam saw it as such very
clearly. He must have recognized the hand of Di-
vine wisdom wherever he turned. But sin obscured
man's wisdom. Through the fall he brought upon
himself a sort of myopia, by which he forfeited his
ability to see beyond the created reality to the
Creator, and so to understand nature for what it was
intended to be, namely, a revelation of the wisdom
and power of the God Who has revealed Himself
more fully in the Scriptures. In spite of man's de-
fection God's purpose for nature remains the same.
His revelation in nature must still complement His
revelation in the Word, both of which have a common
origin and a common purpose, the glory of God.
But for nature to serve this high purpose, it must
be explored. We readily sing, "The heavens declare
the glory of God," but little understand the signifi-
cance of these words until we have learned some-
thing about the science of astronomy. Again, we
confess, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
marvelous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth
right well." How much more meaningful such a
confession becomes on the lips of one who is familiar
with the physiology and chemistry of the human body, to say nothing of the faculty of the mind, or of the soul! God’s revelation in nature becomes meaningful for the Christian to the degree that he implements it with the results of scientific experiment. God has revealed Himself in nature as well as in Scripture, and therefore it is required of us to be as diligent in our understanding of the one as of the other.

Sometimes I fear that such systems and philosophies as we are wont to champion are highly susceptible to ridicule and become meaningless to the public mind because our deeds do not bear them out. It is one thing to say, as Kuyper long ago asserted in his Stone lectures, that Calvinism “fosters a love for science,” but it is quite another thing to prove it by our works. To do so will require intense research efforts, much time, and much encouragement arising from the conviction that God speaks to us in the things He has made.

THE REFORMED FAITH AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

W. Stanford Reid

The question of the unity of the church of Christ is something which is today very much in the air. Wherever one goes in the church, this question comes up for discussion with people strongly for or against. We of the Presbyterian Church in Canada were one of the earliest denominations to be brought face to face with it when some twenty-six years ago over half our church joined with the Methodists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada. Since that time the United Church has been calling for bigger and better unions, while we have been rather sceptical of such moves. With, however, a revival of the whole movement during the past few years we find it necessary to consider our position, particularly as members of a Reformed Church. What should be our attitude; and how should we react to moves towards church union? To answer these questions we must go back to first principles as well as looking back over the way along which the Reformed Churches have traveled in the last four hundred years.

A Central Problem of the Reformed Church

The very term “Reformed Church” raises the question of church unity. The Reformers: Luther, Zwingli and Calvin are often accused of starting the disruption of the Church. There have been many tears, some of them crocodile tears, shed over the divisions wrought by the Reformation. But, however, we look at the situation we must admit that the Reformation meant a division in the medi­eval church. For this they were severely taken to task by the leaders of Rome. Cardinal Sadoleto in writing to Geneva after Calvin retired to Strasbourg declared that their troubles had come because they had left the true church, departing from its unity. This has been the cry of Rome ever since. The Reformers are called schismatics, for they have “rent the seamless robe of Christ,” His church.

While this is a very serious accusation, Calvin and the others were not too much impressed. Their reaction, however, did not come from a scorning of the unity of the church, nor because they were not interested in restoring unity. Calvin has some very strong words to say on the necessity of maintaining the unity of the church. The very title of chapter one, book four of the Institutes “The true Church and the necessity of our union with her, being the mother of all the pious,” makes that only too clear. Calvin, however, did insist that the fundamental unity must be the “unity of faith.” This he held to be the only true, Scriptural position. Only on this basis does the church exist. If the church ceases to acknowledge and serve Christ as the Incarnate Son of God, Saviour and Lord, then it automatically ceases to be the church. Calvin then went on to point out that the medieval church had so over­larded the Gospel with ceremonies, rituals and officials that the Gospel was hidden. What is more the Roman church would not permit the true preaching of the Gospel, which would trample on vested interests. Therefore, the Roman Church was no longer a church, according to Calvin; and Christians could not conscientiously remain in it. Only on such very serious grounds could one withdraw from the church as it then existed.

This insistence on the priority of belief has been virtually the position of the Reformed Churches since that time. As one goes back over the divisions which have come in various Reformed churches in different parts of the world that becomes only too clear. Differences on the basis of fundamental doctrines of the faith have always been the ground of division. If we look at Scotland we find that the question of the Lordship of Christ over the church, involving the whole question of church government
was a major cause of divisions. That in turn went back to even more fundamental doctrines such as those involved in the whole nature of the Gospel. The same was the case in the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands. To a large extent much of our objection in 1925 to going into the United Church was also doctrinal, as is so ably stated by the late Dr. Ephraim Scott in his *Church Union in Canada*.

During the last century, however, a change has come over the ecclesiastical world. Following upon the rise of rationalism and scientific materialism doctrine fell into disrepute. In the middle of the nineteenth century the Evangelical Alliance was formed which set forth quite a long doctrinal statement. It demanded faith in the infallibility of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement and various other doctrines which obviously had supernatursalistic implications. Gradually these views became unpopular. Consequently other bodies began to develop, such as the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Then came the Faith and Order Movement, the World Missionary Alliance and many others. The general idea of all these groups was that of bringing together the church into one grand single body, all-inclusive and big. This would solve many of the problems of the church, opening up new avenues and stopping duplication of effort. Finally the whole thing came to the culmination in the World Council of Churches held in Amsterdam in 1948. This was the long-expected step which would bring final union and consolidation of the Church.

To this programme, what should the answer of the Reformed Churches be? Does the Reformed position, do the Scriptures give us any real guidance? When we ask these questions we find that this becomes

**A Doctrinal Problem of The Reformed Church**

It is a doctrinal problem, primarily, for it is a question of the unity of the faith. As Isaiah points out (8:20) only in turning back to the law and to the testimony, and in agreement with it can men have light. It is this light which alone will allow men to walk together in agreement. (Amos 3:3) It is the common faith that enables the Christians to be one as Christ is one with His Father. (Jno. 17:21) It is only by this means that we can have “one Lord, one Faith, one baptism.” (Eph. 4:5) Union is not to be attained by paring and cutting away our doctrine, but rather by getting our doctrines straightened around so that we and all others can see them as fully as possible. Thus when we as Calvinists ask whether or not we can support these church union projects we must ask: what do they believe? And, how much do they believe? Upon how much can we agree with them, not how much can we leave out?

Under present limitations of time and space we cannot touch on all the points of doctrine which are involved. We can perhaps best see our situation by turning to the one big testing question: What think ye of Christ? All else in our theology is involved in and summed up by that one question. It involves the doctrine of the Trinity, creation, providence, justification, sanctification and all the rest. Therefore, let us see what we do hold in this regard.

First of all when Reformed thinkers come to this question, they hold that Christ is the Son of God, the eternal Word, born of the Virgin Mary, who became flesh and dwelt among us. What is more, throughout His life upon earth, He was truly human and at the same time still the divine Second Person of the Trinity. He performed miracles, proclaimed great teachings and was finally crucified under Pontius Pilate. The third day He arose from the dead and after forty days ascended into heaven. Thus the Reformed faith has always stood squarely behind the historic doctrines of Christ's deity. When they are forsaken, no matter how one may protest, the unbeliever is no longer to be counted as truly Reformed, nor we believe is he even to be recognized as a true Christian.

But it is not just a matter of the person of Christ. That is basic but by no means all. What did Christ do? Why did He become man? Here the answer since the days of the Apostle Paul, has been that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. As our representative Christ by both His passive and active obedience, by His fulfilling the law, and by His bearing of our sins in His own body on the cross, made peace between God and men. He bore the penalty due unto His people and suffered in their place. This He did as the Covenant Head of the Church, so that all who believe on Him, who trust themselves to Him are freely justified by grace and received for His sake. This again is a doctrine at the core of the Reformed faith. Those who would deny it, thereby deny that Christ is the Saviour and likewise rule Him out so that there is no possibility of unity with them on the very foundation of the faith.

The other aspect of this is that it is not just a matter of what Christ has done in the past, but what and where is He now? Here again, the Reformed faith is just as certain and dogmatic. Christ is exalted a prince and a Saviour. He is head over all things to the church. As the Lord He is calling out His people into the Church. He is ruling over them and subduing all His and their enemies. He is Lord. Therefore, there cannot be any talk of church union which does not ground itself fully and completely upon His Word, and which does not give
Him all the glory, honour, dominion and power. He is even King over the state, which means that the church cannot possibly submit to the state, allowing the civil ruler to control the church, limit or teach it. Christ alone is Lord and all union must rest on this.

Some, however, may object to this. If one who professes to be a Christian but does not accept these views asks you to join with him, will you refuse? Personally I cannot see how we can do anything else? We are not against them, nor do we hate them. In fact we will strive to win them over to our position if we possibly can. But to join with them is something altogether different. It is more honest for us to see clearly where and how we disagree and to acknowledge that disagreement, rather than to try to cover it up and pretend that there is no divergence of opinion. When we are in conflict and in serious conflict let us be honest and quit trying to fool both ourselves and the world at large. Such deceit never brings God's blessing. This position therefore means that this is

A Present Problem of the Reformed Church

It is a present problem because of the present move towards union. It is a union of all the churches, including the Roman Catholic church which seems to be desired. Such a union is to be all-inclusive, but there is to be very little which is doctrinal about it. It is to be an organizational union, not a union of faith. It is to be a union for administration, not a union for spiritual development and growth. Whatever doctrine there is to be in it, will be of the very feeblest and most anemic type.

As we begin to study the present ecumenical movement and its statements, both unofficial and official we find this to be the situation. A study of statements of the Faith and Order Movement and the other groups which form the background to the World Council of Churches reveals that while much is said about Christ, little which is really specific can be adduced to show what the movement believes. The phrase “the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour” is used whenever necessary, but this is the only basis of the proposed unity. These words sound nice, but can mean practically anything. We begin to discover this when we make a study of the movements and the individuals who make up the movement.

One good instance of the position held, not by one of the older churches with an historic creed, but by one of the new churches which is the pride and joy of the ecumenical movement is to be found in the Church of Christ in China. This body requires no common faith, but is an organic ecclesiastical union. It recognizes the Apostle's Creed as being a statement of the evangelical position, but nobody has to accept it. (Let us Unite, Peiping China, passim) This church since the overrunning of China by the Communists has been prepared to back the red regime, and accept it heartily. The general secretary of the church, H. H. Tsui, was one of the co-signers of the “Manifesto of the Shanghai Comrades of the National Christian Council on Peace,” a thoroughly Communist bit of propaganda, which appeared in June, 1950 on the front page of the C.C.C.'s official publication. Thus we find that the term “Jesus Christ as God and Saviour” is wide enough to include even the supporters of Communist propaganda.

Perhaps the World Council of Churches' position is even more clearly exemplified by the various individuals who are in the movement, particularly in places of importance. There is for instance Dr. T. C. Chao one of the six presidents of the World Council. Not only is he the author of a Life of Christ which flatly and explicitly denies Christ's deity. He is today one of the principal supporters in China of the red regime. He was prepared to write to the Christian Century (September, 1949) stating that “one can be both a Christian and a Communist in China.” It is perhaps not surprising that with his views concerning Christ this should be his view, but it is revealing that now after a year and a half, he is still one of the presidents of the World Council!

But we do not have to go nearly so far afield. Amongst the leaders of the movement have been or are such men as Professors William Adams Brown, Henry P. van Dusen of Union Theological Seminary and W. M. Horton of Oberlin. All three have been at pains to deny the deity of Christ in the historic sense, and to rule out the idea of his substitutionary atonement. So one might go on. There are others who are not so explicit in the expression of their views, but who would seem to be equally weak in orthodoxy. With such men there can be no real Christian unity, particularly when the ecumenical movement would seem to be interested in obtaining a monopoly on the mission field so that groups which it does not like will be kept out. From what we can learn this has already been attempted in both India and Africa. From the Reformed point of view, this would not seem to be the proper movement with which to make an alliance, nor the proper movement under which we should place ourselves for guidance.

There are, on the other hand, evangelical movements, the I.C.C.C. and the L.E.A. It is a pity that these two groups cannot get together. But there would seem to be both personal and principal differences here which have not been reconciled. The most fundamental problem again, however, would seem to be that problem of doctrinal difference. The churches and bodies which form them, while
apparently agreeing on certain fundamental positions find that actually that agreement does not exist, or if it does, it exists by inconsistency. Again comes that fundamental Reformed insight. To get true union there must be maximum, not minimum, agreement in belief. That would seem to be the need even here.

What then is to be done? Should we throw over our beliefs? That would not seem to be the answer for we would then reject what we believe most sincerely to be the truth. It would seem to be the best plan to organize a movement which is fundamentally Reformed in outlook and in doctrinal basis. At the same time it would be possible for cooperation to take place between such a body and even Mohammedans in defending such a thing as religious liberty, freedom of speech and the like. But to talk in terms of any closer link would seem to be impossible.

We might as well realize that in this life there cannot be complete union even of the faith among true Christians. We are not yet free from sin, and consequently there will always be divergence and difference of opinion. Our duty is to strive for the closest possible unity of thought and belief. Only then can we talk of union. This was Calvin's position, and it is the only really feasible position. The present attitude in the church, however, is far from that of the Reformed Church. Its attitude is that it makes no difference what we believe, we can get together on the very minimum of doctrine. We can be deniers of Christ's deity, rejecters of the Scriptures and supporters of the Communist regime and still have an equal right to be called Christians and be elected to positions of power in a world church organization. This is not unity; it is plain dishonesty—a false unity which destroys all unity and can only lead the church to ultimate disaster. Therefore, as believers in the Reformed Faith let us stand firm, hold to our principles and refuse to entangle with unbelief and apostacy which seems to be the way of so much of the church today.

Most of our subscriptions run out with this issue and are renewable with the August issue. Is yours? Look at the address label. If it is, will you help us by sending your renewal promptly? Thank you.

From Our Correspondents


Dear Professor Bouma:

This is the first letter that I have the honor and pleasure to write you from our new address. On March 17 we received from the Union Minister of Education, Science and Art, our charter as an independent university. Independence means for us several important things. In the first place, we are now a free institution, granting our own degrees and diplomas. Before March 17, we were, as you know, a constituent college of the University of South Africa. The prescribed courses of study for the different degrees and diplomas were drafted by us at Potchefstroom, but they were to be approved of by the Senate of the University of South Africa. We conducted our own internal examinations, but the examiners were subject to the control of a so-called external examiner appointed by the Senate of the University of South Africa. The University of South Africa left the teaching to its various constituent colleges, but controlled the courses of study and the examinations and awarded the degrees. We of Potchefstroom were, of course, members of the Senate of South Africa. New conditions have changed completely. As an independent university we will now be entitled to grant our own degrees and diplomas, to draw up our own courses of study and to conduct our own examinations. Our long experience as members of the Senate of the University of South Africa gives us the necessary confidence that our teaching and our examining will be of a sufficient academic standard to face the whole world.

In the second place, independence gives us a more essential form of freedom. This concerns not the academic standard and freedom of teaching and examining, but more fundamentally the freedom of teaching and research as an acknowledged institution for Christian Higher Education. As long as we formed part of the federal University of South Africa, we were subject to the Acts, Statutes and Regulations of that University. The Act No. 12 of 1916 laid down everything pertaining to university education and administration. In that Act there is a certain clause—called by us at Potchefstroom the conscience clause—forbidding essentially Christian teaching. This clause is number 25, and reads as follows: "No teacher whatever of religious belief shall be imposed on any person as a condition of his becoming or continuing to be a graduate of the University, or a professor, lecturer, teacher, or student of the University, or of his holding any office, or emolument or exercising any privilege therein, nor shall any preference be given to, or advantage withheld from, any person on the ground of his religious belief." As a constituent college we were subjected to this clause. In effect, this meant and means a neutral institution and teaching. At Potchefstroom we were always agitating against this clause but without any avail, quite understandable as this Act laid down what shall pertain to our and other institutions. No exception could be made in our case as long as we remained a constituent college. Our own opportunity lay in becoming an independent university. And this is what happened last year when our private Act was passed by the Union Parliament. In our own Act this clause reads as follows (Clause 31): "(1) In appointing teaching and administrative staff the Council shall ensure that the Christian historical character of the University shall be maintained: Provided that no denominational test shall be applied to any person as a condition of his becoming or continuing to be a graduate of the University, or a professor, re-
search-worker, lecturer, teacher or member of the administra-
tive staff of the University, or of his holding any office or
receiving any emolument or exercising any privilege therein.
(2) No person shall be prevented on the ground of his reli-
gious belief from becoming or continuing to be a student or
graduate of the University."

The position at our University thus amounts to this: pro-
fessors, research-workers, lecturers, teachers and adminis-
trative staff shall be confirmed Christians—not necessarily
members of any particular Church; but the students may hold
any view. This might create a curious position in the future:
a Christian professor and a non-Christian student, granted
that very few non-Christians will avail themselves of the serv-
ices of a Christian institution. As you know, Potchefstroom has
since its inception in 1869 been an institution of the "Gere-
formeerd" Church; in 1921 it was incorporated but its main-
stay was and still is the Reformed Church. Our life and world
view is Calvinistic. To maintain the Christian historical char-
acter of the University means to maintain the Calvinistic char-
acter of the University.

And so, dear friend, a second Calvinistic University has re-
ceived official recognition, the first being the Free University
of Amsterdam, Holland. The Rector Magnificans of the Free
University attended personally our celebration during the mo-
mentous week of March 17. It was a great honor to us. We
did indeed feel the absence of a representative from Calvin
College (and Seminary), as your institution, that of Amster-
dam, and ours are virtually the only Calvinistic University
institutions in the world. At this juncture, we at Potchef-
stroom hope and pray that your institution will receive its in-
depeendent status in the very near future.

And now, we are off on the road of academic freedom as an
independent University. May our teaching our research, our
administration serve only one purpose: the glory of our God!
Our motto "In U Ligr" proves that that will be our aim at this
new university.

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

Groningen
April 19, 1951

Dear Dr. C. Bouma and FORUM Readers:

HERE I sit again at my desk using some of my spare
time to have a little chat with you. Let me begin with congratulations to you all on the seventy-fifth jubilee of Calvin College and Seminary. Too bad that great distances separate us, otherwise I would have been present at the receptions. Now I come by letter.

First of all, we recognize the blessings of God, which have attended the small beginnings which were made 75 years ago. God's ways are indeed wonderful. On April 12 it was exactly 150 years that somewhere in the province of Groningen, in Northern Netherlands, a boy saw the light of day, Hendrik de Cock. As many of his ancestors, Hendrik was trained for the ministry at the Groningen Academy, a few steps away from the place where I am writing this letter. Hendrik was trained by liberal theologians but when he came in his third church the Spirit of God awakened in his heart a love for the old truths. Up to that time he had never read the Canons of Dort, which were for many "terra incognita." Together with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism they served as a link between the churches which called themselves Re-
formed, but this was but a mere formality. No one was really
interested in these standards, except to smile about them from
time to time. It was in Ulrum, Groningen, that Rev. Hendrik
de Cock made surprising discoveries, came to his conversion
and became what he had been only in name thus far: a Re-
formed minister, or as it was then called, after the edict of
King Willem I, "Hervormd predikant."

It was Albertus Christian Van Raalte, who with his fol-
lowers and some followers of de Cock, emigrated to America
and laid the foundations for the School which now may observe its seventy-fifth anniversary. What a small beginning, in Ul-
rum and what a small beginning in Michigan! And, a century later, what small beginnings in Canada. But after a few years
the number of churches in Canada increased, with generous
support from the U.S.A. One just wonders how it will be
seventy years from now.

My thoughts also turn to Australia and New Zealand. At
present hundreds of Reformed people are migrating to those
countries. They are people, I hope, of the same strong con-
victions as Hendrik de Cock. Our friends, Dr. Robinson and
Dr. Allen, will have their hands full. I am sure they are glad
to have the help of two or three Holland ministers. The small
Free Presbyterian Churches experience suddenly a marked in-
crease in membership. May the Lord bless the new relation-
ships between the Hollanders and the Reformed people of
Scottish descent. May God use the small beginnings there for
something great in His Kingdom and may He give great cause
for thanksgiving seventy-five years from now.

Reformed people do not ignore knowledge, nor, it follows,
the schools. I hope that wherever Reformed people settle,
Christian schools may arise. People who are not Reformed
but subscribe to the Holy Scriptures and the Scriptural view
of the covenant, are able to cooperate in this venture.

We do not know how long the world is going to continue
before the Lord is coming again, nor how long we Reformed
people will have the opportunity to build and maintain schools
for primary, secondary and higher education, but we do know
that as long as we are able we should labor to the best of
our ability for this cause. The Lord grant you, brethren and
sisters, who support "Calvin," abiding joy and unfading energy,
unity and humility, in the pursuit of this glorious ideal. Once
I saw with my eyes the buildings on the Calvin Campus, now
I see in the spirit a multitude of people thanking and prais-
ing the Father of lights, the Source of this wonderful gift. I
commend you to God in all your needs.

Yours with Christian greetings,

PIETER PRINS, D.D.
H. W. Mesdagplein 2
Groningen, Netherlands
May 2, 1951

Dear CALVIN FORUM Friends:

SORRY that I cannot address my letter this time to Dr. C.
Bouma. I have learned of his serious illness. I hope that
my next letter may be addressed to him again and that
God may grant him complete recovery. I felt I should say
this first before I talk with you on a subject which will inter-
est all of you, the university problem.

I have noticed that this is a timely subject among you. Rev.
Emo Van Halsema has enlarged upon it in De Wachter and
I also learned about it from other sources. Of course, it is
not my intention to advise you concerning the problem, whether
the church or an association should sponsor the university
movement. That is a local problem, on which I have thoughts
but which I do not feel called to discuss in this letter. Should
one come to the conclusion that the church should sponsor the
movement, another question arises and that is, whether only
one church or other churches too should be interested in this
project. Should one come to the conclusion that an associa-
tion is the best solution, the question arises whether the church
or the churches could not take the initiative for the proposed
association. A good discussion is necessary to come to a Bibil-
cal solution and at the same time you can profit from what
has been done in countries like Holland and South Africa
on this score. However, before you have a university, you may
have to wait a few years. Dr. A. Kuyper began the Free Uni-
versity in 1889. This school had a very humble beginning but
has developed into an institution of 1,300 students. This year
the medical faculty was added and a few years ago a chair

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in economics. I would advise you to subscribe to The Free University Quarterly, the second number of which just appeared, with worthwhile articles written by our professors, in a popular style and in the English language. You see, there is nothing that prevents you from becoming a subscriber and four times a year you receive a number of articles which keep you informed about the work of this Calvinistic university. I certainly would appreciate it, if some of your readers would take upon yourselves to take subscriptions for the Quarterly. You can send the list to me and I would be very happy to present this list to the school where I received my academic training and which I love. The price is ten guineas, about two dollars. Who will take this upon himself? Do not forget the students at Calvin College, they especially should read this magazine, even though two or three should take a subscription.

The World Council, even though two or three should take a subscription and which training and which Pache is correct in warning us against. The World Council sets forth officially, and what its lead­ where the Vatican; the denial that the Catholic Church is read, who may act favorably upon my suggestion. How I should like to be able to present a long list of names to the friends of the University at the coming annual meeting in July. Begin, therefore, without delay. Place your own name first on the list and let me know the result of your efforts.

I shall not write on other subjects in this letter. It might draw your attention away from the main subject. The Lord be with you all and fill you with zeal while it is day and we are able to work. Cordially yours,

Pieter Prins, D.D.

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**Book Reviews**

**WORLD COUNCIL UNDER SCRUTINY**

*The Ecumenical Movement*, by Dr. René Pache, Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Slaus Avenue, Dallas 4, Texas, 1950. Paper cover, $1.00.

W. A. Visser ’t Hooft in commenting upon Dr. René Pache’s book, alleges that our author goes very far in “grouping his facts and quotations according to his prejudices and by leaving out everything which does not fit into his picture” (*Ecumenical Review*, April 1951, p. 310). Such a critique is damaging if true. The critic also avers that statements have been “lifted out of their true context”.

It is impossible for a reviewer to check all quotations. Some of these quotations come from European magazines. In fact that makes this book less valuable. We have only a fragmentary conception of what Europe thinks.

President Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Theological Seminary claims that “few men are better qualified to speak on ecumenicity from the theological viewpoint than Dr. Pache.” Although on general principles we must grant that Visser ’t Hooft should know his own statements, we should not deny what our author claims that he “has tried to treat the ecumenical question in general and objective fashion.” Here is the rub. This book is a symbol of what we can expect often.

First of all men do interpret things differently according to their presuppositions. Basic theological differences, like windows with stained glass, will make us look upon other theologies with distorted vision. As a matter of fact, many statements made do engender the question: “Just what do you mean?”

Secondly, we could be more accurate in our distinction between what the Council sets forth officially, and what its leaders and protagonists say. At the same time we cannot shield ourselves behind this distinction to cover up anything objectionable. The World Council is still a personality movement, and leaders set the tempo. As they think today so will the Council act tomorrow.

Thirdly, what Dr. Pache says is not only a personal opinion. Others share his opinions especially in the evangelical world. Suppose he did Temple, Schlink, and Visser ’t Hooft an injustice, does it follow that he did all writers an injustice? Such an insinuation is as dangerous as the accusation made by Visser ’t Hooft.

Whether through leaders, Council auxiliaries, or official statements we do think that Pache is correct in warning us against the attitude toward the Vatican; the denial that the W.C.C.C. intends to operate as a super-church, and at the same time setting forth as a logical implication that such should be the case; a verbal satisfying basis of fellowship producing an organizational unity but hiding theological shifting grounds.

He is also right in averring that the World Council will sell us down the river for Home Mission Work (even though Dr. Leon Zander makes a distinction between proselytizing and witnessing *Ecumenical Review*, April, 1951, p. 258). We have no reason to deny that the case quoted by Pache as reported in the *Christian Beacon* is honestly stated. A worker of the Livingstone Memorial Mission was refused a visa to enter Tanganyika. This mission is not affiliated with the World Council. One can see when the Missionary Council and the World Council put their heads together they can become the destroyers of religious liberty and freedom of speech.

We believe, although in deference to Visser ’t Hooft we counsel some caution, that this is a splendid little book for an introduction to our contemporary ecumenical movement.

Pache believes that the W.C.C.C. is shaping itself into a fulfillment of Revelation 17. He denies that the only great sin is lack of outward unity.

Any one who ignores ecumenicity ignores the greatest revolutionary force today in Christendom. Theological books will have to be rewritten, creeds will have to be reviewed, and renewed courage will have to grow to face evangelical or orthodox isolation.

JACOB T. HOOGSTRA.
Holland, Mich.

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**AN APPRAISAL OF NEO-ORTHODOXY**


R. Niebuhr is a theologian taken seriously at home and abroad. Until the present, as far as we know, no book has appeared that gave a comprehensive purview of Niebuhr’s theology. This book of Edward J. Carnell fills a real need. We do not know of a better introduction to Niebuhr’s position than this book. It is clear, concise, rather comprehensive, and interspersed with apropos criticisms. It is a respectable reply of orthodoxy to neo-orthodoxy. No theologian can ignore the radical differences between the two with impunity.

Confessedly E. J. Carnell writes from the perspectives of the Reformed faith, retaining, however, objectivity in setting forth R. Niebuhr’s position. Rightly he selects the dialectical tension between time and eternity as the very heart and starting point of R. Niebuhr. In the light of that tension E. J. Carnell explains the terms R. Niebuhr employs, his conception of the Bible, orthodoxy, liberalism, and his evaluation of Karl Marx and communism.
The thread of thought is that man lives in two environments, in time and eternity, material and spiritual. The temptation of man is to select only one of these two and to ignore the other. A tension always ensues. This tension makes man man, so to speak. Constitutionally he must live in that tension. Anxiety follows. In that anxiety short-cuts to security are employed especially in the temporal environment, and these become the very warp of sin. Man cannot avoid sinning because he is constantly tempted, although sin itself is not inevitable (?). Even our Lord Jesus Christ was not sinless as orthodoxy claimed. His perfection consisted of the most perfect love for God.

Sacificial love (agape) must constantly break through this tension. There is, however, need of righteousness, and in the world of imperfections physical force must be resorted to, although force can never be the final answer.

There is nothing absolute. There is no absolutely perfect example of Christ as in yesterday's liberalism, and no Bible as an absolute norm as in orthodoxy. Absoluteness would break the tension and create human pride in the heart of the possessor.

Students of Søren Kierkegaard will notice at once the philosophical lineage of R. Niebuhr. His penetrating psychological observations as pride and egotism, anxiety and fear remind us of this Danish anti-Hegelian.

Jesus does not mean our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the tension in which the sacrificial love is displayed, but not the person who was crucified on Calvary. Jesus, of course, was the Christ to a great degree. Historical events recorded in the Bible are only "symbols." The story of Adam in the garden is only a pointer or a symbol of an original righteousness in all of us today. Thus creation, redemption, resurrection, and eschatology are employed, as symbols of the tension of the dialectics of time and eternity. Niebuhr's approach to history absolutely forbids him to think of God's acts of re-creation as taking place at a definite moment of time.

With this background we can understand the following criticisms. Niebuhr's position is in reality an imposition upon the Bible. Carnell thinks Niebuhr a naive expositor of God's Word. With this we concur since we believe it in more correct to speak of the religious philosophy of Niebuhr than of his theology. His exegesis conforms to his imposed philosophy upon the Bible.

Niebuhr also assumes what he denies. He denies any absoluteness in the realm of knowledge, and at the same time he uncritically affirms that the dialectical tension and love are absolutes. We could restate by saying that no man can say that all is relative without assuming that this is absolute.

As an existentialist he disowns metaphysics, and, consequently, has little use for the traditional formulation of the two natures of Jesus Christ. Carnell rightly asserts that this denial of metaphysics will not satisfy, although perhaps Carnell could also have said to deny a metaphysics is already to assume one.

Since Christ is not synonymous with Jesus Christ of the Scriptures; others besides Jesus Christ can share in the existential Christ. There is only a relative difference between Jesus, Socrates, and Chandi. Carnell is right in demonstrating the fact that the outstanding American theologian (?) has denied the finality of the Christian faith.

If the tension between time and eternity belongs to the very structure of life, including anxiety and sin, then at least two things happen. Is not God the author of sin? Secondly, there can never be a redeemed people and a lost people. There will always be an original righteousness and an unrighteousness in all of us. In other words, Carnell points out Niebuhr's position in universalism.

Carnell gave us a good book. It will arouse such questions in our minds: Is not dialectics per se anti-Biblicist? May we speak of tension between time and eternity or of sin and grace? Can Niebuhr give content to the term "eternity"? If not, does he in his criticism of Communism, living only in and for time, strike a real blow?

 Permit us to state something dogmatically. A book like this brings to light the real struggle in modern Christendom, the plan unknown to the average private infantryman. Sooner or later it will come to a clash perhaps in World Council of Churches when Christians begin to think more consciously upon modern trends. Will it be the dualism of Immanuel Kant uncritically adopted by Protestants or the beautiful unity of a John Calvin temporarily disturbed by sin?

Holland, Mich.

JACOB T. HOOGSTRA.

PEERLESS PASSION TRILOGY REPUBLISHED

CHRISTUS IN DEN DOORGANG VAN ZIJN LIDJEN, door K. Schilder.
J. H. Kok, Kampen; 2de ed.; 018 pp.; f 13.75.

THIS is the second volume of a three-volume set bearing the title Christus in Zijn Lijden which first appeared in 1930. The book under consideration is a current republication, both enlarged and revised. The first edition, twenty years ago, was hailed as an event. During the years that have elapsed nothing has been written on the passion and death of our Lord that can begin to approach this work of Dr. Schilder. It is not too much to say that Dr. Schilder's work has outdated, outclassed, and outranked anything written in this field of investigation. It is the classic on the passion and death of our Savior. Any subsequent publication will have to take its departure from Schilder's monumental trilogy.

It is not just a devotional commentary, altogether too many of which appear year in year out to glut he market with inferior workmanship. It is not just a series of sermons suggested by the occasion of the church calendar and made ready in a hurry to meet the Lenten sales campaign. It is a profoundly penetrating analysis and synthesis of the Biblical passages treated in terms of sound exegesis which reckons with the organic unity of the Scriptures as the whole counsel of God. It is an authoritative proclamation of the direct relevance of the Word of God to the immediate existential situation. There is something of apocalyptical urgency in Schilder. He has realized the titanic import of the struggle between light and darkness, truth and error, Christ and anti-christ, God and Satan. He takes sharp issue with Barthianism and Existentialism because he has come to grips with both and has sensed the situation out of which both deviations arose.

The preacher who prior to the Lenten season has neatly and nicely arranged his contemplated series and has anticipated an ear-catching title and an eye-catching cover, should read Schilder. He will be startled, shocked, and aroused. He will find a theological interpretation which seeks to do justice to the centrality of the Christ as the man of sorrows and the suffering servant of Jehovah. He will cast aside what he thought was a beautiful sermon on The Tears of Peter and he will read anew:

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord... (Luke 22:61).

He will get busy and set right the obvious dislocation which betrayed him into making a 'beautiful' sermon. He will not even think of quoting Schilder because Schilder is not quotable. Doors he used to enter will be slammed shut in his face and new vistas and perspectives will gradually appear to his眼界 and new vistas and perspectives will gradually appear to his...
POSTSCRIPT TO THE PREACHER OF GENEVA


In the April issue of THE CALVIN FORUM the Rev. Harold Dekker gave us a study of Calvin, the Preacher of Geneva. It in it gives us something of the history of Calvin's sermons and also indicates the fact that today there is a re-awakening to the importance of Calvin as the foremost preacher of the Word in his time. In view of Rev. Dekker's treatment of the subject all I need do at this time is to call attention to the fact that also the Dutch Calvinists have been busy in this field of historical research. Already in 1941 two enterprising pastors had finished translating five volumes of sermons by Calvin under the title: HET GEPREDIKTE WOORD (THE WORD PREACHED). And now, ten years later, one of them, Rev. W. H. van der Vegt, has translated Calvin's sermons on the beatitudes. It is a fine piece of work. The language is elegant and vital. The appearance of the book is nothing less than beautiful. The treatment of the text is not sensational, but solid as all Calvin's sermons are. For those who can still read the Dutch here is an invitation to savor riches of the truth as it comes to us through the sanctified and God-intoxicated mind of the Genevan Reformer.

H. R. VAN TIL.

Calvin College.

POPULAR DUTCH COMMENTARIES REPUBLISHED AT KAMPEN

HET BOEK DEUTERONOMIUM, door Dr. J. Ridderbos; I, Chapters 1-17. HET BOEK ESTHESE, door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders, Second Printing. DE HANDELINGEN DER APOTHELEN, door Dr. F. W. Grosheide, Second Printing, Vol. I en II. JACOBUS EN JUDAS, door Dr. F. W. Grosheide en Dr. S. Greydanus, Second Printing. EXODUS, door Dr. W. H. Giepen. J. H. Kok, Kampen, 1950-1951.

The above five titles in six volumes add up to more than a thousand pages of readable type in handy format. These "short commentaries" (Korte Verklaring) of the Scriptures have had such a tremendous vogue in the Netherlands that the publishers have now been forced by popular demand to put out a second printing. This is truly a book for the common man. One can find these commentaries on the shelves not only of school teachers but of policemen, factory workers and artists. Not only is the language non-technical but the scholar in this instance has proved himself able to speak the language of the people. Critical questions are not entertained. No reference is made to the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek but the text of Scripture is reproduced according to the latest Dutch translation. As a matter of fact, Dr. Grosheide, who was chairman of the translation committee of the Netherlands Bible Society that finished the New Translation of the New Testament in 1939, is also one of the main contributors to this series of "Korte Verklaringen."

As a sample of the practical value of these commentaries this reviewer would like to point to Dr. Grosheide's work on the Book of Acts. Under the titles: "The first results of the expounding of the Holy Spirit," the author discusses the community of goods as practiced by the apostolic church. He admits that many have read a kind of Christian Communism into this passage. "That is incorrect, if one understands under communism the abolition of private property and the collective ownership and control of all possessions. For we are informed, indeed, that the members of the congregation remained private owners and voluntarily, as they saw fit, sold and distributed that which was their own. This also became clear later. Barnabas still owned some acreage (cf. 4:36) also Ananias and Sapphira. The mother of Mark, Mary, has a house in Jerusalem, 12:12. Ananias was free to keep his land, also to keep the money after he had sold it, 5:3, 4. There is no mention of a command. We have here a very special form of caring for the poor. There was love, and wherever there was need someone sold a piece of land and brought the proceeds to the apostles. When people came who were in need there was money, or someone was ready to sell his possessions. But we observe that as soon as this first love had cooled a bit this form of caring for the poor becomes ineffective. Already 6:1 speaks of difficulties. Later, when the persecution broke out, the Gentile church was not given the care and fellowship that accompanied Paul made regular collections for them. Paul himself never recommended this form of caring for the poor, let alone giving it as a command, but he introduces an entirely different system, 1. Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8 and 9" (Translation by reviewer).

This is merely a sample of the same and solid approach of the exegetes who have provided this splendid Commentary. Dr. Grosheide also offers a solution to the seeming contradiction of the three reports concerning Paul's conversion. This again indicates the practical value of these handy little volumes. Therefore this reviewer gives his unqualified recommendation to these commentaries. They are written from the Reformed point of view and have duly considered contemporary criticism of the canon of Scripture. They fully maintain the orthodox position while being in the best sense contemporary.

H. R. VAN TIL.

Calvin College.

VICTORIOUS FAITH


In this little volume we have an author setting forth his life struggles and victories in a rather unique manner. The material of the volume remains general and detached from the individual until the closing chapters. It is then we find that what has gone before is a fruit of the author's life. A life in which he found that faith is the victory.

The book begins by setting forth a pattern for the Christian life which follows the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to the promised land. This is followed by examples of faith at work. These examples include interesting character sketches of various Biblical heroes of faith. The bulk of the volume is devoted to a discussion of "Walled Cities." Of the six chapters concerning themselves with "Walled Cities," four deal with what the author calls the sin question, one with life's sorrows and trials and one with our witness. This is followed with brief chapters of a practical nature. In a testimony of himself and his experiences, the author demonstrates how the faith principle is to be put to work. The final chapter is brief. It simply sounds the note of triumph in the author's full realization that victory in the Christian life is not the tangible results that faith will bring, but faith itself is the victory.

Among the factors operating in the author's development of faith life, is a healthy reaction to the modern methods of evangelism. He states on page 32 "This age is turning out preachers of promotion—how-to-do-it' preachers—whose business is to organize and foster the Kingdom of God through the church. We have trained them in the most intricate detail of what to do, and how to do it. We have left them entirely ignorant of what God has done and can do for us. We are preaching a program of works throughout. We are trying to enlist men in a program of doing things for God, and, by advertising what we have been able to do, we try to make a convincing appeal to the lost. Ours is a gospel of promotion instead of a gospel of revelation."

This book is worth reading. There is much in it that will be profitable to anyone. It is with regret that it must be added that after the author has cut through so much of the form and shallowness of modern evangelism and Fundamentalism, he still remains in their camp. He presents an en-
lightening view of growth in grace and the process of sanctification, but fails to properly apply the same understanding to conversion and regeneration.

Grand Rapids, Mich.  
C. O. Buus.

ANOTHER APPROACH TO PASSION EXPOSITION


PREACHERS are forever seeking new and different ways of presenting the old, old story. The author of the above volume has sought a new method to the cross. He accomplishes his purpose by discussing six different modifiers of Christ's face. A separate text has been used for each theme, but all are either directly or indirectly related to Luke 9:51, "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

This little volume makes excellent devotional reading. There is a wariness of the author for his subject which the reader can also feel. The author is at his best in the first chapters of the work. One is also heartened by the author's recognition and condemnation of modern preaching and theology. "Many people have come to think of Him (God) as a kind of motherly old soul who 'wouldn't say a word against anybody.' A God of infinite pity Ah, yes, we have been quick to hail such a being, and to carry on a sly flirtation with sin while we do it. But a God of infinite purity and truth—that is different. We have bought shy of any such conception" (p. 27). But it makes one equally sad to read later, especially in the last chapters, the author's pleadings with men to allow the Lord to enter in and do something for them. To read these pleadings in the light of the poetic expression on pages 78 and 79, makes one wonder if the author has anything better than the positions he has condemned. This poem states that Christ's greatest sorrow and agony is not the torture, disfigurement, we are told, "So Christians however, are those for whom an atonement has already been provided. Those who need the atonement are the ones who are not Christians.

On page 99 we are told, "Such spiritual rebirth is promised through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." This, of course, favors of Arminianism; it is not the teaching of the Bible. Regeneration does not come through faith; rather, faith is evidence that the believer is regenerated. Again, with some surprise we read, "One remembers how our Great High Priest, for our redemption, laid aside the 'form of God'... and took upon him the form of a servant... etc." (p. 72). Christ, however, did not "lay aside" the "form of God." Such a kenotic theology is out of harmony with the Scriptures. The Westminster Shorter Catechism has far more correctly stated the case, when it speaks of "... the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever."

On page 69 we are told that "As members of the human race our very being and states as well as our acts are imperfect and need divine purifying if we are to have fellowship with a holy God." This, however, is not accurate. It is not because we are members of the human race that divine purifying is needed. It is because we are members of the sinful human race that such is the case. Also Hebrews 9:22 is misquoted at least three times.

The Book of Leviticus is a difficult book to interpret. For the most part we find ourselves in agreement with the exposition herein set forth. In a second edition however, the book should be worked over with some care, and the unfortunate statements to which attention has been called, together with some others, should be eliminated.


EDWARD J. YOUNG.

WORLD CRISIS


THERE is everywhere today, among those who do any real thinking, the impression that the world is on the eve of drastic changes. What the imminent changes will be when they come no one seems to know. The signs of the times are bewildering beyond our comprehension." With these words the author begins this stimulating, refreshingly wholesome book, which speaks in stirring language to the generation now living concerning our own time. He discusses the question whether there is any hope for our civilization to survive in view of the critical trend of world events. While he primarily presents a clear keen analysis of the ills of our own nation and offers a positive approach to their healing, it is obvious that he wants the reader to understand that the problem is worldwide in its scope.
Non-Christian men are aware of the critical nature of our times. And men in various walks of life suggest varied panaceas. In the civil sphere men may dream that socialism or some form of collectivism is the answer. In the ecclesiastical sphere there are many who feel that our hope lies in the direction of ecumenicity. The educational thinker judges that the promotion of better understanding between men and nations will bring the desired cure. But not until we get at the real root of our trouble can the cure be prescribed. Diagnosis must precede prescription. To that task the author addresses himself first of all. What is it that is consuming the vitals of our civilization? What are the termites which are eating away the foundation timbers of our institutions?

First of all there is the grossly materialistic philosophy of life with its secularizing effect upon life. Spiritual realities and values have become vague and dim. The fear of God is absent from the hearts of large multitudes, and is vanishing from the hearts and lives of other multitudes. A basic reason for this is that God has been banned from our institutions of learning. Consequently the true foundations of our freedom are neither taught nor known. This can have but one effect—demoralization. Political graft and corruption multiplies. Iniquity, vice and immorality grow apace. Insofar as the church is influenced, religious formalism results. Religion has lost its vertical reference. The teachings and practice of the church move on a horizontal plane. The truth about man’s natural condition is ignored or denied. Unless there is a return to the authority of the Word of God and the message of the Gospel there can be no hope of survival. Insistence on the authority of the Scriptures as the ultimate standard for both what is true and what is right is prerequisite. Such is the solid contentment of the author. What true Calvinist will hesitate to endorse that position? We are in the sorry plight we are in, and civilization is reeling on the precipice of terrible disaster, because men no longer think very much about God, and are still less concerned about the thoughts of God. What our nation needs is not more laws or even better law enforcement; not more alliances with like-minded nations. “What we need is something that can control human passions and change men.” (p. 57.)

Our nation therefore, needs a spiritual revival and prophets of God who have the courage to proclaim, not only to the common people, but as well to political bosses and industrial magnates, “Thus saith the Lord.” And no preacher ought to dare to claim the title of messenger of God unless he accepts the authority and infallibility of the inspired Word of God. Too many pulpits today are occupied by men who have only a word from man to man about man, but no word from God to man about God. The Christian solution to our modern chaos is the Gospel of redemption in Christ. Optimize of that message and its effective application to the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, there can be no real hope. The trouble lies in the human heart. Men are not changed by altering their environment. But when men are changed by the Spirit of God then human environment changes. Only changed men will bring about a changed world. Really changed men know the social implications of the Gospel.

Here is a small book with a big message. It is a book with a refreshing emphasis and a wholesome approach to the critical problems that confront our nation and the world. Its message challenges both the man in the pulpit and the man in the pew. It comes from the soul of a man who understands his times and interprets the handwriting. The church that has become apostate or lost its spiritual vigor may rediscover its high task through the message of this book. Decadent society might feel the pain of the pressing finger on its festering sores if it were ready to listen. Read this book and thank God that there are still such voices being heard today. And pray that God may raise up more of such voices.

While it probably was not within the scope of the book to relate the analysis of our times to the teachings of the Word of God eschatologically, concerning that ultimate crisis awaiting the world, the final judgment, a valuable chapter might have been added to the book by doing so. The question arises, Are the movements of history, interpreted in the light of the Word, perhaps rapidly converging upon that final crisis? What does the Bible teach about world conditions which shall prevail when God shall judge the world to be ripe for judgment? Is human sin beginning to reach the stage of ultimate development? Is the final crisis fast approaching? If so, then there is no hope of survival for present civilization. And then there is an unprecedented urgency about the present situation which should move the living church unto unexampled zeal to finish her responsible task in this Gospel age.

Lynden, Washington

J OHN C. VERBRUGGE

PERSPECTIVES IN PROPHECY


Here is a book which deals with prophetic material in a refreshing and challenging way. Instead of considering only some texts which deal with the endtime, the author sets himself to explain the significance of the farewell words of Jacob to his sons. Thus we have here an attempt to wrestle with the chief problems of history—the plan and purpose of God with His people in the world.

To each of the sons of Jacob was given a peculiar word of blessing and warning. This was divine revelation concerning the historical development of that tribe throughout its history. In dealing with the relevant Scriptural material Overduin proceeds on three basic principles: (1) that Jacob could only have spoken thus by divine inspiration; (2) that Jacob’s word, which is essentially God’s word, is exceedingly relevant for God’s children today who face the same problems in their relation to the world; and (3) that a proper understanding of Jacob’s word here leads to a deeper appreciation of the gospel of God’s grace in Christ. The basic problems which face the Christian today are dealt with in such a way that it becomes evident that they can be satisfactorily solved only by living in the light of the Cross. Some of the chapter titles show this clearly as, for example, “Reuben, the Mystery of Life and Death,” “Judah, the King under the Cross,” “Asahel, Earthly Pleasure or Heavenly Blessedness,” “Benjamin, the Victory of the Vanquished.”

An interesting illustration of the method which has been pursued may be gleaned from Overduin’s study of the prophecy concerning Naphtali. This he has entitled “The Problem of Beauty and Holiness.” After citing nine Scripture passages dealing with Naphtali and his descendants, he discusses the material under four topics: Christianity and Humanism, Beauty without Holiness, Holiness without Beauty, and The Beauty of Holiness. Thus he deals with the problem the Christian’s search for and appreciation of the beautiful. Such problems are faced as, Is there any place for the beautiful in the Christian’s life? What relation does beauty sustain to truth and goodness? Can beauty of form be enjoyed without first facing the question of truth of contents? In the history of Naphtali’s tribe God has warned His people against the temptation of cultivating beauty without a thorough grounding in truth. On this score the church is always in danger of compromising with the world. It is often refuses to recognize the hidden sins of the unbelievers because of the seemingly attractive appearance of their lives.

This problem of the interrelation of beauty and holiness is solved only by the Christian of the cross, who came without form or comeliness. In this connection Overduin discusses “The Riddle of Galilee.” In His home province, which included the territory once occupied by Naphtali, Christ was more popular than elsewhere and yet not accepted as Messiah. This was the sin of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin which Jesus excoriated in Matthew 11. It has room for sensational religion as long as there is no repentance to salvation. Thus in

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doctrine of Scripture. In order that the fulness of divine revelation may be understood, appreciated and practiced, Scripture must be compared with itself. Only then will justice be done to the organic unity of the Bible, which recognizes that the Old Testament gives a shadowy representation of spiritual realities while the New presents them in the full light of time. For all who use the Holland language there is here a rich storehouse of Biblical material. Grand Rapids, Mich.

Peter Y. de Jong.