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EDITORIALS

John Dewey

With the death of Professor John Dewey last June there passed from the contemporary American scene a man whose writings probably reflected the real America since the turn of the century more revealingly than those of any other contemporary philosopher. Our faith in democracy as the ultimate guarantee of the perfectibility of society and the individual, our optimism concerning the wholly secular public school, the decline of Protestantism as a pervading Christian influence, our practical atheism, and our materialism—it is all duly recorded in Professor Dewey’s special brand of pragmatism known as instrumentalism.

As a philosopher he threw overboard all metaphysics, and he repudiated all absolutes—except, of course, the two which he introduced more or less sub rosa, namely, evolution as a cosmic and social principle, and scientific method as the only means of arriving at truth. And the only truth worth having, according to Professor Dewey, is not truth in any absolute or final sense but, rather truth in the sense of “truth made,” truth provisional, truth for the time being. He refused to recognize the genuineness of any problem not in the end referable to experiment and practice, and he defined knowledge as the “intelligent control of a material situation.” Ideas are mere tools, and human intelligence is simply an “organ for the control of nature through action.” The only problems ever really solved are the practical ones, whereas metaphysical and religious ones are simply outgrown. There are no eternal verities and no final answers, and any school of philosophy proposing final answers ipso facto degrades itself to a school of apologetics and propaganda.

Genuine progressive thinking is provisional thinking, i.e., it confines itself to the here and now, always aware of the necessity of perpetual adjustment to changing conditions. Man has no demonstrable destiny or end but only “ends that are literally endless.” Embedded as we are in the evolutionary process it does not make sense to talk about the universe as a whole, for our universe is and will forever remain a “universe in the making.” Moral and other values, therefore, have nothing of the abiding and the eternal about them. Value judgments, accordingly, should be formed and expressed in a way in which they appear to meet human needs as they arise. We may occasionally draw a lesson or two from the past, but it is better to try to look into the future. The real test of the truth of an idea concerns how it may reasonably be expected to work tomorrow.

The import of all this for education is that it, together with everything else, will have to keep moving and changing. Accordingly, Dewey’s application of the absolutes of evolution and scientific method to education came to be known as “progressive education.” Because society learns only in the course of trying to solve its problems, the school should function as a kind of miniature society, in which progress in learning comes as the result of problem solving. The child, like the scientist and, let us hope, like the philosopher, gets his problems from the world of action and should therefore “return his account there for auditing and liquidation,” especially since the practical pursuits of modern man are of a kind as to allow “intellectualization.” Anyway, experimental science has effectively undermined the prestige of the purely intellectual studies.

Change, evolution, and progress are incompatible with the idea of unchanging goals or aims. The proper aims of progressive education are, therefore, those which satisfy the following criteria: They should be the outgrowth of existing conditions so that they will be founded on the activities and needs of the pupil; they should enlist the pupil’s cooperation; they should be flexible; and they should be specific and immediate rather than general and ultimate. Whereas traditionally the aim of education was conceived as the realization of man’s ideal nature and true end (which for Christian education meant the realization of his destiny as a redeemed creature made in the image of God), “progressive education” knows of no ideal nature or true end. For man as a member of a universe in the making there can be only an endless series of immediate and provisional ends, ends which are themselves means to still further ends. We know that somehow we are moving, but we can never know where we are going and just how we shall get there. And so if education may be said to have anything like a general aim at all it can only be that of social efficiency—for the time being, of course. Consequently, we cannot assert that one study is more valuable than another since value is something relative, depending

1 Curiously, Professor Dewey was born in 1859, the year of the publication of Darwin’s Origin of Species.
2 Professor Woodbridge Riley in his American Thought contrasts Ralph Waldo Emerson with John Dewey in this fashion: “One said, ‘Hitch your wagon to a star’; the other—‘Hitch your star to a wagon.’” that is, anything is true for the time being just as long as it furnishes you with motive power.
upon specific situation. All we can say is that culture must be socially efficient to deserve the name of culture, that it is simply a halo of vocation, that usefulness is in utility rather than in enjoyment, and that a thing has value because it is useful. 3

A few observations. To say that one subject is as valuable as any other is to say that education has no determinable goal, i.e., that it is impossible to know just what the purpose of education really is. And this brings us to the subject of Professor Dewey’s criteria of the proper aims of education. These criteria would seem to apply to bad aims as well as to good ones—even where by bad aims we meant nothing more than aims which seem to interfere with “social efficiency.” These criteria would evidently be satisfied, for example, by a successful school for the training of thieves (on whatever financial or political level), gangsters, shysters, confidence men, and so on. The aims of such a school would presumably be founded on petty thievery as a persistent activity and need of the young; they would evidently enlist the cooperation of the pupils; and they would be specific and immediate rather than general and ultimate. In fact, such a school would aptly illustrate Professor Dewey’s definition of subject matter, viz, “what one needs to know in order to do what one is interested in doing.”

It is right here that we see the fallacy of limiting the essentials of education to the essentials of scientific method, for education and life vastly transcend scientific thinking. Professor Dewey, although recognizing the legitimacy of remote ends and interests, shows a definite preference for the immediate ones. As a result the factors of duty and conscience never really enter into the picture of progressive education, proposing as it does only those aims which place no obligation on human nature. Yet there is no good reason, whether in logic or psychology, why remote and therefore more or less external aims, aims imposed as it were from without, cannot in fact represent truly human ideals, ideals which may become internal as the result of a change of attitude. In fact psychology and psychiatry are today asserting an old truth to the effect that a stable personality depends to a considerable extent upon such things as obedience, the recognition of authority, and self-denial. An important criterion of educational aims, a criterion ignored by Dewey, is that it should embody an ideal whose fulfillment is willed. It is simply a matter of fact that conscious mental effort has proved an important factor in past progress; and to the objection that imagined good does not sufficiently influence conduct, the answer is that by the testimony of history it is certain that imagined evil does. Dewey’s conception of interest may fit the needs of backward children; it does not fit the realities in the world of adults.

3) And when is it useful? Whenever it leads to something else which is useful, and so on ad infinitum.

In discussing the role of the public schools in America Professor Dewey appears to be somewhat at odds with himself. He admits that as a matter of history American society made the American public school; nevertheless he recommends that the public school be used as an instrument to reform American society. Here the truth seems to be that the schools, like the philosophers, like John Dewey himself, rarely do more than reflect social conditions and the social temper, and that they do not as a rule change them. The American public will probably continue to employ the schools for the purpose of propagating the type of society in which the adults believe. After all, the adults live where the economic, political, and other problems are; hence, if there is to be any reforming at all, adult society will have to begin by reforming itself. That the schools usually reflect the society which supports them can readily be learned by looking at Russia, where a transformed adult society quickly transformed the schools.

Professor Dewey’s notion of learning by doing has, of course, its uses, and no one has ever denied this. But it also has its limitations. There is an old saying that only fools must learn by experience—the implication being, of course, that the wide awake pupil will be able to learn both from books and from the sad experience of others. Children need not experience crime in order to be effectively warned against it. Naturally, the burnt child dreads the fire, but that hardly warrants the burning. The learning process may start on the basis of physical activities, but that does not support the conclusion that it should be kept there. All depends upon the grade of intelligence; that is to say, the lower the grade of intelligence the more numerous the physical activities apparently necessary. Children doubtless begin some of their learning as the animals do; on the other hand, animals cannot learn as children learn, since otherwise we should be able to teach them mathematics, aesthetics, and morals. One of the most interesting features of Dewey’s theory of progressive education is the paradox that a person completely the product of this theory consistently applied would be quite incapable of reading and understanding Dewey. If philosophy—at least in one of its important phases—may be defined as “the ultimate sense of the ridiculous,” Professor Dewey’s philosophy of education seems seriously lacking in at least one important respect.

In refusing to recognize the genuineness of all problems not referable to the method of hypothesis and verification on the physical level Professor Dewey, of course, brushes aside all “purely intellectual problems.” The truth is, however, that such problems do in fact determine men’s conduct to an extent far greater than is commonly supposed. Take for example such a “purely intellectual” problem as that of survival after death. The question of survival is natural to man in spite of the fact that any hypothesis about it is necessarily speculative.
and inconclusive. Furthermore, it is regulative of human conduct since, obviously, people act as if it were true, or false, or a matter of indifference. To justify any one of these alternatives would call for a certain amount of thinking, thinking which in the nature of the case must always be incomplete. In other words, it is simply a fact of existence to be explained—not ignored—that man is inevitably philosophical, that he thinks about problems he can never completely solve, and that he acts upon beliefs he can never hope directly and completely to verify. One may argue, of course, that modern man ought not to trouble his mind with these things, but the fact remains that he not only does, but that he can't very well do anything else and remain normal. And that is something to be explained, not simply condemned.

Is pragmatism something new? William James once called it a "new name for an old way of thinking." Certainly the only thing new about Professor Dewey's brand of it is the success with which he gave ancient doctrines an American orientation. Its denial of finality to truth, its assertion of man as the measure of all things, its evolutionism, its naturalism, its denial of the legitimacy of metaphysics, its definition of knowledge as a tool for discovery, its humanism, and its scepticism are as old as, respectively, Heraclitus, Protagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, Lucretius, the mediaeval nominalists, Hume, Comte, and Herbert Spencer. Nevertheless, John Dewey's influence upon primary and secondary education in America is not easily overestimated. In Columbia University he left behind a minor galaxy of pragmatists in the school of philosophy, who in turn have fathered thousands of "pale spiritual offspring in the jungles of Teachers College" alone. And Teachers College, despite the fact that it has occasionally been ridiculed for standing politically and socially for little more than Colorlessness, mediocrity, and just plain behaviorism, has exerted a tremendous influence upon the school teachers of the American Middle West, underpaid men and women who for years have willingly spent their summers in New York City for the privilege of drinking at this new fountain of progress.

What must be our final judgment on John Dewey as the philosopher of the American public school? It would seem to be an elementary truth that before we can hope to invent a system, whether of politics or education, which will not in the end turn out to be thoroughly bad, we should be able to take for granted the existence of something like common decency. Now moral earnestness without religious conviction is a bare possibility—at least with the select few who happen to be the beneficiaries of a moral momentum bequeathed by generations of devout forebears. But as a rule the passing of a religion marks the decline of the moral consciousness which it created and sustained. Professor Dewey seems to have taken for granted that the common decency he himself adhered to by reason of the after-shine of a Puritan ancestry could be regarded as a ubiquitous feature of human nature as the result of evolution. If so, his philosophy of education appears to rest upon a somewhat precarious faith, a thing not quite in keeping with his strenuous disavowal of metaphysics and his reverence for scientific method. And if, in view of the present religious and moral poverty in the homes, the schools, and increasingly large sections of the churches, American education will presently have only the principles of instrumentalism to fall back on, one wonders just how long we can last as a self-governing and civilized society. John Dewey is dead, but the dominant secular temper of contemporary America which he expressed is very much alive. John Dewey's spirit "goes marching on"—who knows to what hard destiny?

C. D. B.

4 This applies equally to such questions as the existence of God, freedom, the soul, the nature of the universe, the nature of knowledge, and so on, questions about which all men have some set of notions other—whether in the front of their minds or in the back.

5 Note the absence of Plato and Aristotle. Incidentally, it seems a pity that to date no graduate student seems to have thought it worth while to write a paper on the ancient and medieval sources of Pragmatism. It should prove an easy means to an M.A. degree.

6 Columbia University, formerly King's College, was founded during colonial times by the Anglicans as a Christian college, its motto being In lumine tuo videbimus lumen ("In Thy light we shall see light" Psalm 36:9). Some wag has suggested that it might profitably be changed to In lumine Teachers College videbimus Dewey.

Views on Gambling in Catholic and Protestant Circles

Early this year A. C. Moore assumed the task of berating the Roman Catholic Church for its stand on gambling. A few months later, T. N. Munson of West Baden College in Indiana, undertook to defend his church's position. The Father, I think, had a little of the better in the argument. But a debate is merely a debate. It may reveal who the more clever logician is, who has marshalled the more telling facts, and who has the superior mind and ability to communicate, but it does not settle the real issue. A clever debater may silence his opponent, but it is beyond his competence to determine the truth in any given case. However valuable a debate may be to bring about a unanimity of opinion, to expose error, to clarify the issue and so on, truth and right are settled not in the forum but by Him who is The Truth and The Thrice Holy One. This is particularly true in the realm of morals. And the question of gambling is a moral one. In so far as the Rev. Munson had the better of the argument, it is because he choose to present it as a fundamental is-

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issue to be settled by an appeal to the fundamental laws as found in creation. Moore unquestionably had fundamental conceptions back of his convictions, but in typical American, and I may add, Protestant, fashion he chose to fight it out along practical lines.

A Universal Phenomenon

Gambling is characterized by great antiquity. Traces of it can be found in most ancient history. But in recent times it has come to the fore as a problem. A wave of corruption has been sweeping over our land contaminating everything it touched. In this corruption, gambling appears as an essential part. It has invaded high places, and the citizenry is losing its confidence in its governmental leaders. Gamblers have been long busy in the sports area, but recently the conduct of students, supposedly being trained in the highest type of ethics where honesty and fair play are constituent parts, also shocked the nation because of the academic methods that prevailed in the classrooms and reflected on the gridirons. But why the shock?

Gambling has been going on in various forms, even under the auspices of governments and of ecclesiastical authorities. It has not left its corrupting fingers out of even generally recognized legitimate business transactions. And it is being increasingly recognized as an essential item in most "approved" social gatherings. It is in the very woof and warp of our modern complex society.

There have been leaders, spiritual and otherwise, who have sensed the perils involved and have put forth efforts, all too feeble, to curb or make of less effect this immoral thing. Among the best efforts, I think, put forth by Christian leaders to judge gambling for what it is on Scriptural principles, is that which can be found in the report adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (1928). But what the practical benefits, if any, of that report has been is well-nigh impossible to ascertain. Let us not be too hopeful. But even if it has done no more than strengthen the conviction of those deeply conscious of the sin involved, the synodical committee has not laboured in vain.

No Adequate Definition or Description Available

Munson’s argument calls for a definition of gambling. That has no means been adequately furnished. And it is in this area that many of the difficulties in finding a solution to the gambling problem center. Indeed, his argument rests chiefly upon the Roman Catholic conception of gambling. It is here where Munson and Moore are miles apart. The Father criticizes Moore for equating all gambling with sin. This he asserts is the "skidrow" conception of gambling. It is like classifying a bit of social drinking with alcoholism. The Catholic Church, of course, takes exception to that. Indeed, it does not seem to object to the term "gambling" at all. It regards the general principle of gambling as unobjectionable, and even sponsors it, but it objects to its accretions in the form of fraudulency and excessiveness. Whether this is a legitimate application of the Scriptural mandate that all things must be done in moderation and nothing to excess may be seriously questioned. Gambling is then placed on the level with smoking, eating, working and so on. It may then be indulged in for fun, for money, for social and religious values without being stamped as sinful. It is obvious that if this view is correct, much of the determination of rightness or wrongness will be left to the individual to decide. Judgment will have to be exceedingly subjective. Objective standards will be almost impossible to fix. If this is a part of the way ethical decisions are settled in the church, it does not surprise us that it has gone into a great deal of casuistical determinations and has found it necessary to list and classify sins. By this method the ecclesiastical authorities have given the problem of ethics a degree of objectivity.

The Protestant Conception

All this still leaves the Protestant without an adequate definition or description of gambling. He finds it impossible to dissociate the idea of fraud from that which is essential to gambling. He believes that we should differentiate carefully between gambling and closely allied forms of interests. The Roman Catholic has no difficulty on this score. He objects neither to the word or the activity of gambling. It is the abuse of a legitimate form of human interest to which he objects. Protestants have no patience with this distinction. But they have not gone much, if any, farther in their description of gambling from related forms of human activity and to pigeonhole it definitely as sin.

There is on old description of gambling that appears satisfactory to many. These conditions appear as essential to gambling: HAZARD and the ABSENCE OF AN EQUIVALENT FOR THAT WHICH MAY BE GAINED. The author felt that the description is liable to be seriously misunderstood and therefore adds: "The kind of play which renders an equivalent of skill or labour for what may be gained is not gambling. I am aware that, upon the point of hazard it may be said that there is risk in commerce and in trade, and that the chances in a gambling transaction may be made a matter of mathematical consideration. I am also aware that, on the point of an equivalent it may be said that the results of lawful trade and honest labour are unequal-sometimes rendering more than an equal and sometimes less. But we reply that while the characteristic of gambling is hazard, the feature of labour for wages and all mercantile trans-

action is not hazard but gain for gain.” This description, though not entirely satisfactory, does not articulate the chief factors. Here is another to which I was once almost fully committed. It says in effect that we are gambling when we deal with matters beyond our control and purview, and to do that is to trifle with the providence of God. It was felt that practically all of life is beyond one’s control and purview, and that, consequently, we must use but not abuse the providence of God by using it for mere trivial purposes. The deliberate use of divine providence must be limited to those things that are worthy of divine cooperation, things about which prayer can be made. One must be able to say honestly that in whatever I undertake I can ask God to help as being entirely within the scope of His perfections.

The Appeal to Creation

The West Baden representative of the Roman Catholic Church declares that the problem of gambling must be settled by an appeal to creation. The argument is as follows: God created all things good. They are good by virtue of the fact that God made them. He gave them to man to use and to enjoy. Among the created things, or associated with them, is the possibility of gambling. This must be used for and by man for divine glorification and human enjoyment. It is the abuse of these things created by God that makes a Christian’s conduct wrong. Now this is an old argument. It is used even to this day by many Protestants. I have heard it repeatedly—“One has a right to utilize and enjoy everything in this world because it is here by the creative and providential activity of God.” The great difficulty of this position is that it fails to acknowledge the fact of sin in the world and in the heart of man. It ignores the antithesis so clearly enunciated by St. Paul. It does not take note of the presence of divine Thou-shalt-not’s as well as of divine Thou-shalt’s.

But the Father has another principle, founded on creation, to take care of the difficulties that may be involved because of the presence of sin in the world. The fundamental principles of right and wrong, so he declares, are grounded in man’s nature. God has created him with a conscience which is The voice of God in a man’s heart.” But even that “voice of God” has been subject to modification by the time man comprehends it. Conscience is subject to good and bad education. It can and has approved of the wrong and dictated contrary to Scriptural passages obviously clear. This is somewhat recognized by the Church of Rome, and the situation which could be troublesome just because it can be so emphatically subjective, is remedied by the final declarations of the papal authorities. Some Calvinists have come perilously close to this general position when legislating in matters of personal conduct. They however avoid the stigma of determining personal ethical questions by attempting to show what the Word of God has to say about it. Thus God, at least, theoretically, is called upon to determine ethical problems. Thus the Calvinists differ from the Catholics in this matter from two main angles. The first is the practical acknowledgement of sin as a vital force in this world and the theoretical acknowledgment of the subject’s responsibility directly to God who is the sole determinator of rightness and wrongness.

An Appeal to Universality

This argument consisting of an appeal to universality has repeatedly been made for the position among the Protestants. The universal hope of man in the existence of future life has been used to prove the existence of immortality. It has also been used to legitimize the practice of gambling. It can be found in the hearts and lives of men everywhere. It is often difficult to distinguish it from legitimate business. The forms of gambling may and do vary widely. Men have gambled with their lives, with the lives of those for whom they are responsible, with all their property and even with property not their own. And they have done it in business, in politics, in domestic life and in religion—and then for stakes of every conceivable kind.

Now, it is the very universality of gambling that enters into the Protestant-Catholic discussion referred to above. What is universal is regarded as created in man as a part of himself and that in itself can’t be wrong. So runs the argumentation. But the argument is specious. By arguing from the universal to a conclusion is a popular way. “Everybody does it” settles almost all questions for the young people. It is a form of the democratic principle declaring that the majority rules. It can be reduced readily to the ridiculous, by asserting that sin is right because it is universal. The folly of the argument is usually appreciated only in the abstract. In the concrete it is a favorite one even though it does not always find articulation.

But if it be true that gambling is a legitimate universal manifestation, the Catholics have very little difficulty here. All they need to do is to watch for its abuses and the infiltration of objectional ingredients such as fraud and so on. I do not believe that we are doing justice to the Catholic conception by declaring that The Catholic Church permits gambling in Church and justifies it because it is done for the pecuniary benefit of the Church, or for some other good cause. Moore declares in effect that to the Catholics the end does not justify the means, if it corrupts character. Father Munson agrees but questions whether the means, in this case gambling, is actually corrupt.
I have no "truck" with the position of Rome. I appreciate, however, its attempt to settle the problem on the ground of basic issues. This should have been done by Moore, who after all raised the issue.

Stewardship and Gambling

The fundamental problems in gambling are ethical in character. These should have been stressed in Mr. Moore's presentation. He would have been stronger. There is the divinely imposed obligation of stewardship. A gambler attempts to take away from another unearned or not fully earned property. This will not be a willing exchange of values; but it is granted sometimes with poorly concealed bad-will because of the rules of the game into which he voluntarily entered. The loser has, nonetheless violated his stewardship by surrendering the goods with which he was entrusted without securing adequate returns. The winner has violated the principle that one shall eat his bread by the sweat of his brow. But the gambler attempts to secure his bread by the sweat of somebody else's brow. A deliberately planned parasitical living does not exist within the scope of the divinely approved plan of human living. Then, too, if a person is to avoid the just charge of stealing, he must be interested in giving value for value received.

The Decalogue and Gambling

The approval of the ten commandments must rest upon every Christian thought and act in the field of ethics. And with little difficulty it could be and should be shown, (if the Protestant argument is to be cogent,) that gambling stands condemned as a form of social living. It is essentially idolatry, because it ignores and therefore sets aside the Only True God and it places a non-entity, sometimes called Chance, on the divine throne. That is not loving God with all that man is and that he has. It is, more clearly still, a transgression of the second table of the decalogue. It certainly does not operate on the principle of loving one's neighbor as himself.

Practical Considerations

But Moore unfortunately chose to stress, as Americans and many Protestants are wont to do, the practical involvements. He enumerates five reasons why the Protestants oppose gambling. He asserts that gambling does something to character, and that something is not good. Secondly, gambling corrupts everything it touches. Thirdly, the gambler is a fraud and cultivates the dubious art of cheating. Fourthly, gambling involves a denial of the stewardship of man's possessions, and finally, gambling cannot be made a part of man's highest obligation, namely to glorify God. Some of these items are very important and each of them is not without some value, but they do little more than skirt the deeper problems of the inherent rightness or wrongness of gambling. Moore has in mind gambling as it is in this world and finds it condemnable. But he leaves practically untouched the basic consideration and it is on this basis that Catholics, with some degree of justice, prefer to have the issue discussed. In the Protestant world the emphasis seems to be placed upon the evils of gambling as it obtains among men. It is shown that evil companions, evil consequences, evil character traits, etc., are invariably associated with it. These considerations are not without merit, but they cannot effectively call for the eradication of gambling because it is inherently wrong. At best there is a call for its reclamation or reformation. Better controls, better rules, better associates will place it in the realm of the respectable. That is precisely the reason why gambling in small intimate circles, gambling for small stakes, or for no stakes at all, or gambling just to replace a worse evil (for after all, it is said, we have to have something to do) are all tolerated by the Christian conscience.

After all, the position of the Protestants is strong when considered on the basis of fundamental issues, when backed by Scripture, and when clearly articulated. But this is precisely what has not been adequately done.

H. S.
The Balance that is Calvinism

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This is the second time that I have been asked to deliver a commencement address at Calvin College and Seminary. I count it an honor of which I am quite unworthy. Perhaps the reason why I have been asked a second time is that nobody remembers what I said the first time. Frankly, I do not myself recall. But it is more than likely that on that occasion I discussed some phase of Calvinism. That I wish to do now also.

I

It is a matter of common knowledge among us that Calvinism is often misrepresented and even maligned. For a few examples, Calvinism is said to assign infants to hell in wholesale fashion, and recently a nationally known preacher flung at the God of Calvinism the epithet "a dirty bully."

Perhaps the charge most frequently laid at the door of Calvinism is that it is unbalanced. Calvinists are reputed to be narrow extremists. For instance, they are said to make a hobby of the doctrine of predestination and to ride that hobby to death. And the so-called five points of Calvinism are often regarded as the sum total of Calvinistic teaching. Now it goes without saying that these points occupy a place of great prominence in the Calvinistic system, but it may never be forgotten that they constitute but a comparatively small part of that system.

The truth of the matter is that Calvinism is more insistent than is any other self-styled Christian system of thought on the recognition of all of revealed truth of all that God has made known to men both in general and special revelation. The Calvinistic system would include every truth and exclude none. It willingly receives such mysteries as the Trinity and the Incarnation, no matter how far they transcend human reason. And if unmistakably revealed, seemingly contradictory truths are gladly embraced. For that reason paradoxes abound in our system.

Now it is axiomatic that truth, taken as a whole, is a perfect sphere and as such is perfectly balanced. It follows that Calvinism, instead of being unbalanced, excels in balance. Without hesitation the assertion may be made that balance is one of its most outstanding and distinctive features. I now wish to direct your attention to a few samples of The Balance That Is Calvinism.

II

You have heard it said that Christianity is not a doctrine, but a life. Not so many decades ago almost all Modernist preachers used to sin that into our ears. Due to the influence of Josiah Royce and others, the informed Modernist today knows better; but not nearly all Modernists are well informed. And, sad to say, a great many Fundamentalists too have adopted the same trite saying. Nor is that surprising. American Fundamentalism has been influenced profoundly by continental Pietism and English Methodism, both of which have stressed the Christian life to the serious detriment of Christian doctrine and, it must be added, have thus prepared the way for Modernism.

Does the Calvinist take the position that Christianity is not a life, but a doctrine? If so, he would be as guilty of unbalance as are his opponents. True, he would be unbalanced in the opposite direction, but unbalanced just as badly, nonetheless. As a matter of fact, he insists that Christianity is not only a doctrine but also a life and, prior to both of these, a story. And that position excels in balance.

The Christian religion rests squarely and solidly on certain historical events. To relegate such Bible stories as that of creation, that of the fall of man, that of Jesus' virgin birth, and that of His bodily resurrection to the realm of the mythological, or, for that matter, of the supra-historical is to destroy the very foundation of Christianity. Pearl Buck was wrong when she averred that, in case Christ's bodily resurrection were disproved the spiritual values of Christianity would persist just the same. Paul the apostle was completely right when he declared: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:14, 17, 18.) But such stories must be interpreted, and their correct interpretation contributes to Christian doctrine. For instance the interpretation of Christ's death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for the expiation of sin and the satisfaction of divine justice is a doctrine which lies at the very heart of Christianity and with which the Christian religion lives or dies. And when Paul wrote: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20,) he not only gave a summary of the Christian life, but taught that Christianity as a life is rooted in Christianity as a story and Christianity as a doctrine.

Christianity as a story, Christianity as a doctrine, and Christianity as a life are interdependent. They

(*) Commencement address delivered on May 29, 1952, to the graduates of Calvin Seminary and Calvin College.
stand and fall together. Deny any one of them, and what remains is so distorted as to be unworthy of the Christian name. It is not Christianity but a caricature of it. Uphold all three, and one has a true and balanced conception of Christianity.

John Calvin accepted the stories of the Bible, those in which the miraculous looms large included, as actual history. As systematizer of Christian doctrine he has had no peer. And not only was he unbending in his insistence on Christian behavior by the individual, but the citizens of Geneva also found in him a vigorous social reformer.

The present-day Calvinist follows suit. Even his enemies being his judges, his is the selfsame balance. For he is ridiculed for his "unscientific" acceptance of Bible history, and he is accused in one breath of dead orthodoxy and legalistic Puritanism. Only he who puts a great emphasis on each of the aforesaid aspects of Christianity is likely to elicit such condemnation.

III

Calvinism has sometimes been associated with nationalism of a kind. If a speaker is introduced as a rock-ribbed Calvinist, some in the audience will almost certainly jump to the conclusion that he must be either of Dutch descent or of Scotch. If he proves to be of neither, they are surprised. Now it likely can be shown that Calvinism has come to be more fully developed, and therefore has flourished more, in Holland and Scotland than in any other country, but it does not follow by any manner of means that the people of those two lands have an option — to say nothing of a monopoly — on Calvinism.

Calvin did not have the good fortune of being born in either of those countries. He was a native of France and spent his most fruitful years in Switzerland. True, there is no telling how great a Calvinist he might have become, had he been born and reared in Holland or Scotland, but even as it was he did not do too badly.

Has your attention ever been called to the fact that in the Reformation era, while Lutheranism remained confined in the main to Germany and the Scandinavian countries, Calvinism spread from Switzerland to France, from there to the Low Countries, then crossed the channel to Great Britain, and at the same time made its way eastward through Germany to such countries as Hungary and Bohemia? From the very beginning Calvinism excelled in cosmopolitanism.

The charge has often been brought against Calvinists that they are indifferent to evangelism and are lacking in missionary zeal. Hardly any accusation could be more unfair. In recent decades two German scholars, Schlatter of Tubingen and Pfisterer of Bochum, have shown convincingly that Calvin took a profound interest in Christian missions. Not only were the churches of the Reformation exceedingly zealous for home missions in Europe, but Dutch Calvinists brought the gospel also to Formosa already in 1624, to Ceylon in 1636, and to Brazil in 1637. Two of the greatest evangelistic preachers of history were Whitefield and Spurgeon. Although the latter never saw the light on infant baptism, both of them were ardent advocates of the five points of Calvinism. But why should I name these lesser lights? If you will permit an anachronism, the greatest Calvinist the Christian church has ever had was the apostle Paul. He was also its greatest missionary. And he was its greatest missionary precisely because he was its greatest Calvinist. By reason of his Calvinism the love of Christ constrained him the more powerfully.

In short, instead of being narrow and one-sided, Calvinism is broad and well balanced. Without ever sacrificing truth or principle it is able and willing to adjust itself to the soul of every nation under the sun. As Paul was made "all things to all men," so Calvinism is all things to all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations. To it belongs the universalism of Christianity itself.

IV

Present-day Modernism and Fundamentalism are sharply at odds as to whether the Christian minister should preach on social problems. Ever since the days of Walter Rauschenbusch, Modernism has proclaimed aloud the so-called social gospel. It stresses the Diesseitigkeit of the gospel at the expense of its Jenseitigkeit. To quote Alfred E. Garvie: "Christ saves, not for safety hereafter, but for service here." And it aims at the regeneration of society by such natural means as education and civilization, to the exclusion of the regeneration of the individual by the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Fundamentalism, more practically Modern Dispensationalism, proclaims only the gospel of individual salvation and bars social problems from the pulpit. A representative of that school of thought once said in my hearing: "Society is on fire, but I am not interested in putting the fire out; my sole concern is to rescue as many individuals as I may from the fire." Another concluded a sermon with the sentence: "God will save society when His King comes back," which most certainly is true, but it was meant to imply that we need not bother now to try to save society.

What position does the Calvinist take on this issue? By refusing to take an either-or position he avoids the unbalance of both Modernism and Dispensationalism. By insisting on both the individual and the social aspect of the gospel he achieves a highly commendable balance.

The gospel of the Calvinist is first and foremost a message of individual salvation. For him it is a truism that apart from the salvation of the individuals that constitute society every attempt to save society must prove futile. Therefore, however needful it may be to take men out of the slums, it is incomparably more important that the slums be taken
out of men. And he knows full well that, whatever influence a man's surroundings may have on his behavior, only the almighty grace of God can give him a new heart and radically transform his life. Spurgeon was right when he said that, that if a thief should be put in the perfect environment of heaven, sooner or later he would pick the pockets of the angels.

But the gospel of the Calvinist is by no means exclusively individual. He has a social message too. As the prophet Amos condemned the rich of his day for selling the poor for a pair of shoes, as John the Baptist told the soldiers that consulted him to be content with their wages and the tax collectors to quit robbing the public, as Jesus dealt with the perennial problem of divorce, and as Paul dealt with the relationship of employer and employee, the citizen and the civil ruler, so the Reformed preacher will bring into the pulpit the urgent social problems of his times and publish the solutions proffered by the Word of God.

The Reformed preacher will proclaim Christ as Saviour, to be sure, but also as King. He will most assuredly plead with men to receive Christ as their personal Saviour, but will also command them to honor Christ as Lord and King. In fact, he will exalt Christ as the King universal, to whom has been assigned all authority on earth and in heaven and who has been given by God to the church to be the Head, not only over the church, but over all things. Specifically, in these days of industrial strife, he will tell both capital and labor that the one and only solution for the problem of their relationship to each other is that offered by the inspired apostle—that each of them acknowledge Christ as Master (Eph. 6:5-9). And in view of the present ascendancy of statism he will boldly enjoin the princes and potentates of the nations to bow humbly before Him who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, the sovereign and totalitarian Ruler of the universe.

V

One of the most vexing problems that has confronted the Christian church throughout its history concerns the relationship, one to the other, of the natural and spiritual. In fact, that problem is common to all religions.

Rome teaches that the natural is of lower order than the spiritual and that the natural is sure to become sinful unless it is held in check by the spiritual as a super-added gift of God. The Anabaptists of the Reformation age went Rome one better and taught that the natural as such is sinful. That notion is by no means foreign to twentieth century Fundamentalism. Certain pagan religions hold that evil is inherent in matter, and, strange to say, there are Christians who share that view in one form or another. A bottle of whiskey, say they, is a bad thing, and the human body with its blood and glands is something to get rid of as soon as convenient. Enough has been said to make it clear that the question of the relationship of the natural and the spiritual there is confusion worse confounded.

Far be it from me to assert that every Calvinist keeps the natural and the spiritual in proper balance with each other. Not one of us does that consistently. But I do affirm without hesitation that Calvinism does that very thing more successfully than does any other religious system. To put the matter pointedly, Calvinism insists as does no other system, that on the one hand men must be natural in the spiritual and that on the other hand they must be spiritual in the natural. Permit me to present that position in concrete fashion.

We all know ministers who in ordinary conversation act and speak as men of like passions with others but, as soon as they enter the pulpit, put on airs. In conducting worship they are pretentious and pompous; their preaching is characterized by a "holy whine." They have not learned to be natural in the spiritual. A certain minister boasted that he never took a vacation because Satan takes no vacation either. After one or two nervous breakdowns he died at the age of forty-five. I have a sneaking suspicion that the reason why he did not die at thirty-five was that occasionally he did take a little vacation on the sly. Incidentally, after his departure there was no noticeable increase in the activities of the evil one. That minister too failed to be natural in the spiritual. How well I recall my first summer of preaching as a theological student. I was to serve a rural church on two successive Sundays, and I was to spend the intervening week in that community. As all four of my sermons were prepared before my arrival and the farmers were busy about their work, I had considerable spare time during that week. So it came about that I inquired whether there was not in the vicinity some body of water where I might go fishing. I was told that not far away there was a stream in which fish had occasionally been caught, but it was also hinted that the parishioners might disapprove of a preacher's wasting his precious time at fishing. Being a mere student, I yielded to public opinion. Today it seems to me that in doing so I may have blundered. Of this I am certain: If I were the pastor of that church today, I would consider myself in sacred duty bound to go fishing every once in a while. For the people of that church needed to be taught that men must be natural in the spiritual.

If it is important for the Christian to be natural in the spiritual, it is supremely important that he be spiritual in the natural. Precisely that is the meaning of the Pauline injunction: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

One of the most prevalent evils of our day is secularism. It is also a rapidly growing evil. Increasingly religion is being divorced from the common life and God is being banished from it. All too well have we in these United States succeeded in keeping God out
of politics. That accounts for the fact that our politics by and large are so thoroughly rotten. Some of our leading industrialists and labor leaders hold positions of prominence in the Christian church but make no attempt to apply the principles of Christianity to their mutual obligations. And by this time the public schools of our land have been dechristianized about as thoroughly as any institution can be. Collectively, modern men are not spiritual in the natural. Worse than that, they do not care to be. And that applies to a great many who call themselves Christians. But the Calvinist prays without ceasing:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

Not merely praying, also playing; not merely the reading of Scripture, also the scanning of the daily paper; not merely the contemplation of special revelation, also the investigation of general revelation; not merely the pursuit of theology, also the study of trigonometry; not merely the labors of the clergyman, also those of the physician and the attorney, the cobbler, and the ash-collector—yea, literally all things are to be done to the glory of God.

To be natural in the spiritual and at once spiritual in the natural—that spells a beautiful balance. It is a phase of the balance that is Calvinism.

VI

Calvinism is often held up to scorn because of its conservatism. That it is conservative cannot be denied. It is built upon the objective and unchangeable Word of God. It maintains that general revelation too can be properly understood only in the light of that abiding Word. It firmly refuses to add a jot or to substract a tittle from it. And, although it rejects the doctrine of an infallible church, it does believe that throughout the centuries the Spirit of truth has illuminated the church in its interpretation of the Word. Therefore it sets far greater store than does either Modernism or Fundamentalism by the historic creeds of Christendom. It pledges fidelity unto death to the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

However, let no one suppose that Calvinism is not progressive. Precisely because of its high regard for the Word of God it is genuinely progressive. It regards the Sacred Scriptures as a treasure that cannot be exhausted, as a gold mine that will never be depleted. Therefore it deems it the solemn duty of every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven to bring forth out of this treasure new things as well as old. It believes that the Holy Spirit has led, and keeps leading, the church progressively into the truth. The greatest theologians of the past had drunk but a few drops out of the river of Holy Scripture. Neither Augustin nor Calvin, nor yet Abraham Kuyper, has said the last word on any problem of theology. And the greatest scientists and philosophers and artists that the human race has known had taken only a few sips at the spring of general revelation.

Let me be more specific. Calvin had a clearer insight into proper relation of the church and state than did Augustin; and Roger Williams, extremist though he was, progressed beyond Calvin on that score. But who dares to assert that the last word has been spoken on that subject? In the Christian Reformed Church, Article 36 of the Belic Confession is still very much under discussion. In the field of eschatology many questions remain unanswered. And I feel sure that my premillenarian and postmillenian friends are in for many surprises as the day of Christ's return draws nearer, but I must confess to a premonition that we amillenarians too may be in for one or two. As for the social implications of the gospel for this day and age, we have hardly begun to scratch their surface. In the field of general revelation vast areas remain unexplored. And how colossal a task confronts those who would teach the various branches of general revelation from a definitely Christian viewpoint. Such is indeed the solemn duty of all who teach at Calvin College, and to that task they must apply themselves with might and main. But if they do so apply themselves for a whole century, I surmise that much land will still remain to be possessed. While I am not an authority on philosophy, it does seem to me that such men as Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd of the Free Reformed University of Amsterdam deserve much credit for their concerted efforts to elaborate a distinctively Christian philosophy. But that task too is far from finished.

How clear that Calvinism is characterized at once by an unwavering conservatism and by a zealous progressivism! In that respect too it excels in balance.

VII

I have called attention to just a few samples of the balance that is Calvinism. They could easily be multiplied tenfold. Balance is indeed one of Calvinism's most distinctive features.

At this juncture I must issue a warning against a serious misunderstanding. Let no one carry away the impression that Calvinism is forever compromising, that it everlasting soft-pedals the truth, that it is a middle-of-the-road philosophy. Nothing could be farther removed from the truth. Calvinism is not that way at all. Rather is the opposite the case.

Let me try to drive home this point by reference to that great paradox which not only pervades the Word of God but constitutes one of the most basic problems of all philosophy. I am thinking of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. All of human thought and all of human history revolve about those two poles. And they present a paradox that the greatest thinkers of mankind have proved unable to solve.

That Calvinism puts great emphasis on divine sovereignty is a matter of common knowledge. Does
it in consequence deny, or at least belittle, human responsibility? That opinion is widely held. I once heard a Presbyterian preacher affirm that truth consists of the two hemispheres of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and that Calvinism upholds the former, Arminianism the latter. But what a caricature of Calvinism that was! The truth of the matter is that Calvinism puts, not less emphasis on human responsibility than does Arminianism, but much more. The Reformed theology demands unqualified obedience to the law of God; Arminianism is content with what it calls “evangelical obedience,” which is something less exacting. Arminianism teaches that God adjusts His demands to the enfeebled powers of man and requires no more of man than he can do; Calvinism holds that human inability in no way limits human obligation. What else could be expected? Human responsibility is nothing but a corollary of divine sovereignty. Man is responsible to God because God is sovereign. By all the rules of sound logic, the more one stresses the sovereignty of God, the more one is bound to stress the responsibility of man. Calvinism puts a truly tremendous emphasis on both.

And that amounts to saying that the balance that is Calvinism is not a balance of indecision and compromise and weakness, but a balance of certitude and conviction and strength. It is the direct result of the ready acceptance of all of revealed truth.

Imagine a target with the usual bull's eye surrounded by concentric circles. That target, let us say, represents truth as made known by God in the Bible and general revelation. All systems of Christian thought rightly so called aim at that target. But it cannot be said that any one of them hits the exact center. We dare not claim that even for Calvinism as we know it, for after all it is a human and therefore imperfect interpretation of divine revelation. But we do assert, and emphatically that Calvinism comes closer to the very center of the target than does any other system. For it is the most concerted and also the most successful, effort made by man to do justice to the whole of revealed truth. The Calvinist accepts unreservedly all that proceeds from the mouth of God. He willingly subjects his own logic to the divine logos. To do that is the very essence of Calvinism.

This accounts for the balance that is Calvinism. And such is the glory that is Calvinism.

Special Revelation and the Problem of World Community

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The volume which Professor Floyd H. Ross of University of Southern California has recently authored under a Harper and Brothers imprint, Addressed to Christians: Isolationism vs. World Community, is among the most vigorous recent attacks upon the appeal by any religion, and specifically by the Hebrew-Christian movement, to special divine revelation. The work comes from the sprightly pen of the University’s professor of world religion.

Professor Ross’ thesis is that “the problem of community is the acute problem of our era” (p.9), that it “cannot be divorced from the problem of theology” (p.14), and that its solution is to be found only by renunciation of all claims to special religious revelation, in the interest of an exploratory empirical approach to world fellowship. He classifies along with “childish notions” the “‘only way’ technique,” stressing that “the chosen people complex is an obstacle to genuine appreciations and to world community” (p.140). The opposition to all notions of “special chosenness” runs unyieldingly throughout the volume; not only Christian theism, but Marxist communism, and every variety of claim to a special or absolutistic role or viewpoint in human history, is disparaged as an obstacle. The critique falls most heavily upon the Hebrew-Christian movement, since this is the inherited tradition of the West, and perhaps even more because of a true instinct that if the death-blow can be delivered to this most persuasive claim to special divine disclosure, the master stroke will have been dealt.

Dr. Ross’ volume is not without much to gain the approval even of a spirited adversary of his views. The numerous competing revelation-claims require some explanation by any exclusively revelational viewpoint. It should be remembered also that the bold proclamation of the Catholic hierarchy’s speculations as if they were divine revelation was already criticized by the Protestant Reformers with a vigor seldom approached in our era. Especially pointed is Dr. Ross’ critique of contemporary liberalism. More clearly than the liberals he sees that the denial of the essential uniqueness of Christianity in terms of special miraculous revelation means the doom of the dogma of ecumenical liberal churchmen that in Jesus Christ alone will come a union of...
East and West; the type of divine revelation which liberalism retains makes possible only a quantitative and no longer a qualitative differentiation of Christianity from other world religions. Having rejected the miraculous, liberalism has crystallized as a dogmatic half-way house to fundamentalism, but has been unable to agree upon or to validate any distinctive essence for Christianity (pp.108f.). As against liberalism’s semi-absolutistic position, the author casts his lot with those who “frankly take a radical position regarding all historical absolutes and who are not afraid of the implications of historical relativism” (p. 108).

Turning to the central motif of the book, we are told that a major weakness of both the Petrine and Pauline concept of fellowship is that each was predicated on a highly specific theology, eschatology, and apocalyptic” (p. 45), i.e., an exclusivistic rather than an inclusivistic ideology. Theological particularism is held to be inconsistent with world community. Creedal Christianity, he points out, deposed anathematized Christians from clerical positions and excommunicated them from the Church. In Calvin’s Geneva, the Christian concept of special chosenness “led to its logical coercive conclusion—expulsion from the fellowship” (p.101). “The theological assumptions regarding God and His dealings with mankind, the Bible and revelation, made it impossible for the Reformers to lay a very sound basis for enlarging the concept of community in a qualitative sense” (p.104). Not only does the advocacy of special revelation constitute an obstacle to world community, but religious singularism permits no more than “a bow in the direction of respect for personality” (p.118). Intolerance and disrespect for personality are held to be implied in the very notion of a religious orthodoxy; hence Dr. Ross’ plea is that the problem of world community be “raised to a level of fruitful discussion from which no earnest group is excluded” (p.125).

Belief in special revelation Dr. Ross traces to ignorance of the world religions. “The serious study of comparative religions was not to make much of an impression on Christian circles,” we are told, “before the end of the nineteenth century and even then the practice in most Christian circles was to rearrange certain assumptions, make certain conciliatory concessions at minor points, but not to re-examine the basic underlying presuppositions regarding special revelation, divine mission, or special chosenness” (p.106). The Reformers made the mistake, in breaking with medieval Christianity, of not breaking also with “the basic Christian assumptions regarding revelation, chosenness, absoluteness, and the scriptures” (p.91). But “the Christian theologian’s knowledge of the non-Christian religions remained almost nil until the great period of missionary activity that developed in the Counter Reformation” (p.79). With the rise of interest in comparative religions “in the light of the new knowledge made available, some reinterpretation was inevitable” (p.79).

II

Dr. Ross’ complaint is that absoluteness “can never be objectively supported” (p.122). Instead, he desires “a radical faith which rules out all clinging to hypotheses of the past that no longer illuminate meaningfully any areas of experience.” He champions an appeal to experience, indeed to experience not subordinated to “prior assumptions which are regarded as axiomatic” but rather “subject to continuous reinterpretation or outright rejection” (p.124). And the appeal to experience permits no claim to religious finalism, or to finalism of any kind; the only meaningful approach is that of dogmatism but of explorationism.

In his complaint against all inherited views, Dr. Ross forgets that relativism is a rather ancient theory of knowledge, and as much a stereotyped idiom in the history of philosophy as any competitive theory; it is as much a clinging to the ideas of certain masters (p.21) as any contrary position, and in contemporary thought as conventional a frame of reference as any other. And, in point of fact, Plato and Aristotle demonstrated rather conclusively that relativism illuminates nothing meaningfully—that an attempt on this presupposition permanently to solve the problem of world community is doomed to failure.

But one does not proceed far before he senses that Dr. Ross’ “explorationism” involves actually the outright rejection of special revelation and the unqualified assertion of “genuine universalism” as he calls it (p.87). If Dr. Ross remarks that any alert undergraduate studying comparative religions can detect the “self-congratulatory excesses” of Christianity, it might also be observed that any alert undergraduate studying philosophy can detect the dogmatic assumption of an absolute continuity by Dr. Ross. If certain Christian presuppositions are rejected simply because they are absolutistic in nature, no less are certain unChristian presuppositions absolutistic in the structure of Dr. Ross’ thought: that all theological knowledge is relative (except this knowledge, that it is relative, of course) and that the theologian’s task is exploratory only (except that he must not explore this presupposition critically).

The fact is that, if Dr. Ross repudiates dogmatism, he too says that in no other way can men be saved in the advocacy of a universalism which rejects particularism; in other words, he merely champions a more disguised dogmatism which, to borrow his own vocabulary, appears to represent a retreat into confessionalism, a congealed attitude, an identification of Christianity with a pet formula. For if we take Dr. Ross’ relativism seriously, we must not be misled into any attachment of finality to his own views; if “the area of dogmatic assertion,” as he says, “continually diminishes the extent that we become reli-
griously mature" (p.132), we shall not want to deny his particular emphasis the advantages of this insight. If growth is careless about established formulas (p.14) and "takes place only to the extent that the past is transcended or relinquished" (p.133), there can be no logical reason why Mr. Ross' ideas, if they become established, should introduce a miracle of "special choseness." If dogmatism crushes "the spirit of honest, continuing inquiry" (p.78), we must discourage Dr. Ross from thinking that he has arrived. For he urges all who are engaged in the quest for God to abandon certainty for the search" (p.88); "the demand for certainty impedes the search" (p.89)—as Dr. Ross points out without a trace of doubt. Hence we must not fail, on the broader implications of Dr. Ross' own approach, to apply to his antipathy to special revelation his own plea for "a willingness to re-examine any and all assumptions" (p.105) and to remind him that "all the treasured absolutes of one's own confession or tradition are quite relative to himself" (p.107) and ought not to be addressed to others, even Christians, with any trace of zealous finality.

III

We may therefore call on Dr. Ross to be true to the principle which he professes to cherish: "he who truly believes in God . . . finds himself continually relinquishing the beliefs which he has acquired from past experience" (p.115). Sooner or later, therefore, we expect to find the author cherishing the cause of special revelation—unless indeed, in the midst of his empirical approach, he has happily stumbled upon an absolute which entitles him to rule out the possibility in advance. "For when assumptions or beliefs are held too tightly"—we must remind Dr. Ross in his own words—"they prevent us from gaining new insights" (p.115); and "the only finality a mature Christian can know is his vocation to be a pilgrim or explorer" (p.124); again, "the mature seeker resists the temptation to become a dogmatist on the basis of any one hypothesis or belief that seems to be reasonably verified in terms of a particular plateau in his experience" (pp.129-130). We must not permit an authoritarianism to reach out of Dr. Ross' present—in the interest of an anti-particularistic view of revelation—which might "keep the seeker from becoming mature" (p.131); consequently, we remind him of his duty to doubt. For everlasting explorationism would seem to mean that once-for-all rejection is ruled out, no less than once-for-all affirmation. And any confessionalism in either direction, any "premature resort to absoluteness" (p.127), would reflect "a spiritual inability to return continuously to one's first assumptions and to criticize them" (p.124).

We are tempted therefore to classify Dr. Ross also with "the more hesitant side of the Christian pilgrimage," with those who take "flight to the Absolute" (p.126), unless he is ready to concede the right to an absolutistic view, which he absolutely denies! In short, Dr. Ross' view commits him to the permanent denial that he has the answer, for relativism by its very definition is precluded from ever arriving. In view of this, one must regard as special pleading the statement that the "apotheosizing of revelation testifies to a lack of that spiritual energy and integrity which enables man at his best to face life with genuine seriousness and continuous teachability" (p.141), for the dogmatic exclusion of revelation may witness to the same plight. We must not therefore be misled by Dr. Ross' disparagement of any view that insists "world community must come on our [own] terms," for surely he thinks that it can come on his own terms alone. And if, as the author asserts, "modern man is called to doubt the old ways and the old answers" (p.143), ought not the hesitation of humanism to do so give humanism concern for the courage of its convictions? Yet we must not after all expect Dr. Ross to defend his views of the moment very long, for he himself is authority for the statement that "he who finds it necessary to defend the faith is on the defensive spiritually as well as theoretically" (p.122).

IV

We have tried to show that Dr. Ross' appeal to empiricism is not as innocent as it appears. Although he urges that there be "no covert attempts to dictate the conditions or forms under which the historical process is to be fulfilled" (p.140), he proceeds to dictate these. And he does so not alone by assuming the impossibility of special revelation at any point in the past and in the future, let alone in the present, and by absolutizing the notion of general divine revelation in such a way as to preclude particularism, which, in view of the appeal to experience, can only be what he labels an "acquiescence in authoritarianism" (p.21) or a "tribal prejudice" (p.29), since it would seem to require special revelation for an empiricist to be as sure of the future as Dr. Ross is. For in other major respects than the dogmatic rejection of special revelation this imposition of ideas upon the empirical process is evident, despite the emphasis that "Christian educators . . . must refuse to seek absolutes in history and refrain from creating supra-historical absolutes by postulation" (p.140). For what is the concept of world community, but something which has not as yet been experienced, but which is projected as an ideal? And why should it be thought that in the evolutionary process which Dr. Ross so eloquently champions any "special choseness" exists for humanity which makes it an exception to that will to power which Nietzsche thought was implied in the movement of things? Does not Dr. Ross romanticize nature and man in a way that a strictly empirical approach would have to challenge?

If therefore we think through Dr. Ross' protest against the "authority of the past," we find that he
substitutes in its place not the authority of a wider empiricism, but in actuality the authority of a contemporary thinker. The "idealization of the past in myth, legend and folklore," he writes, with Biblical theology specifically in view, gave it "an authority which it never deserved" (p.128). The present significantly surpasses the past, Dr. Ross urges, for he writes of "permanently continuing revolution" (p.20). And, he fails to emphasize, the same vitality with which the present surpasses the past should be anticipated in relating the present to the future. When Dr. Ross complains that the absolutistic views do not take history seriously because they "stress some one segment of the past" (p.128), is he not himself guilty of stressing one historical segment—viz., the present, which in turn will soon be past? Then too, his interpretation of the present turns out to be debatable, for he himself affirms: "all interpretations are debatable" (p.128). In fact, in his approach to history as a whole in search of meaning, Dr. Ross fails to discern the indebtedness of his procedure to the very Biblical theology he rejects, for even secular historians are reminding us now that the Hebrew-Christian tradition is itself responsible for the idea of history, so that Dr. Ross' courteous affirmation that "every history is a sacred history" (p.132) itself has a peculiarly sacred history. (To be Continued)

Christian Symbolism in the Novels of Herman Melville

Andrew Vander Zee
Northwestern Junior College
Orange City, Iowa

American literary critics generally agree that Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman are America's greatest creative thinkers and writers. Melville's rise to this distinction came many years after his death in 1891. During his lifetime he was known as a minor author of South Sea tales; but after 1920, twentieth century critics, discovering the rich symbolism of Herman Melville's almost forgotten novels, now rate him one of our greatest authors.

Much of Melville's symbolism is religious and approaches life through the use of his inherited knowledge of the Puritan theological scheme.

His first story, Typee, can be read simply as a true account of a few months spent among the simple, happy inhabitants of a South Sea island; in this novel his symbolism is the least apparent. The island, however, is really a symbol of Paradise, and the islanders are symbols of Adam and Eve in the state of perfect innocence. The natural goodness of the original parents is suggested by Melville's recognition of the divine in the character of the Typees. There was "an inherent principle of honesty and charity towards each other." The sinlessness of the Marquesans is attributed by Melville to the "indwelling . . . universally diffused perception of what is just and noble," to "precepts graven on every breast." This charming state of innocence continues to the end of the story.

In his second novel about the South Sea islanders entitled Omoo, Melville symbolizes the introduction of sin into the world by suggesting that civilization brought its fruit of the tree of the knowledge-of-good-and-evil. Most readers will not suspect the deeper significance of Typee and Omoo. His novel, Mardi, however, is obviously symbolic. It cannot stand in its own right as a straightforward tale of adventure. The story is almost an allegory and is entirely subordinate to the Christian truths the author wishes to imply. But instead of using social groups as symbols, Melville now uses individual characters. This time the lovers, Taji and Yillah, live in a beautiful private retreat, so lovely that Taji thinks of Paradise with Yillah. But Taji refuses to submit his will. He would seek his own salvation, would upon self and human reason to find salvation is the "daemon" that drives Taji to his eternal death.

To most readers Melville's novel, Pierre, is a strange story. And read merely as a story, it is positively weird. But when we apprehend the Christian truths that are implied in this extended parable, we realize its great beauty and significance.
Pierre's mother symbolizes the world, and his father, the Divine. At Saddle Meadows (Paradise) he worshipped his father and lived in "sisterly" relation with his mother; thus were the material and the spiritual united in harmony. Lucy, with whom he is in love, represents happiness, a perfect sharing of Pierre's ideal world. Already in "Paradise," however, Pierre's mother has forebodings, and Lucy feels a "fortaste . . . of endless dreariness." When the truth rolls a black billow through Pierre's soul, "the blast, in one night, stripped his holiest shrine." Pierre's father, his "fond personification of perfect human goodness and virtue," has sinned by having a child out of wedlock. The sense of sin destroys Pierre's ideal existence. Joy in material security and spiritual harmony is lost by the knowledge of good and evil.

Pierre is now consumed with the desire to atone for the guilt he has inherited from his father. He would atone by a life of perfect sinlessness. Pierre refuses to compromise with the ultimate divine truth laid upon him by the command of Christ to leave all and follow Him. He will not accept the Rev. Falsgrave's nor the church's mediation, but his light must come from "God Himself whom I know never delegates His holiest admonishments." "Truth, Earnestness, and Independence" become his goal. "Thus, in the Enthusiast to Duty," says Pierre, "the heaven begotten Christ is born and spurns and rends all mortal bonds . . . May heaven new-string my soul and confirm me in the Christ-like feeling I first felt. May I, in all my least shapeful thoughts still square myself by the inflexible rule of holy right."

Pierre falls madly in love with Isabel who symbolizes the truth that only Christ knew. "The divine beauty and imploring suffering of the [her] face, stole into his view." "The heavier Woes . . . both purge the soul of gay-hearted errors and replenish it with saddened truth . . . so that in these flashing revelations of grief's wonderful fire, we see all things as they are." And did Pierre perceive that "though charged with the fire of all divinities, his containing thing was made of clay"? Yes. Oh, that he could be one of those who are blest with poorness of spirit rather than charged with all-consuming fire. He knew that if one shall be wholly honest, he shall "stand in danger of the meanest mortal's scorn." Furthermore Melville suggests that Pierre did thoroughly understand the Plinlimmon pamphlet with its common-sense assertion that the wisdom of Christ is Divine, Chronometrical, not of this world, and only Christ could remain sinless in the practice of His Chronometricals because He was Divine. Puritanism always recognized this dualism: on the one hand, of "the infallible instinct that that monitor cannot be wrong," and on the other hand, of the mortal impossibility of living wholly according to its precepts in this life. Because of this belief in innate depravity, the Puritan knew that "all our righteousnesses are filthy rags." Melville affirms the truth of this teaching when he writes that there are "men of self-disdainful spirits in whose chosen souls heaven itself hath by a primitive persuasion unindoctrinally fixed that most true Christian doctrine of the utter nothingness of good works."

Though Pierre sometimes has doubts of the rightness of his conduct when he cries out, "Corpses behind me, and the last sin before, how then can my conduct be right?" he refuses to heed to the voice of reason in the Plinlimmon pamphlet, and to the sane advice of his Good Angel, Lucy. Lucy symbolizes what Puritans professed, the "spirit of piety, humility and tragedy in the face of the inscrutable ways of God." If Pierre had accepted her offer to help him write his book, she would have made him understand that Christ had also taught, "My wisdom is not of this world." She would have taught him to "feel that blessedness which . . . holds happiness indifferent." However, Pierre thought he could find happiness only in following the divine command to champion Isabel. He pursued the inscrutable wisdom she embodied until his uttermost knowledge of her revealed only nothingness. Then Pierre felt himself neuter, so estranged from life by his utter self-reliance in his search for the ultimate and so disillusioned in that search, that life had nothing to offer him. His end—suicide.

III

_Moby Dick_ is indeed a great Christian tragedy. Ahab is a Nantucket Quaker of heroic proportions, "a man of greatly superior natural force, with globular brain and a ponderous heart . . . a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies." Being a Quaker and a great man, he is called to sainthood, to become a real Quaker. Evidence of that call is the cruel suffering inflicted upon him by the white whale before the story opens. Here is his strongest temptation to sin. He must make a choice. Father Mapple's eloquent sermon is in the book to present the true way to sainthood. Jonah, while in the maw of the whale, in the clutches of evil, repents. In the words of Father Mapple, "He leaves all his deliverance to God, contenting himself with this that in spite of all his pains and pangs, he will still look towards His holy temple. And here, shipmates, is true and faithful repentance; not clamorous for pardon, but grateful for punishment." Then he is delivered from the whale, from evil.

Jonah surrendered his will to the will of God. But Ahab will not surrender. The whole strength of his powerful personality is consumed with an unholy desire to wreak vengeance upon the cause of his suffering. He will not bow to his fate as inevitable because it comes from God, but like Job he will maintain his own ways before Jehovah though Jehovah slay him. Job retains his sanity and is finally silenced into awe and wonder before the majesty of God. Ahab becomes so obsessed with his hate that he turns into a _monomania_. His all-consuming hate
is his sin. Be the whale “agent or principle,” he will seek revenge upon it. Job never ceased to worship Jehovah, but Ahab defies him and blasphemes against him in diabolical hatred. Instead of surrendering his will, Ahab cries out, “I now know that thy right worship is defiance.” Like Melville’s tragic heroes before him, Ahab drives on unrepentant to his eternal death.

IV

Melville’s three great novels, Mardi, Pierre, and Moby Dick, are tragedies of mind. Taji, Pierre, and Ahab meet their eternal deaths because they refuse to accept ultimate truth unless it satisfies their minds. In each novel the true way is suggested, but each tragic hero tries to interpret all experience in terms of intellect. This is also true of Melville himself. Later in life he published a two-volume work in poetry entitled, Clarel, in which a record of his actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem becomes a search for faith. The radical independence of his heroes is gone. But even though he longs to have the faith of many of his fellow pilgrims, he cannot give his mental assent. His was also, as his best critic, E. W. Sedgwick, says, a tragedy of mind.

And yet, for those who are well-grounded in the Reformed faith, and have learned to appreciate the great books on the same level of achievement such as Paradise Lost, Faust, and Hamlet, the reading of Moby Dick can be a profound religious experience. John W. Hollenbach of Hope College has brought this out in a penetrating article.1 “I am certain,” he writes, “that my reading of Moby Dick has been a profound religious experience, bringing a fuller appreciation of the equality of man before God, a deepening of my feeling of the need for compassion, and a humbling sense of the limitation of unaided human understanding in arriving at the ultimate truth.” Why these three novels can give us such deep insights is the substance of this article. Melville has by means of what Sedwick calls his “inherited and temperamental Calvinism” penetrated into the depths of religious experience and expressed his soundings in symbols that echo certain Christian truths. Taji seeks his own salvation; Pierre strives for perfection in his own strength; Ahab rebels against God’s visitations upon him. No man can do these things without being in danger of losing his own soul.


From Our Correspondents

REACTION TO MR. POSTMA’S ARTICLE
April 2, 1952

The Calvin Forum
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Mr. Editor:

The March issue of the Calvin Forum contained an interesting article, Go Ye — Who? by Mr. Edward Postma. Although I disagree with Mr. Postma’s evaluation of the preaching office and lay-preaching, I shall for space considerations limit my reflections chiefly to that part of his article in which he contends that the use of the Heidelberg Catechism as a sermonic text is an evidence of an over-evaluation of the institutional church.

Mr. Postma refers to an exchange of thought between the Rev. Arnold Brink and myself which appeared in The Banner during the summer of 1950. Rev. Brink contended that the material of the Catechism may not be used as texts for sermons. I took the opposite view. Mr. Postma believes that Rev. Brink’s position is a proper reflection of the Protestant consciousness. Mr. Postma states that my position was based on the consideration that the Catechism is an official, as distinguished from a private interpretation of Scripture. He regards this as a Roman Catholic position. And it is; only it is not my position. I too believe that truth is never constituted by official declaration or majority vote. My position is rather that the material of the Catechism may be regarded as God’s Word and used as a sermonic text for the same reason that a sermon can be regarded as God’s Word: because it faithfully expresses the truth of God. If only the text lifted from the Bible is rightly called the Word of God, then no sermon may be called the Word of God. The fact that the Catechism and the sermon are not the very words of Scripture does not prevent them from being God’s Word.

It was at this point that Rev. Brink and I differed. Rev. Brink denied the propriety of such use of the Catechism on the ground that the Catechism is not “the very words of God,” and intimated that his position was demanded by the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Now it is perfectly true that the Bible alone is inspired, and that it alone remains the criterion of every human formulation of the Word of God. But this does not mean that when the Church puts the truth of God into her own language that it ceases to be the truth of God. It was a mistake when Rev. Brink contended, and as Mr. Postma now contends, that the Church’s formulation of the Word is not the Word of God because it is expressed in other words and sentences than those found in Scripture. If this were not mistaken, then neither the sermon nor the translations of the Scrip-
ture could be regarded as the Word of God. Only the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts would be the Word of God — and these are no longer extant. Along this line of reasoning, we would lose the Word of God entirely.

Mr. Postma believes that my position is a reflection of a Roman Catholic consciousness, and is grounded in the Roman Catholic over-emphasis on the external, institutional character of the Church. I trust that it is clear from the above that my position is not based on the authority of “official declaration.” Mr. Postma’s idea of what is the proper view of the Protestant consciousness also needs closer defining. It is indeed true that the view that Mr. Postma has adopted from Rev. Brink is an expression of the Protestant consciousness. But it must be added that it is an expression of the sectarian, not the Reformed version of the Protestant consciousness. Sectarian Christianity holds this mistaken conception of the Word of God, and therefore adopts for its slogan: No creed but Christ; No Heidelberg Catechism, but just the Bible. This is, however, not the Reformed conception of the Word of God and the inspiration of the Scriptures. Reformed thought has never maintained that the Word of God is so inextricably imprisoned in the very words of Scripture that it cannot be taken out of the Scripture and expressed in other words except at the cost of ceasing to be the Word of God. If Reformed thought were not correct on this matter, then the Word of God would be forever isolated outside of human life and thought. The Word of God would then be unable to get out of the Bible. Such a view of the Word leads directly to Pietism and is indeed its representative characteristic, but it has never been characteristic of Reformed thought.

Proponents of this view should consider how perilously close they come to the Barthian conception of the Word of God. Barth too denies that creeds and sermons are the Word of God, and for the same reason. Only Barth goes one step further: he applies the same reasoning to the Bible, and declares that for the same reason the Bible is not the Word of God. Verbal inspiration is grounded on the principle that the Word of God can get into human language and human formulations. We must be careful, therefore, that we do not misconstrue the doctrine of verbal inspiration that we destroy the very thing we are trying to poretect.

It is clear from Mr. Postma’s writings that he himself on this issue is caught betwixt and between. He states both that many formulations of the Word of God are possible, and that one formulation only, namely, the Bible, is the Word of God. Both judgments cannot be true. To be sure, the Bible alone is the norm by which all our formulations must be judged. But as concerns the issue whether the material of the Catechism may be called the Word or truth of God, he must reject one of his two judgments. If the “many formulations” lose the Word of God through the process of formulation, then, whatever else they may be, they are not formulations of the Word of God.

As we together contend for the defense of the Reformed Faith, we must be careful that we do not forge arguments that cut away the very foundations of the Faith we defend. If we accept the reason given by Rev. Brink, and accepted by Mr. Postma, for not using the Catechism as “texts,” and if we accept Mr. Postma’s argument that such usage is an evidence of over-emphasis on the institutional church, then we will, on the one hand, deliver ourselves into sectarianism, and on the other, deprive ourselves of a protective argument against modern conceptions of the Word of God. And it would indeed be curiously tragic if we would unwittingly distort our doctrine of verbal inspiration into an argument prohibiting the continuance of the highly cherished Reformed tradition of Catechism preaching!

We must be equally careful in our evaluations of the church’s preaching office and of lay-preaching. A straight line runs through the under-evaluations, of the preaching office, the institutional church, creedal formulations, and lay-preaching. It is a line that both historically and theologically coincides with sectarian Christianity.

In view of a wide unthinking absorption of sectarian ideas from our American environment, and in view of the expanding ecumenical movement, nothing perhaps is so badly needed at present as a thorough study and a greater understanding of the Reformed conception of the nature of the Church, her creeds, and her offices. Although Mr. Postma’s article does not point in the right direction, it may help to provide the necessary stimulation for the rediscovery of the right answers.

Sincerely,
JAMES DAANE

PROF. MURRAY’S ADDRESS

Westminster Theological Seminary
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia 18, Pa.
April 17, 1952.

The Editor
The Calvin Forum
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Dear Dr. De Boer:

The readers of the Calvin Forum may be interested in two events connected with Westminster Seminary. The first was a notable address by John Murray, professor of Systematic Theology, on Alumni Homecoming Day, February 19, 1952. The address was well-received, and there is hope that it will be put into print.

Under the topic, “Some Necessary Emphases in Preaching,” Professor Murray named four defects by which the effectiveness of the pulpit is impaired. First, as to the ministry of judgment: there is a failure to proclaim the judgment of God upon sin, to announce with power, earnestness, and passion
the demands and terrors of God’s law. To dismiss this proclamation as archaic or as legalism is a mere alibi. The sanctions of God’s holiness are com­plementary to our recognition of his majesty. There lies at the very heart of our Reformed Faith, in the words of Warfield, “the profound apprehension of the majesty of God”; and when we mention God’s majesty we speak of his holiness. A lack of emphasis on the demands and sanctions of God’s law reduces correspondingly, the significance of the gospel, as salvation from the guilt, power and defilement of sin. “By the law is the knowledge of sin”; its ministry is unto conviction of sin; and what is needed is the ministry that will make men tremble before the awful majesty and holiness of God. That aspect of sin which is most conspicuous by its absence from preaching today is guilt; and it is con­sciousness of guilt which leads to the grand article of the gospel, the justification of the sinner by the free grace of God through faith. Without guilt, the gospel is meaningless; there is no longer the urgent and burning question, “How shall a man be just with God?”

The second defect in preaching is a failure to proclaim the full and free offer of the gospel. While there is often no contradiction of this tenet, and even vigorous defense of it, we may see an almost complete absence of it. As this defect is found among some graduates of Westminster Seminary (to whom Professor Murray spoke) it may be due to the fact that many of these came originally from an Arminian or Fundamentalist background where the free offer of the gospel follows an Arminian pattern. Then at Westminster they came by the grace of God to relinquish their Arminian theology and patterns of thought, but have failed to make the necessary adjustment so as to offer the gospel fully and freely along Reformed lines. Among some Reformed ministers there is a grave failure to present Christ with spontaneity and without reserve, with that urgency and fullness which are requisite to the proclamation of the gospel in truth. Only on the basis of a Reformed conception of Christ, of his work and of his salvation, can a full and free offer of the gospel be made. It is a very great sin against Christ and his gospel not to realize that it is precisely the definiteness of the salvation which he has purchased which grounds the full and free offer to all men. “It is on the crest of the wave of the divine sovereignty that the full and free overture of Christ in the gospel breaks on the shores of a lost humanity.” In response to such an offer true faith is elicited by the Holy Spirit from the heart of a lost and helpless sinner. For faith is not simply belief in certain propositions. It is not even the belief that Christ died for us, or that we are the special objects of God’s favour and love. Faith is commitment to Christ, entrustment to him as the all-sufficient Saviour; and this entrustment is congruous only with the presentation of Christ in all his fullness and freeness, exalted before the view of men, as the Saviour offered to them in the gospel without any restriction or fetter, without restraint or reserve.

Third is the failure to make known the necessity of self-examination. There is, to be sure, a danger in morbid introspection, in which many feed on their own experience; this is dishonoring to Christ and detrimental to true piety. We should feed on Christ, and the mysteries of God’s revelation; and the promises which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Yet we should not take our own salvation for granted; if the grounds of our faith are not capable of radical examination, something is wrong. We must be honest with ourselves and inculcate honesty in others. The churches are stocked with those who are enrolled therein, as it were in a society. They should be compelled to examine themselves whether they be in the faith, that they may be self-con­scious and intelligent believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, a fourth defect in preaching today is a lack of emphasis on the high demands of the Christian vocation. This evil too often exists even among self-consciously true believers. They have an attenuated notion of what their vocation is, often reduc­ing the criteria by which their calling is to be de­termined to a few negations. Our vocation has its real essence in positive preoccupations which should expel the negations, in the high and holy demands of our heavenly vocation to be fulfilled in the grace of God and to the glory of his name, that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord.

The other event is the impending Reformed Minis­terial Institute, to be held at Westminster Semi­nary May 13 to 16, 1952. This is the fourth annual Institute conducted by the Westminster Alumni Association. The faculty this year will be composed of Rev. Meredith J. Kline, instructor in Old Testament at Westminster, who will lecture on “The Night Visions of Zechariah”; Dr. P. Y. De Jong, pastor of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, whose subject will be, “The Covenant Idea in New England Theology”; and Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse, who will give “Exegetical Studies in Matthew’s Gospel.” The four evening ses­sions will be devoted to discussions on “The Christian and Economic Theories,” led by Rev. John P. Clelland, on Tuesday; review and discussion of Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century, by A. S. Nash, led by Professor Paul Woolley, on Wed­nesday; and critical discussions of recorded sermons on Thursday and Friday. It is expected that as in previous years Reformed ministers from many areas will come together at this Institute for study and fellowship.
CHURCH NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA
21 Margaret Street,
Strathfield, Sydney,
New South Wales,
Australia
6th June, 1952.

Professor Cecil De Boer,
Editor, THE CALVIN FORUM,
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Dear Dr. De Boer,

Since my last letter to the Forum there has been a complete reorganization of the ecclesiastical set-up to meet the spiritual needs of the Reformed migrants coming to Australia from Holland. The original scheme that was drawn up by the Deputees for Immigration of the Gereformeerde Kerken and the representatives of the Free Presbyterian Church in Australia was that Gereformeerde migrants would be absorbed into the Free Presbyterian Church and that ministers from the Gereformeerde Kerken would come to Australia and labour under the Church Extension Committee — to cover a transition period between conducting services in the Dutch language to the English language.

The Rev. Van Der Bom of Groningen and the Rev. S. Hoekstra of Rotterdam came to Australia and after a few months felt that the plans to put the original scheme of absorption into operation were unsatisfactory. The question was discussed on a number of occasions with the representatives of the Free Presbyterian Church, and after a visit from Dr. H. Holtrop of Scheveningen, representing the Deputees for Immigration, it was agreed by our Dutch brethren that for the present absorption was not the answer to the problem of meeting the spiritual needs of the Reformed Dutch migrants.

The obstacles to the absorption idea were, inter alia: Difference in mode of worship and church government, and undoubtedly the ecclesiastical tradition that had arisen from the historical development of the Gereformeerde Kerken. Under the circumstances it was agreed by the representatives of the Free Presbyterian Church and the Gereformeerde ministers, together with Dr. Holtrop, that if the original scheme was unworkable, the only thing to do was to draw up another blue print for the maintenance of the Reformed Faith among our Dutch brethren in Australia.

It was evident that our Dutch colleagues were convinced that the only solution was to form an independent church; the representatives of the Free Presbyterian Church assured them that they would do what they could to help in the establishment of and independent church. For indeed our only desire is that our Dutch brethren will maintain the witness of the Reformed Faith in Australia.

Our Dutch brethren were now faced with another problem. Would the Dutch Church about to be set up in Australia form a part of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland or should a new and independent church be established? It was decided to found a new and independent church. The experience of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia greatly influenced this decision. Indonesia had presented a more favorable atmosphere for the establishing a branch of the Gereformeerde Kerken than Australia as Indonesia was a colony of the Netherlands and the European population was overwhelmingly Dutch, while in Australia the Dutch population is very small, and the only thing that makes it possible for them to form an independent Church is the fact that the Dutch migrants have settled mainly in the capital cities.

The Provisional Committee (Dutch), having determined to found an independent Church, realized that the previous relationship with the Free Presbyterian Church was now severed. It was and is their desire to keep in as close fellowship with the Free Presbyterian Church as possible in the hope that later on there may be a federation between the two churches. For this reason the Westminster Confession of Faith has been included in their constitution. The constitution which follows was agreed to in each congregation separately.

* * * * *

"We the undersigned, prior to coming to Australia were members in full communion with a Protestant denomination in the Netherlands or in Indonesia adhering to the positive doctrines of the Reformation - regretfully confess that for conscience's sake we are not in the position to join Australian churches, partly because in some of them modernism can unfold itself unhindered, partly because the prescribed way of worship in those churches that are loyal to the Holy Scriptures makes it difficult for most of us to join them wholeheartedly.

For the glory of God and the salvation of ourselves and our children, and accepting our responsibility in the national life of Australia, we have decided to establish an independent denomination designated THE REFORMED CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA.

With faithful hearts we accept as the basis of this Church the Holy Word of God as interpreted by the Westminster Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

We will maintain these Standards by exercising Christian discipline according to the Scriptures, our confessions, and following the Church Order of Dort which is accepted by us for the unity of our churches.

The first congregation established in New South Wales is the Reformed Church of Australia (South). As soon as possible a Consistory consisting of elders and deacons will be elected in the church or in its several parishes.

We avow and accept Johannes F. H. Van Der Bom, a fully ordained minister of the Divine Word, as minister in full charge of the Reformed Church of Australia in Sydney, and hereby acknowledge his labours for our spiritual welfare in the past.

Wherever possible in New South Wales, we will endeavour to promote the establishment of similar congregations, and we will seek Christian fellowship with all those who love our Saviour Jesus Christ and who are willing to base themselves upon the foundation of His Word according to the old Standards of the Reformation.

By adopting more and more the English language in public worship, we will endeavour to become a real Australian Church as soon as possible.

We now constitute the Reformed Church of Australia (Sydney) with the fervent prayer to God to bless us in this way and to make us a blessing to others. May He preserve us and our children and posterity from straying away from the faith once delivered to the saints, and by His grace may He make us faithful servants of His Holy Word and of the standards based upon this Holy Word.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth.
Four congregations have been formed: Sydney, minister, the Rev. Van der Bon; Brisbane, minister, the Rev. Pellican; Melbourne, minister, the Rev. Hoekstra; Tasmania, the Rev. Dr. Schiep. The first Synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia is to be convened next month.

While much has been accomplished, there still remains much to be done. And there yet may be many problems to be solved, as you will appreciate from the opening paragraph of the Constitution. The church is not a Gereformeerde church, but a Reformed Church of Australia, and her membership consists of people who previously belonged to the several Protestant denominations in the Netherlands. But we pray that they will unite in one body to give a clear testimony of the Reformed Faith in Australia. The newly elected Synod will also have its own peculiar problems, as you will gather from paragraphs 2, 3, and 10 of the Constitution. We are led to believe that the following suggestions are to come before the Synod regarding the future relations between the Free Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Churches of Australia:

(a) Appointment of delegates to attend each others Synods
(b) Exchange of pulpits
(c) Identical relations with other denominations as far as possible
(d) Cooperation in Missions and Evangelism

Apart from the formation of the Reformed Churches of Australia, we have little to report on Calvinism in Australia. From time to time one is cheered by hearing individual testimonies of Calvinism. In the majority of cases that have been brought to my notice, appreciation has been expressed of Dr. Lorraine Boettner's work *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*.

We trust that Dr. Bouma's health will improve, and that by the grace of God he will soon be able to take up his labours in His service again.

Yours very sincerely,
ARThUR ALLEN

P. S. Would you please note my change of address to,

ARThUR ALLEN
21 Margaret Street,
Strathfield, Sydney,
New South Wales,
Australia

NEWS-LETTER FROM JAPAN

299, 1-Chome, Egota
Nakano-ku, Tokyo, Japan
June 28, 1952

Dr. Cecil De Boer, Editor
THE CALVIN FORUM
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Editor:

No doubt you wonder at times when a contribution from the regular Japan correspondent of *The Calvin Forum* will appear. Because the Rev. Takeshi Matsuo has been ill for over two years, he has naturally been unable to write a letter. During one of my visits with him sometime ago he asked me if I would consent to report to your readers things of significance that have been happening in Japan in recent months. This I gladly do, although I hardly know where to begin.

Japan is passing through a very critical stage in her history. The occupation of Japan by United Nations forces was, in many respects, most beneficial. From a nation of disrespect, poverty and insecurity, she was brought to a point where she could again lift up her head and face the nations who conquered her. Her poverty, though complicated by a swelling population and lack of foreign trade, was gradually overcome by benificent rulers who were interested more in restoring Japan to her former place among the nations than in exacting stiff penalties, retributions, and reparations. Her insecurity is equal today only to those nations who are fighting a common foe in Korea. Call it pride, nationalism, or use some other term but this is the quality which is causing Japan to regain whatever was lost, economically, during years of war and defeat. Her harbors are bustling, her factories are humming, and the faces of her people show a grim determination to forge ahead.

One wonders perhaps why recent Communist demonstrations should occur in a country that was taught the lesson of democracy so well . . . maybe not so well. That should not be too hard to answer if one only remembers that Communism's activity in this country is making the most out of the situation that saw Japan only recently untethered from the controls of occupation troops. The May Day riots on the plaza of the Imperial Palace were carefully planned and carried out by a small minority of those loyal to the Kremlin and coincided with the spirit of exhuberance that would naturally follow such newfound independence. Students were herded together, and they were prodded with unsavory slogans and were interspersed with Communist organizers well-armed for the occasion. The only Americans seriously injured were some from a plane load of correspondents flown to Japan and under obligation to "get a story."

I am not minimizing the story of Communism in Japan. There is a hard core of seasoned Reds who will not rest until Japan is under the Russian heel. They are bitterly fighting Prime Minister Yoshida's effort to classify Communism as subversive and illegal. Their chief aim is to enlist the man power behind university walls as well as the normal supply of malcontents and soldiers of fortune, and they are succeeding in causing unrest, if the number of disturbances lately is a criterion.

Perhaps a bigger threat to Japan's future is not Communism but a new push to revive State Shinto. Christianity faces a double foe. On May 2, for the first time since Japan's defeat, national memorial services for the war dead were held throughout the
country. At the Yasukune Shrine in Tokyo these services and celebrations lasted for almost a week. It is said that well over two million Japanese perished in her wars over a period of eight years, and religious rites and ceremonies were re-established for the purpose of establishing contact with the departed spirits of the dead heroes in order to inform them that the occupation of Japan was ended. One wonders, therefore, whether the occupation was as successful as it is purported to have been in erasing from the Japanese religious mind those elements which acknowledge the Emperor to be divine and which demand that his subjects bow before a "heavenly" ruler.

The Reformed Church in Japan (Nihon Krisuto Kaikakuha Kyokai) is the first church in Japan since the war to make a public pronouncement against Shinto and Buddhism as being incompatible with Christianity. During the war many churches and Christians compromised their faith by bowing towards the Emperor's Palace and by paying obeisance to the family altar in their homes. Even after the war there were many churches who thought they had done no wrong in allowing such practices. Some still regularly acquiesce or even tacitly approve if a member persists that he can be a Christian and practices such heathen rites at the same time. The Reformed Church in Japan has come out strongly against such compromise.

This church now has about 40 churches spread throughout the main islands of Japan. Of this number, 25 are organized into the Western Presbytery, located in and around Kobe, Gifu and Osaka. The Shikoku Presbytery, on Shikoku Island off Japan's southeastern coast, was organized in the spring of 1951 with 8 churches. The Eastern Presbytery has churches in Sendai, Watari, Shiroishi, Yokohama, Urawa and Tokyo. The seminary is located in Kobe and is maintaining a virile, Calvinistic tradition. Graduates have little difficulty finding churches to pastor. Three American churches are actively cooperating with the Reformed Church in Japan: The Southern Presbyterian Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Christian Reformed Church. The former church works with the Western and Shikoku Presbyteries and the latter two with the Eastern Presbytery.

What should be the main mission emphasis in reaching Japan's 85 million people with the Gospel? I feel strongly for a vigorous evangelization program, by which I mean the preaching and teaching of the Gospel through Sunday Schools, group rallies in untouched villages, towns and cities, and evangelistic services in established congregations. Naturally there should also be a place for mission activity through the agency of Christian education, whereby the Gospel can be taught to non-covenant children in Christian day and middle schools, and Christian universities. These means have received little attention from conservatives in Japan and should be encouraged. Medical missions in Japan should also be revived.

I also feel very strongly the need of translation and publication work. There is a serious dearth of Reformed literature published in Japanese. Japan's literacy rate is almost 100% and people here love to read. The Reformed Translation Fellowship has been doing a marvelous work in the Far East but its work has been limited to Chinese translations and publications. On a recent visit to Japan, the Rev. John Galbraith, Foreign Missions Secretary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, discussed with the cooperating missions the possibility of inaugurating a serious, long-range, comprehensive translation and publication venture which would attempt to translate, publish and circulate some of the most notable Reformed works, especially in the field of apologetics. The searching by Japanese students for ultimate truth can be answered by Reformed literature with its incisive call to return to the normative truth of God's Word.

The work of the Reformed Church in Japan is progressing normally. Much time must be spent in its Presbytery and General Assembly meetings considering organizational, budgetary, and ecumenical matters. She is still a young church. Regular minister's conferences are held when possible. This summer the annual young people's conference for the Eastern Presbytery will be held at a hot spring resort near Shiroishi. The speakers are concentrating on such heavy subjects as predestination and righteousness. All meat and no milk for these babes in Christ! Several of the pastors are getting help this summer from seminary students, who will use this time as a sort of internship. Church membership, while showing no phenomenal gains, is increasing at a steady pace. This means that much time must be spent by the pastors in catechetical work. A week prior to Pentecost, the Tokyo church held a series of nightly evangelistic meetings concluded with a special service on Sunday night by the pastor. At the Eastern Presbytery meeting in Sendai this spring, an evangelistic meeting for the public was held the night of the conclusion of the meetings.

While the world looks with apprehension at the clouds of war approaching, the Reformed Church in Japan, and her cooperating missions and missionaries, are not afraid of the future. This is a day of opportunity, of challenge. And if war, and persecution, and tribulation must come, as it will, we rest on the promises of our Covenant God who will abide with His Church and "make all things work together for good to those that love Him and are called according to His purpose."

In His Name,
HENRY BRUNOOGE
Missionary of the
Christian Reformed Church
Tokyo, Japan

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Book Reviews


One of the high spots of my seminary education which I always remember with deepest gratitude was the course in The Pentateuch with Dr. O. T. Allis, then at Westminster Seminary. Dr. Allis rightly emphasized the fact that we find in the books of Moses the seed-plot of the whole Bible. He told his students repeatedly that the great tidal wave of Higher Criticism had made the Pentateuch its chief battle-ground, but here it must meet its ultimate defeat since the sacred record is clear and consistent that God spake unto Moses and that Moses obeyed the voice of the Lord and wrote these things in a book.

The book under discussion reveals the vast scholarship of its author without losing its popular appeal. As a matter of fact, the problems of the Pentateuch are dealt with in popular style so that every layman can thoroughly enjoy this little volume. Here is a sample: “The Bible is the Word of God, not only because God is its author, but because God and His doings are its pervasive theme. Elohim is a plural form; but throughout the Old Testament it is regularly construed as singular when used of the true God, which indicates that it is a plural of majesty or excellence, and has no connection with polytheistic notions” (p. 9).

The author does not favor the catastrophe or interval theory, “according to which verse 1 describes a primordial creation of wondrous beauty which was reduced to chaos (in connection with the fall of Satan)…” In an appendix five objections are listed against this attempt to reconcile the plain narrative to the findings of science. The author says that two temptations are to be avoided by Bible believing Christians. On the one hand, an attitude of hostility to science must not be allowed to develop, since we do not have to be and cannot afford to be obscurantist. On the other hand, attempts are sometimes made to force an agreement between the Bible and Science by “wresting” the Scriptures. Again in the matter of the length of the days in the creation narrative Dr. Allis will not be dogmatic. “We may well hesitate to assert that the days of Genesis 1 must be taken literally as days of twenty-four hours. But we should not hesitate to assert that infinite time and endless process are no adequate substitute for or explanation of that fiat creation by an omnipotent God of which this sublime chapter speaks so clearly and emphatically. It is equally true that ‘one day is with the Lord as a thousand years’ and that ‘a thousand years are as one day.’ The great word in this account of creation is ‘God’; and in Him we have the only key to all its mysteries and profundities” (p. 159).

Within the compass of these pages we have a penetrating and lucid exposition of the five books of Moses and an argument for their essential unity. This reviewer is of the opinion that in the English language there is no more profound and convincing presentation of the Pentateuch available. Especially helpful are the outline presentations of the materials, but the over-all view of the unity and divine character of the first five books of the Bible are an inspiring example to every aspiring Minister Verbi Dei.

H. R. Van Til
Calvin College

PATER NOSTER

AFTER THIS MANNER. By J. C. Macaulay, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 86 pages. $1.50.

This is a valuable devotional study of the Lord’s Prayer by a member of the Moody Bible Institute teaching staff. Familiarity with this prayer exposes us to the danger of using it thoughtlessly. Therefore this exposition, illuminated by suitable illustrations from life, is doubly welcome.

The author emphasizes that this prayer has great value for the believer, and has important implications for daily living. In expounding the petition, “Thy kingdom come,” he affirms that this prayer is for the present time also and that this prayer obligates me “to bring every segment of my life into conformity to the kingdom of God.” The petition, “and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” according to the author, is a prayer that we need to pray daily, for here the sins of the saints, of redeemed men, are brought to mind, and he warns against becoming insensible to the sinfulness of sin in saints.

In the appendix to this brief study the writer points out that, although there is no direct reference to Christ in this prayer, yet it is full of Him, and that when we pray this prayer, it can only be in His name. In this short commentary the praying of the Lord’s Prayer is presented as a searching exercise, and we are stimulated to thoughtful and reverent prayer.

J. F. Schuurmann
Holland, Mich.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER AS WITNESS


This booklet is designed for the Christian serviceman who suddenly finds himself in a strange new world and assailed by numerous and varied temptations. The popular evangelist, Billy Graham, understands the needs and problems of the men and women in the Armed Forces. He speaks their language. By means of concrete example and colorful analogy he communicates with them. His words meet the standards of precision and specificity. Scriptural texts are used copiously to reinforce his theses.

After briefly presenting the particular problems faced by military personnel the writer suggests that to overcome temptation one must rely on God’s Word and prayer. “God’s Word will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from God’s Word.” “Getting down on your knees helps you to stand on your feet.” The Christian soldier has a duty to witness. “Always be looking for something to do for Christ and you will receive more from Christ.” This booklet would make an excellent gift for anyone in or about to enter the Armed Forces. It may serve to strengthen such a one in his Christian life.

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