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Intimations of the Police State

Our Federal government was originally devised as a government of limited powers. Yet today the things that make for despotism are discernible all around us. One of the most insidious of these is the assumption of the power of unlimited spending in the name of the common good. It is growing increasingly clear that "the power to tax is the power to destroy" not merely an industry or a livelihood but the very fact of freedom itself. The same irresponsibility that makes for persistent deficit financing will probably not, in the event of a genuine crisis, hesitate to over-ride our laws and, in the end, the Constitution.

In a healthy and working democracy the state would at most lend only initial support to large scale financial and industrial undertakings, the actual planning and managing being a function of the communities more or less immediately concerned, who would operate under the leadership of responsible appointees independent of government direction. Once successfully initiated, the state would withdraw from such undertakings' and confine itself to the role of the deputy or vicar of political society, making and enforcing regulations from the political point of view, i.e., for the common good. Unfortunately, initial support by the government of co-operative undertakings calls for administrative machinery which in turn calls for political administrators. And political administrators, like the Hapsburgs, never learn. Unless definitely and significantly challenged, they will continue to complicate the machinery of control until they have saddled political society with a self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

Today this is aptly illustrated by the fact that the huge machinery constructed for the purpose of promoting the general welfare during the critical years of the nineteen-thirties is still with us, despite the fact that World War II has radically altered the domestic picture. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, organized almost twenty-five years ago for the purpose of nursing our economy back to health during the Hoover depression by granting loans to private lending agencies and large enterprises, continues in operation today, granting loans without apparently taking the trouble to distinguish between public interest and private greed.\(^1\) The Maritime Administration, created under the late President Roosevelt for the purpose of promoting our merchant marine, is still in business with a vengeance, actually paying higher subsidies to ship builders and ship operators than ever before. And the Civil Aeronautics Board, originally established in the public interest, seems today to spend most of its time and money defending the private interests of the established air lines and discouraging legitimate competition. In the notorious case involving the property of the Dollar Steamship Company, a case involving sixteen court decisions and judicial opinions, the executive branch of the Federal government for more than six years by-passed the judgments of the Federal courts (including the Supreme Court) in withholding from private citizens a business enterprise which was legally theirs, thus perpetuating administrative posts for deserving party bureaucrats. Add to all this the present administration's recent refusal to invoke the Taft-Hartley Law, presumably because of a provision requiring a secret vote by the workers on the latest offer submitted by management and one begins to wonder just to what extent we can trust the American state to preserve the rights and freedoms of the individual over against bureaucracy, the vote-buying strategy of an administration, and the power politics of labor leaders.

The extent to which government by bureaucracy and administrative decree could develop even in America is strikingly illustrated by the history of the Columbia Valley Authority, one of the nine power authorities into which some of our more ambitious planners would like to divide the country. At present electric power in the Northwest is produced by a pool of Federal, state, city, and private hydro-electric plants, to the complete satisfaction of the people of that area inasmuch as this arrangement makes for an adequate power supply at rates of about one half of the national average. It has been proposed, however, that the present power pool be replaced by an arrangement by which all electricity for the Northwest would be produced by a Federal hydro-electric corporation managed by three men answerable only to the President of the United States. It requires no great mental effort to see that if a scheme such as this were realized, the natural resources of this whole region would be in the hands of three men, who would control soil conservation, irrigation, and water rights. Eventually they could take over the buying and selling of real

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\(^1\) Something it rarely does if the citizens are not wide awake. 
\(^2\) Since about 1945 the Federal Government, in competition with Wall Street, has been priming private enterprise to the extent of about forty-six billions—and advancing some of it to borrowers who presently went bankrupt.
estate, determine the size of farms, dictate farm practices through the control of irrigation, regulate lumbering, mining, and fishing—in fact they could establish any enterprise they pleased simply by calling it an experiment or, more likely, a "demonstration operation." Add to this the Federal government's control of credit through its present lending agencies, and it becomes evident that the economic life of an entire region could virtually be dictated from Washington, with little if any actual authority remaining to state and local governments. In fact, by building and operating power dams such as the one at Bonneville in sufficient numbers strategically placed, and centralizing their control in some bureau of the Department of the Interior, the Federal government could eventually dominate the industrial life of the nation. From the point of view of theory there may be an argument for permitting the state to enter into competition with private and local enterprise for the purpose of establishing so-called yardsticks. Unfortunately, bureaucrats have never been conspicuous either for humility or for a fondness of mankind which would impel them to self-effacing service in the interest of just social and economic relations. One wonders how many of their tribe in Washington actually recognize themselves for what they really are, viz., hirelings of the American people.

The fact of government in business does not usually enhance the dignity of the state as the vicar of political society and the guardian of justice. Much of the corruption within the present administration can be traced to the fact that the Federal government has gone into the banking business without a well-policed political society and the guardian of justice. Muchly enhance the dignity of the state as the vicar of.

Accordingly, the power to lend money or to withhold tax favors, controlled neither by a Christian sense of social values nor by J. P. Morgan's sense of financial values, has actually been exercised on the basis of personal favoritism, with the result that such concepts as public interest and equal opportunity have been largely consigned to the limbo of pure theory. Having the right lawyers, or knowing the right politicians, or befriending a friend of an RFC director have easily become the determining factors in many a loan or tax favor. Furthermore, experience elsewhere seems to show that when acting in competition with private enterprise the state rarely hesitates to stoop to arbitrary and unfair restrictions upon private initiative, thus virtually destroying free enterprise by government fiat, and meanwhile screening its own inefficiency by the expedient of increased taxation. Before the attempt to bring the welfare state to the people of Australia was stopped dead at the polls, the government was enforcing regulations as to how much a merchant could sell, how much he could charge, how many new planes private transport companies could purchase, what kind of cargo they could handle, how much a farmer could ask for his land, and how much a home owner could spend on his house. Although wages rose forty percent, prices rose sixty; the consumer worked virtually three hours out of every eight for the state, and one in every four persons gainfully employed was working for the government.

From a bureaucratically controlled welfare state to the totalitarian or police state seems to be but a step. With the inevitable dwindling of the value of insurance policies, savings accounts, pensions, and social security benefits the men in power almost invariably make the discovery that controls have not been sufficiently radical, and that if the state is to supervise an economy that is really controlled, control must extend to human beings, who naturally cannot be said to be really controlled until their speech and their thought is controlled. Now thought control may at first seem innocuous enough if introduced with sufficient subtlety. For example, the Office of Education, a bureau of the Federal Security Agency, has on occasion presumed to tell teachers in our public schools what to think and to say both here and abroad, under the threat of discriminative action against their local communities—usually in the form of withholding certain Federal favors. Although in themselves perhaps not particularly alarming, such cases offer an indication of how free the teachers would be once the schools were controlled by some centralized Federal agency. Tyranny may not appear as such when it is exercised in the name of "desirable public and international relations," or when it is masked behind the pious sentiment that what is being accomplished is "bigger than any person" whether the bureaucrat or the free American he is trying to muzzle. Yet it is precisely under cover of lofty phrases such as these that despotism quietly but effectively fastens its tentacles on a dozing body politic.

Whether we like it or not, the fact is that the spirit of the police state is a thing not entirely foreign to Washington. And it is somewhat more than latent in the program of America organized labor. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service occasionally operates in a fashion not unlike that of the private militia in a totalitarian state. Immigrants have been held incommunicado, husbands separated from wives, children from parents, and detained in quarters where they could only pace back and forth after the manner of caged animals. Aliens have been held from fourteen months to three years despite the fact that the law forbids holding an alien for more than six months after a deportation order. Presumably for reasons of security the evidence of their guilt has frequently been kept secret, or the person involved was simply presumed guilty until he could prove his innocence.**

**In at least one case the Supreme Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction. Incidentally, several cases of suicide have been reported.

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necness—a rather curious demand when one is kept in the dark as to just what one is suspected of. These cases are generally known, or could be known; yet there has not been anything like a noticeable wave of popular revulsion on account of them. As for organized labor, the menace of thought control is visibly present in the recurring demand for the closed shop and compulsory unionization. Implied is the doctrine that unless a worker thinks in a certain way and adheres to certain dogmas, his right to work is nonexistent. And that this is essentially different from the Russian habit of cancelling a man’s bread ticket unless he thinks and believes as the party does, is at least not self-evident. All of which would seem to indicate that repression and regimentation are not exactly matters strictly confined to the Slavic mentality. Totalitarianism has no need of Russian communists in order to take America over; and it seems rather silly to try to defeat tyranny abroad by establishing it at home.

From all this it is a far cry to the kind of thing envisioned by Washington and Jefferson let alone the kind of thing demanded by the Christian political conscience. Evidently the principle that men are equals in potential worth if not in realized worth, that every man has before God a unique significance because appointed to a task which only he can perform, and that as a steward of God his daily pursuits have a spiritual character and a cosmic significance—this principle, this unique view of man, will receive little more than lip service in a society not thoroughly Christianized. Whatever Washington may have had in mind when he declared religion and morality to be the indispensable supports of good government and just social and economic relations, the fact is that the Christian religion answers to a genuine human and political need. Without it men are deprived of the ultimate hope which enables them to believe in the good society as a legitimate ideal here and now because already achieved in eternity. No one can be certain of ultimate values and final results except by a living faith, a faith that enables a man to transcend, at least in a measure, the accumulation of doubts which inevitably arise from looking merely to men and to status for the sense of worth and dignity so necessary to being created in the Divine image.

It should not be hard to see that removing the economic and political consequences of human selfishness and short-sightedness is not the job of the economic and political specialist. The only way to prevent these consequences is to curb selfishness, and the only way to curb selfishness is to get it recognized. Finally, the only way to get it adequately recognized is by inducing in men the consciousness of sin and the need of forgiveness, something only God can do. At least one advantage of a perspective which views all things in the light of the demands of perfection is that it saves men from the illusion which identifies the Kingdom of Heaven with the UN or democracy, or science or even world peace. It avoids the tragedy of basing life’s ultimate hopes upon one-sided and defective human programs. Since it makes for a constant awareness of the world of sin, it will not be deceived by a purely ethical optimism, realizing that every social achievement is infected with the possibility either of anarchy or of a new kind of tyranny. Inasmuch as its standard is a kingdom of perfect love and equality, it can never be at ease with the status quo, nor can it ultimately compromise with political realities. Accordingly, as we noted earlier, the Christian in carrying the spiritual struggle into political life must have for his final objective a transformed society controlled by the gospel. And to the charge that this is an impractical perfectionism the answer is that it posits a perfection beyond, something to be drawn to, not, as in the case of secularism and communism, a perfection within, something to be drawn out, whether by evolution or the threat of liquidation or both. Religious faith is the certainty that only in God’s perfection do we have our own, and that the secret of overcoming evil here and now lies in the assurance that it has already been overcome—and, conversely, in the knowledge that “finite social progress (so-called) does not constitute the perfection of the universe.” In other words, to consider how you can avoid an evil seems more rational than to condemn it after you have made it inevitable.

In a society such as our own, a society in which men are not recognized as sons of God, the inherent need for achievement, for the sense of adequacy, and for the sense of belonging to God will seek fulfillment in some kind of functional status rather than in personal worth. That a complex industrial and secular civilization makes mandatory such things as profit-sharing, stock-option plans for employees, employee participation in policy making, and so on goes without saying. For unless we can restore to the contemporary urban employe something like the self-reliance, the acceptance of responsibility, and the sense of having a stake in the country which his grandfather had as a landowner, we can expect nothing better than a society more or less perpetually at war with itself. For as organized labor increases in power, in prestige, and in the ability to give to its will the force of law, the employe’s sense of status will revolve increasingly around his occupation and his class membership, so that char-
What About Communism?

We ALL are concerned about the perpetuation of the truth as expressed in Calvinism. How can this, under God, be accomplished? By the conscious efforts of those who believe in it and are zealous for it. For it does not just perpetuate itself. It does not just grow without any seeding, cultivating, and weeding. How and when to carry on these activities requires a fair degree of intelligence. For it requires the ability to see through the particulars of the truth, through truths to the Truth; to see through the peripheral to the central; to see from that which lies on and pertains to the surface to that which is fundamental, to that which lies at the bottom. And the more particulars there are, the greater is the difficulty of seeing them all and seeing through them in their relation to that which is fundamental. Let no one be mistaken on that point. To do so requires time and effort, and with that a basic endowment.

By no means do all souls possess such endowment. And, be it said, not even all educated and academically trained minds are so endowed. Many lose themselves in the mass of particulars. The more the data in the field, the less of a comprehensive grasp is manifested. Some even become hopelessly confused. Thus an historian can be very learned in the field of history and never have anything like a philosophy of history; a teacher of language can lose himself in grammatical details without ever getting at the value of the idea expressed; a sociologist can be lost in surveys without ever arriving at that which will give him a true survey of surveys; a teacher of education can go up and down the list of educational theories without having a philosophy of education of his own; a philosopher can discuss all the schools of philosophy for years, as Joad confesses to have done, and only toward the end have a philosophy of his own. All this is nothing but losing oneself in the particulars.

What has this to do with communism? Much in every way. Have you ever asked yourself how to explain the fact that communism has taken hold of so many? Have you wondered how it was possible for so many to be captivated by it? And when I speak of so many I am referring especially to the so-called intellectuals. The masses have had held before them the bait of more and better food, a richer physical life. But that does not explain the appeal of communism to the intellectuals, and some Hollywood stars. Isn't the real trouble this—that the captivated souls have lacked exactly the ability to do what I have written above?

Let me explain. Not so very long ago I asked an intelligent young man whether he could say anything good about communism. There was a silence, and I could observe from his facial expression that he shuddered at the idea of giving a positive answer. Intentionally, therefore, I repeated the question. Finally he gave utterance to a very hesitant Yes. Now, his position is merely the reverse order of those who are captivated by it. But neither of the two groups has really found its way through the maze of particulars about communism. The young man can be credited, let us say, with an antipathy to, if not an understanding of the basic tenets of communism. But he has stopped there. Fundamentally he is opposed to it but he has not come to grips with the views of communism on various particulars. For if he had, he would probably have no difficulty in saying that he could say something good about communism. That "good" depends on what phase one is looking at, and whether one sees it in isolation. How about its economic, social, ethical, politics, religious tenets? If one looks at the economic alone, he could conceivably say something good about the system. But the real value one attaches to that "good" will depend on the place of the economic in his scale of values. If that is the most important, or again, if it is the only value, he will have no difficulty in embracing communism. If, however, he has others, and those others are of greater value, and if the religious is the all-important value, then the evaluation of communism will become a totally different thing.

What about communism? What do you think of it? That depends first of all on how much thinking you do. But next, it depends upon how much right thinking you do. For, to think aright one must think on all the phases of the communistic system, and that again not as phases next to and independent of one another but as related to one another and to something else. In a word, one must penetrate...
through the particulars to that which is really fundamental. The young man had thought on that and was very right on that score. The religious was paramount to him. But many of our intellectuals, devoid of any real religion, have looked at only certain phases of the system, and probably largely the economic alone. They have accepted the Marxian tenet that that is all-important. To the fundamental of what man is and ought to be and do they have never penetrated.

The above is only an example of what must be done to have Calvinism perpetuated. It is an application of what has been said in previous articles. Probably a little rehearsal of that will not be out of place. I have said that the systematization of the truth as it is manifested in Calvinism, though it must be done, nonetheless involves difficulties and dangers. The difficulty is to see all the particulars and at the same time see what are fundamentals among all those truths. For all are very important, but they are not equally important. And unless the proponents see that which is really important, the presentation will be ineffective. The real impact of Calvinism will not register with those who hear it proclaimed. They will get lost in the maze of particulars, and the blind will be leading the blind.

And, on the other hand, if this difficulty has been overcome and all is properly systematized there lurks a danger. What is it? That one loses himself in the system, in abstraction. That too is ineffective for handing on the torch to the runners of the next generation. To keep it from being lost in abstractionism, the truths of the system must in turn be applied to the situations of the present world. The philosophy must be brought down from heaven to earth. Then only does it become meaningful to the rising generation. The truths and the Truth must be pinned down to the present world. But even that world must be looked at from the point of view of the totality of Calvinism. That is the only way to get the right answer to What about Calvinism, or about anything else.

RALPH STOB

The Place of Bible in a Liberal Arts College Curriculum*

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The term “Bible” in this article does not refer in the main to courses of study in Bible. In our present discussion we are interested chiefly in the proper place of the Bible itself in a liberal arts college curriculum. With this problem settled we can determine the place which courses of study in the Bible will have or not have in a liberal arts college curriculum. But this will not be our main thought.

The term “liberal arts” as commonly employed is a leftover of medieval days. In the terminology of the Middle Ages the term “arts” designated the whole circle of subjects investigated by those who sought a liberal education. This included studies in science as well as in art. The seven “liberal arts” which Roman plebeians might not study were the Trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic) and the Quadrivium (Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, Astronomy). Our present-day Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees still attach that connotation to the term “arts,” including scientific subjects as well as arts in the degrees. “Liberal” in the present usage is employed as a synonym of the term “broaden” or “higher” education.

* This article was read at a Calvin College Faculty meeting to introduce a desired discussion of the subject. It is here published in the hope that it may be of some benefit to a wider circle.

The Bible the Only Rule of Faith and Conduct

We may begin our discussion of this subject with the proposition that the Bible is the only rule of faith and conduct as the basic premise on which we are all agreed. This is not only a principle to which our theologians adhere but one that is subscribed to by all the distinguished gentlemen in our philosophy department and in all the other departments as well. This basic principle, therefore, requires no specific defense since there is complete agreement among us on this point.

The fact that the Bible is the only rule of faith and conduct does not imply that all our facts in the curriculum are derived from the Bible. Nature demands a great portion of our study and time—in most cases perhaps ninety percent or even more. However, without attempting to introduce controversial issues at this point, we all admit that nature and man’s mind are distorted through sin. Man needs what Calvin called the spectacles of the Bible to enable him to understand rightly and to evaluate properly the truths which nature presents.

The Humanist View and the Roman Catholic View

In this respect we differ from the view of the humanists, all of whom deny the reality of any spe-
cial revelation above nature. To them the Bible is not the rule of faith and practice. Even the Bible itself is not of supernatural origin but is a part of nature, embodying nothing more than the opinions of the writers of the Bible and—like the opinions of any human writers—commend themselves to the intelligent consideration of the reader who is free to accept or reject the thought according as he finds it acceptable or not.

We also differ in this from the Roman Catholic position. According to this view man is able to pursue the study of nature almost or quite like man before the fall of Adam and can proceed in his investigations without Bible aid. Aristotle or any philosopher or natural scientist is to him an authority in the natural realm who can enable him to arrive at a complete knowledge of the truths of nature. But when he desires knowledge of supernatural facts which relate to his salvation he needs the interpretation of Scripture. This view is due to the Roman Catholic conception of what happened to man at the time of the Fall of Adam when he lost the image of God. Man was said to have retained his natural power unimpaired, but he lost the donum superadditum through which he was to gain his knowledge of the truths of salvation.

The Reformed View

In contrast with the Roman Catholic outlook the Reformed position holds that man at the fall lost the image of God in the narrower sense. He retained that image in the broader sense in that that he still thinks, feels, and wills. But materially he lost the true knowledge of God in his thinking and righteousness, in his moral conduct and holiness in his heart. Man by wisdom now knew not God as He was to be known, either in His essence or in His works. Man now needs a special revelation to give him the proper perspective of what nature—his field of study—truly is and what it teaches. He needs the special revelation of the Bible to think God’s thoughts after Him. The facts that nature reveals, including all of natural and human history and the study of man himself, will be observed by pagan and Christian alike even though, the results of the study of nature will mean something more to the one than to the other. But we maintain that man needs the Biblical revelation to gain a true conception of what he observes as it is to be understood in its organic relationship to the body of knowledge as a whole.

The Significance of Common Grace

This would be the more true if the only factor operating in man after the fall were his totally depraved nature. In a totally depraved wretch no science or art is possible. But as a deterrent to the destructive forces of sin there is operating upon natural man the common grace influence of God making possible, as Calvin informs us, very admirable studies even in pagan lands notably in ancient Greece. (Cf. Institutes, Vol. I, Book II, Par. XV, p. 247, Ed. of Allen). However common grace never was capable of leading these ancients to the discovery of the truths regarding the three basic concepts with which culture must deal, namely man, humanity and nature. This fact becomes evident when we inquire into the prevalent notions held regarding these three basic ideas. Woman for instance, was not a full developed human being. She was far inferior to man. Likewise were the slaves. Only freeborn men were real men, and then only when they were Greeks. The same is true about their notions of humanity, man’s relation to his fellowmen. They held to numerous rigid class distinctions. They never grasped the thought that one God had made of one blood all the people of the earth for to dwell under the whole heaven. Nor did they attain to the understanding of nature as the creation of one great Creator. It becomes evident, therefore, that for the interpretation of basic general concepts and their proper systematic correlation we need the perspective of the Word of God to understand correctly the origin, nature, and destiny of things. This is true even while we grant the presence of common grace as a deterrent to sin and as a very potent cultural factor in the development of science operating in the pagan world.

The Bible for Science and Art

The Bible, therefore, must be studied in order to have a correct understanding of the nature of the truths found in science and in art. This fact in itself, however, does not yet imply that in a Liberal Arts curriculum there should be special courses offered in the study of the Bible by men who make the Bible their specific object of investigation. Conceivably Bible truths as these relate to the several branches of knowledge, whether the natural sciences or history or psychology or any other branch, could be taught by the specialists in those fields along with the material which they must introduce in their departments. And each student as well as each instructor could let the light of God’s Word guide him in his intellectual pursuits in his own proper field of activity. Not only could each instructor and each student so introduce the Bible into his departmental investigations, but according to us as Calvinists, they all should.

Especially for us as Calvinists is this true. The Calvinist believes in the right of private judgment. Each man should interpret the Bible for himself and each sphere for itself. We hold, for example, that the politician, if he be true to his calling, shall apply the Bible to his political views. Likewise each
scientist should develop and apply the study of the Bible as it relates to his own branch of learning.

The Need of Bible Teachers

Will this fact then exclude the need or the propriety of Bible courses in a Liberal Arts college curriculum? We believe our answer should be no. Or will this fact render unnecessary the employment of scholars who make the study of the Bible their specialty? Again we believe our reply should be no. For this position we submit the following reasons. We could perhaps dispense with Bible courses in a Liberal Arts college and with the use of specialists in Bible if all teachers and all students were perfect in knowledge and were fully informed as to the teachings of the Bible. But no one has a comprehensive knowledge or can be at home in all fields of study. When one desires definite information on a point of interest in any branch of study, let us say English or history, one consults the men who have made special study of those fields. Thus it is also with information to be gathered from the Bible.

We speak of the perspicuity of the Bible, its clearness. By this term the Protestants desired to indicate that the Bible was sufficiently clear to any man with a normal mind to enable him to learn from its pages the rudiments of the way of salvation for himself. By taking this position the Protestants sought to combat the Roman Catholic stand that every man needed the Church to interpret the Bible for him. But that the Protestants never intended that statement to mean that the individual could dispense with services of the Church in acquiring a general knowledge of all points of Scripture is clear from a statement of Calvin to the effect that whose will have God as his Father must have the church as his Mother.1 It is the church that must mother him in the way of salvation, must nurture him in the way of faith. This truth is still more obvious from Scripture itself. The Apostle Peter directs the attention of his readers in II Peter 3:16 to the writings of Paul, some of which he explains, are “hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.” Some thoughts of Scripture are more difficult to understand than others and stress the need of scholarly men who have made a specialty of the study of Scripture to act as interpreters of what the Scriptures actually do teach. This statement is particularly applicable to those harder understood points that bear upon the courses offered in a liberal arts college curriculum.

The need of specially trained men in the field of Bible becomes the more apparent when we consider that no one doctrine of the Bible or of the church rests upon one or two isolated Scripture texts but rather upon the running thought that permeates the whole of Scripture. The Bible is an organism of truth. And texts to be understood properly must be interpreted in the light of that entire body of doctrines which is found in Scripture, or as the Church Fathers expressed it, in the regula fidei, the rule of faith, which runs through the entire Scripture. This fact calls for specially trained men who have the time and the training to enable them to know what the Bible teaches. No man who as teacher is engaged in the work of his department and must devote perhaps ninety percent of his time to departmental studies will have the opportunity nor will he have the training to make of himself a specialist in Bible besides. So I would maintain that no liberal arts school which still adheres to the sovereignty of God and to the Bible as the rule of faith and conduct can dispense with properly trained teachers of the Bible.

By such teachers I do not mean mere ministers. Any person these days can become a minister, either with or without a college or seminary training. I mean a theologian. This again refers to one who has made the study of the Bible his specialty. Today it is a sad commentary on religious schools that so few scholarly Bible commentaries have appeared in recent years. More over, while we greatly rejoice that our own Professor Berkhof’s Systematic Theology is widely used in our country and as well in foreign countries, in Reformed, Presbyterian, Reformed Episcopal, and Baptist Seminaries, and in several Bible Schools, it is regrettable to note that some of these do not have scholars of their own sufficiently versed in systematic theology to write a book on the system of doctrine that can serve as a standard work for their own denomination. Too much time, so it seems, is spent in keeping informed on what some scholarly writer who has come into the limelight has to say about matters religious, even though he may have but a meager knowledge of the Bible and argues from a philosophy of religion all his own. A theologian who is worth his salt should know what the Bible—his specialty—teaches first of all and most of all. Certainly when we speak of the place of Bible in a liberal arts curriculum we must have such men in mind that have made the study of the Bible their specialty.

There is still another reason why specially trained Bible teachers are a necessity in a liberal arts college. In denominational colleges, committed as they are to confessions which to them are the embodiment of the creedal statements of what the Bible teaches—such Bible teachers must know what the confessions have to say about the truths of Scripture. Furthermore they must be informed on how the Spirit of God has led the Church in the development of the knowledge of the Bible in the history of Christendom and how these truths have been applied to the several departments of human knowledge.

Bible for the Student of Today

This brings me a step closer to the problem of the Bible as a special study for the student enrolled in a liberal arts college. If that student is to understand the Bible as the rule of faith in all fields of study including his own, then he needs not just a smattering of knowledge of what the Bible teaches but he needs a sufficiently thorough training in Bible to serve him in his college studies which he is pursuing. Otherwise how will he be able to evaluate properly and to apply Bible truths to his departmental problems? This fact calls for courses in Bible which are not just devotional studies but which are exegetical, historical, and systematic doctrinal studies to acquaint the student with what the Bible teaches and with what has been its application in history. I venture to say that the more the knowledge of the Bible diminishes—as has been the case in American Christendom today—the more fruitful breeding-grounds do we create for the growth of all sorts of errors. It would seem, therefore, that in days such as ours there is more than ever the need of stressing Bible courses in a liberal arts curriculum.

Bible Not Philosophy of Religion

But granting all that has been stated above, could we not even so dispense with Bible courses in a liberal arts curriculum and refer the study of religion to the philosophy department as so much philosophy of religion, as some liberal scholars have proposed? I presume this could be done if the basis of our views were our philosophies. But when we maintain that the Bible is the rule of faith and practice, it would seem to be self-evident that such a view calls for scholars who are versed in that Bible as their specialty to determine what it teaches.

The Need for Practical Courses

I desire to add just one more thought as a corollary to what has been stated. Is there a place in a liberal arts college curriculum for courses that emphasize the practical implications of Bible truths? My reply would be yes, provided such instruction would be sufficiently scholarly to deserve a place in a college curriculum. Just as for instance in the natural sciences we do not train men in these branches of learning to enable them only to teach these sciences, but we also offer practical courses and drill them in laboratory techniques to make them proficient in the practical application of such studies. Likewise, so it would seem to follow, we are warranted in offering courses in Bible that stress the practical application of Biblical truths necessary for life. For that Bible is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (II Timothy 3:16). And so I would conclude that there is definitely a place, in fact a place of front rank importance for Bible in a liberal arts college curriculum.

"Except They Have Agreed"

Dr. Jacob T. Hoogstra
Prospect Park Chr. Ref. Church
Holland, Michigan

Basis of Orthodox Ecumenicity

ONE of the reasons the orthodox and the modernists cannot be in the same ecumenical movement is the difference of norm, basis of fellowship, and source of authority between the two.

All orthodox ecumenicity professes that there can be no true ecumenicity unless by common agreement the Bible is believed to be the infallibly inspired Word of God. This is true of such movements as the A.C.C.C. or the N.A.E. and the international organizations they have fathered. This conviction has been expressed editorially in the orthodox religious press. The First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches has adopted this basis also, adding to it the exhortation: "the forsaking of which has caused the deplorable decline of modern life" (Acts, p.64). Verbal inspiration which is the great offense and intellectual embarrassment to modernism is to orthodoxy, if believed wholeheartedly, the only true foundation upon which ecumenicity can be constructed.

The insistence upon this basis is not obscurantism, as it has been alleged, nor stiff-headed traditionalism. Nor should an orthodox thinker, although he frequently does, assert that "if the Word of God is in the Bible (instead of the Word of God is the Bible), we shall be a victim of subjectivism, and therefore this position is wrong." This would be a type of religious pragmatism—namely to say that "Because I would be at a loss I better accept the whole Bible as the Word of God." The way this argument of subjectivism is put is really no argument, but an embarrassment. At the same time the charge is true only from another point of view. If
the Word of God is in the Bible instead of, the whole Bible is the Word of God, it follows that there is a split-authority in the Bible. God must share His authority with science, logic, human ethics, etc. Besides “I,” the subject, elevate myself as a judge to say what belongs to God and what to man. This is a flagrant and most refined transgression of the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”; and of the second commandment: “I am a jealous God.” The god we have before us is not in the final analysis the competing science but the haughty man who judges between the Word of God and the Word of ancient man according to his own standard of truth. This is the first conviction of the orthodox man the moment we deny the Bible as entirely God’s Word, split-authority and idolatrous subjectivism. The second related principle is that the Bible must determine for itself what it is. It must witness to its own claims. If the Bible cannot be relied upon in its basic self-testimony, what right have we to conclude that it can be held trustworthy at all, as for example, such matchless promises as John 3:16?

Currently there is an unbridgeable gulf between the orthodox and the modernists, or neo-modernists. The adherence to the doctrine of verbal inspiration to the modernists is idolatry to a book or to the words of that book. The worshipper bows before the shrine of the “letter” of the book and forgets that the “spirit” truly sets us free. Many rejoice at their emancipation from the “letter.” Hence that what is the precious Word of God to the orthodox is nothing but bibliolatry, or Bible-idolatry, to the modernists. How these two can abide under one ecumenical roof is either a religious miracle or an ethical apostasy.

Naturally all orthodox will recognize the sincerity of those who seek to live according to their own conception of the “letter” and the “spirit” of the Bible. The orthodox will note the great personal sacrifices made as in the case of a man like Dr. A. Schweitzer. But sincerity, enthusiasm, and sacrifice do not constitute the norm of truth. If they did, then heretics today would be the bishops and theologians, because heretics usually excel in enthusiasm and in sacrifice. The church always returned to the Bible as the final court of appeal. Hence the question today resolves itself into this: Standard or Idol!

The Reformed Basis of Ecumenicity

Reformed ecumenicity agrees with all orthodoxy that the Bible is verbally inspired and as such must be foundational in all ecumenicity. Within that dimension, however, there is room for further explication of what we mean by inspiration. The Reformed theologian can offer to all orthodox a better understanding of inspiration for their reaction and possible adoption.

All friends and critics of the Bible know what is meant by “mechanical inspiration.” Both true and harsh things have been spoken about it. Personally we believe that the criticism has been overdrawn. It has been called “dictation theory,” “typewriter theory,” and “pen-holder theory”; and it has been denied on the basis that an injustice has been done to human personality since the writer is nothing but God’s private secretary. Perhaps our private secretaries do not get the point since they feel no loss of personality in taking dictations. This theory also stands condemned by modern man in that it maintains that God gave man propositional truths. One thing is certain: unscholarly scholarship has superficially made the startling deduction that since a few cantons in Switzerland had accepted the Consensus Helvetica which explicitly taught mechanical inspiration therefore the Reformation generally believed it. Mechanical inspiration stands condemned not because of an injustice to human personality, for the Holy Spirit did say, “write this in a book,” but because of the very teachings of the Bible itself. These teachings prompt the Reformed to present their conviction.

Those who stand in the Kuyperian-Bavinck tradition employ the term “organic.” They employ it in such a way as if all Reformed people and orthodox people generally know what is meant by it. Berkhof, Van Til, and Lecerf of France employ this term, but all three stand in the Dutch tradition. We doubt whether the eminent scholar of inspiration Dr. B. B. Warfield ever employed it. The term seems to be unknown or unused by Scottish theologians and in Hungarian Reformed theology. Dr. Sebysten may be an exception since he was an ardent disciple of Dr. A. Kuyper. Of course we do not wish to make an absolute denial which would be both presumptuous and dangerous. The point, however, is this: In all our ecumenical writings we forget that the term we commonly employ has definite content for those who are in the Dutch tradition. Dutch theology has the task to popularize this term. Kuyper, Bavinck, though dead, still speak.

Organic

“Organic” inspiration refers to the organ or the instrument God employs for the inscripturation of His revelation. It studies the man as prepared by God and moved by the Holy Spirit.

Man is not only an “organ” but also an “organ-ism.” His personality discloses how the spiritual, psychological, and the physical blend into an organism. Each man has his own heredity, individuality, tradition, temperament, trade, profession, environment, and aptitudes. Each man has his own strength of industry or love for holidays. Some prefer books, others trowels. Some feel at home in palaces and others in the gates with loitering shepherds. Each

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one is a child of his age and uncritically accepts what the following age condemns.

It must be obvious to the reader that in organic inspiration God cannot and consequently does not take into His service that psycho-somatic organism as it is in its entirety. If God did, then there would be no special revelation since God would take only man's contacts and ways, and purge them from error, perhaps, but would not give to the author something “special.” God does not take a man's philosophy. God gives something, and that which he gives is new.

God presses into service only that which suites His gracious purposes. There is first of all divine selectivity and direction. God uses by selecting and directing an author's vocabulary without the writer feeling an inner strain. He allows him to remain true to himself in his expressions. God does not require of an Isaiah in the courts of kings the same that he requires of an Amos of threshing machines, kine, sheep, and sycamore trees. Only a Hosea could write as a Hosea. By a miracle of God this human equipment was employed to clothe the special revelation of redemption. Consequently the Holy Spirit is the first author of the Bible. In employing what He desired of the second authors, He remained the Author without denying the actuality of secondary authors who stamped their own personality on the books of the Bible.

In short, organic inspiration affirms that God in His providence trained the instruments he desired, and that He clothed His revelation within the expression powers of a man's personality. We recognize two things in particular. First of all, God's revelation is not beclouded by human expression. Adam was created to commune with God. Adam could know and communicate sufficiently for the needs of a human being. Inspired writers by the power of the Holy Spirit can communicate the truth sufficient for our salvation and the enjoyment of God. God created man so man could communicate.

Inspiration has another aspect. The Holy Spirit has suppressed error in the mind of the sacred writers and has directed them to write not only without error but positively the whole truth of the counsel of God as far as we need to know it now.

Safeguarding the Term "Organic"

We have placed our emphasis upon the man God has specially prepared to be a sacred writer. If we would not limit the organic to the man only as a vehicle of inspiration, but would include the entire man, his peculiar ideas, associates, and the religious ideas of a certain period, we would deny the special revelation of God. God gives the message but He employs the human equipment He providentially forged.

Suppose we would believe that the author had acquired ideas of Egyptian circumcision, Babylonian Sabbaths, heathen temple construction and offerings, Jewish washings and baptisms, or mystery religion initiations, and that God has only revamped these for convenient modes of worship. What would be the consequences? They would vary.

First of all we would have to evaluate all the heathen practices and come to the conclusion if God could use them, borrow them, they either must exist because of common grace, perhaps, or that the antithesis is only one of degree, and that the covenant religion is not absolutely the true religion. One can readily feel that this problem plunges us into the relation between the covenant and the the pagan world, not only as condemned by the prophets, but also as an interaction between the two.

Surely no one would prostitute the doctrine of common grace to uphold such a position. In the light of Romans 1:18ff, all pagan religions repress the true revelation of God. God would not employ the repressed truth changed into a lie. The only thing we can aver is that there is a certain parallelism between the true and the radically false, and that there are certain agreements of language even though the outward form means something different to the pagan.

A false organic inspiration could deceive us in another way. We could follow this chain of thinking. Moses knew Egyptian but not Darwin. He was organically related to people who believed Genesis 1-3. God used him but had to include Moses' ideas about creation. By organic inspiration we can meet the needs of our modern scientists by telling them that what Moses said about creation was his age. He was organically related to it. We can discern between his age and the true Word of God because we believe in organic inspiration. Hence we do no injustice to the Bible. If organic inspiration, however, would be that inclusive then two things would follow at least. There would be two sources of authority in the Bible, and that our Holy God does not allow. Science will not tell us what is true and false in the Bible. Secondly, it would presuppose that God employed a man's conception of the world. These writers do not tell us what they think of the world, but what God thinks of us.

Organic inspiration therefore must limit itself to the man God has sovereignly prepared and employed. This too must be safe-guarded by saying that in the final analysis the question is not: Who is the man? but: What has God wrought in him and through him?

A New Term for an Accepted Truth

In passing it may be well to note that the acknowledgment of personality-variants among the writers of the Bible is not limited to the Dutch tradition of
Reformed theology. Men like John L. Girardeau, beloved by Southern Presbyterians, called attention to it. The Roman Catholic scholar, E. L. van Becelaere (ERE, VII, pp. 346ff) speaks in terms very similar to ours. If our memory is correct, it is Dr. Warfield who compares the Bible to a cathedral and each author to a stained glass allowing only such light to enter as the Architect planned. He made the glass and gave the light.

The point of interest is this: Why not use a term that can be employed to bring out this distinctive character of inspiration? Will the term “organic” receive universal acceptance? Is there a better term? Will all students in time be willing to accept this term?

Value of Universal Recognition of the Term “Organic”

First value is the proper understanding of the character of inspiration. A Christian should leave no stone unturned to gain the best possible understanding of the Bible.

Secondly, we discover the Bible, the Word of God, couched in a human language by human beings, still moved infallibly by the Holy Spirit. It speaks to the common man as well as to the scholar.

Thirdly, it gives the lie to mechanical inspiration and makes clear to any critic that in fighting the mechanical theory he is not fighting orthodoxy but a straw man.

Fourthly, organic inspiration brings out the beautiful variety in the Bible personality variants, types of literature, and modes of expression. Variety always enhances beauty. To discover variety is to discover specific the purpose of the man and the book in the Bible.

Fifthly, organic inspiration will always emphasize the sovereignty of God. He freely chose the men, their training, their fortunes or misfortunes. He gave them the specific message even in the use they make of quoting history from historical records.

Sixthly, organic inspiration will differentiate between Barthianism and the Reformed Faith. Basic to organic inspiration is Genesis 1-3, that man is created in the image of God. There is a distance between man and God because of sin, but not because of creation. God created man in such a way that He could later on use certain men to be vehicles of inspiration. This teaching is rank heresy for a Barthian. The same God suppressed sin of mind, judgment, and expression to give us an infallible Bible. The Holy Spirit overcame in the authors the love for error, untruth, and self-publicity.

Seventhly, organic inspiration will be of great assistance in exegesis. It will teach us that God was pleased to use the forms of literature then extant and the common language then the vernacular of the people. We shall be safe-guarded against idolizing a language of the Bible. It will warn us strongly against the erroneous attempt to criticize the books of the Bible according to the canons adopted in the 20th century. It will bring to light the need of emphasizing “selection” by the Holy Spirit in historical books so that the Bible is history but it is not a historical book of Israel or of any other nation. Ezra was a student of history, but by means of selecting from history what the Holy Spirit guided him in doing he did not write a history but the Word of God. The “student of history” in the author of Chronicles was utilized, but the end result was not a history of the Hebrews but acts of the covenant God to warn and to encourage the covenant people.

The Temptation of Knowledge*

Introduction

Every area of life, every occupation, and every moment, no matter how good in itself, brings with it its own temptations. Life is never without its temptations to go contrary to the will of God which is the law of God.

Fishing, hunting, golf, etc., are legitimate forms of recreation. But how I may be tempted to dissipate my physical and mental energy in sports of this kind. Then, too, I may spend myself in my work so that my personal fellowship with God and with my family may be neglected. Work then becomes an escape; anesthesia of work, the psychologist calls it.

* Devotional Talk at Calvin College Chapel Time, based on I Corinthians 8.

Temptation Unavoidable

One cannot avoid temptation. We are constantly confronted with situations which would subordinate the spirit to the flesh. We live in a world in disharmony and confusion. We grow up in a culture the product of sinful men. And we, ourselves, are sinners, so that as men and women of God, born of the Spirit, we still struggle with a sinful human nature.

Temptation Desirable

But not only is temptation unavoidable; it is desirable. So we are taught in James 1:2-4. “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye are surrounded by
various temptations," so we are told. Why? “For,” so James continues, “the testing of your faith produces endurance.” It is by being subjected to temptation that we can grow strong in the Lord. We can learn to say “No.”

Knowledge as Temptation

In the passage before us knowledge is presented as temptation.

Man, made in the image of God, is a knower. He is a person who comes to apprehend in his understanding, for he is rational. He comes to know. God says of His covenant people in the Old Testament days that they were lost because they had no knowledge. And the Heidelberg Catechism makes knowledge a part of the definition of faith.

Then how can knowledge, so essential to the full-orbed, to the Christian life, be a temptation?

It can. Note what Paul says in this passage, “Knowledge puffs up; but love builds up.”

Paul is talking especially to those Corinthians who knew that food sacrificed to idols had not thereby become impure morally. And Paul says they were right, for “food will not commend us to God.” Furthermore, Paul tells them they were right too in exercising their new-found liberty. They were not like the weaker brother who was still in conscience bound by superstition. No, they could enjoy God’s gifts in nature freely and with thanksgiving.

Yet Paul must warn them that their knowledge may tempt them to sin. How? By separating it from love. For not knowledge, but love is the fulfillment of the law. Not knowledge, but love builds up. Not knowledge, but love will enable us to exercise our new-found liberty which is ours in Christ. If knowledge is separated from love, the weak brother will perish because of your knowledge, Paul tells these Corinthians.

Knowledge and Love

Note this, says Paul to these Corinthians, and to us, “... if any man loveth God, the same is known by him.” It is not your knowledge, Paul seems to emphasize, that assures you of being known by God, but that you love God. This is your assurance. The assurance is of faith, not of knowledge.

Love is that activity of the total person by which he gives himself to another without asking anything in return. Love more than any other word describes the total person in unified action. Love builds up. Love integrates. Love unifies. Faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love.

Only love can integrate knowledge in the total person so that it can be a blessing to oneself and others. Knowledge apart from love divides, dis-integrates, sets up barriers against genuine fellowship. Knowledge apart from love becomes self-love, selfish, makes it harder to give of oneself. But love puts knowledge to work in the service of God and man.

Knowledge and the Student

We are here at college, my fellow students, to pursue after knowledge. College is an institution of higher learning where faculty and students are engaged cooperatively in exploring the arts and sciences for knowledge and understanding. This is preeminently our task at Calvin, I think.

But we are doing this as Christians. We are doing this as a people of God who recognize that the fear of God is the beginning of all knowledge. And we fear God because we love Him. And because we love Him we know that we are His; that we belong to the household of faith; that we belong to the family of God.

We are admonished in the passage of Scripture before us that the knowledge we earnestly and right­fully seek, may become a temptation to us. Paul says to us, too, “We know that we all have knowledge.” But, remember, Paul continues to us, too, “Knowledge puffs up; only love builds up.”

We, too, may fail to integrate knowledge in our total personality and separate it from love. We, too, may make the mistake that the Corinthians made. Their new-found liberty became a stumbling-block to others. They placed knowledge in the foreground, not love.

In our academic community we are constantly subject to this temptation, that is, we are tempted to subject all human relations to knowledge-getting. The thing that really counts in the lives of some students is to get high grades, a strong major, or good recommendations to graduate school. None of these is to be discounted in its significance, of course. We are at college for the purpose of increasing our scholarly endeavors. But they become snares of the tempter to us when they make genuine love of our fellow-students difficult. Yes, in our knowledge we can become a stumbling-block to others, because we cannot give ourselves in humble service, but hold forth our own attainments.

Love Builds Up

How can we in our academic community build up ourselves in love?

Permit me to submit to you three suggestions which come directly from the Word of God.

The first is that of the apostle Paul himself as recorded in Chapter nine. Says he, I am free. I have knowledge. But what have I done? “I brought my-
self under bondage to all, that I might gain the
more.” It is in the love of the brethren, says Paul,
that I have found my freedom. Owe no man any-
thing, but to love one another. We cultivate love
when we give ourselves gladly in the service of
others.

Secondly, according to Psalm 119, we are to lay
up the Word of God in our hearts. He that schools
himself daily in the Word hears God speaking to him
in the love of Christ for His own. And love begets
love. To enjoy the love of God as He speaks to us
from His Word is to cultivate the love of our hearts
for others.

Finally, the fellowship of prayer. When we are
a praying community, we shall enjoy the fellowship
of love. Do you pray for your teachers, for your
fellow-students, for the college in general? Do I
pray for my students, for my colleagues? It is the
fellowship of prayer that binds our hearts in love.

**Conclusion**

When we give ourselves in glad service, when we
drink of the fountain of living waters freely, and
when we walk and talk with our Lord, our earnest
seeking after knowledge will be integrated in a life
which cultivates love for the brethren.

Does the world say of us at Calvin, “Behold how
they love one another”? This is far more important
than high academic standards. As a matter of fact,
without this love academic attainment is sin, for it
offends and is puffed up. Only love builds up.

Let fall on evry college hall
The luster of thy cross,
That love may dare thy work to share
And count all else as loss.

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**A Preface to Eliot**

Never in the history of English poetry have
the major poets of a particular age been so
completely isolated from their society as
they are today. This is a distinct disad-
vantage for both poet and public: and the longer
the situation remains, the wider the gulf becomes. This
dichotomy is the more annoying when we realize
that the reciprocal ill-feelings are in vain: neither
poet, qua poet, nor reading-public, qua reading-
public, can be charged with the blame.

Mr. Thomas Stearns Eliot is an outstanding ex-
ample of the contemporary poet who faces this
‘problem of communication.’ I say that he is an
outstanding example for three reasons: no modern
English poet, in his own lifetime, has received such
wide and controversial attention as has Mr. Eliot;
few critics (the charges of certain fellow-critics not
withstanding 1) have written as extensively about the
problem of communication as has Mr. Eliot; and
nowhere can we find a more comprehensive or a
more significant statement about our own age than
in the highly complex poetry of Mr. Eliot. He is,
in other words, one of the most important poets that
we should read; he is one of the last poets that we
are able to read; and he is one of the new “difficult
poets” who has on occasion come out of his Ivory
Tower to explain to us, in a sturdy prose, some of the
things which underlie the position of the contem-
porary poet.

What follows is intended to be an introduction to
the writings of T. S. Eliot, aimed particularly at that
majority of the reading-public which can find little
but confusion and a host of dead-ends in Mr. Eliot’s
poetry. It will not attempt to clear up difficulties
already existent in particular works; it will not try
to make what is necessarily difficult, less difficult;
the aim is merely to account for the gulf which
yawns embarrassingly between the public and Mr.
Eliot. In other words, my attempt will be to give
the outlines of an historical justification of Eliot,
with the intention of making him a few degrees
more relevant and a few degrees less baffling to the
reader who is groping on unfamiliar ground.

I

One thing ought to be clearly established before
analyzing the situation from which T. S. Eliot has
been sprung: the newness, the “originality” of a
poet very seldom comes ex nihilo. Changes and
shifts and developments in the poetic medium are
almost always demanded by cultural situations. 2
It was not, for example, a personal quirk, but a philo-

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1 A consistent and disturbing line of attack on Eliot and
other modern poets is that the “difficulty” is a result of inten-
tional slurring, dust-throwing, and erudite intellectual clever-
ness. The Saturday Review of Literature is notable for this
sort of criticism—though in this case, it probably stems even
more from an uneasy dislike for Eliot’s flagrant anti-liberalism,
his dogmatism, and his insistence on an historical reckoning
with the spiritual values of society. I have in mind more particu-
larly here the recent statements of Mr. Peter Viereck in the
Atlantic Monthly. Mr. Viereck’s essay on the communication
of poetry is excellent, but its contention that Eliot willfully re-
treats into the “highfalutin” without seriously considering the
readability of his poetry is unfounded, as an examination of his
prose works will bear out.

2 Perhaps the most notable exception to this is the case of
Gerard Manley Hopkins. The high individuality in Hopkins’
verse-form can hardly be attributed to anything within the
Victorian period in which he wrote. His problem, born of the
fact that he was both highly sensitive to natural beauty and
was committed to the rigorous theological discipline of the
Jesuit Order, was a personal problem—similar to that of
John Donne—of writing one thing on at least two different
levels. The interesting thing here, however, is the fact that
only two decades after his death, Hopkins’ “personal” problem
had become precisely the problem of a decaying Western cul-
ture.
sophical and social revolution and a break-down of the old Rational order, that accounted for the striking "newness" of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads of 1798. The case of Eliot and other modern poets is exactly the same—there is a break-down of the old order, a literary vacuum to be filled. "Personal taste" will never account for the differences between, let us say, Pope and Wordsworth and Eliot. In a well-known piece of criticism, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot strips the poet of his clothing of personality and leaves him stand only as a "bit of finely filiated platinum"—a mere catalyst in a "chemical reaction" which takes place between the feelings and emotions produced by the existing culture. For our purposes, he is saying: if modern poetry has changed, it is because the cultural situation has changed.

What, then, has changed so drastically in Western culture since the turn of the century? What has forced the startling metamorphosis of the poetic medium all the way from the fluctuating and embroidered stuffiness of Tennyson to the hard, parched drone of Eliot?

Actually, the physical situation has changed little. The shift has been, as Mr. David Daiches tells us in his Poetry and the Modern World, primarily a shift in belief. This shift has not been sudden and spontaneous; it has developed slowly. It takes shape, historically, as a revolt to the crumbling structure of Victorian culture which Tennyson so dutifully tried to echo. The search for stability, for depth of meaning, for philosophical grounding, became more and more futile. The best adjective that I can find to characterize Victorian society is shallowness, and it is precisely the word which also characterizes our own society. What has come about since the acquiescent fussiness of Tennyson is not a new society, but a different (and non-conformist) attitude toward what is really the same society.

This change in attitude toward the existing social and cultural structure is of sufficient interest to be briefly traced here. Tennyson's own poems show the scars of a struggle for belief—and his solution was a blind faith in and an acceptance of the social foundation. Browning, contemporary with Tennyson, was less at ease in his society and to avoid showing it developed an assertive ruggedness and an interest in the Renaissance. Matthew Arnold accepted the existing order but tried to change it temporarily ignored. The growing dissension of intellectual attitudes which was now a basic part of the entire cultural situation, was finally blossoming out into a technical revolution. And it is this technical revolution, and this intellectual dissension, which plays a large part in shaping the career of T. S. Eliot.

When Eliot's first major poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" came into the confused world of 1917, puzzled readers could find almost nothing of what they had come to expect of a poem. Many of them hastily blamed Eliot for a queerness and an obscurantism.

Despite all of this intellectual flux, however, the poetic medium remained basically the same. Victorian values were being discarded, but until counter-values were to be set up there was little need for changing the language. At the turn of the century, English poetry was squeezing the last juice from the technique of a tradition while it was mentally throwing out the underlying attitudes of that same tradition.

As it emerged, therefore, twentieth century English poetry faced alternative roads: it could hold tenaciously to the half-dead tradition of nineteenth century poetry, or it could strike out and find a new medium to fit the new attitude. The first of these roads was taken by a group of men who called themselves the Georgian Poets. In order to bridge the gap which was stretching itself in the wake of intellectual disorder, these poets found it necessary to limit and restrict the subject-matter of poetry. Their verses were subdued, quiet, and rustic pieces with an intentionally limited perspective. The retreatment was doomed to fail; the death-blow was dealt by the shocking and demoralizing event of a total world war. "Merrie England" could not honestly be the same; the blood hatred and confusion had rendered the threadbare landscapes of the Georgians obsolete.

The second road was taken by a new school of poetry: the Imagists. They also saw that the Tennysonian tradition had burned itself out. Their attempt was to rescue poetry from its growing looseness by putting hard disciplined restrictions upon poetic form. They strongly revolted against the Romantic tradition, and declared through the young philosopher-critic-poet T. E. Hulme the advent of a new age of Classicism. And in doing this, they rejected completely the aims and values of literature that had existed in the century before them. The birth of Imagism was proof of the fact that the old poetic medium was shot through. The problem of communication would have to be at least temporarily ignored. The growing dissension of intellectual attitudes which was now a basic part of the entire cultural situation, was finally blossoming out into a technical revolution. And it is this technical revolution, and this intellectual dissension, which plays a large part in shaping the career of T. S. Eliot.

II

When Eliot's first major poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" came into the confused world of 1917, puzzled readers could find almost nothing of what they had come to expect of a poem. Many of them hastily blamed Eliot for a queerness and an obscurantism.

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What had really come about should have been, upon reflection, fairly obvious. Part of the difficulty with “Prufrock” lay in the fact that the reading public was unconsciously binding the poet to a set of standards and expectations which had actually worn out and become increasingly hollow in the past thirty years. Because of the conditions inherent in a liberal-Romantic commercialized society there was little chance for the public to understand that what they expected of the poet, though in itself not “wrong” or “in bad taste,” was actually—for good or for bad—impossible.

The attempts on the part of both the Georgians and the Imagists to redeem poetry were actually attempts to refine poetry within the scope of public expectation. The intellectual position of T. S. Eliot demanded that he go completely behind that stage, and pick up an unarmoured influence completely beyond the source of the difficulty. In one sense, Eliot broke with the tradition; but in another, more important sense, he felt compelled to leave a small and exhausted tradition to find intellectual kinship in a larger and more basic tradition. Because he found nothing but futility and waste and a spiritual dead-end in the small and immediate tradition he went to work to restore to relevance the larger and more remote tradition.  

To understand this shift in the sense of tradition which Eliot has effected, it is necessary to understand the close relationship between his poetic form and his general critical and philosophical position. Philosophically, Eliot is violently opposed to the entire basis of contemporary society and contemporary culture. His search for a way out of the pathetic, sterile, volitionless, unreal, and meaningless Waste Land has led him to one exit: Christianity. Intellectually, in other words, he had been led back in history to another cultural tradition; to a “road not taken.” In so far as one can call Eliot a propagandist, his goal is to propagate this other alternative of cultural belief—Christianity—which was left standing in the post-Renaissance cultural tradition while the real implications of the choice for secularism played themselves out. He has vigorously rejected, as many more are coming to reject, the philosophical choice which Western Society committed itself to in the Renaissance, and under which it has “progressed” for the past three centuries.  

III

This brief analysis does not do justice to the philosophical and religious bent of Eliot’s mind. But it is perhaps sufficient for its purpose of accounting for Eliot’s departure from conventional poetic techniques. Not only had the poetic convention run itself stale and threadbare within its own context: the context itself, post-Renaissance culture, had so permeated and infiltrated and modified the materials of the artist that they had become completely meaningless outside of the narrow context. This left Eliot with a tremendous formal problem: how can an artist whose motivating spirit is a rejection of a cultural tradition, work in an art-form which uses language, symbols, and rhythms understandable only within that same tradition? The answer, for Eliot, was obvious. He took what he could from the convention—mostly from the internal rebels who were facing the same sort of problem, the Imagists—and then leaped back into the larger tradition to find technical help where he had already found spiritual kinship—in Dante, and in the Renaissance “Metaphysical poet,” particularly John Donne.

The results that Eliot’s experimentation has produced are astounding. He knows that he and his age are, in one sense, living in different worlds. He knows (as the Imagists also know) that a conventional “poetic treatment of words” can no longer be put to use in producing a meaningful piece of art. The only way to break through, to communicate to a public which “cannot stand very much reality,” is to startle, and yet to startle the reader with something intensely accurate, with what T. E. Hulme had called “the exact curve of the thing.”

Here Eliot derived much from the Imagists, with whom he was at one time associated. But Eliot, as early as 1917, made important developments in his own art. These changes are apparent when we compare the early “Preludes” to “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” In the “Preludes,” each image is a static thing, capable of being but not of meaning. But in “Prufrock,” and in almost all of Eliot’s succeeding poems, a series of sharp and startling images are strung out (“. . . a patient etherized upon a table”; “sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells”; and so forth) until, by careful discipline of structure, they come full circle. Each image has modified each succeeding image; their forming has done the work of the poem.

The technique of Eliot, then, “difficult” and “private” as it may be, is one which has come out of a necessity which has been forming in Western culture for some time. That the public has difficulty reading Eliot’s poems, or his poetic drama, is very understandable. But it is an indictment not of the man Eliot, nor of the reading public, but of something lying deeply within the history of Western Culture—perhaps, to some extent, the failure of the orthodox Christian church—which has allowed “tradition” to go uncorrected by “orthodoxy,” to become a fragmentary, near-at-hand, and standardized thing. Eliot is showing us, in his philosophical outlook and in his poetic form, that a current conventionality is hard to shake off, and that a misused tradition is hard to restore.
September 24, 1952

Dear Forum-Readers:

Although the Calvin Forum serves as the intellectually articulate voice of Calvin College and Seminary, its purpose of necessity precludes its publishing, ordinarily, news of events on that campus which holds so unique and significant a place in the world of Calvinistic thought and action. Because you, our Forum readers, are interested, we may assume, not only in the ideas that emanate from Calvin's walls and walks, but also in the happenings there, we include occasionally a news-letter like this one.

The school-year for both college and seminary is in full cry. The eager (?) hounds have emerged into the open fields in their rabid pursuit of the elusive game—learning. In the seminary, a comparatively new group of mentors are conducting the hunt. Due to the action of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1952, five of the six seminary professors were replaced, in each case by an interim appointee for a year term. Old Testament and New Testament will be taught by veterans in the field. Dr. Martin J. Wyngaarden will continue in the Old Testament department, and Prof. Henry Schultzze, established New Testament scholar who served a number of years as college president, has consented to take care of the New Testament department for the present. Dr. John Kromminga whose father, the late Diedrich H. Komminga served for a number of years as college president, has consented to retire this chair for this year. Dr. Henry Stob, formerly professor of philosophy in Calvin College, is teaching the courses in Ethics and Apologetics, due to the emeritation of Dr. Clarence Bouma, whose continued illness makes remote the possibility of his resuming his teaching career. Professor Emeritus Rienk B. Kuiper of Westminster Seminary has consented to teach the courses in Practical Theology. Dr. Samuel Volbeda, who occupied this chair with illustrious success, retired, having reached retirement age and being afflicted, moreover, with a complication of physical ills. The department of Systematics, to which Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer of the Free University of Amsterdam was appointed, had to be manned temporarily by action of the Trustees because of Dr. Berkhouwer’s declining the appointment. For the present, Dr. Jacob Hoogstra, Professor John H. Bratt and Dr. William Masselink will teach the courses in this field.

During the week prior to the opening convocations of college and seminary, a two-day all-faculty conference was held at Camp Geneva, on Lake Michigan. Both faculties and members of the board of trustees participated in the meetings and the free and open discussions of educational policies and Calvinistic integration were universally conceded to have been intensely valuable. Similar annual conferences are already scheduled.

The seminary convocation featured an address by Professor Schultzze on “A Generation of Vibrant Theology.” The college convocation, as usual, featured an address by the college president, Dr. William Spoelhof, whose convocation address this, (his second) year was entitled, “Increasing Your Word-Power.” Very probably both addresses will be published in toto; hence we withhold comment at this time. We make only this exception: our nomination for the theological quotable phrase of the year: “A bombshell in the playground of theological tinkering”—a phrase to describe Barthian theology, used by Prof. Schultzze.


Two new faces appear in the ranks of college administration. John Lester De Beer, Ed.D., has moved from the Education Department to inaugurate the newly created office of Dean of Students. His work of implementing student-faculty relations is becoming increasingly evident and is greatly appreciated. Sydney T. Youngsma, young business executive from Chicago, has accepted the responsibility of guiding the financial public-relations of the institution. His first and already Herculean assignment is the executive direction of the Two-million-Dollar “Needs of Today” campaign.

That campaign was authorized by the 1952 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. A central committee was chosen which has appointed sub-committees and these have in turn organized the entire church so that in the week of November 10-15, 8,000 men will go out in the Christian Reformed communities and call upon the nearly 40,000 families of the denomination. It is planned that a pledged support of about $1.00 a month per family for five years will serve to attain the goal. The money will be used to finish construction of the new Commons

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Building, to add two wings to the Administration Building for the Music department, offices, and other classrooms, to build two girls dormitories and to erect a physical education building. The building-program will be carried out parallel with the collection of the pledged support.

One of the groups to be especially organized behind this campaign is the alumni. The Alumni Association

SELLECTIONS FROM LACTANTIUS:

A VAST amount of scholarly research has gone into the making of this 157 page book. This would be at once evident from the Commentary, comprising forty-five pages of close print on a text of fifty-six pages in larger type. The author is not satisfied with elucidating the text and helping the student over supposedly difficult passages; in addition, he weighs Lactantius's words as to their import, and compares his statements with those of many other Greek and Roman authors, with Augustine, and even with Shakespeare. Besides this, however, the selection of just these pages from a much larger work have taken much labor by itself. This “extra-curricular” work on the part of a busy college professor in itself is deserving of high praise. Any one who is at all acquainted with the teaching and paper-correcting load carried by our Calvin College men, knows that a work such as this must have been accomplished by “burning the midnight oil” (in casu, electricity). And, since the classical languages are not sufficiently in favor these days, both the author and the publisher deserve our admiration and gratitude for putting out this excellent work in such an attractive form.

The contents and Professor Radius's aim in publishing these selections from Lactantius; it has clearly been the conviction of the Latin magister that the study of classical Latin need not be confined to pagan authors. In Lactantius he has met with a Christian author from the third century of our era who wrote a pure Ciceronian Latin—and a man who, both in dogmatics and ethics, upheld the Christian view of God and man over against the pagan view one meets with in Roman authors of the golden age of Senatus populusque Romanus. That, I may safely say in passing, is perhaps the first time in my young life I have heard of any one doing this. Our professor apparently is at once true to his own classic name, and to his Calvin College professorship.

Professor Radius makes it easy for his prospective students and readers (he hopes that also a sprinkling of semi-noles may be induced to return to their Latin; but that is as far as he goes; verbi divini ministri he seemingly despair of as too far removed from the fountainhead of classical knowledge). His commentary and vocabulary are extensive; and on top of all that, he divides his text into short sections, each of which is headed by a brief summary so as to enable the student to know what he may look for.

Perhaps this is all I should say here. My own Latin, slumbering under the dust of forty years of neglect, and driven into the background by much study, from necessity, of modern languages, well... it was a sad experience to discover how much I had forgotten, and a proud sensation to find that, after all, semper aliquid haert. So why rob my younger friends of the delight that is in store for perusers of this small volume, men who are a few decades nearer to that source of pure delight, called Ciceronian Latin? And that mixed with a good dose of Christian apologetics and polemics? Go to it, gentlemen: Non minor est virtus quam quaerere, parta turi: Casus inest illic; hoc erit artis opus. For Professor Radius and for Mr. Eerdmans I hope for a surprising manifestation of such true Ovidian art.

J. K. VAN BAALEN
Edmonton, Alberta

DOCATATL TEXT WITH COMMENTARY
ON A CHURCH FATHER


The aims which Dr. Stob had for the five Socratic dialogues which constitute his Thinking and Smiling should be abundantly realized. In his brief foreword he tells us that he will consider these dialogues successful if they cause the reader to think and to smile. He would have us think about the problems under discussion and see these problems more clearly, and he would amuse us in the process. If he would measure his success by “the degree of stimulation of thought and the enjoyment afforded in reading” (p. 5), he should feel well rewarded.

There is in these dialogues a vivid, fast-moving presentation of ideas and problems of different types, all of which are relevant to our times. In the “Pyrrhus” there is an enjoyable consideration of the conflicting decisions of the Athenian assembly on the much-agitated question of whether an Athenian might go to see a cock-fight. This hearty dialogue may produce more than mere smiles. In the dialogues “Athenian” and “Judean” the author addresses himself to profound questions about true religion and true culture, casts Socrates largely in the role of a non-aggressive inquirer, and permits Judean intelligently to take the initiative. The latter makes the point that “true culture is that
which is inspired by and rooted in true religion" (p. 30), but he cannot be accused of excessive enthusiasm or optimism about the cultural achievements of followers of true religion (p. 32). He stresses the critical importance of individual faith, holds that religion is not concerned solely with ritual, but that with love as its moving force it gives expression to itself also in "deeds to and for other men" (p. 42). The closing words of "Judaean" give sound counsel to Socrates and should be weighed by all men: "True religion is sparing of no man, Socrates, just because it begins with God. Perhaps you will find therein the answer to all your perplexities. Begin, Socrates, with God, the true God, and your problems of the night will see the clear light of day" (p. 46).

In the "Fishmonger" dialogue Socrates is again on the offensive, cleverly exposing the shallowness, self-assurance, and lack of principle of a certain type of practical-mindedness which discounts the usefulness of the "utterly impractical" "professor." The last dialogue, "Diplomat," pictures Socrates vigorously at work on the duplicity which is characteristic of too much official diplomacy. This dialogue should be required reading in some circles.

The characterization in the dialogue is good, although one may perhaps feel that at times the vocabulary of the fishmonger is too elevated for him and one may be surprised at the concession which he makes at the end and at the concessiveness of the diplomat in the last dialogue.

This book is all too short. It is to be hoped that Dr. Stob will give us some longer collections of his stimulating dialogues in the future.

JOHN H. SKILTON
Westminster Theological Seminary

CALVIN'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN PIETY REPUBLISHED


This new English translation of Calvin's Golden Booklet provides an example of the indebtedness of contemporary American Christianity to the Dutch Calvinistic tradition. It would seem likely that the preparation of this translation was at least partly suggested by the important Dutch translation of Calvin's celebrated treatment of the life of the Christian. The content of the Golden Booklet is really part of the Institutes. It made its original appearance as the last chapter of the second edition of the Institutes, but from the fifth edition on it was placed in Book III as chapters VI-X. At an early date this valuable practical section was separately issued in Latin and not long afterwards it appeared in Dutch. It has been issued in Dutch, Professor Van Andel informs us, even so recently as 1938.

Some one has said that the most important part of a book is its preface. This judgment can be accepted only with reservations, and it does not apply in the present instance, where the emphasis rightly falls on Calvin's text. But it should nevertheless be remarked that Professor Van Andel has provided us with wholesome and instructive introductory material in his preface and in his preface-like article, "Calvin's Golden Booklet," in the issue of the Calvin Forum for May, 1952.

The translator informs us that he has chosen as his basic text the last French edition of the Institutes, but has also taken into account Calvin's last Latin edition, Allen's English translation, and a Dutch translation. He has tried to be faithful to Calvin's meaning and at the same time to express himself in simple, clear, up-to-date English. The Golden Booklet, if offered today in Allen's translation, would make difficult reading for a good many persons. Allen's vocabulary and style, stately and majestic though they are, would seem too literary, antiquated, and forbidding to many of the readers whom our translator wishes to reach.

Professor Van Andel's earnest endeavor to achieve simplicity of style has been very fruitful and should make the Golden Booklet intelligible and serviceable to a large class of readers. There are naturally some places in the translation where for one reason or another the meaning may seem obscure to certain readers. The phrase "uppermost consolation" (p. 58) is rather unusual and might be difficult for some. Allen has here "peculiar consolation" (for the Latin "singularis . . . solatium"). Other somewhat unusual expressions are "under all maltreatments and misery" (p. 60) and "blame everything to our human flesh" (p. 49). At times slight changes in the punctuation would make for greater smoothness. The comma, for example, could well be removed from the following sentence: "This means, that he who is ashamed of a simple garment will be proud of a glamorous one" (p. 94). A few typographical errors occur. But slight difficulties such as these should deter no one from commending the general simplicity and clarity of the translation.

The translator has made certain changes in the titles of chapters, has supplied headings to sections, and has introduced divisions within the sections. The material is presented in short paragraphs, quite different from the long paragraphs of the Allen text and much more inviting to the eye. Van Andel's arrangement of material may cause many readers to give more attention to the significance of individual statements than they would otherwise do.

This edition of the Golden Booklet is especially designed for presentation to those making public profession of faith. This is but one of the important services which it can perform.

JOHN H. SKILTON
Westminster Theological Seminary

DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL SYMBOLS


The book before me would fill a real need in our homes and churches if only it were in the English language. It is compact, illustrative, up to date, and inexpensive. I fear that many of our churches are failing to furnish our children with adequate reference material to help them acquire a satisfactory acquaintance with the cultural life of the people of the Bible. In so far as this is absent in the minds of our children, the stories of Scripture will not "take on life" as they should, and even the words of Scripture may leave an undesirable impression on a 20th century generation.

This little volume is not an Illustrated Bible Dictionary in the American sense of the term, as the title would suggest. It classifies its subject matter under general headings such as, "Adornment," "Musical Instruments," etc., and then discusses the specific articles under each heading, and illustrates them on the opposite page. This system has an
WOMAN SUFFRAGE — ECCLESIASTICAL


This is a timely book. The question regarding our women and their place in the churches of Jesus Christ is actual. Should women receive the right to vote at congregational meetings? Should they perchance also be ordained as ministers, elders, and deacons? These questions have confronted many denominations both in Europe and America, and they are presently beginning to clamor for attention in more than one Reformed group of churches, including—as far as the first question is concerned—the Christian Reformed denomination.

Many books dealing with the question of women and their place in the church do not reckon with the infallibility of Holy Writ. Their authors do not seek to base their conclusions on a careful exegetical study of God's Word, but they reason from expediency, and all too often place the Word of God on par with the word of man.

Dr. Hommes, as a sound Reformed scholar, and as might be expected, is not guilty on this score. He strives to base every one of his arguments on the Bible as God's inerrant truth, which should ever be our standard and norm.

The book under discussion is indeed very informing regarding the place of women in the church. It vigorously and rightly condemns the policy of the past by which all feminine help in the work of the church was avoided. Doubtlessly a book of this type will stimulate the churches to employ more of our consecrated and able women for certain types of work.

But the present reviewer must confess that he is not at all ready to subscribe to all the conclusions to which the author comes in this book. I refer particularly to the author's conclusions regarding the question whether or not our women should vote at our congregational meetings and whether or not certain Scripture passages bar our women from becoming ministers, elders, and deacons.

It is my fear that the author has been too subjective in his treatment of the subject. I am afraid that he has approached his subject with a definite bias. At least, the author in some instances posits premises which to my mind he fails to prove, but upon which premises he bases conclusions as if he had fully and objectively established their correctness. For instance, Paul, according to Dr. Hommes, when speaking of the relationship of women to men in the church, always thinks of married women and their husbands. The author, for example, does not see in I Cor. 11 and I Cor. 14 any reference to certain creational, abiding, differences between men and women in general. But is not this indeed a very important point in these two classical passages? And should not the denial referred to be carefully considered and substantiated in a study such as Dr. Hommes wrote?

It also appears to me that the author is at times too fragmentary in his consideration; failing to search for the overall, abiding, foundational principle, and therefore also too hasty in his conclusions. For example, on page 57 Dr. Hommes declares that the familiar passages, I Cor. 14:34, 35, and I Tim. 2:12 cannot be used for the consideration of the question whether or not women should be accorded the right of suffrage in the churches insomuch as these passages do not concern the question of suffrage in the churches.

But would the esteemed author not agree that these passages, although they do not deal with the question of women suffrage in the churches, may nevertheless offer us some very important guiding principles, having great weight also for the question of women suffrage in the churches?

Page 149, I believe, also presents us with an instance of a conclusion drawn too hastily. The author there asserts that the early church accorded women an honorable and active place, even official functions, namely that of Deacons. For Rom. 16:1 calls Phoebe a Deacon. Now the word deacon in Greek simply means minister or servant. In our English Bibles Phoebe is therefore said to be "a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae." Now one may grant that there perhaps was a class of women in the early church known by the term deaconesses, although this cannot be proven. But if one believes for himself that this is an established fact, then yet the question would remain: Were these women official office-bearers, or were they worthy women who were appointed to help the Deacons in their work?

Personally I am not at all convinced of the correctness of the positions which the author occupies. Neither, to be sure, is he in line with the vast majority of the best exegetes which God has given His Church throughout the years.
Yet I would recommend the purchase of Dr. Hommes' book to all who would make a thorough study of the very important subject which the author discusses. The book will no doubt help the churches in the Netherlands reach a solution regarding the question whether or not women should be accorded the right to vote in ecclesiastical matters. And it will also help the thoughtful student in our country to see the pro and the con of this question. It will especially acquaint him with the exegetical problems which one must face before he can come to a definite conclusion for himself regarding this issue.

I say this in spite of the fact that I am convinced that Dr. Hommes' word is by no means the last to be printed regarding this important, timely, and intriguing subject.

Martin Monksma
Grand Rapids, Michigan

CHILDREN AS CHRISTIAN PARENTS SHOULD SEE THEM


HERE is a good book for Christian parents. Every parent, in our Reformed circles, too, should read it. The author is a Christian teacher and a Christian parent. He speaks primarily to parents. And in language that every parent can understand. He knows the psychology of childhood. His psychology is up-to-date. And he tries to view it in the light of the Scriptures. Our parents need the light the author throws on bringing up children in the fear of the Lord.

Many good things can be said about this book.

1. It is written for parents in language that the parent not schooled in psychology can understand. This is not easy to do. It is an accomplishment.

2. It is written for teachers, too, though they may have had more than one course in psychology. A Christian approach to the psychology of childhood is rare. Most of our teachers have been schooled in a psychology based on current non-Christian trends of thought. The author helps teachers correct some of their views.

3. The book is replete with helpful suggestions based on the best we have in psychology up to the present time. Let me mention a few illustrations.

The active character of the child in his own self-development is made very clear. To ignore the developing personality of the child in his development-urge as an individual is a serious mistake. This the author makes abundantly clear.

The basic need of security in child development and the changing character of that security as the child matures is brought out effectively. Many problems of later childhood and adolescence, even of adulthood, have their origin in the absence of adequate security in early childhood, or in the wrong kind of security.

And then I should mention, too, how the author handles the place of freedom in child-life. Parents in our Reformed circles, too, can learn much from this chapter. Closely related to this discussion is the exercise of authority.

The nature of love and of the feeling of inferiority in child-life are handled very well, too.

4. I should refer to the completeness of the book, too. It is very comprehensive and inclusive in that it deals with nearly every important psychological problem that may arise in the rearing of children.

5. This book comes at a very appropriate time. Parents are beginning to realize, too, I think, that many physiological ailments and complaints have a psychological basis. Mary seems to have a cold and has a slight fever this morning. She can't go to school. Is she unconsciously trying to escape something at school? This is not an uncommon occurrence. Careful reading of this book will help parents understand some of these things, too.

6. Just to mention one more virtue of this book. Throughout the reader feels the heart-throb of a warm Christian teacher and parent. The author loves the Lord and seeks to serve Him in this capacity. Now piety is no substitute for accurate scholarship. There are many books, in this field, too, by earnest Christians that lack genuine scholarship. But this is really a book on psychology written by a Christian scholar, for parents. So, parents can read it with confidence. The author is a genuine Christian scholar.

In the face of these many praise-worthy qualities of this book, it is the more to be regretted that it is not written from a Reformed point of view. The author is evangelical, but not Reformed in his theology. And because he is not Reformed in his theology, he cannot take a consistent and unitary philosophical position. Parents and teachers of the Reformed faith must be placed on their guard here. The author does not mean to mislead. He honestly and sincerely takes the position of the current American evangelical Christian who fails to see and understand the full significance of the thoroughly Biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God as Creator and Redeemer.

In the very preface the author goes wrong. Says he, "The aim of the author has been to present facts and ideas that are sound. The Bible has been his ultimate and final criterion. What he has written was set carefully alongside plain Bible teaching, whenever possible, to ascertain if harmony existed between the two. Where the Bible is silent, sincere endeavor has been made to have every statement in accord with other high standards of accepted truth."

What is wrong with this, you say. The Bible is not only taken into account among other sources of truth, but it is considered the "ultimate and final criterion."

Precisely. It fails to do justice to the unity of human knowledge. The Bible is place "alongside" of "other high standards of accepted truth." When in conflict, the Bible is given priority. Reformed thinking, however, takes seriously the words of Ps. 36:9, "... in thy light shall we see light." It does not place the Scriptures alongside of other truth and give it priority. No, it views all truth in the light of the infallible revelation as God has given it to us in the inscripturated Word. But, remember, this Word is a closed book to the heart and mind of the unbeliever.

This explains the author's wrong start in the first chapter where he discusses Personality—Beginning, Process, Plan. The soul-life of man is discussed as of biological origin and personality is the product of an interaction of the organism and the environment. Then, on page 15, the "active human spirit" is mentioned. But what can this mean in light of the previous discussion? The ego, I, or person is not Scripturally oriented from the beginning, and hence, remains ill-defined in what follows.

That man is a religious being, that God deals covenantally with him in the human race, that he is dead in sin until made alive in Christ, that God has made a promise to Christian parents that He will be their God and the God of their
children, that in Christ we are obliged to a new obedience; these and similar doctrines so clearly taught in the Scriptures are ignored or by implication denied. And it is these and similar doctrines that are basic to our discussion of the task of parents, authority, love, and the normal personality.

I repeat that parents of Reformed persuasion can read this book with much profit. Many valuable suggestions for child nurture in the family are given.

Many of our P.T.A.'s look for projects of value to parents. Study groups under the leadership of one who can appraise this book aright can use it with great benefit to themselves in their parental task. Here is a project of great value to teachers and parents together.

What we need very much is helpful literature of this kind written from a distinctively Reformed point of view. We hope and pray that this may be forthcoming in the near future.

CORNELIUS JAARSMA
Calvin College

A NEW NATIONAL UNION PUBLICATION

WHAT SHALL WE PLAY? By Kathleen J. Tiemersma.

A NOther publication of the National Union of Christian Schools has come off the press. It is a handbook of games for children of all ages. It is written primarily for the classroom teacher but can be used by any instructor or director of physical education for children.

The book is divided into five sections. The first includes goals, methods, and equipment needed, plus suggestions to new schools on how to plan a playground.

The other four sections are related to the kindergarten and other three departments of the grade school. Each lists the aptitudes and abilities of a certain age group and the games suitable for that age.

The aims set forth by the author agree with the general aims of education as listed by the National Education Association. By guiding children's play, by teaching them how and what to play, we teach them health, muscular co-ordination, fair play, proper use of leisure time, good citizenship, ethics, and preparation for life.

The author accomplishes her aims by presenting a wide variety of games. She states, "True physical education is not only education of the physical but also education through the physical." This view also coincides with our Reformed idea of education. Are not our bodies temples of the Holy Ghost?

Of course, we must remember that these games and the directions for them are the same wherever we find them. In any school a conscientious teacher will strive to teach the ideals of fair play, etc., but the difference lies in the motives behind these ideals. Here the Christian teacher has a special duty.

The majority of the games are active, but many can be adapted for use in a crowded classroom. There are also some which can be correlated with other subjects in the curriculum. In playing these games, problems occasionally arise which a beginning teacher might not anticipate. These hurdles might have been presented to aid her.

The trend in education today favors the teaching of all subjects, including the arts, by the classroom teacher herself rather than by a specialist. Mrs. Tiemersma also approves of this principle. The author's knowledge of children's needs, emotions, actions, and reactions is very apparent. She speaks from a child's point of view.

Undoubtedly much time has gone into the study of the biological, psychological, and mental growth of the child. This is evidenced in the grade groupings of games, as well as in the materials used. Any list would necessarily be flexible because children all enjoy games suitable for younger or older children, depending on their maturity.

The explanation of the games are concise and complete without needless repetition. There is a good list of source material in the bibliography; although for the amount of time and space allotted to physical education in our Christian schools, this book is by itself very complete. It deserves wide usage.

MADELENE H. ROERSMA
Oakdale Christian School

OVERSIGHT

We regret the omission of a line naming the great seventeenth century thinkers in natural law—from Dr. Berkhout's article in the October issue, p. 38. The names omitted were Puffendorf, Grotius, Leibnitz, and John Locke. E.B.
Christmas Suggestion

What Finer Christmas Gift than A Year's Subscription to

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Calvin College,
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