Christmas Today: Another Fulness of Time?

On Surrendering the Apostle Peter to the Papacy

Van Til's Idealistic Penchant

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Christmas Faith for Today

"THERE are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves, 'If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!' Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself."

So spoke Martin Luther.¹ There are many other indications of the simple and realistic piety of the great reformer. We do well to listen to him, unexcelled as he is in the reality of his experience, the depth of his Biblical understanding, and the significance of his contribution to Protestantism.

Listen to his vivid description of the human reality of the wonderful birth. "Think, women, there was no one there to bathe the Baby. No warm water, nor even cold. No fire, no light. The mother was herself midwife and the maid. The cold manger was the bed and the bathtub. Who showed the poor girl what to do? She had never had a baby before. I am amazed that the little one did not freeze. Do not make of Mary a stone. It must have gone straight to her heart that she was so abandoned. She was flesh and blood, and must have felt miserable—and Joseph too—that she was left in this way, all alone, with no one to help, in a strange land in the middle of winter. Her eyes were moist even though she was happy, and aware that the Baby was God's Son and the Savior of the world. She was not stone. For the higher people are in the favor of God, the more tender are they."² Certainly there was nothing docetic³ or unreal in the Incarnation as Luther saw it.

Perhaps there is some anti-Catholic bias in this comment on Mary's virginity, but there is a strong suggestion also of sound Protestant piety. "Some claim, since Christ was born of a virgin, that virginity is superior to marriage. He did have to be born of a virgin that he might be a Saviour without sin. But take note that he was not born of a nun or a woman outside of the married status. Mary lived with her husband, and no one supposed that they were any different from any other married people. Christ wished marriage to retain its honor alongside of the virginity of Mary. The virginity was concealed from the world; the marriage was proclaimed. Mary wore a veil like any other wife. If one would praise virginity, splendid, but not to the disparagement of marriage. Virginity, marriage, and widowhood do not earn heaven. They enter into heaven through faith in this little child."⁴

What is the object of calling on Martin Luther in this way? It is in order that we may have something to say to Reformed Christians at this season and in this age. We call on our fellow believers not to exalt Jesus beyond reach or empty his Incarnation of real significance. Praise him we must, but that would not be true praise.

Surely it is superfluous to point out that we have no intention of advocating modernism, with its thoroughly humanized concept of Jesus! When we come to worship at Bethlehem's manger, we do not worship humanity, but divinity. But there are those, as we very well know, who have exalted the God-man so high that he cannot be approached, except through the intercession of his mother Mary. In fact, we are told that Mary is by this time so highly exalted that she must be approached through St. Anna, her mother.

Protestantism—even orthodox Protestantism—also has its pitfalls. One is a Christ whose deity is so well protected that his humanity is no longer genuine. Another is a Christ so doctrinalized that he does not breathe or speak. Another is a Christ whose words are so familiar that they no longer thrill us with their freshness and significance. Our very glory becomes our shame. People turn away from this to an Arianized Christianity, to some form of humanized Jesus who is a very vivid elder brother, but nothing more. It's a poor bargain, but it isn't made without some reason.

Although our high priest has passed through the heavens; although he is the Son of God; "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We could not

² Ibid., p. 39.
³ Docetism refers to the ancient view which held that Christ's birth, body, death, and resurrection were not real, but apparitions with a teaching (doceens) function. This view fed upon philosophical presuppositions which depreciated the body, and matter in general.
⁴ Bainton, op. cit., p. 31.
Imagine the real Christ more divine than he is. But he is at the same time as richly human as ever a modernist thought him to be, and we ought not to forget it.

* * *

There are many great mysteries about the Incarnation, concerning which theology may speak with its subtleties and refinements, its plodding analyses and sudden soaring flights of vision. Theology has plumbed deep into this goldmine of compassion, and has been lifted high on the pinions of divine love, in the past. It ought not to cease to do so today. Who dares to say that the subject has been exhausted? There is mystery here, and we ought not to leave it alone. We ought to look around it and over it and under it and into it. We ought to wonder at it and reflect upon it and speak of it and revel in it.

Mystery—and miracle too. The mystery of God’s love for man and the miracle of its revelation; the mystery of the Godhead and the miracle of its manifestation; the mystery of the two natures and the miracle of their union in one person, himself very God and very man.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"—who has plumbed this thought?

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son"—what analogy can illuminate this mystery, this miracle?

"But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law"—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!"

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son"—how is it possible? What mortal can tell?

* * *

Mysteries and miracles—they are here aplenty. But there are marvels too, and faith should not overlook them. We mean, things which can be understood in terms of human capacities, but in which those human capacities rise to heights worthy of our admiration and emulation. These are the marvels of faith translated into action. Such is the faith of Mary. St. Bernard declared there are here three miracles: that God and man should be joined in a Child; that a mother should remain a virgin; and that Mary should have such faith as to believe that this mystery would be accomplished in her. Luther comments that the last is not the least of the three. Faith struggled a bit—"How can these things be?" But it triumphed—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord." A marvel, too, that the humble shepherds could so implicitly believe what was revealed to them. And who can forget Joseph, obeying when he could not possibly have understood?

We must not forget that these events really occurred, to real people. We have not a docetic Christ or a symbolic Incarnation. We must look on a flesh-and-blood baby, in a material manger, with the bustle of life going on around the stable. Not for sentimentalism’s sake, of course. No mere sentimentality is wanted, for it endures only for an emotional moment and then is gone; and it isn’t even worth much while it lasts. In fact, it is just to prevent such a mere moment of sentimentality in a year of preoccupation that we write as we do. The circumstances of Jesus’ birth were God’s doing, and it is to be presumed that he wants us to reflect upon them.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We must be realistic about this, or we shall miss the significance of the whole event. And just as realistic must we be about the fact that he is with us always, even to the end of the world. Although his glorified body is exalted to God’s right hand, with his Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit he is never absent from us. He is present in the Church which is his Body; the Church whose Head he is; whose members we must love, whose functions we must promote, whose harmony we must cherish, whose visible unity we must make manifest. His commands concerning the neighbor are with us; in fact, Luther was not at all wrong when he said that Christ is present in the neighbor.

About this we must be realistic too. And if there is a practical message we would bring to orthodox Christianity in the Christmas season, this is it. He is real. His birth is real. His presence is real. His commands are real, and we ought really to obey them—indefinitely more so than we have done.

* * *

He dwells with us—God with us, Immanuel.

He works through us—it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.

It is almost as if this is another fullness of time, this age in which we live. As in the days of his advent, the times are crying out for him. This age needs him desperately, with its decay of morals, its disintegration of faith, its groping for answers while the answers stare it in the face; its overwhelming, debilitating fear; its mounting crisis.

How shall he speaks to this world? Until he comes again, visibly, bodily; until he comes with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, he speaks through the flesh and blood of his Body. We who are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—we speak for him. The words of his mouth must come through our lips; the beauty of his love must shine in our faces; the tears of his compassion must roll down our cheeks; the fire of his indignation must flash in our eyes. Here is mystery, too; and without a miracle it cannot happen. But may we be equal to the marvel of faith.
translated into action, faith responding to a real Lord. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

Make no mistake; he is a demanding master, this Babe of Bethlehem. Leave the ivory towers of orthodox complacency, and come afresh on a pilgrimage of discipleship. He does not desire the lip service to vague ideals which might satisfy a docetic savior. He commands flesh-and-blood service. He orders us to purify our hearts unto unfeigned love of the brethren; if we do not obey there is something radically wrong with our faith. There never was one who gave so much; but there never was any either who demanded all, as he demands.

Who will deny that there is need for rededication to the golden rule which he enunciated—a need found here, right here in Jerusalem?

* * *

Christmas is tremendously profound, yet overwhelmingly simple. Let those who excel in profundity also grow in simplicity. Let those who would be good leaders also learn to be good followers. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart."

Let us make a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, pitying never, but worshipping always. Let us walk with our incarnate Lord, never running ahead, but always humbly following. For a servant is not greater than his Lord.

J. K.

The Significance of the Latest Research About the Apostle Peter

Oscar Cullmann’s New Book

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The Apostle Peter, his person, his theology and his significance for the Christian Church were in Protestant theological literature always neglected. We have many books about Paul but almost nothing about Peter. The life and work of Paul, his theology and its effect were elaborated upon to the tiniest detail. The Apostle Peter did not interest authors and readers except as a subject for polemic discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, and Protestant theology refers to Paul and Augustine and silently gives Peter over to the Roman Catholic Church. At least, this is the viewpoint of popular theology, which always imagines Paul as the basis of Protestant theology and Peter (of course in another meaning) behind Roman Catholicism. To a certain point it was an understandable reaction of the Protestants against that exaggerated importance which is attached to Peter in connection with the Papacy. It is easy to understand that the Valdensians doubted Peter’s stay and martyrdom in Rome for the reason that there is no word about it in the Bible. It is easy to understand that the Reformers in their fight against Papacy gave a new interpretation of Matthew 16:17-19. It is easy to understand that these two problems rose again and again during the centuries and became objects of radical examinations and bitter fights. But we cannot accept the fact that with all this the interest of Protestants for Peter seemed exhausted, even when (as mentioned) a reaction against an exaggerated action is up to a certain point always explicable and easy to understand.

After all this we cannot wonder that the recently revived interest in Peter on the part of the Protestants and their systematic elaboration of the whole problem presents two questions: first, the exegesis of the locus classicus Matthew 16:17-19; and second, the stay and martyrdom of the historical Peter in Rome.

Several books and articles were published concerning the exegesis of the locus classicus (which is strictly connected with the problems of the church). The discussion of the conception of the “Ekklesia” reached its culmination in the dispute caused by E. Peterson. It abated when Peterson resigned his professorship and left the German Evangelical Church for Roman Catholicism. The Protestant standpoint crystallized from this discussion is represented by K. L. Schmidt in several studies, especially in his article “Ekklesia” in Kittel’s Theologisches Woerterbuch (published in English in the “Bible Key Words”).

The modern elaboration of the problem of Peter’s martyrdom in Rome is connected with the name of Hans Lietzmann, the successor of Adolf Harnack, who in his book Petrus und Paulus in Rom (1915, second edition 1927) defended the Harnack view (which is the accepted Roman Catholic tradition). Fifteen years later Oscar Cullmann, disciple of H.

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Lietzmann, published his first article about this question in the *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* (1930, page 294ff). In this article Cullmann brings new indirect proofs of the martyrdom in Rome. The line of Harnack, Lietzmann and Cullmann automatically brings up the question whether or not we should take into consideration with these standpoints a subconscious prepossession of the disciple to the master, i.e., a determining influence. Under the weight of the arguments set up by these authors, this question ceases to be a factor for every objective reader. As the opposition of the tradition has to be mentioned Karl Heussi with his book *War Petrus in Rome?* (1936, written against Hans Lietzmann). Here Heussi takes a point of view strictly against Peter's stay and martyrdom in Rome. After Lietzmann's answer and Heussi's rebuttal others joined the discussion, but the question became more acute when at the beginning of World War II it became known that the Vatican led excavations under St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome in a search for the tomb of Peter.

The news was received by the Protestant public with a sceptical anxiety. The Roman Catholic propaganda made no secret of the fact that it expected more from the eventual discovering of Peter's tomb than the solution of a historical problem (whether or not Peter died in Rome). It expected from the eventual discovery the principal proof of the Papacy. Certain details had been revealed of the excavation which started in 1939, but the final results were revealed only as late as 1950 by the Vatican. The Pope announced in his 1950 Christmas Eve sermon categorically that the tomb of Peter had been found under the Cathedral of St. Peter. He added that the bones found close to the tomb could not be identified with certainly as the remains of the Apostle. He also announced that detailed results of the excavation would be officially published. This took place a year later, while the scientific world waited impatiently. On the strength of these documents it is now clear that the categorical character of the papal announcement has not been proven.

After such preludes, and in this atmosphere, the latest book of Oscar Cullmann, Professor of the Early History of Christian Doctrines and the New Testament at Basel was published. (*Petrus. Junger Apostel - Martyrer. Das historische und das theologische Petrusproblem*. Zwingli Verlag, Zurich, 1952). Cullmann, whose preceding book *Christ and Time* with its inspiring new conception has received an unusually fine reception is at this time the first authority in the field of the Apostolic Age and of the early history of Christian doctrines. Consequently he pays attention not only to the above mentioned basic problems but he surveys the whole complex question, including the biography of Peter, his role among the twelve disciples, his missionary activities, his theological view points, his meaning for the early church, etc. Of course, the question of Peter's stay and martyrdom in Rome is analyzed with the results of the latest excavation. We also find here a full explanation of that *locus classicus* with its systematical theological consequences. Thus Cullmann's book is the first systematical elaboration of the Peter-problem from the side of the Protestants, a long needed work of great importance. The perfect knowledge of the enormous amount of literature written about the detail-problems, the full possession of the whole exegetical and historical material, the being free from every denominational prejudice, and the dispassionate security with which Cullmann handles his theme give his book much credit, even though some may disagree with details.

Considering the importance of the question, this book should be read by every Protestant theologian and minister. To my knowledge an American translation is already in preparation. Without making the use of this translation superfluous, let us briefly analyze what Cullmann's main arguments are, and how his end results harmonize with his general theological conception, the originality of which we have been already persuaded of in his *Christ and Time* and other preceding studies.

II

The book has two main parts. The first discusses the historical, the second the exegetical-theological problem. The historical question will be discussed according to the three sections of the life of the Christian Peter, namely the Disciple, the Apostle, and the Martyr. In the exegetical-theological part we can first read the textual criticism and explanation of Matthew 16:17-19 and then the systematical consequences of the whole research.

1. To Simon, Jesus gave the name *Kephas* (which is not a proper noun but a common noun) which in Greek means *Petros* or "Rock." Peter takes a special place among the twelve disciples even during the life of Jesus, not in the leading role but as the representative of the twelve. After the resurrection of Jesus he is not only a representative but the leader. As leader of the small congregation in Jerusalem he practices all spiritual powers, including church-discipline. Even the Apostle Paul acknowledges his leading role. But from the moment Peter leaves Jerusalem to start his missionary work, James the brother of Jesus becomes the leader of the congregation in Jerusalem, which at that time meant the Christian Church. It was only for a short time that Peter was leader. The greater part of his life and work was consecrated to the mission, namely to the mission among the Jews, which depended upon the congregation in Jerusalem. As a missionary, Peter was subordinated to James, and "Primacy" never came into the question; so much so, that for example Paul at one time openly scolded Peter.

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Peter's missionary field could have been Asia Minor, where he probably established the congregation in Antioch. If this is true (the particulars to this are better than to the Roman tradition) then Antioch has as much, if not more right to appeal to the establishment from Peter than Rome. Peter's entire activity is based on the mandate of Jesus. But this includes the prophecy of his martyrdom (John 21), so this mandate from Jesus is limited because it is for the earthly life of Peter.

Concerning Peter's stay and martyrdom in Rome, Cullmann first examines the literary sources. He makes sure, that until the middle of the second century no document affirms explicitly that Peter was in Rome and had died there. For his martyrdom we pos sess only the old tradition in John 21:18ff., and for his stay in Rome so much is sure—Peter had not been in Rome when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. It cannot be proved that Peter established the congregation in Rome, but inasmuch as it is of Jewish-Christian origin it is possible that Peter as leader of the Jewish mission at one time visited Rome. No word can be found about his bishopric, and it is historically impossible in the form as it is mentioned since the fourth century. For his martyrdom in Rome we have indirect proofs in I. Clem. 5. and Ign. Rom. 4. 3. Every other text we have is such that it shows only the evolution of tradition.*

According to Eusebius H. E. II. 25, 7., about the year 200 some places have been shown in Rome which could have had some connection with Peter and Paul but it is not clear whether these are the tombs of Peter and Paul or the places of their execution.

The results of the excavations are as follows: Under the altar of the Cathedral of St. Peter a monument has been found which could be the same as the one mentioned by Eusebius. What was under this monument? Was it a real grave? We cannot be sure. Before the excavated part of the monument an empty hole has been found, 80 centimeters wide and the same in length. The hole was covered; around it some graves have been found but none of them can be dated before 70 A.D. In the subterranean lengthened line of the excavated part of the monument some bones have been found, but they don't prove a thing because "to find bones in a graveyard is in itself not astonishing." In the northern wall of the monument a marble box 30 centimeters wide and 77 centimeters long has been found, filled with an indefinable mass of earth, etc. This does not prove anything either. Neither the monument nor the excavated part of this cemetery mention the name of Peter.

* It is certainly wrong when Dr. J. Unger ("St. Irenaeus and the Roman Primacy," in the Theological Studies, September, 1952) tries to come to a conclusion in this problem only on behalf of an exegesis of adv. haer. III, 1-3. Certainly, in this text at least one thing is not true, namely, that the Roman congregation was established by Peter and Paul. Vide Cullmann, pp. 128, 264.

It is quite unlikely that in the terrible days of the Christian persecutions by Nero would the Christians have been able to dig a grave and arrange a funeral so close to Nero's garden, even if they would have been able to recognize the body of Peter. We do not know whether the ashes of Peter and of the other martyrs have been spread on the waters of the Tiber or whether all the bodies were put into a common mass grave. So much is undoubtedly sure, that in those days Christians did not care for graves and relics because it was contrary to the strong belief in the early second coming of Jesus. On the other hand, we ask Why did Constantine allow the Cathedral of St. Peter to be built on that most inappropriate spot, unless he had a special reason to do so? It might be that people of later ages arbitrarily identified the place of execution as the place of Peter's grave; the place of execution might have been in the circus of Nero located at the Vatican hill.

The new excavations did not bring any new results in the unsettled question—the tomb of Peter cannot be identified. Everything we know about the problem comes from the literary sources, and according to these Peter in all probability was in Rome and died there as a martyr, probably within the territory of the Vatican hill.

2. By the exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 Cullmann first makes sure that the verses are authentic. The sentence has two centers: one is the expression of ekklesia and the second is the person of Peter. Because of the expression of ekklesia some theologians consider the whole text as non-authentic. It is true that this word can be found only once more in the Gospel according to Matthew. But it is also true that the word ekklesia covers an idea which is well known to the Gospels and which belongs to the center of the preaching of Jesus.

The meaning of ekklesia is “People of God” and this idea was well known to every Jew. Moreover, every Jew believed he was a member of this “nation.” The Jewish Messiah-hope is unimaginable without the idea “the people of God.” Consequently if we acknowledge the consciousness of Jesus as Messiah we must also think about this idea. Quite natural at that time was the thought that such a community has to be built, and the building of that congregation is a present projection of the coming Kingdom of God. According to Jesus it will be built in the future but the time of its building is indefinite. The second center of the text is Peter but his activity on earth is definite. The Roman Catholic explanation which says Jesus had to think of the successors of Peter because He is speaking here of things which are naturally longer than the life of Peter fails, because according to John 21:16 Peter's work to feed the sheep is limited with his death. Everything said in this verse about Peter concerns him, only him, and not his “successors.” Peter has to build the
foundation of the church and this is a historical event which cannot be repeated.

Peter is the first of the apostles, but the characteristics of the apostleship are of such a nature that it is wholly impossible to repeat or succeed this position. There can be successors to the apostles in a temporary meaning but none in apostolic quality. Not even concerning the leading of the church can we speak about successorship. As leader of the congregation in Jerusalem, i.e., leader of the Christian Church, Peter was active only a very short time. Later he led only separate congregations, and the New Testament never mentions Peter's name in connection with Rome. The first Roman bishop who refers to Matthew 16:17 is Kallist (217-222).

These are Cullmann's final results: Peter is the foundation of the church in a temporary meaning. There can be no word about succession and less about binding this succession to one city. Peter's person, his work, his role as the foundation of the Christian Church was a single act in the course of time; an act in the "redemptive history" which cannot be repeated.

III

The historical part of the Peter question cannot be solved on the grounds of the available documents. In this problem only the discovering of new documents would help; unfortunately these have not been given to us by the recent excavations. Peter's stay and his martyrdom in Rome is grounded only on indirect literary proofs. We have seen that the solution of this problem would only mean the settlement of a historical question which has no influence on the theological part of the whole complex. The Roman Catholic theology has its own theory to the effect that Peter never entered the city by the Tiber (v. page 261 and the Roman Catholic literature given there). Cullmann represents the standpoint of a Protestant, according to which, if Peter really died in Rome as a martyr it would not mean anything concerning the papal primacy. The first part of Cullmann's book has complete information regarding the status of the problem today, making it an indispensable work for every Protestant. This part convinces us that we do not know anything certain about the historical question and it does not convince us of anything more—but it does not intend to. This is the strength of the first portion; it is free from every prejudice and gives us a true picture. The results of the second part are totally new and we have to stop here for a moment because this is the first application of Cullmann's theology of the New Testament.*

The characteristics of Cullmann's theology are his understanding of Time and the accentuation of the so called "redemptive line" (heilsgeschichtliche Linie). The heilsgeschichtliche Theologie is in itself not new. Its first representative was the great antignostic bishop from Lyon, Irenaeus. His influence is to be felt by Nicetas, bishop from Rennesiana (in the Explanation of the Creed; the idea of the "recapitulatio") and by Augustine too. The heilsgeschichtliche Schule during the last century in Germany followed the same line and at present we have Cullmann as the main representative. According to Cullmann, the conception of Time in the Bible can be compared to a straight line which came from infinity to creation, follows to the end of the world and through this to eternity. The center of Time is Jesus Christ: towards Him came Time, because of Him happens everything in the present and in the future. On this line of time the revelation of God is history, an event, which will be played on special terms at a special appointed time so designated by God (kairos). The life of Jesus Christ is the revelation of God; Christ's death is the assurance of salvation. Thus the redemption is not an abstract idea, but an event taking place in time with banal simplicity, which has an eternal value and cannot be repeated. Christ's death, his resurrection, the foundation of the church all belong to the center of the "redemptive history" (Heilsgeschichte).

This is the viewpoint Cullmann takes regarding the problem of Peter in his earlier work Christ and Time (second Swiss edition page 152) and the full elaboration of this notice is the present book. According to this, Christ builds His church really on Peter, the Rock. Peter lays the foundation of the church, and on this foundation will be built the future church. A foundation can be laid only once, and the succession of Peter is impossible and unnecessary because the work he had to do was done. With the dogma of the Papacy, the Roman Catholic theology makes the same mistake as does with the thesis of the transsubstantiation. It wants to project a historical event of the past into the present, instead of looking back at it ("in remembrance of me") and so to conform to the center of the redemptive history.

Two essential elements of Cullmann's theology are the principles of "selection" and "substitution." The essence of God's redeeming work as history is the selection of a minority in order to save all. First a nation is selected, then within this through a progressive reduction is selected the so-called "Rest of Israel" but even this group narrows by Deuteronomy and by the Ebed Jehovah. This "One" enters history in the person of Jesus from Nazareth, who with His redeeming death fulfills the task for which the Jewish nation was selected. Here the redemptive history reaches its center and from here it continues, with the change that the development is no

* Before Christ and Time was published Cullmann's smaller study Koenigherrschaft Christi und Kirche im N. T., which inspired Karl Barth during his writing of Christengemeinde and Buergergemeinde. But this is not an application; Barth's theology generally differs from that of Cullmann's, e.g., in the conception of time. The main difference between the two theologians is briefly as follows: according to Cullmann time is a straight line, eternity is an endlessly long time. According to Barth time is a relative idea, there is no time in eternity.
longer directed from the majority to the One but in reverse—out of the One with a progressive development to the majority, but so that this majority always represents the One. These are the Apostles, the Church, the Body of that One Jesus Christ. This will fulfill the task of the “Holy People of God.” This development reaches its culmination in the new mankind, new heaven and new earth (Christus und die Zeit, p. 99ff).

The application of this idea for Peter takes place in this manner: Christ is the center, the One. Out of the One continues the development in the direction of the majority. This appears first in the selection of the Apostles, in a special apostolic quality and commission. From here the line clearly goes toward the church, etc. But according to Cullmann there enters a new reductive progress in the person of Peter. He is the representative of the twelve disciples, he is “selected” of the Twelve as “substitute” of the Twelve, with a special task and power. On this point the otherwise logical line breaks, even though Peter’s role will be limited by time. When in the person of Jesus the development began to move from the One to the majority why should it narrow again in the person of Peter? Why should we see in him, in the “one,” the foundation of the church, on whom, with a progressive development, the whole church will be built? The contrast dissolves perhaps in that form, that the church is built on the basis of the Apostles and in the foundation Peter had a heilsgeschichtlich unique task to do.

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Cullmann’s book was published about a year ago in Switzerland and its effect was unexpectedly great throughout Europe. Both Protestants and Catholics studied this work and today Cullmann has an extra seminar about the critics of his book at the University of Basel. We hope that the English translation will be published as soon as possible so the American public too will be able to enrich itself by this important work.
Van Til in Review

It needs no saying that a Christian apologetic finally involves a Christian philosophy, since the apologetic conflict is between Weltanschauungen. And the efficacy or sterility of the apologetic will depend on the consistency with which the philosophy is Christian. To use Vollenhoven's language, the Christian apologetic is characteristically antithetical, not synthetical, in motive; and its success rises or falls with the degree to which it is synthesis-shy.

A recent article in these columns by John Vriend has reminded us that it is the great merit of Dr. Cornelius Van Til, Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, that he has committed himself to the task of constructing a Christian apologetic, and, in the process, a Christian philosophy. Van Til's aim is to be Christian with thorough consistency; he eschews any attempts at synthesis of Christian and non-Christian motifs.

The importance of Professor Van Til's work springs from its initial insight, that he who fails at any point to reckon seriously with the Christian doctrine of Creation, Fall and Redemption can only end with partial explanations and perplexing antinomies. Van Til has taken St. Paul's cue—"The unrighteous . . . have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator"—and has followed it with vigor; he has been concerned to continue Calvin on corruptio et conversio, and Kuyper on antithese.

It is not clear, however, that Van Til has succeeded. There are certain defects and excesses in his argumentation that forbid any ready description of his apologetic as "Christian" or "Calvinistic," notwithstanding his concern at better moments to disown these defects and excesses. These departures from Scripture and the Reformed creeds are owing, in my judgment, to Van Til's idealistic penchant.

I

Of special interest is Van Til's use of the limiting concept. He is eager to use Grenzbegriffe in the interest of "concrete thinking," in order to avoid "abstraction." A Grenzbegriff is, according to Van Til, a concept "that should never be employed to do duty by itself," a concept that should be used with reference to something that does not exist "in any pure state." A limiting concept, in other words involves

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4 An apologetic, for example, in Van Til, is not afraid to use the concept of "Grenzbegriff" as a "limiting concept," in order to avoid "abstract" thinking. A Grenzbegriff is, according to Van Til, a concept "that should never be employed to do duty by itself," a concept that should be used with reference to something that does not exist "in any pure state." A limiting concept, in other words involves

5 It is apparent from this that Van Til, unlike the Germans, does not contrast the "limiting" concept with the "constitutive" concept. By his definition a limiting concept is a concept used constitutively, although never alone.

Van Til's use of the Grenzbegriff is not, however, always consonant with this definition. The use is quite unambiguously modern when, in accord with a prior definition of history as differentiation, Van Til calls "common grace" a limiting concept. In one context we find a supralapsarianistic reading of pre-Fall history in terms of post-Fall history, and in another, quite consistent with the first, we read: "History is a process of differentiation. Accordingly, the idea of that which is common between the elect and the reprobate is always a limiting concept. It is a commonness for the time being. There lies back of it a divine as if." 3

Professor Van Til wants to give history meaning; it is only through the use of such limiting concepts, he believes, that we can give it meaning. But history is deprived of meaning ab initio if we define it simply as being principally differentiation, or as being the struggle of meaningfulness against meaninglessness. History as history is obviously not mere differentiation; as Van Til himself asserts elsewhere, that process is always accompanied, or at least opposed by the communio we generally express with the common grace doctrine. And this commonness is too real to allow description of it in terms of a "divine as if." In other words, when thinking of history as history, as real, common grace must be reckoned with constitutively, and must not be explained away by recourse to a fictionalism. 4 Van Til would admit that the meaning of history is not the same as that of eternity, but in failing to figure with contingent reality gesetzegebendich, so to speak, he cannot give history and time their worth. He quite

6 See Common Grace (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 11, 34 ff., 84; An Introduction to Systematic Theology (Phila., 1949), p. 38; Apologetics (Phila., 1951), p. 34. It is interesting that Vollenhoven also, in the interest of less "abstract" and more "concrete" thinking, rejects, among others, the formal—material and the essence—existence distinctions which Van Til is not afraid to use.

7 See Common Grace, p. 74. Also Apologetics, pp. 29, 31, 32, 34.

8 Such a fictionalism is, of course, implicit in talk of a "divine as if," and is not out of place where the Triune God's ad extra dealings are overlooked in an attempt to honor His ad intra relations.

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correctly says that “the eternal must always remain independent of and prior to the temporal.” 8 But likewise the eternal is not obliterator or negative of the temporal.

That Van Til’s use of the concept of common grace is frequently inconsistent with his own definition of limiting concept and with a Scriptural view of history is clear not only from his description of common grace in terms of a “divine as if,” but as well from his numerous statements that the non-Christian can reach at best only “formal” truth. 9 Besides questioning the propriety and final intelligibility of such a distinction between “formal” and “material” truth, we may observe that elsewhere Van Til strikes a quite different note. He warns that we must not think of that which is common between believer and unbeliever “as a merely formal something.” “... God bids us bide our time and hold to the common, as correlative to the process of differentiation.” 7 The net impression left Van Til’s reader is of two opposing conceptions, chameleon-like expressed and defended.

II

There are other accents in Professor Van Til’s language which are also reminiscent of modern idealism. These are heard with the Berkeleian God of his theology, and with the coherence theory and “phenomenalism” of his epistemology.

That God’s creative activity involves his will and volition as well as his mind and thought is undeniable. Van Til admits this. 8 But his confession is not satisfactorily borne out by all his expressions. God’s knowledge is spoken of as only a priori, as only analytical; and God’s interpretation of facts (i.e., of creations, of the created) is said to precede the facts themselves. 10 These truths are left to stand alone, however, without the proper qualification which, it soon appears, is necessary. For although “God’s knowledge of the facts comes first” in an important sense, in that they exist in his eternal plan “before” creation, in another important respect his knowledge is a posteriori, 11 or “synthetical.” That is, it is necessary to distinguish God’s thinking the world from his creating it by an act of will. If we fail to do that, we either teach an eternal creation, since God’s plan, his interpretation, his knowledge, is eternal, and there is no new thought in him; or we deny the reality of creation, calling it a thought of God, attributing to it only mental existence, existence in the mind of God. If we admit that creation is real, and is something outside or objective to God, and did not always have existence, we also must admit that God’s knowledge of the world “before” and his knowledge of the world “after” the creative act are different. And this justifies speaking of God’s knowledge as in some sense “synthetical” or a posteriori; not that the Creator “has” both it and the other, i.e., a priori, analytical, but that his knowledge, which is one and whole, is partly describable in terms of either. To speak solely of the analytical in respect to God’s knowledge, therefore, leave the doctrine of Creation largely unexplained.

Thus we cannot speak of “interpretation” and the “knowledge” of God synonymously, for God’s interpretative activity presupposes his creative activity; or, if we choose to speak of them together, the distinction and difference must be maintained between God’s act of creation and his act of interpretation, for the two are different as well as distinct. 12 To identify and confuse the two is the typical error of idealism—an error, it will become clearer, that Van Til too often fails to recognize.

The predilection for idealistic constructions is more apparent in Van Til’s adaptation of the coherence theory of truth. The logic of Bosanquet and Bradley, believes Van Til, “is the finest and best that can be produced in the field of logic on a non-Christian basis,” and “the form of statement may be used by us in order to express the Christian theistic conception of logic.” 13

Christian theism is, of course, a unit, as Professor Van Til is concerned to stress. And, in so far as the Christian is committed to the unity of the truth and shuns all pluralism or atomism, we may speak of coherence meaningfully. It is a question, however, whether Mr. Vriend’s statement, that Van Til’s coherence theory is “not to be identified with the corresponding Hegelian theory,” 14 is in every respect true. It is doubtful that Van Til’s use of the coherence idea stops short of an objectionably idealistic foundation or application.

This becomes clear when Van Til furnishes the metaphysics of his coherence.

Parmenides stressed that which had been inherent in all previous Greek speculation that logical consistency is the criterion of reality. That is real which is thinkable.

Was Parmenides mistaken in this insistence? We believe not... From the Christian-theistic point of view we hold that Parmenides was right in thinking that real-

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5) Apologetics, p. 18.
7) Common Grace, p. 83.
8) This term is used here to facilitate distinction of this conception of Van Til from another of his, which is the Reformed one of God who creates the world by an act of omnipotent will (see the Westminster Confession, II-III, and Westminster Shorter Catechism, VII-VIII).
10) Apologetics, pp. 6-7, 22.
11) The use of “a posteriori” in this connection is inoffensive if etymology rather than historical usage is considered, and in so far as we do speak legitimately of before and after in God. Elsewhere Van Til does not hesitate to be “fearlessly anthropomorphic” (see Common Grace, p. 73).
12) This is hardly to deny that in God mind and will are at one. It is only to say that, given the distinction in God between mind and will, the proper referent of the creative act is the latter of the two.
14) Vriend, op. cit., p. 34.
Van Til would qualify this, however. He adds to his remarks on Bosanquet and Bradley that their conception of logic is vitiated by their failure to distinguish between human and divine knowledge. And, regarding Parmenides, he continues:

"The only difficulty is that Parmenides took for granted that that which is real should be thinkable by man. As Theists we say that that which is real is thinkable by God, because it has been thought by God. In the case of God's own existence it goes without saying that his own being is identical with his own thinkability. Then as far as Christian and non-Christian is concerned we hold that God's plan [1] [presumably, his thinking or thought] brought it into being. This means that God has thought it before it came into existence." 17

This latter qualification only brings out an other feature of Professor Van Til's thought already mentioned, his Berkeleian notion of God. It is now unmistakably set forth that God's thinking activity is his creative activity. "In God ... the real is the rational and the rational is the real," repeats Van Til elsewhere. "It goes without saying that the universals, that God's plan, that God's logic, God's absolute interpretation is prior to the things known. His very interpretation has brought them into existence." 14 "... Kant's creativity theory of thought ... is the germ of the idealist notion of the coherence theory of truth," "the only way that Christianity can meet Kantian thought is by setting over against its creativity theory of human thought the creativity theory of divine thought ... ." 18 By what notion of Christianity are such idealist aberrations included in a "Christian" apologetic? That enigma perplexes Van Til's careful reader, for he is elsewhere exhorited "to distinguish carefully a Christian from the non-Christian epistemology." 19

It is clear from the former qualification that Van Til would apply the coherence idea to God alone, and rightly so; 20 only in the case of divine knowledge can we speak in terms of complete coherence. We cannot speak in such terms in the case of divine and human knowledge together, for then any initial distinction between the two is obviated. And we cannot speak in such terms in the case of human knowledge, for that was the Parmenidean error.

One of Van Til's favorite themes is the Calvinistic one that real knowledge of a fact is knowledge of it in its relation to God. It becomes doubtful, however, that Van Til's arguments in elaboration of this theme avoid the Parmenidean error in every respect, when he writes that "... meaning ... is ... fact." 21 Basic to Van Til's conception of apologetic methodology is a kind of idealist confusion of the principium cognoscendi and the principium essendi, here in the form of a phenomenalism. 22

That Van Til does not escape the phenomenalism he is otherwise anxious to berate is evident from his belief that the only valid apologetic procedure is what he calls "reasoning by presupposition." The apologist can in no sense appeal to "facts," for the simple reason that the Christian and non-Christian have no facts in common. According to Van Til, one's interpretation of a fact is the fact. 23

Professor Van Til would undoubtedly hasten to add here that facts and their interpretations are of course not identical, but that "it is impossible to deal with facts apart from a principle of interpretation." 24 Nevertheless we cannot conclude that therefore Christian and non-Christian have no facts in common. It is in interpreting the facts that diversity arises. And even though a knower never knows a fact without his interpretation of it, a non-Christian knower cannot so misinterpret a fact to the degree that we can say he deals not with facts but with "fancies." 25 Van Til himself says that "there can be no facts in any realm but such as actually do exhibit the truth of the system of which they are a part." 26 It is because all facts are what they are—that is, revelatory parts of the created cosmic "system"—that they resist all non-Christian efforts at complete falsification of them. Unless we make this necessary qualification, the possibility of communication between Christian and non-Christian must be denied.

The phenomenalistic strain in Van Til is also seen in his consideration of the problem of Anknüpfungs-
punkt. Communication between Christian and non-Christian is impossible with other of Van Til's provisions as well. Because there is no "common human consciousness" 27 Van Til concludes that we cannot speak of a "common logic."

Kuyper already saw (and Calvin before him) that there are two "kinds" of science in that there are two "kinds" of men, regenerate and unregenerate. It is in this respect that we can speak of two human consciousnesses, not common. But we find ourselves bound to calling both human, and both consciousnesses, and this fact designates some type of community. Kuyper perceived also this, and spoke as well of a "common logic."

But Van Til hesitates to take this last step. He demurs when Kuyper asserts that "er is niet tweëérlei, er is slechts één logica." 28 That Van Til means not simply that there is no common philosophy of logic, but also that the laws of thinking are not held in common by Christian and non-Christian, is apparent from his rejection of Kuyper's view, which includes provision for the distinction between human consciousness.

It is the question not so much whether Professor Van Til's intentions are good or certain of his formulations correct, as whether he is consistent with himself. For although the discussed defects and excesses are a conspicuous part of his works, rather formidable documentation could be mustered, from other passages in them, which would support a contrary evaluation. But unless these conflicting evaluations can be exhibited to be resolvable, any evidence ranged for either one is but evidence that there is an unfortunate contradiction in Van Til's writings—a contradiction that leaves our first and last exclamations the same: Cur spargit voces in vulgum ambigus?

27 Ibid., p. 51.
28 Common Grace, pp. 42-43. But elsewhere Van Til admits that the Christian and non-Christian do honor the same laws of thinking; the admission, of course, is presupposed by his whole discussion.

The statement of W. Young in Toward a Reformed Philosophy (Grand Rapids, 1952, p. 134) that "Van Til's standpoint as that of Dooyeweerd ... repudiates the notion of a purely formal logic," should not be misunderstood to mean that Dooyeweerd denies, as does the Van Til of darker moments, the fact of a "common logic" in the sense of "redeneerkunst," "denkwetten." Says Dooyeweerd: "De wijsbegeerte der wetenschap beweert in 't geheel niet, dat het geloof een 'palingenesie' is, die een ander mens van ons maakt en een andere logica (in de ... zin van 'redeneerkunst') meebrengt. ..." Zij ontkent ten stelligste, dat de palingeneese, die zich in het menselijk hart voltrekt door de werking van de Heilige Geest, andere denkwetten voor de Christen zou meebrengen dan voor de niet-Christen." See Philosophia Reformata, XVI, p. 149. Dooyeweerd is concerned at all times to affirm "de solidariteit van het christelijk met het niet-christelijk denken," "de solidariteit, die Gods Woord ons zelf openbaart" (Philosophia Reformata, XIII, p. 31).

29 The relevant passage in Kuyper is Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, 2 II, p. 107. N.B. that even though for Kuyper, "er is slechts één logica," he admits that "... bij het methodologisch onderzoek [der logica] aanscions allerlei verschil en tegenstelling opduikt."
30 An Introd. to Syst. Theol., pp. 35-36.
31 This denial is not gainsaid in Common Grace, p. 5, where Van Til writes that believer and non-believer "metaphysically ... have all things in common, while epistemologically they have nothing in common;" because the so-called metaphysical and epistemological situations are never in abstraction from each other in, for example, an apologetic debate, and for Van Til the metaphysical situation is of only secondary significance (see Meta. of Apolo., p. 9).
From Our Correspondents

The Calvin Forum,
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

December 1, 1953.

Dear Sirs:

THANK you for your evaluations of “The New Apologetic.” No doubt most every one will be gratified for an open discussion of an apologetic that has carried considerable weight and exercised a quite determinative influence in Reformed circles. It is quite right, of course, to hope that the discussion will be carried on with due objectivity, and without the exercise of undue antagonisms. But it is quite as right to hope that an objective evaluation will not be hindered by the intrusion of irrelevant considerations.

The correspondents who wrote in your last issue will not take it ill of me, I hope, if I made a few comments with respect to their complaints. The fact that Dr. Van Til “has been held in high esteem for many years” is hardly ground for prejudice against the fact that “the major part of a whole issue of our Calvin Forum is devoted to a criticism of one and the same author.” Rather, the high place Dr. Van Til occupies among us, and the large influence he has exercised on our theological and ecclesiastical life, warrants and even calls for an extended analysis and evaluation of his views.

It does not seem to be quite necessary to hasten to assure the public that only “a few members of those faculties (of Calvin College and Seminary—S.) knew that this attack was forthcoming.” Having once been on the Forum staff, I know that what was forthcoming in any issue of the Calvin Forum was known only by “a few members of those faculties,” (the Editorial Committee) and in some cases only by the Editor-in-Chief. But at no time, in all the nineteen years of Forum publication, has it ever been thought necessary to assure the public that not all faculty members knew what was forthcoming. Why now? Does Prof. Kuiper mean to suggest that the “attack” on the new apologetic represents the mind of only a few, and that the majority of the Calvin Faculties do not agree? In any event, it ought to be clear that the issue is the thing—not the number of people who knew or did not know it was going to be discussed.

I suspect, too, that Prof. Kuiper takes undue alarm at the designation “Westminster’s apologetic.” It is a wholly common way of speaking to designate a distinctive theological position, not only by reference to the professor who is its chief exponent, but also by reference to the school in which it is taught. This is unobjectionable, and often heartily welcome when the position is spoken of complimentarily. It is even less objectionable with reference to a school like Westminster, which is rightly concerned about a consistent basic theological position — unlike those schools that constitute themselves open theological forums and allow to various theological opinions “a respectful hearing.” And it is a fact, of course, that Dr. Van Til taught not only in his own department at Westminster, but also the basic course of Introduction to Dogmatics in the Dogmatics department. Westminster Seminary could hardly take offense, therefore, even if not all past or present members of its faculty adopted that apologetic in toto.

May I suggest, too, that it is hardly charitable or right to associate the Calvin Forum’s address to Dr. Van Til’s apologetic with the “violent, and in some instances vicious, attacks by Old Modernists New Modernists, Arminians, Dispensationalists, and . . . Hyper-Calvinists” against Westminster’s defense of the Reformed faith. It may be assumed, as indeed it is avowed, that what has recently been written in the Calvin Forum was also concerned with the defense of the Reformed faith.

Sincerely,

George Stob
HOW OLD IS THE EARTH?

De Ouderdom der Aarde. By Dr. G. J. Sizzo, Drs. J. G. Van De Fliert, Dr. C. P. Koene, Dr. J. Verseveld, and Drs. M. Eilander. (Kampen, The Netherlands: J. II. Kok; 1952.) 89 pages.

Much has been written on the conflict between reason and faith. Obviously there is also much confusion as to the relation of the one to the other. So much that is written assumes, falsely to be sure, that reason and faith are mutually exclusive of each other, that reason mixed with, or based upon, faith is a contradiction, and that faith is never reasonable. Too often we are told, in effect, that the road of reason leads one way and the road of faith in the very opposite direction.

The Christian honors both faith and reason, and in that order. He does so because both are God's gifts to man. In common with all mankind, the Christian enjoys the gift of reason. In distinction from many of his fellows, he also cherishes the gift of faith. The latter enables him to see the created cosmos for what it was and now is, including his reason. It teaches him that reason by itself, perverted by sin, tends to elevate self to the throne of the cosmos rather than recognize on that throne the God Whose glory the creation must serve. So it is the Christian who, by God's grace, holds forth a synthesis of reason with faith, a cooperation of the two in the exciting quest for knowledge. Such is the ideal.

But the Christian, if honest, is well aware that he too labors under difficulties. His vision is not clear at every point. The synthesis is a task not completed but in progress, one that requires of him all that he can give to it and all that the whole of Christendom can contribute. His faith is not strong enough, nor his reason sufficiently reliable, to make progress without errors. Repeatedly he must retrace his steps, check his compass, and climb to the heights of faith from which he can get a better view of his goal. And so we say that a Christian always labors under a tension, the tension of a pilgrim who is in the world but not of it. This tension comes to focus at many points within the broad area encompassed by God's special and general revelations. Although by faith the redeemed individual is sure of a fundamental unity between these two revelations, honesty compels him to admit that he possesses a full understanding of neither of them. Therefore, if he is wise, he will tread cautiously. The task demands sane judgement, charity, and especially humility.

One of the problems which has excited much difference of opinion among Christians is that pertaining to the age of the earth. Recently there appeared a booklet entitled, De Ouderdom der Aarde, consisting of a series of lectures presented to a conference of Christian scientists called for the purpose of critically evaluating the research which has bearing on a determination of the age of the earth. We congratulate these men for addressing themselves to this problem. All too many of our kind, perhaps of too little faith, hesitate to do so, or even frown upon such a venture as quite unnecessary and a waste of time. One cannot, and may not, ignore the sciences of Physics, Geology and Paleontology, among others, which have accumulated much knowledge of our planet. Believers and unbelievers alike lay bare the mysteries of the cosmos, and God continues to speak through them.

A quotation from the introductory address of the conference, by Dr. Sizzo, is to the point. He says, in his paper on "The Creation Narrative and Historical Geology," "We believe, precisely on Biblical grounds, not the least Genesis 1, that God gave to man the created world as a task, to investigate it with his God-given reason. That such a task is more than an interesting adventure, more than a passing of time, and that the knowledge so derived possesses the character of truth, we may assert, precisely because God's revelation declares that the world is not a chaos, nor a product of chance, but a unity founded in God's wisdom, a product of His providence and decree. This conviction compels the Christian to honor the facts of the natural sciences. When through painstaking research, careful screening of the facts, and logical interpretation and accounting of these facts a scientific account of the age of the earth is evolved together with a chronology of events, then such an account cannot be considered a negligible quantity, especially for the believer. Rather, he will recognize it as truth and reckon with it as such, as he seeks to understand the significance of God's working in the creation of the world."

It is in this spirit that this conference was convened, for the purpose of ascertaining "whether there is among us a common opinion with respect to the reliability of current scientific theories." Following a historical review of the geological sciences are papers on the age of the earth as determined by physical, paleontological and geological researches, to which is added a chapter on the age of the stars.

Lyell's principle of the "uniformity of change" is the basis for modern geological theory. This principle is one of faith and not capable of proof. It is not a principle of geology so much as it is one of philosophy, for which reason it deserves much attention and evaluation. Its usefulness in providing a simple explanation of the many and various data of geology makes it, at best, a plausible theory according to Van De Fliert. However, he does not take this occasion to analyze or examine this principle further.

On the basis of physical researches, dealing especially with data from radioactivity studies, Koene concludes that the age of the earth is in the neighborhood of two to three billion years. He admits that such calculations are based upon the supposition that the rates of radioactive decay have remained constant through the years, an assumption he believes is amply supported by experimental evidence.

In his lecture on paleontology, Van De Fliert concludes that this science is incapable of arriving at an absolute age of the earth, or even of its fossil formations. His sentiments are contained in a quotation from Clarke, "So long as an
estimate of the age of the earth rests on evidence of the rate of change or adjustment in organisms through the acquisition of new characters, we may as well abandon the attempt to express it in concrete terms and satisfy ourselves that for the development of life the duration of that fraction of the earth's history is beyond human expression.

Verseveld critically, but briefly, examines the evidence from geology. He concludes that calculations of the earth's age from sedimentation studies are very uncertain, but that studies of glacier formations are more reliable up to about 600,000 years ago.

In his paper on the age of the stars, Elander comes to the opinion that the oldest stars have an age approximating a trillion years.

We are not in a position to evaluate these conclusions. It is significant that these men do not close their eyes to the deliverances of these sciences, but recognize them as worthy of study. If one is convinced, as many are, that the age of the earth is six thousand years as Bishop Ussher said it was, he may not dismiss the data to the contrary with the simple statement that such data are the products of unbelief. Rather, he is obliged to study them critically, honestly and fearlessly.

To do otherwise betrays a weak faith. We look upon this small volume as a neatly outlined summary of an honest evaluation of the pertinent facts. Such studies must be continued. God demands no less respect than this for His revelation. Our faith in Him is not at stake.

E. Wolthus

God Hidden and Revealed, by John Dillenberger (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; n.d.); 193 pp. $2.50

The sub-title to this book gives a more exact clue as to its content, viz., The Interpretation of Luther's deus absconditus and its significance for Religious thought. The author of this production is Associate Professor of Religion at Columbia University, and at one time instructor in Religion at Princeton University. It is a book dealing with a most basic doctrine for theology, namely, that of revelation. The author demonstrates that he is thoroughly at home and moves with grace and ease in the terminology and concepts of the so-called Dialectical Theology of the Crisis Theologians, and, no less, that with some minor restrictions and criticisms, has adopted as his own the main thrust of that theology. We have witnessed during the past few decades a wave of research in the theology of Luther. Almost every German theologian of note has written on some phase of the theology of the great Reformer, and incidentally it has stimulated considerable interest in the writings of the Reformers. One would expect that the issue of such penetrative and exhaustive research would establish Luther's theology in a pattern of considerable consistency. However, the reverse is true. "There is no unanimity in the interpretation of Luther, or in the resultant theological views... The unity which exists is primarily one of opposition to previous interpretations." (p. 37) The reason of course is to be traced to the prejudice, the particular bias with which the interpreter accomplished his work. From the point of view of the Barthians, the Ritschian interpretation of Luther, which places the hiddenness of God on a scholastic basis and which see the hiddenness of God in conjunction with the nature of God as love, is untrue to the thought of Luther himself. (p. 35) But, obviously, Dillenberger's interpretation of the deus absconditus in Luther's theology is slanted to fit the position of the Crisis Theology.

The central thesis of the book is that the hiddenness of God is the "necessary correlate of revelation since it is defined and circumscribed by the nature of revelation." God's hiddenness involves two major aspects, according to the author, viz., one that refers to the nature of revelation, which includes the mystery of God's communication and of the content of revelation; and secondly, the aspect of the nature of God in Himself as conceived behind his revelation (cf. p. xvi, 56, 68-69). The classic circumscription of these two aspects Dillenberger finds in Luther's term the deus absconditus. The attempt to understand the meaning of this necessary correlation between the hidden and the revealed God is in large part the stimulus to a resurgence and rejuvenation of theological vitality (cf. p. xvi and 153). It is Dillenberger's conviction that hiddenness emerges as a meaningful category of considerable importance for theological thinking... that hiddenness and revelation belong together for a meaningful concept of revelation (cf. p. 69). In fact, he even adds emphasis to this main contention when he declares that "In short, the necessary relation of revelation and hiddenness has implications for every theological problem" (p. 172). It is from the point of view of the hiddenness of God, the deus absconditus, that the problem of revelation must be approached, its nature defined, and it would seem logical then to add, its content determined. This content in this context always remains a mystery and hidden. When the author declares that "theology must be a meaningful wrestling with the faith which emerges for one out of the "Bible," the orthodox, evangelical theologian would be ready heartily to endorse the affirmation, provided the terms "faith" and "Bible" in that sentence were interpreted in their evangelical, biblical and accepted orthodox sense. However, as interpreted by the Barthians, it is to be roundly condemned. For the Bible according to these theologians is in no sense of the term the infallible deposit of God's will. In fact, they precisely deny this orthodox conviction, for it runs counter to their central affirmation, viz., that revelation is always an act, it always is an event, it always occurs; it is a communication to someone; it is never a product. To put it in Dillenberger's words: revelation is an event; the event itself, while it reveals, is always hidden. Therefore it is an event which itself is apprehended only in faith. To see God in Christ is not a matter of self-evidence, but belongs to the type of communication which is known in and through God's hiddenness and which is again hidden upon its communication. This, claims the author, Barth has seen so clearly in his analysis of veiling in unveiling, and unveiling in veiling. To be in faith, or to experience God's grace in one's own life does not bring with it the continuation of that experience." (Italics mine) "The believer in every moment may and does again become an unbeliever." (166). In other words, I might experience a moment when revelation occurs to me, but what God communicates to me is a revelation of His hiddenness; it is mystery, but the very next moment the event of revelation is not taking place, nor have I the assurance that I ever again will have a similar communication. The Bible therefore can in no sense be accepted as the product of God's special revelation, since to speak in that way is, according to the Barthian, contradictory language. There can be on their basis no fixed canon, no closed product of revelation. Revelation may occur at any time and to anyone. Therefore Barth is willing to call the Old Testament "awaiting revelation" and Dillenberger will include the history of religions as "preparatory revelation." That means in simple language that the Bible is not an au-
The authoritative and normative basis for theology. The only basis for theology for the Crisis theologian is revelation, that is, revelation as he conceives of it, which is a thoroughly speculative, philosophic concept, moreover entirely subjective. Revelation is for him an act within the context of personal, individual experience. The result is that God in his revelation is hidden, in his hiddenness he is revealed; in his unveiling he is veiled, and in his veiling he is unveiled. This dialectical relationship is implicit in the biblical witness in his revelation is its relation or correlation to hiddenness. The complaint of Dillenberger is that while much has been written about revelation, little attention has been given the other facet, its necessary correlate, viz., the hiddenness of God. And now the germ for this basic discovery, which has implications for the whole gamut of theology, according to the author, is to be found in Luther's deus absconditus.

Dillenberger complains further, that Luther's discovery soon suffered eclipse in the Post-Reformation theology as represented by Protestant orthodoxy, for this theology "knew too much about the intricacies of the working of God to permit genuine mystery or hiddenness as a part of their heritage." (p. xvii). The result was that they made impossible claims to knowledge of God. Reaction came in the Enlightenment, which Dillenberger believes was not anti-religious. It only tried, claims the author, to establish religion "through the instrument of reason" on a firm foundation. The issue however was not too encouraging, for it signaled the decline of Christianity as a "powerful and living force for a rather colorless form of religion in general" (p. xviii). We can only remark, how could it be otherwise when human reason supplants special revelation as a criterion and norm for authority? Kant tried to make room for faith by restricting it to practical reason; Hegel tried to establish the thesis that movement of life and history was itself the domain of revelation; Schleiermacher insisted that religion was a "new Third" over against duty (Kant) and thought (Hegel), but all were ill-fated attempts; all were rationalistic, humanistic, a man- and reason-centered approach rather than a God- and Scripture- special revelation one. Ritschl, the father of Liberal theology, who powerfully influenced two generation of preachers and teachers, tried heroically to re-establish the honor of theology as an independent discipline. He insisted that the basis for Christian theology is the revelation in Jesus Christ, which means that it is primarily limited to the gospels. The content of revelation for Ritschl is the love of God manifest in Christ as founder of the perfect spiritual and moral religion, i.e., the kingdom of God. Dillenberger quite correctly asserts that Ritschl's theology involved the "contention that men can be freed from the consciousness of guilt and enter into the God-given task of establishing the moral kingdom of God. It includes the recognition that God's fundamental purpose and man's proper understanding of it are identical. Revelation is not the disclosure of a mystery, but the making manifest of what man at best should have had some knowledge of all along" (pp. 2-3). Obviously such a view cancels revelation from the orthodox view and is in diametric opposition to the central thesis of this book, viz., that hiddenness is the necessary correlate to revelation. Since, however, Ritschl found the idea of the deus absconditus in Luther's theology, he confessed a certain religious interest in the concept. However, it was Ritschl's conviction that Luther pushed this point in an undesirable direction, making God to be ex lege, without standard, beyond law, thus rendering God an arbitrary creature. He traced Luther's use of the term from his training in nominalistic scholasticism; in the distinction between the voluntas beneplacit et voluntas signi. The other aspect of Luther's theology was, according to Ritschl, the better part, and it signified his real contribution, viz., that God is love. This aspect was irreconcilable with the arbitrariness of God, and the only way to solve the apparent contradiction is to reserve the element of truth in the deus absconditus, to subsume it under revelation. But actually to speak of revelation for Ritschl is only a pious phrase, for, according to his own words: "We find not only that God's personal end and the end of the world are one, but also that the knowledge of the end of the world attainable by us coincides with the Christian idea of the nature and completed revelation of God" (p. 12). This by one stroke cancels the necessity and fact of revelation. Not revelation, but human discovery is the word that fits such a scheme. Ritschl begins with the "given-togetherness" of the end of God and man. Little wonder that a serious discussion of the cross is lacking in Ritschl's writings. In the light of such discussion of Ritschl, it is strange that Dillenberger makes the assertion that "Ritschl made a distinct contribution in emphasizing that the point of departure for theological thinking is revelation." (p. 15). It only proves conclusively that when the Barthian uses the term "revelation," and when we as orthodox evangelicals employ the term, we are not speaking similar language. Sadly, many evangelicals seemingly are not aware of this, or are willfully blind to recognize it.

Dillenberger then proceeds to trace the development of the deus absconditus in Ritschlian thought as set forth by such men as Loofs, Harnack, Karl Holl, and F. Kattenbusch. The second chapter continues this discussion of the nuances in the interpretation of Luther regarding this concept of the hidden God. Consideration is given the views of Karl Heim, the two Seebergs, Hirsch, Paul Althaus and Elert. Seeberg assumes, says our author, that for Luther the deus revelatus is the deus in carne, the deus crucifixus, and that means that God's love is revealed in hiddenness, and is hidden in revelation; God becoming man and conquering through suffering define the content of revelation, but they also mean that God is hidden in revelation. Such is the consistent nature from which every theological problem is approached by Seeberg, and Dillenberger adds, "it is essentially correct." That is why the author speaks so approvingly of Seeberg, claiming that the greatness of Seeberg's interpretation is this "that he has given content to the identification of revelation and hiddenness in Luther's thought." c. pp. 52-54 The central affirmation of Heim is, according to Dillenberger, that "God's essence remains ungraspable and his revelation, in its claim upon man, also remains beyond grasping. The latter however, (i.e. God's revelation in its claim upon man), is the basis for all knowledge of God and its more positive sense it is still encased in a form of hiddenness" (p. 62). The present reviewer confesses that he finds it extremely difficult, even with the help of considerable imagination, to see how such revelation would furnish much positive content as a norm for faith and practice! The chapter ends with the statement that "hiddenness emerges as a meaningful category of considerable importance for theological thinking, the contention is at least established that hiddenness and revelation belong together for a meaningful concept of revelation" (p. 69).
Chapter III is a most crucial part of the book. It deals with R. Otto's view of the Wholly Other, the *mysterium tremendum, numen ineffabile; tremendum as awesome, overpoweringness, energy, urgency; and mysterium as fascination, wholly other, holy, the non-rational factor, the overplus in the idea of the holy. Otto's thrust is that the religious dimension is a *sui generis, a phenomenon which is to be understood, appreciated, experienced in its own right; requiring its own tools of understanding and judgment. The argument is that the religious dimension is a realm of disclosure objective in character, yet within the context of human experience, and that hiddenness is found to be expressed in the non-conceptual side (non-rational) of the manifestation of the numinous. According to Otto, Luther needed the concept of the *deus absconditus in order to make room for faith: "all things that are believed must be hidden away" (p. 77). Reason cannot grasp the impact of the *tremendum of man; yet this impact is revelation of the Holy, the Wholly Other, and it is non-rational as to conceptualization, therefore it only reveals the hiddenness of the Wholly Other. It is perfectly clear why Dillenberger devoted a chapter in consideration of the view of R. Otto, for it is precisely tailored to fit the thesis of his book, viz., that hiddenness and revelation belong together for a meaningful concept of revelation. Since all pagan religions, too, manifest such a phenomenon, devotees of pagan religions also experience dread and fear before the wholly other, and this experience is revelation; it has objective character, even though it comes thru human experience. There is therefore nothing to mark off, to sharply distinguish the special revelation in Christ, in the Bible, from the revelation of the *mysterium tremendum of the pagan religions. For that reason Dillenberger tells us that these pagan religions are "preparatory revelations" of the hidden God. Similarly Barth calls the OT "awaiting revelation." The *deus absconditus as the *mysterium tremendum is not the *deus ignotus. Rather, this hidden God has a positive character, only it is hidden for conceptualization. Dillenberger quotes Otto as follows: "Feeling and experience reach far beyond conceiving, and a conception negative in form, may often become a symbol (ideogram) for a content of meaning which if absolutely inalterable, is none the less in the highest degree positive" (p. 92). Otto claims that the history of religions teaches the increasing rationalization of the divine or numinous, and that this is especially noticeable in the religion of Moses, for here the "numinous is throughout rationalized and moralized." It is Dillenberger's judgment that Otto's description of the nonrational is an elaboration of the hidden God as first discovered in Luther. While admittedly Otto did not stand in the historic Christian understanding, yet the great importance of his work is his "intensive documentation of the concept of the Wholly Other, or hidden God who makes himself known positively to man without relinquishing his mystery and awesomeness either in nature or operation" (p. 99). "The structural understanding of revelation is similar in Otto and Barth" (p. 159). Therefore, contends Dillenberger, Otto's work ought not to be understood as "psychology of religion, but as an attempt at ontological expression" (p. 174).

Chapter IV is entitled "The Correlative Character of Revelation and Hiddenness." It is an instructive chapter, dealing with the views of Brunner and Barth regarding this matter, in which their position and the nuances of difference among them is set forth. This chapter alone would furnish sufficient material for a rather sizeable book-report. The author believes that Barth, in his analysis of the meaning of God's hiddenness, has been more decisive than any man studied thus far. He has more consistently connected hiddenness with revelation. Barth has defined hiddenness exclusively in conjunction with revelation. (pp. 141-142). Brunner conceives of the two aspects of revelation, viz., God's separation from all creation and his communication to man, under the concept of holiness. It is of the essence of God to reveal his love—revelation and love are one. Love therefore is not an attribute, but God in his activity. There is no *being for himself which is not also a *being for us. The two aspects of God's holiness which Brunner calls the dialectic of wrath and love are the two sides of God's hiddenness. Outside of Christ man knows God as the God of wrath; in Christ, as the God of love. Yet even in his disclosure in Christ, God is hidden (pp. 102-103, 108-109). Brunner rejects double predestination since this runs counter to human responsibility and decision. "Historically it comes out of the neoplatonic side of Augustine and from Calvin's torturous use of the Bible" (p. 110). Yet Brunner pleads that we take the possibility of rejection seriously, and in this he distinguished himself from Barth, who claims that no one can finally escape the saving activity of God. Dillenberger seemingly agrees with Brunner, for he asserts that "man must have freedom, that is, he must not be a puppet who is subject to the decree of God in one way or another. Man therefore is not free to choose God but he is free to reject God" (p. 168). Why one man has faith and makes a decision for Christ and another not, is a puzzling question. "Willingness of decision is not enough. ... Without decision faith cannot occur, but decision will not make faith. The difficulty of this, for me, does not lie in an apparent destruction of the freedom of man, but in positing a double character in God at a point where he does not reveal himself. It involves hiddenness as an area where revelation is not operative, whereas hiddenness and revelation must always be kept together. ... It is the mystery which seems to remain locked in the heart of God himself" (p. 169). For Barth, the problem of God's hiddenness is exclusively a problem of revelation. Because one knows God-revealed in Christ, one knows that he is a hidden God. Hiddenness is the *terminus a quo and no less the *terminus ad quem of theology. Hiddenness is therefore necessarily established through revelation (p. 119).

God cannot be defined. When one knows Jesus Christ, declares Barth, one does not know conceptually what one really says. "Here hiddenness divides what one has received and what one tries to express" (p. 122). The dialectic is somewhat as follows: Revelation establishes how hidden God is. In revelation one has indirect though genuine knowledge of God. ... Because God veils himself in the flesh in order to unveil himself no *analogia entis is possible. If God did not veil himself he would smash into man's world. ... God's veiling in Christ ... includes God's unveiling in his veiling. ... God's veiling in his unveiling must again become and be an unveiling which is recognized as veiling. (pp. 123-125).

The book is well written; the author has mastery of the material. It will well serve as orientation into the historic grounding and development of the view of revelation as espoused by the Neo- Reformers, the Crisis theologians. The present reviewer is deeply convinced that the view of revelation as held by them is speculative, philosophical and not
biblical. Barth insists that the starting point for theology is revelation. So do we. The fundamental and basic difference in our theology however is the difference of our view or revelation. While we use the same term, we are not saying the same thing.

W. H. Rutgers

Dogmatische Studien - Het Werk van Christus by Dr. G. C. Berkouwer (Kampen: J. H. Kok; 1953)

Het Werk van Christus is the latest in a series of monographs on the entire field of Dogmatics. Nineteen monographs are planned, and this is the eighth.

In this latest volume, as in those that preceded it, the author reveals his detailed knowledge of the recent literature in this field. The book abounds in references to divergent views, views, namely, that diverge from the soundly Scriptural, and from the historic Reformed position. Indeed, the plan and arrangement of the material is determined not so much by a desire first of all to give a positive exposition of the various truths considered, as by the desire to maintain the correct position, in the midst of and over against those views that depart from the historic faith of Christendom. Hence the general title that covers all these monographs is precisely indicative of the contents. They are "Studies in the Field of Dogmatics," rather than a textbook on Dogmatics in the usual sense of the term.

There are ten chapters in the body of the book. After an introductory chapter, the following subjects are discussed: the motive of the incarnation humiliation and exaltation, the office of Christ, the great mystery, the suffering of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the sitting at the right hand of God, and Christ and the future. Finally we have a very lengthy chapter, covering more than a hundred pages, on various "aspects of the work of Christ," namely, reconciliation, offering or sacrifice (offeringen), obedience and victory.

It will be quite impossible in a brief review to give any adequate idea of the richness of this volume. The author is rather well-known to many here in America through his two visits here and his previous publications. This latest monograph fully lives up to our expectation, and to his reputation as a theologian who writes with the authority of an expert in his field. One trait that stands out, in the opinion of this reviewer, is the skill of the author in drawing fine theological distinctions. He excerts himself on the one hand to mark every deviation from the norm, and on the other hand to be scrupulously fair to those whose views he criticizes. In a word, the book is an outstanding example of careful theological-scientific thinking and writing.

There were certain parts of this volume that this reviewer read and re-read with special interest, as for instance the material presented in connection with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. This doctrine has received special attention in recent days, at least here in America, in connection with the new translation in the Revised Standard Version (young woman, instead of virgin, as in the King James Bible, and as also in the American Revised Version). Berkouwer does not favor the exegesis that the passage in Isaiah is a direct and explicit prophecy of the Virgin Birth, and is therefore not, as are some too violent defenders of the faith, alarmed by the new translation. But he does hold, especially in connection with the name "Emmanuel," that Matthew's reference to the coming virgin birth of Christ as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy gives the true Messianic, though at the time somewhat hidden, meaning of the prophet's word.

There are other aspects of Berkouwer's work, (not merely of this volume) that deserve a word or two. First, the testimony of Scripture is constantly brought before the reader, more so than in some other "dogmatics" or dogmatical studies. There is, in other words, more of the Biblical Theology touch. Secondly the question may arise, do not Berkouwer's multiple fine distinctions and multiple references to deviating views and sometimes to writers not very well known (if at all) in America, rob this volume, in some parts, of that simplicity of style that makes for enjoyable reading by the average layman? Or is the work intended only for professional theologians? Over against this, we must not fail to remark that one very commendable feature of this volume (as of the others that have preceded it) is that it rises, especially in certain parts, completely above the sometimes rather coldly theoretical atmosphere of doctrinal discussion. It is not merely the professional dogmatian, but the devoted Christian who speaks to us.

Finally, this volume gives to the Confessions, both the ecumenical and those of our Reformed churches, their proper place of honor. They are repeatedly referred to and their Scripturalness made clear. The Christian world, both the professional theologian and the "ordinary believer," as he is called, need this emphasis. And especially the Reformed Christian, also here in America, must seek to maintain, and perhaps regain, the spirit of deep respect for these official and historical testimonies of their Christian faith.

G. Hoeksema

Commentaar op het Oude Testament - Hosea, by Dr. C. Van Gelderen en Dr. W. H. Gispen (Kampen: J. H. Kok; 1953); f 16.90.

R. C. VAN GELDEREN, who died unexpectedly on Sunday, November 18, 1945 is the main author of this excellent commentary on Hosea. As Professor at the Free University in Amsterdam he devoted years to this work. Dr. W. H. Gispen was urgently requested to complete the unfinished work, and, though reluctant, consented to do so. We are grateful to him and now have in our possession a most scholarly discussion of a prophecy that contains a vital message for our age.

This large volume of 426 pages should be in the library of every minister whose task it is to preach the full counsel of God. It begins with an Introduction dealing with the Twelve Minor Prophets, discusses Hosea as a person and his utterances, and has a long list of works consulted. We counted no less than 61 commentaries and other publications which are mentioned by name throughout this fine work. The learned scholars deal with textual criticisms, internal difficulties, the differences between the original Hebrew and the Vulgate translation, and quote Hebrew and Greek and Latin at will.

Bible students are aware of the many problems in Hosea. The authors are not afraid to tackle these and come up with a solution. Wellhausen, Marti, and many others are quoted repeatedly, and their erroneous views are pointed out and refuted. This commentary is not for the average Bible reader. It is too profound. But scholars and students should read and study it. Its strength lies herein: it allows GOD to speak through his appointed spokesman, the prophet Hosea. The J. H. Kok N. V. of Kampen are to be congratulated for the excellent printing and the external appearance of this commentary.

Edward B. Pekelder
This pamphlet of 46 pages contains a severe criticism of the decision of the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands pertaining to the right of women voting at our congregational meetings. The consistory of the Antwerpen church decided to introduce the practice, and this brochure is a "Bezienswaard"—a petition and an appeal to reconsider the entire matter. No doubt the contents of this booklet and the arguments adduced will be carefully read and used to oppose the decision of Synod. In view of the fact that this matter of women voting at our congregational meetings is a new subject in the Christian Reformed churches—the more so since the Ecumenical Synod held this past summer at Edinburgh took up the Overture of our Synod (1950), and appointed a committee which brought its report, which will be studied by our leaders—we welcome this contribution.

No less than eight objections are presented. They read as follows: 1. The decision is in conflict with explicit pronouncement of Holy Writ; 2. It is in conflict with the principles laid down in the Scriptures; 3. Woman-suffrage (vrouwenkiesrecht) does not rest upon the Bible nor upon principles deduced therefrom; 4. It yields to the pure—worldly desire to give man and woman the same rights; 5. The appeal to the changed social-structure and to the manners and customs of former days attacks ("torn aan") the authority of the Bible; 6. Woman-suffrage has unjustly been compared with approbation; 7. The decision is in conflict with our Church Order; 8. It is also in conflict with our Reformed Confessions. (We have translated somewhat literally).

A careful scrutiny of these eight grounds reveals that there are not that number. Surely, 1, 2 and 3 refer to the same basic consideration, namely, that the decision of Synod conflicts with Holy Writ and the principles therein expressed. The writer weakens his petition when he enumerates eight grounds or objections when he actually mentions but five. Besides, we are of the opinion that grounds 4 and 5 refer to the same matter, though expressed in a different way. Furthermore, of all the material considered grounds 7 and 8—in which he makes mention of the Church Order and our Confessions—are about the weakest. An appeal to Article 30—which insists that only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted in an ecclesiastical manner—and Article 31, which teaches that the decisions shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God, cannot become of force just because Mr. Sluys contends that the decision is in conflict with the following passages from Scriptures. The same can be said of objection 8, in which Article VII of the Belgic Confession is referred to. All Reformed people accept this article. Not a mere statement but proof is necessary to contend that Synod's decision is in conflict with our Reformed creeds.

A second observation. We find many sweeping assertions without ample proof. These do not help the writer to convince his opponents. E.g., on page 3 we read, "What does Holy Writ say about this subject? The answer can be brief: NOTHING." What then? Listen, "Women-suffrage in general is an invention of the last century, finds its origin in the French Revolution, was defended by the Marxists, Atheists and Feminists and in most countries was not introduced until after World War 1. Woman-suffrage is therefore an idea (denkbild) of the Modern age, that does not appear at all in the Bible, no more than plane-travel or wireless telegraphy." Again, on p. 15 we read, "These are pure worldly and revolutionary ideas (namely, that injustice is done to our women by depriving them of their right to vote and the demand of fairness), which are at home in a godless world, but not in a Christian community. ... And thus they create a sphere which in essence is revolutionary."

On p. 24 we read, "Women-suffrage is the ideal of unbelief."

Finally, "Who demand women-suffrage? Are they not a few Reformed theologians who have made a hobby of this subject and are now filled with zeal for it." (p. 25). I repeat, such unproven assertions do not help us to learn God's will as He has revealed it. Surely, one cannot accuse a Reformed Synod of arriving at a prayerful decision which should be called "worldly and revolutionary ideas." K. Sluys must come with better arguments than these.

A third observation. There is an attempt on the part of the writer to use Scriptures for adduction. He quotes at length the passages which he believes should ban women voting at our congregational meetings. The committee appointed by the Christian Reformed churches designates these "key passages." Some of them are: 1 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 Corinthians 14; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24. Our Synod requested that "an exegetical study be made of all Scripture passages which have bearing on this question." K. Sluys should remember that merely quoting these texts does not prove anything. Furthermore, he combats the ground adduced by Synod (of the Gereformeerde Kerken) pertaining to the unity of the man and the woman in Christ and concludes with this remark, "We may not allow unbelief to dictate to us." That's weak, we believe, and so is the argument centering about the "office of believers," which is said to be "misleading."

On page 28 an interesting argument is given. We quote, "In the Reformed churches on December 31, 1951 there were 126,968 male communicant members with 161,899 women communicant members. In addition there were some 37,534 whose sex was not mentioned, but no doubt the ratio would be the same. This means that there are one-third more women than men in our churches who could vote. In practice this would mean that the women in our churches will determine who are to be the office-bearers."

That women voting at our congregational meetings is a first step to modernism is true only when it can be proven that the Scriptures forbid this right. This K. Sluys has failed to do.

This pamphlet, which should be read, brings home one point that should be noted. The Rev. M. Monsma in De Wachter mentions this, namely, the binding character of our congregational meetings in our Reformed system of church government. He discovered a difference between our views and those in the Netherlands. Objection 6 in K. Sluys' brochure deals with this matter. The right of women to vote at congregational meetings has unjustly been compared to approbation—so the writer contends. He writes, "Approval of a nomination implies that all members, including women and baptized members, have this right. We do not allow baptized members to vote; neither may the women." In conclusion, we believe that this brochure gives off more heat than light. Let us calmly consider what God's Word teaches us on this score and carry out God's will.