The Calvin Forum
Calvin College and Seminary

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/calvin_forum

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/calvin_forum/194

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Calvin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Calvin Forum by an authorized administrator of Calvin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dbm9@calvin.edu.
"Day Unto Day Uttereth Speech"

The Extent of the Antithesis

Teacher Training

The Church and Labor

Correspondence

Reviews
THE CALVIN FORUM
EDITORS COMMITTEE

Valnetin Beber

Associate Editors

JOHN KROMMINGA
LAMBERT J. FLOKSTRA

THE FORD DREKSE

Book Editors

JOHN TIMMERMAN

JOHN BRATT (Theological Works)

MARCH, 1954

Contents

Articles

“Day Unto Day Uttereth Speech” Charles Vincze 143

The Extent of the Antithesis Thedford Dirkse 147

Evaluating our Teacher Training Program

Lambert J. Flokstra 149

The Church and the Labor Problem.
Part III: The Policy of the Christian Reformed Church

Sidney Newhouse 152

Correspondence

Letter from Ripon 158

A Note in Reply 160

Book Reviews

A Case of Incompatibility James Daane 160

Karth Barth: Prophet or Heretic? James Daane 161

The Atonement J. D. Eppinga 163

Kingdom Within Steve Van Der Weele 163

Brief Reviews John H. Bratt 164

The CALVIN FORUM
Published by the Calvin Forum Board of Publication

VOLUME XIX, NO. VIII.

MARCH, 1954

The CALVIN FORUM is published by a board of the combined faculties of Calvin Seminary and Calvin College. Its purpose is to provide a means of intercommunication among all persons interested in the application of Calvinistic principles.

Address all editorial correspondence to Dr. Cecil De Boer, Editor THE CALVIN FORUM, Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. Address all subscription and circulation correspondence to: THE CALVIN FORUM, Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan.

THE CALVIN Forum is published monthly, except from June to September, when it appears bi-monthly. Subscription price: Two Dollars per year.

Donors or underwriters for subscriptions from Japan and similar “soft-currency” areas: Bergsma Brothers Foundation Grand Rapids, Michigan.

W. J. Dykstra, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Entered as second-class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at Grand Rapids, Michigan under the Act of March 3, 1879.
**"Day Unto Day Uttereth Speech"**

THE Book of Books, the Holy Bible, makes an allusion to a strange, mystical conversation between the days, when—in the XIXth psalm—it says: "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (Psalm XIX, verses 2-4.)

Whenever I have the opportunity of addressing young people, I always have the feeling of speaking to a day, whose sun is just about to rise; the feeling of Today speaking to Tomorrow.

This talking of one day to an other day, the messages of one generation to its succeeding one, is the theme of our address.

We could assume many utterances which one day might be conceived as conveying to an other day, but out of the many possible utterances we take just one. That utterance is this: Brother Tomorrow, prepare to be an other day's Today, as I prepare to be your Yesterday!

I

What does this utterance mean both for Today and Tomorrow, for an older generation and its younger one?

1. First, it tempers down their aloofness toward each other. It presses them into the continuous, orderly and natural flow of life, into the consciousness of an organic relationship. No more can one generation cut itself loose from other generations, than one day can separate itself from the rest of the days. It is an abiding truth that no one can live, nor even die to himself. Not even generations. Old and young are related to each other, and they must accept the reciprocal responsibilities implied in their organic relationship. They have no right to pull apart and erect barriers between each other, but on the contrary they are to seek for the things which tie them together and set them into the organic continuity of the race.

2. Secondly, the message of the days gives horizons to all generations. It widens the outlook, curtails selfishness and prevents any generation from being shortsighted and narrowminded. From men of just our day it moulds us into men of many days. It gives a wider setting and a more far-reaching effect to our individual lives. It lifts up the eye from just the immediate present and prompts us to look farther ahead and behind. It lessens the danger of our losing our life by keeping it solely for ourselves.

3. In the third place, it precludes a great deal of superficiality from our mind and induces a great deal of seriousmindedness. It engenders a sadder and humbler, but also a deeper and saner conception of life, when it says, that Today will not always be Today, nor will proud Tomorrow always be Tomorrow. We must all be conscious of our day eventually wanting into Yesterday. This consciousness must take out all pride and lightmindedness from all generations; it makes us appreciative of the time and opportunity we have at our disposal, because it brings us face to face with the fact of our common transitoriness.

Thus the voice of the days shows knowledge to the generations.

II

But what does the never ending speech of the days mean for Today specifically?

1. First, it imposes upon Today the duty of calling Tomorrow to preparedness. As one sentinel wakes up another, so must one generation wake up its immediately succeeding one; you are next, prepare to take my place! Yes, generations come upon generations, as days follow upon days. And it is decidedly not Tomorrow's duty to awake Today, but on the contrary, it is Today's duty to wake up Tomorrow. An older generation cannot let its youth slumber in carelessness as long as it pleases, because time does not wait for us. A conscientious, honest Today must call its Tomorrow to preparedness.

2. Again, the voice of the days forces a deeper appreciation of the youth upon an older generation. Today must know, that the continuation of its own course depends upon Tomorrow. Whatever is dear to the heart of one generation, whatever is unfinished by it,—becomes lost for ever and remains unfinished to all eternity, unless its successors embrace it and carry it on to completion. Therefore, only a decadent generation can be indifferent toward its youth, but a generation full of vigor and resolved to live, will...
be very much alive to all the problems, needs and interests of its younger generation.

3. But, in the third place, such a generation must take a serious account of itself as to what it has, what it values highly enough to wish it to be appropriated by its younger generation; what it started worthy of being carried on by its posterity. Yes, a generation that is anxious about not fading into the past as an historical vacuum, must submit itself to a searching self-examination. Because no intelligent transference of values is possible without an intelligent summation of the values to be transferred. A proper thought for Tomorrow improves even Today and begets a certain definiteness and purposefulness in its attitude.

4. But even that is not enough! A generation that is eager to pass on something, and really has something to pass on to its following generation, must also provide for the ways and means of such a passing on. It must be deeply conscious of the fact, that the heritage of generations cannot be transferred to generations by any kind or any amount of physical force, but only by the ways and means of training and education. In this respect education is a mightier force than all the might of all the armies in the world combined. And, as a matter of fact, all the educational endeavors of the ages—from the training by the beast of its offspring to the elaborate educational theories and systems of men—have originated from the unconscious or conscious realization of this fact.

These are the messages of the days to an older generation, when it finds itself addressed by this warning: Prepare to be an other day's Yesterday!

III

And the deeper the insight of a generation into the seriousness of life: the clearer and louder its call to preparedness to its succeeding generation will be.

The more sympathy and responsibility one generation holds for its future generations: the more consciously, circumspectly and self-sacrificingly will it provide for the requirements of an intelligent education for them.

The more pride one generation has in itself, the more it values its own principles, ideals and the heritage entrusted to it by preceding generations: the more earnestly and entreatingly will it try its utmost to pass them on to its successors, for safekeeping, development and possibly for realization.

A true yardstick with which to measure the stature of any given generation is to examine what it did in the field of education for its future generations.

Do you want to know how deep an insight into life your forefathers had? Do you want to know how much they cared for their posterity? Do you want to know what they judged as their most valued possession? Then just look at your college and seminary here, and remember what your forefathers dedicated them to, and consequently what these institutions stand for!

Even the stones will loudly proclaim it to you, that your forefathers were not scanning only the surface of existence, but they piercingly went after the deeper meaning of life, even as far as God's infallible Word lets man go!

Even the stones will testify to it, that despite all the physical, spiritual and intellectual hardships and difficulties of pioneering in a strange land, they were people of far-reaching visions, reaching beyond themselves toward the succession of their future generations.

Even the stones will sing out the tender melodies of their loving care for their successors!

Even the smallest pieces of stone around here are particles of a great memorial to their Calvinism as their most valued possession. Calvinism, in its devotional aspect as true religion. Calvinism, as a philosophy of life based on God's own revelation; and Calvinism as a God-centered view of the world.

Unquestionably they had to leave many things behind, when they sailed away from the shores of their mother land, but this Calvinism of their confessors they brought along into the then wild recesses of this land.

Calvinism to them was not a piece of easily changeable raiment; not a matter of place of habitation; nor that of transferable civic loyalty; and not even that of the mother tongue. It was more than all this!

It was their real core, the real crux and guarantee of identity with their children and their children's children!

It was their most invaluable gift to this new land, and their most cherished heritage to their posterity!

And so they dedicated these institutions to Calvinism, and with a rare enlightenment and many heroic sacrifices they have gradually built them up for the cultivation of Calvinism on the highest and widest level possible for them to reach, and for the transfusion of Calvinism, in all its aspects and inferences, into the life of their descendents and that of the land.

Your ancestors have certainly acted as true Calvinists of all lands and times have always done! They certainly understood what it meant for them when they heard the voice of the days: Prepare to be Yesterdays of many days to come! Oh, I could be very proud of, and very thankful for those old Dutch forefathers of yours for their having been such good Calvinists and such good Todays toward their Tomorrows! That modern prophet who could sway me from their principles just was not born yet!

IV

But what does it mean for Tomorrow: Prepare to be an other day's Today?

1. First, it means to wake up from the narcosis of all sorts of easy-going irresponsibility. Tomorrows, as
a rule, have so much of that! But especially today's Tomorrows. Whole worlds are collapsing around them, but it does not seem to alter them any. They have so few problems, and still fewer worthy ones. The whole nation's youth—all honor to the exceptions—appears to be in the grip of a good-time craze. Things serious and existential are boring and annoying to them, to the point of despair and exasperation to their elders. Any one who has anything to do with "modern" youth knows this. And any one who will have anything to do with them will find it so. And this is a very disquieting defect of today's youth. Unless youth wakes up to the responsibilities of its own day, it might prove itself a very poor Today of an other Tomorrow. Perhaps even poorer than the present older generation, which often times is so lightly and uncharitably criticized by the members of the new generation.

2. Secondly, in order to avoid this danger and disgrace, Tomorrow must take it gravely, when Today cares enough to awaken and warn it to prepare, and it must have much more receptivity for the urgings of the older generation. A somewhat deeper and saner conception of life would go a long way toward making youth more appreciative of, and more attentive to, their elders. They would be much slower about branding everything just outworn "old-fashionedness" in the views and ways of the older generation. Perhaps they would even realize that what they glorify as "modernism" and "keeping up with the times," in its essence, is usually nothing else but an overdose of libertinism, something as old as the ages, against the godlessness and arrogance of which nobody has fought a more valiant and determined fight than our own John Calvin. Yes, today's individual and communal life would be charged with fewer desocialising elements, and life around us would be much godlier, saner and happier, much more united and promising, if the younger generation of today would be better disposed to see somewhat more good in the older generation. Without this disposition on the part of a new generation an older one can do nothing for its Tomorrow, despite all its sincere efforts. Its best endeavors will fall to the ground. The natural course of progress, that of one generation enriching the life of its succeeding ones, will be disrupted, to the loss of the whole human race. Today's call of preparedness to Tomorrow most certainly and vitally necessitates appreciation and receptiveness on Tomorrow's part!

3. But that same voice is also calling Tomorrow to obedience, haste and diligence. Time certainly does not waste any time and it does not speak in uncertain terms. When it says: Prepare!—it means just that: to prepare. "With your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand... in haste," just as the sons of Israel were commanded to eat the Lord's passover. (Exod. 12:11). Prepare, while the Lord lets you, with all zeal and diligence, "redeeming the times." (Eph. 5:16) The more opportunity missed for preparation, the harder lessons will have to be taken in life. Therefore, Tomorrow's main business is to prepare, to profit by the wisdom and folly of the ages, to discover new truths, new angles of old truths,—or just the truth of old truths—to the honor of its day and for the good of the race.

These are some of the meanings of Today's call to Tomorrow: Prepare to be another day's Today! Do not stroll in leisurely, empty-handed, empty-minded and empty-hearted, but come in well prepared, that your day may be praised, after it goes down on the path of all days and generations! Do not forget, my son Tomorrow, that in all eternity you have just one day, your own day, to leave your footprint in this world! So, get prepared, and do what is right in the sight of the Lord, and do it honorably, with all thy might, while you can!

V

And the more ambitious a generation about putting in an honest day, replete with worthy achievements: the more alert, receptive and zealous it will be as to preparedness.

The more conscientious about meeting the needs of its day: the more and the better students it will yield.

Because the underlying condition of good scholarship is really nothing else, but the taking of one's life and life in general conscientiously, as a God-given talent, that cannot be buried without sin and regret.

This is why conscientious people are in fact always students, until the Lord pleases to call them to their rewards.

And here I feel constrained to pay a sincere tribute to Calvin College and Seminary, and to all those who ever were and are now connected with it.

In a comparatively short period of time this Institution became one of the outstanding institutions of its kind. Nay! It became more than just that! It is a class of its own. It is a citadel of Calvinism and the home of sound knowledge. And where Calvinism and sound knowledge is an article of vital necessity, there the graduates of this school are in demand.

As time rolls on, this Institution is becoming more and more a veritable eagle's nest of professors for other institutions, and the good savour of what this school can impart, is spreading in an ever widening circle, through the qualities and life-work of its well prepared, and for that very reason, devout graduates.

Even I, a humble son of a far-away little country and of a kinless race, that of the Hungarians, have benefited much by this Institution.

First, by the fact, that one of its most distinguished graduates and former professors, the venerable Dr. Gerhardus Vos, was one of my professors at Princeton Seminary. Secondly, through some of the published volumes and articles of some of the members...
of its illustrious Faculty. And in addition to these, the fellowship of its graduates labouring around my present place of calling, has been extended to me in all the sincerity of one Calvinist to another.

Calvin College and Seminary, shining star of Calvinism and God-honoring knowledge in America, and all those, who carry your burden and are labouring for the fulfillment of your God-blessed mission,—I congratulate you, both for yourself and for your graduates!

I congratulate you with the joyous sincerity of a brother Calvinist, to whom another land and other race gave birth, but who is a Calvinist and a brother just the same!

VI

In conclusion, allow me to dwell on that for a few moments. I said, that a distant little country, and a kinless race, that of the Hungarians, gave birth to me, whereas the truth of history is, that to the Calvinists of your ancestral land Hungary never was an unnoticed remote country, and the Hungarian Calvinists were never looked upon with indifference by the Calvinists of the Netherlands. The closest ties have existed always between the two groups of Calvinists.

From the XVIth century on scores of Hungarian Reformed students frequented the famed universities of Holland, where Dutch magnanimity is maintaining several centuries-old scholarships for them.

Toward the end of the XVIIth century the galley-chained ministers, professors and schoolmasters of the Hungarian Reformed Church were set free at the command of Admiral Michiel Adrianzoon de Ruyter by the might and Calvinist heart of your ancestral land Hungary never was an unnoticed remote country, and they were given a home in Holland, until a safe return could be effected to Hungary. Hungarian Calvinists can never forget this, and even our little children are taught to keep it in grateful remembrance!

And should I forget to mention the fact that after the great War ten thousands of Hungary’s poverty stricken children were taken into the Netherlands at the invitation of her good Christian people, and nourished back to life and happiness?

And should I overlook the other fact, that your type of Dutch Calvinism was always, and is today, a never-clogging source of inspiration to the spiritual life and theological thinking of Hungarian Calvinism?

Brother Calvinists of Dutch ancestry in America, your ancestors were great not only in regard to their relationship to their own successive generations, but—as illustrated by my examples—in regard to their relationships to World Calvinism as well. Attending to their duties toward their own generations well, they also had a clear conception of the catholic character and validity of Calvinism.

And this is just what I want to impress upon both your Todays and Tomorrows: Be not satisfied by taking good care of your own immediate affairs. Without being meddlers, have an eye, have an ear, have a thought, have a vision, have a sense of calling also for universal Calvinism, or at least for Calvinism in America! In America, where uncompromising Calvinism usually had to take refuge in comparatively small churches like yours and especially mine, despite the fact that the need for Calvinism is evermore crying in this Land.

Lift up the banner of Calvinism! Continue your zeal and mission for it! Endeavor to be the driving power behind the most far-sighted Calvinistic activities! Adhere to this institution as to your very life! Aspire to make it a center of radiation for unadulterated Calvinism, and dream about it even in daytime as about the first and only Calvinist University in America: the John Calvin University!

“With God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). See, how even the silently moving days declare His might and glory! They do not send messages only to each other, but above all they speak of the Eternal One. They do not direct the attention of the generations only toward each other, but above all to the eternal Father of all generations. They do not clamor for any independent course of their own, but they gladly and smoothly merge into the course set for them by the timeless Lord of all times. Vain glory does not tempt them, but their joy over simply being the servants and instruments of the all-glorious One transforms their daily conversation into a majestic heavenly symphony.

Is it not an object lesson for all generations and individuals to seek their lives connected and adjusted to, fixed and rooted in an eternal holy God, and orientated according to transcendental dimensions, set to eschatological ends, focused at the End of all ends? Just as we are taught by Calvinism, which traces our course to the premundane decrees of a sovereign God.

And with such lives believe the testimony of the Son of God—the weaklings of the earth can move mountains.

Let, therefore, all individuals in all generations of all places and races “through all the earth and to the end of the world” take an example from the silent witnesses of the heavens to dedicate and re-dedicate themselves to the tireless service of the great and true God of the eons, and leave the rest to Him. He will not fail to bless the strivings of His children; He will not withhold the crown of life from His blood-purchased good and faithful servants!
The Extent of the Antithesis

The term antithesis is a very popular one in conservative circles these days. It is a term which is used to designate something of what is taught in the Bible. It refers to the division in this world between two irreconcilable forces. This division has been indicated or described in various ways: there are the children of light and the children of darkness; there is the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the devil; there is the city of God as opposed to the forces of evil. This distinction and division has been divinely revealed, and it is also the experience of those who are members of the kingdom of heaven. As one matures spiritually this opposition or antithesis becomes more evident, more real, and more pervasive.

And yet the term antithesis is somewhat of a shibboleth. It is part of the current theological jargon. To the Christian there is no question as to whether there is an antithesis. The question rather concerns the extent of this antithesis. Here there are two possibilities: either the antithesis is equally deep, intensive, clear-cut, and pronounced in all areas of human experience, or it is not equally so in all such areas. Either the antithesis is equally divisive on all levels or else it is manifested to a greater degree in some areas of life than in others. The extent of this antithesis is a question of some concern to the Christian scientist.

The notion that there are no gradations in the extent of the antithesis has an appeal, and appears to be held by many people, if one may judge by what they say and write. It is appealing because it is so simple. Therefore it is easy to comprehend and apply. It also may appear to be more deeply religious than the other notion. It is the idea that a Christian might instinctively appropriate to himself. Because of this appeal it would be well to examine some of its implications — particularly as they apply to the study of science.

I

This view holds that the antithesis is as deep on the most integrated plane of our thinking as on the most abstract level. The antithesis is as sharp, then, in the field of philosophy as it is in mathematics. The antithesis is as pronounced in the study of physics as it is in the study of human relationships. To bring out the difference between these two ideas we may consider two situations.

In the first place, take the question of ethics, or motivation. The Christian is conscious of the fact that he is a creature of God, that he is responsible to God in all that he does, and further that it is his duty so to conduct himself as to bring praise to God. With these considerations in mind suppose he makes a contribution to a certain charitable cause. An unbeliever does not have the motivation that the Christian does. He does not consider himself a child of God. He is a creature in his own right and concerned only about what other people will think of him. He has no duty towards anyone, and he owes no one anything. And yet he too may give an equal contribution to the same charitable organization. A principal motive in his case may be income tax considerations. Here the antithesis is rather sharp. The motivation and thinking is entirely different for these two individuals. The only similarity is in the gift and the cause to which it is given.

In the second place let us consider these same two individuals in another situation. Each is confronted with the addition of three and four, and both come to the same conclusion — the sum is seven. Here again the evident result is the same. The question now is whether the antithesis is as sharp in this second situation as it is in the first. In the first instance the antithesis was in the motivation back of the gift. It was not in the sum of money. That was the same in both cases, and each sum could purchase an equal amount of goods for the institution to which these gifts were given. In the second case there was no consideration as to whether the sum should be six, seven, or eight. Any answer other than seven would have been inconceivable. The Christian had no choice. Regardless of his religious convictions the answer is seven.

Where then is the difference between the unbeliever and the Christian? If the antithesis is to be as sharp in the second situation as in the first one must now add something. Did the Christian get seven as an answer because he believed in God? No, the atheist would get the same answer. If we would hold that the antithesis is equally sharp in all areas of human affairs, then the only way out seems to be the course that some have advocated. The antithesis is said to lie in this, that the sum of seven is different for the Christian from what it is for the unbeliever. But this immediately raises another question: How is it different? Can the Christian use the atheist’s answer here, and vice versa? The answer to this is obvious. Does the seven mean for the Christian that God created the world? He knew that before. Where then is the antithesis? Actually, it is difficult to see the sharpness of the antithesis in this particular case. The reason is that here the degree of abstraction is great, and the greater the degree of abstraction the less distinct the antithesis becomes.

The Calvin Forum * * * March, 1954

Thedford Dirkse, Ph.D.
Professor of Chemistry
Calvin College
The temptation — if one holds that the antithesis is equally sharp in all situations — the temptation in such a situation is to place the antithesis on the abstraction. For example, on the color of an object, or the number of minutes in an interval, the speed of a moving object, the number of articles in a group, etc. This approach, however, presents difficulties for the scientist. If the antithesis is present in the object of the sense perception itself or in the abstraction, then there is no objective world of reality. Then there is no common ground for the believer and the unbeliever. Then the statements made by the unbeliever about the object of his study cannot be used by the Christian. Then, where an unbeliever reports his observations of, e.g., an eclipse, these observations cannot be used by the Christian. One might also ask whether a photograph of this eclipse taken by the unbeliever could be used by the believer.

And yet there is an interchange of information between believers and unbelievers going on every day. Surprisingly, then, no serious consequences seem to follow. For example, the observations by an unbelieving doctor about a certain disease and his suggestions of treatment are used successfully by Christian doctors. The predictions of unbelieving astronomers about the time of an astronomical phenomenon seem to accord with the observations of believers. Such examples could be multiplied. Thus, at least casual observation indicates that there is a common ground, that there is no apparent antithesis in many observations or abstractions.

In this connection one also hears it suggested by those who hold that there are no gradations in the extent of the antithesis that there is no such thing as bare fact. All so-called "fact" is said to be a matter of interpretation. According to this view, the mind receives certain sensations, and as these sensations react on the mind they become facts. The individual then makes the facts and there is no strictly objective fact. Now it is true that we as individuals receive impressions and sensations, and this is often followed by interpretation. Furthermore, our interpretation is a product of our past experience and this past experience may modify our interpretations. The unbeliever has a history different from that of the believer. But this does not mean that the interpretations of a believer and of an unbeliever concerning a given bit of sense data must invariably differ. It is true that each may use his sense data for different purposes, but that is not the point at issue. The fact is that much of our interpretation of sense data is done in terms of what we have received or heard from unbelievers. This is because none of us lives in a strictly and exclusively Christian community.

For instance, suppose there is a baby that is just beginning to handle objects and associate names with them. He handles a round, colored object. At a given moment there is an unbelieving relative present and observing the baby. Both the baby and he receive sense perceptions from the object the baby is handling. The relative says to the baby "ball" and "red." Henceforth, the baby uses the same terms to describe the object. The believing parents never correct the baby in this since they would have told the baby the same thing. Must we now say that this baby is untrue to its covenant obligations because it interprets certain sense data the same way as the unbelieving relative? Or should we say that there is an objective reality, a common ground?

II

Practical evidence seems to favor the latter view. According to this view there is an objective world — the world God has created. Not only has He created it, but He has given us the so-called cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28) to use it and subdue it. This is the world from which we daily receive impressions and sense data. These data we then interpret and call "facts." For instance, we receive certain color impressions and call the color red. Other sense data we interpret as round or hard or thirty second or six feet, etc. True, these are interpretations and we cannot be certain that what is red to us is the same thing to someone else. But this does not mean that there is no common objective world of reality. The possibility for an interchange of impressions, or interpretations of sense data, must exist, or else we live in a vacuum. If this is not possible then we cannot have intercourse with others. Then we cannot converse with them because there is nothing in common.

It appears more realistic to assume that the antithesis is not equally sharp and divisive in all situations. There are different degrees of interpretation, some of which are more abstract than others. There is the interpretation of the immediate sense data, e.g., the size of the object. Then further interpretations may follow. The object may be identified as a tree. It is a certain kind of tree. It is a tree found in a certain locality. It came from the seed of a similar tree, etc. Finally, the interpretation may be broadened to such an extent that it is decidedly different for a believer than for an unbeliever, e.g., the source of life in the tree. As the interpretation includes a larger and larger portion of reality, as the interpretation deals with a more integrated and less abstract point of view, the difference between Christian and non-Christian — or the antithesis — becomes sharper.

There is a common denominator. All mankind live in the same world, and all receive sense perceptions from this common environment. This immediate perception is alike to all creatures, except perhaps for physical differences in individuals. In dealing with these perceptions we all have a common vocabulary, we all speak the same language. Thus there can be communication between all people on this level of
sense perception. The antithesis is not in the objective world. We cannot be citizens of the kingdom of heaven merely by avoiding certain parts of our environment. Rather, the antithesis resides in our thinking. As our thinking broadens in scope this antithesis becomes more pronounced. The antithesis is in us. Individuals, not numbers, are members of either the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of the devil. Both believer and unbeliever inhabit the same community. Both perceive in this community, thus both have the same raw material for their thinking.

Therefore both are without excuse. But the one, putting all his sensory data together, sees the hand of God, and thus God is revealed to him. The other, putting the same data together, refuses to acknowledge God, refuses to go beyond this sensory data. It is then that man places himself in either the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness — in the realm of the complete antithesis.

Of course, the believer also has the Spirit operating in his heart so that he can see the hand of God. The unbeliever does not have this gift, but that is not the point at issue here.

Evaluating Our Teacher Training Program*

WILLIAM Lyon Phelps once wrote: “I love to teach as a painter loves to paint, as a musician loves to play, as a singer loves to sing, as a strong man rejoices to run a race. Teaching is an art — an art so great and so difficult that a man or woman can spend a long life at it, without realizing much more than his limitations and mistakes, and his distance from the ideal.”

It is but natural that any program of education that has as its aim the preparation of persons for this fine art of teaching should be subject to constant scrutiny and appraisal. A critical evaluation of a teacher training program is altogether desirable and wholesome. I therefore welcome this opportunity to present a rationale of our teacher education program at Calvin College.

To make a proper appraisal of any educational project one must do so in the light of the aims, goals, and objectives set up by those who launch the project. The N. C. A. in its accrediting policy recognizes this principle when in its manual of accreditation it states: “The facilities and activities of an institution will be judged in terms of the purposes it seeks to serve.” The implications of this principle will become more apparent in the subsequent discussion.

Since we are part of the American educational scene it may be well to take a look at some of the characteristic features of contemporary American education.

One of these is a myopic concern for the present and a corresponding disregard of the past. This emphasis on contemporaneity, or, to use the words of Robert Maynard Hutchins, “this philosophy of presentism” is reflected in statements like the following: “We need a modern education for a modern world. We have to prepare our youth to live in contemporary society and face its problems.” At first blush such statements seem very convincing. But just what do we mean by the modern world and contemporary problems? How do these problems differ from those in the past? And what relationship do these have to the constants, the unchanging element, of human nature and of human problems in all ages? These more basic questions are either ignored or evaded in expressions such as these: “Teachers should make a conscious effort, both by the selection of material included in their courses and by their manner of handling it, to make clear to their pupils how a modern society is run and organized.” In the light of this emphasis we can appreciate what was in the mind of the writers of the Harvard Report on General Education in a Free Society when they said: “One of the aims of education is to break the strong hold of the present on the mind.”

Closely allied to this first characteristic is a second, viz., that of conditioning the attitude of the mass mind in favor of social reform and improvement. Under such slogans as education for adjustment, education for the future, education for citizenship and the like, there has been a stress on conditioning in terms of right social attitudes and proper social techniques and social action. The extensive National Education Association study on “Education for all American Youth” (1944) regards the school as a social service agency which should study the immediate needs of the group, and it specifies these needs, among others, as the sociological ones of job, family life, and practice in democratic living. The Report of the President’s Commission on Higher Education (1947) stresses the same idea when it proposes that liberal education should be replaced by general education “with content that is directly relevant to the demands of contemporary society.”

* An address given to the administrator’s sectional group of the Midwest Christian Teachers’ Association, October, 1953.

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * MARCH, 1954
Whether contemporary society asks the basic relevant questions as to the nature of man and society is a matter that is not considered. This prevailing view is based upon that of Rousseau, who held that evil does not reside in individuals (you recall his first statement in *Emile* — all things are good as they came from the hand of the Creator), but that it arises out of bad social arrangements. This view further embodies the worst features of John Dewey’s pragmatic instrumentalism. This emphasis on social orientation and adjustment is far removed from Plato’s claim that education is concerned with the art of converting the reason from the knowledge and love of what is mean to the knowledge and love of what is worthy. It is a virtual denial of Plato’s dictum that “states are made, not from rocks and trees, but from the characters of their citizens which turn the scale and draw everything after them.” In spite of what our modern educationists conditioners may say, it remains true that fundamentally the political and social problem is a problem of human character in the first instance. ( Cf. James 4:1.)

- This concern with the social process and the social man has, in the third place, led contemporary education to a neglect of the study of individual man. An estimate of our real nature, our knowledge of man as man, and of the norm that should govern his conduct, can only be achieved through a thorough and disciplined study in the fields of religion, literature, history and the humanities generally. And yet this field of study is largely an uncultivated one in modern education. Instead, the concern for man is confined to experimental psychology and sociological investigations. In modern education the *ethnos* and ethnography have been substituted for the ethos and ethics, and cultural anthropology has displaced the humane study of history. As a result morals have been confused with mores and the norms for human living which traditionally have been considered to be objective standards of human conduct have become statistical averages. (Witness the Kinsey reports on Sexual Behavior.) Notwithstanding these proposals of modern education it still remains true, in the words of Sir Richard Livingstone, that “man is the real problem, the old, the modern problem: for the new world is not so new: humanity changes its clothes but not its nature; Adam puts on a more elaborate and complicated dress but remains the old Adam.” Without a thorough study of the constancy of human nature gleaned from the experience of history, both sacred and secular, modern slogans such as “the dignity of the individual” and “the sanctity of the child’s ego” are but empty sentimental clichés and generalizations that cannot meet the social and spiritual crises of our times.

- A fourth characteristic of modern education is an overexpansion of the curriculum at all levels. Elementary and secondary schools as well as institutions of higher learning have been adding projects and courses at an ever accelerated pace, apparently on the basis of the absurd principle that everything that a person has to learn must be taught at school. This is especially evident in the curricular offerings of teacher colleges of education and the community colleges, the latter of which have, in effect, become all things to all men. As a result of all this over-expansion and the cluttering of the curriculum with trivialities, the basic disciplines are being shunted to one side. However, real education is selective and intensive. The school should see to it that the pupil studies a few fields so thoroughly that he begins to comprehend in a measure at least how much application, thoroughness, precision and persistence are needed in the pursuit of knowledge. This humility of scholarship is not acquired in schools that have become intellectual slums because of the overcrowding of the curriculum. Such schools tend to produce the half-educated, and therefore essentially uneducated persons, who unaware of their ignorance are given to emotive outbursts of opinion in all fields.

- Basic to all of the characteristics mentioned is a fifth, viz., that modern education suffers from a neglect of well-defined aims and purposes of education and from an almost exclusive emphasis on the means of education. Modern education does not give the pupils and students a ruling principle, a set of standards in terms of which he thinks and governs his conduct. Schools by and large lack a conscious and clear sense of direction and purpose, which alone can lead to compelling convictions. Educationists have been more concerned with techniques and methods than with an overall scale of values in education; they have stressed means rather than ends. Instead of becoming enlightened through a philosophic study of basic strategy in education, they have pattered about in peripheral tactics of school activity. As a result their research has produced, as one writer has so aptly stated “only too many Ph.D. dissertations in education which are merely statistical froth, neither nourishing nor stimulating, and which amply justify the cynical definition of educational research as finding something that everybody knows and expressing it in language that nobody understands.” Because of this emphasis on the “know-how” rather than on the “know-what” and the “know-why,” we are producing, in the opinion of Bernard Iddings Bell, a nation of Henry Aldriches.

If time permitted, I might go on and speak of the modern emphasis on doing rather than on thinking, on emotional adjustment rather than on disciplined study, on the practical and utilitarian rather than on the theoretical bases of education, on vocational preparation rather than on the development of the person.

The picture, or perhaps better than the thumbnail sketch, of the overall educational scene I have given you is not a very encouraging one. All over the place we see bewilderment, aimlessness, and confu-
sion. Intellectual anarchy and cultural bankruptcy mark our present social order. And what are our teacher education institutions doing to correct the situation? By and large those who teach in these institutions are devotees of the experimentalism and instrumentalism of John Dewey and Kilpatrick, and are faithfully propagating the tenets of the New Education movement. Being under attack and criticism in recent years, the professional educationists in our schools and state departments of education are making an all-out effort not merely to perpetuate but even to expand the very practices that have produced the cultural anarchy in our educational systems.

But what have all these lamentations about the state of education in the nation to do with an appraisal of teacher education at Calvin College? Is this discussion not just so much shadow-boxing, irrelevant to the topic under discussion? I do not think so. Our Christian school movement is caught up in the cultural (or shall I say anti-cultural?) situation I have just described. Inescapably we are in a sense part and parcel of our contemporary culture. It is simply a fact that we and our schools are living in mid-twentieth century America.

The question we should face in all candor is whether we in our Christian school system have not taken over some of the mistaken emphasis and adopted some of the undesirable educational views and practices of the modern school. Have we not in certain respects compromised with the prevailing trends? Though we may not subscribe to the statement that "the school should serve all and sundry educational needs of the community" are we not none-the-less guilty of diluting real education by constantly enlarging our curricular offerings with matters that can be best learned outside the school? In reflecting on these questions let us keep our sights on our main objectives. We should remember that if a truly professional teacher should not only acquire a number of vocational skills but should have assimilated as a result of his study of educational theory and practice a number of basic principles and attitudes which can be applied to a wide variety of situations. Therefore we stress guiding psychological and pedagogical principles rather than rules and directives, understanding and insight rather than prescribed instructions.

In this professional education we differentiate between two fields of study — education as a science and teaching as an art. The first of these — education as a science — involves a study of the history, arts — he has, in principle at least, become the kind of person who, in obedience to the cultural command, can think God's thoughts after Him. In this disciplined process of education he has acquired a wide range of fundamental knowledge and cultivated interests. He has achieved that versatility of mind that has made him strong and free, capable of exercising adaptability, imagination, judgment and decision. This necessity for a cultivated intelligence in a teacher cannot be overemphasized. A person of cultivated intelligence need not be taught everything he has to learn. Such a person is alert and sensitive to situations and because of his intellectual maturity knows how to deal independently with new problems. For him education is a life-long process and not one that terminates at the end of formal schooling.

Secondly, because we believe this, we take the position that teacher education is not merely the work of our department of education but is the task of the entire college. To attain the objective of preparing teachers with a broad and comprehensive Calvinistic view of life, the concerted efforts of all the departments of the college are enlisted. In this respect the entire faculty is directly involved in the program. In a very real sense, therefore, teacher education at Calvin College is an institutional objective and not merely the work of any one department.

A third goal we have in mind in the preparation of teachers is to give the student a more detailed and thorough knowledge in the fields of his major interests, i.e., in the subjects he intends to teach, so that he will be equipped to move about with a degree of composure and confidence and to speak with a measure of authority in these fields. To achieve this we have set up a system of majors and minors in the various academic subjects.

In the fourth place, we believe that, in addition to this academic training, the teacher should receive a professional preparation specifically designed to qualify him, in a measure at least, to confront with assurance and tact the various teaching situations in the classroom. This aspect of teacher education is especially the province of the department of education. In this preparation our aim is not merely that of training in the tricks of the pedagogical trade. Our view is broader than that. We believe that a truly professional teacher should not only acquire a number of vocational skills but should have assimilated as a result of his study of educational theory and practice a number of basic principles and attitudes which can be applied to a wide variety of situations. Therefore we stress guiding psychological and pedagogical principles rather than rules and directives, understanding and insight rather than prescribed instructions.

In this professional education we differentiate between two fields of study — education as a science and teaching as an art. The first of these — education as a science — involves a study of the history,
philosophy, theory and practice of education. The second field aims to give an orientation to the art of teaching in real classroom situations. This is the field of directed student teaching.

These are our goals, and it is in the light of these that our program must be evaluated. How well do we succeed in attaining these purposes? Though we are far from attaining the ideals set forth, we do believe that each year we send forth into our schools a number of young men and women equipped with a professional outlook and competence that give every promise of further growth. Admittedly, the number is not large enough. There are altogether too many of our graduates who, though technically meeting the requirements for certification, have no intention of making teaching a professional career but use it as a stepping-stone for other careers, the most prominent of which is that of becoming a wife and mother in the home. Our problem, which is the problem of our entire Christian community, is that of recruiting men and women who, with a deep sense of Christian consecration and devotion, will dedicate themselves to the profession of teaching in our Christian schools.

In the nature of the case, a professional school can not turn out a finished product in the sense that a factory turns out a finished product. We do not strive to lay the groundwork for a professional outlook and consciousness. In the belief that a concern for the supervision of instruction and the improvement of teaching should be the chief task of the administrator, we turn the prospective teacher over to you in the confidence that you, in the in-service training of the teacher, will build upon the foundation that we have laid. And now I close in the words with which I began my paper; "Teaching is an art—an art so great and so difficult that a man or woman can spend a long life at it, without realizing much more than his limitations and mistakes, and his distance from the ideal."

The Church and the Labor Problem

Sidney Newhouse
Senior Class
Calvin Seminary

Part III: The Policy of the Christian Reformed Church*

In marked contrast to the scarcity of official reference to the labor problem in the Netherlands is the frequent entrance of such discussion in the Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in America. While it may not be possible to define all factors that contribute to this difference in the official attentions of these two branches of the Reformed Church, a few of these factors can be readily distinguished. One factor is the tiny minority represented by this church in the American scene; this little group could not isolate itself if it wanted to. The much larger segment of the population represented by the Church in the Netherlands made it far easier for the individual member there to avoid or to withdraw from undesirable association than was possible on this side of the Atlantic. In America there simply were not enough of kindred conviction to avoid such association; it was a matter that had to be faced. At the same time its pressure was not so keenly felt in many places as in the Netherlands. The vast size of our country and the great differences of peoples making up her populace contributed to a labor union problem that was far from uniform; the distances involved allowed for development of differing attitudes among the isolated groups of the Christian Reformed Church, and the differing aspects of unionism encountered among the various nationalities allowed for a wide variation of reactions. In the absence of unions positively Christian or openly Socialistic there was neither a force to draw the better elements out of the neutral unions nor an official, organizational front repulsive to Christian membership in these unions. These factors cannot be evaluated outside of the atmosphere of American culture. In this younger country, in many respects still in the pioneering stage, the forces of the material and the pragmatic were and are undeniably strong; these forces did not remain outside of the church. At the same time there was within the church a strong carry-over of its European background with its emphasis upon the theoretic and the ideal. This combination of cultures differing in age and emphasis has also contributed much to disputes in the history of the labor problems of the members of the church. Such complexity has had much to do with the frequent consideration of the labor policy of the church.

I

The earliest inquiry concerning union membership, in 1881, was not concerning unions as such but rather as secret organizations. As such the Synod warned against them but gave no specific judgment.41 Again in 1883 the question of employ-

---

41 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1881, Article 66, p. 18.
ers' and of employees' unions was considered. In this decision the Synod set the essentials of the pattern that was to be followed by the Christian Reformed Church until the present time. It is practically the same as that of the churches in the Netherlands. Contained in this decision are two significant elements: First, it is recognized that no general ruling can be made because of the wide variety of cases. The decision in each case is left with the local consistory. Reference is made to Article 65 of the Church Order which neither approves nor condemns as improper funeral services in the church, but leaves the final decision to the local congregation. Second, the officers of the church are instructed to be alert for such cases as are plainly in contradiction with the Scripture and with the Standards of the church. The basic policy of the Christian Reformed Church throughout has been this: these two standards, and judgments on the basis of these standards always individually considered.

1886 saw the first official decision on the basis of this policy; this was in regard to the Knights of Labor, who were approved by American Catholics but condemned by the Canadian branch of that church. Synod opined that no confessing member of the church might affiliate with this organization because: a) it bore the marks of a secret society, and b) it had started out on the way of violence, in this way being contrary to both the fifth commandment and the patient trust that the believer is expected to show in his life. In 1890 a similar decision was taken against the Patrons of Industry and certain Farmers' Alliances as being secret or oath-bound organizations. In regard to this decision it is interesting to note that the church does not take a position which cuts off members who may be affiliated with such organizations but instead says that all church members are warned to refrain from joining these orders . . . ministers are exhorted to warn against them with gentle earnestness . . . The strong similarity between such language and decision and similar rulings in the Netherlands, if it does not speak of actual communication in regard to these matters, surely does speak of a oneness of religious genius, of a oneness of conception of church and society, of the church and the individual congregation.

The Synod of 1892 declared the church's position—concerning the official nature of the union. It declared that each union is to be judged on the basis of its official statutes and the purposes that the union itself sets forth. If the purposes of the union are seen to be in conflict with the Scriptural principles of society, the admonishment and discipline of the church are not to be withheld. In seeking to present a united witness at least in a measure the Synod asked that differing consistorial decisions be corrected at the level of the classis. It might be said at this point that the last recommendation of this Synod has been largely overlooked in the present practice of the various congregations. Churches in the same classis and separated by just a few city blocks have differing policies in regard to union membership in the neutral unions. This situation is the occasion not only for a divided witness but also for confusion and a lack of unity within the church. It is an example of over emphasis upon local autonomy and of a lack of vision as fellow members in the one Body of Christ.

II

No large mention of labor unions enters the records for a twelve year span until the Synod of 1904, but this Synod made considerable progress in defining the policy of the church. This progress was evident especially in three directions: First, it declared concerning the possibility and nature of the Christian's cooperation with the so-called neutral organizations; second, it outlined the characteristics of unacceptable unions; third, it recommends methods of discipline in cases of objectionable union membership.

In regard to cooperating with neutral unions, these points were called to the attention of the members of the church:

1. One may not demand of the Christian that he separate himself completely from the world but rather that he speak and act from a different principle than that of the world.
2. The Christian may not ignore or evade injustice and unrighteousness in labor but is called to withstand sin wherever he meets it.
3. The Christian workman usually can do nothing alone but may find union membership necessary for livelihood.
4. The Christian is called upon to organize on a distinctively Christian principle whenever and wherever possible.
5. Under necessity a Christian may remain in or join a neutral union as long as it does not manifest definitely anti-Christian marks.

(My summary.)

These five points illustrate a realistic approach to the problems of labor that is cognizant both of the Christian's calling in the world and of the limitations that are present to him in his endeavors to respond to that calling. The calling to have dominion over the earth contains in it also this: that the Christian cannot separate himself from the world. The call to withstand sin and injustice means that there may be times when this is accomplished by the Christian's cooperation within a neutral union. That such a goal may be achieved despite the ignorance of most of the rank and file members is an un-

43 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1883, Art. 37, p. 15.
44 Idem., 1886, Art. 90, p. 32.
47 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1892, Article 61, pp. 27, 28.
48 Reference material for this paragraph and for all the following discussion of the decision of 1904 is found in the Acts of Synod of that year, Article 119, pp. 34-36, and in Schaver, *Vol. II*, p. 219.
deniable fact. That God's Common Grace is also
Sovereign Grace must not be overlooked. The call to
maintain family and self by the labor of one's hands is
fundamental to the very nature of man. God-imposed
and God-given labor is not to be taken away lightly by ecclesiastical fiat without careful examina-
tion of the pertinent facts of each case. These
facts the Protestant Reformed Church has over-
looked in its rejection of all membership in the
American Federation of Labor and the Congress of
Industrial Organizations.

On the other hand, the Christian is called upon to
subdue the earth as a child of God; his every effort
toward that end, be it individual or collective is to
be stamped by that particular motive. He is never
"just another man"; he is always a Christian. This
means that he is forever in a state of tension, never
loosing himself from his unshakable anchor in the
Word of God; yet continually discerning, sifting,
weighing to determine that which is acceptable in
the world which he meets to carry out the task given
him from heaven. Because of his anchor and because
of the source of his task the Christian must of neces-
sity reject all that imperils the successful accom-
plishment of his calling here on earth. Organizations
so endangering him are naturally outside of his ac-
cepted affiliations. The distinguishing marks of such
bodies, the dangers they present to the Christian's
calling, and the obligation of the Christian in regard
to such bodies, have largely been ignored by the
average member of the Christian Reformed Church.
Reasons for this no doubt are legion, but included is
this — that this aspect of the Christian life has not
been stressed by the ministry of that church. For all
practical purposes the exhortation for Christian or-
ganization and Christian judgment in regard to or-
ganization has for many remained a decision on
paper only.

Turning next to the marks of unions that are de-
declared unacceptable, the Synod stated that a Chris-
tian may not be a member of a union that:

1. exacts unconditional obedience to the majority or board
without regard to one's duty to God, the State, the
Church, and the Family; or which retains exclusively
the right to continue or to end one's membership. These
are rejected as being contrary to the first and fifth com-
mandments and also to the teachings of I Cor. 7:23 and
Gal. 5:1.

2. officially desecrates the Lord's Day by business or
pleasure.

3. by rule or resolution permits the use of violence by pick-
ets, or which in strike or boycott so uses force to occa-
sion directly acts in conflict with the fifth and sixth com-
mandments.

4. forbids or makes impossible the performance of one's
Christian duty, or demands that which one as a Chris-
tian may not do.

5. officially raises money in an un-Scriptural manner.

6. has a secret religious ceremony.

7. is essentially an oathbound or secret organization.

These strictures still stand upon membership in the
neutral unions by those members of the Christian
Reformed Church. Obviously, the two referring to
secret organizations are not especially pertinent to-
day in the labor field. With increasing public dis-
favor, violence is less common now than formerly
and in that respect the third stricture is not of great
import. However, there is another aspect in which
force is still a very much used item in union repor-
toire; this is not an official use but it is a very com-
mon one. It is the constant pressure which by word,
attitude, and action keeps all the employees of a
given establishment in line with union demands, a
pressure that accomplishes its ends by means fair or
foul without question as to the right or wrong of the
method employed or the end sought. The shocking
part of this pressure is that it is frequently exer-
cised by members of the church whose official stand-
ing is here being discussed. It illustrates the great
discrepancy existing between official policy and ac-
tual practice.

A little reflection will reveal that other strictures
listed here have a real bearing upon many unions
today. The nature of many of these bodies is absolu-
te as far as the individual working man is con-
cerned. If the obedience required is not uncondi-
tional, it is nonetheless so much so that a protest
springing out of one's attempt to carry out his duty
toward God, the State, etc., as rightly due these, has
a strong possibility of depriving one of his work.
Again, official desecration of the Sabbath is not at
all uncommon, and that by unions claiming mem-
bership from the church that castigates such things.
Finally, limitation of work output according to union
regulation is a common thing in unions having mem-
bers from the Christian Reformed Church. Though
these same members recognize the error of such
regulation they are powerless to change this restric-
tion. This is interference with one's Christian duty.
Granting that the problem is exceedingly complex,
it must also be granted that the policy of the Christ-
ian Reformed Church on its official records, and the
policy of the working man who sits in the pew, very
often are two quite different things.

In its deliberation concerning the discipline to be
exercised in regard to objectionable union mem-
bership, the following are the conclusions reached by
the Synod:

1. Consistories having discipline in mind must take note of
the differences existent among the so-called neutral unions
and also the differences among these unions in regard to
the consistency with which their officially stated prin-
ciples are applied.

2. Membership in the unions falling under the strictures
listed above calls for increasing pressure by the consis-
tory, resorting first to instruction, then to warning and
admonishment, and finally to censure.

3. Members are to be censured if they are in any way guilty
of union violence, whether it be by unprotesting silence
or by actual participation.

164

THE CALVIN FORUM * MARCH, 1954
4. Consistories are to tolerate membership in acceptably neutral unions under the pressure of circumstances, but are also to urge the earliest possible departure from these unions and the setting up of a positively Christian organization.

The first of these conclusions will be referred to later. In regard to the second one wonders if it is actually in force or not; it is being enforced with mystic silence if at all. Of course, there is also this to be remembered, that the people of the Christian Reformed Church will not generally be found in extremely radical organizations. The third has been death with above, but the nature of such offense is so personal and unapproachable much of the time that it does not easily become an object of consistorial attention. It is the fourth conclusion that has brought difficulties to the church. Essentially these difficulties have sprung in large part from this, that the church has been asked to decide when a member may remain in a neutral union and when he must step out to form a separate Christian organization. While the church no doubt has been neglectful in giving guidance in this matter, its members have been remiss in carrying out their duties as individual Christians in the social organization. There has been a confusion of the spheres of church and society.

III

Already at this stage in the history of the Christian Reformed Church’s dealing with the labor problem she had gone far beyond the detail with which her sister church in the Netherlands dealt with this matter. It would be sheer presumption to attribute this to a greater awareness of the issues on this side of the ocean; it speaks rather of a greater pressure upon a church that stood in isolation and had of necessity to grope her way along on a pathway entirely new and strange. There was little comfort to be found in the actions of other American churches, for even if one did leap the barrier of language and nationality he would find at best negative support in resolutions condemning the unjust practices of unionism. At this stage virtually nothing was being done in a positive way by any of the churches in America; developments of greatest note were yet to come in both the Liberal and the Catholic churches. The orthodox segment at this time, shortly after the turn of the century, was just beginning to test its vocal cords; its voice was to become strongest in the next two decades, only to die away and for the most part to become quiet. The strong tides of Socialism were not to strike America as forcefully as they struck Europe and in the absence of clearly Socialist unions, the question of participation in and cooperation with the neutral unions came more and more to the foreground.

The Synods of 191660 and of 192851 dealt with this question both on an individual and a collective basis.

In a rather vague statement the Synod of 1916 declared that “... in places where independent Christian unions are desirable they should try as much as possible to cooperate with other unions in achievement and maintenance of societal justice and righteousness.” (My translation, S.N.) In 1928 Synod stated that “... Every Christian should be considered to be at liberty to cooperate with others in every lawful domain of society, ... he has a perfect right ... to unite with others in an organization if the evident aim of such enterprise is not in conflict with the general principles of justice as set forth in the Bible.” (As translated by Schaver, II, 219). Thus the church continued, and now more clearly than ever, on a middle way that was designed to permit cooperation with the neutral unions whenever possible but also designed to keep its membership aware of the decidedly Christian stamp that was to rest upon them and their labor union relations at all times. It was not and is not an easy path; advocates of both emphases continue to struggle over what is to be regarded as consistently Scriptural in this question. Such difference of opinion and consequent discussion can be of great help to the members of the church, whether they be striving to leave a Christian impression in a neutral union or if they be fighting to keep a Christian organization in operation. Neither can be benefitted if either takes the attitude that his is the only possible expression of the Christian faith for the entire church in this connection.

One of the extremes here represented was voiced at the Synod of 1930 in an overture requesting the expression of Synod in regard to the nature of the American Federation of Labor.52 This, as a similar overture thirteen years later,53 rather obviously was expected by some to lead to a blanket rejection of the major unions in the country, in the first overture the American Federation of Labor, and in the second this and also the Congress of Industrial Organizations. This the Synod refused to do in both instances. While the burden of the report in 1943 is contained in a very lengthy report, the gist of the grounds for denying this overture is basically two-fold: first, these organizations are far too large for the investigation necessary for wholesale condemnation; and second, to request such condemnation is to imply group censure. The nature of censure is individual and cannot be forced into the mold of the church’s action over against a group. It will be noted that this last argument is exactly the same as used in the Netherlands in refusing wholesale censure upon members of the questionable political parties there.

Especially in the decision of 1943 did the Synod take note of the unchristian practices found in many locals of the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O., but even this forthright statement was interpreted in such a way

---

51) Idem., 1928, Article 103, p. 91.
52) Idem., 1930, Article 68, p. 74.
54) Idem., Supplement XXVII, pp. 381-403. This report also contains a concise historical sketch of Synodical decisions in regard to labor from 1881 to 1939.

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * MARCH, 1954
as to demonstrate the danger of an extreme emphasis. From the warning against sinful practices found in these unions, it was deduced by one writer that the organizations as a whole stood condemned. Such reasoning serves only to confuse the issue within the church and to make the position of the church appear ridiculous to those observing from without. It is precisely at such errors that point 1. (above) is aimed. This point is aimed also at a companion error which is often linked with such overly zealous reasoning, the error which asserts an organization to be in fact that which its principles can by force of logical deduction be made to lead to.

But unpleasant things can also be said of the Synodical dealings, resolutions, and admonishments in regard to the construction of buildings on the campus of the denominational college. There has been vagueness on the part of Synodical directive and a lack of diligence and thoroughness on the part of those awarding contracts. Also, there may have been insincerity on the part of those accepting the contracts. Without attempting to place the blame for the present situation at anyone's door, it can nonetheless certainly be said that the situation is highly incongruous when the same leaders who have repeatedly spoken in favor of Christian organization, by financial contract employ a neutral organization that only tolerates the existence of such Christian bodies. This situation, if anything, has brought confusion within the ranks of the Christian Reformed Church. It has brought about the situation in which if one were to ask what the policy of the church is in regard to labor he might receive answers that ranged all the way from almost an outright rejection of membership in neutral unions to a nearly unqualified acceptance of such membership. The sad part of this picture is that as far as the practical application of Synodical decision is concerned, each and all might be right. The beautiful rhetoric of the church's attempts to hold a middle position that recognizes both the ideal and the practical has for the moment lost contact with the existing situation; practically speaking, the Christian Reformed Church at the present has no labor policy.

IV

Happily, the present unpleasant situation need not be regarded as the ultimate growth of all the labors of the church in years gone by. Especially significant were the discussions of corporate responsibility of 1945 and 1945. These decisions gave support to the view earlier accepted that censure is and must remain an individual matter. The Synod here decided that while corporate responsibility could make one liable to ecclesiastical discipline, the degree of guilt would have to be determined on the local level. Also, in the application of the principals of corporate responsibility Synod emphasized that corporate responsibility was not to be centrally decreed: "... their application to concretely existing local, State, or national conditions is a matter for the individual Consistory and Classis, and especially for the conscience of each person who becomes involved in it." Such consistency gives good hope that ultimately, though perhaps after many years, there shall yet one day be seen in the Christian Reformed Church a labor policy reasonably one in theory and practice.

Such good hope depends upon the Church's carrying out with the same consistency that which she has held in essence already for so many years. The program that the Church is called to follow, if this hope is ever to materialize, was beautifully set forth by the Synod of 1930. The following is a rather lengthy but very meaningful statement of that program:

"... It is perfectly clear that the Church can accomplish whatever it may be able to do in this sphere, only with the means entrusted to her, that is, by the faithful preaching of the Word, and by exercising discipline in the spirit of love, but never­

(1) by preaching unceasingly and uncompromisingly the biblical principle of the Christian's separation from the world. The Bible clearly teaches that believers constitute a peculiar people, and that as a holy people they are in duty bound to separate themselves from all that is unholy, and should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, but should avoid all social entanglements that might in any way compromise their Christian character and profession;

(2) by setting forth clearly and unequivocally the anti-Christian spirit of the Marxian Socialism with its glorification of class hatred, class struggle, and class ethics, and its principle that might makes right; and by placing over against this the great fundamental biblical principles of justice as they apply in the industrial world and ought to be maintained by all those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ;

(3) by calling particular attention to the principle of corporate responsibility, clearly taught in the Word of God (Acts 2:44, 47; Eph. 5:21; I Tim. 5:22; II Jn. 11; Rev. 18:4), affirmed by an enlightened Christian conscience, and recognized by sociologists and by giving a discriminating answer to the question whether and in how far one can relieve himself of this responsibility by protesting;

(4) by exercising discipline in the spirit of love, but nevertheless with a firm hand whenever her members become guilty of propagating un-Christian principles in the world of labor, assume an unbrotherly attitude toward their fellow Christians, take part in acts of violence, trample upon the fundamental principles of justice, or refuse to break with organizations that are avowedly anti-Christian in character, or reveal throughout an anti-Christian spirit in their activities.

By working along such lines as these with fidelity, the Church will naturally train the conscience of the laboring men in her midst, and will make them feel more keenly than they do at present the need of distinctively Christian organizations in the industrial world. If the need is keenly felt and the necessity clearly seen, the laborers themselves will find ways and means for the establishment of such organization and when they do show that they feel within them the urge to organize on a strictly Christian basis, that they are willing to take up

the struggle in separate organizations for the sake of their King and that they are ready for the sacrifices which it may entail—then the Church will undoubtedly find many ways in which it can encourage them in their laudable efforts.  

Obviously, this was drawn up with the idea of a separate Christian organization in mind, but it is also apparent that included in this quotation are the principles necessary for the guidance of the Christian in a neutral organization. The Church must give guidance to each, and when once each realizes that the other too has a legitimate place in the Christian community, the Christian Reformed Church will then be in a position to proclaim and practice a forceful and reasonably concise labor policy. It is high time that the Christian Reformed Church as a whole take hold of one basic attitude toward this matter of labor; it need not be a dual standard that allows membership in both Christian and neutral unions. Instead it must be a single standard that embodies the establishment of Christian unions wherever possible and that also has room for a high type of practical Christian witness in the neutral unions where other organization is not possible. Neither is possible without a united church that is convinced of the need of both.

What then is the policy of the Christian Reformed Church? It is a carefully systematized approach that is basically the same as that in the Netherlands, only in far more detail. It too recognizes that in matters conflicting with doctrinal and confessional standards the labor problem becomes an ecclesiastical matter. It too has room for the neutral organization within the bounds of that which is not offensive to Scripture or Confession. It too has encouragement for the independent Christian union. It too conceives of censure and judgment of membership as individual affairs. It too sees the work of God as the final authority in both Church and society. There is one important difference: undoubtedly because of different circumstances the church in America has been called upon much more than the church in Holland to bring pressure to bear upon the members for organization in Christian organizations. This gives the Christian Reformed Church the unenviable position of holding the weaknesses of both Catholicism and Protestantism while the strength of each is largely absent. The position is this: the Christian Reformed Church lacks both the strength of popular support as present in the Netherlands and the power of a central control as in the Catholic Church. She is the unhappy recipient of both the weaknesses attendant upon Protestant decentralization and that of a clergy advocating that which the public is not enthusiastic about. While these statements cannot be taken as absolute, they nonetheless do give the main thrust of the situation.

While the Catholic approach in the United States is riding a highly effective avenue by placing key men in spots of influence in the ranks of labor and conciliation boards and by their special education setup, the Christian Reformed Church has made virtually no impact in this field. The impact is limited to the very small amount of her people that are organized in the Christian Labor Association. Even of this number only a tiny fraction have the ability or the interest to propagate the principles of Christian social action in an effective way. Worst of all, there is little if any formal education given that officially recognizes the one emphasis of these many Synods that have called for distinctively Christian organization wherever possible. While Christian social workers are being produced in other fields, there is as yet no apparent production of social leaders for the field of labor. Here the Christian Reformed Church has not even begun to meet the challenge of the impact being made by the Roman Catholics.

Again, when the forces of the Liberal group are marshalled, it must be admitted that though they have the wrong starting point, means, and goal, yet it is highly likely that they have had a greater influence on the American labor scene than the Christian Reformed Church has had. This is not an argument for the acceptance of Liberal tenets and goals, but it is an argument to place our highly treasured doctrines and standards in such a vehicle of operation as shall make their influence felt in the labor world. This vehicle must of necessity be the working man, individually or collectively, but imbued with the richness of the heritage that is his and enthusiastic for its propagation. The preparation of this working man is the task of the church insofar as he receives the necessary Scriptural and confessional guidance; the orientation of the working man in regard to his specific problems is the task of extra-ecclesiastical society. In Holland this task is taken over by the various organizations of the C.N.V.  

Ultimately, however, it is the comfort of the Christian Reformed Church that she has a genuine gospel message to bring which must have a real influence in the lives of her members. In this she stands incomparably higher than the Liberal Church with its unprincipled, wavering message of humanism and pragmatism. It is the Word by which the former lives and judges life itself; to the latter there is no real source of life and certainly no criterion by which to evaluate or guide life.

The contrast between American orthodoxy and the Christian Reformed Church is not nearly so strong as it ought to be; this contrast would be present and forceful if it were not for the great discrepancy between the ideal and the real policies of the Christian Reformed Church. The present situation is one in which the Christian Reformed Church says a great deal more concerning what ought to be done in labor than does the American orthodox church, but actually she does but a very little bit more than does the latter. It places the former perilously near the position ascribed to a portion of the

---

60) Idem., 1930, Article 68, pp. 74-76.  
61) Idem., 1937, Article 17, p. 11.

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * MARCH, 1954

orthodox church, that portion that is accustomed to voice glittering generalities concerning the labor field, while doing nothing of a concrete nature. There is a great advantage on the side of the Christian Reformed Church for strength and clarity of message; there ought to be the same strength and clarity in the practical witness of her members in their labor affiliations. It is there in a small degree; it stands in need of much care and growth. The Orthodox group have no labor policy. The Christian Reformed Church does have; it remains for it to develop this policy into positive reality.

If any one thing is noticeable after this comparison of the different positions, it is this: the Christian Reformed Church member must be made aware of the fact that the church does not judge in intimate matters. The obligation rests upon the individual believer. He must face squarely the decisions of social organization; he may not ignore them nor seek to pass them along to an ecclesiastical body whose task it is not to decide in such matters. Guidance the individual may and should seek from the Church; guidance the leaders of the church should constantly be giving him; but the decision and the responsibility remain the individual’s. Let the church remain the church, and let the individual fulfill his office as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

---

From Our Correspondents

Dr. Cecil De Boer, Editor The Calvin Forum
Calvin College and Seminary
Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

Dear Dr. De Boer:

I was disappointed in Dr. Zylstra’s reply to my letter of May 26, as published in the October FORUM. He has clarified nothing in my mind regarding his thought on the basic issue I raised — whether our nation should continue to expand its efforts toward state domination.

Unfortunately he has the illusion that I repudiate the intellectual per se — merely because he is an intellectual. I regret that he receives the impression that I do not highly prize my station in life. I would hasten to assure him that I do, even though I identify myself with the “man on the street” because of our common problems.

My contention, and the motive for my letter, is that a class of intellectual, exercising the broad scope of his potential under the “protection” of our late administration, was rapidly plunging our traditionally democratic nation into a Collective-Socialistic State.

I had hoped Dr. Zylstra would more clearly express his ideology, as briefly mentioned in “Eggheads.” If he does not subscribe to the basic concept of government as the New and Fair Deals have proposed, but, regardless of consequences, only wished for continued “protection” of the intellectual, then he should have so stated. Instead of boldly expressing his reaction to my description of the serious consequences of our headlong plunge into Socialism and its evil counterpart — Communism, he has issued a condescending rebuke.

It bothers me that educators can be so naively remote in their thought, that reality no longer holds a challenge. If Dr. Zylstra thought he could publish an editorial such as “Eggheads” and not get a vehement reaction from someone closely associated with Life as it is, then he must have lost cognizance of the fact that the FORUM reaches beyond the limits of the College campus.

I should like at this time to inject a few observations in order to set the record straight:

1. I did not use the terms “intellectual,” Democrat and Communist synonymously. My case has not depended upon using these three terms interchangeably. I thought it was apparent that my previous letter had defined them adequately. To clarify this basic misunderstanding, I shall enumerate these terms:

   Communist — an irrepressible creature with obsessions of world domination for an elect few, and base servitude for the masses of humanity. To obtain these ends he will brutally destroy all
of life which we have learned to appreciate and enjoy — even life itself.

*Democrat* (or *Republican*) — either is representative of a dignified political party. However, any member guilty of conspiracy to overthrow our nation's hard-won freedoms, (wrested by the laboring hands and backs of its common people; by the diligent thought of its great leaders; by the blood of its youth who have served their lives for its perpetuation) is a nefarious creature worthy only of our utter condemnation. It has been proven that the past administration was guilty of “protection” of these evil fungi.

*Intellectual* — one who possesses a high degree of intelligence. I believe that Dr. Zylstra and I disagree upon the rationale of the intellectual's role in our society. I understand his definition of the intellectual as being “simply the thoughtful man, whose thought, being disinterested from the practical momentums of the common man and of the business man, has some chance to be free, some chance, also, therefore, in its disengagement from what IS, to do justice to what OUGHT TO BE.”

If the disinterested man wants lebensraum for his visions, then let him become a Yogi, or a monk, or a dreamer — but please let him remain detached. The visionary who rots in clouds of theory, who barely condones the work of man’s hand, who criticizes the mental labor which provides his lofty station, and who castigates his contemporary intellectual who might find productive outlet of talent — is worthy of the indifference and hostility of the common man. Let him remain separated, but let him also give free rein to his peer — the intellectual, who by experience, history, and practice, is conscious of the practical problems of existence.

2. Mine was not a funeral dirge over the dead body of the Truman administration. The lamentation was Dr. Zylstra’s — mine was a song of jubilation.

3. I am not inaccurate in my characterization of the Truman electorate — the record speaks for itself. I may be “over-sanguine” in my expectation of the Eisenhower administration, but I still place justified confidence in his ability and sincere desire to rebuild the shambles of government as he inherited it. I am happy that Dr. Zylstra agrees with me in my delineation of the evil of Communism.

4. “Eggheads” may have been a short editorial, but Dr. Zylstra should not be so modest in assuming that it was a “little” editorial. When he includes a thought which decries the fact that a new administration has come into being which will attempt to change some of the previous policies of government, and he is over-anxious about the role which the nebulous intellectual will have to assume — then it is loaded with potentialities.

5. I agree with Dr. Zylstra that an uprising by masses of people may become very dangerous, but he overlooks the peril which was arrested by the last presidential election—the threat to our national safety and future by a group of intellectuals. Even as the Prussian militarists utilized their paper-hanging corporal, so a nucleus of intellectuals took advantage of their haberdashery clerk and tried to force their theories upon this democratic nation. Whatever the future holds in store for American Government, I am certain that President Eisenhower and his appointed assistants will strive for national security, safety, economic stability, and justice.

6. There is a good deal of truth in the quoted statement of Mr. Peter Viereck, although I take serious issue with the thought expressed regarding the problem under discussion. Why must we take for granted that the executive appointments which have been made are basically short-sighted business people or men with “scant sympathy for the literary and ethical ideals of intellects?” What evidence is there that the present administration will “alienate its intellectuals?”

Those questions seem to demand an answer, because I gained the impression from “Eggheads” that any administration which would attempt to build a governmental society upon firm, stable principles is destined to be a mercenary, commercial, prehensile, selfish nucleus. It seems to me that a government which stabilizes its economy, safeguards its future from foreign aggression, and inculcates respect for the individual, would be the type of government which the intellectual, especially, would support.

Because the Administration is trying to supervise the operation of our national government in a skilful and orderly manner, it is being accused of vulgar possibilities which might develop in the future. While the late body politic has placed a premium upon the initiative of individual progress, it is apparent that our present administration is making monumental effort to reestablish the democratic principle that the citizen, rather than the State, is the prime moving force in government.

May the disinterested intellectual then realize that an efficient, capable, intelligent government not only encourages the laborer in his labor, the business man in his business, the professional man in his profession — but also the thoughtful person in his contemplation. Certainly the history of our few centuries of national existence reveals the unrestricted latitude of the intellectual under these conditions.

May he also realize that the common man and the interested intellectual will combine forces to thwart his illogical utopia — because they can en-
vision the real, the actual, the positive end result of such detached thought from reality.

Sincerely yours,
JHN D. HOLLANDER, M.D.

A NOTE IN REPLY*

As I see it, Dr. Hollander wants me to discuss his subject rather than my own. He wants to discuss the trend towards State domination, and more particularly whether it is not true that the late Demo-

* Dr. Zylstra is at present on leave of absence from his position as Head of the English department at Calvin College, having been granted a year's fellowship by the Ford Foundation's "Fund for the Advancement of Education." — (Editors.)

The author of this book is J. M. Spier (not to be confused with H. J. Spier, author of Karl Barth: Prophet of Ketter), minister of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland. He is an influential representative of the Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd school of philosophy and has provided a fine introduction to that philosophy in his Inleiding In De Wijsbegeerte Der Wetsidee. Just recently his Tijd En Eeuwigheid appeared.

The book here under review is his first to appear in English, having been translated by David Hugh Freeman, one-time student at the Free University of Amsterdam. Although the language sometimes lacks fluidity, Spier's thought is clearly conveyed, and both Freeman and the publishers have rendered a service by making Spier's Christianity and Existentialism available to English readers.

The service rendered is a double one. It provides a lucid presentation and critical appraisal of Existentialism by a Reformed man. In addition, it provides a reflection of one of the basic principles of the Vollenhoven-Dooyeweerd school, for Spier evaluates Existentialism on the basis of his commitment to this school of thought. Thus the reader is not only led into the mysteries of Existentialism, but through the prism of Spier's criticism a fundamental principle of this Christian philosophy constantly falls upon the reader's eye.

This effect is insured by the translator's brief Introduction, in which he points out that, true to the tradition of the Vollenhoven-Dooyeweerd school, Spier subscribes to the principle that every school of philosophy is grounded in an initial religious commitment and is prejudiced according to the nature of this commitment. On the basis of this subscription, Spier evaluates Existentialism. Consequently, the reader is everywhere urged to recognize that no theoretical-philosophical thought is truly critical unless it is willing to recognize that every school of philosophy, its own included, rests on a pre-theoretical religious commitment. No theoretical thought, philosophical or scientific, can avoid making an initial religious commitment, and in consequence no philosophical or scientific school of thought is truly neutral. This is a valid principle, and following Spier's validation of it through his critique of Existentialism will be a wholesome experience for the reader.

Since Existentialism is more a matter of existence than a system of thought, Spier begins by discussing existentialists. He starts with Kierkegaard, who attempted to effect a compound of Christianity and existentialism and "had a tremendous influence in all later Existentialism. (p. 9)." Although Kierkegaard's Christianity suffered because of his attempted synthesis, Spier says that "Kierkegaard remained a faithful Christian. His last words expressed his confidence that he would soon enter into the eternal presence of the Lord Jesus (p. 8)." Thus Spier classifies Kierkegaard with the synthetical thinkers who (mistakenly, of course) use Existentialism for Christianity rather than with the antithetical thinkers who use Existentialism against Christianity for the purpose of destroying it. (In a similar manner Vollenhoven classifies both Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.)

Nietzsche next receives brief treatment, and the elements in his thinking that entered into the later development of Existentialism are briefly indicated. Fuller treatment is then given to the German existentialists, Jaspers and Heidegger, and to the French existentialists, Marcel, Lavelle, and Sartre. Last of all, attention is turned on the "theistic existentialism" of Spier's fellow countryman, Arnoldus Loen. Spier regards Loen as a fresh original thinker whose existentialism warrants far greater attention than it has in fact received.

After presenting the existentialists, Spier presents the characteristic features of existentialism. Space prohibits even drawing the outlines of these representative characteristics. Perhaps without being untrue to Spier I can present the matter thus: Existentialism is supra-scientific and supra-philosophical. Being thus irrationalistic, it is not in the first instance a system of thought at all. It is rather a personality, a single personality who wills an authentic existence — in spite of the Menace to his existence which he encounters on every side — and by free decision arises above the world of

Book Reviews

A CASE OF INCOMPATIBILITY


The author of this book is J. M. Spier (not to be confused with H. J. Spier, author of Karl Barth: Prophet of Ketter), minister of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland. He is an influential representative of the Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd school of philosophy and has provided a fine introduction to that philosophy in his Inleiding In De Wijsbegeerte Der Wetsidee. Just recently his Tijd En Eeuwigheid appeared.

The book here under review is his first to appear in English, having been translated by David Hugh Freeman, one-time student at the Free University of Amsterdam. Although the language sometimes lacks fluidity, Spier's thought is clearly conveyed, and both Freeman and the publishers have rendered a service by making Spier's Christianity and Existentialism available to English readers.

The service rendered is a double one. It provides a lucid presentation and critical appraisal of Existentialism by a Reformed man. In addition, it provides a reflection of one of the basic principles of the Vollenhoven-Dooyeweerd school, for Spier evaluates Existentialism on the basis of his commitment to this school of thought. Thus the reader is not only led into the mysteries of Existentialism, but through the prism of Spier's criticism a fundamental principle of this Christian philosophy constantly falls upon the reader's eye.

This effect is insured by the translator's brief Introduction, in which he points out that, true to the tradition of the Vollenhoven-Dooyeweerd school, Spier subscribes to the principle that every school of philosophy is grounded in an initial religious commitment and is prejudiced according to the nature of this commitment. On the basis of this subscription, Spier evaluates Existentialism. Consequently, the reader is everywhere urged to recognize that no theoretical-philosophical thought is truly critical unless it is willing to recognize that every school of philosophy, its own included, rests on a pre-theoretical religious commitment. No theoretic thought, philosophical or scientific, can avoid making an initial religious commitment, and in consequence no philosophical or scientific school of thought is truly neutral. This is a valid principle, and following Spier's validation of it through his critique of Existentialism will be a wholesome experience for the reader.

Since Existentialism is more a matter of existence than a system of thought, Spier begins by discussing existentialists. He starts with Kierkegaard, who attempted to effect a compound of Christianity and existentialism and "had a tremendous influence in all later Existentialism (p. 9)." Although Kierkegaard's Christianity suffered because of his attempted synthesis, Spier says that "Kierkegaard remained a faithful Christian. His last words expressed his confidence that he would soon enter into the eternal presence of the Lord Jesus (p. 8)." Thus Spier classifies Kierkegaard with the synthetical thinkers who (mistakenly, of course) use Existentialism for Christianity rather than with the antithetical thinkers who use Existentialism against Christianity for the purpose of destroying it. (In a similar manner Vollenhoven classifies both Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.)

Nietzsche next receives brief treatment, and the elements in his thinking that entered into the later development of Existentialism are briefly indicated. Fuller treatment is then given to the German existentialists, Jaspers and Heidegger, and to the French existentialists, Marcel, Lavelle, and Sartre. Last of all, attention is turned on the "theistic existentialism" of Spier's fellow countryman, Arnoldus Loen. Spier regards Loen as a fresh original thinker whose existentialism warrants far greater attention than it has in fact received.

After presenting the existentialists, Spier presents the characteristic features of existentialism. Space prohibits even drawing the outlines of these representative characteristics. Perhaps without being untrue to Spier I can present the matter thus: Existentialism is supra-scientific and supra-philosophical. Being thus irrationalistic, it is not in the first instance a system of thought at all. It is rather a personality, a single personality who wills an authentic existence — in spite of the Menace to his existence which he encounters on every side — and by free decision arises above the world of...
unauthentic existence which falls under scope of theoretical-rational scientific and philosophic thought. By virtue of his free decision against nihilistic menace, he achieves his own reality, which reality is that existential consciousness in which both knowledge and being converge. This existential consciousness is that reality which is true personality and authentic existence.

Since this is the nature of the religious motif of Existentialism, Existentialism cannot be combined with Christianity, and Christians must reject Existentialism "radically and totally."

Does this mean that Christians can learn nothing from Existentialism? "Is the antithesis not of such a deep and broad nature that no point of contact exists between non-Christian and Christian thought? Is truth not exclusively guaranteed to the person who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit? Is not the life and thought of the non-Christian wholly enmeshed in complete falsehood (p. 123)?" Spier's answer to questions of this kind is: "It is indeed superficial for a Christian to take the position that he can learn nothing from a philosophy which does not take as its starting point the Word of God. . . . It is superficial to say: Is not a non-Christian conception completely false (p. 120)?"

And to the man who asks, "Can we learn anything positive from a system which does not take its starting point in the Word of God . . . or can we only learn what we must not do?" and, "Is it not true that [the recognition of] any value other than this negative one is a violation of the antithesis which divides Christian and non-Christian philosophy in principle?" Spier's answer is, No. Even though Existentialism does not take its departure from the Word of God, Existentialism does possess "moments of truth, detail-truth." How is this possible? Spier's answer is, "The fact of God's general conserving goodness (usually called common grace)" and this truth, says Spier, "is of extreme importance to the Christian at this juncture (p. 123)."

What are some of the moments of truth in Existentialism from which even the Christian may learn? 1. Existentialism's anti-rationalism, which insists that all reality is not of a logical nature (p. 125). 2. Existentialism's rejection of neutrality in philosophy (p. 127). 3. Theistic-existentialism (Loen) can warn Reformed theology against the danger of legalism, which reduces true piety to conformance to abstract, impersonal law (p. 130).

What are some of the reasons that Existentialism must be rejected? 1. Existentialism must be rejected because of its conception of existence. For Existentialism, man is history. Man is defined as that which is always in the state of becoming. Such a view of man is a denial of the fact and doctrine of creation. The dialectical view that man is what he becomes and becomes what he is, is a view that would deliver man from the reality and limitations of creation, and endow him with a freedom and power he does not possess (p. 132). 2. This conception of existence, i.e., that man is always in the process of becoming, is a secularization of the Christian idea of creation and freedom (p. 135). 3. Existentialism destroys the meaning of life by positing a cleavage between man and his body (the world) and by radicalizing the Fall and by reducing the fullness of life and of the world as created by God. 4. Existentialism has a wrong conception of time. It cannot, urges Spier, do justice to "cosmic time." (For the meaning of cosmic time the reader is left to consult Dooyeweerd's writings.) Spier goes on to add that "existential time bears a predominantly historical character (p. 137)." This statement is at best misleading. Existential time is not historical time in any biblical sense. In biblical thought the meaning of historical time rests on the fact of creation. Since Existentialism denies the initial event of creation and makes existence itself the creative process, its time concept is a distinctively existential time concept. Whereas the biblical conception of historical time rests upon the recognition of reality as posited by God's creative act, Existentialism describes man (it has but a secondary interest in the existence of anything else) as transcending himself and thereby achieving his own reality.

The statement that "existential time bears a predominantly historical character" is only true if we first accept the existentialist's conception of history. The statement is only acceptable if we are willing to accept the proposition that "man is history," i.e., that man, ontologically considered, is process and must, therefore, be dialectically defined as a reality that is what it becomes and becomes what it is.

I heartily recommend the reading of this book. First, because it gives the reader a fine sample-taste of the Vollenhoven-Dooyeweerd school of thought, and most of all because theology in our time so much stands under the influence of existentialism that no one can hope either to understand or effectively evaluate the various theologies of our day unless he possesses a working knowledge of the nature of existentialism. No responsible criticism of theology in our time is possible unless one is able to identify existential thought.

James Daane

KARL BARTH: PROPHET OR HERETIC?


Within the brief compass of this small book, the Rev. H. J. Spier answers two questions: Is Karl Barth a prophet or a heretic? and, What does Barth have to say to us?

By "us" Spier means his own countrymen of the Reformed theological tradition, especially those who have their own educational, political, and cultural organizations. What does Barth have to say to those who stand on the religious soil in which, for example, the Anti-Revolutionary Party has flowered?

Spier is a just and careful critic. He recognizes that an answer to this question does not constitute a fair evaluation of Barth's theology and influence. If Barth is to be fairly gauged, he must be measured against a German, not against a Dutch background. Barth did not arise out of the Reformed situation in Holland, but out of a religious and church situation that stood under the sign of Schleiermacher and nineteenth century German liberalism. Out of this he came, and to this situation he speaks.

Where this historical sense of occasion is present and the proprieties of criticism it demands are duly observed, there even Reformed critics of Barth, says Spier, will be happy that Barth and the Barthians arose. Remembering the drastic nineteenth century German reduction of the gospel to mere ethics, even Reformed theologians will be pleased to hear Barth cry that it is grace to receive grace and to live by grace. When at various points the evangelical witness of the sovereignty of divine grace rings out in Barth's theology we must, says Spier, raise our voice and say "yea and amen." When Barth insists that Christ is God of very God, when he proclaims against Schleiermacher the greatness and majesty of God, then we may not pretend that we have heard nothing, says Spier, or pretend that we
have heard nothing but pure modernism. On the contrary, we can be thankful for what we have heard. Even we Reformed people of Holland, says Spier, may be thankful that in Liberalism’s native land there is a Barth who sincerely concerns himself with the teaching of the Bible, and who has in large measure helped to bring about the significant current revival of exegetical studies of the Scriptures.

Should the Reformed people of Holland import Barthianism into Holland? Should they accept it as a substitute for the Reformed tradition as it has flowered on Dutch soil? Spier’s Neen to these questions is as emphatic as was Barth’s famous Nein to Emil Brunner. To do so would be a thankless disregard for the rich development of the Reformed faith in Holland. It would be bartering a superior heritage for an inferior importation.

Spier deals very briefly but very clearly with Barth’s conception of various Christian doctrines. Barth’s doctrines of God, of Christ, of the Church, of God’s Word, of general revelation, of election, and of man are presented and criticized. This is followed by the meaning of Barth’s theology for social and political Christian action, and here the criticism is particularly spirited.

I would heartily recommend the reading of this book to anyone able to read the Holland language—even if he knows little about Barth’s theology. For Spier knows how to present his case simply, without himself becoming simple. He knows Barth’s theology, and he knows its social-cultural bearing on life. Barth is allowed to speak. Spier does not first put things in Barth’s mouth and then take them out. Such critical procedure is neither hygienic nor honest. Barth’s position is fairly presented. Only after a fair presentation is it criticized and evaluated, sympathetically in the context of the German milieu in which it arose, and sharply on a Reformed and biblical basis. Spier’s presentation is so eminently fair that no Reformed man will be tempted to become a Barthian either because of deceptive wooing, or in the interest of rendering Barth justice.

Spier does not pull his theological punches, but the reader has the solace and advantage of knowing that his punches are not landed on a straw person created in the image of the critic. Spier’s criticisms are not borrowed, nor has he learned Barth’s theology second-hand, in five easy lessons. He has not been content to stand outside of Barth’s thought and hurl a slogan or two. Nor has he turned a serious theological task into the easy game of criticizing Barth without reading him. In such a game of course there is no danger—but also no regard for ethics. Spier has chosen the better and more difficult path of working his way into the thought of Barth and of evaluating it from the inside.

Spier’s specific criticisms of particular Barthian doctrines cannot be here presented. Spier himself has done so in as brief a form as can be done. Those interested will have to read his little book. It may here be stated, however, that Spier’s basic criticism of Barth’s theological method is on Barth’s existential dialecticism. Barth has said that he believes he possesses the freedom to use any kind of philosophic categories for the interpretation of the Christian faith so long as he does not fall into bondage to any. Spier does not believe that Barth has escaped bondage to existential dialecticism. Even so Spier does not muffle Barth’s voice and allow it to say no more than existential dialecticism will allow. At various points in Barth’s theology the truth of the gospel, says Spier, does break through. Spier believes that in spite of the serious damage wrought by Barth’s dialecticism, Barth’s theology is at bottom a theology of the grace of God in Christ and that at essential points the music of the gospel breaks through Barth’s dialectical construction of theology. And I may add that in this estimation Spier does not stand alone in Holland. There are others among the theological thinkers of the Gereformeerde Kerken who hold the same estimate.

In spite of very serious objections to Barth, Spier is sure that Barth has something to say even to the Reformed people in Holland. While he spiritedly rejects Barth’s renunciation of Christian political and social organizations, he frankly admits that Barth’s criticisms may be used in achieving a healthy critique of Holland’s Christian organizations.

Similarly, Spier rejects Barth’s conception of election and reprobation, yet asserts that it would be foolish and eigenwijs to think that we who are Reformed could learn nothing from Barth’s doctrine of election. What can Reformed theology learn anew from Barth? That election and reprobation may not be regarded as equally definitive of God’s purposes in Jesus Christ, something that Reformed thinkers have sometimes shown a tendency to forget. God’s purpose, asserts Spier, is to save the world, and reprobation may not be so construed that this purpose is thrown out of biblical focus by a bi-focal interpretation of election and reprobation.

Is Barth a prophet who will deliver the Church from bondage into perfect freedom? Spier mentions no liberal theologians by name, but asserts that many liberals think so.

Is Barth a heretic and nothing more? Must conservative Reformed people regard Barth as a way-preparer for the Anti-christ?

Here Spier mentions only one conservative by name. Professor C. Van Til, says Spier, has assessed the theology of both Barth and Brunner as “the new modernism.” According to Van Til, declares Spier, Barth’s thought has essentially nothing to do with orthodoxy, nothing to do with the biblical teaching of the truth of God. Barth is a modernist who reasons from human experience and then predicates these self-made human truths to God. Barth’s theology is modernism in the cloak of orthodoxy. Van Til, says Spier, goes so far as to assert that Barth denies that God is the self-contained Triune God and teaches that God’s existence is dependent upon the existence of the world. If, says Spier, we move along this line, then one can only say that Barth’s theology is merely heresy (enkel ketterij).

What does Spier say to the liberal claim that Barth is only a prophet, and to Van Til’s claim that Barth is only a heretic? Both these extreme claims are in Spier’s judgment mistaken. Neither is true. Both the liberal’s claim and the claim of Van Til are too easy; both are over-simplifications (“al te gemakkelijk en al te simplistisch”). Spier says that we must sharply criticize Barth, but this does not mean that we are “blessed possessors” (“gelukkige bezitters”) who can learn nothing from Barth. It will not do to present Barth, Spier urges, as though he were the way-preparer for the Anti-christ.

Barth, says Spier, is neither every inch a prophet nor every inch a heretic. He is rather something of both; he is the man in whom the prophet sometimes wins over the heretic, and the heretic sometimes over the prophet. To assert that Barth’s theology is either pure modernism or pure orthodoxy is to do what is easy: to over-simplify his theology and misrepresent his position.

One of the great needs of the Reformed Churches in America is the appearance of books in the English language which fairly and thoroughly present the thought of Karl Barth — presentations in which Barth can be recognized because he is allowed to speak — books which offer a thorough

162

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * MARCH, 1964
and relevant criticism of Barth's theology on a Reformed, biblical basis.

Until such books appear, the American committed to the Reformed tradition and able to read Holland will do well to read Spier's little book (and others; for example, M. P. Van Dijk's evaluation of Barth in his Existenz en Genade). And for those who cannot read the Holland language, English translations of such books as these would serve good purpose.

JAMES DAANE,

THE ATONEMENT


"A CLASSIC is any work, in any field, which has inherent value, acknowledged excellence, and enduring worth." If this definition be sound it verifies an opinion the theological world has held for eighty-six years, — namely that The Atonement by A. A. Hodge is a classic.

INHERENT VALUE

The work is divided into two parts, with the Nature of the Atonement (part one) occupying the major share of the author's attention. However in part two (Design and Application of the Atonement) as well as in the first section there is constant evidence of the patience which marks the scholar. Terms are always carefully, sometimes painstakingly defined, articulation is always in excellent English, and points to be registered are never set up without liberal appeal to Scripture for support.

Because the procedure is progressive and the argument cumulative, it is hardly proper to single out any one section as standing above another. But where matters become most fundamental, as in chapter four (why God punishes sin) and in chapter seven (the federal headship of Adam) the author's abilities are projected in sharpest focus.

ACKNOWLEDGED EXCELLENCE

It seemed as though Outlines of Theology from the same pen had set a high enough mark which no subsequent effort on the part of the author could equal. Yet in The Atonement Hodge fully attained the dimensions his earlier work had led the public to expect. His sanity and balance were again in evidence. Thus this work too was heralded from the first not only by those who agreed with him doctrinally, but also by those who stood as his theological opponents. Today no bibliography on the atonement is complete without listing this book. The many uses to which it has been put; the many quotations from it to be found in countless articles and volumes; the fact that a publisher has seen fit to reprint; — these all bear witness to an excellence thoroughly acknowledged.

ENDURING WORTH

It is to be noted that the doctrine of the Atonement is set forth throughout in opposition to error. And because all the traditional falsities are effectively, i.e., scripturally refuted, the book will always have lasting value for those for whom the Bible is the living word of a living God. The preface contains an interesting description of the author's world, which is filed, he says, both with heresies which attack historic Calvinism, and that latitudinarianism which seems supremely indifferent to exact conceptions of doctrine, — "and which is our chief source of danger." Because these words constitute as apt a description of the year 1953 as they did of the year 1867, the book is as apropos to the present as it was to the past.

J. D. EFFINGA

KINGDOM WITHIN

Kingdom Within, by Siebold Ulfers, adapted by Marian Schooland from B. Williamson-Napier's English translation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1953).

K. CHESTERTON, in his essay on Rudyard Kipling, makes the statement that "The globe-trotter lives in a smaller world than the peasant." What Chesterton is doing, of course, is contrasting the superficial knowledge of men and manners that one acquires as he sees them through the windows of a speeding automobile or of a comfortable train seat, with that deeper understanding which comes only by intimate acquaintance with people after years of living with them. Chesterton's observation is a good one to remember for an adequate appreciation of the merit of the novel Kingdom Within. For the book is parochial, but the parochialism is a healthy one. Its appeal will be felt keenest by those of the Reformed community who are close enough in time and geography to sense the spirit of a Dutch peasant community and to respond sympathetically to it — a community to whom the church is a meaningful institution, and whose inhabitants regard the minister as a servant of God who speaks with authority.

Granted, then, that the stage of Kingdom Within is a small one, the very limitations make for greater concentration, and the drama is vital and throbbing. For it is not only in New York or Paris, San Francisco or Grand Rapids that the drama of life is being enacted; it is being enacted also on the byways, in Hardewyk and Graafschap, in Noordeloos and Sully, in hundreds of such communities represented by Eastloorn, the fictitious locale of Kingdom Within. In short, wherever people live and laugh and love, there is potential material for dramatization by the sensitive and gifted author.

Siebold Ulfers was such an author, and he understood the people of these communities. He acquired this understanding through his ministry in several rural charges of the Hervormede Kerk, and through his love of the people whom he served. He detected the depths of feeling which so often went unexpressed, the basic integrity and sincerity of the inhabitants, their rough but genuine humanity, but also their weaknesses: their proneness to forget their gentler manners, their tendency towards rigidity, their frequent lack of the grace of charity in their judgments.

Do not look in this novel for that series of inter-related incidents whose consequences move towards a climax and inevitable resolution which we commonly designate as "plot." Ulfers seems to have felt that his purposes could be best achieved by a more modest form, and the form he selected was a happy one. For the book is a series of vignettes, of sketches, of separate episodes, all unified, however, by the locale and the characters who inhabit it. And several motifs recur throughout, providing links between one episode and another.

The first situation which affords continuity to the group of sketches is that of the schism of 1886 and 1887. From that date on there are two churches in Eastloorn — the Reformed Church and the Dissenting Church. And the account of how the schism was brought about, and of the relations between the two pastors and the members of the two churches — both the bitter feelings and the residual fraternity — form an integral pattern of the book.

Prominent, too, is the emphasis on spiritual growth, of development, of wisdom gleaned from experience. The ex-
perience of the years leaves very few of the characters unchanged. They undergo mellowing, they increase in spiritual sensitivity, and acquire a greater degree of charity and patience. A notable instance is that of Ilting, the Bell-Ringer. Ilting feels that people can hear how many years a bell-ringer has been in the service from the way he rings the bell. His own bell-ring ing undergoes significant changes as the years progress. He began, he confides to the minister, with a beginner’s zeal, letting the bell shoot high up into the air, but paying little attention to the fine points of bell-ring ing. The depth to his ringing comes later, after the murder of his son and the spiritual crisis which followed. And Ilting tells the new minister, Walter, that the depth to his sermons will also come later, and only after suffering.

Another pattern in the novel is the fact of the village rascal. It seems that such a renegade from law and order, such a violent character, belongs to the tradition of Eastloorn. The people are embarrassed about this tradition, and they regard it as a curse hovering over their community. It is a humbling and chastising experience for them to realize that somewhere they have failed, that something has been inadequate in their community, and to be faced with the concrete evidence that the covenant is not an iron-clad guarantee that their children belonged to God.

The relation of a minister to his flock is also a theme of frequent recurrence, and Ulfers takes some care to delineate the several possible types of response. One cannot help feeling, too, that Ulfers is injecting some instruction for pastors. Old Senserff, for example, realizes the hardships of his parishioners, and the particular kind of help they need. And so his preaching is close to their experience, and his work among them is accordingly effective and fruitful. And Ulfers lets us know what he feels about the minister who is guilty of affectation, who manages to become very popular, and whose name, consequently, appears on many a list of trios of calling churches. Ulfers’s sympathy is all for the minister who goes on from year to year, faithfully discharging his duties in a self-effacing and sacrificial way without receiving acclaim from the many. He believes also in educating his parishioners, rather than in ministering to them solely at the level of understanding they already possess. Says he: “Do not underestimate their intelligence . . . It is fallow ground, and your harvest there will be greater than the harvest from soil that is cultivated each year.”

But perhaps the most significant thread of unity is that suggested by the very title. Wiegen, the day-dreamer, the idealist, the visionary, has his eye always on the Kingdom; and many comments throughout the book elucidate and defend the thesis, that the Kingdom is larger than any Church or any denomination, that it can include such people as Crazy Aggie and that one cannot exclude prematurely even Joop, the village atheist, who at the very end is brought into the fold. The terminal impact of the book, then, vindicates decisively the point that denominational and individual differences are ultimately resolved in the mysterious and gracious relationship of the kingdom.

This is a welcome book, a significant book, a wise book, and one probably not beyond the competence of writers among us. Dr. Henry Zylstra, reviewing the book in the October issue of the Reformed Journal, makes this stimulating comment:

One hopes sometime for an Idylls of a Reformed Community from the pen of an American hand. What a good and useful book it might be! Such a community ought to have a Reformed Church in it, and a Christian Reformed Church, and two Protestant Reformed churches, one of each persuasion. It ought to have something of human ridiculousness in it, and a very great deal, of course, of the merciful balm of love. It ought to be a book which becomes a part of the spiritual tissue of our life. Its situations and people should become symbols of our recurring experiences. To mention the Dreamer, or Goesting the Silent, or Ilting the Bell Ringer in the Reformed Netherlands is to remind everybody of something they already know. Such a book saves a lot of talk. It educates and edifies. It humbles.

There are some important facts which one ought to know about the antecedents of this book as recently published under its present title. It seems that it was written originally under the title Oostloorn, the fictional community which Ulfers used as the setting for the events of his novel. This was a Dutch publication. It has been very popular in the Netherlands, and the most recent of many editions appeared as late as 1952. It has also been translated into other languages; the English translation was done by B. Williamson-Napier under the title Idylls of a Dutch Village. The publication under review is an adaptation, and a competent one, of Williamson-Napier’s work, prepared by Miss Marian Schoolland under the new title Kingdom Within.

STEVE VAN DER WEELE,


For the past century the name of this distinguished Anglican archbishop and poet has been synonymous with sane and sound treatment of the prophetic and kingly work of Christ when He was here upon earth. An exponent of the principle that a parable intends to convey but one fundamental truth, he has unearthed a wealth of truth while at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of the extravagant and fantastic. He views the miracles as substantive of the divine claims of Christ and revelatory of His redemptive work. No serious Bible scholar can ignore with impunity his contributions.

THE WE BELIEVE. (Grand Rapids: The Young Calvinist Federation; 1953), 96 pp. $1 per copy, $9 per dozen.

In a sense the doctrinal standards, except for the Heidelberg Catechism, constitute terra incognito for the constituency of the Christian Reformed Church. This We Believe, if put to use, will serve to remedy that deplorable situation. It is a revised and abbreviated reprint of explanations of the first thirty articles of the Belgic Confession, prepared for The Young Calvinist by the Rev. P. A. Hooekstra in the years 1925 to 1929, with additional material on the last seven articles to complete the series. Comparable to the series on that confession by the Reformed Fellowship in the 1952 issues of the Torch and Trumpet, it provides a ready handbook to the understanding of that significant doctrinal standard.

J. H. BRATT

We kindly request our readers to inform us of any change of address. Your co-operation in this respect will not only keep our mailing list up to date but will also insure prompt delivery of the issues of our journal. (Editors)