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History, Sextant and Compass

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Book Reviews
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Book Reviews

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The question of how one’s religion ought to influence his philosophy has long been an important and difficult one for Christians. It worried the earliest apologists, furnished an endless mine for day-long debates among medieval scholars, and now is proving a fertile problem for discussion among contemporary Protestants. And it crops up in a myriad of forms. We come upon it when puzzling over the relation between theology and philosophy, the relation between natural and special revelation, between natural and revealed theology, over the validity of the arguments for God. Thus anyone wanting to discuss the question, after beholding this great array of thinkers and problems, must be both timid and bold. Yet my hopes are not set on saying something new on this difficult matter. I will be pleased if I succeed only in making the question seem a bit more clear.

Obviously I cannot discuss here all the problems I have mentioned. So I have limited my subject to “The Christian and Philosophy.” First I will discuss briefly what leads me to suppose that there is a problem here. Then I will define “Christian” and “philosophy” as suitably as possible, and as accurately as necessary, for proceeding on my way. Then I will explain what I think the relation between the Christian and philosophy to be, and why I think it is such. And finally I will suggest a few reasons why this conclusion may not immediately appear true to those who reflect on it.

The problem arises through the meeting of two ways. The first is the way of the Christian who feels that his faith in some manner ought to guide his thinking, but is not sure just what that manner is. The second way is that of the philosopher who finds himself amid a crowd of theories—the humble ones all proclaiming their truth about a part of the universe, the proud ones, about the whole universe. And the ways meet when the Christian tries to discover what guidance his faith can properly give him in deciding which philosophic theory to accept. So the problem is that of the reflective Christian who is a philosopher.

Now what do I mean here by “Christian”? It strikes one immediately that the great number of aspects to being a Christian makes it extremely difficult to find one of them, or a combination of more than one, which may rightly be called the “essence” of being a Christian. Will we say that having the mystical experience of conversion is the essence of the Christian? Or that living a life of love is the essence of the Christian? Or, again, will we say that believing a certain set of statements is the essence of the Christian? Or rather that all of these are essential, plus perhaps some more? It is clear that to go at the problem in this way is to let it get out of hand.

Fortunately, we do not have to go at it in this way. For our purposes we can proceed without fixing upon the “essence” of the Christian, but rather by deciding what aspect of the Christian is of direct concern to us here. And the determination of this is not difficult. We are here concerned with that aspect of the Christian which involves believing certain statements. And these statements are those of the Bible.

Our concern with the Christian is with what he believes, with the statements he holds true; as opposed, for example, to what he has experienced, or how he lives his life. This is true because our problem arises when someone feels that being a Christian imposes some obligation upon his thinking, upon his intellectual life. So our concern is with the Christian who wonders what ought to be the relation between what he thinks as Christian and what he thinks as philosopher.

Now some may shy away from this decision to be concerned with the Christian only in so far as he holds certain statements true, and may feel that this is far too formal a construction to be of much worth. They may point out that conversion to belief in the Christian God does not first of all mean the acceptance of a different set of statements, but rather a whole change in “outlook”; that belief in God does not primarily mean regarding as true the statement “God exists,” but means rather a whole view of reality.

Now it is certainly true that a change in “outlook” occurs upon conversion to Christianity. But two things must be said. In the first place, I am not asserting that the Christian outlook is merely intellectual; even if the intellectual aspect of this outlook is only belief in a certain set of statements, there is much more to this outlook than merely the intellectual aspect. For example, there is the ethical aspect, the concern for living a righteous life. Therefore, since the outlook is not exhausted by its intellectual aspect, it cannot be exhausted by the set of statements one holds true. All I am saying is that our problem concerns the intellectual aspect of this outlook, for we are concerned with the Christian’s thinking; that there is more to this outlook than the intellectual aspect, is plain.
But secondly, is the intellectual aspect of this outlook exhausted by the set of statements one holds true? Now so far as I can see, the only thing anyone could possibly add to this is that not only one's beliefs as to what are the facts are changed by a change in outlook, but also the facts themselves are changed. Now indeed, one fact is changed by a change in outlook; namely, the fact that one's outlook is changed. But beyond this, no facts are changed merely by changing outlooks: God's existence is the same fact whether one believes it or not. We mortals have no power to change his existence, let alone annihilate it, by not believing it. By changing our intellectual outlook we can change a fact about ourselves; all other facts, however, remain just what they were before we changed our outlook. But since the facts in general are not changed, it must be our beliefs as to what are the facts that are changed; it is the set of statements we hold true that is involved in the intellectual aspect of the Christian's outlook. And it is with this set of statements which the Christian holds true, in so far as he is a Christian, that we are concerned.

I said that the statements a Christian believes, in so far as he is a Christian, are the statements of the Bible. Three remarks must be made concerning this assertion. In the first place, it clearly refers to an ideal situation; no Christian has ever believed just exactly what the Bible says, in the sense that no one has been so perfect as to believe just what every statement truly means. The best of exegetes have made mistakes of interpretation. But since we are concerned with what the Christian ought to think, and not with what he may happen to think, it is with this ideal situation of truly understanding and believing the statements of the Bible that we are concerned.

Secondly, I will not prove that the statements a Christian ought to believe are those of the Bible. Most of my readers will accept the assumption. And if anyone should want to say that not all the statements of the Bible have to be believed by Christians, and should want to sort out those statements essential for belief from those unessential, this will in no way destroy my thesis but rather clarify it. For then we will know more specifically what statements we are talking about.

And in the third place, I am not being at all specific when I say the Christian believes the statements of the Bible; for there is no end of disagreement as to what many of those statements mean. But this vagueness as to what many of the statements of the Bible mean also does not destroy my thesis. For in so far as it becomes more clear exactly what the biblical statements mean, just so far the relation of the Christian to philosophy does not take on a new character but only becomes more clear.

I shall now attempt a suitable definition of "philosophy." I think it will be agreed that we may consider philosophy as a body of statements. We can most quickly decide what statements, by deciding on their subject matter. The statements we call "philosophic" are by and large answers to four different but related questions: What general kinds of entities are there? In what general ways are these entities structured? What general kinds of value are there? In what general ways are values structured? And by "general" in all these phrases I mean "not the specific concern of any social or natural science." Thus an experiment designed to discover a one-hundredth chemical element, or an investigation designed to decide whether Caesar did cross the Rubicon on that fateful day, would not be called "general." But a discussion designed to decide whether there are universals would be called "general."

We can now accurately state our problem. It is this: "What is the relation between biblical statements, which the Christian as Christian believes, and statements which explicate the general kinds and structure of entities and values?" And an answer to this question will also answer for us the related question: "What guidance does Christianity give in deciding the truth of philosophic statements?" Or, simply "How should what a Christian believes as Christian be related to his philosophy?"

Now three different logical relations may hold between biblical statements and philosophic statements. These are the relations of implication, mere consistency, and incompatibility.

By saying that one statement implies another I mean that we can decide the truth or falsity of the second just from knowing the truth of the first. Thus the proposition that "all men are mortal and Socrates is a man" implies the proposition that "Socrates is mortal." For if the first proposition is true, the second must also be true. Ordinarily we express this relation by the word "if...then"; so that usually we would say, "if all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal." Now in the subject matter of our discussion, implication may hold in two directions. Either a biblical statement may imply a philosophic statement, or a philosophic statement may imply a biblical statement. However, we have said that our interest is in the guidance which a person's Christianity may give to his work in philosophy; and thus our only real concern is with the philosophic statements which may be implied by biblical statements. So, for instance, we need only be concerned whether belief in the Trinity implies belief in universals ante rem, and not whether belief in universals ante rem implies belief in the Trinity.

By saying that two statements are merely consistent, I mean that the strongest logical relation between them is their union by the word "and" or its equivalent. Thus neither does one imply the other, nor does either one contradict the other. For example, when I say "it is raining today and it will snow tomorrow," I cannot conclude just from knowing that it truly is raining today that it truly will snow tomorrow. But if the first statement implied
the second, instead of merely being consistent with it, I could conclude just from knowing that it truly is raining today that it truly will snow tomorrow. Or if the first statement was the contradictory of the other, I could conclude just from knowing that it truly is raining today that it will not snow tomorrow. Thus, we might say that belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is merely consistent with belief in universals *ante rem*; and by this we would mean that even though we know the truth of a statement asserting the existence of the Trinity, we cannot decide just from this the truth or falsity of a statement asserting universals *ante rem*.

Finally, by saying that two statements are incompatible I mean that the two statements cannot both be true. Thus if belief in the doctrine of the Trinity were incompatible with belief in universals *ante rem*, we could not hold to the truth of both a statement asserting the existence of the Trinity and a statement asserting the existence of universals *ante rem*.

We can now discuss which of these relations actually holds between biblical statements and philosophic statements.

It is sometimes held that Christianity conflicts with philosophy. Apparently people have meant by this that Christianity is incompatible with philosophy. But in what sense have they meant this? They may have meant that, given any philosophic statement, there is at least one biblical statement which is incompatible with it; and since the biblical statements are held as true, every philosophic statement must be false. But I cannot believe that anyone has seriously meant just this; for surely, if the theory that there are universals *ante rem* is incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity, then the theory that there are not universals *ante rem* is not incompatible with it.

But perhaps such people have not meant that every statement of philosophy is incompatible with at least one biblical statement, but rather that every possible *system* of philosophy is incompatible with at least one biblical statement and hence all philosophic systems must be false. (By a "system" here I mean simply a conjunction of many philosophic statements, all of them held as true, all of them consistent with each other, and the whole group of them giving an adequate and comprehensive account of the universe.) Now in only one sense could it be said that Christianity is incompatible with all systems of philosophy. Consider a list of solutions to philosophic problems. For every solution considered incompatible with Christianity, its opposite would be selected, and this would then be consistent with Christianity. But it would then be asserted that one could never take some of these statements which are consistent with Christianity and form out of them a system which is both consistent and adequate. And since we said that a system must be consistent and adequate, a person who holds this would in effect be saying that every system of philosophy is incompatible with Christianity. But to my knowledge no thinker has ever said this and I do not see how it could possibly be proved.

Some thinkers who have held that Christianity conflicts with philosophy have said something very similar, but have invented various devices to avoid the rather amazing conclusion that all philosophy is necessarily false. Siger of Brabant, the medieval contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, is an example. He held that Christianity was incompatible with philosophy; but he avoided the serious consequences of this with his subterfuge of the "double truth" theory, holding that both Catholic theology and Averroistic philosophy were true, but in different and completely unrelated senses. Now Siger was very clever on this point, and slyly avoided making it at all clear what two completely different senses truth could have. But I think that a clarification of this point, if possible, would furnish the only plausible theory of incomparability.

A considerably more cogent theory is that biblical statements imply philosophic statements. This, as I understand him, is what Professor Dooyeweerd means to say. Now this may mean, in the first place, that every biblical statement implies some philosophic statement. But neither Professor Dooyeweerd nor anyone else wishes to say this. It may also mean that some biblical statements imply some philosophic statements. But with this interpretation everyone would agree; for no one would deny that the statement "there is a God" is a biblical statement, and that it implies a philosophic statement that God exists. So I feel sure that Professor Dooyeweerd means to say more than this. He means to say that some statement(s) of the Bible imply every philosophic statement necessary to a philosophic system. Thus, Professor Dooyeweerd is saying that Christianity implies one philosophic system and is incompatible with all others. He does not mean to say that he has this system; he means to say only that with sufficient study and reflection we can arrive at it.

Now to prove this view mistaken one must find some philosophic issue, to which it is generally agreed an answer must be furnished if a system is to be comprehensive, and then point out that the deduction, leading from a biblical statement to an answer on this issue, is lacking. This can be done. To show it, I will choose two philosophic issues which

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1. "I came to understand the central significance of the 'heart,' repeatedly proclaimed by Holy Scripture to be the religious root of human existence.

2. "Therefore, in the development of a Christian philosophy which is actually stimulated by the Biblical ground-motive of the Reformation, there must be a constant striving after the reformation of philosophic thought. This precludes the canonizing of a philosophic system." *Ibid.*, p. 522.
all philosophers will agree to be crucial for a comprehensive system. The first is that of the nature of universals. The use of universal words in our language is so prominent that no philosopher can omit explaining them and still have a comprehensive system. But I know of no deduction, starting from biblical statements, which demonstrates for the Christian that he must hold to the position of pure realism, or moderate realism, or conceptualism. All of these, and perhaps even a form of nominalism, can be developed in a manner consistent with all the facts asserted by biblical statements. The second issue is that of the nature of space. Again, space is so prominent an aspect in our experience that no comprehensive philosophic system can avoid treating it. But I have seen no biblical statement which in any way implies either the substantival or relational theories of space to the exclusion of the other. And because on at least these two important questions no such demonstration has, to my knowledge, been presented, I cannot at present agree with this view of the relation between Christianity and philosophy. For if these demonstrations are lacking, and if at the same time a system which claims to be implied by biblical statements gives answers to these important questions, then the position which the system takes on these questions must be reached by other means than implication from biblical statements. But this is contrary to the hypothesis. For it was claimed that a comprehensive system could be deduced. Thus a system which claims to be implied by Christianity must give an actual implication for each philosophic assertion it makes, or take its claim cavalierly.

My own view of the relation between Christianity and philosophy is a bit more complex. In the first place, there are definitely certain philosophic statements which are incompatible with certain biblical statements, and hence these philosophic statements are excluded by belief in Christianity. On this ground, for instance, any philosophic statement that God does not exist, or that God is finite, is mistaken. But if it is true that certain biblical statements are incompatible with certain philosophic statements, it must also be true that these biblical statements imply certain philosophic statements; namely, the negations of those with which these biblical statements are incompatible. Thus biblical statements imply that God is not finite (infinite) and that God exists. About very many other philosophic statements, biblical statements say nothing at all. For example, as we have already seen, they give us no help on the problem of universals and the problem of space; we cannot reach a solution to these problems by any sort of deduction from biblical statements. So to summarize, biblical statements exclude certain philosophic statements, imply their opposites, and about many others say nothing at all.

But there is a certain consideration which weakens the force even of this statement of the relation. For in every case which has come to my attention, there are at least two distinct interpretations of the philosophic statements which biblical statements imply, and we cannot decide between these interpretations by a deduction from biblical statements.

Let me illustrate this by what is probably the most difficult case, that of God’s existence. I said that biblical statements exclude the philosophic statement “God does not exist,” and hence imply the statement “God exists.” Now there are two distinct senses to this statement “God exists,” and biblical statements neither exclude nor imply either one. On the one interpretation, when I say “God exists” and “I exist,” I am using the term “exist” in the two statements in a univocal sense. On the other interpretation, I am using the term in an analogical sense.

On the univocal interpretation, the word “God” and the word “I” signify two very different beings; that is, the essence or character of God and of myself are very different indeed. But since the essence includes the total “what it is” of these entities, existence does nothing more than signify that these two very different characters are both actualized. Hence existence in the two cases means exactly the same, namely, that these two very different characters are both actualized; and this is true because “existence” signifies no essence at all.

On the other interpretation, existence cannot be so completely separated from essence: the existence of a thing is not sheer, but has some character or essence of its own; and this character derives from the particular essence whose existence it is. Therefore since the essence of two different things is different, their existence, which gets its own character from that essence, must also be different. The most we can say then is that there is an analogy between the existence of two entities: as God’s essence is to his existence, so my essence is to my existence.

Now these two interpretations constitute a very subtle philosophic point, but it is clear that either one allows for every fact asserted by biblical statements. Although biblical statements are incompatible with the statement “God does not exist,” and therefore imply the statement “God exists,” they can be consistent with both the philosophic statement “God exists in the same way I exist” and...
"God exists in a way analogous to the way I exist." Therefore, although biblical statements do imply that God exists, they do not imply either that his existence is univocal or that it is analogical with ours. But since this issue will have to be decided if a complete philosophic system is to be constructed, it will be seen that biblical statements here do not imply philosophic statements whose interpretations are definite enough to constitute a philosophic system. And we can generalize this situation with respect to the meaning of existence, to say that in every case we shall have to decide on other grounds than implication from biblical statements what precise interpretation we shall give in our philosophic systems to those philosophic statements which biblical statements imply. We cannot get proofs for all our philosophic statements from the Bible. The Bible is not a textbook on philosophy.

Thus it is my position that Christianity says nothing at all about many philosophic issues. On some of the rest, it definitely excludes certain answers, and therefore implies their negations. But these negations are probably in every instance subject to several interpretations; and about these various interpretations Christianity says nothing. Hence on the basis of the different answers to issues about which Christianity says nothing, and on the basis of the different interpretations of statements which it implies, a multitude of different philosophic systems can be constructed, all of them compatible with Christianity. There is no such thing as the Christian philosophy; there are only Christian philosophies.

What this means, more concretely, is that there may well be Christian platonists, Christian aristotelians, Christian existentialists, Christian phenomenologists, etc. However, such characterizations of Christian philosophers will always be more or less ambiguous. For no Christian can hold everything that Plato said, or hold everything that Aristotle said, or everything that Heidegger said, or that Husserl said. In each case then we shall have to decide when such loose characterizations are no longer useful or informative. Thus, Plato's philosophy is chiefly marked by his belief in the realm of ideas; and if one kept this belief but gave up everything else that Plato said, I think he might still very meaningfully be called a "platonist." However, the two basic tenets of contemporary logical positivism are (1) that all meaningful statements are either analytic or empirical; and (2) that all analytic statements are true and meaningful by convention or tautology, and all empirical statements are true and meaningful by empirical verifiability. Now the Christian will have to give up the latter of these tenets, for statements about God are not empirically (scientifically) verifiable. But this tenet is so basic to logical positivism, that I would hesitate to call anyone who gave it up a "positivist." Thus any characterization of a Christian philosopher as a platonist or aristotelian or existentialist or phenomenologist will always be somewhat loose, and depend on a prior judgment as to how much of the original system can be surrendered without its basic spirit or method being lost.

I venture the claim that this conception of the Christian's relation to philosophy was also that of John Calvin. My evidence here is slight, since Calvin mentions philosophy or philosophic problems only rarely; and when he does, so far as I know, it is always to castigate the scholastics, or Zwingli, for their foolishness. But perhaps this fact that Calvin so rarely mentions philosophy is just the evidence I am seeking. For it indicates that Calvin's rigorous development of what the Bible said was not, to his notion, at the same time a development, or ground for development, of a philosophy. But I do not think that my view about the Christian's relation to philosophy will find immediate acceptance. So, aside from the fact that some may see at a glance that it is necessarily mistaken, let me suggest a few reasons why it may not at once be accepted.

First of all, there may be the person who in general agrees with me, but feels that many of the philosophic statements which Christianity implies are not at all vague, as I seem to feel, but are very definite and have only one interpretation. He might support this contention by mentioning the doctrine of the Trinity and reminding me that this says God is one substance with three persons, and that the only conception of substance which fits this doctrine is what we might call the "Aristotelian" conception. But I would then point out to him that this formulation of the Trinity to which he is referring comes not from the Bible but from an early church council deeply under the influence of Greek philosophy, and that the Bible itself does not refer to the Trinity as a substance with three persons. This same sort of explanation will account for many apparent implications of philosophic statements, since a multitude of our theological formulations use philosophic concepts. And if this is true, the actual implication of philosophic statements by such formulations of doctrines can be insisted upon only if we feel that the particular philosophic concepts used by theologians to explain biblical statements are the only concepts which may be used. But such infallibility not even the theologians would wish to claim. For certainly one does not have to be an Aristotelian to believe in the Trinity.

Secondly, it may be said that I have completely ignored the problem of presuppositions so important in building any philosophy; and that this neglect completely destroys the effect of my efforts. But this is not true. For I believe that all Christians who speak of the importance of presuppositions

3 But I have not read all of Calvin's works, and would appreciate receiving refutation or confirmation of my view here. My position is also basically that of Occam, and it would be interesting to discover whether Calvin's unconcern for philosophic problems in any way stems from reading Occam or his followers.

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would insist that the Christian's presuppositions ought to be (though they may not actually be) the statements of the Bible; and my only concern in this paper has been with the person who believes the statements of the Bible and wonders what relation these have to philosophy. So I have by no means ignored presuppositions; for me, the Christian's presuppositions must be belief in what the Bible says, and it is precisely with this that I have been concerned.

Lastly, there may also be a certain hesitation which arises simply from differences in use of vocabulary. I gather that some people hesitate to accept a philosophy which does not make use of certain words or concepts which they consider prominent and basic in the Bible, such as “heart” perhaps, and feel that Christianity implies such philosophies to be false. But one must look behind the use of words here, and into the facts which these words are intended to express. And then we may find either that these facts have no direct philosophic relevance, or that philosophy recognizes them but expresses them in different ways. Similarly with respect to natural science, few people nowadays would wish to deduce from the Bible's mention of “the four corners of the earth” a theory asserting that the earth is square, and not round.

In conclusion, I cannot say I am happy with this result of my investigation. For I think I wished the relation between my faith in Christianity and my endeavors in philosophy to be much more close and intimate than it now appears to me to be. And yet, perhaps my conclusion should not appear wholly distasteful. For it assures me that the Gospel of Christ will never be identified with my philosophy nor any other philosophy, be it that of pagan or saint. It assures me that ever again men of God may use philosophy to tell their fellows what the Gospel means, but that the Gospel itself will always be more than these halting expressions and these feeble efforts. It assures me that God's revelation will always be too much for man's philosophy. And of these things I feel most certain.

**History, Sextant and Compass**

John Rooze

The readers of this periodical form a group that places much emphasis on the study of theology. However, I fear we frequently fail to recognize the value of the study of history. The providence of God we confess, but the evidence of His direction in the affairs of this world we often disregard. The sovereignty of God is our basic religious tenet, but men seem to apply this truth to their personal activities, not to the affairs of state or the history of the nations. A consideration of the value of history will certainly be worth our serious attention. The utterly confused state of mind that prevails today needs, not only the steady influence of faith, but the locational and directional indicators that history provides for our life's journey. The study of history can be our sextant and compass in a storm-tossed world.

Certainly Scripture clearly indicates the relative importance of history. Our Bible was given as the revelation of God. Considerably over half of this revelation is history, the story of how God dealt with men. Notice what happened when men forgot their history: Judges 2:7-11 records that, as long as Joshua and the elders who overlived him remained to rule, the people of Israel were faithful to God. When, however, a generation arose "which knew not the Lord nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," then they began to serve Baalim. Here is God's record to show how important history was to his chosen people. And that emphasis is made time and time again in the Old Testament: Stones are set up in Jordan with orders to the people to repeat the story of God's leading; the law of God is preceded by an historical statement; God refers to himself many times as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. History takes its important place in the Old Testament Scripture, and we in the church of God should consider it no less significant to our lives.

Even more fundamental to our welfare is the New Testament history. Is it not true that our very salvation is based on the historical facts: Jesus came to earth, lived here, and died at the hands of the Jews and Romans. We have a faith that is based on the record of history, and without a knowledge of that record, men cannot be saved; we must believe in the historical Jesus.

Beyond the range of the Biblical record is the story of the Christian Church. There is the abundant evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in spreading the Word of Truth, and what a mighty testimony that history is! Could any man, even one with a most embryonic interest in the Church of God, read through the first volume of Schaff's great *History of the Christian Church*, and remain unstirred by the might and power of God? Could any preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ read a better exposition of Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the stone broken from the mountain, which filled the whole earth, than to read the history of this early Christian
Church? We are thrilled by the record of those believers who unswervingly marched in the power of God; that history, too, is for the edification of the Church.

But how about secular history? Is it also so glorious that it should merit our close attention and careful study? I am reminded of the words of Socrates, "There is nothing which, for my part I like better, Cephalus, than conversing with aged men; for I regard them as travelers who have gone a journey which I too may have to go, and of whom I ought to inquire whether the way is smooth and easy, or rugged and difficult." You see, Socrates was after vicarious experience. And that is precisely what we find in history. It is the experience of the nations and peoples who have gone before and from whose record we can learn. I wonder whether those who lightly esteem our civil rights and who give support to men who carelessly override the Bill of Rights, are familiar with the long and hard struggles back of this heritage of the fathers. You see, history could teach them that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. It could teach them that the unguarded relaxation of our vigilance, when evil men are being tried, is the first step on the way in which righteous men will later be condemned. However, with history, as with life itself, she teaches only those who will learn.

Many a man has dreamed of the day when he could travel around the world to see glories of other nations and peoples. In history we have a type of learning which gives the benefit of travel while we remain at home. We can even relive ages long gone by and visit nations long since passed into oblivion. And not only do we profit from such a visit itself, but we lay the basis for a wide cultural enjoyment, the bounds of which are simply unlimited. Whole worlds of interest open themselves to us. Through historical reading we can in our imagination stand on Mount Lebanon, and see the Assyrian hosts of Sennacherib marching south to the conquest of Jerusalem. Cruel and bitter foes these men were, whose reputation went before them and made the hearts of their foes tremble. Learn the history of this mighty conqueror, and then read Byron's poem, The Destruction of Sennacherib. Certainly, a familiarity with this history will double the meaning of this literature, and put flesh and blood on the figures that move through its lines. Follow these readings with a passage from the third chapter of Nahum, in which he describes the effect of the fall of Nineveh; and you will understand that the Bible too, takes on new life when read in the setting of the times in which it was written. How those major and minor prophets would open their treasures to us if we could read them in the light of the social and religious conditions prevailing in those days! History is the field from which we must reap such literary harvest; and the deeper we cultivate, the better the yield will be.

There is, too, an extremely practical value to the study of history. Such a study serves as an excellent training school for those who are to be civil servants in our nation. Time and again we have experienced the damaging effects of entrusting our diplomacy to men who lacked historical perspective and often, too, we have been blessed with men of vision, who looked forward with a discerning eye, because they had looked backward with understanding. Jefferson, Madison, J. Q. Adams, T. Roosevelt, and Wilson, were men who knew their history, men whose tempered judgments were a boon to the nation. Our State Department is beginning now to see the value of careful, scholarly training in history as preparation for foreign service, and has begun to take the necessary steps to select and prepare its office holders.

History, too, can teach us where our weaknesses lie in the field of government. By a survey of our national elections we can discover how significantly material prosperity or business recession has directed the vote of the people. We can learn that men will neglect their franchise rights until the danger of losing them becomes imminent. We can watch the sway of city politics from the attitude of careless indifference in which ten per cent of the voters appear at the polls for an election, to that of righteous indignation over corruption and crime. Then again we can watch the electorate relax, joke about "politics," and wait for the next social tidal-wave. However discouraging such facts may be at times, we must study them and take them into consideration while making our judgments. History must be our sextant and compass, to give us our bearings, and provide us a present, from which we can look both backward and forward. Otherwise improvement and progress will be impossible.

Those who read in the field of history need no longer justify their activities for themselves or for others. Biography enables them to live in the fellowship of the great men of all ages; literary history gives both the pleasure and the profit of inspiration; and intellectual history enables us to think the thoughts of great men after them. Our tastes will differ, there should be no argument about likes or dislikes, but there can also be no question about the benefits of historical reading. Mark Van Doren, in his Liberal Education, says, "The educated person knows one thing at least: the past is a burden which crushes only those who ignore it, and so do not study how to balance it on their shoulders. It is there, in spite of everything: known and used for what it is, it can lighten the entire load. Dismissed from the mind by 'practical' men, it can bring them to deserve Robert Maynard Hutchins' definition of them as 'those who practice the errors of their forefathers.'"

God speaks in history. Those who know Him and know His providence, look across the broad fields of man's experience through the eyes of their Lord. They gain an interpretation of history that no man can acquire by his own insight. They follow the
record of His church, which, through storm and strife, went on in the quiet confidence of His promise that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Utterly indifferent to the mad scramble for wealth, or the desperate fear of calamity, His people move in the peace that passes all understanding. Why? Don't they see the foreboding clouds that threaten to unleash their fury upon us? Surely, they see the clouds; but, because they read history in the light of God's word, they also see the finger of God writing across the pages of history in crimson letters "My children, I love you."

Dutch Art and Calvinism

Henry J. Van Andel

THERE is a Government Guide on Dutch Art by H. E. Van Gelder which draws the attention of the reader to the fact that of the Seven Dutch Schools of Art, the School of Utrecht was dominated by the Catholic Spirit. Many of the painters of this school specialized in highly-colored floral pieces and still lifes, and in Bible genre in the style of Caravaggio, consisting in contrasting planes of dark and light. They acquired these two kinds of Baroque or sumptuous technique from Italy and were, therefore, called “Italianates” or “Italianizers.”

The other six schools: Amsterdam (Rembrandt and his followers); Haerlem (Hals and his friends); Leyden (Jan Steen); The Hague (Moreelse); Delft (Vermeer and De Hoock) and Dordrecht (Van Goo-yen and Cuyp) were Protestant and different. They were realistic and sober; democratic; individual and personal. The new true-to-nature style was not popular, and, moreover, there were hundreds of artists, so that their products were sold in cheap stores and in the weekly city markets to prosperous middle-class businessmen and farmers. Many of the artists plied another trade, and of those who did not, several went bankrupt.

The New Spirit

The new “matter-of-fact” fashion in art, also found in Dutch Low Gothic and Dutch Renaissance Architecture, and in Dutch Songs and Music of that time, was caused by the new spirit of enterprise which developed the Dutch West-European trade into world trade, and this in turn was caused by the eighty years of war for religious liberty and independence, and this again by the Calvinistic doctrine of revolution by the lower magistrates in case of suppression and persecution. It has probably also to do with the realistic doctrines of total, but not utter, depravity; restraining, distributive and aiding common grace; and individual predestination, even of form and shape (Art. 12 of Belgic Confession). At least a dozen recent critics in Europe and America ascribe the new Spirit to Puritanism, forgetting that from the beginning there have been three kinds of temperaments in every religion and also in Calvinism: the serious-minded, the moderates, and the lighthearted ones, and that all three types were tremendously influenced by the popular edition of Calvin’s Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life, in which he mentions as the three virtues of the “present life”: Contentment, Moderation, and Faithfulness. It is the French historian, Doumergue, who sees connection between this and Dutch Art.

The new spirit in Dutch Art revealed itself in three characteristics, the exact opposite of Baroque, or Contemporary Italian Art. The Italians, as we said, emphasized in their third century: idealism, sumptuousness, romanticism, reverence for the Aristocracy in church and state. The Dutch, because of the nature of their national character, and as a result of their vehement conflict with autocracy and tyranny, felt for sobriety and realism; personalism and individualism; democracy and liberty. War and religion urged them away from Rome and Feudalism. They broke the images of the Saints and tore up many costly Italianate paintings in the “wonderful” year 1566, the year of Iconoclasm, and after a thirty-years’ conflict, emerged with a culture which bore the mark of a Calvinistic life and world view: realistic, individualistic, democratic. They could not longer believe that art should mold and shape figures like the statues of the old Greeks, and that everyone who had his portrait made should fit in with the classical types of Zeus, Apollo, Juno, Venus and others. God had given every human being, every animal, and every plant its own form and shape. Individuality was not a product of chance but of God’s wise and kind providence. And so, painters and sculptors had to be true-to-life, true to nature, true to themselves, because of God’s eternal purpose, which was to build a new earth and a new Kingdom out of the old motives and the new elect. This, in turn, led to a revolt against later Feudalism, and the still later Machiavellianism of King Philip II. Democracy, government by council, and moderation, with respect for the old historical privileges, led to reverence for the common man, humaneness, equality of opportunity in social, economical and political life. Every guild member could, at first, become a magistrate, and

1 Doumergue, Art and Feeling in the Work of Calvin.
even grand pensionary of the republic, if he was a lawyer.

The New Technique

This new outlook drove the artists on to a new technique which fitted in with the three types of temperament and religion. The first new contribution was one of Frans Hals. His rough outlines were the result of visual unity, that is: the three foci in plain view, but the circumference more or less blurred. This suited the comical scenes of himself and his most famous pupil, Jan Steen, who, it was reported, threw his technique to the winds. But this technique was, indeed, the result of correct focusing, and then of correct vision, and had nothing to do with slothfulness. After Hals came Rembrandt with two new ideas: colorstroke and chiaroscuro. Before him the artist drew first in outline, and then filled the squares and triangles in with the brush as Hals had done in the “Laughing Cavalier,” called a “riot of color.” Rembrandt further introduced the chiaroscuro or light-dark contrast of a small circle of a golden dusk surrounded by two-thirds, and later seven-eighths of a grey-green, and after 1642, of a dark brown background. This was not a little change of Caravaggio’s rhythm of dark and light planes, but created a third dimension because the light shone into the farthest parts of the dark recess as a candle flame radiates into the corners of a cellar. To the first and second generation also belonged Van Gooyen, who saw the beauty of the diffused sunlight penetrating a mist or haze, another way again of creating perspective. But the master mind of the third dimension was still to come in Vermeer who discovered plein air, i.e., airiness, which is the result of a rhythm of sunlight and shadow patches. As Hals and Steen represented the humorous or light-hearted type of Dutchmen, so Rembrandt and Van Gooyen, respectively, with their dark brown and soft colors, typified the melancholy temperament, and Vermeer the mentality of the moderate and equal-minded or serene Calvinist Hollander who considers prosperity and adversity both to come from the same Heavenly Father, and, therefore, is not disturbed by anything.

The Dutch painters contributed with these five elements to the development of all painting. Impressionists like Joseph Israels, and expressionists like Van Gogh, point to Rembrandt and Van Gooyen on the one hand, and to Vermeer on the other as their great predecessors. Technique as such may be neutral, and yet its origin is plainly connected not only with three kinds of temperament, but also with three types of religion. Life, after all, cannot be cut up into compartments. It is an organic and mysterious unity. Dutch art is proof of this.

The New Content

Not only in spirit and in technique, but also in content the Protestant Dutch painters made great contributions. In the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, many products of art had a dualistic character. Portrait, landscape and domestic or historical genre were not consistently kept apart. Portrait often had the spirit of genre and landscape crept into portrait and home life. The Dutch began consciously to avoid this mixing of types because they believed that each type had a character of its own. Nevertheless, incongruent material may be used to create atmosphere, but then in the background, or on a small scale, so as not to disturb the unity of the product. After all, a landscape does not need animals or human beings to be complete. Nor does a man have to smoke a pipe or hold a book, and a lady to complete her toilet to make herself more attractive. A portrait should express individuality, and not distract by play, work, or meditation. But there is room for genuine domestic genre, though the impression should not be spoiled by introducing an anecdote or an obvious story. Symbolism is more effective if it is not forced upon an observer, but naturally though convincingly applied. This principle of unity leads to what has been called independent (or free) portrait, domestic genre, and landscape. It hangs together with the ineradicable belief in the right to liberty or individuality, and this is bound up with the faith that everything in the cosmos has its own being or structure, office or function, and form and shape, because God has made it so for his grand purpose of having the right proportion of variety and unity in his creation. It is part and parcel of the principle of sphere-sovereignty, which was introduced by Calvin when he maintained that church and state have each its own task, and that matters of culture should not be “under the bonds” of Church or State. (Cf. Article 28 of The Belgic Confession).

And so we must come to the conclusion that the Protestant Art of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century owes its spirit and content, and partly its technique, to the religious influence of its Calvinistic creed and traditions. Yet, the great contributions of Dutch Painting of the Golden Age made for a new kind of art, for modern realism and, further, for an enrichment of the history of art for all times. And this paradox is acknowledged not by Dutch Art critics and historians first of all, but by recognized foreign experts of humanistic vintage.

[2] Ruskin’s criticism is not correct.

[3] Institutes III, Ch. 19.

An Inherited Theology: II*

James Daane

In a preceding article I presented and evaluated the epistemological basis on which Dr. Alexander De Jong, in his book, The Well-Meant Gospel Offer, evaluates Herman Hoeksema's and K. Schilder's views of the general offer of the gospel. In this article I wish to consider the theological positions into which De Jong has been led by his epistemological views.

A Serious Omission

De Jong presents and criticizes Hoeksema's view of the covenant and shows its adverse consequences for gospel proclamation. Hoeksema defines the gospel as both husk (reprobates) and kernel (elect), and restricts the promise of salvation to the elect-kernel. Hence, he, therefore, denies that salvation is offered to all who hear the gospel. Consequently, says De Jong, Hoeksema conceives of gospel preaching not as the call of the tender Shepherd's voice, but as an authoritative announcement that God will save his people. In this presentation of Hoeksema's view, De Jong does himself well. But he then makes the claim to have thereby "sketched briefly the salient points of Hoeksema's polemic against the idea of gospel offer as used by the synod of 1924" (p. 52).

But this claim is by no means true, for De Jong has completely overlooked the heart of the whole issue. The basic issue between Hoeksema and the Three Points of 1924 concerns the nature of grace. For Hoeksema does not merely object to a general offer; he objects to any kind of offer. The ground of his objection is that it is the very nature of grace that it cannot be offered, neither generally nor particularly, neither to the reprobate nor to the elect. Grace by nature is such that it cannot be offered. It is by nature unconditional. Because this is the heart and essence of Hoeksema's objection to 1924, it was also the heart and essence of his position in the recent controversy within the Protestant Reformed Churches about "conditional theology." It is a matter of his whole theology, for the question of the nature of grace is central to any theology. To assert that grace can be offered in any way or to any one is, according to Hoeksema, to alter the nature of grace after the fashion of Arminianism.

De Jong has completely overlooked the fact that the question about the nature of grace is the crux of the difference between Hoeksema and 1924. The general offer taught by 1924 presents one conception of the nature of grace. Hoeksema's rejection of the very idea of offer presents a different conception. And Van Til's restriction of the general offer to "mankind as a generality" also presents a view of grace that differs from 1924.

Hence De Jong's failure to give attention to Hoeksema's fundamental objection to the general offer of 1924, is a serious technical omission in what purports to be a sketch of the "salient points." But what is more serious is that this omission keeps De Jong from considering the nature of grace both as regards his own position, and as regards the view of grace that he has taken over from Van Til.

De Jong quotes Hoeksema, "The preaching of the gospel is neither blessing nor curse" without criticizing the conception of the nature of grace which this statement contains (p. 49). This is a defect in a book dedicated to a critical consideration of the preaching of the general offer of the gospel. In this statement Hoeksema denies that the preaching of the gospel is decisively qualified by grace so that gospel preaching is a decisively gracious event. He contends that it is neither blessing nor curse. Gospel preaching is a neutral event. In short, the nature of grace is not such that it decisively qualifies the gospel and its proclamation as a non-neutral, gracious event and reality. And since it is as such neither blessing nor curse, it can be both.

Schilder's position is the same. Schilder contended that history is a neutral reality, neither decisively qualified by grace nor by curse. His position is that history is not the history of redemption rather than a history of damnation. It is essentially neither, and therefore can be both. And this is also the position of Van Til, who also denies that the temporal-historical process (more specially the process of differentiation) is decisively qualified by grace. On his view the whole temporal-historical process (even pre-Fall time and history) is essentially a neutral process. It is just as much qualified by curse as by grace, and, since it is decisively qualified by neither, the whole neutral process is equally dedicated to damnation and salvation.

In biblical thought the nature of grace is such that it decisively qualifies gospel preaching so that it is a gracious event (as 1924 contended!) and not a neutral event so that hearing the gospel can as such be a curse. Likewise the biblical idea of grace decisively qualifies the temporal-historical process (after the Fall) so that this process is a decisively redemptive, not damnatory, process. De Jong's omission not only kept his eyes closed to this biblical truth, but led him to accept Van Til's view of the nature of grace.

* This concludes a review article by Dr. Daane. Part I appeared in the April issue of the Forum.
What is Van Til's view of the nature of grace? We have seen that in his view it is not the nature of grace to decisively qualify the temporal-historical process as a gracious process. But worse, in Van Til's thought grace is not the nature of grace. It is not the nature of grace to be gracious! The very purpose of grace is to get elect persons for heaven and reprobates for hell. On this, Van Til's position is very clear. In his *Particularism and Common Grace* he tells us that the Gospel was preached to Adam so that God might realize the purposes of election and reprobation (p. 2). In his *A Letter on Common Grace* Van Til tells Dr. William Masselink very frankly that he (Van Til) does not believe, for example, that the unbeliever's natural "regard for virtue and good outward behavior" (as the Canons of Dordt express it) is the result of common grace. He says that the unbeliever's regard for virtue is the presupposition of both common and special grace (p. 16). Van Til urges that grace would operate in a vacuum, i.e., it would be without the necessary raw-material to accomplish its purpose without this presupposition. For the nature and purpose of grace is to get rid of this common regard for virtue and good outward behavior by the process of differentiation! It is the nature and purpose of grace not only to obtain good people for blessing, but also to get wicked people who through the process of differentiation have no regard for good outward behavior and are thus made ready and ripe for the full curse of God. Thus in Van Til's conception of grace, it is not the nature of grace to be gracious. The nature of grace is neutral; it is neither blessing nor curse, and therefore it can be both.

De Jong falls into this conception of grace when he defines God's longsuffering as correlative to the process of differentiation (p. 140), and when he denies that God's will and counsel is decisively qualified by grace, by insisting that God's will is no more antithetical to sin than to goodness (p. 80). This must be considered next.

The nature of grace! That is the issue that separates 1924 and its rejectors!

**God's Counsel and The Sinner**

In the former article it was pointed out that De Jong criticizes Hoeksema because, under the influence of Heyns, he conceives of the God-sinner relationship in terms of competition. He quotes from a commencement speech in which Hoeksema said, "that the freedom and responsibility of man are hemmed in from every side by the counsel of God... That's God with his counsel and with his almighty providence hemming in and limiting from every side the moral creature that is called the king of Assyria." De Jong comments, "Resident in those italicized words lies Hoeksema's theological understanding of the mystery which we shall never logically resolve" (p. 80).

Nevertheless, De Jong proceeds to resolve the mystery. He says that man's activities are not "activities which God needs to limit and hem in" (p. 80).

One wonders whether De Jong has forgotten all about Point II of 1924, which teaches the opposite, namely, that man's activities are such that God needs to limit and restrain his sinful activities if human society is to be possible. I am sure that De Jong knows Point II, but that he is driven at this point to deny it because he has inherited from Van Til a theology that has no need for Point II.

Van Til's theology has no more need for Point II than does Hoeksema's. In fact both Van Til and De Jong have even less need for it. Why, according to De Jong, does God not need to limit and hem man in his activities? His answer is that God realizes his counsel in and through man's activities in such a way that, "Man as a creature together with all his activities—in faith and unbelief [!] is never a competitor of God" (p. 80). 2

Man the sinner never a competitor of God? When Adam tries to be like God, he is not competing with the one true God? Even in unbelief the sinner is not antithetically related to God! What has happened to the antithesis? Where is Christ's victory? The sinner is no longer God's enemy! There is no need that God be reconciled to the world!

Here De Jong out does Hoeksema. Hoeksema agrees with 1924 that the sinner needs to be hemmed in. He denies, however, that this is accomplished as Point II teaches: by a restraint of the Spirit. God accomplishes it by his almighty providence. But De Jong denies that God needs to hem man in. God's will is such that no matter what man does—whether in faith or unbelief—man always does what God wills. Therefore, there is no competition, no need to hem man in!

Where did De Jong get this idea of "no competition" between God's will and the sinner? He could have obtained it from some of Hoeksema's writings. He could even have obtained it from the commencement speech from which he quoted, for in that same speech Hoeksema defines human responsibility as man's inescapable obligation to respond to God—without adding that man is responsible for making the right response!

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1 Masselink has quite rightly charged that this is a denial of total depravity—a charge which has gone unanswered.

2 It is imperative to see that in the theology of Hoeksema there is a strong tendency, and in Van Til's theology the tendency becomes a principle, to make God's will neutrally related to sin and goodness, and thus to dissolve the antithesis and to render sin non-ethical. Protestant Reformed ministers have explicitly stated that God did not need to be reconciled to the world in the Cross! But De Jong and Van Til outside Hoeksema by making the tendency into a theological principle with the explicit elimination of competition from the God-man relationship. Van Til says that sin only seems to be antithetically related to God's will or counsel (Cf. *Letter on Common Grace*, p. 87). In the theology of Hoeksema there is little room for the antithesis. In the theology of Van Til none. But both give it considerable room in their Ethics.

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De Jong very likely received the idea from Van Til, for the latter teaches that every fact is what it is because of God's will, and that every fact, sinful or non-sinful, is revelational of God's will (Common Grace, p. 5; Particularism and Common Grace, p. 13; Letter on Common Grace, p. 39; The Infallible Word, pp. 266, 267).

Because of his uncritical acceptance of a conception of God's will and the manner in which God realizes his counsel—a conception which eliminates the idea of competition—De Jong has taken a position which has no need of Point II and which dissolves the antithesis and the antithetical character of sin.

When is a Reprobate?

I can hardly agree with Dr. Herman Kuiper when he chides De Jong for seeking better to understand the general offer and the fact of reprobation. Certainly there is no visible reason for saying that the last word has been said on this problem. And De Jong is quite right in viewing it in the light of the eschatological nature of gospel proclamation. For this he deserves our genuine appreciation. If only De Jong had maintained a greater degree of theological independence. For it is understandable that H. Kuiper has objections to it.

De Jong urges, "He [a man] is a reprobate... because he resists the redemptive will of God in the gospel call" (p. 130). This is very obviously not the position of the Canons of Dordt, which claim that a reprobate may simply be passed by by God (Strange to, De Jong himself urges this feature of the Canons against Hoeksema! pp. 116, 117). According to the Canons, one may be a reprobate without ever hearing the gospel.

Where did De Jong get this idea that no man can be a reprobate by being merely passed by by God, and that he can only become a reprobate by being met by God in the gospel call? Are all those who never heard the gospel elect persons?

This surely is not a common Reformed position. De Jong himself gives no indication as to where he obtained it. But it is more than likely that he obtained it from Van Til. Van Til contends that it is the nature and purpose of both common and special grace, and of general and special revelation, to produce reprobates. Thus he contends that the gospel was preached to all men in Adam in order to get reprobate persons (Particularism and Common Grace, p. 2), and on the same basis he can teach that the mere misuse of God's common grace and general revelation as given in "rain and sunshine" is a crucifying of the Son of God afresh (Common Grace, p. 95). On this theological basis one can, as De Jonge does, contend that a man is a reprobate only "because he resists the redemptive will of God in the gospel call."

De Jong further criticizes Hoeksema by saying, "He argues as if God offers salvation to sinners who are already elect and reprobate. This is a serious inaccuracy" (p. 128). This is indeed a strange position. Does not the gospel offer ever come to anyone after he is an elect or reprobate?

Van Til has scored Schilder for abstract thinking because he distinguishes between man as creature and man as sinner. Following Van Til, De Jong scores both Hoeksema and Schilder for denying that God shows favor to the concrete sinner. "Both deny God's favorable attitude toward concrete sinners..." (p. 68). But does not De Jong do the very same thing when he urges that God does not offer salvation to real elect and reprobate persons? Moreover, what does the gospel say to those who are already elect and reprobate persons? This is a question that De Jong will find no easier to answer than Hoeksema and Van Til have found it to be.

Where did De Jong get this position that the gospel offer only comes earlier, i.e., only before men are real elect or reprobate persons? There can be little doubt but that he has taken it over bodily from Van Til. Van Til says, "The offer comes to those who have so far neither believed nor disbelieved. It comes before that differentiation has taken place" (Common Grace, p. 78). He says it comes to the "sinful mass of mankind," and "comes thus generally," i.e., to mankind as a generality (Ibid., p. 78). Here Van Til denies that it comes to the concrete individual, yet De Jong scores both Hoeksema and Schilder for denying that it comes to the concrete individual (p. 68), and agrees with Van Til that it does not come to the concrete individual who is already an elect or reprobate!

The reader will observe the unmistakeable similarity between De Jong's statement that the gospel offer comes before the sinner is an elect or reprobate, and the following from Van Til: "The general offer has meaning only with respect to those who are at an earlier stage of history. It has meaning with respect to the elect and the reprobate when they are, and to the extent that they are, members of an as yet undifferentiated generality" (Common Grace, p. 81).

De Jong in taking this position over from Van Til has failed to detect the existential character of Van Til's concept of earlier which governs the later appearance of the concrete elect and reprobate person by means of differentiation out of the earlier, progressively diminishing generality of mankind. I am sure that if he understood Van Til's position, he would not accept it—in which case he would not now be in the unenviable predicament of defending his position on predestination.

3 It comes, says Van Til, to the generality which as yet has neither believed nor disbelieved. But in the same paragraph he also says that it came to the generality in Adam and that the generality rejected it!
The General Offer: Common and/or Special Grace

De Jong asks, “Is preaching common and/or special grace?” and he adds, “This presents the question which fragmented the Christian Reformed Church in 1924-25” (p. 135). In view of this statement one wonders why De Jong gave no consideration to the central issue of 1924, namely, the nature of grace?

But was the Christian Reformed Church fragmented over the question whether preaching is common or special grace, or both? At any event, this question leads De Jong into a discussion in which he says, 1) that the gospel offer is evidence of common grace, 2) that in his view the gospel offer is grounded in Christ’s work and is not the fruit of common grace, 3) that he bypasses all “terminological disputes” and, 4) that common grace renders no support for “the vicious idea of neutrality” (p. 139).

The only observation I wish to make of this is that this kind of theological writing does not make for clarity and understanding. In his Common Grace Van Til says that he uses the term common grace, and others like it, “loosely.” In his Particularism and Common Grace, he urges that it is the nature of grace to be both common and special (or what is the same thing, that common as well as special grace is characterized by particularism—in which Van Til’s conception of the nature of grace is concealed. De Jong here asks whether preaching is common or special grace or both. And his answer is that the general offer is an evidence of common grace, and (in a footnote) that this offer is not the fruit of common grace. Coupled with this is the assertion that he by-passes all disputes about terminology (p. 139). All this certainly does not make his position clear. And his statement that “The christological emphasis of S. G. de Graaf’s contribution to the common grace [question] is particularly fruitful and an accent foreign to the discussion of 1924” does not clarify De Jong’s position (footnote, p. 139).

It may be granted that Point I of 1924 is not a masterpiece of theological precision. It may be that De Jong feels—some of his statements surely suggest as much—that the whole question of the relationship of God’s grace to those who hear the gospel ought to be reformulated and set in a different perspective, and that this could be done in harmony with the spirit and intent of Point I. His position that the general offer is an evidence of common grace, but is the fruit of Christ’s work and not the fruit of common grace, suggests that he may be thinking in terms of a single grace of God. But why tuck this “divergence” from Point I in a footnote? Why refuse to define terminology? Why do Van Til and De Jong both insist on a continued use of loose terminology? Complaints are frequently voiced by the exponents of Van Til’s theology that the dissenters do not understand. Perhaps they do not; and perhaps they do. At any rate, De Jong’s failure to consider the nature of grace coupled with his above-indicated intermingling of common and special grace is bound to be baffling in a theological community which usually thinks of common and special as two different kinds of grace. And Van Til’s remark that “All agree that common grace is not a small quantity of special grace” (Common Grace, p. 76), taken together with that structural principle of his theology: that the Gospel was preached before the Fall and that this is common grace, is also baffling. No less baffling is Van Til’s contention that it is the nature of grace, and therefore of all grace, that it is both common and particular. It is more than time that this theology cease presenting us with loose terminology. The times past may more than suffice for misunderstanding. It is also more than time that this theology explicitly express its relation to 1924. Until now we have been given only passing remarks of agreement, but casual remarks which do not relate to the structure of this theology are not enough. Such remarks may suggest agreement with 1924, but they do not explain the peculiar, characteristic features of this theology. Thus, for example, Van Til’s remark that “. . . God’s restraining grace keeps man from being as bad as he can be” (Letter on Common Grace, p. 35) sounds like agreement with Point II of 1924. But the structural (existential) principle of this theology that the totally depraved unregenerate become what they are (!) “by way of rejecting God to whatever extent God reveals Himself to them” (Common Grace, p. 91) remains wholly untouched by his passing remark of agreement with 1924. If the structural principle is true, that the unregenerate rejects God to whatever extent God reveals himself to him, then, in spite of the passing remark of agreement, this theology knows nothing of a restraint by the Spirit as taught by Point II.

Let this theology relate itself to 1924. Let it define its terms, and much of the misunderstanding will evaporate.

For Whom is the General Offer Meaningful?

De Jong presents his exegesis of such texts as speak of a command to “all men” to believe, and of the atonement of Christ for “all men” (for example, Acts 17:30, 31; I Tim. 2:4, 5). Speaking of Christ’s atoning ransom, De Jong says, “This ransom is for all who are confronted by this mediator in the gospel proclamation” (p. 172). De Jong does not want the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement. He eliminates the universal idea by restricting the scope of Christ’s ransom to all who hear the gospel. Yet how does this in any essential manner differ from the Arminian position? De Jong posits a difference; he does not believe the atonement is for all men, but only for all men who hear the gospel. But the difference is not the difference that makes the Reformed position differ from the Arminian. De Jong frequent-
ly tells his readers that we must be extremely cautious in the formulation of our doctrinal positions. But here again is evidence that good intentions and passing remarks of agreement, or even vigorous affirmations of orthodoxy, are not enough.

What does “all men” mean in such texts as state that Christ gave himself a ransom for all? De Jong says “all men” does not mean every individual. Nor does it mean “all kinds or classes of men.” It means, rather, “‘anyone at all, anyone you please’” (p. 173). At this crucial point De Jong presents his meaning in quotation marks, and leaves us in the twilight. From there we are led to the position that “all men” means “universal indefiniteness.” Thus the general gospel offer is said to be universally indefinite. It is hard to be definite about what this means. Apparently it means that the general offer is meaningful for everybody in general but not for anybody in particular. This seems a fair description of what De Jong thought.

If so, then we have under slightly varied terminology Van Til’s position that the general offer is for “mankind as a generality,” but not for “men as men.” It is meaningful for everybody as long as everybody is nobody in particular, but is meaningless for particular (concrete) men. Here, then, De Jong falls, under the influence of Van Til, into the very position for which he criticizes Hoeksema and Schilder: that there is in the gospel offer no favorable attitude of God toward concrete sinners (p. 68)—a position which harmonizes with De Jong’s position (also borrowed from Van Til) that the object of the gospel offer is earlier than his reality as an elect or reprobate (the offer comes before men are elect or reprobate, p. 128), a position which is rooted in existentialism.

* * *

De Jong is not wholly without theological ability. He writes with a fluid pen, sometimes almost glibly. But his theological expressions in his books lack precision, and what is more serious, his own theology is a loosely bound package of incompatible pieces. Many of his difficulties flow from the fact that he has set himself an impossible task. The position of 1924 and that of Professor C. Van Til cannot be combined. His book is valuable evidence that it cannot be done. And many more of his difficulties stem from his uncritical acceptance of Van Til’s epistemology and of many of Van Til’s theological positions rooted in this epistemology. These theological positions, together with the epistemological substructure on which they rest, cannot be reconciled either with biblical or Reformed thought. De Jong’s book puts the spotlight on this fact. De Jong’s loyalty to Van Til is much longer than his comprehension of Van Til’s theology. His theology will not have attained integration until it is purified of its incompatible elements. And this will not happen until he begins to stand on his own theological legs as an independent and critical theological thinker.

In De Jong’s list of theses, included only in the soft-cover edition of his book, he expresses the judgment that it would be advantageous to Reformed scholarship in America if Calvin Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary would merge. I very seriously doubt that Van Til’s theology is typical of the theology of the faculty of Westminster Seminary. (This matter is, of course, a rather open question.) They have not been openly critical of it, and to that extent they have of course tolerated it. At any rate De Jong’s book will not create sympathy for his judgment that the merger would be advantageous. But his book will serve the purpose of stabbing us awake to the fact that the theology of Prof. C. Van Til and the theology of the Christian Reformed Church are in a deep sense incompatible. And I can only express the regret—for it is regrettable—that De Jong has allowed himself to get caught in the middle with his theology down. He can regain what he has lost only by an independent, open-eyed, critical evaluation of what he has been led to accept.
The Editor,
The Calvin Forum
Grand Rapids
Dear Dr. DeBoer,

Whether we look at Europe or Asia we need to look up to our eternal and immutable God, and again it is in His Son that we prove Him to be such. In Spain we see Rome in control, with many Protestant schools and churches closed by order of the Franco government. R. C. pastorals are constantly attacking the exceedingly small Protestant minority, as if it were the deadliest poison that could be injected into the life-stream of the nation. France is, so far as one can see, divided and uncertain, afraid and inclined to be pessimistic. Germany is divided in such a way, as to give the Roman Catholic bloc in the West tremendous power, and place the large Protestant population of the East under the domination of Communism. Thus the position of Protestantism in the Germany of today is highly unsatisfactory. From the merely human standpoint, it is anything but reassuring to contemplate the titanic struggle which is shaking Europe to its very foundations. But God is weaving His golden thread of purpose through the dark tapestry of our sinful world's sinful history. God's purpose is redemptive: the Cross of His Son towers above the failures of man, and will yet be the healing of the nations.

Many gave a sigh of relief when they read that Senator McCarthy had been stripped of much of his power. Britain viewed this man with concern and astonishment. McCarthyism became a term in the same class as the very Communism which the Senator professed to hate. Possibly the British attitude may not be fully understood in the States, but conceptions of liberty do differ. Here a man may believe anything he likes, provided he does not coerce others. Politically that may be dangerous, but the alternative, to the average Britisher, is more dangerous. Your correspondent was heartened to learn that not all Americans supported McCarthy's methods, and that he was not an example of the general disposition of our great neighbour.

Billy Graham's all-Scotland crusade 1955, will cost much effort and money. A recent circular informs us that the campaign will cost approximately 47,000 pounds sterling, one-third of which is needed for the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow another third for "administration and publicity," the remainder being necessary for what is termed "the vital ministry of counselling and the follow up of converts." This budget would be much greater were it not for the generosity of Billy Graham's party, who will travel at their own expense, and pay their personal expenses in Britain. We have already commented upon Graham's visit to London; it will be most interesting to watch Scottish reaction in three main camps—the materialistic non-church-goer (often near Communist), the theological conservative, and the "liberal." The materialists and liberals will probably react in much the same way as their counterparts in England—it is the Calvinistic and Reformed core of the High-lands in which we are most keenly interested. (Most of them use psalms exclusively in worship, without instrumental accompaniment.) On the whole, Billy Graham will notice little appreciable difference between the reaction of the people of Glasgow and those of London—the response of the Highlanders is another matter. Does Scotland need this Crusade? One thing is beyond dispute: industrial Scotland, (Glasgow, the Clyde, coal-fields, etc.,) which Graham will reach, does need the Gospel.

This year is the quatercentenary of the persecutions in Britain under Mary Tudor, when men like Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer were burned at the stake. An effort is being made to recall those stirring times and so review the present situation. Perhaps it is fitting that the Martin Luther Film should ring times and so review the present situation. Perhaps it is fitting that the Martin Luther Film should

From Our Correspondents

THE CALVIN FORUM * * * MAY, 1955
of the Fellowship," states an official leaflet, "is the Reformed or Calvinistic interpretation of Christianity as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith." Financial support is derived from voluntary contributions and the sale of literature. The Fellowship is a non-profit organization. Details concerning the R.T.F.'s income tax status in the U.S.A. may be obtained from the American representative. Since 1949 the R.T.F. has done splendid work in presenting many Chinese with scholarly statements of the Reformed Faith and critique of modernism and other evils.

The New London Commentary on the New Testament will be welcomed in Britain. To have F. F. Bruce on Acts or Dr. Alexander Ross on James and John will be acceptable to conservative ministers and students. Marshall, Morgan & Scott of Ludgate Hill, London, are to be congratulated for what they have done in this respect. No doubt many will place orders for the seven volumes at present advertised at 25/- each.

The amount of scholarly Christian literature now being circulated in Britain is most encouraging. The theological works and monographs published by the Tyndale Press (Bedford Sq., London) alone will do much to strengthen the weak and convert the doubters. Mass evangelism will make an impact on the British people, but ultimately nothing will have such telling effects and so great a harvest as the moulding of the student life of the country according to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

I have scarcely mentioned Ireland; on another occasion I may have the privilege.

With greetings,

Yours in His Service,

Fred S. Leahy.

**EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWS RELEASE**

At its sixth annual meeting, at Shelton College, N. J., the Evangelical Theological Society voted to participate jointly with the American Scientific Affiliation in a summer meeting. The dates will be June 21-24, 1955; the place, Winona Lake, Indiana; and the program to consist of papers, addresses, and panel discussions on subjects that concern the Bible-believing emphasis of both groups. Topics to be considered include the comparative methods of science and theology, geology and Genesis, the flood, the origin of races, the ethics of antiquity, the origin and spread of culture, and similar matters. For further information write Dr. Roger Nicole, E.T.S. program chairman, Gordon Divinity School, Beverly Farms, Mass.

At the meeting Dr. Burton Goddard, the retiring editor, reported that the first volume of the E.T.S. monograph series, *Brunner's Concept of Revelation*, by Dr. Paul Kewett, has now left the press. Members of the Society receive copies of all publications free of charge. The Society authorized the immediate publication of Dr. Merrill Unger's study, *Israel and the Armageddon of Damascus* as the second volume of the monograph series. A volume, *Men and Scripture*, a study of the doctrine of Scripture as held by important church leaders from sub-apostolic times to the present, by various members of the society, was reported as almost completed in its editing. The editor noted that similar volumes of composite authorship will be published from the papers read at the annual meetings; this will be when there are sufficient papers on any given area of investigation.

Officers for the coming year were elected as follows: president for 1955, Dr. Harold B. Kahn of Asbury Theological Seminary, Ky.; and vice-president, Dr. Roger R. Nicole of Gordon Divinity School, Mass. For the first time in its history there was general shift in the more permanent officers of the society. Those newly elected were: secretary, D. J. Barton Payne of Trinity Seminary, Chicago; treasurer, Dr. Robert D. Culver, of Wheaton College; and editor, Pres. John F. Walvoord of Dallas Theological Seminary. The Society expressed its appreciation to the retiring officers who had carried the work of the Society from its founding in 1949 up to the present; Dr. R. Laird Harris of Faith Theological Seminary, Philadephia, retiring secretary; Dr. George A. Turner of Asbury Theological Seminary, Ky., treasurer; and Dean Burton L. Goddard of Gordon Divinity School, Mass., editor.

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS**

National Association of Evangelicals
108 North Main Street,
Wheaton, Illinois

George L. Ford, Associate Executive Director

HEATON, ILLINOIS — Following its new "grass roots" approach the National Association of Evangelicals is offering a guide for the organization of Local Evangelical Fellowships.

The brochure, "How to Organize a Local Evangelical Fellowship," has been prepared by the Rev. George L. Ford, Associate Executive Director. Mr. Ford has drawn on his experience in organizing local evangelical groups in the Pacific Northwest where he was regional N.A.E. director before coming to the National office. The guide is designed to aid local groups of ministers who have a concern for the spiritual, moral and social needs of their communities. It provides a step by step outline of how to set up an effective group.

Areas covered in the brochure include how to start a local fellowship, how to keep it going, and suggestions for consideration by the organizing committees. It also provides a sample constitution and a list of twelve suggested areas of activity.

The guides are available without cost from the National Association of Evangelicals, 108 North Main Street, Wheaton, Illinois.

WASHINGTON, D. C.—The Evangelical Protestant position as based on the word of God will be presented in a series of ads that is being made available by the National Association of Evangelicals according to announcement by Dr. Clyde W. Taylor, N.A.E. Secretary of Affairs in Washington. Dr. Taylor stated that the ads are designed to meet a long existing need of clarifying the Protestant position due to misconceptions that have arisen from other advertising. The ads, however, will go beyond this immediate need, providing for the general public a clear-cut presentation of the plan of salvation according to the Scriptures.

An initial series of thirty ads is planned in three groups of ten each. These will be provided in mat
forms without charge to local groups and organizations that will sponsor them in local newspapers.

A sample of the first ad,* "Strange Tales About Protestants," and other information concerning the program may be secured by writing to the National Association of Evangelicals, 1405 "G" Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.

* [See below, ed.]

**STRANGE TALES ABOUT PROTESTANTS**

Strange tales are being circulated about Bible-believing Protestants.

The rumor has been circulated that these Protestants do not belong to the "true church." It is being said that the Protestant faith started in the 16th century. You can hear it said that this Protestant faith was founded by "corrupt" leaders... and that they started a new kind of Christianity.

The Bible gives us an accurate account of how the Christian Church began. The early Christians obeyed Christ's command to "preach the Gospel to every creature." The Bible says they "went everywhere preaching the Word." As a result, groups of Christians sprang up all over the world.

These scattered groups of believers, independent of one another, were united only in their faith in the Bible message. That "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (II Corinthians 15:3).

The Church in the first century was not an organization; it consisted of groups of individual believers. The true Church today is not an organization, nor a group of organizations. It is the total number of those who are believers in the Bible message of salvation.

The basis of membership in the true Church has not changed since the first century... it has never been by sacraments or by membership in any church organization... it has always been by spiritual birth, as Christ explained to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3).

You may have other questions about the true New Testament Church... and about membership in a local Bible-believing church. Many of your questions are answered in an interesting FREE pamphlet which will be sent to you if you mail the following: (Coupon)

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LOS ANGELES—With prominent local political leaders taking part, members of the Southwest regional of N.A.E. devoted their December luncheon session in First Church of the Nazarene to a stimulating panel discussion on "Christianity and the Political Drift." The panel was moderated by Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, Pasadena theologian and chairman of N.A.E.'s national social action commission.

Participating in the effort, which many in attendance observed might well furnish a pattern of concern with social issues by other regions, were Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, President John Gibson of the Los Angeles City Council, City Attorney Roger Arnebergh, and Councilman Gordon Hahn. They are among the Southland’s evangelically-minded office holders. In attendance was N.A.E.'s national representative, Rev. George L. Ford, who reported on the organization's broader advances.

The panel made a vigorous start with the moderator's blunt initial inquiry whether a Christian could afford to dabble in politics, since its reputation is that of a shoddy and shabby business. The participants suggested that the political arena is shabby and haphazard in considerable measure just because godly citizens are so often indifferent to political issues, and stressed that, especially in the national and international situation today, the Christian cannot afford to divorce himself from the political picture.

Guided by the moderator, participants voiced their conviction in response to such questions as: What do we gain if our politicians are evangelicals? Is an evangelical Christian necessarily a better politician? Is the evangelical conscience committed in advance against voting for a competent candidate whose religious convictions are Jewish, or Roman Catholic, or Unitarian? What examples can be given of the practical difference it makes when one is an evangelical officeholder, on such issues as corruption in office, the liquor traffic, the smog controversy? What guide-lines does Christianity furnish us for the national and the local political drift? Has national foreign policy in recent decades been negotiated from the standpoint of spiritual strength or of spiritual apostasy? What moral leadership do evangelical politicians take in the social crisis? How does a Christian view of politics differ from any other view?

In closing the panel, the office-holders fell somewhat into disagreement on the question of the role of the church in politics. The question put to them by the moderator was: "If you as a Christian politician stood where I as a Christian minister stand, would you... tell the church members how to vote? give definite instruction in the sphere of political issues?" All agreed that the primary task of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel, and that if it is preoccupied with political affairs, its misjudgment in that arena soon encourages people to suspect it of misjudgment in spiritual matters also. But some of the participants held that some political affairs, e.g. legalized gambling or legalized prostitution, are morally so clear-cut that they can be discussed with liberty from the pulpit. The general tone, however, was a recognition that the church as a church ought not to enter the political arena, but that Christian men of conviction must be counted to mirror and voice their convictions as men of two worlds.
The author of this work is the well known professor of New Testament studies at the Free University of Amsterdam, who served in that capacity almost from the beginning of the present century, and in his long time of service wrote and published commentaries on several New Testament books, and also many other books and pamphlets on various New Testament subjects. The fact that he taught New Testament exegesis for about half a century, wrote several commentaries and also an excellent work on the principles of interpretation, rendered him eminently qualified for the writing of the present work, which deals with the history of New Testament revelation, sometimes called Biblical Theology. This study utilizes the fruits of the exegetical studies of the past, but seeks to integrate these and to see them as a whole. It is really the crown of all New Testament studies, and plays an important part in paving the way for Dogmatics, which aims at a systematic presentation of the revealed truth.

The author evidently prefers the name which Dr. Kuypser gave to this study in his Encyclopedia. Instead of speaking of it as Biblical Theology, as was more common, he gave preference to the name History of Revelation. While recognizing the different nuances of the truth as it is found in the presentation of the New Testament authors, and also the difficulty of integrating those various aspects, he nevertheless aims at presenting the New Testament revelation as an undivided whole. He does not follow the current usage of distinguishing between a Petrine theology, a Pauline theology, a Johannine theology, and a theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In his estimation this breaks up the revelation of the New Testament in an unwarranted way.

At the same time he evidently reckons with the fact that historical conditions often called for different presentations of the same truth, and often warns against traditional interpretations which do not reckon with this fact, and which have been shown to be untenable in the light of later exegetical studies. He is fully aware of the fact that some of the recent findings of the natural sciences, which have been tested and proved to be facts, and several archiological discoveries, call for a careful re-examination of some scriptural statements.

The way in which the author divides the history of the New Testament revelation differs somewhat from the usual one, and he has defended it in a separate work. He divides it into three periods. The first period takes account of the work and the oral teachings of Jesus during his earthly sojourn. The second period is that in which the Christian Church comes to development, and the real meaning of the work of Jesus is interpreted. And the third period deals with the already-established Church, in which it became necessary to defend the truth against prevailing errors.

A proper understanding of this division calls for a few additional remarks. The first period takes account of what happened at the time of the incarnation, of the announcements by the angel and of the prophetic words spoken by Zacharias, Mary and Simeon, and further of the work and the preaching of Jesus. His oral teachings are carefully stated and in many cases exegetically interpreted.

The second period begins with the founding of the Christian Church on the day of Pentecost, and its further development, especially through the preaching of Peter and Paul. The Christian religion gradually passed from the Jews to the Gentiles. A detailed account is given of the missionary activity of Paul. This is followed by a consideration of the various Epistles of Peter, and of their doctrinal significance for the interpretation of the redemptive significance of the work of Christ. These Epistles throw the proper light on the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The third period concerns the defense of the truth respecting the work of Christ. Attention is called to this defense as it is found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the Epistles of Peter, in the Epistle of Jude, and in the writings of the apostle John: his Gospel, his Epistles, and the book of Revelation. It is carefully pointed out what each one of these writings contributed to the defense of the Christian truth.

We highly appreciate this thoroughly Reformed work of the esteemed writer, and congratulate him with the completion of it in his old age. Especially do we appreciate the publication of this work, since up to the present time we did not have such a complete presentation of the revelation of God in the New Testament. Our theological students and ministers who are able to read the Dutch will undoubtedly profit from its perusal and study.

L. Berkhof


The task of reviewing this book has been made somewhat difficult by the lavish statements concerning its importance which appear on the jacket. Dr. Wilbur Smith, himself an author of a book dealing with science and the Bible, calls it “a truly epochal work” and labels it as “the most important discussion of the problems involved . . . that has appeared in this country in the last fifty years.” Dr. Smith further states that “it is the only book, that I know of, by an evangelical scholar of today, that can be favorably compared with the masterly, learned works in this field which were produced in the latter part of the 19th century,—and no book, conservative or liberal, on the subject of science and the Christian faith can be written during the next few decades, if it is an honest work, without fully taking into account this truly remarkable volume. It is the best our evangelical world has yet produced in our day.” In the
light of such unstinted praise, it should be obvious that it takes some courage to properly evaluate this work.

There are many excellent features of Dr. Raam's work. This reviewer happens to know on the basis of correspondence with him a few years ago that this book was born out of a genuine sense of need "for some good advanced works for the really troubled Christian college student." We believe that he has met a large part of this need by producing a work which can be recommended to college students for serious study. Such recommendation, however, does not imply endorsement of all his views. Our differences appear throughout the body of this review.

The author is now Director of Graduate Studies in Religion at Baylor University, Waco, Texas. He views the problems from the point of view of the philosopher rather than the scientist. As can be expected, the portions of the book dealing with the philosophy of science and the theological implications of the problems involved are stronger than those dealing with the actual scientific material. He is of the opinion that "the average scientist is very naive when it comes to the matters of the philosophy of science and that it is not science per se that is so important as it is the theoretical bases of science, and the generalizations to be made from scientific statements" (personal communication). This, of course, is but a restatement of the ancient argument between the philosophers and the scientists. Everyone believes that men outside of his field are naive in their ideas concerning his field. Scientists usually regard philosophers in the same light. Maybe the old Quaker wasn't so wrong after all. Many philosophers contend that one can philosophize about science without knowing too much concerning the actual science involved and they get a bit provoked at the average scientist for his failure to take cognizance of their estimation of the importance of the field of philosophy. Many scientists also err by going too far in the opposite direction. The truth of the matter seems to lie, as it frequently does, somewhere in the middle - one should know both to speak authoritatively on these problems. This is just another way of saying that, until some genius comes along, books written by scientists will have definite philosophical and theological weaknesses and vice versa.

In all fairness to Dr. Raam, we feel that he has done a very commendable job with the material he presents even though his lack of comprehension of the basic sciences is manifested throughout the latter portion of the book. He wisely restricts himself to fields such as descriptive astronomy, the aspects of geology which deal with the flood, and the like. The author is honest in recognizing these limitations and is willing to depend on the scientist for data. For example, on page 182 he states, "Due to the author's own lack of technical training in geology, certain of Dr. Kulp's criticisms are beyond his grasp. . . . " Some may be tempted to ask at this point, on what basis can they be assured that the science he cites is trustworthy? They will have to practice the same faith Dr. Raam does when he states in the preface, "In reference to technical details of the sciences I must depend on what other men say, and I am thereby at their mercy."

The wide range of subject matter included in the book makes it almost impossible to give a fair digest of the material, and we shall restrict ourselves to a few interesting features. The opening section discusses the imperative necessity of a harmony of Christianity and science. The author attempts to explain the present status of Christianity and science in terms of the history of the development of science. In doing so he points up a weakness in the theologians of the past - a weakness frequently caused by being "woefully ignorant of the simplest facts of science... Most of the clergy were trained in the classics, and were strangers to the sciences. Therefore, they did not even have the facts to create a telling strategy." Scientist will assent to many points in Raam's evaluation of this phase of the problem. We only hope it will lead theologians and philosophers to an awareness of the fact that some real scientific knowledge will be needed by them if they are to avoid the mistakes which men of an earlier generation made, mistakes which are the cause of much of the scepticism present in the world today. This can best be done if the men studying in this area become conversant with some of the basic essentials of the science which is molding thought today.

Dr. Raam also cites hyperorthodoxy as one of the causes of the present antagonism of sciences to evangelical Christianity. He believes that the movement of reconciliation may come from the scientist or from the evangelical. He goes on to say that the problem can be solved only if we pay due respect to both science and Scripture. At this stage of the book we feel that the problem Raam faces with his denomination brethren is a greater one than the one we face in the churches which are committed to the principles of the Reformation. The actions he calls for are well known to those who recognize the sovereignty of God in every sphere. This is a weakness we find throughout the book. Many of the problems faced by the average fundamentalist owe their origin, we believe, to their narrow view of the meaning of Christianity. A church that has taught, for example, article II of the Belgic Confession is not nearly so prone to have the problems which Dr. Ramm cites as are those churches who started out with the cry, "No creed but Christ."

The second chapter analyzes the conflict between theology and science. The treatment of this important topic impressed us as being weak and elementary and amounts to little more than saying that scientists in the main are not Christian. The same can be said for sociologists, historians, or for that matter, philosophers. On page 52 Ramm states, "However, the most drastic difference between science and evangelicalism arises from the usage of the scientific method and knowledge by the scientists." Dr. Raam's observations in this connection are very good and we feel that this chapter would be stronger had he elaborated more on the role which scientific method has played in shaping thought today. We know he is qualified to do so.

Dr. Ramm then goes on to deal with the fundamental problems of Christianity and science. These involve the language of the Bible in reference to natural things, the Biblical view of nature, Biblical cosmology and a Christian philosophy of nature. The philosophy Ramm suggests "is not offered in any spirit of dogmatism nor finality, but it is an explorative adventure, a heuristic adventure, to try to force evangelical Protestantism to develop a Christian philosophy of nature." This ultimately leads him to advocating progressive creationism as the fundamental pattern of creation. Although we are tempted personally to go along with the author on this score, we fear that many will have serious doubts as to the validity of his assertions. Some may feel that he trusted the scientists too much. It might be well if in later editions of this book this part were elaborated a bit more. One wonders just when it becomes sensible to publish an "explorative adventure." Our years of teaching experience have taught us that students are not especially dis-
cerning and frequently are unable to differentiate between hypotheses and statements to which one is willing to completely commit himself. It will be interesting to observe what the contents of Dr. Ramm’s ultimate philosophy of nature will include. Dr. Ramm’s failure to state definitely his philosophy of nature is a real deficiency. He errs likewise in the chapter on Biology. Here he states that “the fundamental problem of Christianity in biology is not really evolution but a philosophy of biology.” Yet he is inconsistent at this point since he spends most of the time in that chapter on evolution. He examines the various views, states the one he likes best, but gives little rigorous defence for it. We also looked for some evaluation of the work done by Dr. C. Van Til in this connection. Dr. Ramm has either failed to read him or has chosen to ignore his material on common grace, the nature of fact, and other epistemological problems.

The material dealing with the anticipation of science in Scripture impressed us as being almost completely negative in character. The section is devoted to the many erroneous ideas which have been proposed by men like Harry Rimmer, Sanden, Chestnut and others. He criticizes these men, and justly so, for asserting that the atomic theory is anticipated in the Bible. We feel that Dr. Ramm was not wholly intellectually honest in this chapter to the extent that his verbal chastisement of the men mentioned did not include his good friend Dr. Wilbur Smith, whom we quoted at the beginning of this review. The latter is at much at fault in his book, This Atomic Age and the Word of God, with his fanciful interpretations of 11 Peter 3:10-14, as is either Chestnut or Sanden. Rimmer was obviously a fraud and can be completely ignored. In fact, the chapter could possibly be justified on the basis that some one has to publicly expose a man who has befuddled the thinking of many evangelicals. We must admit that we have attempted this on a small scale some years ago in the Calvin Forum in connection with Rimmer’s exposition of Joshua’s long day. We discovered that Rimmer passed off the foolish calculations made by Totten about 1890 as his own work. (Totten, by the way, died in an insane asylum.) But for Dr. Ramm to completely ignore a book in the chapter under consideration which only a few years ago was hailed as a “literary triumph . . . to evaluate the deeper implications of the release and use of atomic energy . . . in the light of the eschatological teachings of the Bible,” possibly because the author is a friend of his, is not quite fair. The purpose of the book could have been achieved fully as well by leaving out the entire chapter and getting at Rimmer in the chapter on geology.

The latter half of the book deals with the sciences of astronomy, geology, biology and anthropology. Physics, the most basic science of all, as well as chemistry, are not included except in an incidental way. (This is quite of the advertising on the jacket.) It is in this section that the author’s lack of scientific training becomes apparent. The following observations are suggested in a spirit of helpfulness, since we do appreciate the almost insurmountable problems anyone faces in attempting a work of this kind. The list of men given on page 129 dealing with discoveries in the field of atomic theory fails to include the name of Rutherford. No physicist or chemist would have done so. Of all the names mentioned this one should by all means have been included since his experiment with the scattering of alpha-particles enabled him to give us a picture of the structure of the atom which is still regarded as substantially correct today. Rutherford is also noted for his work on the transmutation of elements. On page 148 Ramm confuses specific heat with heat of vaporization. The exponential numbers cited on pages 149 and 258, as well as his designations of U-235 and U-238, mean little to the initiated. Such terms need a bit of elaboration for the general reader if they are to be of any value. This is also true of the material on page 150 — a scientist could cite more cogent reasons for the argument and would have explained somewhat the significance of Mendeliev’s table. The average man has little or no background knowledge concerning matters such as these, and if the argument is to teach him anything, the terms should be explained a bit.

The material dealing with geology impresses us as the strongest chapter of the section concerned with scientific matters. Its chief value lies in Ramm’s presentation of some genuine reasons why the flood theory of geology, as proposed by Price and others, is untenable. His ideas concerning a localized flood, his reasons for accepting a “pictorial day” for the creation days, his contention that the entire record of the flood must be interpreted phenomenally, that is, not only was the flood localized but the destruction of mankind was also local though spoken of in universal terms, may not meet with a warm welcome from some of his brethren of the cloth. We personally are not at all ready to accept his ideas here — chiefly because he makes no appeal to Scripture to substantiate his claim. We found this to be another weakness of the book. In the chapter dealing with anthropology, he accepts an antiquity of man somewhat near 500,000 years. He does so solely on the basis of scientific evidence. As a scientist, we would like to have the theologian integrate this kind of data with the Scriptures, and until it can be done we would be a bit hesitant to accept the data. The scientist is well able to give us his data himself. What we had hoped for in Dr. Ramm’s book was a critical evaluation of this data in the light of Scripture. Dr. Ramm gives us the impression that he is quite willing to accept this type of scientific discovery, and we admire him for it, but the Christian scientist has long since felt the need for a theological appraisal of these discoveries as they relate to the Biblical record. One cannot help wondering when one comes to the end of the book what the doctrine of verbal inspiration means to Dr. Ramm. The reviewer hesitates to say more about this matter since he is not a theologian. But it will not at all surprise him if many will hesitate to recommend the book to their students because of some of the startling notions suggested by Dr. Ramm. I am not afraid of novel ideas, but one at least would like to have the comfortable feeling that there is some warrant in Scripture for maintaining them. This Ramm fails to give and one wonders whether he can do so without re-stating what he means by the inspired Word.

To be a bit more specific on this score, let us consider a few passages. On page 172 we read, “We must realize precisely what the Bible says and cannot say; and what science says and cannot say — the story of creation can only be told by the cooperative efforts of the theologian and the scientist.” Every Christian would doubtlessly be willing to assent to the truth of this assertion. Then on page 222 we find, “We believe, in agreement with the authorities which we have listed, that creation was revealed in six days, not performed in six days. We believe that the six days are pictorial-revelatory days, not literal days nor ages-days. . . . The theological importance of Genesis is that God is Creator, that God created all — not the specific order of creation.”
Concerning the flood, Dr. Ramm states on page 239, “A third view, and the one which we hold, is that the entire record must be interpreted phenomenally. If the flood is local though spoken of in universal terms, so the destruction of man is local though spoken of in universal terms. The record neither affirms nor denies that man existed beyond the Mesopotamian valley. . . . The emphasis in Genesis is upon that group of cultures from which Abraham eventually came. . . . the deluge was universal in so far as the area and observation and information of the narrator extended. Whatever existed beyond the scope of the narrator’s knowledge the record is silent about.” Dr. Ramm cites various authorities, who first suggested this notion, in support of his own position — but references to the Biblical account are conspicuous by their absence. This may be as good a place as any to observe that most of the ideas which Dr. Ramm sets forth have been proposed by others years ago. He usually comments on the various ideas suggested in connection with a given topic and then states which is his preference. One more citation in this connection. On page 249 we read, “The flood was local to the Mesopotamian valley. The animals that came, prompted by divine instinct, were the animals of that region; they were preserved for the good of man after the flood. Man was destroyed within the boundaries of the flood; the record is mute about man in America, or Africa or China.” [Italics ours]

Concerning the origin of man, Dr. Ramm writes, on page 315, “We believe that modern science has demonstrated a great antiquity of man, relatively speaking. His antiquity of somewhere near 500,000 years is large compared to Ussher’s 4004 B.C., but recent compared to the 500 million years ago when life is abundantly detected in the rocks. . . . The answer to man’s antiquity must hinge in large part on our presuppositions as to the origin of man.”

Then, after he has again presented various views in this connection, Dr. Ramm states, on page 330, “Until we get further light from science or archaeology we must suspend judgment as to any final theory of the harmonization of Genesis and anthropology, realizing that if we are pledged to period geology we perhaps shall have to be pledged to period anthropology.” In connection with the Fall we read, “Part of man’s judgment was that he be turned out of the park and into the conditions prevalent in the rest of creation. Barrels of ink have been used to describe the effects of sin upon animals and nature. It has been categorically stated that all death came from man’s sin. . . . It was argued that before Adam sinned there was no death anywhere in the world and that all creatures were vegetarians. But this is an imposition on the record. Ideal conditions existed only in the Garden. There was disease and death and bloodshed in Nature long before man sinned. As we have shown in the chapter in geology, we cannot attribute all this death, disease and bloodshed to the fall of Satan. Certainly the Scriptures do not teach that death entered the world through Satan.”

And thus one can continue. It will be interesting to observe the response which ministers will give to this portion of Dr. Ramm’s book. One wonders if they will not insist that the title be changed from THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE to A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE. At all events, Dr. Ramm has collected an immense amount of material as the result of his prolific reading, and has made this material readily available to those interested in this type of problem. Whether people will swallow it all, or remain comfortable after they have done so, must yet be determined. At all events, the book should give rise to some serious discussions of basic issues.

John De Vries


This author of this book is the Professor of Bible at Grove City College, (Penn.). In its 14 chapters he discusses what he deems to be the central tenets of the Christian Faith, the Table of Contents indicating such subjects as Religion, God, Creation, Sin, Salvation, the Kingdom of God, Christian Love, Prayer, Man’s Destiny, and the Witness of Nature, History, Experience.

The opening chapter defines religion as adjustment to reality. The question is raised why there is such a variety of such adjustment among men. Variable personality factors are cited as the reason for this variety. Monsma then states that the adjustment which satisfies one’s personal interests and attitudes and yet remains true to objective facts and logic would appear to be the truest religion. He presents Christianity as the adjustment which best satisfies these factors. At this early point one can scarcely avoid asking “What, apart from objectivity, makes a thing true?” Can truth also be measured by the degree it satisfies?

God’s existence is declared to be a rationally required fact. This world must have a sufficient reason for being. It must be an object of consciousness, a universal, permanent consciousness. This world is an intelligible structure. The first chapter of Genesis “accounts for everything by accepting the reality of a self-existent, all-creating, all-controlling, purposeful, intelligent God.” Monsma holds the door wide open for denying Genesis 1 as literal history when he fails to take a stand on whether it is literal history or an imaginative presentation of a process of which we have no precise record except such as science may discover.

It is when he speaks of the meaning of the Cross that Monsma finds orthodox Christianity off base. In four lines he dismisses forensic theology as a “crass” interpretation. My dictionary defines the word “crass” as follows, “Coarse or thick in structure, dense, dull, obtuse.” It is almost inconceivable to see the faith of centuries, the hope of millions, so summarily dismissed. I am reminded of the words of Scripture, “God chose the foolish things of the world . . . the weak things . . . the base things . . . the things despised.” Might we add, in interpreting, “the crass things”?

In place of the substitutionary atonement, Monsma suggests as a “more acceptable” interpretation that we have in the cross an object lesson, God and Christ doing the teaching. “God joined men in forsaking him on the cross, not because he was evil or God was indifferent to him, but to demonstrate God’s rejection of sin and the sinner. Jesus freely bore God’s judgment and thereby made it clear, so clear that men can see it and apply it to themselves, can understand it and truly repent of sin. By faith men can identify themselves with Jesus on the cross, accept God’s judgment revealed in it, become conformed unto his death, as Paul puts it, and thus find forgiveness of their sins. By faith they can now take his cross into their lives and be saved. The act of self-condemnation involved in such faith gives it its saving virtue” (p. 41). Monsma goes on to say that Christ broke the power of sin on the cross because he died thereon without bitterness, in self-sacrificing love. The cross is a demonstration of God’s judgment. Christ
changed it from a symbol of shame to a means of salvation. In other words, the cross is a signpost, pointing the way, not a place of literal substitution.

It is not for this reviewer to examine all of the Scriptural evidence for forensic theology. One can only wonder just why Monsma pins the "criss" label on it so easily. And one wonders whether the "object-lesson cross" has ever sustained a soul in the conviction of sin, whether this interpretation of the cross is most satisfying, to use Monsma's own language.

In discussing saving faith, Monsma says, "In some circles the idea is prevalent that saving faith has to do only with repentance and the acceptance of the merits of Christ, and that good works have no direct saving value. They are regarded merely as evidence of the genuineness of one's repentance and acceptance of Christ, as the natural fruit which a regenerated life bears, and as means of expressing one's gratitude to God for salvation. As such they may be regarded as necessary to salvation, but not as part of the ground of salvation." This, I take it, is a rather nice characterization of the view of the Heidelberg Catechism on the subject of good works. This view Monsma sets aside as misconstruing what Paul teaches. Paul is said to reject the works of the law as devoid of saving value. Then the author seems to suggest that the fruits of the Spirit's activity in us, good works, which center in God and Christ, do have saving merit. He suggests that here Paul is in substantial agreement with Jesus, who makes salvation dependent upon loving God and doing the deeds of which he speaks in the Sermon on the Mount.

These are but a few indications of Monsma's departure from the Christianity of the Scriptures. Though he says many fine things in this book, especially in the last few chapters, one is led to wonder how much of the "message of Christianity" is left when the "Rock of Ages, cleft for me" is removed, when salvation becomes a cooperative work of man and God.

Arthur W. Hoogstrate

_Ned B. Stonehouse, J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1954). $5.95._

_His BOOK contains more than the record of the personal life of J. Gresham Machen. As such, it is interesting enough and worthy of reading, but the wider significance of the book lies in its account of the Modernist-Orthodox controversy in the Presbyterian Church, more particularly, in the faculty of Princeton Seminary. The infiltration of liberalism into the Presbyterian Church furnishes the background for this biographical memoir. It is appropriate that the author should release his work for publication on the 25th anniversary of the founding of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Westminster is the embodiment of Machen's ideals, and the culmination of his heroic struggle in defense of the Reformed faith within the Presbyterian Church.

In spite of the wide publicity given to Machen during the Modernist controversy of the 1920's, the casual observer learned very little about his personal life. This situation was largely due to his reticence on such matters. He cared little for public attention, and was always careful not to permit his personal affairs to intrude upon ecclesiastical matters. Thus only a few of his intimates knew of the warmth and charm so characteristic of him. Dr. Stonehouse has done a real service to the church by giving the facts necessary for a true appraisal of Machen's personality an career.

A great part of the book is devoted to Machen's spiritual and intellectual preparation for his work. Of staunch Presbyterian stock, his orthodox training both in church and home produced in him a strong Christian conviction. His education was in the finest classical tradition. At John Hopkins, where he received his basic education, he studied the classics under the guidance of the great Greek scholar Gildersleeve. Thus the foundation was laid for a brilliant career as a New Testament authority. The decision to enter Princeton Seminary was made after much heart-searching. Machen was certain that his calling was not to be a pastor yet he felt that God wanted him to devote his life to the service of the church. His teachers at Princeton encourage him to continue his education in theology. This he did in several German theological schools where he learned abou the Modernist heresy at its source.

Eventually Machen was called to lecture in New Testament at Princeton Seminary, which was still at that time an orthodox seminary. The story of the decline of Princeton into a liberal institution, the vigorous protests of Machen against liberal advances, and his eventual resignation from the faculty form an exciting and informative account of the defence of Protestant orthodoxy with which every Reformed Christian should be familiar.

The closing chapters of the book relate the history of the founding of Westminster, of the Independent Board of Missions, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and of Machen's untimely death while on a speaking engagement a Bismarck on Jan. 1, 1937.

In his preface Dr. Stonehouse modestly states his regret that he was unable to bring to the task of writing this book the qualifications of a professional literary man. His apolog is unnecessary. The style is forthright and clear, and fully adequate for the purpose.

Dr. Stonehouse was fortunate to have access to the voluminous correspondence which Machen carried on with his parents and friends, and many of these letters are quotes in this volume. The correspondence between Machen and his mother is especially valuable. These letters are remark able for their urbane style and penetrating thought.

Stonehouse is frankly an admirer and friend of Machen. He was asked by Machen to serve as his assistant in the chair of New Testament at Westminster. Their relations on the faculty were most cordial. Would this fact disqualify him as an objective and impartial biographer? Recognizing this danger, the author has been careful to document his assertions fully. His interpretations are based on carefully considered facts.

The common reader will find this biography interesting and the scholar will find in it an array of accurate information and interpretation which will serve well to help him penetrate into the significance of the Modernist controversy. I heartily recommend this book to all who treasure the Reformed heritage, and seek to know the truth about one of its most able apologists.

Hero Bratt
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