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**Technology Raises a Problem**

**Theology in Our Time**

**Religion and the State University**

**The Reformed Ministry:  
Advice to Young Preachers**

**A Spiritual Theme to a  
Secular Audience**

**On Classifying Library Books**

**Book Reviews**

**VOL. XVIII, NO. 6**

**TWO DOLLARS  
A YEAR**

**JANUARY, 1953**

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THE CALVIN FORUM

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# The CALVIN FORUM

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# EDITORIALS

## Technology Raises a Problem

IT is not so many years ago that our newspapers and magazines made liberal reference to a new Social Reform movement known by the name of Technocracy. Briefly stated, this was a movement which favored control of the economy by men of technical skill such as industrial engineers. Its theories were based upon the premise that, since technical advances in the production of consumer goods have so far outstripped the progress in our social institutions, and since our civilization is largely what scientists and engineers have made it, these men must now also assume control over it in all of its ramifications.

This theory is by no means dead, even though it is seldom mentioned today by its old name. Especially since the advent of the atomic energy age a few years ago, there has been a growing sentiment among leaders in the physical sciences that the far-reaching effects of the new discoveries upon our world should be administered by those trained to think in technical terms. This same thought comes to expression especially in Russia where technical competence is an important consideration in appointing men to high office in the state. The whole structure of the Soviet Union is geared to technical processes, with the utmost emphasis upon maximum production.

We find something of the same trend in our own country, particularly within our large industrial concerns. Intent upon maximum efficiency at all costs, in many instances the industrial engineer is the final authority, whose job it is to eliminate all "waste" motion. Closely associated with him is the accountant who evaluates every motion, human or otherwise, in terms of dollars and cents. Streamlining is the primary goal in so many instances.

### A Problem

Even if you and I are not laborers in such a factory, nevertheless all of us, as members of society, are under the influence of technology. Not one of us would like to be deprived of the many conveniences and luxuries made possible by the technical progress of the last century. However, with all such progress it becomes increasingly apparent that thinking individuals are becoming concerned about its effects upon the human spirit. It is this concern which prompted the publication recently of a booklet entitled, *Roeping en Probleem der Techniek* by Dr. Ir. H. Van Riessen, and published by J. H. Kok of Kampen, The Netherlands. The author is espe-

cially interested in bringing Christian philosophy to bear upon the problems raised by our technological progress. He considers the subject of technology in relation to our philosophy of life, to science, and to labor, and then suggests briefly what may be done to arrest the devitalizing effect of our obsession with technology. Apparently his chief concern is for the laborer who is rapidly losing his identity and especially his freedom.

It is entirely proper that the Christian, particularly the Calvinist, be concerned with this problem. It is, in fact, *necessary* that he be engaged with it. Both technology and the laborer affected by it must be related to God and His will. And where the one has an apparently inevitable effect upon the other it becomes necessary to ask whether this influence is conducive to the fulfillment of man's high calling before God or not. Not only machines but human spirits, created in the image of God, are rapidly becoming the tools of technology, and it is right to question whether such a situation is compatible with God's purpose for man.

### Various Opinions

We may say that modern technology is the product, or better, the application of discoveries in the pure, physical sciences. It is applied science, and the sciences are related to it as knowledge is to "know-how." With the freedom which characterizes him as a human being, man has risen far above the purely physical nature. His products in most cases far excel in quality those formerly extracted from nature. His technical acumen has enabled him to discover the secrets of God's universe with remarkable proficiency. That is precisely what he is called upon to do. The book of nature must be read if it is to be a revelation at all. Van Riessen says, "Technology is a precious fruit of the human spirit, a high calling of man created in God's image."

There are those today, many in fact, who view science and its consequent technology quite differently. There are a few who despise them as products of the devil. We have such sects in our own country. There are many more, however, who would deny any relationship at all between a Christian philosophy and technology. For them the latter is a-Christian or neutral, and need not look to the Scriptures for direction—from which it follows that it is immaterial whether or not a Christian has an interest in the developments of a technical sort.

You will recognize at once that such an attitude is a very general one and not confined only to a consideration of the physical world. It permeates thought in all fields today.

The Christian, however, who accepts the Scriptures as God's revelation, must assert the demands of God's revealed will. "Whatsoever ye do" is the all-inclusive language of the Scriptures. The author of this booklet points out that God has repeatedly illustrated what He means by this mandate. Witness, for example, Exodus 31 where God called Bezaleel and equipped him by His spirit to be a skilled craftsman for the construction of the tabernacle. Witness also the technical accomplishments of such Biblical characters as Hiram, Hezekiah, and Uzziah. We are inclined to doubt the validity of some of these Biblical references as warrant for, and sanction of, the development of technical skills as the author seems to imply. Be that as it may, we Calvinists are agreed that technical competence is not sinful as such but is just another facet of the peculiarly human capacity for revealing the glory of the Creator. The very nature of man, created in God's likeness, requires that he expend himself in utilizing to the fullest extent the forces resident in nature.

All too often our activity in the sciences has as its sole object to satisfy ourselves, to increase our physical well-being. Such a motive is, of course, the consequence of sin. It is particularly apparent in the field of technology which so directly affects each one of us at the material or physical level of our lives. It is well for us to emphasize that such a motive is decidedly un-Christian and selfish. We need to be reminded often that we are under Divine obligation first of all to glorify God Whom we know by faith to be the author of the objects of our search, and who demands the totality of our being and doing. Such a conception of our task makes our discoveries *His* revelation and not ours. That gives purpose and meaning to our work, and emphasizes its necessity and sublimity.

### **Work Is a Calling**

Van Riessen points out very clearly that work is a blessing, a calling, yes, a calling to serve. It is just this conception of labor which is in danger of being lost in our technological age. Too often all of us behave as if our work were a means of making a living rather than a part of living itself. That is particularly true of manual labor, but increasingly true also of much so-called professional activity. We so easily forget that labor and the ability to engage in it are blessings. Furthermore, labor of even the simplest sort should have a purpose which is satisfied in the very act of laboring. The current mentality is quite the opposite. Labor is frequently considered a necessary nuisance, a means of making money which can increase our happiness during

after-work leisure hours. Satisfaction comes not in doing a job well but in anticipation of the whistle which signals the time when life really begins. Modern technology has reduced so many processes to a series of special operations that each laborer is not much more than an automation who can do his task without thought, and who has lost all freedom to exercise his initiative because he is not in a position to appreciate the total significance of the process. Herein lies the chief danger of our technological civilization. Without an appreciation of the total process in which he plays a part, the laborer gradually loses sight of the fact that his work is a mission, a calling, and that he is first of all a personality responsible to God. His spirit must find expression in his labor as well as in his spare time.

### **How Solve the Problem?**

Here then is the real problem with which Van Riessen is concerned. Our very *culture* is in danger when man no longer finds his work a challenge. How can this problem be solved? The author makes a few suggestions which apply especially to a typical large industry. He maintains, first of all, that those in responsible positions must give minimal directions of such a nature that the laborers can exercise a maximum of freedom and initiative in their work. This will require a considerable educative program, punctuated by many errors, but it is well worth the effort. Specifically, however, what must be done? In answer to this question we do not find much satisfaction in this booklet. The author does suggest that factories be limited to a maximum of one thousand men, so that each employee may feel himself a participant in the enterprise. He also recommends that work be so organized that ten to twenty percent of a laborer's time be devoted to functions which challenge his imagination. Though this may seem unrealistic and uneconomical, the author feels that it is essential and eventually will "pay off." More employee participation in the improvement of working conditions, manufacturing methods, and the like also must be stimulated. Further than this Van Riessen does not go, for, says he, it is not his purpose in this booklet to propose a detailed plan for the spiritual recovery which he feels is desperately needed.

Of course, this is not the first time that we have been reminded of this condition. It is of one piece with a much more general situation or condition which involves all of us, laborers or otherwise. It is characteristic of sinful mankind to consider work a necessary evil to be executed with a minimum of effort and in the minimum of time. This is true even in education which supposedly should enoble all of experience. We see it in the schools where study is often merely a means to a mercenary end and must be facilitated by means of detailed directions, formulas which cannot err, and so forth. But

it is most apparent in the sphere of industry where a sharp division exists between brains and brawn, between the planners and those who follow the plans. And such a division inevitably leads to many problems, social and otherwise, of which we are all aware. True it is that there will always be those who lead and those who follow. But the rise of technology has greatly widened the gulf between the two to the point where labor has lost its real significance.

How serious is this situation? The author of this book looks upon it as a real threat to our culture. What becomes of our culture and civilization when millions of our fellowmen live their lives in a "spiritual wilderness," as he calls it? Our culture

is the product precisely of that spiritual quality called freedom which is now in jeopardy.

We have no easy solution to this problem. The present trend seems to be largely irreversible. Our lives are so bound up with the fruits of technology, the things of this world which we have adopted as necessities, that such a moral issue as Van Riessen holds before us seems quite unimportant to the masses. However, that is no excuse for us as Calvinists to do nothing. More than ever we must assert the value of the individual and then implement that assertion with all the power at our command. The fight against sin in all its forms is always our struggle.

E. W.

## A Generation of Vibrant Theology

THOSE who have never made a study of theology, and even some who have, regard it as an arid field. It is, they say, an area that is hostile to growth and development. It dotes on the word "authority," which means that it binds itself tightly to books written thousands of years ago. Theology, they say, fondles the term "conservative" looking askance upon the work of liberals and progressives. All and all, these men paint a very uninspiring and forbidding picture of this great science.

Nothing is farther from the truth. Those who set themselves to a serious study of theology find it an invigorating experience. Theology is far from being dead; it is vibrant with life. It has been characterized by revolutions and reformations, by supplementation and accretion, by application and reaffirmation. And every theologian who is worthy of the name concedes that theology has not arrived. This is the position of even those who stand foursquare on the doctrine of Biblical infallibility. New facets are constantly being opened and new applications to the ever-changing complex of modern thinking and living are incessantly called for. New evaluations are forever being thrust upon us. The Bible lends itself, indeed offers itself, to the prayerful probings of the human mind. It is a fountain that refuses to run dry.

The literature that has been pouring forth from the press in the area of New Testament study during the last thirty years reveals most vividly what has taken place during the last generation. It shows how vibrant theology actually is. Some theologians may be dead, but theology cannot be modified after that fashion.

### From Analysis to Synthesis

During the last generation there has been a notable and far-reaching change in the methods of

theologians. They had been analytical, and as scholars they were undoubtedly under the influence of the spirit of scientific studies, which had a veritable mania for taking things apart. Such method had its value, of course, and made possible great advances in the progress of civilization but was frequently quite destructive, except when followed by a process of synthesis. The scientist took the object of his research apart and proceeded to characterize and to classify. But when he so analyzed, let us say, a flower he had no flower left. So also the theologian dissected and redissected the Bible. And by such analytical devices he lost the Scriptures.

At the beginning of this century there was little thought which supported the unity of the Bible. The Gospels were torn apart so that the desks of New Testament scholars were strewn with paradigms, stories, editorial comments, and proverbs. But the Gospels were gone, except as rather poorly made copies of collections. One could peruse the area of Biblical theology and would find it difficult, if not impossible, to find a book revealing or tracing the essential unity of Biblical teachings. The books that did appear divided the field into separate disconnected theologies. There were Synoptic theology, Pauline, Johannine, Petrine, and Jacobine theologies. The various New Testament writers were placed over against one another, not as supplements, but as opposites and correctives. So anyone, however slight his knowledge of New Testament study may be, can show how the Bible and its teachings were ground under the merciless heel of the analysts who occupied the places of prominence a generation ago.

With a great deal of concentration the analysts attempted to show the disunity of the Bible and by that process to cast discredit upon it as the Divine authority in Christian thinking and living. The practical results were and are that men lost the ground of their faith and floundered about in the mire of despair. Leaders of thought throughout the

world began to predict that civilization would soon be destroyed by a sort of a suicidal process. And closely associated with this trend was the advent of two world wars within a single generation. These had a sobering effect which came at a time when the evaluation of Scriptures by Biblical scholars was exceedingly low. Indeed, these scholars had no Bible left. From their point of view, all they had was a collection of phrases of dubious value written by men of dubious intelligence and ethics.

In the midst of this general despair students began again to look for a Bible with a message of authority. Working synthetically they began to look for unity. Declares A. M. Hunter of Aberdeen University: "Sooner or later a change was bound to come—a change from the centrifugal to the centripetal. That change is now upon us. Our critics have left the circumference and are bent on the center—on the unity which underlies the diversity."<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have still a long way to go in showing the essential unity of the whole Bible. But they have made a good start by showing that certain Biblical themes are consistently taught throughout the Bible. C. H. Dodd in his *Apostolic Preaching* has shown that identical doctrine about the church can be traced through the entire New Testament. Taylor has done the same thing for the doctrine of atonement. A. M. Hunter in his *Message of the New Testament* shows that the story of salvation presents a unified doctrine throughout the New Testament. These are just a few of many other works which give evidence of the quest for unity. We have gone a long way from New Testament theology to a New Testament theology. Professor Hunter jubilantly declares that "the plain man need be in perplexity no longer if he but listen to our modern interpreters."<sup>2</sup> The note here sounded is, of course, a bit over-jubilant, but it does reveal a recognition of the fact that theologians in general have shifted and are shifting from an analytical to a synthetic approach. What the ultimate result of such a shift may be is difficult to foresee, but it certainly makes it exceedingly difficult for the liberal and for the modern critic to maintain their positions.

### From Anthropology to Theology

Perhaps the most notable of our relearnings in the last generation is the new appreciation of God on the part of New Testament scholars. Prior to the recent resurgence of theology, men attempted to create a theology out of anthropology. The attempt to make God out of the current conception of God seemed in part justified. We have in our humanistic conception developed an exceedingly high conception of man—practically deifying him—and we were

informed that man is according to Biblical definition the image bearer of God.

So men embellished the conception of a human father and declared to those looking for a newer and clearer conception of God: "Behold your God." But what they actually saw was a creation of the human mind pitifully inadequate for human worship and inadequate for redemption. Indeed our conception of God had descended to such a low estate that the atheists were pretty close to being entirely justified in deriding God as we conceived Him to be. Even the great modernistic preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick, complained about the fact that we have gotten so low down in our conception of God that we are almost ashamed to confess belief in Him and think that we honor Him when we can name a few scientists who still believe in Him. We had gone so far astray in our deification of man and humanification of God that the human and the divine were identified. In the process we lost God who could bring the security so direly needed.

This view has stamped American Christianity, so that when Professor Denis Brogan of the Political Science Department of Cambridge University commented on American religious life, he declared that "religion in America unlike religion in Europe, is a unifying force. And it is so because it is untheological; somehow the religion of good works does not divide people here"<sup>3</sup> as religion does elsewhere. (This comment was made at the American Round Table held on April 14, 1952).

One may not agree with his opinion in the matter, but he does take note of the fact that American religion is untheological. By implication he declares it to be anthropological, humanistic—a religion of good works for the benefit of man and certainly not for the glory of God. Professor Brogan had caught the religious characteristic of the American in general. It is untheological. But had he been acquainted with theological thinking in general, he might have detected the beginnings of a change in the thinking of religious leaders.

Perhaps Karl Barth should be given a great deal of credit for the termination of this tendency toward the cheapening and obliteration of God. In 1918 near the close of the first world war his *Römerbrief* appeared and became a potent force in the English-speaking world, particularly after its translation in 1932. The book was everything a commentary should not be. In it he ridiculed all commentaries as being but series of translations, philosophical and archeological notes. This was unfortunately too true. But Barth's own commentary is even less than that as a commentary. In it we learn more about Barth's mind than about St. Paul's—a mind clearly revealing the influence of Plato, Kant, and Kierkegaard. Though Barth's conception

(1). A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 1951, p. 138.  
(2). *Ibid.*, p. 139.

(3). American Round Table, *Digest Report of the First Session on the Moral and Religious Bases of American Society*, 1952, p. 7.

of God is far from being Christian in the Biblical sense, he threw a bombshell in the midst of that type of thinking which tended to identify God with man. He strove to drive home the total differentness between the two. He insisted that God was *das ganz Anderer*. Unfortunately, his conception of God was philosophically conditioned, and it has led us, I fear, to a distorted conception of the God of the New Testament. In holding before us the transcendent God, he tempted us to lose the imminent God. Both of these aspects of God were traditionally maintained so that a personal redemptive relationship between God and the sinner could be conceived as Scripture taught it. Nevertheless, this renewed emphasis upon the transcendence of God was a wholesome reaction and it began to be felt all along the line of Biblical research either directly or indirectly.

Unfortunately Barth and his cohorts have not led us out of the camp of the modernists. He has clung to presuppositions that have invited many modernists to his way of thinking. But be that as it may, he must be associated with the tremendous shift from anthropology to theology which is clearly discernible in the writings of New Testament scholars during the last thirty years.

### **From the Son of Man to the Son of God**

During the first quarter of the present century there was a great deal of response to the cry "away with creeds" (or formulated theology) and "Back to Christ." Creed and Christ were put in juxtaposition to one another. There was a feeling that the Christ of the Christians had been hidden under all sorts of theological reflections. So the scholars, in response to this cry, began the search for Jesus. There was a most feverish quest for the historical Jesus. Men began to tear the Bible apart analytically. They attempted to get rid of all editorial accretion. The *Geschichte Schule* tried to get at His actual sayings and doings. Vainly they attempted to develop a biography of Jesus. Though the number of so-called biographies was legion, none was found acceptable to the critics themselves. They came up with the last and greatest Jewish prophet, with a peerless Teacher, with a social reformer, with a revolutionist, and so on. During the last generation these reconstructionists have been increasingly rejected. This new view of Jesus has been adequately voiced by Hoskyns and Davey in a book entitled *The Riddle of the New Testament*. This book constitutes a review of the critical methods that have been in vogue in New Testament research. They show that the critics could trace their studies back through paradigms, parables, miracles, proverbs, and so forth, back into tradition, but they never could escape the Christological question: "What think

you of the Christ? Whose Son is He?" This is the riddle which the scholars could never escape. The generally-accepted position was that He was but a Jew, born probably illegitimately, Who transformed himself, or was transformed into a supernatural Christ—feeling Himself called to fulfill certain eschatological ideals. This position was and is unacceptable. They found that, in spite of all the work of the critics, New Testament documents converged on one point, namely, an act of the living God sending His Son into the flesh and maintaining His divinity, and working out supernaturally the redemptive plan of God. This remained incomprehensible; and yet it alone accounted for the trustworthy documents that are extant, and for the ecclesiastical and, in general, world-wide transformation. So scholars are moving from a son of man to the Son of God.

### **From Human Ascent to Divine Descent**

This reemphasis on the supra-naturalism of the Christ was not, of course, an isolated movement. It created a soteriological transformation. This has been articulated most effectively by Anders Nygren. He is a theological professor at Lund, Sweden, where the third convention of the Conference on Faith and Order was held last summer. He has written a monumental work of three volumes the title of which is *Agape and Eros*. He asks the question: What do you mean when you say that Christianity is love? There are two Greek words for love. These two words indicate the two widely different conceptions of the doctrine of salvation. Scholars have been attempting to trace the Christian religion or its chief parts back to the mystery religions of the Greeks. *Eros* express the Greek conception of an approach to God, whereas *agape* characterizes the essential Christian idea. *Eros* expresses man's way to God, whereas *agape* indicates God's way to man. Scholarship has been trying to indicate *eros*, man's way to God. It has been answering the question: What must man do to be saved? It is the "do-something" religion. Touches of this emphasis can be found in our works of charity, in our stress upon ethics, and even in our songs explaining that "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." This, Nygren points out, is not the distinctive Christian note. That is expressed by *agape* which indicates God's way to man rather than man's way to God. It refers to the Divine downward movement, the Divine self-giving manifested in Christ's sacrifice, in his drawing of the sinner to the Father, all the while strangely indifferent to human merit. Thus again God's glory is being reinstated, and man's worth is being discredited. It is the Divine descent rather than the human ascent that is being increasingly recognized. It is at least a gesture in the direction of re-enthroning God in the work of salvation.

## From a Club to a Church

There is still another area to which I would like to call your attention, in which striking reconstructions have been made by theologians. I refer to the conception of the church. The doctrine of the church suffered a tremendous relapse at the turn of the century. This was due in part to the abuse of the prerogatives assumed by the Roman Catholic Church, and perhaps more yet to the remarkable appreciation of individualism that had come to obtain. It was an era in which man developed a very fertile intellectual soil for the growth of democracy; but it left a few generations clawing at one another. The idea of the unity of the human race—of common problems and common foes—somehow remained remote. Scholars interested in the Christian religion did not remain entirely free from this taint. Christians began to complain about “churchianity.” They wanted Christianity, which they felt was apparently at odds with the church. They tired of the creeds and insisted upon having Christ without intervening ecclesiastical authority. There was a growing number of individuals who advocated “unattached” practical Christianity. The church was gradually losing its authority. It degenerated into a human organization, a “get together” club, a group of individuals voluntarily associated for the promotion of projects of human welfare—their own and sometimes that of others. However, this spirit of cooperation for a common, human good is in the air now. We have labor unions, national and international; we have ecumenical gatherings and many other types of cooperatives which, I think, serve in part as a reaction to the rank individualism that pulled men apart.

In just how far this general spirit, born out of need, contributed to renewed interest in the church, I do not venture to say. It would be easy to overstate. But the fact that there has been a relearning of the church as a divinely instituted organism is clearly in evidence. Newton Flew has written an excellent work entitled *Jesus and His Church*, a citation from which should suffice. He says, “The con-

viction is growing that the need of the Christian people is a fresh vision of the Church as God meant it to be, His own creation, the instrument of His age-long purpose, the reconciling body in which all mankind might meet in a worship and a service which would extend to the furthestmost boundary of human life.”<sup>4</sup> To this testimony let me add that of H. H. Farmer: “The idea of the Church is a part of the Christian doctrine of God. The Church is not an optional addendum to the Christian way of life and, as such, can be dispensed with. It is not something brought into this world by the social instincts of humanity, a sort of a Christian get-together club. The divine purpose of love in so far as it achieves its end of bringing human persons back to the real meaning of their life calls into being and must call into being a new order of personal relationships. It creates a new fellowship of men and women which is both the realization and the organ of that realization in history, which ultimately must transcend for its realization all history.”<sup>5</sup>

Other such citations could be called upon to indicate the growing conviction that the church is not a human institution but a Divine institution established for the purpose of God's glory and for the working out of His redemptive plan. It has, therefore, Divine sanction and Divine authority. This is a wholesome shift from the idea that the church is an organization created by human connivance and cooperation, and toward which a man can with impunity remain indifferent.

There are other areas in which the vibrancy of religious thinking is in evidence. I am not so sure that all of these movements can bring a great deal of satisfaction to the orthodox who believe unswervingly in the infallibility of the Bible. That conviction is not too prevalent, I fear. And without the acknowledgement of that infallible guide we must be wary lest we are being led by blind guides. I am under the impression that the movement is rather *away from* something rather than *toward* something.

H. S.

(4). Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church*, 1938, p. 13.

(5). H. H. Farmer, *God and Man*, p. 143.



# Religion and the State University\*

The Rev. Leonard Verduin

Pastor of the Ann Arbor Chapel  
of the Christian Reformed Church

THE Campus Religious Council at the University of Michigan has watched with great interest and concern the development of a growing conviction that all is not well with our higher education touching the place of religion in its curricula. As so many pulsebeats in this development locally, one might list among other items the various colloquiums on the problem held at Lane Hall some years ago, the Report prepared by a Faculty Committee in 1948, a Report drawn up by the Student Committee on Religion, circulating currently, the remarks made by President Hatcher at a Convocation called by him of late, and the animated discussion at a literary college conference held at the League recently.

We hope it is not presumptuous for us to put down some of the convictions that have grown upon us through the years anent this matter. We have come to certain convictions both as to diagnosis and as to indicated remedies.

## I

May we share with you first of all our diagnosis of the problem? We believe that one of the outstanding characteristics of our American experiment in higher education is its ambition to be *commitmentless*. We Americans have acted upon the assumption that man at his best is a creature without commitment to any specific *Weltanschauung*. And we have attempted schools, teachers, and teaching without any such commitments or with very much attenuated commitments. The best teaching, the only proper teaching, it was held, was slantless teaching. Our "neutral" university is the result of this attempt to keep commitment to a *Weltanschauung* in abeyance.

Now it can hardly be denied that in some ways great good has come of this approach. Without the objectivity engendered by this approach our vast advances in the sciences would have been quite unlikely if not impossible. By common consent there is an area of human learning that is best served by the dispassionate approach. And we feel that the values inherent in it are considerable even in the study and the teaching of religion. But all through the American experiment thus far it has been felt that religion can hardly be made to fit into the scheme of commitmentlessness; by definition religion implies commitment to some Person or Thing which then becomes the point about which human

life is oriented. Wholly dispassionate religion is a contradiction in terms. And in the presence of these two major assumptions, viz., a) that learning is to be commitmentless and b) that religion is impossible without commitment, the inevitable result was that religion was relegated to extra-curricular and off-campus status. Religion came to be looked upon as a footnote in which matters not essential to the text were broached. And not far removed from this was the assumption that the religious person is odd, a freak, a deviation from standard. Quite unintentionally, we are convinced, but surely nevertheless, this was the practical upshot of our American experiment with commitmentlessness.

One often hears the idea put forward that the First Amendment to our Constitution with its provision that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." enjoins commitmentlessness upon us. But we may say with certainty that no such thing was intended by this Amendment. Quite oppositely it anticipates commitment, multiple commitment, even rival commitment. Convinced that such is not undesirable, it provides that in this situation Congress shall not make any law whereby one commitment is given undue leverage (resulting from establishment) nor another commitment be put at a disadvantage by a law prohibiting "the free exercise thereof." Nothing in this Amendment precludes the teaching of courses in religion at a university. What is precluded is favoritism, that and that alone.

We think there is evidence that it has begun to dawn upon many earnest students of our American experiment that we have been, to put it simply, a bit glib with our idea of commitmentlessness. Men without more or less deep-seated commitment have turned out to be pretty much a figment of the mind. And the nearer man gets to be the dispassionate tabulator which the system expects him to be, the less significant he becomes except in those areas of investigation where commitment attenuates. We have discovered that man as we experience him is not the dispassionate being we had imagined. And we have learned that he will not forever keep his allegiance-giving in abeyance. Somewhat to our consternation we have discovered what a deep-seated urge to commitment resides in his soul. We have seen commitment, even in fanatical forms, appear where we had least expected it.

\*This article was originally a memorandum drawn up for the Campus Religious Council of the University of Michigan.

## II

It is at this point that we find ourselves not without fear as to the future. We fear that the college student reared in an atmosphere artificially purged of commitment is hardly the sort of being needed to resist the overtures of some missionary pressing for commitment to the nihilistic "isms" that clamor for man's allegiance in our times. We feel that our system has produced young people with a partial vacuum in an area where man does not tolerate a thorough-going emptiness; and this we hold to be a danger. Commitmentlessness, we fear, can hardly be a proper immunization against the fanatical commitment patterns confronting men in the world today. We feel that the only trustworthy immunization consists of pitting commitment against commitment, loyalty against loyalty, commitment to something good and wholesome against commitment to that which robs men of their proper humanity.

We cannot refrain from pointing also to another sinister thing that has grown up within our vaunted commitmentlessness. What we have in mind here can best be introduced in connection with the appellation "sectarian" as it is bandied about of late. We hear it said in public that a person with this or that religious commitment is sectarian and that teaching in the signature of such a commitment is sectarian teaching. This is alarming. For the word *sectarian* in our culture has meaning only in the presence of *establishment*. A sectary is by definition a person who deviates from the standard, the accepted, position. Can it be that in spite of the First Amendment, establishment has taken place nevertheless—establishment for commitmentlessness, so that a person committed religiously is labelled sectarian? Must we accept that the secularist is the standard? And that the religionist is sectarian? Blatant atheism can take on all the characteristics of a religion. Does the Constitution actually mean to provide for its freedom of expression the while bidding the confirmed theist to hold himself in check seeing that he represents a sectarian position? To argue thus would be to abuse the very principle of Americanism. America was born in the fond conviction that committed men are not at all undesirable and that multiple commitment also is desirable, so desirable that the First Amendment was written to insure free play for varying commitments. As soon as we begin to act upon the assumption that commitment, particularly conflicting commitment, among the citizenry is undesirable, so soon have we turned traitor to that which the founding fathers had in mind. And a university in the truly American tradition, far from discouraging commitment, will encourage commitment; but it will exercise every precaution so as not to be unduly kind, or unkind, to this commitment or that.

## III

We should like to record a few of the things that have come to the fore in our thinking as we pondered

a possible solution to the problem as we construe it? We feel that it would be in all cases a tragic mistake to bring into the curriculum any thing, or into the teaching personnel any person, not genuinely sympathetic toward the techniques of objectivity dictated by commitmentlessness wherever those techniques are useful. We feel that commitment, also religious commitment, allegiance to a specific religiousness, is an asset and that when appointments are made it should be considered an asset; but we are quite as certain that an instructor whose *sole* characteristic is commitment can do little good and much harm. Academic respectability must be guarded very jealously at a school such as the University of Michigan.

On the other hand, if our analysis of the problem is correct, it would seem that a given religious position can be most adequately treated in a classroom by a person himself committed to that religious position. Just as one would hardly expect a person committed to totalitarianism to represent adequately the traditions of western democracy, so it is highly unlikely that a person whose commitment lies elsewhere will represent adequately a given religious position. We are happy to notice that the Student Committee Report anticipates this opinion as it states that well-reasoned exposition of basic positions is needed "by men who are committed to them." The person, for example, who in his own thinking is still committed to the possibility and the desirability of commitmentlessness can do more harm than good even though the course he teaches bears a religious title.

## IV

We come now to the question as to the extent to which the creation of a Department of Religion carries in it the solution to our problem. This plan would no doubt have its advantages, one of them being that it would tend to give back to religion the standing of a legitimate discipline in a modern university. (It was denied by implication at one of the meetings held recently, that religion is a legitimate discipline.) The creation of such a Department of Religion would help to liberate religion of the stepmotherly treatment it has been given in the era of commitmentlessness, would tend to bring it back into the family, as it were. The creation of such a Department of Religion would also bring the University of Michigan into the orbit of our better Schools of Religion—by and large a useful and a beneficial thing. It would no doubt attract graduate students who have concentrated in this area. These are now almost necessarily shunted away from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Exchange students from some of the European universities with their faculties in religion would also be encouraged.

In spite of these and other benefits that would accrue from such a Department of Religion, we feel that the mere establishment of such a department will not remedy things adequately, if the present

commitment to commitmentlessness be allowed to continue unrebuked in the other areas of a university. Several departments calculated to produce allegiance-less, commitmentless, young people plus one department proceeding upon the assumption that commitment is wholesome does not add up to a very promising whole. Moreover, we feel that even if a Department of Religion were created, this ought not to imply departmentalization. A university should not attempt to be kindly disposed to religion in one department and nonchalant toward religion over the rest of its surface. This would be as unrealistic as to ask an individual to be religious between nine and ten o'clock and indifferent or hostile to religion the rest of the time. It seems to us that in those departments where commitment plays a relatively more important role, men presently on the faculty and known to be in possession of a specific religious commitment should be encouraged to teach from the point of view of that commitment, so that the teaching may be "from within." We feel that these same persons should be encouraged to offer added courses in the areas in which they are proficient. No doubt an adequate solution to the problem would require additions to the present faculties. And we believe that the people of the State of Michigan are prepared to make such additions possible. The appropriations needed for this expansion should not be too hard to get.

## V

We should like to state that in our humble opinion teaching personnel need not necessarily be restricted to faculty people in the usual sense of that word. If there is resource material available on a part time basis—men who seem suitable in the mind of those whose task it is to evaluate qualifications—then we see no reason why such resources should not be exploited. There is precedent for such procedure; at various times the university catalogs have listed courses in Prison Management, to give a specific example, taught by men not otherwise of the faculty but sufficiently expert in a given field to enable them to perform a special and useful service.

We feel that although additions both to faculties and curricular offerings will probably have to come gradually, they should be added in considerable quantity. And we feel strongly that any such expansion, whether of teaching personnel or of curricular offerings, should in all cases result from university initiative. Any other procedure will, we feel, jeopardize the academic excellence to which the University of Michigan justly lays claim, and provide occasion for embarrassment.

We are not unmindful of the fact that what we propose raises problems and difficulties. One of the major ones would be in the spirit of the First Amendment to preclude favoritism for this or that religious commitment and the handicaps such favoritism would entail for some other commitment. This problem, sizeable though it may be, is not im-

possible of solution. We think that the American formula supplies the solution. We have seen this formula show the way on other fronts, such as the political. No doubt groups with specific political commitment would like, each in turn, to have the University serve its cause by granting establishment as it were; but it is evident that the University has not allowed itself to be seduced to do such a thing. If the University could engage some person of sufficient stature to guide the program envisioned, this, we feel, would be a step in the right direction. Such a person could also teach some of the courses, those of a more comprehensive character in comparative religion, for instance. In our opinion it would be useful whether there be a Department of Religion or no, that frequent opportunity be given to all who serve in this program to meet for discussion and common planning. Multiple and even more or less diverse commitment is not unwholesome in a society such as ours; but isolation and insulation is definitely bad. It is our experience that where ample opportunity is given to men to talk themselves out in each other's presence, undesirable rivalries and animosities do not readily develop.

## VI

To summarize: As we see it, our culture owes immense debts to certain *Weltanschauungen* and to persons committed to them—to the Judeo-Christian tradition for instance. And we hold that that culture can hardly be expected to survive if the commitments that went into it become or remain *terra incognita* in the hearts and minds of our future leaders. We feel that the university owes it to the many students that flock to her to give them an *opportunity* at the very least to know the "pit out of which they have been digged." We are hopeful that if these *Weltanschauungen* are fairly and sympathetically sketched, many, even very many, of each student generation will avail themselves of the opportunity to learn to know some of the things religious that have gone into our culture. We may say that we are sufficiently impressed by the common good will and the general good sense of our students to believe that wholesome commitments will result from such courses, even though commitment is not the primary motive for offering them. May we be bluntly specific? There is a crying need, for example, for a course in the Department of Anthropology which would set forth the view of man as it is contained in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Whether a given student taking such a course will commit himself to that view of man and act accordingly is a secondary, although very important, matter; but it is his birthright to know how we came to be what we until now have been. And although it is very true that other agencies such as the home and the churches have their own sizeable obligations in this matter, it is the university's obligation to see to it that the student has opportunity to know these things in the idiom of a university.

# On the Ground---With Both Feet\*

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## Introduction

AS the Apostle Paul said of himself to the Corinthians, so do I say to you about myself: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom"—partly because I am unaware of having either, and partly because I assume that you have your fair share of both. But you may view me as a man of the field, or as a lower oarsman up on the deck, or as a soldier out, for a spell, of the firing lines of the Church Militant. If my message benefits you, I shall be thankful to the Husbandman of the fields, to the Master of the ship, to the Captain of the Lord of hosts.

The title of my address is "On the Ground — With Both Feet." Under that title I propose to impress upon you the necessity of a steadfast, unwavering stand for the faith known to us as the Reformed faith, and also for that way of life and outlook on life for which Calvinism is the accepted term. Reformed faith, according to our conviction, is nothing more and nothing less than Bible-attested Christianity, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Calvinism, on the other hand, is nothing more and nothing less than the most thoroughgoing and the most consistent projection of the principles of that God-delivered faith into all the fields of life and all aspects of the world around us.

Both the Reformed faith and the Calvinistic translation of its principles and implications into the large bills and small coins of living and thinking have for their characteristic an intellectually, emotionally, volitionally well balanced position, a certain "on the ground" common sense and realism. To sway from this "on-the-groundness" is to court shipwreck for ourselves as Reformed believers and Calvinistic thinkers as well. In order to remain therefore what, as we believe, God Himself ordained us to be, that is, Reformed Christians of Calvinistic persuasion, we must hold on to the characteristics of our ancestral heritage and precious personal possession by staying on the ground, and that with both feet. Yes, with both feet, because the dangers of being swept away are real, manifold, and great indeed. To stay balanced in the middle is never easy, not even under the most favorable conditions, because the point of friction and irritation of all opposing forces, either from the right or from the left, is exactly the middle point.

\* Commencement Address delivered at Faith Theological Seminary, Wilmington, Delaware, on May 20, 1952.

The maintenance of our historical character and position is an especially trying task today. It is not far from reality to say that the whole world has gone mad. A definite aversion toward anything that as much as breathes common sense is rampant all around us. Extremes and contrasts of apocalyptic proportions are battling their battles. The man in the middle is in everybody's way. The man with as old a cure for the ills of the times as the faith once delivered unto the saints and with a world-and-life-view as strictly rigged to the Word of God as is Calvinism, is looked upon as a curiosity and a troublesome fellow.

Yet, in spite of all this and more, there is our post, right in the thick of it, right in the middle. There we must stand with both feet on the ground, that is, if we aim to live up to the heritage and to the destiny with which Almighty God saw fit both to privilege and to burden us. The very spirit of the times being against us makes it a heroic stand and a manly job. Let us now touch upon some more specific points of danger to such a consistent Reformed testimony and Calvinistic stand.

## The Inward Make-Up of the Minister

Impediments may exist right in the inward make-up of the minister himself. If he be a man predisposed to influence by any consideration at the expense of principles, his fitness for a Calvinistic Reformed testimony is greatly impaired. We must learn how to stand by our convictions, alone with our God, if that be the need of the hour. Our spiritual heritage has always produced definite characters and strong personalities, and not just stalks of reed shaken with the wind. Our mission calls for that mature manhood which found its full development in Christ Whom I just love to picture to myself as praying in solitude on lonely mountain tops.

Being addicted to "bigness" in the organizational, statistical sense is another impairing thing in our service. In our days everyone claims to be the champion of "the little man"; and poor "little man" had very seldom in history so small a chance as he has in our days. Whatever the idol or the hoax, it attracts, provided it is big enough. We are being swallowed up in bigness. It goes on in the realm of religious and ecclesiastical life as well as in the other spheres of existence. Some months ago I asked a prospective minister if he would be willing to put in a couple of years as a missionary under the

auspices of our church. "Hmm, not very well," said he, "and even if I wanted to be a missionary, I would rather go under a bigger church." This is the kind of a "break" smaller churches and denominations often get, regardless of what they stand for. For men called on to present a consistently Reformed and Calvinistic testimony this is a very important thing to consider, for at the present much of the scripturally and historically Reformed and Calvinistic truth, as we know it, has its well-nigh sole city of refuge in smaller churches and denominations. These smaller churches and denominations are, therefore, the very ones which should be the dearest to the hearts of all full-blooded Calvinists and confessors of the Reformed faith. Mere bigness should not sweep us off our feet. God never meant statistics or mere physical proportions to be the measure of truth. If He did, Christianity would have died with the little band of the original disciples. To combat the temptations of bigness we have Christ's own encouragement: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Another thing which I also notice in contemporary young ministers is equally less promising for a truly Reformed and Calvinistic testimony. It is a frightening over-concern for financial security and well-being right from the start, coupled with a definite averseness to begin the climb at the lower rungs of the ladder. Many young men want to begin both as to rank and remuneration where it took the toil of decades for their elders to arrive. And if the older ministers in the so-called "better churches" do not oblige them by eliminating themselves in one way or another, they just pack up and go to where they hope to realize their ambitions, regardless of the merits of the cause left behind. I have given considerable thought to this phenomenon, and I find its roots in a distorted application of existential philosophy and in a lack of faith and consecration. According to faith and experience God will see to it that "the just shall live by faith" even in the physical, material sense. But the "just" must be "just" and place the interests of God above immediate self-interest. This may sound old-fashioned, but an honestly-served God is still the best Employer, the surest Provider. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

The next thing needed by the minister for a sound, on-the-ground Reformed stand is the right blend of faith and knowledge, of zeal and reason. Zeal must be sifted through reason, and reason must be kept enlightened and warm by faith. This proper balance is of the very nature and genius of the Calvinistic make-up. Without it one may fall a victim to a number of extremes, from dry intellectualism to tear-jerking emotionalism, from die-hard routinism to excitement-hunting sensationalism. All of these are dangerous to the very nature

of our heritage. As the Book of Books says: If "the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." There was once a wise, old minister in our midst. With finger raised in warning he used to say: "Children, anyone can be a Christian, but it takes a man of intelligence to be a good Calvinist."

A truly Reformed minister must also have a proper regard for the past and a well ordered conception of the church. We do not care much for a physical, mechanical "apostolic succession" in orders, in offices, or in any of the external, peripheral matters of Christianity, but we most assuredly do care about being in an incontestable spiritual line with those who first and successively received that Faith the "Author and Finisher" of which is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Therein lies our true Catholicity.

The supreme and sole authoritative source of this faith is the Holy Bible as God gave it to us. Humanly speaking, it is the product of the past. Without proper regard for God's doings in the past no one can approach it with proper respect. The secondary, and in that sense also authoritative, sources of our faith are our historical creeds which in essence all contain the same Reformed faith and Calvinistic outlook. They consent to and also incorporate, in part or in whole, the great ecumenical creeds of the formative years of the Christian Church. Together with the Bible they present to us "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" as also "the faith of our fathers." Without proper regard for them we would fall out of line with "the communion of saints"; we would lose our Catholicity and the charge of sectarianism would be hard to fight off.

We love these creeds as indeed all Reformed believers of Calvinistic persuasion do. Our fathers did not deny us the right to replace them if we wish or can with better ones from the Word of God. But if we did we would still be asserting that creeds are salutary and necessary for the welfare of God's people in God's Church. They constitute the fence around God's vineyard. The unsettled individualists, the form-hating pietists, the new-faith-hunting modernists are never at peace with the creeds. The streets may have curbs, the rivers may have levies, little clubs or large countries may have constitutions, but the Church of God should go without any stated standards—according to non-Reformed, un-Calvinistic ways of thinking and reasoning.

A few years ago we almost came to an agreement to merge with another Hungarian group within a larger American denomination. When the article of the agreement—containing in effect the outline of a confessional church within a church—was presented, a leading member of the other side stood up, and well-nigh shaken with vehemence he stated in essence: "This whole talk of a constitution, by laws, and creeds is a deep shock and disappointment to me. I expected love and not paragraphs. It is Jesus Christ I want and not creeds. If He is not

enough for a basis of union, nothing else will be. Come in without any reservations and Christ will make His laws when we dwell in union." The lead was taken up and became the dominant opinion.

Now one has to admit that this sounds good—even Christian. But it is neither as good nor as Christian as it sounds. Behind this thinking there is a wrong conception of Christ as "the Word that became flesh," and also a wrong conception of the Church as Christ's Spirit-begotten Body. The Lord, Who took upon Himself, if nothing else, the form of man, is pictured as a sort of form-hating, naked Christ. And the Church is viewed not as a body at all, but as an un-knit, loose, and fluid something, with every individual a law unto himself, nothing defined, nothing codified. This is not our world. We are of an orderly, of a confessional mind, as indeed all Reformed Christians of Calvinistic persuasion are. The merger, of course, received a stab

in the back by the above mentioned display of non-Reformed theological thinking, but, of course, its proponents are still blaming us for its failure.

It is only a fully appropriated, Reformed theological thinking and a well trained Calvinistic acumen that can enable us instinctively to detect the fallacies of non-Reformed and un-Calvinistic reasoning. Cultivate that instinct by all possible means to the sharpness of a veritable sixth sense! It will be worth more than any library to you. When every minute of your time, every ounce of your attention, will be claimed, when sudden decisions on questions small and great will have to be made, you will need that instinct as the body needs the protection which our reflex movements provide. Thus we should be prepared to stand on the God-hallowed ground of Calvinistic, Reformed testimony, with both feet firmly planted.

(To be continued)

## The Cocktail Party--A Modern Miracle Play

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THE success of T. S. Eliot's play, *The Cocktail Party*, is a reminder of the effectiveness of drama as a vehicle for religious ideas. It is to be hoped that his plays, as well as those written by his countryman, Christopher Fry, will suggest to other playwrights that religious drama, which vivified the message of the medieval church, provides themes which are also relevant to the needs of our own time. Surely those themes would be eagerly considered by many people with whom the church does not ordinarily communicate. Moreover, the advent of television supplies a potential audience many times larger than was ever envisaged by the medieval dramatists, and the play is obviously a suitable program for telecasts. The reaction of the audience to *The Cocktail Party* is a preliminary answer to the question of how effectively spiritual themes, presented without the aid or hindrance of stock religious responses, may be communicated to a growing secular audience.

Eliot's reputation as a coterie poet makes the fact of his authorship of a hit play the more impressive as evidence of the possibility of religious drama. Few of Eliot's admirers would dare to hope that one of his plays would run so long and so happily at the Henry Miller Theater. To be sure, the play is interesting simply on the level of entertainment; it may be enjoyed as a comedy of manners, dealing with a living-room intrigue. And the plight of the estranged husband and wife, whose problem is solved when the one cries to the other, "What can we do?" is deeply moving to the least metaphysical

of playgoers. For it is a discovery full of consolation to unhappy couples that when the marital arguments have been exhausted, a possibility of reconciliation survives; hope can begin at the very edge of divorce proceedings with the recognition that the suffering, at least, is shared. The second act, with its dramatic consultation in Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly's office, is perhaps the source of much of the popularity which the play enjoys.

At the end of the second act occurs a libation scene, in which three of the characters propose a toast for those who stay at home and for those who travel. But the toast has a sacerdotal quality and is more clearly part of a secret rite than the familiar "bottoms up." The audience shifts uneasily in its seat; nothing in the first act had prepared them for this antique ceremonial action. It is disconcerting to discover that what seemed a comedy of manners was in reality a miracle play for modernity, an homily for an Hopalong Cassidy age. Nor is the crucifixion of Celia in the third act received by the audience as a satisfactory solution to her difficulties. We are not the stuff from which martyrs are made; they seem always to our prosy minds melodramatic or bizarre. Moreover, the playgoer wonders how he can be expected to take the monkey eaters of Kinkanja seriously. Finally, a psychiatrist who gathers a case history without consulting his patient and who solves a personality problem with a proposal which leads to the death of the patient near an ant hill is not a familiar type of psycho-analyst. Our suspicion of him is confirmed when he himself lies

down on his couch in the office on Harley Street. The audience rejects much, but it also retains much; and it is this residual element which concerns those who in changing times are the bearers of the tidings.

## I

The central problem of the play is also the problem which cocktail parties are intended to solve: the problem of solitude and boredom. But the malaise which Eliot's party reveals is not caused by a temporary tedium, which can be remedied by an anchovy on a toothpick and some conversation about Michelangelo; the problem here is a profound estrangement from society, a psychological exile, which becomes even more acute during the ersatz geniality of a party. The plot is the eternal rhomboid: Lavinia loves Peter, Peter loves Celia, and Celia loves Edward. This love, however, has nothing in common with Christian charity, which "seeketh not its own." Each of these unhappy people has fallen in love with a projection of his own desires, and the physical embodiment of the projection inevitably falls short of the ghostly perfection of the alter ego.

Peter seems least aware of this egocentric predicament, but even he has moments when he is aware of his plight. He tells Edward that he misses Celia a great deal, because of

... those moments in which we seemed to share  
some perception,  
Some feeling some indefinable experience  
In which we were both unaware of ourselves.

Lavinia also suffers from a feeling of isolation. When she receives no love from her husband, she accepts the attentions of Peter Quilpe rather than suffer estrangement from her fellow man. But Peter falls in love with Celia, and Lavinia, pursuing the sad logic of neurosis, concludes that Peter did not love her, no one had ever loved her, no one could ever love her.

Her husband Edward is also solitary, but for different reasons. His situation is reminiscent of that of Lawrence Wentworth in a novel which has strongly influenced *The Cocktail Party*—Charles Williams' *Descent into Hell*. In this novel Wentworth falls in love with an image of Adela, because the real Adela is not accessible; but as soon as the girl herself comes to him, he finds the embodiment of his desire repulsive. When Edward is able to reach out and take Celia, he no longer desires her. He suspects, like the Prufrock of Eliot's earlier poetry, that he is growing old, and that desire, which could be counted on to create the sensual community of youth, has fled, leaving him a middle-aged man in a lonely living-room. If Lavinia is unloveable, he is unloving, and each has been betrayed by the other.

Celia's difficulty is more complicated, but she shares one problem with the others. She tells Sir

Henry Harcourt-Reilly that she is obsessed with a feeling of solitude: "I mean that what has happened has made me aware/That I've always been alone. That one is always alone." With varying degrees of clarity each of the four has observed what Gabriel Conroy discovers at the end of a short story which Eliot much admired, James Joyce's *The Dead*. Conroy looks at his sleeping wife "as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife." He saw that her real love affair had been with the spirit of the long dead Michael Furey, and now he himself "approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead." The solid world was dissolving and dwindling, making communication with other human beings progressively more difficult. Peter, Lavinia, Edward, and Celia, like Gabriel Conroy, had confronted what Sir Henry called "the final desolation/Of solitude in the phantasmal world."

It is this understanding of the ultimate poverty of individualism which is one of T. S. Eliot's achievements in the play. Perhaps it is not surprising that his thesis has won no wide acclaim. Beginning with the breakup of medieval feudalism, the intelligence of the western world has been greatly concerned with the development of the concept of the individual, and the success of the teaching may be measured by comparing the free and yet limited individual of the Renaissance with the autonomous individual which was the ideal of so much Romantic writing. In our own day we have been so much preoccupied with the struggle against totalitarianism that we have lost sight of the dangers of the individual who is limited only by himself. Garcin's comment in Sartre's *No Exit* pursues this movement in western thought to its logical conclusion: "Hell is—the others." Eliot's reply is surely that which is spoken by Edward in *The Cocktail Party*: "Hell is oneself, Hell is alone . . . ."

## II

In an earlier play, *The Family Reunion*, Eliot dealt with the theme of the essential solitariness of each member of the family, even though there had been a formal effort at communion in the family reunion. Do what one will, says Harry, "one is still alone in an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts." One strategy for combating spiritual loneliness then presents itself: what if the ghosts—principles of meaning in the spiritual world—make efforts to communicate with man, and what if they are not vindictive, like the Furies, but rather friendly like the Eumenides? It is surely one of the oddities of the history of ideas that there should arise at Oxford in our own time a circle, dominated by the memory of Charles Williams, which is especially concerned with establishing the friendliness of the spiritual world, just as at Cambridge during the seventeenth century a circle arose which was determined to assert the reality of the spiritual world against the psychological materialism of Descartes and Hobbes.

In *The Cocktail Party*, Alexander, Julia, and Sir Henry are called "guardians"; they have a status like that of Mary and Agatha in *The Family Reunion*, wanderers "in the neutral territory between two worlds." In one sense, they are personifications of forces which have their real location within the human mind. Edward tells Celia that there are two selves, one of which wills, but so weakly that it is overpowered by the second self; in some men, he says, the self which controls is called "the guardian," but in himself the inevitable mastery is achieved by the spirit of mediocrity. Alexander is Peter's guardian. He is the most secular of the gods in this curious Pantheon, and is in fact a man of the world. Obscure hints betray his supra-human character only to the playgoer who remembers Eliot's habit of obscure allusion. Alexander MacColgie Gibbs is an accomplished cook, whose special pride is that he can create *ex nihil*: "of all my triumphs/This is the greatest. To make something out of nothing." In the play he has some eggs from which his creation emerges; and his meal, which Edward allows to spoil on the stove, may also be reminiscent of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, which the modern world ignores and so deprives itself of spiritual nourishment. In the end, of course, Alexander turns out to be Sir Henry's and Julia's accomplice, and finally he is the bearer of the news of Celia's crucifixion. He attacks the solitude of Peter by giving him "connections" in California.

The character of Julia deceives the audience at first. She seems to all of us a garrulous old woman, and consequently we pay little heed to her remark, "I know you think I'm a silly old woman/But I'm really very serious." Peter says to her, "You never miss anything," and later admits that he is afraid of her. Edward thinks of her as "that dreadful old woman" who always "turns up when she's least wanted." Lavinia says, "That woman is the devil. She knows by instinct when something's going to happen." It remains for Celia to discover that "She is always right," and that perhaps she has supernatural powers: "It may be that even Julia is a guardian. Perhaps she is *my* guardian."

In the light of these clues we go back over the opening scenes and discover that Julia is only pretending to be a garrulous woman. She forgets her glasses in Edward's apartment, but only in order to have an excuse for returning. Early at both cocktail parties she asks what seems to us at first an irrelevant question about tigers, but which we later see to be full of significance. Thirty years ago, in *Gerontion*, Eliot wrote that "In the juvenescence of the year/Came Christ the tiger." Her glasses have only one lens, showing perhaps that she is one-eyed, and so closely identified with Sir Henry, who sings,

As I was drinkin' gin and water,  
And me bein' the One Eyed Riley,  
Who came in but the landlord's daughter  
And she took my heart entirely.

Both are one-eyed like the Cyclops, who in classical mythology were said to have been descendants of both Heaven and Earth, and so are effective prototypes for Eliot's divine-human guardians.

Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly is not, of course, an ordinary psychiatrist. He has a quasi-divine power which is recognized by Lavinia, who asks him, "Are you a devil/Or merely a practical joker?" Celia is sure that "he has some sort of power." After the moving interview with husband and wife in Act II, he raises his hand in a priestly manner and says, "go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence." He says the same thing to Celia, with the significant addition that he calls her "my child." After the interviews he lies down exhausted, and one is reminded of the sudden weariness of Christ after the woman has touched the hem of his garment when he has passed in the crowd. His work is to clarify the nature of the solutions which his patients may choose for themselves.

At the last cocktail party Sir Henry quotes an extended passage from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*—the same passage, incidentally, which is quoted in part by Adela in Williams' *The Descent into Hell*. Shelley describes the encounter between Magus Zoroaster and his own image, and he goes on to say that there are

two worlds of life and death:  
One that which thou beholdest; but the other  
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
The shadows of all forms that think and live  
Till death unite them and they part no more.

No further use is made in the play of the Oromaze-Ahriman antithesis in Zoroastrian mythology, since the fable implies a dualism which has been considered heretical since the third century, when St. Augustine refuted Manichaeism; but the conception of the *Doppelgänger* is useful to reinforce Eliot's insistence both of the reality of the spiritual world, and the manner in which the material world copies the spiritual world.

Each of the four characters has discovered "the ultimate desolation" of solitude in a world of spirits, and the guardians are busy helping them to establish contact with their fellow man. Alexander succeeds as well as he can with Peter, who is reconciled to the fact that Celia has "some secret excitement which I cannot share." His choice of Hollywood and its business is considered reasonable by Sir Henry, who tells him that "You understand your *metier*, Mr. Quilpe—Which is the most that any of us can ask for." Peter himself, however, understands at the end of the play that he had been interested only in himself; and we are prepared to believe that he must now learn to look at people (the idea is Julia's) as objectively as he has been in the habit of doing for his films.

Sir Henry makes Lavinia and Edward see how easily their problem can be solved. If Lavinia is unloveable and Edward is unloving, by turning to each other for help their difficulty is neatly solved.

Escaping from the prison of selfhood, they proceed to work out a new relationship, this time without expecting too much of one another, and without magnifying the failures of the other. When Celia asks, "Is that the best life?" Sir Henry replies, "It is a good life. Though you will not know how good/Till you come to the end of it."

Celia has considered this solution, but it is clear that her malady requires a more radical therapeutic. She has a deeper problem than a sense of solitude: she feels guilty of sin as though she has been reprehensible not only in the eyes of the community, but also in the judgment of God. To cure this desperate illness she must be "transhumanised" (the word is Julia's). Not for her is the composure and contentment in co-operative society which Karen Horney describes as the chief redemptive hope in *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*. She must conquer sin just as Thomas à Becket conquered sin in *Murder in the Cathedral*—by submitting to death and martyrdom. The saints find different ways, Sir Henry tells us; Celia's way led to the island of Kinkanja and crucifixion, but the details of her humiliation are not so important as the fact that in a few dedicated souls self-esteem may be shattered in fact as well as in principle, and its place taken by the austere bliss which may be found only at the edge of human history. Her death is tragic as all deaths are tragic, nature asserting its ultimate claim under conditions of pain; but her death is not pitiful, as Sir Henry understands, because while she is a victim of natural necessity, she is not subject to it. Within her *metier*, as the others in theirs, she has avoided the final desolation of solitude.

In terms of these three solutions, the libation spoken by the three guardians at the end of Act II is singularly effective. Peter has no word spoken for him, since he has not yet come to the place where the words are valid. Lavinia and Edward, prototypes of the great multitude of proud and angry mates, are given the words for the building of the hearth: "Let them place a chair each side of it." On Celia's behalf are spoken the words for those who go upon a journey: "Protectors of travellers. Bless the road." Though the terms chosen are novel, Eliot has proposed an ancient spiritual answer to an ancient spiritual problem, and here as elsewhere in his poems answers his own question, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?"

### III

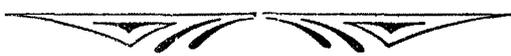
Yet despite the universality of his theme, Eliot remains, even after the success of *The Cocktail Party*, a coterie poet, partly because he is not widely understood, and partly because he himself has limited

his audience. The playgoer wonders uneasily how many Celia's there are in the theater and whether Eliot would not describe most of the audience as Sweeney, Mrs. Porter, Aunt Violet, Prufrock, and Madame Soskin, quaffing endless martinis and plucking out endless olive pits, but never the heart of the mystery. In his *Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot says that "There is one class of persons to which one speaks with difficulty, and another to which one speaks in vain." According to Sir Henry,

The best of a bad job is all any of us make of it,—  
Except of course, the saints.

The difficulty is, however, that there are few saints—according to Protestant theory, there are none at all. As a consequence, the play offers little hope to the ordinary man, standing as he does dead center between the devils and the angels. Surely Eliot has obscured the admixture of evil which is in the saintliest life; and more seriously, he has obscured the moments of spiritual insight which can irradiate the most ordinary life. Although she was speaking of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, Miss Helen Gardner's criticism of them applies with equal force to T. S. Eliot: "The most curious feature of their work is a tacit assumption of a kind of neo-Calvinism, by which characters are divided into those capable of religious belief and experience, and those who are apparently forever outside of it . . . . It leads to a double falsification of the artist's vision; it causes a writer to treat differently characters who are of equal importance to the structure of the book . . . . It substitutes a formula, often mechanically applied, for an artist's effort to understand and recreate living experience." The audience of *The Cocktail Party* does not miss the point that Eliot has offered them the life of Peter, looking for connections; or, at best, the life of Edward and Lavinia, making the best of a bad job.

Celia's martyrdom inevitably seems quixotic to one who has just stepped out of Times Square. Perhaps the dramatist will always be confronted with the problem of making spiritual solutions seem credible to the secular mind, and thus inherit the wistful problem of the pulpit. "I shew you a mystery," said One who had often looked into shy and incredulous eyes. But *The Cocktail Party* is more closely related to modernity than *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is a noteworthy effort to address worldlings, and the fact that it is not more successful is inherent in the theme. There can be few who leave the theater who do not feel grateful to this poet who has rescued the stage from the tap dancers and who stands watchfully in a living-room while the universe whirls about his head.



# "In a College Chapel"\*

Lambert J. Flokstra  
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Ex. 20:2. I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Deut. 7:8, 9. . . . because Jehovah loveth you and because He would keep the oath which He swore unto your fathers, hath Jehovah brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that Jehovah thy God He is God, the faithful God who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

Amos 3:1, 2. Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.

Amos 9:7. Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?

THESE passages suggest a very important question. It is this: Is the exodus of Israel from Egypt a unique significant event in the history of God's people, or is it to be placed on the same plane with all other events in human history? Is the exodus of Israel an extraordinary act of God's special providence or is it to be equated with the exoduses of the heathen people?

The first three selections I read (and many others of a similar nature might be cited) seem to point to the exodus of Israel as a special Divine intervention. This view is supported by the fearful signs and miracles in Egypt preceding the exodus and by the numerous Scriptural references to God's bringing Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And yet, paradoxically, God through Amos appears to deny the special importance of Israel's exodus and to place it on a par with that of other nations.

Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?

How can we resolve this dilemma? The Scriptures leave no doubt that the exodus of Israel had extraordinary meaning and was a unique event in the history of redemption. But, and here is the rub of the matter, this significance cannot be deduced from the fact of the exodus as an isolated historical event. Its redemptive value can only be understood properly in the light of the entirety of God's revelation. In the exodus we are confronted with Jehovah, the living covenant God, who offers us His mercy and lovingkindness and who demands our love and obedience. It is only through an act of faith in His self-revelation that the real significance of the exodus can be grasped.

\* A Scriptural meditation as presented in the faculty-conducted chapel hour of Calvin College.

Amos in the passage quoted addresses an apostate Israel which had departed from the way of a living faith. This apostate people lays claim to God's special favor on the basis of a bare historical fact, viz., the exodus, abstracted from the total program of redemption. To this faithless people who had wandered from the way of Truth God through Amos says in effect: As viewed from your perspective, your exodus gives you no special prerogatives. "Have I not also brought . . . the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?"

All of this has much to teach us about the Christian view of history. We are warned against deducing God's purposes in history from the historical facts themselves. The essential meaning of historical events is not revealed by the events themselves. To conclude God's attitude and disposition from the historical data, apart from revelation, reflects an arbitrary and dangerous subjectivism in historical interpretation. Even the most stupendous and momentous facts in human history such as the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Resurrection do not explain themselves. Their significance can be comprehended only by an act of faith and can be understood only in the light of Revelation.

Yet there is always the tendency even on the part of sincere, well-meaning Christians to assume that the extraordinary events of history of and by themselves reveal God's intention and purpose. To take but one illustration. The initial successes of the Southern States in the Civil War were interpreted by sincere Christians in the South as signifying Divine approval on their cause. This danger is frequently accompanied by another, viz., that of identifying success and prosperity with God's blessing and approval; and failure and adversity with God's anger and disapproval. Think in this connection of the argumentation of Job's three friends who concluded from the fact of Job's affliction that God was displeased with him. This altogether too common desire to select special events as themselves signifying Divine intent must lead to a fragmentary and erroneous interpretation of history and to a practical denial of the fact that all events are providential.

The Church of God boldly and confidently confesses that the Providence of God embraces the totality of historical events; it speaks of God's mysterious rule over all things—including health and sickness, riches and poverty, prosperity and adversity—all events past, present, and future. It furth-

er confesses that this all-inclusive, omnipotent rule of God is not arbitrary but is directed to the coming of His kingdom. When you and I by an act of faith become citizens of that Kingdom, we become personally involved in this redemptive program. Then the confession of the Providence of God is no longer an abstract theological dogma but becomes a practical reality in our everyday living. Then also, but

not till then, do we see in the Providence of God not only His power and omnipotence but also His boundless love in Christ Jesus. We then confess with Paul that "we know that to them that love God all things work together for good" and we join in his doxology,

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Trends in Library Book Classification

Lester DeKoster  
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THOUGH Santayana has written of Josiah Royce that he seemed able to give an intelligent answer to any question asked him, no man really presumes to encyclopedic knowledge in this twentieth century. If ever any man did, he has long since slipped quietly beneath the flood of printer's ink which Gutenberg, like the sorcerer's apprentice, loosed upon the world. Nowadays happy is the scholar, and long the hours beside his reading lamp, if he can presume to be abreast of the productions in his own field in any one language. Indeed, he is uncommon rare if he knows just the titles of *all* the books and magazines in his discipline which pour from the presses in any one decade.

But even floods come to rest somewhere, and the deluge of printed materials comes, soon or late, to repose in the libraries of the world; not all of it, indeed, but enough so that the collections of Harvard and Yale, e.g., have doubled their size every sixteen years since the turn of the century. The mere accessioning and housing of such numbers would have been the undoing of a nineteenth century library, but these problems were only a part of the reason why twentieth century librarians took to bicarbonate of soda.

Time was when even so eminent a collection as that of the British Museum could be placed on the shelves almost in the order of accession, to be thereafter identified simply as book X, shelf Y, and in case Z, a natural inheritance from the days when manuscripts were chained to their desks. But almost overnight such a system, or lack of one, came to mean that a thousand books on the same subject might well be spaced yards or even miles of shelving from each other. Nor was this an insuperable obstacle to the use of the collection so long as the only access to it was the printed catalogue, arranged by title, author, and subject divisions. Choose your books from the catalogue, turn in the call numbers, and have a spot of tea while someone sleuthed them for you. Art, after all, is long . . . and times enough.

Now, if someone hadn't opened the sluice-gates to oceans of printer's ink, and if someone else hadn't opened the library stacks to everybody from Professor Alpha to Zeke, the grocer's boy, librarians might not have needed that bicarbonate. But from the turn of the century it grew ever more apparent that libraries must classify precisely or be drowned. Thomas Jefferson had done it for the collection of books he reluctantly sold to an equally reluctant buyer, the national government; W. T. Harris, the St. Louis philosopher-educator, had done it for his high school library.

Nor did book classification begin *de novo* in St. Louis or at Monticello. The standard French bookseller's system developed by Brunet dates back to 1810. The Germans, of course, had been at it long before, one, Gesner, devising a scheme in the 16th century. Leibnitz had toyed with it, and some monasteries had a system for placing works by the Fathers on one tier, those about the Councils on another, etc. Callimachus is said to have devised, or employed, a classification scheme for the Alexandrian at its peak; and it is maintained that the clay tablets in the library of King Assur-bani-pol were sorted out into six divisions: history, law, science, magic, dogma and legends.

All this, however, antedated the sorcerer's apprentice. Suddenly there were books all over the place, on subjects heard and unheard of, with more people than ever before clamoring to use them—and make it snappy! Classification systems designed to give structure to philosophical perambulations, or devised during the thinker's siesta, and adapted to library needs of a few hundred accessions a year (with an occasional new subject tossed in to keep the cataloger awake) gulped, grew bilious, and then exploded. Harvard is said to have tried eight systems of classification from the day when John Harvard gave his books and his name to the infant college. Yale had much the same experience; and before 1900, Dr. Richardson at Princeton set about in

despair to make his own scheme as a means of tying the loose ends together.

Because, alas, devising a classification system which would serve to inevitably bring books on the same subject together, in logical order, and close to those on kindred subjects had long been difficult enough. But add to it the qualification that such a system must prove well nigh infinitely hospitable to new subjects in logical relation to the old, and you have come a long way from neat speculations on the structure of the real world and rule of thumb classifications based thereon. Indeed, so far, that of the systems tried, and untried, since the days of tablets baked under Eastern skies, only two achieved wide acceptance; and of these, only one may outlast the century.

In 1876, a young assistant in the Amherst College library published a forty-two page outline of a classification scheme, employing a pure numeral notation, and based on the principle that each number be treated as a decimal fraction. The second edition in 1885 was of 314 pages, and thus Melvil Dewey's decimal system was on its way to becoming the most widely used scheme ever devised. Perhaps the key to its success lay in the fact that a decimal fraction can be infinitely subdivided by simply adding digits. Let a new aspect of a subject arise, and presto, it is accommodated by the addition of a single digit in the appropriate division of the schedules. The notation, moreover, was simple; and, since he started the first library school, Dewey possessed for a long time a kind of monopoly hold on the young library profession. Instead of the scholar, lost amongst his tomes, the new librarian was a technician; and one of his tools was the Dewey decimal system imparted to him with loving care at the library school.

Very soon, however, the main classes of the scheme were all assigned down to the third expansion. Dewey had first divided all knowledge into ten main classes: that was all the digits he had, 0 to 9. Then he subdivided these ten into another ten subclasses for each, then these into ten more for each. By then it must have been noticeable to all but the most devoted of his followers that the strength of the system was precisely its greatest weakness. That is, you can create a sub-class by simply adding a digit, neatly and painlessly, but what do you do when along comes a new area which is legitimately coordinate with the ten classes already filled? And, alack, many were such new subjects which peered over the horizon as edition after edition of the schedules sought in vain to logically accommodate them. A German contemporary of Dewey's, Dziatzko, early remarked on just this vulnerability of the decimal notation; wrote he, "For smaller popular libraries a convenient apparatus; for larger and scholarly libraries, an insufferable strait-jacket!" And so it proved to be.

A major effort to circumvent the unwillingness of the arabic numerals to expand between the digits 0

and 9, was the Brussels revision of the Dewey schedules. First published in 1905, and revised in 1927-33, the Universal Dewey, as it was called (UDC) sought to expand the main classes on a coordinate basis by the introduction of symbols other than numerals. Its office now at the Hague, the Institut International de Documentation under the chairmanship of F. Donker Duyvis seeks to promote the use of this revision. It has secured no wide acceptance, perhaps in part for the reason that symbols other than numerals or alphabetical letters offer, of themselves, no order for filing, and a pre determined order must always seem a little artificial: after all which would come first on the shelves or in the card file, an asterisk or an ampersand? And what then, of the two employed together?

A minor effort to escape the wrenching from its base which the vast expansion of knowledge is forcing upon the Dewey is the new fifteenth edition of the schedules, 1951. A major shift in the schedules would, of course, leave large classes of previously cataloged books henceforth anomalously loose from the rest of the collection or duplicate their class numbers elsewhere. Thus, while minor changes are hardly effective, major shifts are prohibited. As it is, the crackle of fiery discussion kindled by the fifteenth edition raised temperatures at countless conventions in the year past. But basically the DC is committed, for better and for worse, to the decimal structure, and it is living to see its youthful vigor become middle age weakness.

Meantime the library of Thomas Jefferson had grown up, though none of the original books remained. In 1899 it had the good fortune to be established in a new home under the deft hand of one Dr. Herbert Putnam. He and his aide, Charles Martel, capped the house-warming with earnest discussions about a scheme of classification which might successfully breast the floods of ink which the new century promised to spew at the national library. Melvil Dewey was invited to Washington; so were many others from home and abroad. In 1901 an outline appeared. The notation would be mixed a combination of the English alphabet and numerals with decimals as a weapon in reserve. By placing the letters first they could plan for twenty-six main classes instead of Dewey's ten; by combining letters and numerals, they could get over seven million combinations out of any six digits to Dewey's 900,000. They elected to employ twenty-one of the main class letters, leaving five for expansion on this very general level. Gaps in the sub-class ran to the millions of potential divisions, on both coordinate and subordinate levels.

One by one they drew to Washington catalogers and subject specialists, until they had assembled the largest group of classifiers ever employed under one roof. One by one, then, the schedules began to appear, over a period of fifty-one years, with one—K Law—still to go. By now the schedules occupy

more than twenty volumes of greatly varying size, each with its own index, totaling more than 6,000 pages, and making the Library of Congress classification by far the most comprehensive and detailed ever devised.

At first a pitched battle was waged betwixt those who saw in LC the best hope of dyking the floods and those who would have Dewey or nothing. But gradually the acrimony died away, and a pattern became visible: staying with, or adopting, Dewey were the "small popular libraries" which did not expect to exceed 100,000 volumes as a rough figure, and those larger libraries which were too deeply committed to change. Adopting and changing to the Library of Congress system were the major university libraries of the country, and specialized collections which adapted the schedules to meet their own needs. The discussion is no longer over the comparative merits of the two systems—one British writer, E. A. Savage, going so far as to insist that LC is the most nearly perfect scheme imaginable. The discussion is rather about at what point in growth does a library feel the pinch of the strait-jacket?

It may be supposed that if LC is to be superseded at all, it will be only by some development in the adaptation of punched cards to library cataloging, or by the substitution of microprint for large sections of the current and future holdings. Experiments of great interest are under way in both areas, but promise little that will be within financial reach of even large libraries for a long time.

One provocative variation of conventional clas-

sification schemes is that which its creator S. R. Ranganathan calls the Colon Classification. It is employed at the University of Madras from which Dr. Ranganathan has stimulated the library movement throughout India. Reminiscent of Kant and the symbolic logicians, the scheme is built thus: suppose that all knowledge might be broken down into its basic concepts, its natural components, and a symbol assigned to each. Then suppose that the operations which the mind can perform with these concepts, or components, could be identified and given another type of symbol. Obviously, then, any book on any subject could be assigned a classification number built up out of these basic symbols and precisely descriptive of the nature of the book. In a work, now in its third edition, which Dr. Ranganathan produced along with some thirty-odd other volumes on allied matters in the past twenty-five years, he seeks to work out such a system of fundamental concepts with their symbols. He calls express attention to the tentative character of his efforts, but the scheme is in operation and can, in his case, be employed from memory. It takes its name from the use of the colon as symbol for one of the class of mental operations. It has so far been skeptically received outside its native land.

The flood of print never abates, and the test of skill between the classifier and the printing press never admits of respite. The only solace the librarian has is his fond expectation that if also the LC system is shattered, surely by then someone will have discovered a triple action substitute for bicarbonate of soda, probably with chlorophyll.

## Book Reviews

### A VALUABLE WORK ON SERMON TYPES

THE SECRET OF PULPIT POWER THROUGH THEMATIC CHRISTIAN PREACHING. By Simon Blocker, D. D., Professor of Practical Theology, Western Theological Seminary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951. 209 pages. \$3.00.

AFTER forty years of preaching, fifteen as a professor of homiletics, the author has put the American clergy and students under lasting obligation with this book, the importance of which is in reversed ratio to its size.

Dr. Blocker understands the art of saying much with few words; each word and phrase must be carefully weighed, for it is sure to add something essential. "How important it is that the Christian preacher pays the price of being qualified physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, dynamically to preach the whole counsel of God, to lift God's people to the proper levels of Christian thinking and feeling, to keep the life of the church in an atmosphere of Christian unity, possible only by ever increasing sensitiveness to the glory of God and the grace of Christ the Saviour" (p.17).

He makes great demands. The preacher must "be willing to sweat blood to become a mighty prophet of God" (p.16); "Thematic Christian preaching can only be the technique of a truly redeemed man" (p.20); but the result will be that "Vast supernatural powers are operative in preaching that merits the descriptive term 'thematic Christian preaching.' These are such as the power of the Word of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the grace of God, the power of the blood of Christ, the power of the resurrection of Christ, the power of faith, the power of prayer, the power of a surrendered life" (p.20).

Perhaps the value and scope of the book may best be indicated by pointing to the Table of Contents. After a one-page preface, which one feels tempted to reproduce in its entirety, the book has two parts. Part One contains fifteen chapters on "Thematic Christian Preaching": I. What Is Thematic Christian Preaching? II. How to Get a Good Theme for a Sermon. III. How to Scale Thematic Heights. IV. Thematic Searchlights on Sermon Structure. V. Structural Aspects of Thematic Sermons. VI. Surplus Values of Theme Construction. VII. The Birth of a Thematic

Sermon. VIII. Selection in Thematic Sermon Construction. IX. Thematic Expository Preaching. X. Thematic Topical Preaching—Usual Form. XI. Thematic Topical Preaching—Special Form. XII. Thematic Textual Preaching. XIII. Thematic Doctrinal Preaching. XIV. Thematic Narrative Preaching. XV. Thematic Sermon Delivery.

Part Two has six chapters on "Demonstration Sermons": XVI. A Thematic Expository Sermon: Christian Security. XVII. A Thematic Topical Sermon—Usual Form: The Fire of Jesus Christ. XVIII. A Thematic Topical Sermon—Special Form: Christian Certainties. XIX. A Thematic Textual Sermon: Christ and World Crisis. XX. A Thematic Doctrinal Sermon: Does the Church Matter? XXI. A Thematic Narrative Sermon: Good News for Sinners.

I have only two remarks to make. The author is opposed to all controversial material being brought into a sermon. I prefer to say with the late Dr. Machen that "truth cannot be expressed clearly except it be put in opposition to error." And secondly: I turned with keen interest to the "topical" sermon entitled "The Fire of Jesus." I wanted to know how a topical sermon might be scriptural. It seems to me this "topical" sermon is really a "textual" sermon—which makes it all the better.

As a preacher of average ability, who still "sweats blood" over his sermons after thirty-nine years of effort, I may say that had this book been published earlier I might perhaps have added to my repertoire of doctrinal, exegetical, expository, and narrative preaching, sermons of other types.

I should be disappointed in the American clergy should not this book soon appear in a second edition—with a more durable binding, please! and I pity the seminary student who finds himself unable to locate somewhere three "bucks" for a book the value of which I consider "above rubies."

J. K. VAN BAALEN  
Edmonton, Alberta

### THEOLOGICAL TRADITION PRESERVED

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD. By Herman Bavinck, D.D.  
Translated, edited and outlined by William Hendriksen, Th. D. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. \$5.00.

THE name of the author is well known in Reformed circles. Among his chief claims to distinction is certainly that of theological erudition. His greatest work is his *Reformed Dogmatics* which appeared in a third edition in 1918. *The Doctrine of God* is a translation of the second volume in that four-volume work which has long since taken its place among Reformed classics. The fact that it was published more than three decades ago might lead some to conclude that this book is outdated. However, it ought to be apparent that there is much in contemporary theology which can be properly evaluated only when one is thoroughly steeped in Reformed tradition.

One repeatedly hears expressions deploring the fact that a rich store of information regarding the Reformed faith goes unappreciated by those who lack a reading knowledge of the Dutch language. Dr. Hendriksen has used his recognized theological and linguistic ability to make Bavinck's development of the doctrine of God available to the American public.

As expected, the author gives evidence of wide and thorough acquaintanceship with philosophical and theological literature. It is gratifying to find that he does not include a host of references which would be meaningless to many readers, but that he actually states the views advanced by

others, and then in concise and positive fashion presents the Reformed interpretation. Scriptural references and exegesis abound, so that the reader may be convinced that Reformed dogma is rooted in the Scriptures. Emulation of the author's example on this score would require that we do not blindly accept his interpretations or conclusions, but rather test them by the inspired Word.

There are various chapters in the book which are worthy of special mention. The so-called proofs for the existence of God are presented and evaluated in most instructive fashion so that one is prepared for the author's contention that in choosing between atheism and theism "it is not the mind but the heart that chooses." The discussion on God's names with its emphatic reminder that Scriptural revelation, including these names, is anthropomorphic in character, is most enlightening. The same is true of the chapter entitled "God's Counsel." Here, too, it might be well to remember the words of caution: "Scripture, as such, does not give us an abstract description of these decrees, but presents them to us in their historical realization."

It would be regrettable if this book were read only by ministers and theologians when so many others could profit by the information it presents and inspired by its demonstration of the fact that in the history of the Christian church, God's truth marches on. Its value is enhanced by the translator's outline, which not only helps the reader understand the trend of thought, but also makes it possible to concentrate on brief passages at a time. If only a part of each Sunday were spent in the perusal of this book, it would pay rich spiritual dividends.

The publisher has done fine work and is to be congratulated in the courageous venture of publishing a book of this kind. May the reception given it encourage both publisher and translator to continue their efforts. The translation of the remaining volumes of Bavinck's *Dogmatics* would be a boon to those who are interested in the preservation and propagation of the Reformed faith.

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### A CALVINISTIC PHILOSOPHY

GRONDBEGINSELEN DER WYSBEGERTE. By Ds. W. Faber.  
Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1952. 128 pages.

A DUTCH preacher wrote this book assuming that those who know little about philosophy ought to be interested in it. First, then, a definition of philosophy. While science seeks for a systematic reduction of all perceived reality to a unity, philosophy is interested in the roots of our knowledge, the essence of reality, the origin of the universe. What is nature, what is the soul, and what is the relation between thought and being, being and becoming, becoming and doing? Every definition of philosophy is an indication of one's basic philosophy. Bavinck and Hoekstra define philosophy as the science of principles, but Volleghoven defines it as scientific thinking about the cosmos *ex et ad* its Originator. Philosophy should not seek to project or impose a world-image. It must discover and disclose the proper world-view.

The two chief types of metaphysics are idealism and materialism. Although theology joined hands for a time with idealistic metaphysics against materialism, the emergence and present persistence of dialectic materialism has shown that philosophic idealism was incompetent to win the day. Idealism and materialism are twins since both are horizontalistic and immanentistic.

Epistemology deals with the origin and nature of knowledge. As to origin, rationalism from Greece down to today, albeit in varying degrees, ascribes to human reason the capacity to produce knowledge. Empiricism, on the other hand, appeals to experience as a given which the mind apprehends, orders, and systematizes. As to the nature of knowledge thus obtained, realism holds that man does get in touch with reality, while phenomenalism maintains that seeing things through the prism of our thinking, of necessity imprisons our thought. "The starry heavens above and the moral law within" of Kant is a perfect epitome of his epistemology. No wonder that he sought to regain what he had lost in his *Pure Critique* by projecting his *Practical Critique*. One cannot rest in solipsism which is the notion that there is no reality above and beyond human consciousness.

Logic is the formal discipline that sets forth the laws of thinking. Has sin deprived us of the capacity to think logically? Rationalism not only denies this but refuses to acknowledge any basic impairment. The Bible teaches the need of regeneration, not only to know God redemptively, but also to know man and the world properly. Aristotle laid the foundation for the science of logic and Kant held that no advance had been made since Aristotle. Faber points to the notable progress made by Wundt who wrote three volumes covering logic in general and logic of the exact sciences and logic of the spiritual sciences. Dr. Vollenhoven has written on the necessity of a Christian logic, but others hold that logic is not a normative but an inductive science.

Man is a moral being. Faber at this point raises the question concerning the difference between theological and philosophical ethics. The former is concerned with God first and man thereafter; the latter reverses the order. The subject of theological ethics is the reborn man, while in philosophical ethics man in general is the subject. Theological ethics is derived from Scripture but philosophical ethics is derived from *ratio*. Theological ethics rests on special revelation while philosophical ethics depends on general revelation. Reviewing these distinctions, Faber concludes that there need be no real conflict between the two if philosophical ethics is properly orientated to Scripture and reckons with revelation.

Baumgarten, who died in 1762, was the first to use the term aesthetics to designate the science of the beautiful. Plato found the basis for art in the world of ideas; Hume and Darwin held beauty to be a purely psychological phenomenon, while others stressed the empirical basis of art. Faber holds that art is not mere imitation, since the artist presents what he perceives as it is reflected in his own soul. Nor is art mere ornamentation of life since the artist's projection becomes itself a real part of life. Being moved and overpowered by his contemplation of the cosmos, the artist is impelled to give expression in image, painting, and literature.

It is difficult to evaluate aesthetics because it is not as yet sufficiently developed as a science. Artists are often unduly preoccupied with their own notions and are notoriously individualistic. The response which beauty evokes needs to be investigated experimentally. Such investigation may not lead us much beyond the dictum, "*De gustibus non disputandum est.*" But difficulties must not deter us. There is objective beauty. God is the great artist, and men must see and reflect the glory of God. Sin too must enter into our evaluation. Art for art's sake is unchristian and that

which is ethically bad cannot be aesthetically acceptable. When the choice, in concrete cases, narrows down between culture and spirituality, there can be no doubt what the decision must be. The passion for objectivation exposes the artist to the danger of worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, but art may never become the substitute for religious adoration.

After a brief apologia for philosophy versus an unwarranted interpretation of Colossians 2:8, Faber rapidly surveys the place of philosophy in Christendom. Tertullian thought that the coming of Christ outdated philosophy. There seemed to be some warrant for the judgment that Jerusalem has nothing in common with Athens in view of Athens' evaluation of the Christ and his cross. But while philosophy did not ignore Christianity, the Christians could not eventually find refuge in isolationism. Celsus opposed Christianity but later Aquinas sought to Christianize Aristotle. For a time heresies led to the proscription of Aristotle and philosophy, but in 1366 it was held that no one could attain to the rank of magister without a study of Aristotle. When Averroes taught that God had chosen Aristotle to reach the highest rung of perfection, and interpreted the Koran in the light of Aristotle, and was charged with heresy, he hit upon the device of double truth. But in 1276 Pope John XXI condemned the principle of double truth. Though Luther taught philosophy at the University of Wittenberg, he viewed Aristotle as the prince of darkness. Calvin differed from Luther in his approach but did not fail to oppose false philosophy. In the nineteenth century the church proved incompetent to cope with the tremendous surge of philosophical thought, but in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century there was notable improvement. The writings of Kuyper, Woltjer, Geesink, Bavinck, Hoekstra, de Hartog, and Wielenga prepared the way for the movement represented by Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and others which gives promise of a thoroughly Calvinistic philosophy.

This Calvinistic philosophy emerged at the Free University of Amsterdam about a quarter of a century ago. It is associated especially with Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd and bears the name, *De Wysbegeerte der Wetsidee*. It is frankly Calvinistic since it reaches back to John Calvin who did not project a philosophy but furnished the constituent elements for it. It claims to be the continuation of the true thrust of Dr. Abraham Kuyper who exploited Calvin theologially and laid the groundwork for philosophic construction of Calvin in his *Encyclopedia of Theology*. It appeals outspokenly to the Scriptures, but since the Bible is no textbook on philosophy, it makes use of the totality of all created reality which is the very direction in which the Bible itself leads us. The leading ideas gathered from Holy Writ and basic to this philosophy are the following:

1. The absolute sovereignty of God over all things.
2. God has given laws and ordinances for all creatures. The demarcation between God and the creature is the law of God which is central to the Calvinistic philosophy.
3. Sovereignty in every sphere.
4. The heart is the root, the centrum, of man's existence. This is opposed to the philosophies that seek the center in the will, the reason, thinking, or the personality of man.
5. The antithesis is a result of predestination which means that there can be no compromise with immanentistic philosophies or any synthesis with any of them.
6. There are fourteen spheres, although these fourteen are not necessarily final and closed. They are: (a) arithme-

## THE REFORMED DIACONATE

THE MINISTRY OF MERCY FOR TODAY. By Peter Y. De Jong. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952. 261 pages. \$3.50.

tical (b) spatial (c) physical (d) biotic (e) psychic (f) logical (g) historic (h) linguistic (i) social (j) economic (k) aesthetic (l) juridical (m) ethical (n) pistic. (Notice that there is no separate time-sphere since the entire cosmic reality is enveloped in universal time).

7. The Calvinistic philosophy reckons seriously with the fact of sin which has affected the totality of the cosmos but has not destroyed a single temporal function, not even that of faith, since unbelief is not the annihilation but the reversal of faith.

8. The power of sin has been conquered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

9. The Calvinistic philosophy holds that in order to solve the epistemological problem an inquiry into both the transcendent and transcendental requisites for scientific knowledge is needed. The transcendental refers to the root of our existence, the heart, which is the supra-temporal concentration point of all cosmic functions; the transcendent points to the intuitive activity in the knowing process, since the heart works through intuition. Only in the light of true knowledge of God can true knowledge of all reality be attained.

The book closes with a brief resume of Existentialism as represented by Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Sartre. This philosophy is characterized as nihilistic, atheistic, anxious, amoral, and individualistic. Because of its decadent and macabre character, issuing in godlessness and lawlessness, it is the polar opposite of the Calvinistic philosophy referred to above. Did the author mean to say that we are confined finally to these alternatives?

This introduction to philosophy in its second edition suggests that the Dutch people of today are reading philosophy. It emphasizes the fact that we are by no *means* ready to declare our independence—in the hope of having reached maturity—from The Netherlands. True science is not national. It is still recognized among us that we can profit richly theologically by studying the Dutch writers. But if our theology is to be adequate for the world of today, we shall have to have theologians who are thoroughly conversant with philosophy not only, but specifically with the Calvinistic philosophy. We shall remain indebted to The Netherlands for years and years to come. The bibliography at the end of each chapter of the book under discussion is loaded down with Dutch authors. College students and not the least pre-seminary students will have to know their Dutch to know their world. The amazing fertility of Dutch thought evokes our admiration and calls for active participation.

The emergence in our time of the Calvinistic philosophy for which Dr. Kuyper longed and prayed is an event of stupendous magnitude which puts to shame and roundly condemns those who dare to be indifferent to it. That does not mean that its present form is final and finished, but it does mean that we shall have to make its study a work of faith and a labor of love. In doing so we had better not forget that this study must also be marked by the patience of hope. Christians the world over need to know about this movement, and we who read the Dutch can serve as "errand boys to deliver the goods." But let us have faith and charity and patience enough not to eliminate at the outset those who have not reached the clarity and insight which we may upon occasion suppose we have attained. We can do untold harm to the cause of Christianity by falling into the error of absolutism.

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THIS book concerns itself with the office of our deacons. That fact in itself makes it a book which merits our sympathetic interest, inasmuch as it has no predecessors in the English language. There are no other books in English which deal specifically with this very important subject. And the office of our deacons, in its scriptural, Reformed sense, has been grossly neglected and much abused in many denominations throughout the years. A publication such as *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* may do much to help hold Christ's office of mercy in high esteem in our churches. It is my hope that this may be the case, and I judge that we owe Dr. De Jong a vote of thanks for giving us the volume under discussion.

The book is scripturally founded and historically oriented. It fully recognizes our time honored, venerable Church Order and its rulings and directions regarding the office of deacon. It is, moreover, comprehensive in its treatment.

The author presents his material in fourteen chapters, the first of which discusses the need for the ministry of mercy for today. Dr. De Jong then proceeds to consider the Scriptural basis for the office; the exercise of the ministry of mercy in the various churches throughout the centuries and today; the exercise of the ministry of mercy specifically in the Reformed churches; the qualifications for the office of the diaconate; the deacons' appointment to office and their task; the organization and regulation of their work, etc.

In the last four chapters the author discusses diaconal cooperation with the State, with institutions of mercy, with other diaconates, and finally the interesting question of women in the office of deacon.

I would recommend this volume without hesitation. Every deacon should have it and study it. It makes excellent reading for all of our office-bearers and for all of our people. In my estimation a book such as this might well be used for discussion purposes by deacon's conferences and men's societies. There is an urgent need for volumes as the one before me, and for their careful, studious reading and discussion.

One suggestion at this time. At the head of every chapter the author cites brief quotations from Holy Writ and from certain non-biblical writers. The quotations from the Bible are not indicated according to the Scriptural references, but merely by the name of their Biblical author, just as he does with quotations from Dryden, Goldsmith, Kuyper, and others. Thus he quotes, in connection with Chapter One, John 17:20, 21. Yet the reference is not John 17:20, 21, but simply Jesus Christ. And then follow quotations from Dryden and Montaigne which are credited after the same manner.

May it not seem to some readers that Dr. De Jong is placing Holy Writ on par with other writings, and the God-inspired writers on par with ordinary writers? I know that this was far from the thought of the author. I am, of course, not talking about Dr. De Jong's attitude and intent, but concerning impressions which he might give.

Perhaps he would want to alter the book on this score, if and when a second edition is called for. May that second edition be called for soon!

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