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Jesus Only!

A Sermon by the late REV. J. GRESHAM MACHEN, D.D., Litt.D.

And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee . . . (II Kings 4:30).

THE doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible does not mean that all parts of the Bible are equally important or equally beautiful. It only means that all parts of the Bible are equally true.

Even the least considered parts of the Bible have indeed their place. No part could be missing without loss; and as it has been said that the true lovers of Shakespeare's poetry love the level lines of Shakespeare, so the true lovers of Holy Writ love the level chapters of the Word of God. They love those chapters of the Bible where we seem to be walking through the plain, between one great mountain peak of revelation and another.

But in the midst of the level chapters of the Bible, we come ever again to

marvelous gems of narrative, where it seems as though God in the exuberance of His grace had couched His revelation to men in such matchless beauty as inevitably to arrest their gaze.

Such a gem of narrative is the story of the Shunammite woman, told in the fourth chapter of II Kings. What a divine book the Bible is, and also what a human book! As we read that story of a mother's grief, the long intervening centuries seem to be rolled away like a disappearing curtain. There is nothing that seems strange to us as we read. It might all have happened yesterday. We are brought as close to that family of long ago as though they were living here with us today. How wonderfully natural the story is, how marvelously simple, and yet how profound!

In comparison with the insight into the depths of



Dr. J. Gresham Machen

the human heart which that simple story brings, I think the best efforts of uninspired writers seem but puny and thin.

At the centre of the story stands one of the unforgettable portraits which the Bible contains. It is the portrait of the Shunammite woman. In what few and simple strokes is the wonderful picture drawn! The great dramatists of the world might have put into that woman's mouth pages of soliloquy; Greek choruses might all have done their part in glorious verse: and still we should not have one-tenth of the knowledge of that woman's soul or have our heart-strings one-tenth as much stirred as is done by the few and simple words, and by the strange and eloquent restraint, of this matchless story.

At Shunem there was a great woman. She does not seem to have been a woman of many words; like Mary the mother of our Lord she kept things and pondered them in her heart. No vulgar talk, but only simple deeds coming from a strong and plain soul.

The thing that stands out in the character of that woman is her power of concentration upon one central resolve. One only, she determined, could help her in her hour of need. To seek that one she put all other considerations aside, and when she had found him no persuasions could send her away.

It was indeed an hour of dire need in which she sought the prophet's help.

She was a great woman, as the Bible says. I suppose that means she was a woman of some wealth and position. But she had a secret, gnawing sorrow, the sorrow that she had no son. That was always a tragedy to a Jewish woman. To her it was a tragedy too great for words.

In the course of time Elisha the man of God chanced by. She constrained him to eat bread; then she made for him a little chamber on the wall, and set for him there a bed and a table and a candlestick, and he came in and lodged there.

That prophet was a mighty man of God, but he was not above noticing the simple kindness that the woman had shown. "Call this Shunammite", he said. Gehazi called her and she

stood before the prophet. "What shall I do for you?" he asked. "Shall I speak for you to the king or to the captain of the host?" And she answered, "I dwell among mine own people".

But Gehazi had observed some things. He was not a very lovely character, but apparently he kept his eyes open, and he rather wanted to do this woman a good turn. "Verily she hath no child", he said, "and her husband is old". So the woman was called again. She came and stood in the door. "About this season", said the prophet, "according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son".

Ah, there was that old sore opened up again; there was that deep sorrow of the heart, so carefully covered up, brought out into the cruel light of day! It was more than could be borne. "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid".

Yet the prophet's words came true. The woman conceived and bore a son. We can well understand with what love and devotion the mother followed the life of that only child. Her whole soul was wrapped up in that boy whom God had given her to take away the agony of her soul.

The boy went out one day to his father with the reapers. Then, as now, boys seemed to have loved to watch their fathers as they worked. I do not know that humanity has changed as much as we are sometimes tempted to suppose.

But tragedy and sorrow lurked in the sunshine of that summer's day.

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The boy said to his father, "My head, my head", and the father said, "Carry him to his mother". They carried him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

What a world of pity is conveyed to us by the simple words! How infinitely tender is this majestic Book of God! There the mother was with her dead child in her arms.

Does the Bible proceed then to describe her tears or report her agonizing cries? No, it does not at all. I think there were no tears and no agonizing cries. She took her dead child up—that was all—and laid him in that little chamber on the wall and shut the door.

One thought held exclusive possession of her soul. She must get to that man of God. Nothing must intervene. There was no time for sympathy, no time for explanations. "Why are you going to the man of God today?" her husband said. "It shall be well", said she. No time even to tell the father about his child lying there in that chamber.

Gehazi came to meet her. "Is it well with thee?" he said. "Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?" And she answered, "It is well". There was one only to whom she would tell the sorrow of her heart. Let others think what they would. Words exchanged with them were nothing but a waste of time.

At last she came to the man of God. She caught him by the feet. There was no time for politeness; there was no time for pleasant words. Her words were wrung from her as by a bitterness beyond all control. "Did I desire a son of my lord?" she said. "Did I not say, Do not deceive me?" She was right. She had not asked the prophet for a son; she had asked nothing from the prophet, and she had said to him when he promised her one, "Do not deceive me".

It was a bitter reproach indeed. Well, what did the prophet do with that bitter reproach; what did God do with it—the God for whom the prophet spoke?

Sometimes God rebukes the reproaches of men. He rebuked and punished the Israelities who murmured against Him in the wilderness. But there is a difference between such

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The Christmas Paradox

By the REV. RICHARD W. GRAY

Pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church, East Orange, N. J.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Cor. 8:9).

THE celebration of Christmas in America in this fifth year of the war will be stripped of the customary tinsel and trappings. Scarcity will keep the Christmas tree, the luxurious gift, and the sumptuous Yuletide dinner from many homes. The grim spirit of Mars will suppress the jolly spirit of St. Nicholas. Distance will bar the reunion of families with husbands and boys scattered to the far battlefronts of the world.

However, America, at this Christmas season, is a Utopia in comparison to the rest of the world. We indeed have scarcity, but elsewhere privation prevails. The spirit of jollity is suppressed here, but the spirit of sadism depresses the people in conquered countries. The ocean which separates continent from continent prevents reunion in many American homes, but the impassable gulf which divides the world of flesh from the world of spirit forbids reunions in countless homes of Europe and Asia. Poverty, slavery, helplessness, subjection—these are the things which characterize the peoples of Europe and Asia on this occasion when the world contemplates the birth of Jesus Christ.

In such a world the question might naturally be asked, Is the message of Christmas a farce? Does the Christ-child have anything to offer this chaotic civilization? Let us hasten to assure that He does! But, just as we must remove the pretty colored wrapping and the brightly-hued ribbon from the package in order to catch a glimpse of the precious Christmas gift, so we must eliminate the excrescences in which the centuries have wrapped God's great gift in order that we may behold its real meaning. Better to understand the import of God's unadorned gift that first Christmas, let us consider the words of the apostle Paul: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he be-

came poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich".

The Poverty of Christ

A proper understanding of this paradoxical Christmas carol depends upon two things—the historical circumstances of the birth of Christ, and the inspired exposition of the incarnation as we find it in Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men".

These verses focus our attention upon the poverty of Christ at His birth. "He became poor", "he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant". These words indicate the inception of our Lord into a state of humiliation at that particular point in history which we celebrate as the birth of Christ. The estate of humiliation sketched by the words, "poor", "of no reputation", "form of a servant", is painted in greater detail in the record of His birth preserved in Matthew and Luke. From that picture we learn the following facts about Christ's poverty:

First, Christ was poor in material possessions. At a time when half the world is looking to Uncle Sam, the rich philanthropist, to supply many of its material needs, we Americans must guard against losing our sense of values. It is well to recall that the true economic state of Christ, the Saviour of the world, was reflected in His first resting place, the manger of straw in the stable of cattle. He was born into the family not of a rich industrialist but of a poor carpenter.

Christ was poor in social standing as well. The struggling proletariat of this old world could derive much comfort this Christmas if it would ponder the fact that the Saviour took not the form of a prince or a king but "the form of a servant". Though royal blood coursed in the veins of Joseph, His father according to legal genealogy,

the house of David lay in irretrievable ruins. Its newborn heir was the subject of the house of Augustus!

Christ was also poor in physical power. Like all children, the Christ-child was utterly helpless. He took upon Himself all the frailties of human nature, yet without sin. Oh that the poor, helpless people of Europe who would overthrow the mighty German *Wehrmacht* would take courage from the fact that the conqueror who toppled the gates of Hell was once a feeble babe in His mother's arms.

Finally, Christ was poor in legal status. Our sympathies today are with the cruelly dominated subjects of Nazi totalitarianism. But let us recall that the Child born on that first Christmas morning was under the iron fist of the Roman emperor who decreed that His parents should journey all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be enrolled; that the fanatical order of Herod, tyrant king of Judæa, drove the holy family to Egypt for safety in the first months of Jesus' life; that the patriarchal figure of Moses cast its shadow over His life, demanding His circumcision at eight days as well as His presentation in the temple.

Those who bemoan their fate in a cruel world at this Christmas season have company in their misery in a Friend who knew all the restrictions of one born into a poverty-stricken family, all the confinements of a child of lowly social standing, all the limitations of an infant on his mother's breast, and all the restraints of a Jew born under the Roman and Mosaic laws. To those who know this Friend, He is a friend indeed. It was for their benefit that He voluntarily assumed this poverty. "For your sakes he became poor."

The Paradox of Christ's Poverty

When we have said all that, we have touched only the fringe of the profound significance of the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A person living in New York's lower East Side, as long as he never rises above the confines of the wall about him, does not fully realize his restrictions

and handicaps. But let one who has enjoyed the luxuries of Park Avenue be transplanted to the slums, and the humiliation will overwhelm him. And if the velvet-cushioned child of royalty were to forsake the riches of the palace for the poverty of the slums, he would scarcely survive. Yet it is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Though he was rich, he became poor".

Despite the fact that this illustration carries us farther into the depths of the meaning of Christ's poverty, we have not yet reached its most significant aspect. To compare, as some have done, the incarnation of the Lord Christ to impoverishments like those of King Christian of Denmark, King Haakon of Norway, or King Peter of Yugoslavia, exiles from their rightful thrones, is utterly inadequate. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was not a deprivation, not an impoverishment, not an emptying. The Revised Version translation of Paul's sublime declaration of the incarnation is erroneous. It is not correct to say, "He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant". One cannot "empty" by "taking", any more than one can subtract by adding. The correct rendering of the passage is: "who, being and continuing unalterably to be in the form of God . . . made himself of no reputation by taking upon him the form of a servant". And so in our next text the translation is: "He, being and continuing to be rich, became poor". Christ, in His incarnation, did not relinquish the form of God, but took to Himself the form of a servant; He did not give up His riches but added poverty. That very fact is the paradox of Christ's poverty.

Some time ago, the son of the head of a large corporation, a co-owner of the business, did an unusual thing. Desiring to learn the business from the ground up, he went to one of his factories and, under a pseudonym, applied for a job. For a time he worked as an ordinary laborer without disclosing his true identity. Let us imagine the man of the story to be the late Edsel Ford, son of the motor magnate, and president of the Ford Motor Company. Imagine him securing a job at one of the factories. In the morning, he who helps make the rules of the company, in obedience to those rules, punches the time clock and takes his place in the long assembly line. As the incompleting chassis of Ford after Ford passes by, he screws

nut six hundred and sixty-six on bolt seven hundred and seventy-seven. When his perspiring body becomes exhausted, he stops for a moment to rest. The boss comes along and shouts: "Come on there, Jones! Keep on the job". That is one of the foremen whose application for work he okayed when he sat at his desk in the main office. Yet, he takes the chiding order. The experienced workmen at his side poke fun at his inexperienced ways. His complaint of blisters on his tender hands is met with some scoffing remark. But he doesn't retaliate. Nor does he say, "I'm Edsel Ford. Mind your 'p's' and 'q's'". All this time his name is on the company's stationery as president of the Ford Motor Company. After working hours, his phone is busy as he consults with his father and other executives about plans for the new helicopter which the engineers are designing. Paradoxically, Edsel Ford has two modes of existence: Edsel Ford, president of the Ford Motor Company; and Edsel Ford, laborer for the Ford Motor Company. Like most such illustrations, of course, the parallel is far from perfect. But it may serve in some measure to clarify our thoughts.

Returning to our text, let us explore the paradox of the poverty of Jesus Christ. Has He not two modes of existence? Was He not at the same time Jesus Christ, the rich Son of God, and Jesus Christ, the poor servant of man?

The Son of God who could say, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine", was also the legal child of the poor carpenter, Joseph of Nazareth. The Lord of Glory who could say, "The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine", could also say, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head".

The Son of God, to whom the Father said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom", was also an insignificant child of a Galilean peasant. Throughout His thirty-three years on earth, He made His friends not among Pharaohs or Cæsars but among publicans and sinners.

Moreover, the Son of God, who in the beginning spake and the world was created, and who "upholds all things by the word of his power", was also a helpless infant in His

mother's arms.

Finally, consider that the Son of God who wrote the law on tables of stone at Sinai, and who gives authority to the kings of this world to rule, was Himself obedient to the law of Moses and to the numerous decrees of Cæsar Augustus.

Simultaneously, therefore, Jesus Christ is the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and the poor Galilean peasant; the King of kings and Lord of lords, and the menial servant who washes the disciples' feet; the Lord God Omnipotent, and the impotent babe in Simeon's arms; the one Lawgiver, and the helpless subject who is circumcised according to the Mosaic code and pays tribute to the arrogant Cæsar.

If, at this Christmas, we should exclaim at the endurance of the poverty-ridden peoples of the world, how much more should we wonder at the humiliation of Jesus Christ on that first Christmas! Timothy Dwight, one-time president of Yale University, gives voice to the Christian's adoration in these words: "What were the views, which the Angels formed of this new and astonishing event? Easily may we imagine, that all Heaven was lost in wonder, and buried in silence to behold this transition from infinite glory to supreme humiliation, from the throne of the Universe to a tenement of clay. How instructively ought we, uniting with Angels in the same views and the same emotions, to behold, wonder, and adore!"

Even more fitting are the words with which Paul closes his description to the Philippians of the humiliation of the incarnation: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".

And, let it be added, every tongue that confesses Christ now shall, through His poverty, become rich—rich, not in the tawdry riches of this world, symbolized in the tinsel and trappings of Christmas, but rich in those heavenly treasures which are not corrupted by moth and rust and which constitute the real meaning of God's gift to man, the supreme Christmas present.

The Mission of Our Church

By the REV. OSCAR HOLKEBOER

Moderator of the Tenth General Assembly of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Pastor of Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Oostburg, Wisconsin

"Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

WE have witnessed the crushing power of nations able to command vast military machines—power to lay waste small nations to such an extent that we wonder if they will ever rise again. It almost seems that the day of small, independent, peace-loving nations is past. Perhaps the same can be said for small business. It is the huge corporations that receive the lion's share of government expenditures in this war. Meanwhile small business is so overburdened with governmental red tape and so pressed by competition that it cannot flourish and in some instances is even forced to close its doors.

Likewise, in the opinion of many observers, this is a most unfavorable time for small denominations. Those observers point to the numerous denominations already on the scene. They claim that there is no spot in our nation so isolated but that at least one of the many denominations has already sought to gain adherents there. It could be demonstrated that the larger denominations have greater financial power and superior equipment for the promotion of church extensions. Then too, other things being equal, the local church that has a fine auditorium, a polished and eloquent orator in the pulpit, inspiring music and a social program for week-day activity has apparently much greater drawing power than has a small church of ten or fifteen faithful souls meeting in some obscure, poorly-adapted, unpaid-for building.

Appalling Indifference

In some such way the case against small, newly-organized denominations might be stated. We have suggested some of the difficulties we face as members of such a denomination—The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. But these are not all. One of the reasons the growth of our smaller churches is so slow is simply the ap-

alling indifference in so many places. The mistaken belief that one religion is about as good as another is incredibly common. We witness today the sad spectacle of millions of people, not illiterate but rather well-educated, perishing for "lack of knowledge"—knowledge of the way of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures. Yet, strangely enough, there is little clamor for this "knowledge".

A colleague of mine in the ministry reported to me a recent incident that is illuminating as well as tragic. He was canvassing homes in a certain district of Milwaukee with a view to the purchase of a new place of worship there. He visited a certain lady and asked if she objected to the prospect of a church to be built in that particular restricted zone. She replied that she had none, and thought it a splendid idea. Then he asked her about her church affiliation, whereupon she replied, "I belong to no church". When challenged on the point of consistency, she hastened to declare that if all people lived as she did there would be no need of churches!

My friend's ministerial experience probably could be duplicated many times, and accords very well with a similar experience of my own. A young woman came to me with a letter from a Methodist Episcopal church of a near-by city, desiring to affiliate with the church of which I am pastor. I knew she had not attended church service for years. Further inquiry revealed she did not think church attendance had much to do with the Christian life. She also confessed, unabashed, that she was too busy to read the Bible. Then I asked her to give me an idea of what it meant to be a Christian and at once she responded: "If you really want to know, I think I'm a good Christian". Not only are such people wholly ignorant of the gospel but they also prefer to remain that way. Is it any wonder that new denominations and, particularly, small congregations within them have difficulty launching new ventures as long as they proclaim the unadulterated gospel of grace?

Church Unionism

Added to all this, we live in an age of church union. The trend is toward the merger of the large denominations and the increased influence of the powerful Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The effort of the Federal Council to control radio time allotted to smaller ecclesiastical bodies is already widely known and poses additional perplexities for small churches with a distinctively evangelical message.

What I have written so far is not designed to dampen the enthusiasm of the members of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. My purpose is rather to face facts however unpleasant, then to examine our assets, and to chart the course of our future as God may give us grace.

Like the Philadelphia Church of Revelation 3:8, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is "a little flock poor in worldly goods, and of small account in the eyes of men" (Trench). But this is by no means a disadvantage. A church or an individual that is poor in material resources may be rich in spiritual resources. A church of small account in the eyes of men may be of great account in the eyes of God. If you take another interpretation of the words, "thou hast but little strength", it can mean that the church is consciously weak and therefore a fitter object for God's power to rest upon. There you have a thought equally applicable. I doubt that the old saying, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity", is thoroughly Scriptural, but Scripture does furnish abundant evidence that God delights in manifesting His power in behalf of those who readily admit their own weakness and hence their utter dependence on Him. Thus it may be said that our conscious weakness, our lack of material resources, the very reproach with which we are regarded—all these are assets rather than liabilities.

The history of Israel as well as that of the early church furnishes us with numerous examples to prove our contention. Abraham and a handful of Bedouin servants overcame the forces

of four tribal kings in order to rescue his nephew Lot. The account of the endurance of Israel in Egypt in spite of the effort of Pharaoh to exterminate them is another clear instance of God taking the side of the weak. The conquest of Canaan by a small, non-militaristic people, their subsequent victories over strong invading forces, including that remarkable rout of numberless troops of Midianites by Gideon's band of three hundred—all these narratives and many more like them are eloquent testimony to the comparative unimportance of material resources and the urgent necessity of laying hold by faith upon the inexhaustible resources made available by the gracious favor of our sovereign God. Let me remind you of the words of our Lord to His apostle, Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness". Despite all the persecution by Jewish Sanhedrin and Roman tyrants, the small bands of defenseless Christians in the early church were made to triumph through Christ.

Our Seeming Insignificance

Humanly speaking, we are still just a "little flock". By our departure from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. we have not appreciably thinned out its ranks. By division in our own ranks, in the eyes of many we ridiculously weakened our own cause. Our controversy with the modernist-indifferent element in the church has not even had the effect of producing a counter-reformation of any considerable proportions. Is our movement then a failure? The answer is an emphatic "No!" To say that it is a failure would be to leave God out of account. God will not honor the church that dishonors Him. The apparent progress of large denominations that have dethroned Jesus Christ and dishonored His Word is a hollow prosperity. The church that builds squarely upon the Word of God and honors Christ is bound not only to survive but also in the end to prevail.

In the meantime discouragements and frustrations are bound to come, but these are designed to test and promote faithfulness. "He that endureth unto the end shall receive the crown of life".

As a denomination we are little more than seven years old. In that time we have promoted both home and foreign missions and despite han-

dicaps these have been signally blessed. We have added a full-time secretary for the Committee on Christian Education, and have distributed thousands of tracts and booklets whose influence is just beginning to be felt. Some of our men have entered other denominations. We deplored their departure, but we may have overlooked the fact that God uses such means to scatter the "seed", and what seems to us a severe loss may become a real gain. Our committees, like many of our ministers, live a hand-to-mouth existence without financial surplus, yet God has supplied all our needs. Westminster Seminary, ecclesiastically independent yet all but indispensable to us, is on a sound financial basis, has a faculty second to none despite the loss of notable scholars, and never lacks for earnest, scholarly students. THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN (like the seminary, not under church control) is a tower of strength to our cause, is wide awake to trends in the church, and commands the respectful interest of many outside our denomination.

Editorial writers of other papers and leaders of other church bodies have looked to our church with keen interest and have prayed for our success. One writer wrote of the exemplary "glow of principle" that characterized our constituency—by which he referred to our unflagging zeal for the Reformed Faith. Another leading cleric saw Calvinism in our church as occupying the "midstream" of American life, whereas he modestly consigned his own to the "sidestream". Surely, we have every reason to "thank God and take courage".

The Worth of Our Testimony

Certainly it is an asset to have such a clear, consistent, intellectually acceptable interpretation of Christianity as the Reformed Faith. It is the one interpretation that gives God all the glory that is due unto His name. It is the one interpretation that makes salvation all of grace. It is the interpretation which is death to the natural pride and self-righteousness of sinful man but, when rightly understood and humbly believed, it is completely satisfying. Moreover, it is of the nature of the Reformed Faith that its implications permeate every sphere of human life—social, political, economic, educational and religious. It gives us not only a complete and systematic

understanding of the way of salvation but it also offers a comprehensive life- and world-view that touches the thought-life of the Christian at every point and integrates all of life so as to dispel the fog of confusion and bewilderment that characterizes the present age. Has The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, with its belief in the doctrine of God's sovereign control of this world, a message for men and women, troubled and bewildered in war-torn times? Will it have a message for our soldiers and sailors when they return from the conflict, broken possibly in body and mind? We answer with a stentorian "Yes!"

This vital, robust Christianity (for Calvinism is just that) has captivated the students who prepare for the ministry at Westminster Seminary and sends them forth with a glowing enthusiasm to preach and teach. These same men need all the enthusiasm they can muster to face a world in which their message is patently unwelcome. Although Calvinism, or the Reformed Faith, once dominated the Protestant church and still has many nominal adherents, it has given way to an appalling extent to the Modernism that is more palatable to a proud, self-willed, luxury-loving people.

Yet here we are in the midstream of America, ministering not just to one language group whose forebears came from some one country on the continent of Europe, but having contacts with all classes in all parts of America—Maine, Florida and California; the East, Middle West and Far West. What an opportunity! What a future!

Lest We Forget

We are still a small church. Is that serious? Only insofar as we have not done all in our power to propagate the gospel. Only insofar as many come under the influence of a "gospel" which only deceives and destroys, because we could not reach them with the true gospel. Only insofar as we may have trusted too much in human resources and not have relied enough on God. Only because it may very well be that we have not lived the gospel we preached. It is sometimes a good thing to turn upon ourselves the searchlight of criticism we direct toward others. It helps to keep us humble. It is so easy to adopt a spirit of intellectual superiority, while we treat with deserved contempt the false religions

so prevalent today. Before we can make much progress, it is well to discover wherein we have erred, candidly confess, and seek to remedy the situation.

We have an aversion to the church union movements of the day. The compromise of conviction and doctrine involved is extremely distasteful to us. As leaders in the church we have become strongly individualistic. Finding it difficult to cooperate with other church bodies, we are in danger of neglecting to cooperate with each other. Moreover, having shelved the larger issue of Modernism, we tend to ride a hobby on some minor issue which looms larger in our minds than it deserves. As we continue to define our position and continue to be on the defensive, are we not in real danger of becoming involved in hairsplitting? I have no desire to underestimate the importance of the intellectual aspects of our faith, but it does seem that we would do well to be reminded of the virtues of love and forbearance, of the necessity of submerging our personal whims for the good of the whole church. It would do no harm, and might do a great deal of good, should we be reminded of the "tie that binds our hearts in Christian love".

Zeal we have had without doubt, but have we always expressed it in love? Devotion to truth has characterized our movement throughout; we have kept His Word and not denied His name; but have we always spoken the truth in love? Our insistence upon Christian liberty has been commendable, but in our use of it have we commended the gospel to others? We have sacrificed a great deal for the cause, but have we sacrificed enough? Some of us had the courage of our convictions when we attacked Modernism in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., but have not the heart to tackle difficult disciplinary problems that arise now.

Is there a future for The Orthodox Presbyterian Church? Is there a future for Calvinism in America? These are related questions. To be sure, the future of the church or the kingdom of Christ does not rise or fall with The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. But that our church has an important contribution to make to that end need not for a moment be called in question. Christ has set before us an open door of opportunity to preach the un-

searchable riches of grace in Christ Jesus. It will take faith, fortitude, a fervent zeal and an untiring labor of love, but under the blessing of God it can and shall be done. Let our battle-

cry and our hymn of hope be this:
 "Lead on, O king eternal,
 The strife will not be long,
 This day the noise of battle,
 The next the victor's song".

We, the People, Speak!

By the REV. ROBERT S. MARSDEN

General Secretary of the Missions Committees of
 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

FOR two weeks the office of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church was literally swamped by replies to the letter which, on October 22nd, was sent to nearly twenty-four thousand people in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (see THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, November 10, 1943). The letter had been sent chiefly to elders whose names and addresses were obtained from the minutes of the several synods of the church. The replies came in thick and fast—the more violent of them first! Some of them should have been written on asbestos paper, but there were many with milder criticism and a goodly number of replies from saints of God who desired more information and advice.

Two hundred sixty replies have thus far been received. Before the letter was sent out, I quietly hoped that we would receive replies from one per cent., and we have done slightly better than that. The replies range from vilifying diatribes to letters written by earnest Christians in tears. They come from all parts of the country, from people in all walks of life, and from all economic levels. Some of them are on the finest bond paper with engraved headings, while others of them are on tablet paper or, if the authors desired to show their contempt, on post cards. They vary in length from ten words to three thousand words! They probably represent all shades of thought and conviction, and so give a fairly accurate cross-section of thinking in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

If one had any doubts concerning the spiritual degeneracy of that church before reading the replies, all these doubts would vanish after perusing just a few of them. I quote from a dozen letters, from what appear to be the most prominent people who

replied. I quote from these prominent people not because what they have to say is necessarily of more importance than what was said by more humble people, but because they presumably represent the "brains" of the church, if not its spiritual leadership. Remember that these people are all elders or ministers in that church. I have not quoted from those whose chief interest has been in vilifying me or our church. These people have all written seriously and on their official stationery. Much more blatant Modernism could be unearthed from the letters of less prominent people and from letters which are too violent in tone to deserve quotation.

It is not my intention or inclination to move to Brazil because a majority of the people of this country want Roosevelt for president and his New Deal gang. Neither do I propose to leave my Presbyterian Church affiliation because a majority of the general assembly elected a liberal as Moderator (from the treasurer of a railroad).

I consider Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin one of the greatest if not the greatest Christian in America today (from the dean of a Presbyterian college).

Your crowd withdrew from the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. and now are attempting to run our church from the outside (from a United States senator).

I sincerely hope that it may not be long until you will come back into our church (from the governor of a commonwealth).

If there are reforms to be brought about, such as you suggest, then it should be done within the organization (from the president of another railroad).

Let us not turn aside and quarrel over theological differences (from a Pittsburgh business man).

The session of this church is not liberal. And we will not become so because Dr. Coffin is Moderator (from the session of an Ohio church).

This church was itself a mission church, supported by the Board of National Missions for over forty years. Now that it is on its own feet, it would seem indeed to

be "an ungrateful child" to walk out (from the session of an Indiana church).

The way to combat modernism today is not by withdrawing into our own corner, but by combating it from within (from a California minister).

[I] agree with the missionary priest of Dr. Cronin's novel that there are many doors to heaven (from a New Jersey attorney).

One of the emphases of the teaching of Christ,—if not the main one,—is to bring the Kingdom of God upon earth, or in other words, to bring about good will among all mankind (from a New York real estate broker).

It seems to me that your church should recognize that there is a war on and that the question of modernism and fundamentalism is not important (from a Pittsburgh bank president).

Of the two hundred sixty replies, one hundred forty of them were quite violently critical, sixty others more or less mildly critical, and sixty more or less mildly favorable. It is a commentary on the teaching of the Apostle Paul that "not many wise men after the flesh" are called, for, in general, the letters from the more prominent people and the best-written letters were critical. A few of the more mildly critical letters were answered, and all of the favorable letters were answered. To most of these people tracts were sent telling about our church. About twenty of the most favorable answers were passed on to our ministers in the neighborhood of the writers with the suggestion that perhaps they would want to make a personal call upon the correspondent. It was surprising how many pastors replied for the elders who had brought the letters to them. Letters were received from no less than forty ministers, and almost without exception the writers were quite critical, while protesting their own orthodoxy. Most of them quoted Jesus' words in condemnation of the Pharisees' proselytizing to wickedness, and seemed to think that Jesus was there forbidding all proselytizing. Letters were also sent by, or at the direction of, at least ten church sessions, and at least two of these asked for more information. One person sent a contribution along with his reply!

What were the net results of the letter? In innumerable churches there must have been a great deal of discussion of the issues, and while much of the discussion was undoubtedly dismissed with the assumption that

we were simply "cranks", some of it surely will have a good effect. The fact that no one who answered the letter seriously attempted to defend staying in the church by an appeal to the Bible or the Confession of Faith is indeed significant. When ministers and elders of a church which professes to believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, make so little attempt to justify their position by a serious exposition of the Word, one cannot but wonder whether they have much conception of what it means to accept the Bible as one's rule of faith and life. The results also seem to justify a prediction that there will be no general exodus from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in our generation. I venture to predict that the denomination could unite with the Episcopal Church upon any basis of union which might appeal to the Episcopalians, without losing any sizable number of members.

But what are the positive results? It is a little early to judge. We have faithfully witnessed to these people, and we know that in His own time God will bring forth fruit of that witness. Certainly some of those elders who wrote favorable replies will unite with our church. There is good prospect that at least one or two churches may be moved to withdraw in a body from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Again, some people who did not answer the letter may seek out our church; there is some evidence of this already. In a few localities there were at least several people who sought further information, and these may form a nucleus for the organization of a new Orthodox Presbyterian church.

Questions From Guardian Readers

Readers are invited to submit questions freely to this column. Answers must of necessity be brief, and an exhaustive treatment of difficult subjects is not contemplated. Questions will be answered in the order of their receipt and with due consideration of their general interest for a wide variety of readers.

HOW can the imprecatory Psalms of David (e.g., Psalm 139: 21, 22: 'Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? . . . I hate them with perfect hatred') be reconciled with the principle of Christian love?" E. W.

A clue to the answer to this ques-

tion may be discerned in the verse quoted. The Psalmist is appealing to God for approval of his hatred. In the next verses (23, 24) he prays, "Search me . . . and see if there be any wicked way in me". It is obvious, therefore, that the "hatred" here mentioned is not considered as something wicked.

In this particular passage the word *hate* refers not to that evil passion which is so severely condemned elsewhere in the Bible, but rather to an intense conviction on the part of the Psalmist that the enemies of God, because they are in active enmity against Him, must be destroyed. If these enemies prevail, they will seek to destroy God. Hence, they must themselves perish. Note that there is no personal hatred expressed against specific individuals who were enemies of David. On the other hand, this *hatred* is directed against men rather than against sin as such. Sin does not appear in the abstract, but manifests itself through men. Therefore, men who oppose themselves to God are those against whom the Psalmist has set himself.

This attitude is not incongruous with the principle of loving one's enemies. True love may sometimes be exhibited by opposing the evil that men seek to perform, and we must resolutely oppose such men when their actions are directed against God and His Word.

"When our Lord spoke of the Law and the Prophets, did He have reference to the copies of the Bible which were then in existence or to the original manuscripts?" D. G.

When Christ employed the words *Law and Prophets*, He had reference, it would seem, to the Old Testament Scriptures as such, rather than to any particular manuscript or group of manuscripts. At the same time He could enter the synagogue at Nazareth and use the copy of the Scriptures which was present (Luke 4:16-21). No doubt He made a practical use of the Bible in His day just as we do today.

However, the exemplar of Scripture which exactly presents the revealed will of God can, in the very nature of the case, be only the manuscript which was written by the human authors of the Bible. Every copy of these original manuscripts is but a copy of the Bible. Our Lord's use of the Scriptures does not in any sense change this fact.

The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITORIAL

A Banner at Half-Mast

IN THE October, 1943, issue of *The Calvin Forum*, Editor Clarence Bouma takes "Editor Birch" severely to task for daring to criticize the recent affiliation of the Christian Reformed Church with the National Association of Evangelicals (see *THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN*, August 15, 1943, page 233).

Editor Birch has no zeal to cross swords with Editor Bouma, lest such controversy be interpreted as the inception of a rift between the Christian Reformed Church and The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. But Editor Birch has grave doubt that the position espoused in *The Calvin Forum* by Editor Bouma is by any means the position of even a majority of the members of his denomination. Therefore let it be clearly understood at the outset that these remarks are directed not at all against the Christian Reformed Church but solely against the arguments of the National Association's champion, Editor Bouma.

Dr. Bouma is far from reserved in his excoriation of us. "Specious attacks like this one", "gross ignorance", "utterly unfounded", are phrases that characterize his editorial. We do not wish to fight back with the same lethal weapons. Rather, we prefer to deal soberly with the substance of the accusations. Since Dr. Bouma makes eloquent appeal to the organ of the National Association, *United Evangelical Action*, we shall as far as possible document our reply by quotation from that journal.

Dr. Bouma's first specific accusation concerns our statement that the National Association has temporized with the Federal Council issue. He says:

The charge that the N.A.E. has not taken a strong stand against the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and in any way compromises with this liberal movement (against which the very organization of the N.A.E. is a

courageous protest) is so utterly unfounded and betrays such gross ignorance of the movement that one wonders how it could ever have been made by one who seeks to enlighten his readers.

We did not say that the National Association has never expressed disapproval of the Federal Council. It has! In recent months, it has expended much space in its magazine in viewing with alarm the policies of that modernist body. The National Association has been like a husband heartbroken by the gross infidelity of a wayward wife. The husband banishes the wife from his home and openly and tearfully denounces her before his friends, even going so far as to declare that she is no longer his wife. But he never applies for a divorce, never takes the necessary steps actually to sever the abused marital ties. Despite his protestations, he remains married to her. The National Association, like the heartbroken and wronged husband, has steadfastly refused to go the one further step that would give weight and meaning and force and reality to its very vocal disapproval. Instead, it has continued to do what we said it has done: It has "as an organization repeatedly refused to join battle with the Federal Council". In proof of this contention, we call to the witness stand the official magazine, *United Evangelical Action*. In the issue of August 1, 1942, in an editorial entitled "Contentious versus Evangelical Christianity", Dr. Harold John Ockenga, now president of the National Association, says:

At the St. Louis Convention a very important issue was raised; namely, Is the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action willing to attack the Federal Council of Churches? This issue has reappeared in numerous magazine articles since the St. Louis Convention.

The position taken by all but six delegates voting on April 8th at St. Louis, and officially the position of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action, is that we will not attack the Federal Council. Let this be plainly stated and understood.

Yet Dr. Bouma says, "We know the Christian Reformed Church well enough to be able to say that specious attacks like this one of editor Birch will have no effect on its leadership".

There is, however, a far more basic problem involved in the position maintained by Dr. Bouma—a problem so all-important to a Reformed church

that even the Federal Council issue becomes relatively insignificant by comparison. It is the problem involved in the fact that the National Association is planning and putting into effect as rapidly as possible a program of ecclesiastical functions, that is, functions that are properly to be performed only by the churches themselves, not by an outside organization. Ecclesiastical functions include evangelism, Christian education and missions. Since it is not yet clear just how far the educational and missionary activities of the group will go, we shall for the most part confine our remarks to the contemplated evangelistic program. What kind of doctrine will be featured in such evangelistic campaigns? Obviously, only such doctrine as expresses the beliefs of the majority, or that is the least common denominator of the convictions of the members. Can a Reformed church, then, cooperate in the propagation of Arminian evangelism? Let us hear Dr. Bouma's answer to that question:

... our Calvinism does not make us narrow exclusivists who do not recognize other brethren in Christ that may not be Reformed but who hold aloft the banner of the Gospel no less than do the Calvinists.

Just here, in this business of holding banners aloft, is the crux of the entire question. A few days ago we received a letter which contained such an interesting analysis of Dr. Bouma's confused thinking at this point that we can do nothing better than quote its pertinent paragraphs:

"He [Dr. Bouma] speaks of raising the banner of Christ with the Pentecostals et al. But what is the banner of Christ? Whatever it is, it has a definite message written on it. At the very least, it must have written on it that Christ died and rose again for the elect. Perhaps Dr. Bouma is thinking of raising a banner with indistinct and blurred lettering upon it, so that every man can read it according to his own myopia. Perhaps Dr. Bouma looks for a sort of Pentecost miracle in which every man will read the banner in his own tongue.

"In any event, Dr. Bouma is surely confused. Perhaps he is thinking of Dr. Abraham Kuyper and his willingness to join with the Roman Catholics to defeat the pagans in Parliament. Perhaps, if the National Association of Evangelicals were a political organ-

ization, dedicated to the proposition that evangelicals should have free time on the air, we might possibly go along with them. But this banner business puts a different face on matters. It is one thing to cooperate on gaining time on the air, or a seat in Parliament, and quite another thing to cooperate on what will be said when the objective has been gained".

Lest there remain any doubt that evangelism is on the immediate agenda of the National Association and that Christian education and missions are at least contemplated, we quote once more from *United Evangelical Action*. In the issue of July, 1943, is printed the full report of the Committee on Policy and Fields of Endeavor, which report, with its recommendations, was unanimously adopted by the convention. Here are a few illuminating excerpts:

Recognizing the urgent need for co-operation of orthodox evangelistic efforts in our day, we recommend the appointment . . . of a Committee on Evangelism . . . which shall . . . formulate plans for the promotion of such cooperative evangelistic efforts, putting said plans into operation as soon as possible. . . .

In view of the overwhelming unfinished task of Home and Foreign Missions, which creates a need for united action

among all evangelical bodies, be it resolved that the National Association of Evangelicals organize a Missionary Department. . . .

We recommend that the Association . . . through a sub-committee of its Committee on Education, as far as possible, conduct research into elementary and secondary Christian education in its entire scope, the findings to be given wide publicity. . . .

We recommend that the Executive Committee of this Association consider the appointment of a full-time promotional Field Secretary of Education as soon as funds are available for the same.

It is still possible that in the fields of Christian education and missions the National Association will avoid usurping its proper sphere. For it to avoid such usurpation in the field of evangelism, however, is not possible without an immediate about-face.

We hope that Dr. Bouma will consider, as he raises the banner of the gospel, that he should raise it to the very top of the mast. If he attempts to do that within the National Association, he will discover that while he pulls heavily upon the rope of Reformed theology, his colleagues are pulling with equal vigor and far greater numbers upon the Arminian strands. The banner, Dr. Bouma, will go only to half-mast!
—T. R. B.

gary, France, and The Netherlands. Other interesting features are the conference program, and resolutions and greetings. The seven addresses, however, constitute the more important part of the book. The subjects are: "The Glory of the Word of God", "What Is the Word of God?", "Present-Day Interpretations of the Word of God", "The Word of God and Philosophy", "The Word of God and Science", "The Word of God and Education", and "The Word of God and Culture".

The most salutary feature about the book in general is its emphasis on a truly Christian apologetic. This is not to say that each speaker who treats the subject teaches a flawless system of evidences, but that there seems to be an approach to a much more durable system than has been advocated by many American Calvinists in the past. Instead of appealing to logic, science, and history to prove the existence of God or to establish the authority of the Scriptures, the emphasis lies upon the thesis that these can never inwardly persuade man of the validity of the Christian religion. Dr. Harold J. Ockenga's address, "The Glory of the Word of God", is inspirational in nature rather than apologetic, but he nevertheless lays the foundation for a consistently Biblical apologetic when he begins with a strong emphasis on the doctrine of the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. It was most appropriate that this should be the keynote in a Calvinistic conference whose central theme was the Word of God, for it was Calvin who first gave this doctrine its proper expression. As Dr. Ockenga says, ". . . Calvin held to the doctrine of the necessity of the testimony of the Spirit to the soul of man for the accreditation of the Word of God. He believed that it was possible through reason to vindicate the sacred Word of God from aspersions of men, but he never did believe that men would become convinced by reason of the authority of God's revelation" (p. 27).

In his brief but lucid address on "The Word of God and Philosophy", Dr. Henry J. Stob, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, contrasts Biblical philosophy with those systems which have assumed a negativistic or independent attitude toward the Word of God. Repudi-

The Bible and Calvinism

A Review by the REV. EUGENE BRADFORD

Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, Unaffiliated, Fawn Grove, Pa.

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE REFORMED FAITH. Addresses delivered at the Second American Calvinistic Conference. Edited by the Publication Committee of the Conference. Baker's Book Store, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1943. 221 pages, \$1. (Not available through THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN Book Service.)

IN A day when the liberal ecumenical movement is rapidly gaining momentum, it is encouraging to note the appearance of a book which is the product of the true ecumenical spirit of Calvinism and which seeks to give expression to the implications of the Reformed theology around which Christians of many denominations have rallied. *The Word of God and the Reformed Faith* is a record of the proceedings of the Second American

Calvinistic Conference held in Grand Rapids, June 3-5, 1942. If for no other reason, this work should command the attention of the religious world because it springs from a gathering of more than four hundred Calvinistic leaders—teachers, students, ministers, and laymen representing ten denominations. We may, therefore, expect this book to reveal to a considerable extent the present status of American Calvinism.

There are two parts to the book: the first contains the principal conference addresses; the second, banquet speeches and conference memoranda. Among the banquet speeches are addresses by men qualified to speak on the effect which religious persecution has had on Calvinistic forces in Hun-

ating systems which either separate revelation from philosophy or subordinate the former to the latter, he proposes that philosophy and revelation be "integrated, fused, intertwined".

According to this view, the Word of God should be taken up into, made constitutive of, philosophy. The resultant philosophy would be "biblical" or "Christian". It would deny that reason and faith can be separated. It would refuse to mark out an area in which Revelation may not speak; it would refuse to devise a science in which Christ is not Lord. It would hold that Christian thinking is conditioned thinking, conditioned by the character and nature of the thinker, and by the thinker's basic loyalties. It is not something separate from faith, but rather something joined to faith in the deeper unity of selfhood. Such thinking is not neutral and objective in the sense in which these words have become a kind of shibboleth, but is colored and controlled and "biased" by the immediate apprehension of that Truth which, though not perceived apart from thought, is never the deliverance of thought, but always a miracle and a gift. It is thinking in the shadow of Christ; a thinking prejudiced in favor of The Truth (p. 107).

It would seem that Professor Stob's reasoning is valid. If one accepts the Reformed doctrine of total depravity, he must acknowledge that sin has darkened the mind of man so that he cannot understand anything aright until his soul has been flooded with the light of redemptive revelation and transformed by the grace of God.

Commenting on the first few verses of St. John's Gospel, Dr. John DeVries, in his address on "The Word of God and Science", enunciates the same truth: "The Bible is simply telling us that we cannot go from science to God and that the only approach is from God to science" (p. 118). Incidentally, Dr. DeVries raises the important question whether the non-Christian scientist can really know any of the facts of science, since he does not know the God who created all the facts. In other words, is there such a thing as a brute fact? Although his answer may be disputed, the point raised should provoke the careful reader to deep thought.

The best-organized address and the one which should be of the most practical value to the majority of readers is that on "The Word of God and Education". In this address, Professor Thomas E. Welmers of Hope Col-

lege calls for a recognition of the glory of the triune God as the goal of education. With the proper goal in view, man may begin his journey back to God. But he must also understand the starting-point—a sinful human nature. Unless the darkening influence of sin is recognized, it cannot be dispelled. Modern education is based on the idea of the innate goodness of man, but Christian education has a different presupposition which determines for education a different content and different methods—content and methods which take into account the sinfulness of the person to be taught. Parents and teachers should by all means avail themselves of the splendid counsel and practical wisdom given in this address.

A very worth-while chapter is that entitled "Present-Day Interpretations of the Word of God", by Dr. Oswald T. Allis. Dr. Allis is concerned to demonstrate the thesis that there exists a striking parallel between Higher Criticism and Modern Dispensationalism. While he insists that there is no basic similarity between these two schools of thought—the one being naturalistic and the other evangelical—he makes it perfectly plain that both systems of interpretation adopt a divisive attitude toward the Scripture. Higher Criticism divides the Bible into numerous documents and fragments of documents which allegedly represent more or less diverse and contradictory viewpoints, while Modern Dispensationalism divides the Bible into several dispensations set in sharp contrast to one another in such a way as to impair seriously the unity and harmony of the Scripture. The Dispensationalist's basic tenet, the "parenthesis" view of the church, is capably exposed by Dr. Allis in his exegesis of Acts 15:13-18. Over against all divisive methods of interpreting the Scripture he insists that "the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself", and that this "harmonistic method of interpreting Scripture is the time-honored method of the Calvinist" (p. 80).

The reader may be somewhat disappointed in Professor Louis Berkhof's answer to the question, "What is the Word of God?" The various views of the doctrine of the Word of God which have been held during the history of the church and those which

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are current today are expounded and criticized, but the Calvinistic position on this foundational matter is set forth in a fragmentary manner and only by way of criticizing opposing viewpoints. In addition, we cannot help but feel that his criticism of Barthianism is not as forceful as the present theological controversy demands. Perhaps the weaknesses of this address can be attributed to a yielding to the ever-present temptation to cover more ground than space and time allow.

Professor Leon B. Wencelius' address on "The Word of God and Culture" is a challenge to Calvinists to reveal to the United Nations their great inheritance: ". . . a culture which knows that it is the gift of God and that its only aim is to glorify the Creator" (p. 181). Professor Wencelius displays a wealth of knowledge of the influence Calvinism has had upon painting, music, and poetry, and demonstrates from many examples that "when men obey the Word of God and try to achieve their vocation, they are builders of a real civilization and the bearers of a culture whose purpose is to realize in the field of Art and Science the creative impulse of God Himself" (pp. 177f.).

The title of the book might lead the reader to expect more in the way of Scriptural exposition. Although many Scripture passages are quoted, only one (Acts 15:13-18; pp. 93f.) is exegeted with any thoroughness. The force of some of the addresses might have been increased and their value enriched if the teachings of some of the relevant passages from Holy Writ had been expounded.

A hearty endorsement of this book comes without hesitation. It should be instrumental in leading the Christian world to realize that there is not one legitimate sphere of life which the Reformed Faith does not embrace and in which the Word of God is not the final authority.

Christmas Eve at the School-House

A Story in Two Parts, for the Children's Hour

By HARRIET Z. TEAL

PART I

THE sleigh came jingling down the winding road from the Sunset Hill Farm and turned into the highway leading to the railroad station. In the back of the sleigh, tucked among blankets and old buffalo robes, were the four Gordon children—the four "Peas in a pod", their father jokingly said. "The four Peas" was his nickname for his children because each name began with "P": Peggy (Margaret, really), Peter, Paul and Polly (whose real name was Mary).

The sleigh stopped beside the snowy station-platform and the children piled out, full of excitement because they expected their cousin Elizabeth to arrive on the train from the City for a visit to the farm over the Christmas holidays, as she had done the year before.

Soon the whistle of the locomotive was heard in the distance; then around the curve, way down the track, the train appeared and came rushing toward them, puffing to a stop. The conductor swung to the platform and began assisting the passengers to alight. Soon Elizabeth stepped down, looking so pretty in her red coat and tam, trimmed with bits of dark fur, her brown curls blowing in the breeze, cheeks rosy and eyes bright with excitement and delight. She was immediately smothered in Gordons who, all chattering at once, led her over to the sleigh. "Betty", exclaimed Peggy, "Daddy says we are 'four Peas', so I guess you'll have to be a 'Bee' among the 'Peas'". They all giggled at that, as they made a place for their cousin in their midst, and all snuggled down into their warm covers for the return ride to the farm.

At Sunset Hill there was so much for Elizabeth to see, both in the house and out-of-doors—old friends to greet and new ones to meet among the sheep, cows, horses, the big dog, and the old cat and new kittens—and the children had so much to tell her, all at once, that she was fairly in a whirl.

The most important and interesting bit of news which the Gordon

children had to tell was about their new Sunday school out at Pine Tree Glen.

"And it's really our very own Sunday school", Peter informed her.

"Do you remember that little school-house, just off the highway, on the road leading back into the Glen?" Peggy asked.

"Oh, yes, the one with the big, high pine tree beside it".

"That's it—well Daddy and Mother and Miss Spring, my Sunday school teacher, and we children all go over every Sunday afternoon and have a little Sunday school for the children who live in the Glen. There are about half a dozen little houses back there, not much more than shacks, really, and none of those children ever went to Sunday school before. So one Sunday we went over there and visited them and the next week we started Sunday school in the school-house, and now children from five different families come every week".

"And you can go with us to our new Sunday school", put in little Polly, "'cause tomorrow is Sunday".

"Oh, I'd love to", cried Elizabeth, "I can hardly wait!"

On Sunday morning the Gordon family attended Sunday school and church services at the church to which they belonged. But in the afternoon, accompanied by Miss Spring, they drove out to their own Sunday school at the Pine Tree school-house. Seventeen boys and girls and a few parents were already gathered in the school-room awaiting them.

Elizabeth looked with interest at these children from the backwoods—their clothes might be rather shabby, she thought, but their faces were clean and bright with happy anticipation—they must love their Sunday school.

All joined heartily in singing Christmas hymns which Miss Spring had taught them, and they listened attentively to what their teachers had to say. Toward the end of the session, the school was thrown into happy excitement by an announcement made by Mr. Gordon of a Christmas celebration to be held in the school-house on the afternoon of the day before

Christmas. Then, before Sunday school was dismissed, all recited together the memory verse for the day:

"For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

On the homeward drive Elizabeth was still thinking of this memory verse. "Uncle Will", she said, "I don't quite understand what that means. Does it mean that every single thing that happens to a person is good? How can that be when so many bad things happen to people?"

"Think a minute, Elizabeth", replied her uncle. "What does the verse say? Is the promise to everyone or just to certain ones?"

Elizabeth repeated thoughtfully, ". . . to them that love God . . . who are the called according to his purpose".

"Exactly", answered Uncle Will. "The ones God has called and made His children, who love God and believe on His Son, Jesus Christ. The promise is to all such, and to us it means that every single thing that happens in our lives, God has intended shall work out for our good and blessing and for the glory of God. Will you believe this, Elizabeth, and trust God, no matter what He sends?"

"Well, it is in the Bible", replied the little girl, "so of course I believe it".

* * *

The days that followed were very busy and happy days. Not only was the Gordon family preparing for the Christmas celebration at home, but the Christmas program of their Pine Tree Sunday school was also occupying a large share of their attention. Ever since early in the fall they had planned for the occasion, and, with the aid of some interested friends, had purchased gifts of warm clothing, as well as games and toys, candies and other goodies, as a Christmas treat for the children of Pine Tree Glen. Also each of the five families was to receive a basket containing more than enough food for a good Christmas dinner, and including in each a fine, fat chicken from the Gordon's farm.

Of course Elizabeth looked forward eagerly to sharing in all this fun and excitement, but there was one looked-for event which far outweighed, for her, everything else—for her own dear Daddy, who was an officer in the United States Navy and seldom had

an opportunity to be at home, had obtained a week's leave of absence to spend Christmas with his family, and he and Elizabeth's mother planned to arrive at Sunset Hill on Christmas Eve.

* * *

At last the day before Christmas arrived. It was planned to hold the Sunday school program early in the afternoon, so that the Glen children could reach their homes afterward before darkness fell, and also that the Gordons might return to Sunset Hill in plenty of time to meet Captain and Mrs. Andrews, Elizabeth's parents, when they arrived on the evening train.

The fields and hills lay still and white under their blanket of snow, and overhead the gray clouds hung low with promise of more snow.

"It looks so Christmasy, doesn't it?" commented Elizabeth as they drove through this wintry scene to the school-house. But once within, winter seemed to vanish. How lovely the room looked! The Gordons and Miss Spring had been there the day before to trim a Christmas tree and decorate the school-room with evergreen boughs, holly branches, silver stars and scarlet bells. And one of the older boys from the Glen had come early in the day to build fires in the stoves and keep them going, so that the whole place was now aglow with beauty, light and warmth.

The audience gathered promptly and scarcely a member of any of the five Pine Tree Glen families was missing. The coats and caps of those who came in last were powdered with snowflakes but, amid the snug brightness within, little thought was given to the weather outside.

Immediately at two o'clock the program began. How they all enjoyed it—the singing of the Christmas carols, special music and the recitation of Scripture by the children! The Christmas message delivered by Mr. Gordon was beautifully illustrated by Christmas pictures thrown upon a white sheet on the wall.

Following the program came the presentation of gifts. It was at this point that the audience began to be more and more conscious of the storm outside. For some time there had been an increasing moaning of the wind and the sound of driven snow swishing against the windowpanes. And now—suddenly—there was a roar like

the sound of an approaching express train and a blast of wind struck the building with a force that made the windows rattle and the walls shake. Again and again came these gusts of wind, each seeming more violent than the last. Looking toward the windows, they saw the driving snow so thick that it looked as though a white sheet were hung outside the glass.

Suddenly, with a terrific blast of wind, there was a sharp report like that of a gun and a rending, tearing sound, as a heavy dark shape swiftly flashed by all the windows on the east side of the room. "The big, pine tree! It's blown down!" cried several at once. Men and women cringed in their seats with pale faces and the little children began to cry.

(To Be Concluded
in the Next GUARDIAN)

Jesus Only!

(Concluded from Page 338)

murmuring and the cry of the agonized soul that seeks God's help. God knows the difference between the two. The prophet, God's spokesman, did not rebuke that woman for her reproach. "Go, Gehazi", he said, "and lay my staff upon the face of the child".

But the woman had not come for Gehazi; she had come for that man of God. No other would satisfy her. Let Gehazi do what he would. She would stay with the one from whom alone help was to be obtained. "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth", she said, "I will not leave thee". And he arose and followed her.

Little help could Gehazi bring. He laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing, and he reported, "The child is not awaked".

Then Elisha came into the house. He went into the room where the dead child was, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up and stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

But the mother, where was she? What a chance for a dramatic scene

when the mother first saw her son alive! What a theme for glorious words! Well, it is a dramatic scene. One of the most dramatic in all the world's literature. But how does the Bible depict it? Not in the swelling words of men's wisdom, but in words of one syllable. Here is the way the Bible ends this matchless story: "And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out".

That is all. The commonest words in our language or in any language—no adjectives, no descriptions, and yet our heart melts within us when we read.

The Bible is like that, my friends. Such a sweet simple book, and yet how sublime!

The question arises, however, why God has put this beautiful little narrative in His holy Word. Is it just to arouse within us tender emotions as we sympathize with that mother and

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her child? Is it just to melt our stony hearts and weld together in a common human sympathy the different ages and the different generations of mankind?

Well, I will not say that that is not a part of God's purpose in including this matchless narrative in His Word. But I think we can detect another purpose too. I think there is something that we can take from the example of that woman of so long ago and apply to our lives today.

That woman had recourse to one and one only in her soul's dire need. Husband and friends for the moment were forgotten; sympathy for the moment was cast aside. Even the servant of the prophet, though with definite commands from his master, would not do. No, all that the woman thought of was her child lying there dead, and the one who alone could give her aid. "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth", she said, "I will not leave thee". We think of Jacob wrestling with the angel through the night; we think of the Psalmist refusing to let God go till the blessing was obtained. What intensity and exclusiveness of devotion was there!

But what sort of devotion was that? Was it merely a touching instance of the way in which a strong character will impose itself upon those who are in its environment? Was it merely an example of the way in which a strong and good man arouses the confidence of those who are in need?

No, my friends, I think it was something more than that. I believe it was at bottom the cry of the human soul for the living God. That prophet, according to the Bible, was the spokesman of Jehovah; he was one who, by his words and by his mighty deeds, said, "Thus saith the Lord!" The woman felt that, I think. I do not mean that she necessarily put it into words. But I think that she felt in her soul of souls that there was in that strange man of God for whom she had made that little chamber on the wall something that called forth supreme devotion and supreme confidence in the hour of need. The prophet was God's messenger to her, and in seeking his help, and refusing to be satisfied with that of any other, she was saying really with the Psalmist, "My soul thirsteth for God". Her faith was a faith that was full of agony. It was a faith like that of the one in the Gospels who cried, "Lord,

I believe, help thou mine unbelief". But like that faith, it was accepted by the One who knows the heart. The woman bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Is there anyone to whom we in our day can come as that woman came to the man of God? Is there anyone to whom we can have an absolutely exclusive recourse in the hour of our soul's need? Is there anyone for whom all other resources may safely on occasion be cast aside? Is there anyone whom to reach we can refuse to greet any other by the way and whom to reach we can if necessary hate father and mother and wife and sister and brother and child?

Yes, my friends, there is One. There is only One. Christ Jesus, it is He!

Many have offered themselves as healers of our hurt, as comforters of our sorrows, as lifegivers to our souls dead in trespasses and sins. Many are the physicians of mankind. But, ah, my friends, when we face the real tragedy of our lives, when we know that we are sinners, when we see ourselves as God sees us, when we face the judgment throne, then we know that all the soul-physicians are quite powerless to heal our deadly hurt or to make dead souls to live. Then we refuse to greet any by the way, then we put our fingers in our ears, then we turn aside from the well-meant sympathy of family and friends, then we forget our well-turned phrases and our fears of being thought naïve, then we say in the words of the old hymn:

"Foul I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die".

Ah, my friends, it is Jesus only for us, when we face the fact of sin.

Yes, my friends, it is Jesus only to the Christian—Jesus only in whom we trust, Jesus only whom we must absolutely obey. We have many teachers and many leaders and even many masters according to the flesh, but only one Saviour, only one Lord.

Notice how very clear that was made at the beginning of the gospel. What an exclusive devotion Jesus demanded of His disciples! "Let the dead bury their dead", He said to the man who wanted just to bury his own father before he obeyed the command, "Follow me!" "If any man come to me", He said again, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he

cannot be my disciple".

We are almost appalled when we read claims like these. Would they not lead to fanaticism? Would they not lead to men's making an excuse of religion in order to evade homely duties to father or mother or wife or child? Well, yes, they would lead to fanaticism except for one reason—for the reason that the One for whom such exclusive devotion was asked could be trusted not to let the devotion to Him interfere with real family duty or right human affections. Dangerous indeed would it be to listen to such claims coming from any other, but not when they come from Jesus. Trust Him and obey Him, and you never will be led into heartlessness or sin.

But when that is said, it still remains true that the claims of Jesus were stupendous. The relationship to Him took precedence of even the closest of earthly ties. The first disciples accepted those claims of Jesus. They left all when they followed Him.

Then came the cross and the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost and the founding of the Christian church. From the beginning Jesus was the Head of the church. He was the exclusive Saviour and Lord.

The visible church, however, was never altogether without sin, and sin manifested itself especially in one recurrent way—in the attempt to place other things in a position that belonged rightfully to Christ, in the attempt to put other things or other persons between the Christian and his Lord.

The sad process began even in the apostolic age. At Colosse it was the angels that began to encroach upon the prerogatives of Christ. I am not sure whether those false teachers in Colosse really denied the high doctrine of the person of Christ which was proclaimed by Paul. Christ no doubt was highly exalted in their teaching. But they also exalted the angels, and practically, even if not theoretically, that tended to dethrone Christ. The absolutely exclusive place of Christ in the devotion of the church was impaired.

With that encroachment upon the place of Christ in the thoughts and affections of the Christians, there went also an encroachment in the field of conduct. Those false teachers in Colosse had their "mandates"—

"Touch not, taste not, handle not"—which went beyond the commands of Christ. Already in those early days there were those who put the word of man or the word of angels above the Word of God.

Then, after the angels, among the usurpers, came the saints. What a very natural, what a very innocent, thought seems to lie at the basis of the doctrine of the intercession of the saints! Just think for a moment of the pious dead. Their souls have departed from their bodies. But they are not dead, are they? Well then, if they are not dead, they must surely be able to do at least the things that they did upon this earth. When they were here they prayed to God for us, and how we valued their intercessory prayer! Well, then, are they less able to pray now than they were able then, and ought we to value their present prayers any less? When they were on earth, we asked them to pray for us. Why should we not continue to do so, now that they have entered into their reward?

It seems innocent, does it not? But in reality it is not innocent at all. Do you not see that in attributing to the departed saints a sort of ubiquity that enables them to hear you when you cry to them, you are giving them something that belongs only to your divine Lord? Christ is being crowded out from His rightful place.

No, danger that way lies. When you enter into your closet, pray to your heavenly Father, and pray to God the Son, and pray to God the Holy Ghost, but do not pray to any other in heaven or on earth.

With the saints there came the virgin Mary. How beautiful is the picture of Mary in the first two chapters of the Gospel According to Luke! Shall we refuse to her the fulfilment of her prophecy in her beautiful song of praise: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed"? Surely not! We shall gladly call her blessed who was chosen of God to be the mother of our Lord and who said in the simplicity of her soul: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word". Well, then, why may we not ask her to intercede for us before the throne of her Son? If the prayers of such an one could be heard while she was on earth, why not also now when she is in heaven? Ah, it sounds so plausible, and yet what a depth of tragedy lurks

in those plausible words! "Pray for us, Mary", countless burdened human beings have said. "You are a woman such as we, you know what it is to yearn over a child, you can give us just the human sympathy that we need". Pathetic, is it not, very natural, very human? I cannot find it in my heart to inveigh against it today. And yet, my friends, it is sin. By that supposed intercession of the virgin Mary, Jesus has been pushed aside. "Mary can sympathize with us", say the millions who bow before her picture in the cathedrals of the world. Ah, but cannot Jesus sympathize? What says the Scripture? "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities", it says. I tell you, my friends, Jesus is no far-off God; Jesus can sympathize with all of humanity in a way that no mere man and no mere woman ever can sympathize. His love is far tenderer even than the love of the tenderest mother, and Jesus unlike any mother knows the depths of the human heart. That little modern song is quite right when it says: "Jesus knows all about our troubles". How sad it is, then, when Mary has been put into a place that belongs only to Christ!

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So, in the history of the church, angels, the saints and Mary the Mother of God have—through no fault of their own, but through the vain imaginings of men's hearts—been allowed to stand between the Christian and his Lord. They have through no fault of their own been made to be usurpers of a place that belongs rightfully to Christ alone.

But the greatest usurper has yet to be mentioned. The greatest usurper is the church.

Now the church is a divine ordinance. I mean not merely the church invisible, the great company of the truly redeemed; but I mean also the church visible, the church with its orderly government and its orderly administration of the means of grace. Yes, that too is an ordinance of God. Yet how sadly have God's gifts been perverted! The visible church, given to bring men to Christ and lead them ever anew into His holy presence, has sometimes interposed itself between the Christian and his Lord.

Church history tells the sad story. Gradually the lawful authority of the church was perverted until it became an authority that was unlawful. The church claimed to have the right, as a living organism, to give a supernaturally authoritative interpretation of the Bible; without that supernaturally authoritative interpretation by Mother Church it was held that the Bible was a dangerous book for the rank and file. So gradually salvation was sought through obedience to the

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rules of the church. The Christian no longer had direct access to the Word of God. It was mediated to him by the authoritative interpretation of the church. The church interposed itself between the Christian and Christ.

The Reformation brushed all that aside. The Bible was rediscovered. It was shown to be a plain book which the plain man could read. It needed no authoritative interpretation by the church, but in it God spoke directly to the soul. Ah, what a burst of freedom was that! What a moment it was, to be sure, when the words were first burned upon Luther's soul, "The just shall live by faith"! Then was the barrier removed, then were the shackles stricken off, then did the soul stand again directly in the presence of God. Then did Christ Himself again become Lord.

But time has gone on. The Protes-

tant churches have become great organizations—wheels within wheels, boards upon boards, committees upon committees. Ah, that need not necessarily have dethroned Christ. It was a danger, but the danger might have been met. But, alas, something else was going on. The Bible was being undermined. It was no longer regarded as inerrant. It was said to contain errors like other books. It was treated as inspiring literature, the record of man's search for God.

What happened when the Bible was thus undermined? Ah, men said, it meant emancipation for mankind. That old doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture was a shackle, men said. Thank God, we do not have to defend it any more. We are emancipated! We are free! The religion of the letter has given place to the religion of the living spirit. The inerrant Bible in the old sense is gone, but the living church has taken its place.

So men said. But do you know what really happened when men became emancipated from the Bible? I will tell you, my friends. When they became emancipated from the Bible they became slaves. They had torn up the Magna Charta of human liberty.

Tyranny has been stalking everywhere throughout the world in our day. It has manifested itself in Mussolini and in Hitler. It is threatening our country in a most menacing way.

The great barrier against tyranny was the Bible. Now that the Bible has been given up or is being interpreted

to mean its exact opposite, tyranny has free course.

It has free course in the state. It also has free course in the church. It has triumphed in the church in a thousand places and in a thousand ways. In the church body known as the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., tyranny has triumphed in a particularly outrageous and almost blasphemous form. A mandate now given full force in the church declares that support of the program established officially by the general assembly is as much the duty of every member of the church as is obedience to our Lord's command when He said, "This do in remembrance of me". Support of agencies propagating what is crassly contradictory to the Bible is enforced by ecclesiastical penalties. Christ has been dethroned. Fallible men have tried to push themselves between Him and those for whom He died.

What should be done when the machinery of the church thus pushes itself between the Christian and Christ? I will tell you, my friends. The Christian must seek Christ again at any cost. The Christian must seek His face at any cost, and must obey His commands alone.

We can learn here from the Old Testament narrative with which this sermon began. We can learn from the intensity of that Shunammite woman. If she allowed nothing to stand between her and the prophet—mere temporary mouthpiece of God, sinful like other men—surely far less should we allow anything to stand between us and our blessed, divine Lord—our blessed Lord so sweetly offered to us in the gospel, so sovereignly yet so lovingly commanding us in God's holy Word. No, my friends, we must allow nothing, absolutely nothing to stand between us and Christ—no pope, no ecumenical council, no presbytery, no synod, no general assembly!

People are often being called upon today to make a momentous choice. On one side are fine church buildings, precious human associations, and the favor of the world. On the other side is Jesus Christ, with the print of the nails in His hands. Some men, when faced with that choice, are choosing Christ. When they do that, a wonderful peace and joy steals into their souls. May God lead every one of you to make that choice and have that peace and that joy!

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