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*the* **CALVIN**  
**ORUM**

**Professor Van Til's Apologetics**

**The Calvinist and  
Social Responsibility**

**The Minister's Reading Habits**

**Correspondence**

**Book Reviews**

**VOL. XIX, NO. 4**

**TWO DOLLARS  
A YEAR**

**NOVEMBER, 1953**

THE CALVIN FORUM  
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Self-made John Bunyan lived sixty years—and left sixty books from his own pen. Karl Gutsall, restless pioneer, traveled incessantly, and left behind two books in Japanese, one in Siamese, seven in German, five in Dutch, more than sixty in Chinese, and numerous books in English. Talent, that? Nonsense; it was hard work. Genius? No doubt; but the genius that spelled five percent inspiration and ninety-five percent perspiration.

Nor has age anything to do with it. No more than the muscles in the blacksmith's arm grow flabby, need a minister's brain go limp. At the funeral of my sixty-two year old brother in Zeist, Netherlands, it was recently stated that when his body through prolonged illness had grown too weak for him to do his own reading, he had others read to him by the hour because "his active mind needed fresh supplies of information continuously to give him food for thought."

On the other hand, years ago an intelligent elder said of a former minister, "When that man first came to town, he could put rings around me in our weekly Bible class; but now, after ten years, he has his library left, but I do not yield an inch of ground to him."

So the slogan is "Carpe diem!" "Lege, lege, semper aliquid haeret!"

Perhaps we shall have to learn from the late J. Van Aniel, one of whose secrets was that of "speaking a fitting word upon occasional contacts, so as to redeem valuable hours from time-robbing special calls."

As for me, when I weary of reading, and of the solitude it imposes, I take heart from the hopeful anticipation that I may hear some day—in spite of much imperfection along other lines—the welcome words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

## From Our Correspondents

752 Giddings S.E.  
Grand Rapids 6, Mich.  
October 12, 1953

The Editor,  
*The Calvin Forum.*

Dear Dr. De Boer:

THE latest issue of *The Calvin Forum* carried a total of four regular articles. Three of these were in criticism of approaches and emphases characterizing some of the positions held by Prof. C. Van Til of Westminster Seminary. It is, of course, anyone's privilege to differ from this recognized scholar in the fields of Reformed philosophy and theology. It is doubtlessly a good thing that views propounded by certain Reformed scholars are carefully weighed by other Reformed scholars. Yet I regret that the major part of a whole issue of our *Calvin Forum* is devoted to a criticism of one and the same author, an author and authority who has been held in high esteem in Reformed circles for many years because of his ability and because of his loyalty to our historic Calvinistic commitments.

However, what grieves me is the tone and general thrust characterizing the first two contributions under discussion.

The actual titles of the three articles are objective. They read as follows: "The New Apologetic," "Professor Van Til's Apologetics," and "On Brute Facts." But the cover page lists them as follows: "The Jungles of Westminster's Apologetics," "An Exercise in Ambiguity," and "Apologetics by Inconsistency." And page seven carries this sub-title for

the second article: "A Linguistic Bramble Patch."

Why should the staff employ these offensive headings? What good can they produce? And the thrust of these latter titles comes to the fore in the first two articles repeatedly. Why should this be?

Furthermore, is it fair, wise, and Christ-like ever to use ridicule when one discusses the views of a fellow-believer? Should we use this barbed weapon in our polemics at all? I for one do not think so. It cuts and smarts; it beclouds and drives apart. It does not tend to clarify, convince, and win.

We of the Reformed faith form but a small minority. Let us not attack each other uncharitably, nor stimulate blind prejudices and uncalled-for separations by faulty methods of discussion; but let us discuss our findings and considerations objectively and with mutual appreciation. Let us criticize frankly and severely if need be, but let us ever do so in the spirit of the Master who said "I am meek and lowly in heart." And let us give evidence of the fact that we have learned to take to heart the admonition of the Apostle (Phil. 2:3), "in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself."

Moreover, we need each other!

We must work together toward a solution of our common problems related to a common assignment.

We are not antagonists. We are brethren and co-workers; we are allies! And Westminster and Calvin are two kindred training camps, serving the self-same cause. We have a common enemy and a common warfare.

We cannot afford to foster unnecessary antagonisms and separations. We may not do so!

Nor should we be disturbed if we cannot immediately see eye to eye on every issue. Particularly not if the issues are complex and still in the discussion stage.

I am confident, Mr. Editor, that I am voicing the sentiments of hundreds of your readers. And—lest I be misunderstood—I would address these words to *all* our leaders and writers for their most earnest and prayerful consideration.

Fraternally, yours in Him,  
MARTIN MONSMA

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Iron Springs, Alberta.  
Sept. 25, 1953.

*The Calvin Forum,*  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Editor:—

AS a regular reader of *the Calvin Forum* I have often wondered if some of the articles which are presented could not be put into language which is a little more readable to the common man. I must confess that many of them are too deep for me. I can read them and re-read them and I am still wondering what I have read.

We are at present digging into the problem of the Antithesis and Common Grace, matters which contain depths which are possibly too deep for the greatest philosophers. There is however a level it seems to me that the common man can understand. The Word of God is such that it speaks to children as well as to adults. We are even told that unless we become as children we cannot as much as see the Kingdom of God.

Now I may be wrong but it seems to me that in writing on the Antithesis many who claim to believe it are nevertheless trying to get rid of it or at least are trying to tone it down. It furthermore seems to me that many of us are trying under the cover of Common Grace to make it comfortable for ourselves in this world which is at enmity with God.

Surely this is not the purpose of these discussions.

When our Synod adopted the three points in regard to Common Grace it put in a very strong warning against using these points as a loophole to let the world into the church. Is this not what is happening today?

Our great danger today is not that we are trying to flee out of the world but rather that we are becoming conformed to the world. The spirit of ecumenicism is rampant and it is imposing a yoke on us which is an unequal one, against which we are warned. The church in the past has not taken a stand against the evils of Capitalism and the result is Socialism and Communism. Today the pendulum of the clock is swinging the other way and the Gospel of Christ is watered down to a mere movement of social reform. People are getting Christian-

ity and Communism mixed which accounts for the tremendous gains Communism is making.

Many of our people are Socialists and Communists and they do not know it. When the Communists took over China the road was opened for them by the Modernists who mistook Chinese Communism for a mere movement for agrigarian reform. Even some of our own men were fooled by it. Too late we found out our mistake. They did not see the Antithesis. Let us beware! The Kingdom of God is a spiritual and a heavenly Kingdom, not one of this earth.

Fraternally,  
JOHN DE JONG

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Dr. Cecil De Boer  
Editor of the Calvin Forum

Dear Dr. De Boer:

WILL you not kindly place in the November issue of the Forum the following reflections on the Forum's recent attack on the apologetic of Dr. Cornelius Van Til?

I certainly am not opposed to controversy among brethren in the sense of objective discussion of significant differences. We shall always need controversy of that kind. The history of Christian doctrine tells us that it has often served to bring truth to light and to make possible precise formulation of truth. And I have not the slightest objection to an objective expert appraisal of Van Til's apologetic. It is due, and I shall welcome it.

However, I do regret certain aspects of the aforesaid attack. With your permission I shall indicate a few of those aspects.

The reader could easily get the impression that the attack was launched unitedly by the faculties of Calvin College and Seminary. Inasmuch as the Forum is published by a board consisting of those faculties, there would seem to be logic in the contention of "A Letter from Ripon" in the October issue: "The Calvin Forum represents the thought of the combined faculties of Calvin College and Seminary." And yet, few members of those faculties knew that this attack was forthcoming. I for one was not aware of the existence—to say nothing of the content—of the articles concerned until they appeared in the Forum. I think the public is entitled to those facts.

I object to your indiscriminate use of the term "Westminster's apologetic." It could be misunderstood. If you mean that Van Til's apologetic is being taught at Westminster Theological Seminary, you are obviously right. If you mean that Van Til's colleagues are in some measure responsible for the fact that this apologetic is taught at Westminster, you are right again. Beyond all doubt, they deem Van Til's apologetic deserving of a respectful hearing. But if you mean that Westminster Seminary has officially adopted Van Til's apologetic *in toto* and has

set it up as a standard of orthodoxy, you are mistaken.

Here are two institutions of learning—Calvin and Westminster—both committed to the Reformed faith. Each is upholding that faith imperfectly, to be sure, yet, we may believe, earnestly. For almost a quarter century now Westminster has performed that task in exceedingly hostile surroundings. Precisely because of its adherence to the Reformed faith it has been subjected to violent, and in some instances vicious, attacks by Old Modernists, New Modernists, Arminians, Dispensationalists, and such as may be described, for want of a better name, as Hyper-Calvinists. In the face of truly tremendous opposition the men of Westminster have held the fort. Lo and behold, the September, 1953, number of the Calvin Forum, published by the combined faculties of Calvin College and Seminary, launches an attack upon Westminster, particularly upon its Department of Apologetics. At first blush that seems most regrettable, for it is an obvious desideratum that Calvin and Westminster present a united front to the many enemies of the Reformed faith. However, the matter has another angle. It is clear that there exists among brethren within the household of the Reformed faith a sharp difference

on an important matter. To ignore that difference and pretend that it does not exist would hardly serve the cause of truth. Rather, it must be threshed out. Therefore I would not at this juncture demur further than I have done, if the Forum's evaluation of Van Til's apologetic were characterized by objectivity coupled with brotherly love and esteem. But precisely there is the rub. Undeniably the Forum's appraisal is marred at more points than one by disrespect and belligerency. That I regret more than anything else. Permit me to add that I am pleased, but not fully satisfied, with your notice in the October issue, that "no offense to Professor Van Til or disrespect toward Westminster Seminary was intended." The language referred to was as a matter of *fact* both offensive and disrespectful and therefore should, I think, have been retracted.

I hope and pray that, when the smoke of the present battle shall have lifted, the faculties of Calvin College and Seminary and the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary may be seen standing shoulder to shoulder in the defense and furtherance of the Reformed faith.

Cordially yours,  
R. B. KUIPER

