

THE CALVIN FORUM

A MONTHLY

After the Depression
How Sober Are We?

Greek and Christian Thought
A Contrast

The Sit-Down Strike
Let History Speak

Christianity Cross-Centered
Calvary Our Acropolis

Federal Council Protestantism
Are We Bankrupt?

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The CALVIN FORUM

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VOLUME II

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NUMBER 12

EDITORIALS

Thou, Divisive Creed

CREED, thou art despised because of what thou doest. Just recently in the Unitarian denomination a courageous leader sought to enthrone thee by directing attention to heresy within the fold. He lost his position of influence because he espoused thy cause. His Church preferred the freedom of thought to thee. Thou art too insistent upon thy authority in the field of thinking and action. In another denomination thou wast enthroned. But thou didst again manifest thy intolerant spirit. The church that needed so badly the spirit of unity was by thy presence split asunder. And because of these divisive results of thy presence thou art outlawed by all broadminded and bighearted leaders in America. But "Creed", be thou ever so unpopular, I am for thee. Be sure that thou art reflecting accurately the sentiments of God as revealed in and through Christ Jesus. Continue to divide and redivide. That is thy method of purification. The great Judge of all the earth will also divide.

H. S.

Convenience, The Sabbath Determinator

SUNDAY was once the day specifically dedicated to the service of God. It was worship day. Later on the emphasis was placed in a practical way upon the day as a day of rest. Its significance was to be found not in that it was a day of spiritual replenishment, but rather a day of physical and mental relaxation. A new definition is in order now. It is that day of the week in which men do that which could not be conveniently done on the other days. It has become a part of that unit called "the weekend". It is the day in which the largest attendances are recorded at the ball-park. It is the day in which the cottages are all occupied and churches must be closed for the lack of worshippers. In view of this spirit which has manifested its devastating presence for some years, it was indeed surprising that men have not seemed to think of it as a convenient day for commencement exercises. However, the University of Purdue finally saw very clearly that Sunday was *the* day for the graduating ceremonies. The argument is none other than that of convenience. "Verily, Convenience, thou dost rule with a devastating hand. Thou dost rob us of one of our most valuable institutions and move us to be grateful for the robbery. Canst thou also aid us when the clock of our lives strikes twelve?"

H. S.

The A. M. A. Yields

FOR some time past the American Medical Association has fought shy of any sort of an alliance with the government in its endeavors to maintain and promote what has been suggestively called "public health". There may have been some very valid reason for frowning upon what seemed to be a political interference with the medical profession. They feared, and that not without reason, the regimentation program of the Federal Government. They were convinced that the men at Washington may be good politicians and statesmen, but they were not qualified to pass on matters that properly belonged to the medical profession. They knew, too, that the patient-physician relation was a highly personal one, which would be endangered by any socialized medicine scheme. But in the face of many such valid considerations the A. M. A. actually seems to be yielding to the pressure of political leaders. Why? Are there too many doctors that are finding collections difficult? Are the reasons after all economic in character? If so the medical profession is surrendering by its retreat one of its greatest assets, to wit, the reputation of willingness to serve personally and sympathetically, even in the face of the certainty that there will be no collection of fees.

H. S.

The Christian Religion Indispensable

RUSSIA has been the most extreme of all the countries of the earth in its anti-religious policy. But Stalin has recently announced a more tolerant attitude. His mother's recent Church attendance may perhaps be interpreted as a gesture of encouragement. Tabasco was the severest anti-religious state in anti-religious Mexico. But Gov. Manero recently announced, in harmony with a milder federal policy, that the Christian religion would be unmolested in Tabasco. Dr. Link, influenced by the educational forces to which he had submitted himself as a student was among the most fervent believers in the futility of the Christian Religion. He was all together too sophisticated for that sort of thing. But he announces through his writings that religion, and particularly the religion as outlined by Scripture, was and is the best remedy for our mental and social problems. Many religious leaders

of radical writers and speakers with disorderly minds, while even in Washington the atmosphere at the White House and immediate vicinity is charged with various communistic symptoms. What the general public in Michigan, Illinois and Indiana would like to know is how much protection it may expect against the anarchy and tyranny fomented in Washington. Do the local authorities, which reflect public sentiment in their respective communities, receive the requisite support from our central government or is the latter trying to force the former to run counter to the popular demand and so enrage

the local public? Terrific resentment is still kept reasonably within bounds, for the public does not know what instructions the governors are receiving from the President. In Flint, Michigan; in Anderson, Indiana; and in Waukegan, Illinois, public sentiment clearly was on the side of the law-abiding citizens. Now the public desires to discover whether local authorities must be regimented under the aegis of the brain trusters in Washington, or whether the time-honored liberties established by the Anglo-Saxon race shall be maintained, as they have been in England and in The Netherlands.

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

William Childs Robinson, A. M., Th. D.

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THE Cross of Christ is the acropolis of the Christian faith, the heart and core of our religion. The death of Christ was the first of the primary principles Paul preached (I Cor. 15:1-3); the portraying of Christ crucified was the burden of his apostolic labors (Gal. 3:1), the fundamental topic of his preaching (I Cor. 2:2); yea, the Christian Gospel is "the Word of the Cross" (I Cor. 1:18). Accordingly, Warfield finds that "the place given to the death of Christ in the several theories which have been framed of the nature of our Lord's work, may not unfairly be taken as a test of their scripturalness"; while men like James Denney have rightly warned us that the virus of Socinianism and Unitarianism begins here.

The Cross in Eclipse

However, that the Cross has no such central place in the thinking which dominates much of the current preaching is admitted by those most conversant with "liberal" opinion. President Coffin of Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., has expressed the matter thus: "It must be confessed that, in our day, and especially in those circles where Christianity is interpreted in terms of contemporary thought, the Cross does not hold the central place in preaching." The Cross "is seldom preached as a redemptive act. Indeed few of those who have accepted the current liberal theology devote many sermons to the Cross of Christ. They feel themselves incapable of treating the theme." Coffin states that for these "liberal" thinkers the central place has been usurped either by the Incarnation, or by religious experience or by the teaching or example of Christ.

During the 1937 conference of an evangelical denomination in a Southern state one of the pulpit orators of this denomination preached in the First Presbyterian Church of the city. This eloquent preacher insisted that the Church was wrong in placing the emphasis upon the Cross as the center of Jesus' ministry. The Cross was, he held, only the incidental reaction on the part of forces which Jesus had opposed in his teachings. The important thing in Jesus' ministry was his teaching, not his unavoid-

able death. The account sounds more like the Racovian Catechism than the evangelical movement out of which this minister's denomination came.

Christ and Him Crucified

When the Reformation was lifting high the banner of the Cross, Calvin twitted the Romanists with resigning to crucifixes of gold, silver, and brass the preaching of the Word of the Cross. But Roman Catholics are retaliating today with the charge that many American Protestants have not only taken the Cross from the tops of the churches, but as well from the heart of their preaching. Perhaps that is the fundamental reason why the religious and moral leadership which a generation ago was unquestionably in Protestant hands has been slipping from our fingers; why the Federal Council's radio hour has steadily lost prestige to the Catholic hour.

Even many so-called orthodox ministers have not realized that sound doctrine means the preaching of the biblical faith *in its biblical proportions*. The preaching of many is on the circumference rather than the center of the Gospel; that of others is merely the usage of Bible texts as mottos for non-scriptural discussions. Some allow sociology to supersede the Gospel, forgetting that the preaching of the blessed exchange of the Cross which shows that God is just even in justifying sinners is the only way to enthrone justice in human affairs.

Others have exchanged the language of Zion for the jargon of psychology, oblivious to the fact that relief or release from guilt, the most poignant complex life ever poses, is only found when we forgive ourselves on the same ground that God forgives us. The blood of Christ is the great psychotherapy for our sinful race; His Cross is the only forgiveness adequate to moral personality.

Some preachers are blaming their own failure to preach the Cross upon the fancied demands of youth. At a retreat held by the ministers of Carlisle Presbytery, a pastor from Lebanon told this incident: My son Jim, who was captain of the Princeton University basketball team, spent last summer at home. As he was starting back to school I told him that I did not want to lose my contact with young people,

and asked him which of the sermons I had preached that summer appealed to him most, as a representative young man.

"Well, Dad," he replied, "I liked best your sermon—I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

The appeal of the Cross tore Africana away from his fleshly lusts and pagan practices. No smaller incentive can save the social set of America from the lusts of the flesh, the pride of the eye, and the pride of life. Our age needs nothing so much as the sanctifying radiance that streams from Calvary. His holy passion for us is the instrument in the Spirit's hand for the healing of our debased passions.

The Grub-Worm versus Christ

A few years ago the Easter lesson leaf for one of the younger age groups in the Sunday School was taken up with the story of a little grub-worm who finally climbed a lily-stalk, shed his water clothes, spread his lacy butter-fly wings and flew into the beautiful beyond. This omission of the fundamental facts of the Christian faith was explained thus:

"A great majority of thoughtful and devoted Christian leaders who are working in this field have been convinced after a great deal of experience and observation, that the kind of stories needed are not those that directly teach Christian truth, but those that have a wholesome background and atmosphere, and that hold up Christian ideals of conduct."

And further, "Needless to say every idea must be very simple and within the realm of his (the young child's) experience. Death is not one of those things which comes within the experience of such a child . . . Now you can't teach the resurrection of Jesus without teaching the death of Jesus."

This year the story of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead has supplanted the story of the metamorphosis of the grub-worm; but the very fact that the pupil-centered curriculum has gone to such length as to allow nature stories to supplant the Cross and Resurrection is enough to condemn the basic principle thereof. Ought one to continue a plan which in such a specific way has shown itself the enemy of the Cross of Christ? Furthermore, it is more fitting for Presbyterian and Reformed teachers to ally themselves with the Calvinist Herman Bavinck and the God-centered curriculum, than with the humanist John Dewey and the child-centered curriculum.

The Cross Central in the New Testament

For these and other reasons it is imperative that men of faith affirm the centrality of the Cross and urge the proclamation of a doctrine of the atonement of sufficient import to warrant the Cross being taught to the babes in Christ as the first principles of the faith, and ever presented to the saints as the cardinal truth and vital center of Christianity.

The Cross is central in the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and in the life of the Church which He established and has sustained through the ages; it will be central in the thought of the Church of to-day only if we have an adequate doctrine of Him who was crucified, of what He did

for us on the Cross, of the motives or spirit which prompted His priestly propitiation.

We consider first, then, the centrality of the Cross in the New Testament. "All (of the New Testament writers) were firmly persuaded that the Cross was the heart of the Gospel." "All the light of sacred story gathers 'round its head sublime." "Compare the space given to the passion week with the total extent of the Gospel records. Of his twenty-eight chapters, Matthew devotes seven to that last week, one-fourth of the whole. Of his sixteen chapters, Mark gives five, nearly one-third of all. Of his twenty-four chapters, Luke devotes four and a half, nearly one-fifth. Of his twenty-one chapters, John gives almost nine, nearly one-half. Here is a striking and significant fact: the fourfold account of Christ's life and work includes eighty-nine chapters. Of these, twenty-five, considerably more than one-fourth, are occupied with the passion week." Kagawa counts ten references to His death in Jesus' own teachings as given in Mark alone, prior to that event; and concludes that the religion of Jesus is the religion of crucifixion, that is, of redemption.

Jesus' Teaching and Ministry

At His baptism, the voice from heaven identified Jesus with the messianic servant prophesied by Isaiah xlii, while John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Lamb of God that taketh on Himself the sins of the world (John i. 29, 36). In the temptation, therefore, Jesus refused other messianic roles and even in His early ministry spoke of the tragic element in His vocation (Mark ii. 20; cf. Matt. v. 11). As soon as Peter had made his great confession, Jesus unfolded to the disciples the necessity for His death as the climax of His Messiahship. The repeated conversations concerning His decease (Luke ix. 31; Mark vii. 31-8, ix. 30-2, x. 35-45), and the use of the imperfect tenses (Mark ix. 30-2) indicating that He kept on talking on this theme, have led scholars to describe this period of our Lord's ministry as "the passion ministry of the North." On one occasion Jesus was rebuked by Peter (Mark viii. 32) for teaching His death, as later the disciples were unable to bear the word (John xvi. 12), and proved foolish and slow of heart to believe from the prophets the necessity of the suffering of the Christ (Luke xxiv. 25-6). It is a reasonable inference that this unwillingness of the disciples to hear has much to do with the fact that Jesus is not more frequently reported as teaching the meaning of His death. Jesus "applied to the Messiah the descriptions of the sufferings of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah liii," and in connection therewith taught its full substitutionary significance, "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life (or soul) a ransom instead of the many" (Mark x. 45; Matt. xx. 28; cf. Isaiah liii. 10-12). In "one of the best authenticated passages in all history" Jesus declared that the sacramental cup was His blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins (Mark xiv. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28).

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who of His own accord giveth His life for the sheep (x. 11-18); who came to die that

He and the Father might be glorified, and all men drawn unto Himself (xii. 23-32); who laid down His life for His friends (xv. 13), and went away that the Comforter might come (xvi. 7). In dying Jesus prayed that the Father might forgive His murderers and declared that He had finished the great work committed to Him.

After the Resurrection

In the one chapter in which the third gospel summarizes the post-resurrection teaching the death of Christ is referred to thrice as the burden of Jesus' teaching (Luke xxiv. 6-8, 26, 46). Thus at least twice during the forty days Jesus traced out for the disciples the Old Testament prophecies concerning His death. To the Gospel of the Forty Days belongs the collection of Old Testament passages on this subject which underlies the preaching of Acts and is referred to in I Cor. xv. 3. The collection certainly included Isaiah liii., which Philip used as had his Master before him (Acts viii. 30-5).

With the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit there followed a Copernican revolution in the disciples thinking according to which the Word of the Cross which they had previously rejected became the focus of their lives, their thought, and their preaching as is clearly seen in Paul (Gal. ii. 20-1, ii. 1; I Cor. i, ii. 2; I Tim. ii. 6-7); in First Peter (i. 19; ii. 21-24; iii. 18; iv. 1, 13); in Hebrews; in First John; and in Revelation. In that great vision of the Church in heaven, our Lord is designated the Lamb some thirty times. As the Lamb that has been slain, He stands in the midst of the Throne of God receiving the adoration of all creation and the gratitude of the Redeemed. The Apocalypse describes the Redeemer as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, thus making the Cross the foundation upon which the just Jehovah hath granted our race a history, and His people salvation.

In I Corinthians 15:3 Paul lists the death of Christ for our sins as the first of the principles which he taught and equally as the first thing which had been taught him. In other words, the Cross was central to the primitive Christian community prior even to Paul's conversion. Judging by the place given to the Cross in the Gospels, in the 'oral gospel' as recorded in Acts and this passage in Paul, we are justified in declaring that the Cross was the primary element in the earliest Christian proclamation. Harnack has certainly not overstated the matter when he says that "many teachers, like Paul, presented the Cross of Christ as the content of Christianity"; and that "'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' was not simply Pauline, but common to Christianity in general."

The Cross in Church History

When we come to study the history of the Christian faith we find that the Cross has maintained its centrality in all branches of the Church in spite of efforts made by sundry human philosophies to supplant it. The tendency of Neo-platonism was to deflect Greek Christianity toward a mystical eternalization or deification of man; the deflection of the mediaeval church was toward the Aristotelian

hierarchical principle; in the modern age Humanism, the Enlightenment and Kant have magnified the sufficiency of man. But with every departure from the preaching of the Cross there has resulted such a decadence in the life, love, loyalty, and faith of the Church that Christendom has ever returned with new insistence upon the centrality of "that green hill without the city wall where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all."

The faith of the early Church is indicated by the Apostles' Creed and the writings of the Fathers. The point of view of the most ancient Christian symbol is that Christ was born to die and enter into His glory. Every event in the life of Jesus after His birth is either passed over or else concentrated in His death. But the Creed does not pass over His death, rather it devotes three articles in its scant twelve to that fact. With mighty blows the Creed thrice rings the changes on the Cross: *suffered . . . crucified . . . dead*. Thus in the Cross, the Christian Symbol condenses all the meaning of Christ's life and mission. There are only two signs which history recognizes as representative of the Christian religion; and both are taken from Calvary: *The Cross and the Crucifix*.

The Apostolic Fathers commend the church which "rejoices in the passion of our Lord" and bid us "fix our gaze on the blood of Christ, and know that it is precious to his Father, because it was poured out for our salvation." "On account of the love which He had for us did our Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of God, give His blood for us, His flesh for our flesh, His life for our lives."

The Testimony of the Fathers

Athanasius presented the Cross as the satisfaction of the Divine veracity and "the sum of our faith." Eusebius of Caesarea, the scholar of the ancient church, held that "the law of Christianity is the holy cross of Christ," that the Lamb of God offered Himself a penal substitute for our sins. Chrysostom teaches "Christ saved us from death by delivering Himself to death" "We were under sin and punishment; He by suffering punishment did away with sin and punishment. He was punished on the cross." Cyril adds, "We have paid in Christ Himself the penalties of the sins with which we are charged." "Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, has redeemed us, by laying down His life (soul) for us, offering Himself to the Father as a sacrifice without blemish, giving His blood in exchange for the life of all, for He was worth more than the world." Augustine says: "All my hope is in the death of my Lord. His death is my merit, my refuge, my salvation, my life, and my resurrection . . . the certainty of our whole confidence consists in the blood of Christ." John of Damascus summarizes: "The whole activity and wonder-working of Christ is most great and divine and wonderful; but his precious cross is the most wonderful of all. For by nothing else was death destroyed, the sin of our first parents atoned for, hell despoiled, resurrection bestowed, power given us to disdain things present and death itself, the restoration of original blessedness accomplished, the gates of paradise opened, our nature seated at the right hand of God, we made children of God and

heirs of heaven—but through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For through the cross have all things been set right.”

Or if one prefers the summaries of modern scholars, the following was written by a French and endorsed by a British authority on the history of doctrine:

At the base of the teaching of the Fathers we find “a fundamental principle, a truth of faith deeply rooted in the Christian conscience—that salvation

has come to us by the Cross of the Son of God. For them all the death of Jesus Christ is something else than an example: it has had outside ourselves, according to the divine plan, a real and mysterious operation, it possesses an objective and distinctive value. Two general facts express this supernatural efficacy—the Saviour’s death appeases for us the divine wrath; and it is a penalty, the penalty of our sins, voluntarily undergone by the Lord in our place.”

IS PROTESTANTISM BANKRUPT?

Luther Craig Long

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THE United States of America is said to be a Christian nation. This is due to the fact that from the very beginning of the history of the United States men and women who believed the fundamental doctrines of Biblical Christianity worked side by side in the work of government. Christians who are members of the Church of Rome have worked with Christians who are members of Protestant denominations and have sought to establish a form of democratic government which would preserve freedom to worship God according to the dictates of the individual conscience.

In this article we will not presume to pass judgment upon the question of the spiritual influence which the Church of Rome has upon the citizens of America. This survey will confine itself to the consideration of the question of whether or not Protestantism has lost the spiritual influence which it once possessed.

Federal Council Protestantism

In order to examine Protestantism the casual observer will probably ask for the name of the largest organization which is composed of the various denominations in America. This organization is The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. This national religious organization is composed of the representatives of the many local town, city, and state federations of Churches. In a certain Connecticut city there are approximately seventy-eight Protestant Churches. About fifty of these Churches have united to form what is known as The Council of Churches of that city. In some towns and cities there is probably even a greater and oftentimes a unanimous representation of the Protestant Churches in the local organization which composes the Federal Council. And yet one point must be made absolutely plain: the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America does not by any means represent all of the denominations or all of the Protestant Churches or Protestant men and women in the United States of America. Neither does the program or doctrinal standard of this Federal Council satisfy the conscientious convictions of the Protestants who are not members of this Federal Council. This means, then, that whether we may wish to admit it or not there are at least two main groups of people within the United

States of America today who call themselves Protestants: first, there are the Protestants who have united to form the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and second, there are various Protestants who have objected to the doctrinal standards of the Federal Council and to the policies of the Federal Council and have proceeded to remain unaffiliated so far as affiliation with any general association of denominations is concerned. Let us examine, briefly, both of these major groups of Protestants.

Before the War

About 1912 there was little trouble within Protestantism. Churches were well attended at all services, the Churches had very little financial worry and the Churches seemed to have an influence for good in the community. To be sure, it was not expected that the chief drunkard or embezzler of bank funds was a Church member. Churches did not enter into any other method of attracting visitors to the Church than the method of good positive preaching of the doctrines which the Church was chartered to propagate. No other method of money-raising was resorted to than the method of receiving the voluntary offerings of satisfied men and women who worshipped at the various services of the Church. The Church did not consider it to be a function of the Church to entertain her members or visitors; that social life of the members was left to individual liberty, and the type of social life and activity which the Church members voluntarily chose was opposite from that form of social life which the non-Church member naturally chose for themselves. This was the glory day of Protestantism in America.

During the War

When the World War came, and men and boys of the Churches entered the service, it was considered a national emergency which was sufficiently important to necessitate the inclusion in the Church programs of forms of activity which in themselves were as good and worthy as the American Red Cross. It was considered “a service to God” for some Protestant ministers to devote their preaching time on Sundays to talks upon the importance of buying Liberty Bonds. Churches entered into a varied program of social service and coöperation with government agencies