

the **CALVIN**
Orum

A Durable Peace
Work and Pray!

The Labor Problem
The C. L. A.

Philippine Letters
Thoughtful Reflections

Education—
In Calvinistic Style

Modern Science
And Reality

Letters

Books

Verse

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**TWO DOLLARS
A YEAR**

FEBRUARY, 1945

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laundry and money were returned. My guess is that cloth has come in from the States for the people to make clothes of. For on all the school girls now (the schools are open again) I see gingham, percale, and cheap cotton dresses. In almost all homes there is a sewing machine, rickety sometimes but still going. Civilization here seems to be built around that. The best buildings in the towns are the municipal buildings, the Catholic churches and the schools. One is impressed by the fact that this is a United States culture laid over a Mongolian race which has been long in the Spanish Catholic tradition of things. It is my impression that the improvements are things brought over from the States through Civil Service and governmental agencies. If you look at the Island as I saw it today from out in the water you see how fair it is. The sky is a deep blue. The heat is not overly oppressive now. Many small garden root crops are grown here. One is called camote. There is also the equivalent of a sweet potato. And the kangkong leaf is eaten. Also the banana, the cocoanut, and

cocoanut salad. This salad is an expensive rarity in the States. It is made from the deliciously crisp innermost sprout of the young cocoanut tree, and there is only one such morsel in a tree. It is good, but to my taste not much better than choice celery. I have not seen rice here, but that crop is, of course, the staple in the diet of the Filipino.

This has been a long year, a memorable year. I have seen many novel and some horrible things and gone far over God's earth and feel stronger than ever that there is certainly purpose in the world and that it is God's purpose and that men are the responsible agents. I do not know just what He has in mind for me, just what for you. But there is nothing trivial or unimportant in any of it. It is full of purpose. My prayer on this last day of the year is that God may bless you, and strengthen you, and protect you with the wings of His love.

[Note: These letters were not written for publication, but like the Letters from New Guinea are excerpts from personal correspondence. Dr. Zylstra's address now is: Sgt. Henry Zylstra, 36874303, G-2, 6th Army Hdqs. Co. APO 442, c/o P. M., San Francisco, California.]

Calvinism and Education

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IN 1938 one found a stirring of Calvinistic sentiment on the Continent and in the British Isles. In the words of a Lutheran professor in the University of Paris, God was bringing His Church back to Calvinism, which is the backbone of Christianity, for God knew His people needed a backbone for the stern days that were to envelope Europe. And in these days when our hearts are torn with anxiety for loved ones who are jeopardizing their lives upon the high places of the battlefields, we need to turn our hearts to the sovereign God of Calvinism, for only the worship of the great God of Heaven and earth will make souls stately enough for the travail through which we are passing.

The revival of Calvinism means the uplifting of the Bible, the magnifying of the God who speaks in the Book, and such a realization of man's plight as turns us to the Gospel of God's grace for salvation. For Calvinism is simply the most consistent form of Christianity. In this Conference we come to perpetuate the God-centered testimony that its beneficent rays may bless every sphere of human life, thought and endeavor. In discussing Calvinism and Education, I shall seek to set forth three great principles, namely: (1) Calvinism approaches Education in the Light of Christian Revelation; (2) Calvinism sees Education from the God-centered point of view; (3) Calvinism takes God's ac-

count of man's plight and stresses God's provisions for educating or re-moulding man into his Maker's likeness.

A Revelation Approach to Christian Education

Experiments made with rodents show that when one of these humble creatures is placed in a closed box and light is introduced at any one place, the little animal always comes to the light. With all his intelligence man is finite, limited, sin-darkened. Therefore, he needs and should expect light from God. And when the light is given he should come to it and begin every intellectual process where the light is brightest. In the Christian Revelation the dayspring from on High visited us to shine upon those who sat in darkness. God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of His glory and grace in the face of Jesus Christ. When the sun of righteousness is shining upon us from God's holy Word, we ought to begin with this light rather than with the darkness of human speculation or with the twilight of the semi-pagan society. Men tell us that one must begin where he is. In the wonder of His grace God has placed the Calvinist in His saving self-revelation. Hence, the Calvinist begins intellectually where God has graciously placed him: in Jesus Christ. Needless to

say, we do err and we will err in education as well as in every other sphere of life and endeavor. But our errors will be vastly fewer and less fatal if we begin where the light is brightest and take God's Word as a lamp for our feet and a light for our pathway.

Such a process is historically justified. For the first three centuries of the Christian era the Roman Empire seemed to be the great living magnitude carrying culture and civilization for the future, and the Christian Church only a persecuted minority. But the next three centuries showed that the Empire was only an old decaying tree soon to be uprooted by the storm of barbarian invasion only strong enough to overturn the Germanic nations which sought to rise from the Empire's ruins. The real life of the future civilization was in that vigorous young sapling, the despised Christian Church. Neither the Roman Empire nor the Germanic tribes, but the Christian movement was the chrysalis in which the heritage of civilization was to be preserved and out of which the future of education was to come. However much the Christians might be persecuted, theirs was the promise: "Fear not little flock it is your Father's purpose to give you the Kingdom." Education owes to the Christian Faith the light of God's Word and as well the preservation of the classical heritage of literature, music, art, and architecture, and the Roman sense of law and order.

When one looks beyond the Middle Ages he finds that the translation of the Bible into the languages of the several peoples made the languages and the nations of modern Europe. Luther's Bible made the German language and nation, Robert Olivetan's translation of the Bible shares with John Calvin's theological writings the honor of creating the beautiful French language, while the English of Shakespeare was moulded by the Genevan version, and our mother tongue came to precision through the versions of Tyndale, Coverdale and King James.

Education and Scripture

Now this stress upon the Bible is the direct outgrowth of the Reformation. The Council of Toulouse forbade the translation of the Bible into the common tongues. Before he wrote his celebrated ninety-five theses, Martin Luther wrote a series of theses protesting against the university custom of basing education upon the pagan philosopher, Aristotle. Similarly, William Tyndale objected to "nozzling" the boys at Oxford for eight years on Aristotle before they were allowed to study the Bible. John Calvin said that one must begin with the doctrine of Heaven and that no one can have the least knowledge of true and solid doctrine without having been a disciple of Scripture.

Roman Catholic Scholasticism begins with natural revelation and tries to build the Christian super-

structure upon the naturalistic foundations forgetting that the foundation of a building determines the lines of the whole. The concrete manifestation of the extent of this aberration is found in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. This beautiful piece of Renaissance literature presents More's ideal of society, but the people on the island of Utopia do not have the Christian faith. Theirs is only the religion of the four classical virtues—truth, fortitude, temperance and wisdom. And Thomas More is a Roman Catholic saint. Thus it is Roman Catholic and not Calvinistic to begin with nature and then impose the Bible on the natural foundation.

Calvin teaches that there is a revelation in nature, but that man is so blinded by sin he does not read this light of nature aright. According to Calvin one reads the Bible in the light of its supreme revelation: the Grace of God in Christ. And one reads the revelation of God in nature by looking at nature through the glasses of God's Word. Here is a man who can only read by the use of heavy glasses. Hand him a book. The printing is there, but without his glasses he cannot read it. Let him adjust his glasses and he reads the message which was always there. Put on the glasses of God's Word and one reads the revelation of God in nature.

This is true of the simplest and most every day fact. In the light of the Scripture a cow is given for the service of man and is properly domesticated. Apart from the Scripture the cow has become the sacred animal of India for which so able a man as Ghandi calls on the Hindu to sacrifice his life. And this "fact" interpreted without the light of God's Word has brought all India to the edge of starvation. Too many cows consume the vegetation.

In the Christian account man is fallen in his whole being. It is not reasonable then to start with principles enunciated by this sin-blinded human reason and seek to force the Word of God to conform to such erroneous lines. The Reformers did not try to pour the new wine of the Christian faith into the old wineskins of pagan metaphysics and papal ecclesiasticism. They began with the Word. Bearing aloft the light of God's Christian revelation they became the torch-bearers of modern civilization.

The Bible and American Education

When we come to this side of the Atlantic we find that the Puritans and the Pilgrims, the Scotch-Irish and the Reformed, the Huguenots and the Baptists came to this country in order to have freedom to worship God *according to the light of His Word*. It is historically proper that the Bible be taught in every school house in America, the Bible had more to do with the founding of the American colonies than all the other books taught in our schools.

The first freedom to be won was religious liberty, then followed political, and economic freedom

comes only in the third place. It is not true that political democracy gave us religious liberty. Rather it is religious liberty that taught men to desire political independence. It was the Presbyterian elders in Mecklenburg and Tyron Counties of North Carolina and the Presbyterian minister in Continental Congress who demanded political rights commensurate with the religious liberty they had carved out in the American wilderness.

Education and the Sovereign God

When one begins with the Christian Revelation he has a firm foundation for knowledge. All knowledge rests upon a correlation of the knower and the known. Bluntly put, the knower and the known must swim in the same ocean. A great deal of modern philosophy has become skeptical because it has based knowledge on the human mind and has no logical way of correlating external reality with the consciousness of man. The common sense realist tried to say that external reality must correspond to what it appears to be because "I can't help so believing." But-can't-help-oneself is a poor basis for truth. Suppose some evil being made you so you couldn't help believing an error—would that make it true? Begin with the sovereign God of the Bible, begin with the Christian creed and then descend from your Christian Faith to yourself and to the world in which you live. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ did not make us to be fundamentally deceived. He put us in this world to know it, to tend it, to rule it. The laws of our thinking are the laws of things, because our faithful Creator made them both. Our reason is not an autonomous power functioning in a world of its own creation, it is a gift of God which remains subject to the revelation of God and knows truly as it thinks God's thoughts after Him.

Natural Science assumes the unity, stability and order of things. The chemist charted the ninety odd elements and predicted several of them before he had isolated them. His whole assumption of this unity, order, stability, and causality is invalid, however, unless he admits the sovereign God of the Bible. One God created all things, both giving to them order and giving to the scientist the confidence that there he could find this unity. Every scientist banks on the stable order of nature. The Calvinist confesses the counsel of God's providential decree which establishes and maintains this order. For the Calvinist there is one first cause, one final purpose, one Divine power ruling and overruling history for this final purpose. Yes and one blessed revelation opening to our hearts the meaning of the changing panoramas of life. Jesus Christ is the key to the plan of the ages, and our hearts and minds are restless until we rest in God in Christ.

Beginning with the Christian revelation we have a certain and clear light on the things of God and of man, of salvation and of conduct, of truth and of worship. And God uses the truth He has given for moulding of men into His own likeness.

In ourselves, we ministers, teachers, elders, and deacons of the Church are as truly fallen and sinned as are the other children of Adam. We are not a super-caste of Brahmins with a secret wisdom that others know not. Calvin well says that the power delegated by Christ comes to us not personally but officially, not so much to our ministry as to our ministration, or more specifically that this power is given to the Word. We have spiritual power only as we rest in the Word. (*Inst.* IV. 8:2) The light we have for the guidance of the people is the radiance from the hallowed page which shines on from age to age.

[NOTE: This article is the first part of an address delivered at the Regional Calvinistic Conference held last year at Jackson, Mississippi. A second article follows next month.—Editor.]

