

# THE CALVIN FORUM

A MONTHLY

Yes-and-No Kagawa

Our Japanese Puzzle

Peace and Territorial Sovereignty

War and International Law

The Camel's Hump

A Phantasy

Dispensationalism and Premillennialism

A Critique and Exposé

After the Spring

A Sketch

Social Evils and Social Justice

Wages and Land Ownership

Significant Books

Santayana's Puritan

Religious Pedagogy

Evolution vs. Creation

# The CALVIN FORUM

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# The CALVIN FORUM

VOLUME I

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., MAY, 1936

NUMBER 10

## EDITORIALS

### Religious Liberty Imperilled

ABOUT the first of May, 1936, Judge Mason in the State of Massachusetts sentences three children, ages six to nine, to the reformatory because they refused to salute the United States flag. Their father, a Russellite, had taught them that it was a heinous sin to show reverence to any national symbol. It was idolatry. Thus they had learned what was for them the will of God. And they must obey God rather than men. One may question the wisdom of the father, but he must admire the courageous conviction of the children.

We wonder, however, whether this decision of the judge is symptomatic of a growing intolerance toward religious freedom in this country. We have sat back in smug complacency when the press reports revealed the story of the subordination of religion to state's interests in various parts of the world. We have looked with disgust mingled with pity at that unenlightened age when the Puritans could find no religious freedom and were forced to find a place of tolerance in the wilderness of the new world. But that was three centuries ago. But, after all, such persecution pales before what has happened in this enlightened age. Russia leads the ignoble parade of nations that desire to submerge religious interests to those of the state. Germany followed not so far behind. And — and will this country fall in line? I do not care to be a Calamity Jane, neither do I wish to follow the proverbial antics of the head-hiding ostrich.

Methinks I see a cloud in the bright skies of our religious freedom. It is a dark and ominous cloud that is gaining momentum. I can see the signs of the four A's in it. It is full of "isms." It is picking up our educational and our political institutions. Indeed, it seems to be sweeping everything and everybody along except the conscientious objectors. They are left strewn in its path. Among them are children from six to nine.

H. S.

### Father Divine's Peace Mission

FATHER Divine is a negro, small of stature and quiet of mien. He was but an ordinary preacher in a small fishing village on Long Island, until he put into successful practice the adage that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. That was fifteen years ago. Today he is located in New York City and many thousands — he claims 20,000,000 patrons — believe that he is God. He specializes in

eating places and has more than a hundred of them scattered throughout America. They are called Heavens and are officially known as Kingdom Extensions. Meals can be had for the nominal fee of 15c and lodging for \$1.50 per week. Whites as well as blacks are rallying to his leadership. "It is not merely an industry, but a phenomenal religious movement, based on the credo that Mr. Divine is the second Messiah, appearing in the flesh of a lowly race and that the Kingdom of Heaven is not at, but in hand."

We stand amazed at the astonishing success of a religious cult which so obviously represents the spirit of an exclusive *diesseitschristentum*. It gives to its adherents real and tangible values here and now. And that is, after all, not so far removed from the spirit that permeates many of the more "respectable" religious cults round about us. Father Divine has by and in his religious cult exposed the real motive of many a religious devotee. He has proved the devil's charge that men serve God because it is profitable business. Many Christian leaders today prefer to ask their people to make an investment rather than to present a thankoffering. They urge their parishioners to be engaged in religious activities, such as prayer, scripture reading, church-attendance, and so on, because it pays to do so. It is a damning commercial view of religion. It stands foursquare over against the religion of Christ. He gives freely. One needs to buy nothing. The Christian is rich in Christ, for "all things are yours." There remains nothing for a Christian to do but to show genuine gratitude by a life dedicated to obedient service. But we will not rise to that spiritual elevation until we have learned to prefer Manna to chicken and God's mansions to Father Divine's heavens.

H. S.

### The Old Modernistic Trick

Kagawa is a concrete instance of the ambiguity, the yes-and-no attitude of modernistic Christianity. He is a noble soul, as there are many noble souls both inside and outside of the Christian pale. He has been deeply influenced by the ethical spirit of Christianity. He proposes a solution for the economic ills of his land which may prove to be of surpassing value. But when the question is raised: Is Kagawa a biblical Christian? Is he a true follower (not of the imaginary modernistic Jesus but) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of man? Is

individuals, but it could not be permanently sold. At the end of each fifty years, it reverted to the house to which it was originally assigned, when Canaan was divided among the tribes. Evidently it was the intention that land only be thus exempted from complete private ownership, for with certain minor restrictions, city houses could be permanently sold. Says God speaking to the Israelites of those days, "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine."

It is not always easy to know just what place the Old Testament should have in the life and thought of a Christian. Certainly we are not under the Mosaic Law now, but we are given there an authentic picture of the mind and will of God and not least of all we are given His definition of righteousness and unrighteousness in human relationships. We shall be well-advised to listen to the law of Moses at this point, for it is exactly here that we have allowed very serious injustice to enter, and we have woven that injustice into the very fabric of our social order. It is fundamentally just that a man should own his house completely and permanently, for he made it. It is the work of his hands. But no man made the land. God made that. Just as the Law says: "the land is mine."

#### \$100.00 a Square Foot

We always get into trouble when we depart from the Law of God and this is no exception. For there is only a limited amount of land, and once it is surrendered into complete private ownership, its owners can levy on the rest of the community almost any tax they choose. Without the use of the land, men cannot live. Manhattan Island is perhaps our best example of this almost limitless power over the community. Why should the great-grandson of some colonial settler receive a rental of a hundred dollars a square foot for his small piece of land? He has not earned it, and judged by the justice of God it does not belong to him. We must remember that when some one is given money which does not belong to him, inevitably some other man has had taken away an equal sum which does not belong to him. As we said, landowners can extort from the rest of the community almost anything they want. In our large cities the average citizen pays one-third of his income for rent. Only a very slight fraction of that appalling tax on his resources

represents the cost of the house he lives in. Most of it is a tax extorted from him because he must use a tiny bit of city land.

Now, as illogical and unjust as all this is, we are going to find it a very long and difficult task to eliminate it and put justice in its place. The private ownership of land is woven into every part of our community life. No Christian is open to criticism for owning land at this present moment. We live in a social order which is built on that foundation. No doubt if a man by inheritance or otherwise comes into the possession of a large income from rent, he should realize that fundamentally this money belongs to the community, and he should administer it as a trust for the community good. Most of us have no such problem.

But we are all citizens of a state where this injustice dwells, and it dwells there by our permission. We are responsible before God for this talent of membership in a democratic state. That talent is not to be wrapped up in a napkin, but used, for God will require it at our hand. We who serve the Almighty God who is Sovereign of the political state and of the industrial order, will seek His will in our political life and strive with every ability and every opportunity which He gives us, to weave Justice into the national fabric in the place of the injustice which characterizes it now.

#### à la Henry George

The line of thought of this second section, has been discussed with great ability by Henry George in a book which is the supreme classic of the Liberal in politics. It will clarify any man's understanding of justice and injustice in our national life to read *Progress and Poverty*, written as it was by an earnest and sincere Christian, who devoted his whole life to advancing the cause of social justice which shone in his soul as a heavenly vision. It takes lots of patience to be a Liberal in politics, and not be disobedient to the heavenly vision of community righteousness. Opposition is continually springing up in quarters where it is least expected, and the cause of justice must expect to be defeated nine times out of ten, always. "But Thou art our Father though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, Thou O Jehovah art our Father, our Redeemer forevermore."

## A LETTER

Philadelphia, April 21, 1936.

Editor of THE CALVIN FORUM:

GENERALLY I don't favor the practice of authors commenting publicly on the criticism of their books when that criticism happens to be unfavorable. Only in rare instances, where such criticism is palpably unfair and incorrect, do I believe that authors should be given the opportunity to defend themselves. Even such highly respected organs as the literary sections of *The New York Times* and *The New York Herald-Tribune* open their columns from time to time for such defensive comment, and I trust that THE CALVIN FORUM will want to be as fair and hospitable as they.

I feel that the full-page criticism of Dr. Pieters, of Hope College, of my book "The Shepherd King," published in your April, 1936, issue, calls for certain statements. If this book on Abra-

ham were to stand alone, as a casual literary production, I should perhaps remain silent. But the book is the first of a contemplated series dealing with outstanding characters in the history of Calvinism (chiefly to acquaint our young people with our life-and-world-view) — using the term "Calvinism" anachronistically, in line with Dr. Kuyper's well known assertion in Stone Lectures that Calvinism issued from the tents of the Patriarchs.

I appreciate the great deal of labor Dr. Pieters has spent in the reviewing of my book; I regret keenly the unfortunate result of this labor. One wonders about the really enormous difference between the magnificent editorial written about the book in *The Intelligencer-Leader* by Dr. Pieters' colleague at Hope College and Western Seminary, Dr. J. R. Mulder, and the present review. One also wonders about the fact that of all the

scores of reviews and comments that have reached the publishers and author of the book, Dr. Pieters' is practically the only one that is definitely unfavorable. In fact, the large majority of comments (and many of them by highly responsible editors) are highly laudatory. In the very same mail in which Dr. Pieters' review reached me eight other reviews were found. Just by way of example, may I quote from among these eight the comment offered by the *American Lutheran Magazine*:

"This striking historical romance deals with that outstanding character of Old Testament times, 'Abraham, the friend of God,' — that heroic figure who in wealth and power attained the status of a king. The story remains true to the Scriptural account but tells a fascinating tale against a striking historical background and with great emotional appeal. The various incidents in Abraham's life are graphically portrayed and the book will be read with a breathless interest. Particularly striking is the portrayal of the queenly Sarah. (This in contradistinction with Dr. Pieters' observation re Sarah, who denounces my description of her.) The author tells his story with true reverence and with an honest regard for historical data. The book is recommended for gift purposes and also for church libraries."

Well, Mr. Editor, there you are. I feel I should be given the opportunity to let your readers know that Dr. Pieters' opinion is decidedly not the prevailing one.

As to my English, for which I am being given a verbal lashing, I have purposely written the book in the vernacular of our own time. Dr. Pieters has the right not to like that. But when he says, "I do not remember ever having read a book of this kind in which the language used was prevailing so poor in its literary quality," I can only say that he again stands severely alone in his judgment. *The Religious Telescope* comments on the book's "lofty literary style." *The Watchman-Crusader* says, "The settings are excellent and the descriptions of the scenery vividly realistic." *The Evangelical Quarterly*: "Mr. Monsma has good descriptive powers." Dr. Clarence Edward Macartney: "A very readable book." Dr. Donald G. Barnhouse: "A highly readable book." Dr. Edward Yates Hill: "Written with classic simplicity and sustained power. It grips the attention from beginning to end. Dr. Monsma cannot use his brilliant gifts to better service to young and aged alike than to write more books like 'The Shepherd King'."

My most serious comment concerns a number of faulty statements by Dr. Pieters dealing with the historical and archaeological facts. My book is the result of painstaking investigation, both *in loco* and among ancient records and documents. I have studied in the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, in the National Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and in many

other places. I have consulted ancient Jewish, Arabic, Egyptian and Babylonian sources, to find a factual basis for my descriptions. And then to find a reviewer lightly brushing all that material away with a mere wave of the hand is almost amusing — tragi-comical.

I cannot enter into any details. Just a few remarks: Abraham's experiences in Egypt are based on records that are centuries and millenniums old. It is not at all a proven fact that Isaac was born in Beershebah instead of Hebron, as Dr. Pieters avers. That Ur was situated on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, as Dr. Pieters thinks, is disproved by the fact that Terah and Abraham lived opposite Ur, and that Abraham had to cross the Euphrates ("Hebrew" — "river-crosser") to get to Canaan. Dr. Pieters' idea about the actual location of Sodom and Gomorrah is not bolstered by the best archaeologists, Dr. Kyles opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. For Dr. Pieters' information, the Syrian language was in use long before the period of the Israelitish kings. It was widely used by the people of the "Suri," or northern Mesopotamia, in Abraham's time, and was the language of diplomacy between Babylonia and Egypt. The priests of Egypt are not "perhaps" correctly portrayed, but their portrayal is exact, historical, based on incontrovertible archaeological facts. I cannot use more space to dilate on all this.

I deeply regret that Dr. Pieters did not see fit to emphasize, or even mention, the chief feature of the book, namely, the portrayal of Abraham as a man of faith — a man who notwithstanding his human frailties and human passions, held fast to his all-sovereign, all-powerful, all-merciful God, — a God-possessed man, quiet, majestic, towering far above the polytheistic, superstitious, ignorant world of his time. The popular conception of Abraham as a gilded saint is unhistorical. Dr. Pieters apparently has not been able to wrest himself loose from that conception. Abraham was a sinner like the rest of us, but a sinner in whose life the glory of the grace of God shone forth with unusual brilliance.

I also deeply regret that this present attempt to help give America a Christian belletristic literature, as Holland has it, and as, to a certain extent, also Germany and England have it, was met in our CALVIN FORUM (of all publications!) with a reception that is hardly encouraging, to put it mildly. Allow me to assure your readers, however, Mr. Editor, that I am not yet "floored." In fact, I think I shall continue my efforts, if God in His mercy gives me time and strength.

And will you personally accept my very hearty thanks for all the space you are giving for this rather lengthy rebuttal?

JOHN CLOVER MONSMA.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### DR. LIGHTFOOT ON THE GOSPELS

HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION IN THE GOSPELS. *New York, Harper and Brothers, 1935. 236 pages.*

THIS volume contains the Bampton Lectures of 1934. Its significance lies in the fact that it represents a sort of an introduction to and acceptance of a definite form of German scholarship into the English world. In the field of theology, the Germans have shown themselves willing to give themselves over with a courageous and effective abandonment in the pursuit of establishing a hypothesis. The English are far more conservative. Lightfoot states in his preface that he regrets the suspicion and indeed hostility with which this study (form-criticism) is regarded at present in his country and he thinks that it is a mistaken attitude.

The first two lectures give us a valuable review of the history of the study of the Gospels from Irenæus up to the present time. Considerable space is devoted to a thorough analysis of *Formgeschichte*.

Dr. Lightfoot applies the form-criticism method only to the Gospel according to Saint Mark. In lectures three and four a

scholarly attempt is made to discover what is history and what is interpretation in the second Gospel. He concludes that from the very beginning the Gospel writers and even the preachers before them were interested not in presenting Jesus, but the Christ, that is to say, an interpreted Jesus.

Lectures five and six discuss the passion narrative as found in the Synoptics. Dibelius also subjected this section to special treatment. This is probably due to the conviction that the passion story has taken shape as a connected whole earlier than any other section of the Gospel and that there is a closer measure of agreement in the structure and order of this part of the Synoptics than can be found elsewhere. It presents itself most advantageously for this study since it is possible to trace variations in the form and interpretation due to the specific objectives which the several authors may have had in mind. For the same reason a special section is devoted to a treatment of Christ's rejection in Patris (Lecture VII).

The last lecture consists of a conclusion in which the author compares the Johannine and the Pauline conception of Christ's incarnation. He calls attention to the fact that John in the