



The Voice

of the

*Mennonite Brethren
Bible College*

XVI: 1

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

1967

THE VOICE
of the Mennoite Brethren Bible College

VOL. XVI

January - February, 1967

No. 1

THE VOICE is the publication of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, published bi-monthly in the interest of sound Christian teaching, and setting forth the doctrinal position of the institution. Printed by The Christian Press Ltd., 159 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg. Subscription price: \$1.00 per year. Send your subscription to:

THE VOICE, 77 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg 5, Man.

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EDITORIAL

THE DISEASE OF CONTEMPORANEITY

In the January 6th issue of *Christianity Today*, its editor, Carl F. H. Henry, published an interview with Dr. D. Elton Trueblood, a Quaker philosopher. To the question: "What would you single out as the reigning tenets of our time?" Trueblood answered: "The first of these is the extreme belief that all our problems are new. I would call this, really, the disease of contemporaneity." He illustrates this sickness by relating an experience with a group of pastors, whom he advised to read such books as Augustine's *Confessions*. Immediately he was accused of antiquarian interests, since such old books obviously had nothing to say to our day.

This kind of attitude is more prevalent in our denomination than we would care to admit. The rage for being up to date, for being relevant, for communicating, takes on such proportions in the thinking of some, that the Scriptures, too, appear to be completely out of date (although it is not in good taste to say it.). Some members of the church are so excited about innovations — 'new theology', 'new morality', 'new Christian ethic', that they give one the impression as if the Christian church has no past. They overlook the very important fact that Christianity is an historical faith; it is rooted in history and is not a modern philosophy. The Scriptures, too, are part of that ancient past of the Christian faith, and, therefore, to cut ourselves off from the past, in our passion to be relevant, means that we have no anchors for our faith. We become, what Trueblood calls, "an orphan generation", enamored with new developments in our culture; impressed with all our new problems.

How stupidly proud can we get, when we speak of developing a 'new Christian ethic' that will solve the problems of race, war, and hunger. Why not rather preach repentance for having failed to live up to the 'old Christian ethic' of the Sermon of the Mount. What is the 'new morality' but old-fashioned Sodom and Gomorrah? Some radical theologians in their foolish attempt to be "with it" vie with each other in making shocking statements that defy the 'old' standards of morality.

Some professing Christians are so infected with the disease of

modernity that they feel called to question everything that has proved to be valuable and conducive to spiritual health in the past. The question is not so much, Is it Biblical? but, Is it new? How utterly ridiculous this position can appear is well illustrated in the story of the young girl who came to know Christ in an evangelistic rally. She had found God, all things had indeed become new. So, while talking to her 'new' pastor of the 'new' church about her family, she remarked: "My people are old-fashioned; they don't believe in God."

I am all for changes. I have had to make plenty of them in my short life. From a quiet rural community I was transplanted to noisy cities; from plowing with mules (they are slower than horses) I have taken to flying with jets without pain; from a rustic, agricultural setting my lot has been cast into an academic community. All these radical changes (and a few more) I have accepted with delight, and, incidentally, I have found the old faith of the Scriptures very relevant for every new situation. Younger people nowadays want to make the impression that they have to make 'tremendous adjustments' to new problems. Well, as Trueblood says, "you can hate your wife at 600 miles an hour just as much as at six miles an hour." What intolerable conceit on the part of our younger generation to think that their fathers had no new ethical problems to face!

As I said, I'm all for changes. But let the changes be in the right area and in the right direction. Our Lord once accused the religious leaders who were steeped in dead formalism, of saying when they were given the new wine to taste: "The old is better." But let us be careful not to misapply this judgment of our Lord on Jewish traditionalists. The parable of the wine and the wineskins (and the patch on the garment) clearly teaches that the new message of Jesus could not be contained in the old forms of Judaism. And if the Lord in his grace should revive our church so that some of our patterns of church organization, of evangelism and missions, of Christian Education, and other forms of church life (such as are not explicitly laid down in the Scriptures) should no longer be adequate, I want to be ready for change. If, instead of gathering in large, costly church edifices, we should change to house-churches (incidentally, that's not new, it's very old), then I want to change. If the guitar should prove to edify as much as a pipe-organ, I will make that hurdle, too. If our brotherhood should again decide in the next ten years to re-organize its conference structure, I am open to such changes as well. If it should turn out to be better for the church to have the preaching service before the Sunday School, I am ready to change (as long as such innovations are not made every Sunday — even a church bulletin could not keep me on course if the order of the service were changed every Sunday). I am utterly amazed at the resistance to change that some folks manifest when it comes to some of these externals of church life. However, when a would-be prophet (in

an attempt to be relevant) announces that the day of preaching is past, I remain 'old fashioned' (i.e. Biblical). It so happens that preaching is an important ingredient of New Testament Christianity.

Of course, I don't mean that our preaching should be done in antiquated language. I am completely in favor of translating old vocabulary into new words. It happens to be part of my daily task at the college to do just this. Often those who know the ancient languages well can give the best modern equivalents (as some recent Bible translations demonstrate). As a matter of fact it would be a good exercise for every preacher to write out a sermon, occasionally, using only current language (no 'Bible language'). However, I am not suggesting that our preaching should dispense with Biblical terminology. Every Christian must learn the basic vocabulary of Christian doctrine (I suggest we rather not look for modern substitutes for words such as God, Devil, Christ, Sin, Grace, Hope, etc.). On the other hand, religious language can become a meaningless jangle of cliches. We must put forth a serious effort to speak our neighbor's language (although I wouldn't use every term that a teenager brings home from school, in a sermon), but this does not mean that we change the message of the Bible. Our preaching becomes relevant when we give God's 'old' answers to 'new' problems — and give them in such a way that people can understand what we mean. C. S. Lewis once asked a preacher who had warned his audience that their disobedience would have "serious eschatological consequences", whether he had meant that they would go to hell if they disobeyed the Gospel. "Yes", said the preacher. "Then why didn't you say so", said Lewis. What a lesson on 'being relevant'!

I hate to be out of date! I want to be contemporaneous. But the disease of contemporaneity scares me. May it never be said of our church: "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates" (Judges 5:8).

D. Ewert.

DAVID LIVINGSTON said:

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay?

God had only one Son and He was a missionary and physician. A poor, poor imitation of Him I am, or wish to be. In this service I hope to live; in it I wish to die.

Would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among people whose language I could not understand, and whose attitude towards me was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." On those words I staked everything, and they never failed.

ARTICLES

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF JESUS

I. INTRODUCTION.

What did Jesus say about God? It is quite possible that the so-called popular conception of the Gospels would maintain that the God of Jesus is mild, meek, and all love. Without a proper exercise of the critical faculty it is also possible that the liberalism of another day has sufficiently labelled Paul so that he is to be blamed for a viewpoint which sees God as One who exercises wrath alone. If one were looking for a proof-text such a dichotomy as that stated in Romans 11:22, "Note then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off," could be assigned to Jesus' concept of God and Paul's perversion of that concept. But, is it that simple?

With the Synoptic Gospels as our primary authority, we propose to examine the evidence and to determine from it what Jesus did say about God. Since such a theme could easily become a major study, we have chosen to limit ourselves to an analysis of what Jesus said about the sovereignty of God. As a working hypothesis in the development of a theology of Jesus, we suggest that the relevant material in any area of this study is to be reconciled in the Passion experiences of Jesus Christ. Thus the sovereignty of God finds its fullest meaning in the exercise of restraint as the Son of God in the flesh made atonement for the sins of men by pouring out His own blood on the cross. What Jesus said about God, and what God did in the crucified Christ, are then to be the content of our study on the sovereignty of God.

After careful consideration and study we are convinced that the initial temptations of Jesus in the wilderness experience, following His baptism by John, are an adequate outline of Jesus' teaching concerning the sovereignty of God. Jesus' reply to Satan in each instance defines a major facet of that sovereignty. When tempted to "command these stones to become loaves of bread" Matt. 4:3 (Luke 4:3), His reply points out the real need of man, while inferring that God can be disobeyed; when tempted to prove

that God would preserve Him from self-inflicted disaster Matt. 4:6 (Luke 4:9-11), His reply clearly indicates that God is not to be tempted; and when tempted to worship Satan Matt. 4:9 (Luke 4:7), His reply limits man's proper obedience to the will of God. The basic facts are laid down, God is sovereign over the needs, the actions, and the direction of man's life. In the remainder of the Synoptic Gospels these are enlarged upon and illustrated. And finally, in the Passion experiences the true meaning to these temptations becomes evident. Satan's primary interest was to have Christ reject the sovereign way and working of God in His life, and thus in the life of every man.

II. GOD AS CREATOR AND CAUSE OF ALL THINGS.

Jesus' particular use of Scripture, to counter the temptation of Satan in the wilderness, provides an insight into His acceptance of the written revelation of God the Father. With this in mind, it will often appear that Jesus' direct testimony as to the person of God is somewhat abbreviated. But to the Jews of that day who were of a similar understanding concerning the Scriptures, the message was all too meaningful, for some believed, but many demanded His crucifixion when the message confronted them with the reality of Christ's person and demanded an obedience in faith and discipleship. Thus the facts of creation, omnipotence, and omniscience needed only to be implied to bring the understanding men had about God to the arena of daily living.

The reply to a question on the legality of divorce is based on the fact that "from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'" Mark 10:6 (Matt. 19:4). The Mount of Olives discussion on the signs of the end contains a reference to "the beginning of the creation which God created" Mark 13:19. Thus Jesus acknowledges and declares that God is the Creator, and in particular that He created man.

With reference to the omnipotence of God, Jesus chose a crucial question about the possibility of men being saved, to make a potentially sweeping claim. He replied, "all things are possible with God" Mark 10:27 (Matt. 19:26, Luke 18:27). The primary reference is to God's ability to save men, but is it not logically credible that One possessing such power and authority could do all things? When challenged by the Pharisees as to the source of His authority to cast out demons, Jesus boldly raised the possibility that He casts them out "by the finger of God" Luke 11:20, or as another source has it "by the Spirit of God" Matt. 12:28. All evidently accepted the fact of the sovereignty of God over Satan and the demons, while Jesus lived by it. His life was such a visible testimony that when He cured the paralytic "they glorified God" Matt. 9:8; when He healed all who came the throng "glorified the God of Israel" Matt. 15:31; and when He cast out the demon from a child "all were astonished at the majesty of God" Luke 9:43. The Sadducees

were faulted by Jesus because they knew "neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" Mark 12:24. Thus God is sovereign in that He is able to do anything, and that He is able to overrule all for the accomplishment of His purposes, or as Shaw states, "for the accomplishment of ends of moral and spiritual worth with His children."¹

The omniscience of God and its resultant providence were carefully taught by Jesus and are recorded in Matt. 6 and Luke 12. First, effective and meaningful, prayer to God is to have as its framework the conviction that God as Father "knows what you need before you ask him" Matt. 6:8. Then, the action of God in providing food for birds, clothes for grass, and giving consent to falling sparrows Matt. 6:26-32, 10:29, is assurance for all men that He cares and will provide for them. However, contrary to the other creatures, God in His sovereignty demands of men that they "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" Matt. 6:33. By implication Jesus says that our heavenly Father who knows our needs for sustenance also knows our highest need, the acknowledgment and acceptance of God's rule in life. Finally, to the scoffing Pharisees Jesus declared an awesome truth, "God knows your hearts" Luke 16:15, and to a private group of disciples on the Mount of Olives Jesus revealed that God alone knew the time of the final hour of all things Mark 13:32. Thus God is sovereign in His knowledge and involvement with men and the world He created. Again Shaw states, "the universe as a whole and in its parts is preserved and governed by God for purposes of holy Father-love, the purposes revealed most fully in Jesus Christ."²

The Scriptural reply of Christ to Satan in the first temptation, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" Matt. 4:4, accounts for God as the One who has created and sustains all things, while establishing a proper priority in man's spiritual dependance upon Him.

III. GOD AS THE ONE WHO CHOOSES

Berkhof, in discussing the attribute of God's sovereignty says,

*"He is clothed with absolute authority over the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. He upholds all things with His almighty power, and determines the ends which they are destined to serve. He rules as King in the most absolute sense of the word, and all things are dependent on Him and subservient to Him."*³

In whatever camp one may find himself in the Calvinist-Arminian controversy it appears that Jesus wished to make clear the sovereignty of God in election, in forgiveness and in judgment, under the general consideration of God as the One who chooses. It is not within the scope of this paper to debate the issue, but the action and teaching of Christ do present an understanding of the freedom

of man and the sovereignty of God which leave the mystery unsolved, and perhaps rightly so, because of our inability in the first place to obey fully according to our present knowledge.

In election, God is first fully gracious towards all men, both the just and the unjust as He gives them the sun and the rain, Matt. 5:45. Then, however, Jesus indicates that the days of tribulation will be shortened "for the sake of the elect, whom the Lord chose" Mark 13:30. In another context Jesus expounds a similar truth when He replies to the disciple's charge that He has offended the Pharisees, "every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up" Matt. 15:13. These same elect, who cry to him by day and night, are to be vindicated by God who as the just Judge is sovereign over all men, Luke 18:7. And finally, the granting of seats at the right and left hand of Jesus in the kingdom is according to the choice of the Father, Matt. 20:23.

In forgiveness, Jesus makes use of the common belief of the people about God, to present evidence for His divinity. They understood that God alone can forgive sins, Mark 2:7 (Luke 5:21). However, Christ also teaches that the effectiveness of the prayer to God for forgiveness is conditioned by the act of forgiving by that man, Mark 11:25. It is no coincidence that when requested by His disciples to teach them to pray, He should have them ask the Father for forgiveness as they also have forgiven others who have trespassed against them, Matt. 6:12. It is a measure of God's sovereignty when Jesus teaches that "he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" Luke 12:10. Aulen comments that "in relation to evil the divine power appears as both grace and judgment."⁴

In judgment, God requires the soul of man each in His own time, Luke 12:20, yet He is the only One who knows the time of the day of judgment, Matt. 24:36. While Jesus makes many references to that final day He does not link them directly to the person of His Father. However, at least the one parable of the vineyard is clear in its message about the judgment of God upon those who cast out and kill the beloved Son. Jesus answers His own question as to their end by saying, "He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others" Luke 20:16. No doubt few, if any, grasped then the significance of such a judgment upon the Chosen People.

It seems appropriate to recall that as Jesus stood before Pilate these same tenants tempted God by demanding that Christ's blood be on them and on their children, Matt. 27:25. Little did they grasp then the meaning of the cry in relation to the sovereignty of God, the One who chooses to act in election, forgiveness and in judgment. Jesus replied to His tempter in the wilderness when challenged concerning God's possible choice of action, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God" Matt. 4:7.

H. Swartz

(For references see page 15)

BOUND TO BE FREE

"It has been truly said", remarks Richard N. Longenecker in his recent work, **Paul: Apostle of Liberty**, "that the term **liberty** is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist. Moralists, religionists, and politicians throughout the course of human history have embraced the concept; and in the course of its wide usage, the idea has become encrusted with a varying assortment of associations and connotations." Amid such a welter of human conceptions and misconceptions, the Christian believer finds that he is compelled to return to the bedrock of Scripture, to the New Testament in particular, for a valid and worthy view of personal **liberty**. However, as the Christian studies more closely and comprehensively all the New Testament passages which, in one way or another, bear upon the subject, he soon discovers that the New Testament conception of **liberty** is not as simple and straight-forward in nature as he (perhaps) had hoped it might be.

He discovers, in passages, for instance, like I Peter 2:16, Galatians 5:13, and I Corinthians 9, that essential contraries or antipodes are juxtaposed by the writer, and this not for the sake of mere rhetoric but for the sake of a more adequate representation of the truth. These contraries are freedom and slavery, or liberty and bondage, and they are brought together by the New Testament writers in a way that finally leaves no doubt that the one cannot be properly understood and genuinely experienced in all of its fulness without the other. The Christian learns that the New Testament conception of liberty is a paradoxical one that involves a necessary reference to a crucial kind of bondage.

That the Christian view of liberty turns out to be a paradoxical one, in one sense at least, should not startle nor upset us, really. Truth, especially truth related more directly to God and His purpose and plan for mankind, often seems paradoxical to us, and perhaps necessarily so. If an infinitely wise and holy God is to communicate truth to finite beings and to communicate it in such a way that His truth is not distorted in the process and yet genuinely relevant and intelligible to man in the end, it must often bear two rather different aspects and seem paradoxical, therefore.

In the world of nature, in the physical universe, man frequently encounters situations and phenomena that involve seeming contraries and never balks at the thought of paradox which such contraries suggest. He observes the contiguous connection, for example, of the forces of attraction and repulsion in the realms

of electricity, chemistry, and atomic structure and activity, and never stops to ask, in the spirit of angry protest, why this connection should persist. Indeed, there is so much in our natural environment that is mysterious and paradoxical which man takes in full stride that one can only wonder why he so often stops short and stumbles when he comes upon seeming paradox in the world of morality and in the realm of spiritual growth.

It appears that in respect to ethical conduct and spiritual development, man — even the Christian believer, at times — is much more disposed to look for simple, straightforward, and unilateral action, for a kind of growth or progress that involves no difficult dilemmas, no painful and perplexing conflicts, no paradoxical contraries, no delicate and sensitive balancing and integrating of contrary forces or impulses. And in respect to the matter of personal liberty, in particular, man is so much more prone to settle for a simple and selfish conception of it that will cost him no probing self-examination, no honest consideration of the rights and needs of others, and no serious contemplation of the possible effects of his own actions or example upon the lives of others around him.

The Christian is, all too often, quick to conclude when he reads passages like John 8:36 or Galatians 5:1 or Romans 7:6, that the life of Christian liberty is one of nigh absolute freedom — freedom from the oppressive demands of the Law, freedom from the narrowly-conceived convictions of other Christians, freedom from the exhortations or cautions of ultra-conservative folk, and freedom from the tradition bound creeds of the Christian Church.

It is both amusing and disconcerting to reflect upon the general eagerness of many Christians of our day to accept so simple and selfish a notion of Christian liberty, and to accept it from contemporary advocates of it whose fundamental orientation is really a humanistic or even purely naturalistic one. In his conscious or subconscious pride, contemporary man often speaks of the issue of liberty or freedom as if it were an altogether new problem that had never distressed mankind in the same essential way, hitherto. When man speaks in this manner or mode, he does so because he has fallen prey, surely, to what Elton Trueblood has called the modern "disease of contemporaneity". For the matter of personal freedom is, after all, a very old one that goes back to the discussions of Jesus about it with the Pharisees and scribes (John 8); that goes back to the prayers of David for a fuller experience of it in his own life; that goes back to the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah (Isaiah 61); indeed, that goes back to the experience of Israel when she was delivered from the bondage of Egypt in order that she might be free to serve God alone! One suspects that, in the end, modern descriptions of the issue of personal liberty are very often only what Fulton Sheen has called "new labels for old errors" — old heresies in modern dress!

Contemporary man, even contemporary religious man, in his characteristically loose and irresponsible discussion of the subject of personal freedom, says much about the necessity of achieving freedom **from** a number of things. He argues and pleads for freedom **from** poverty and economic insecurity, freedom **from** oppressive taxation and governmental controls of certain kinds, freedom **from** the pain of honest but tedious labour, freedom **from** the inhibitions of marriage as traditionally viewed, freedom **from** the restrictive laws that still govern divorce, freedom **from** all official censorship of material presented to the public in press and periodicals, freedom **from** old-fashioned notions of sex and sexual indulgence, freedom **from** the kind of parental or institutional authority and discipline valued by a former generation, freedom **from** austere conceptions of self-discipline in moral code and conduct, freedom **from** puritanical notions of responsibility and mutual admonition and exhortation in the Christian church, and for other freedoms related to these.

Now, while **some** of these enumerated "freedoms", when pursued and practised in the proper measure or in the proper context, many be legitimate enough, most of them are obviously prompted by a deep-seated selfishness. And A. T. Padovano is surely right when he remarks (in his new book, **The Estranged God**) that "one of our difficulties today is that we strive for a freedom, **from** certain restrictions but we do not move **toward** a freedom to assume certain obligations. If we achieve a freedom **from** restrictions and do not move **toward** a freedom to do certain things, we suffer from the burden of freedom and the burden of ourselves."

As Christian believers of the twentieth century, we often fail to see clearly enough that the kind of personal freedom that modern man — even modern religious man — desires and urges upon us is not the kind of Christian freedom of which Christ spoke or of which the apostles spoke when they discussed it in their letters to Christian churches. Indeed, there is a great gulf fixed between the two conceptions of it! And what should alert and alarm us particularly, we would suggest, is the plain fact that these modern representations of personal freedom have not served to render Christian believers more compassionate, concerned, humble, winsome — more Christ-like, in other words, and more successful in drawing men to the Savior and Lord who makes men new and makes them whole.

The personal liberty of which the apostles speak is a much more difficult and paradoxical, a much more demanding and precious element and experience than certain modern conceptions of it, to be sure. For the apostles, Christian freedom was always linked to a certain "bondage", to a controlling devotion, to a Person unto whom the Christian's supreme loyalty rightly belonged. They could not conceive of a freedom that was absolute. They were convinced that any freedom that was to be a purposeful and precious one would necessarily involve voluntary

commitment and devotion to a supreme authority, and that absolute freedom was an illusion — was, in fact merely a bondage to the sinful self and must, therefore, issue finally in spiritual death and damnation.

The New Testament writers, then, conceived of a liberty which involved, at its very core, a willing bondage to Christ. They contended that we who are Christ's disciples are, as Donald M. Baillie has expressed it so succinctly, "most free and personal when He is most in possession of us." A contemporary disciple who has evidently caught the paradoxical nature of Christian liberty as the New Testament represents it, and has succeeded in describing various facets and expressions of it with compelling force is Eugenia Price. Her latest book, **The Wider Place . . . Where God Offers Freedom From Anything That Limits Our Growth** (Zondervan, 1966), is indeed an authentic word, and a word in season, about Christian freedom. She concludes her book with the words, "And herein lies the liberty: when we are free to let God decide, we are free of every characteristic that binds and hampers our steady growth into His mature responsible sons and daughters. Jesus came proclaiming the joy of living in the day of the free favors of God toward anyone who comes to Him in need of freedom from the bondage of sin — the subtle sin of joylessness as well as the gross sins of selfishness."

The apostle Paul knew himself to be a liberated man in contrast to the legalistic Pharisee fettered by the demands and restrictions of Jewish law which he had been prior to his conversion to Christ. But he knew himself to be, at the same time, a bondslave who must bring all things into the captivity of Christ. He knew himself to be free of all men — free of the opinions, the intimidations, the pressures, the fads and fancies of men. But he knew himself to be, at the same time and in virtue of the call and claim of Christ upon his life, a servant unto all men. He knew himself to be a servant who could not, therefore, simply insist on all sorts of privileges and rights as others might, who could not simply scorn the personal feelings or convictions of other (perhaps unduly conservative) believers, or simply ignore the anxious counsel of fellow labourers.

The apostle Paul, dominated by a supreme love and loyalty to Christ, was able to become free and flexible enough to become "all things to all men" in order that he might save some. He had learned, gradually, to accommodate himself to the situations and to the needs of others at the cost, frequently, of his own "freedom" but that without compromising or surrendering his integrity. For him, such accommodation was, as James Moffatt has remarked, always "a costly, difficult, and exacting course." Paul felt that he was free of the Law as self-righteous Jews conceived of it and as they served its demands, but he did not ever feel that he was free of the need for self-denial and self-discipline in order that others might encounter Christ and submit to His lordship.

HYMN - SING: SOME REFLECTIONS

According to those who compile statistics, "Hymn Sing" continues to be one of the most popular programs on the CBC - TV network. From an early experiment which was to last for thirteen weeks there has grown a program that has become standard viewing and listening for thousands of Canadians every Sunday. One would hardly have expected that ordinary hymns and "religious music" would have that much appeal in an age when the influence of the church seems to be diminishing.

Since this program deals with religious content it is well for Christians in Canada to consider its merits and demerits. The M.B. Conference needs to observe this program closely, if for no other reason than that seven or eight M.B. young people are part of the Hymn Sing Chorus. Perhaps the churches have something to learn from this method of reaching the world with "religion." And what should be done about those aspects of the program which are displeasing? The program has been on the air long enough to permit some comments and reflections.

What I like about the Program

I am pleased to hear that many people are tuning in to this program because it gives them an opportunity to hear many fine hymns. There are many viewers who probably never attend a church where these hymns are sung. Furthermore, the hymns are well sung — the singers are well trained, the voices blend well, and the words are easily understood. It is good to see clean-cut young people present hymns without apology and without

Such, then, is the New Testament view of personal liberty in the Christian life. It is surely a more paradoxical but also, in the end, a more potent and precious conception of liberty than that which confronts us in so much of the literature on the subject today. This is, after all, the kind of liberty which Christ Himself embraced when He bound Himself to the Father's will in order that He might be free to redeem men from the bondage of sin. "And none", as Reginald White reminds us in his wonderfully inspiring booklet, **A Relevant Salvation**, "who have followed the Master's way have found life less exciting or less enriching. The very variety of Christian experience abundantly confirms the Gospel's claim that Jesus sets men truly free."

Herbert Giesbrecht.

the finger snapping and hip-swinging that seems to accompany most of the popular singing on TV.

One must also commend the producers for handling the TV medium effectively and imaginatively. I am pleased to note that the producers have found it possible to present the hymns without the distractions that a chorus-master visible on the screen would automatically create. The variety in presentation through the use of solos, duets, etc. is also commendable, as well as the use of special arrangements or modulations to different keys for various stanzas (though this can easily become a mere gimmick). Background information provided for some of the hymns allows for a change of pace and style and gives opportunity to stress salient features of a hymn or gospel song. Taken as a whole, the CBC has handled its forces well in presenting this program in an interesting and effective manner. Since the CBC is a professional organization and pays all the personnel involved well (from the tax-payers' money), we have a right to demand and get professional performances.

What I dislike about the program

What I dislike most about Hymn Sing is the "hit parade" atmosphere that is consciously projected by the producers. The most obvious effect of this approach is to suggest very strongly that the hymns are designed for entertainment only and need not be taken any more seriously than any popular song on the hit parade today. The use of some very light and frivolous songs or swanky arrangements from time to time is also deplorable. The militaristic emphasis on the Remembrance Day program was entirely out of place for those who believe that it is not the Christian's business to participate in nor glorify war in any form.

The greatest single weakness in the whole program is the host, Don Brown, and the image he projects whenever he appears on the screen. He is a night club entertainer at other times and has other TV shows of that nature. I find his presentation and his manner nauseating, completely out of keeping with the spiritual content of the program generally. He is soft, namby-pamby, tries to be warm and cuddly and coquettish, and forever blinks his eyes. It is impossible for him to give authenticity to the program, just as it would be for Bing Crosby were he to sing the hymns.

It is disturbing to discover that most of the personnel concerned with the production of Hymn Sing are not "church people" nor even thoroughly familiar with the tradition of singing hymns and making music for the honour and glory of God. It is difficult to understand the reasoning of the CBC in this matter, since the program is obviously concerned with singing hymns. When the CBC presents dramas, programs for children, nature programs, scientific programs, news analyses and the like, they invariably place these in the hands of capable people — all of them authorities in their own fields. How then shall one explain the exception

made with respect to Hymn Sing? The producers have made it a **popular** program, to be sure, but is it popular for the right reasons? Surely the CBC could find somewhere in Canada people qualified to carry on a program of this type who have the necessary "good looks" on screen and the requisite knowledge of hymns and hymn styles? Would this be too much to ask of the CBC?

It is time the CBC asked whether the Hymn Sing program is true rather than whether it is popular. Can hymns remain true if they are presented as entertainment? Are newscasts telling of war in Viet Nam or starvation in India to be treated as entertainment as well? Will the CBC also present sermons as entertainment? Can Bible reading become entertainment and still have a vital meaning for those who listen?

Hymn Sing becomes entertainment to the extent that the CBC and the producers do not take the content of the program seriously. Religious truths expressed in the hymns cannot be presented seriously by those who do not believe in the truths they are expressing. Although the program may have broad popular appeal, there is a farcical quality about much of it, and to the extent that viewers are unfamiliar with this false quality the CBC is misleading the public by suggesting unconsciously that the religious content is a matter of no real concern to anybody. And so there will be those who tune in because of popular appeal while others tune off because of farcical presentation.

Some concluding comments

It may be unfair to seem to suggest that the CBC is committing a misdemeanour by having secular people present a sacred type of program. We do not expect the state (CBC in this case) to do the work of the church. But if the CBC operates in the area of religion (Hymn Sing) then surely the church should be disturbed if the clear message of the gospel becomes distorted in the process.

Even if the program remains much as it is at present, the producers could make several improvements. There should be a greater effort made to explore the riches of hymnody through the ages in a systematic way. The format is already beginning to suffer because of lack of variety in content — we hear much of certain gospel songs and hymns but little of chants, chorales, Psalm tunes and the like. Seldom do we ever hear anything in Latin, French, or German, or in some other language well represented in our Canadian culture. Singing hymns should be more than an exercise in nostalgia (The Church in the Wildwood). I don't object to hearing hymns like this from time to time if there is some effort made to help the viewer understand and discriminate between various hymn styles.

I would say that about 60% of the material presented on Hymn Sing is satisfactory in content and presentation. It is a program that is well suited to be heard on Sundays, at least. However,

if the program is to gain in popularity it will have to build its appeal more solidly on the spiritual values of the hymns themselves. Once the novelty of Hymn Sing wears off a little more the program will lose popular appeal because the public quickly tires of those who merely amuse and entertain.

No doubt the style of presentation we are getting in Hymn Sing is an attempt to put more rhythm into religion — a phenomenon that has received increasing attention in the last few years. Some church groups are experimenting with jazz idioms and the like in a church context. To try to "jazz up" the old, sedate hymns is as ridiculous as pouring new wine into old bottles (though I'm not suggesting that the jazz element is new wine). Those who fail to find significance in the content of the hymns themselves will try to find it in the music. And so we get a kind of colourful package Sunday after Sunday, but not too much attention is given to what's inside.

We probably have to admit in the end that the CBC was wiser than the church in discovering what would "go over" with the general public in this kind of religious context. Hymn Sing may be an indictment against us — we who feel strongly about making sweet music before the Lord and using good music as a force in preaching the gospel. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of Light. Perhaps all our criticisms against this program are unwarranted, since we are really admitting that the CBC is not doing the job as well as we ought to be doing it.

Instead of spending so much time and emotional energy against TV as a mass medium we should have spent more time and energy in discovering effective ways of using this medium to present the gospel in our day. With a program such as Hymn Sing the CBC has shown what we might have been doing all along.

Can we still do something? We have plenty of musical resources all across our conference. Perhaps we can yet learn to pool our resources in such a way that a significant thrust could be made. I would think that many TV stations across Canada would be interested in programs of merit somewhat along the lines of Hymn Sing. What do you think?

Peter Klassen

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- 3 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 76.
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A SERMON

THE CHURCH'S QUEST FOR REFORM

II Kings 22, 23

God's people have experienced reform at various times in history and these have come about in various ways. When we speak about the Reformation, however, we immediately think of the early sixteenth century and the several individuals who played key roles in the events which transpired; men like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and perhaps Menno Simons. We seem to take for granted that the character of the church today has been quite specifically determined by the events of the sixteenth century. In certain respects this is certainly true and we ought to manifest an appreciation for what happened and for the way in which it has influenced the subsequent history of the church. At the same time, however, we need a much broader perspective and one which sees our present circumstances not merely in the light of what happened then or even of 1860, but rather, in as far as God enables us, to see ourselves as He sees us.

The reform commonly known as Josiah's reform (II Kings 22, 23) is one which I believe can provide us with such a perspective. The Scriptures provide us with a wealth of detail concerning the conditions which prevailed and the events prior to and subsequent to the reform. There are a number of striking parallels to our own day and there are certainly many inferences to be drawn which are as valid for our day as they were for Josiah's.

1. The Constant Need for Reform

A study of the life of Judah prior to the reign of Josiah shows that it was a period during which wickedness was virtually unchecked. Manasseh had reigned for over forty years and during this period there was almost complete religious decay. Judah bowed to the gods of other nations and forgot the Lord who had delivered her from foreign nations. Manasseh was considered one of the worst kings Judah had ever had. Prior to him, King Hezekiah had instituted many reforms but these were entirely repudiated by Manasseh.

Then again, looking at events subsequent to the reign of Josiah, we find that almost the same circumstances prevailed. Jehoiakim,

the son of Josiah did little or nothing to keep intact the reform which his father had begun. Pagan practices crept back in and immorality and irreligion again became general.

Thus we find that as significant as the reform may have been in the years that it was in effect, it was rather limited in its duration. It did not bring about any very permanent changes in the life of the nation. Must we then say that the reform was entirely superficial or was the reason simply that its effects could not be perpetuated? From the scriptural account it would appear that the latter is certainly true although in many respects the reform was admittedly superficial.

It seems that the entire history of Israel was characterized by a series of cycles which alternate between apostasy and repentance. This does not simply mean that repentance was not genuine. Rather it points to the fact that each generation must experience God for itself and further that even within each generation there is constant need for repentance and renewal. What our fathers and forefathers experienced may be a real blessing for us, but it is not sufficient. It may even give rise to a complacent attitude within us and give us a sense of security in that we consider ourselves to be in the tradition of the true Christian Church. We have broken away from the Catholic Church; we have broken away from those whom we considered apostate and have remained in the tradition of the pure church — the righteous minority. If this is our attitude then we are in danger. Faith must be individually and personally appropriated and is not simply passed on from generation to generation. We may have to change our opinion as to what and where the true church is. Those who least see the need for reform are very often the ones who need it most. There is a constant need for reform and we in our day need reform.

2. The Nature of the Obstacles to Reform.

The events surrounding the reform which Josiah instituted also show us something regarding the nature of the obstacles to reform. Reform never proceeds without opposition. Josiah was not able to purge the land of all the evil without taking issue with the ways in which evil found expression in his day.

Most specifically, Josiah had to deal with all the idolatry in the land. The people served gods which were not really gods for they were the work of man's hands. Judah had been subservient to Assyria and this meant also that they had to recognize their overlord's gods. The result was that there had developed a religious laxity and that pagan shrines had been set up in various places. Josiah therefore had to purge the land of all these foreign cults and this no doubt met with considerable opposition. We read that the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem. After all, their livelihood depended on the continuance of this pagan worship. The reform threatened to disrupt the entire social order. People's security was at stake.

In our society and community there are also many obstacles to reform. In many ways these are very much like the obstacles which Josiah faced. Essentially, I believe, the obstacle which faces us is also idolatry. There are various forms of idolatry but in essence they are the same. I would like to mention what I believe several of these idols are:

(i) There is the idol of self-sufficiency. Man does not like to acknowledge his dependence on someone else. He likes to believe that he has control over his own destiny. He can bring about a better world in which to live and he can resolve the difficulties of his existence.

(ii) There is the idol of materialism. This is an obstacle to reform which does not merely exist for a certain class of people but it is one which exists for all of us. All of us are attached to things as probably no other generation has ever been. We think in terms of houses, furniture, food, entertainment and leisure. This is such an accepted pattern in our society that it is very difficult to orient our thinking along different lines.

Other obstacles are such things as conformity to the world, pride, and false religion. We have built up such an elaborate system even in the practice of our religion that most of us would probably feel severely threatened at some particular point if a genuine reform were to come about. Something that we hold dear would probably have to go and before we commit ourselves completely we want to know what it is. Perhaps the price is too high and so we find various means by which we rationalize the way in which we continue to live.

3. The Human Factor in Reform.

Reform and renewal do not usually come spontaneously. They are not entirely unpredictable in character. While reform ultimately comes from God it is mediated through human beings. The Scriptures relate that Josiah, even as a young lad, "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." Later, after he heard the words of the book of the law he became greatly concerned about all the evil in the land and repented and made a covenant with the Lord to keep all the commandments of the Lord with heart and soul. True to his resolve the king thereafter set himself to the task of removing all the idolatrous worship in the land of reinstating the worship of the true Lord. While it is true that the king himself could not change the heart of the people and bring them to a right relationship with God, it is also true that these outward factors had a very beneficial effect on the spiritual and moral life of the people. Some stopped short with the outward changes. Some became complacent because they believed that outward changes in themselves were sufficient. But for others the righteousness

which prevailed outwardly created a climate in which they could seek God and find him.

We too cannot stand idly by and wait for new life to break upon us. We too can help create conditions in which the Spirit of God can more readily speak to us. Sometimes we don't give God a chance. We are so involved in our own pursuits and in our own immediate interests that we have no time in which to focus our attention on other things. Situations in which God can speak don't come about frequently enough. There are many situations which are so far removed from spiritual concerns that it is almost impossible for God to speak. We need to consciously create circumstances in which God can speak to us. We need to share our concerns with one another and discuss Scripture and what it means for the disciple. So often we concern ourselves with trivialities but don't really discuss the fundamental things of a Christian's life. There are many ways in which we can create a climate favorable to reform and renewal. The structure of the worship service, the songs we sing and the activities we engage in are all vital factors. These can degenerate to meaningless formalities but they can also be instrumental in bringing new life into the church.

4. The Divine Inspiration for Reform.

Here resides the most important aspect of reform. Indeed this is the one netirely indispensable aspect — reform can only come from God.

As we consider again Josiah's reform we find that it was certainly motivated by God:

(1) It was certainly by God's grace that such a God-fearing man ruled over Judah at this time.

(2) The finding of the law-book was providential. It was God who directed things in such a way that it was found at this particular time.

(3) The law-book itself had a divine origin. It was the expression of the divine will. It was this law which provided the basis for the measures which Josiah introduced. The law gave the reform a positive direction and intensity.

(4) We find that there was also a revival of prophetic preaching at this time. Men like Jeremiah went about proclaiming the divine word. All these factors converged at a particular point in history and this we must attribute to God's providence. If God had not intervened in this way it would not have come about.

There have been other times in history in which God worked in such unique ways. Most important is the time when Christ came which is referred to as the "fullness of time." God had prepared the way, though man did not realize it.

Perhaps we can think of the Reformation also as such a time. God used and created special circumstances to bring about his

purpose in history. During the sixteenth century there were religious, economic and political factors which converged in such a way that a new life movement was possible. I believe this was providential.

We do not always know how and where God is working. We are often very short-sighted. Sometimes we may even find ourselves hindering the work of God when we believe we are furthering it. Therefore it is very important for us individually to be in a right relationship to God so that life may be imparted to others. We of ourselves cannot do it; we cannot manipulate God. But we can give ourselves as instruments of his service. We can and we must seek to be faithful in the task which is ours, so that God can bless the church as a whole with a spiritual awakening.

A. Dueck

BOOK REVIEW

The Church's Worldwide Mission

Edited by Harold Lindsell. Waco, Texas: World Books, 1966, pp.289 — \$3.95

This book is actually a report on the proceedings of the "Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission" held at Wheaton College in April, 1966. For those of us who did not have the privilege of attending this unique convention of missionary leadership, the reading of this symposium gives an excellent opportunity to share the experience of the 938 delegates from 71 countries who participated in this international Congress.

The Congress was sponsored by two large missions associations: The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (E.F.M.A.) and the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (I.F.M.A.). Fifty-nine ag-

encies or conferences cooperate with the E.F.M.A., and approximately forty-six societies are affiliated with the I.F.M.A. With more than 13,000 missionaries serving under the societies or churches connected with these two associations, they constitute possibly the greatest concentration of personnel and resources for missionary outreach in today's world.

A review and critique of this book implies, by virtue of the nature of its contents, a critique of the Congress itself. Because of the large number of contributors — some 22 in all — it should be obvious that the chapters vary greatly in form and content. It may be pointed out

that editor Lindsell has spared no effort to eliminate defects in style and composition.

The book has four major divisions. **Part one** contains five Bible expositions on "Mission and Church"; **part two**, which constitutes the strategic section of the symposium, presents the ten major study papers; **part three** gives the "Wheaton Declaration"; and **part four** concludes with five "area reports". The editor has written an introductory chapter in which he gives an "Overview of the Congress". Those readers who do not have the time nor the interest to read through the whole book will find in this chapter an accurate and concise "digest" of the main papers and general proceedings.

The major study papers reflect the chief areas of concern of the missionary leaders and agencies which called and sponsored the Wheaton Congress. Since a selection of topics obviously had to be made because of the limitation of time, it is interesting to note which missionary problems were singled out for special consideration and study. One must assume that these topics were given priority over others because they were deemed to be more important and more crucial. The reader may compare his own missionary concerns with the following list of topics dealt with in the major study papers: Syncretism, Neo-Universalism, Proselytism, Neo-Romanism, Church Growth, 'Foreign' Missions, Evangelical Unity, Evaluating Methods, Social Concern, and a Hostile World.

Space will not permit an analysis and critique of the above topics. I believe that evangelical Christians will generally be agreed, that all are concerned with relevant issues in the present missionary situation. In view

of our recent General Conference decision to combine our missions and our welfare program, the essay on "Mission and Social Concern" is of special interest. Evangelicals in the past have all too often emphasized proclamation (kerygma) at the expense of service (diakonia). The positive approach taken by the writer of this paper, as well as the "Declaration" of the Congress itself on this issue, give rise to the hope that in the future Evangelicals will take a more courageous Christian stand on questions of social justice and human welfare.

Although the program of Communism was not on the official agenda of the Conference, several speakers refer to it at some length. Rev. Alfred Larson, for instance, who spoke on "Missions and a Hostile World" identifies Communism as one of the chief threats to the "Christian faith and the Christian church" (cf. p.210). This identification of "Communism" with the "Hostile World" is a subtle temptation to which Americans all too frequently succumb. The result is an unscriptural dichotomy of the world — a godless (Communist) East, and a Christian (Democratic) West. We need to remind ourselves that American materialism is as hostile to the Christian faith as materialistic Communism. We need to remember, moreover, that there are also many true Christians who worship our Lord behind the "Iron Curtain" and that some of the fastest growing churches are found in Communist countries.

Two crucial problems, which have a direct bearing on the outreach and strategy of Christian missions, are not even mentioned: Missions and War, and Missions and Race Relations. It is rather hard to compre-

hend why the planners of the Congress deliberately excluded such important issues from the agenda on which Christ's teaching is so unequivocal, and which have such practical bearing on the progress of missions. The race-problem with its tensions and conflicts has been one of the problems of missions. The race-problem with its tensions and conflicts has been one of the most formidable obstacles to the expansion of the church, both at home (America) and abroad (Union of South Africa, Rhodesia, etc.). The same can be said about the participation of Christians in the wars of "Western Imperialism" or any wars for that matter. Will Evangelicals ever be prepared to face these crucial issues of New Testament discipleship?

Apart from these limitations, the "Wheaton Declaration" is a great document. It manifests true spiritual discernment and a genuine evangelical commitment to the Great Commission. All servants of Christ, who love their Lord and who are willing to obey His command, can join the brethren at Wheaton in the following solemn pledge:

"WE
the delegates here assembled

in adoration of the Triune God,
with full confidence in Holy
Scripture,
in submission to the Lord Jesus
Christ,
and looking for his coming again,
DO COVENANT TOGETHER
for God's eternal glory,
and in response to the Holy Spirit,
with renewed dedication,
and in our oneness in Christ as the
people of God,

TO SEEK
under the leadership of our Head,
with full assurance of His power
and presence,

THE MOBILIZATION OF THE
CHURCH

its people, its prayers, and
resources,

FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF
THE WORLD IN THIS
GENERATION

So, help us God!
AMEN." (p.237).

For a proper understanding of the present problems and prospects in the Church's worldwide mission this book deserves high priority in the reading list of ministers, missionaries, Christian workers, and all who are concerned about making their witness more effective in today's world.

J. A. Toews

Christian Faith And The Liberal Arts

edited by H. H. Ditmanson, N. V. Hog and W. A. Quanbeck.

(Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), pp 280, \$4.60

What is the place of the liberal arts in the Christian church? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a liberal arts education in a church-related school? Can the liberal arts be truly "liberating" in a

Christian college? Should our M.B. Conference strengthen and expand the liberal arts program at the M.B. Bible College? Are we convinced that a Christian liberal arts education is better for our young people

than an education received at the university? These are some of the questions that occupy our minds as we consider the existence and possible expansion of the M.B. College of Arts. The book "Christian Faith and the Liberal Arts" provides some pertinent suggestions and answers to the above questions and raises many more thought-provoking ideas with regard to the church's role in education.

The thesis of the book is that "the church has a definite stake and a special interest in liberal education. Since the liberal studies deal with the central powers and the core studies of human knowing, they constitute the unique and decisive area of education where the Christian viewpoint can and must make its impact. Furthermore, since the liberal studies are the prerequisites of all human learnings, they should also be the first concern of the church in its program of higher education" (p. 3).

What are the liberal arts, and what is their prime function or purpose? The liberal arts include the languages, natural and social sciences, the humanities, history, philosophy, logic, mathematics and theology. They thus represent all areas of human learning. These disciplines are designed to enable students to communicate ideas clearly, to inquire into the nature of truth accurately, to evaluate concepts, ideas, events and movements wisely, to understand men and their works sympathetically, and to reason validly. The liberal arts are called "arts" because they aim to "make" or "produce" a certain kind of mind.

It is exactly at this point that many otherwise well-meaning people become suspicious of the liberal arts.

They often seem to find that the arts "form" the mind in such a way that the "educated" become highly critical of the church and its traditions and thus lose their zeal and even appreciation for the church's task in the world.

This fear may sometimes be founded in fact, for many so-called educated people have not only become destructive in their approach and attitude to matters of faith and morals, but have also lost their witness in the halls of higher learning. Two considerations are here in place. First, are the liberal arts to be blamed for such an attitude of mind? One may perhaps assume that a person who despises his heritage and becomes a revolutionist simply in order to break down structures without building something constructive in their place, has not received a truly liberal education. A truly educated individual should be humble, positive, constructive, imaginative, appreciative of all the noble and the good, and tolerant in the best sense of the word. The purpose of a liberal education, to be sure, is to make one think and criticize, but this criticism must always be of a wholesome kind. Secondly, if a "secular" arts training often produces the kind of people mentioned above, we might have to more seriously consider the importance of a Christian liberal arts program and pay the necessary price for its implementation.

The services of the Christian liberal arts college to the church are many. The book underscores the following three in particular: First, it provides educated churchmen. "While many of our colleges were founded to give a cultural education to men going into the ministry, this should not be our view today" (p.

26). The Christian liberal arts college seeks to prepare men and women for life in all vocations and the church. Church members educated and trained in church-related colleges will not remain indifferent to the concerns, ideals and aspirations of their church. Secondly, it stands for a Christian philosophy of life. All courses and programs of studies (including all campus activities) are viewed under God. God is not only the author and revealer of theological truth, but of "secular" truths and knowledge as well. "In the battle against secularization the Christian liberal arts college can be a mighty arm of the church. Ours is no time for weakening the liberal arts program — now is the time for its strengthening up to the limit of our resources and men" (p. 31). Thirdly, it should promote creative culture and research. The church college will be unable to command the manifold research facilities of the large university, but it can succeed on a more moderate scale. In the realm of the creative arts, such as music, Christian drama, and papers and articles on certain theological issues, the church college has already made a real contribution to our culture. The Christian college, moreover, could and should have a loud and clear voice in matters of morals and certain expressions of contemporary culture. The Chris-

tian college can become the conscience of our society.

After discussing the principles, presupposition and structures of a Christian liberal arts college, the book proceeds to suggest how Christian principles can be applied in teaching and studying the various arts courses. In this last section some of the authors are at times somewhat vague and too general in their assertions. At times one has the feeling that certain Christian educators have not resolved within themselves the tension resulting from the collision between the secular and religious. For example, what are we to make of the following statement? "The Christian college teacher is first of all a Christian, then a liberal artist, before he professes his particular art or science" (p. 114). This division is not necessary and perhaps it is highly dangerous. The teacher at a Christian college is a professor who is also a Christian. His scholarship, instruction and life proceed from what he is as a Christian personality. All that he is, produces and stands for, is the product of his integrated character. In this sense the so-called "secular" becomes Christian, for all knowledge and truth come from God and are used by the Christian for the glory of God and in the service of mankind.

H. Loewen.

