

# THE CALVIN FORUM

A MONTHLY

Pressure Groups  
A Two-Sided Evil

Barth's Theology  
His Basic Position

Bavinck on Man  
Some Excerpts

American Calvinistic Conference  
Proposed Program

Secularizing Our Schools  
Dewey's Method

Books

News and Letters

Verse

# The CALVIN FORUM

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# The CALVIN FORUM



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## GROUP PRESSURE: A TWO-SIDED EVIL AN EDITORIAL

MANY a reader of *Time* must have smiled while reading the item on relief which appeared in the number of September 12, 1938. The magazine reported that to a "W. P. A. client on duty in a gravel pit at Sycamore, Illinois, last week came the industrial accident which a million U. S. taxpayers have feared was inevitable among W. P. A.'s hordes of shovel men: while leaning at a comfortable incline with his legs crossed and both hands grasping the shovel's handle to make a pillow for his chin, Ellis Colvin lost his balance, fell heavily, fractured his wrist. Shovel Man Colvin promptly applied for Government Compensation."

Implied in this statement is the widely held impression of "taxpayers" that the W. P. A. is but a racket enabling many who are undeserving to exert pressure upon the industrious and taxpaying members of society to furnish them a living. That so large a number of men and women as that which receives assistance through the W. P. A. organization is in a position to exercise some pressure, and that in coming elections this may become more and more manifest is undoubtedly true. The giving and administration of relief to millions is fraught with possibilities of evil, not the least of them being the power which lies in the ballots of these millions.

The misuse of administrative power that may find expression in the W. P. A. and the work destroying attitudes which may develop among those on relief is matched, however, by the attitudes of many carping critics. If waste of time and money, without appreciation of the real opportunities given through the W. P. A., is the charge to be held against the W. P. A. leaders and workers, lack of appreciation of the need of this kind of relief, of the tremendous amount of good that it is doing, of the honest work given by millions receiving it, is the charge fairly to be held against many critics. In the critics of the W. P. A. as well as in the W. P. A. itself we have but too obviously evidence of selfish interests and the pressures that grow out of or feed upon such interests. There is need of more impartiality, of more objectivity, of more willingness to know, to understand, and to serve, on both sides.

If one is struck today by the influence of power groups and of pressure groups abroad and in this

country he should consider that the wielding of such influence is not a new thing in history. The pressure of the labor group in the France of the present may lead the observer who is not sympathetic to labor to believe that the very world is tumbling in upon him. If he knows the history of France he may, however, realize that this means little more than a shifting of power from one pressure group to another. The amazing thing is simply this that men are still doing the same old thing.

The last few years have brought a healthy fear of too much "government in business." Those who have, however, shouted loudest in reaction are perhaps just those who should have realized that in the past we might have had too much "business in government." Democracy in this rich land of ours, in which comforts, conveniences, marvelous means of communication unknown to the fairly well to do in many other lands enable practically all of us to live in the common stream of events, has made possible the passing on and making universal of many traits, evil as well as good. Democracy it seems has meant not only the common possession of the vote but also the common possession of certain attitudes and practices. Pressure groups, at first operating subtly and behind the scenes, now operate boldly and openly. So many of them have arisen that this may well be the rock on which Democracy will go shipwreck.

Management and Labor have of late been having it out in what threatened for a while to be a free-for-all with no holds barred. Legal compulsion favoring slightly the labor groups (for the first time in American history Labor would insist) has brought about a measure of peace. Both groups are, however, undoubtedly marking time and seeking to strengthen the pressure they may exert or influence they may have. A Commission on Industrial Relations which the President empowered to study the conditions in England has in the meanwhile reported on methods of solving problems in labor relations there. Among the other things it reports that in England Collective agreement does not mean what many have thought it should mean here, a contract between one employer and one union, but a contract between a group of employers and a large

fallen state is no doubt always arbitrary, but at the same time also voluntary, service. Thereby every man acknowledges and confesses that he can be free only in absolute dependence; that he can be true to himself and be a human being only when serving God." (pp. 142-143)

11. God alone saves man. "Man does not save himself, and does not save God, but God alone saves man, the whole man, man for eternity. It is a religion not of works, but of faith; not of merits, but of grace. Man can add nothing to it,—salvation is God's work alone; of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. But this almighty and always active will of God is not realized without man, as

antinomians of all kinds imagine, but in man, and through man. It is realized according to the witness of the whole Scripture, in regeneration and faith, in conversion and forgiveness of sin, in sanctification and perseverance. All the steps in the way of salvation are God's work, the effect and fulfillment of his will; but because they take place in man, and are realized in his consciousness and will, they may all be considered and described also from an anthropological point of view. In order to become a sharer in divine fellowship, a person must be regenerated, changed, renewed, or, to use the most common term, a person must be converted. Conversion is the sole and absolutely peculiar way to heaven." (pp. 228-230)

## THE BLUE FRINGE

William T. Riviere, D. D.

*Victoria, Texas*

NO one who is now on earth knows what Jesus looked like. Artists paint their pictures of him; and sculptors make their statues: but the likeness is imaginary. None of us can know how He looked.

Jesus was a man's man. He won the devotion of a select group of men friends; bravely He went to a dreadful death and bore a world's sins in His own body on the cross. Who can be satisfied with the ladylike faces which so many artists imagine and paint for that manly hero? They show a long-curved, delicate man with small hands and feet; but Jesus was a carpenter and builder, Who had earned His living with those hands. A carpenter's hands have more strength than delicacy, more muscle than fineness of shape. Surely He was vigorous and masculine and strong; but we do not know how He looked.

Nor can I recall ever seeing a painting that showed how He really dressed. For Jesus was a Jew; and the pious Jew had God's command to wear blue fringes on the borders of his outer garment.

The history of that blue fringe takes us back into the Old Testament. Probably it was a fringe. But the Greek and Hebrew words that describe it were differently translated by different scholars: fringe, hem, border, even lace. How can a mere man keep up with such differences, anyway? God's Holy Spirit had the words written down, but they have been studied and translated and preached about by ministers and professors and men of books, not by dressmakers or dry goods merchants. I think it was a fringe; but certainly He wore something blue on the edge of His garment. The history of this blue fringe is found in the Old Testament.



HERE are some suggestions about blue in the book of Exodus. In chapter 24 we read how the people accepted a covenant of obedience to God, and the covenant was sealed with blood. Then Moses and Aaron and two other priests and seventy elders had a vision of God: "under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." That blue, the color of the sky, represented the very presence of God. In the poor words of human speech, God looks down from heaven and pities us; God speaks to us and comes down from heaven to save us; God lifts us up to be with Him: is not blue the heavenly color, a reminder of God? Blue is one of the principal colors of the Tabernacle; and one of the high priest's outer garments was of blue.

The command about the blue fringe is in the fifteenth chapter of Numbers. Sacrifices and forgiveness were provided for the soul that sinned through ignorance. But a terrible warning was given against sinning presumptuously, against reproaching the Lord and despising His word. Next we read about the man whom God commanded them to stone to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath day. Those people not only lived under a strict Sabbath law: God also reminded them of it every week. They found manna, the bread from heaven, ready to be gathered every morning except the Sabbath; and the day before the Sabbath they gathered a double portion so that they both had food for the Sabbath and could rest on the Sabbath day. On the Sabbath day they were not even to kindle a fire in their houses or tents. This Sabbath wood-gatherer was punished for the presumptuousness of

his sin, for reproaching the Lord, for publicly despising the word of God. Don't say that picking up sticks was a small thing. A few strokes with a pen send a man to prison, if those strokes forge a signature. Crooking your finger may be a capital crime, if the finger rests on the trigger of a pistol aimed at a man's heart or brain. The little act is no trifle: It shows the wicked will; it does great harm to others; and it incurs the dread penalty.

Immediately after this object lesson of sin and punishment, God told Moses to instruct the people of Israel, then and throughout their generations, to wear a perpetual reminder of God's commandments. They were to have this blue ribbon or fringe on their garments to remind them of God. The blue was to remind them of His commandments and to remind them to obey His commandments and to remind them not to seek after their own heart and their own eyes but to remember and do all His commandments. This blue reminder was chiefly, I suppose, for the wearer; but also others who saw it would be reminded of God's commands for the direction of life.

You know very well that with this command in the law of Moses, in Jesus' day pious Jews had plenty of blue borders and fringes on their garments. If a man could not afford a wide strip, he had a narrow strip of blue. A poor man who could not afford blue ribbon for the whole border could wear blue tassels on the corners of his robe. Even in poverty a pious Jew could obtain a blue thread, knot it together into a tiny tassel, and sew it to the corner of his meagre garment to remind him of God and of God's law.



**C**ERTAINLY Jesus wore the blue fringe on His robe. He was a Jew, under the law of God. He came to fulfil all that law. He taught that law. He must have obeyed its precepts. He was preaching to the Jews, a prophet sent by the God Whom the Jews worshipped, a prophet sent not to destroy their law but to fulfil. Surely He wore the fringe of blue, the

heavenly color. He came from heaven; He came to show us the way to heaven; He died to open heaven for us; and He was to return to heaven. He must have worn that fringe of blue.

This blue fringe is what is spoken of in the gospels as the hem of His garment. You find it, for example, in Mark fourteen, verse thirty-six. Jesus had fed the five thousand, and His disciples had seen Him walk on the water. When they came to land the men of that country "sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

These things were involved: They looked, not at self, but at Jesus. They had to believe in Him. Those who believed could bring their friends. They had to touch in faith. A man who could stand had humbly to stoop to touch the bottom fringe; but the lowly fringe was down where the very sick, who were laid at His feet, could reach it. It was a matter of touching the blue fringe at the bottom of His robe.

You may come to Jesus, too. Let your heart kneel before Him and humbly reach to touch His blue fringe. Just the fringe is enough. Even that little touch does so much. We must stoop to touch it. But those who are already down find it within reach of their fingers. This reminder of high heaven hangs at the feet of Jesus. Bend down and touch, and be completely healed, all forgiven, perfectly whole. When He makes you well, you can live and love and work for Him.

The gospel of Christ, of heavenly blue, brings light to those who cannot see: truth for our needs and law for our guidance. It brings help to the weak: healing of soul as well as of body. It brings comfort to the sorrowing: the celestial color of hope. It brings forgiveness to the sinner: a new start even for the worst of us. It brings inspiring guidance to those who want to live fully: bright blue suggests the joy of active life. Jesus brought heaven to us on earth.

## AMERICAN CALVINISTIC CONFERENCE

JUNE 27-29, 1939

*Name*

*Place*

**T**HE name "American Calvinistic Conference" indicates that the purpose of this conference is to reach as many American Calvinists, whether in Canada or in the United States, as possible. We are not related to the European Conferences. We are fortunate, however, to have on our program not only Americans. We know that the presence of others will benefit us much. Our primary purpose is to rally American Calvinists, in the hope that if others can join with us they are cordially welcome to do so.

The evening meetings will be public gatherings. These will be held in the Sixth Reformed Church, Paterson, New Jersey. This church edifice is both spacious and cheerful. The day conference meetings will be held in the Paterson Y. M. C. A. This Y. M. C. A. can accommodate many for meals and will extend dormitory privileges to members. This, of course, will be an important factor for hotel reservations may be limited during the World's Fair. One of the high spots of the conference will be the oppor-