

CALVINISM: SIX STONE-LECTURES

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Calvinism: six Stone-lectures by A. Kuijper

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A. KUIJPER

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STONE-LECTURES**

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Six ^w Stone-lectures

BY

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FIRST LECTURE.

CALVINISM A LIFE SYSTEM.

A traveller from the old European Continent, disembarking on the shore of this New World, feels as the Psalmist says, that "his thoughts crowd upon him like a multitude". Compared with the eddying waters of your new stream of life, the old stream in which he was moving seems almost frostbound and dull; and here, on American ground, for the first time, he realizes how so many divine potencies, which were hidden away in the bosom of mankind from our very creation, but which our old world was incapable of developing, are now beginning to disclose their inward splendour, thus promising a still richer store of surprises for the Future.

You would not, however, ask me to forget the superiority which, in many respects, the Old World may still claim, in your eyes, as well as in mine. Old Europe remains even now the bearer of a longer historical past, and therefore stands before us as a tree rooted more deeply, hiding between its leaves some more matured fruits of life. You are yet in your Springtide,—we are passing

through our Fall;—and has not the harvest of Autumn an enchantment of its own?

But, though, on the other hand, I fully acknowledge the advantage you possess in the fact, that (to use another simile) the train of life travels with you so immeasurably faster than with us,—leaving us miles and miles behind,—still we both feel that the life in Old Europe is not some thing separate from life here; it is one and the same current of human existence that flows through both Continents.

By virtue of our common origin, *you* may call us bone of your bone,—*we* feel that you are flesh of our flesh, and although you are outstripping us in the most discouraging way, you will never forget that the historic cradle of your wondrous youth stood in our old Europe, and was most gently rocked in my once mighty Fatherland.

Moreover, besides this common parentage, there is another factor which, in the face of even a wider difference, would continue to unite your interests and ours. Far more precious to us than even the development of human life, is the crown which ennobles it, and this noble crown of life for you and for me rests in the Christian name. That crown is our common heritage. It was not from Greece or Rome that the regeneration of human life came forth;—that mighty metamorphosis dates from Bethlehem and Golgotha; and if the Reformation, in a still more special sense, claims the love of our hearts, it is because it has dispelled the clouds of sacerdotalism, and has unveiled again to fullest view the glories of the Cross. But, in deadly opposition to this Christian element, against the

very Christian name, and against its salutiferous influence in every sphere of life, the storm of Modernism has now arisen with violent intensity.

In 1789 the turning point was reached.

Voltaire's mad cry, "Down with the scoundrel" was aimed at Christ himself, but this cry was merely the expression of the most hidden thought from which the French Revolution sprang. The fanatic outcry of another philosopher, "We no more need a God", and the odious shibboleth "No God, no Master", of the Convention,—these were the sacrilegious watchwords which at that time heralded the liberation of man as an emancipation from all Divine Authority. And if, in His impenetrable wisdom, God employed that Revolution as a means by which to overthrow the tyranny of the Bourbons, and to bring a judgment on the princes who abused *His* nations as *their* footstool, nevertheless the principle of that Revolution remains thoroughly *anti-christian*, and has since spread like a cancer, dissolving and undermining all that stood firm and consistent before our Christian faith.

There is no doubt than that Christianity is imperilled by great and serious dangers. Two *life systems* 1) are

1) AS DR. JAMES ORR (in his valuable lectures on *the Christian view of God and the world*, Edinb. 1897 p. 3) observes, the German technical term *Weltanschauung* has no precise equivalent in English. He therefore used the literal translation *view of the world*, notwithstanding this phrase in English is limited by associations, which connect it predominately with *physical* nature. For this reason the more explicit phrase: *life and world view* seems to be preferable. My American friends however told me that the shorter phrase: *life system*, on the other side of the ocean, is often used in the same sense. So lecturing before an American public,