

torch and trumpet

February - March 1955 - Vol. 4, No. 6

torch and trumpet



FEBRUARY — MARCH

Published by
REFORMED FELLOWSHIP
Incorporated

TORCH and TRUMPET

TORCH and TRUMPET is a bi-monthly publication devoted to the exposition, defense and application of the Truth as set forth in God's Word and summarized in the following Calvinistic creeds: The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism. Publication dates: the first of April, June, August, October, December, February. Editorial correspondence should be sent to Rev. John H. Piersma, 1000 Hancock St., S.E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan. Subscriptions may be sent to Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 63 Jefferson Ave., Grand Rapids 2, Michigan. Subscription rate is two dollars per year postpaid anywhere. All copies mailed flat.

*Entered as Second Class Matter
Under the Act of March 3, 1879*

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Looking Backward — and Forward!



Dear Friends:

In any enterprise it is both fitting and necessary that we take time to look backward. We must see what we have done. We must take stock of that which we have failed to do.

With this issue of Torch and Trumpet we finish our fourth year of publication. We have enjoyed this venture. There is genuine excitement in doing a work that is dedicated to the furtherance and propagation of our rich Reformed heritage.

Our joy is tempered somewhat, however. We sense we have failed in certain respects. We feel our publication must deal more directly with certain current questions. We feel we must be more successful in avoiding academic terminology. We want to speak to the plain and solid Christian laity who are really the backbone of the church — the grocer, the farmer, the business executive, the housewife, office-worker, factory worker, etc. We have not always succeeded in the effort to speak to them. This we regret, and we wish to do better in this regard. In spite of these regrets, we do have one supreme joy. It is this: we feel we have been faithful to our Lord and the blessed truth he has committed to us. We may not always have spoken as plainly as we should have. But we sincerely believe we have spoken faithfully. For the privilege of maintaining this witness over the past four four years we thank God.

In order to improve our magazine in the ways referred to above and also in other respects, we plan some marked changes for Torch and Trumpet. You are due for some big surprises — and we mean exactly that. We sincerely believe you will find our Torch and Trumpet of the future a better, more readable and more relevant magazine. We urge you to renew your subscription if it expires with this issue. You will be glad that you did.

We wish for each of our readers the continuing joy of remaining true to the blessed heritage that is ours. That heritage we may not lose by default. To maintain it requires constant prayerful vigilance and struggle. We invite you to continue in that struggle with us, all to the end that our faithful covenant God may have the greater glory and his kingdom may shine the more brilliantly in its everlasting light.

Faithfully yours,
REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

DON'T FORGET

Does your subscription expire with this issue? Be sure to renew Now. And Watch for the next *Torch and Trumpet*. You are due for some pleasant surprises.

TODAY'S BATTLE

A Summary of the Lecture Given by Dr. W. Hendriksen in the Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church, Thursday evening, December 9, 1954. Please note that this is not the lecture but a Summary.

Mr. President, Friends!

THE material of my lecture is distributed under five headings, as follows:

I. ITS SKIRMISHES

Every age has its doctrinal controversies. The early church had its theological and Christological battles. People quarreled about the trinity and about the natures of Christ. In the market-place one person would shout, "There was a time when he (Christ) was not (did not exist)." And another would shout back, "There was never a time when he was not." There was also the controversy with reference to man's freedom and his ability or inability to contribute toward his own salvation. How is a man born, free or bound? Subsequently — think especially of the time of the Reformation — questions were asked with reference to the final "say-so" in religious matters, with reference to the relative importance of "faith" and "works" in attaining salvation, and with reference to the nature of the Church and the sacraments. Moreover, there has always been a dispute about "the end of the world." In recent years this phase of the conflict has come somewhat into the foreground.

Now in view of all this it certainly need cause no surprise that today, too, we notice opposing trends of thought within the bosom of the Church, also within the bosom of denominations which at one time or another in the past officially accepted Reformed confessions. Throughout this lecture I am referring to them as a group and not to any one particular denomination. Surely if formerly there were *controversies*, which at times might even be termed *battles*, we can expect *skirmishes* today.

We should distinguish, I believe, between a *battle* and a *skirmish*. Not every dispute is equally serious or equally basic. Though in *unity* there is strength, *uniformity* is the death of any church. It has been well said that in *essentials* there should be unity, in *non-essentials* liberty, and in *all things* charity. Surely, when both sides are careful to define their terms and to prove in all their argumentations that they are really trying to base their conclusions upon the infallible Word of God, controversy may not be too deplorable.

Thus *skirmishes* are in evidence today — and have been for a long time — with respect to such questions as:

"Is God kind to all or is he kind to his people only?"

"Does the unbeliever know anything concerning God and/or the universe?"

"Is cooperation of any kind permissible between believers and unbelievers?" To a certain extent such disagreements may be called *skirmishes*.

However, there is real danger that at times the "skirmish" may begin to assume the proportions of a "battle." Something that should cause concern may be injected into the controversy. Yes, "the skirmish" may lead to "the main engagement," like the distant rumbling precedes the storm.

Let us then study:

II. ITS MAIN ENGAGEMENT

Now, on this point clarity is needed. Although it is certainly true that the denial (by the school of Karl Barth) of tenets of faith, *more or less* basic, has exerted its sinister influence upon circles which may be characterized as "traditionally or confessionally Calvinistic," yet the basic point at issue is not what some people surmise it to be. If the question be asked, "Do you subscribe to the proposition that the Bible is the infallible Word of God?" many would answer immediately, "Yes, indeed!"

But this does not necessarily mean that *all* of these individuals can be trusted. The real issue is something else. The *main engagement* is fought over this closely related question, "Granted that the Bible is God's inspired Word, are we willing, in actual practice — for example in settling controversies or in every-day actions and attitudes — to permit that Word to exercise full dominion over us?" The question is not, "Do you say that the Bible is God's infallible Word," but, "Do you really *mean* it?"

Let me illustrate. Here, for example, is a man who, when confronted with the question with reference to Scripture's infallibility, gives an answer that is thoroughly satisfactory. But the next day, meeting with a group of individuals of impressionable age, he tells an off-color story which causes the cheeks of Christian young men to glow with righteous indignation and which brings a blush to the countenance of chaste

maidens. Surely, though the man who told that joke may be ever so ready to subscribe to a doctrinally sound proposition about the Bible, he is a dangerous individual, not a safe guide for young people.

Here, again, is a church-organization which has been established for the purpose of studying the Word of God. But in discussing various questions hardly anyone ever refers to the Bible. So, one day a member tells you, "I do not care to remain with that society, for it never gets down to rock-bottom. The men (or women) argue and argue, but no one bases his conclusions upon the Word." Yet, when asked the question, "Do you accept the Bible as God's infallible Word?" every member would immediately answer, "Certainly."

Or, let us say, here is a man who writes a book or gives a lecture. In that book or in that lecture he discusses fundamental issues. Perhaps he even attacks the position of another author or speaker. But not only is his language so abstruse that not even a man with a high degree of intelligence (who happens not to have specialized in the author's or speaker's hobby) understands him, but in addition the line of argumentation — so much at least is clear! — fails to give evidence of the fact that the writer or speaker has made a careful study of Holy Writ. Is he unaware, perhaps, that Scripture might have something to say anent these matters? He surely is not *ashamed* of the Bible, is he? This man, too, in answer to a pointed question, would affirm his belief in Scripture's infallibility, but he seems to make very little use of this important book.

What are we afraid of? Is it the *scholarship* of the liberals? But is scholarship a commodity on which they have a monopoly? Hardly! Here, for example, I have an article which was published in an exegetical journal of note. Its author states that he does not believe that the apostle John wrote the Fourth Gospel. He gives as the reason for his disbelief the "fact" (?) that the early church-historian Eusebius taught that "another John" (not the apostle) wrote that Gospel. — But the critic is definitely wrong, for Eusebius never said *that!* — Here, again, is a book which deals with the subject of *New Testament Introduction*. It boldly states that the apostle Paul could not have written the Pastorals (I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus), for the simple reason that "as a matter of fact Paul was never released from his Roman imprisonment," hence he never had time to write the Pastorals. — Many years pass by, and during all this time authors by the score simply copy the word of "the great majority." Then one day (rather recently) I pick up an issue of an exegetical journal and notice that it contains an article which bears the title "Paul's Life After Acts." The author shows that the position which you and I have always accepted — namely, that Paul was really released from his Roman imprisonment (hence, could have written the Pastorals) — is by far the most probable, and that *all* the historical evidence points in that direction! — It would be easy to multiply examples. Why not permit the Bible to speak for itself? *That*, I take it, is *real* scholarship.

Let us then do this in connection with a few of the questions that have been bothering some of us.

(1) "Is God kind to all or only to his people?"

Holy Writ answers as follows:

a. *God blesses all his creatures.* Read the following passage in your Bible: Gen. 39:5. Note that Jehovah actually *blessed* the house of that worldly man, Potiphar. Now, don't try to evade the issue by saying, "*But . . . it says, for Joseph's sake.*" Of course, it says, "For Joseph's sake." Stress that fact as much as you wish, but please be fair enough to admit that in this passage it is stated in so many words that *Jehovah blessed Potiphar's house!* And do not begin to use arguments like this: "But that cannot be true because God had reprobated Potiphar from all eternity," etc. *When the Word of God plainly states a fact, you have no business to say, "It cannot be true."*

Read also Ps. 33:5; 145:16, 17; Jonah 4:10, 11 (look them up in your Bibles). Then note that according to Paul, Rom. 1:21, God's wrath is upon the wicked because "they did not give thanks." Certainly if they did not receive any blessings, there would have been no reason to chide them for not having given thanks!

b. *When God blesses his creatures, he does this because he is kind and merciful, just as he also wants us to be kind and merciful.* Read it for yourself in Luke 6:35, 36 and in Matt. 5:43-48.

So the question is "Is God kind to all his creatures?" must be answered in the affirmative.

Nevertheless, we hasten to add, "*The believer is more than just God's creature. He is also God's child.* God is his Father in Christ, and that means, of course, that when the believer receives *anything* — rain, sunshine, anything else — then in *his* case the kindness of God toward all his creatures and the *love* of God for his elect "kiss each other." Read Rom. 8:32. It is *this* aspect of the truth which is often neglected. Yet Scripture speaks very clearly.

(2) "Does the unbeliever know anything concerning God and/or the universe?"

Also with respect to this question the Bible gives a definite answer. As far as *surface-knowledge* is concerned, the unbeliever knows many things:

a. He knows something about matters pertaining to *this world*. Jabal knew something about tents (Gen. 4:20), and Jubal knew something about music (Gen. 4:21).

b. He also knows something about *God*, enough to deprive him of any excuse (Rom. 1:20, 21). He is constantly confronted with God's revelation in nature, whose voices reach him from every side.

c. He may even know something about matters pertaining to *God's special revelation* and/or to matters touching the *way of salvation*. Think of Baalam, Judas Iscariot, Demas. Read also Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 12:47; John 1:11; Heb. 6:4-6.

But, as far as these worldly individuals are concerned, *to them*, all such knowledge is surface-knowledge. In *their* lives it neither proceeds from the heart nor ever reaches to the root of any matter. Scripture is very clear also on this point. It states that the unbeliever

"hinders the truth in unrighteousness." He *suppresses* the truth of God's general revelation (Rom. 1:18). Since this is so clearly stated, why is it that certain individuals are always quoting from the works of those men who, at least to some extent, were *suppressing* (holding down, curtailing) the truth? Why is it that some almost leave the impression that they think more of Plato than of Paul, of Socrates than of Christ? How can it be justified that by them "the glimmerings of natural light" of which our Confession speaks (*Canons of Dort* III and IV. 4) are apparently transformed into "the blazing brilliance of the noonday sun?" I call this policy ridiculous and . . . dangerous!

And as to the knowledge of spiritual matters, is not I Cor. 2:14 clear enough?

(3) "Should the believer cooperate with the unbeliever?"

Scripture clearly shows that to a certain extent there should be contact. "Else must one needs go out of the world" (I Cor. 5:10). Jesus did not pray that the Father would take the disciples out of the world. These disciples, moreover, are a light shining in the darkness; they are the salt of the earth.

But does that mean now that the very essence of Calvinism is hearty cooperation with the world in all social endeavors, without a *distinct* program (based upon Scripture) and without *distinct* organization? Moreover, must we begin to stare ourselves blind upon the rim of the wheel of society? In establishing his kingdom on earth, does God operate "from without inwardly" or "from within outwardly?" Has it ceased to be true that "out of the heart" are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23)? The *emphasis* surely should not be placed on a program for social betterment (though there should be such a program!) but on the spreading of the Gospel of salvation in Christ. With Paul we should strive to become "all things to all men . . . in order that we may at least save some." Our *supreme* task and challenge is to "bear witness" to the world.

Let us never forget that no better solution of mankind's problems — including the *social* problems, which certainly should not be ignored! — has ever been found than the eager acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the ready response to his redeeming love. The *truly converted* individual will also wish to treat his neighbor fairly! It is *he* who is now ready to study scriptural principles touching such matters as peace, warfare, education, business, industry, labor, etc. The only true approach to *any* problem — also to the problems that have been bothering people who belong to traditionally or confessionally Reformed denominations — is the *biblical* approach.

Today's battle is the battle against the *unbiblical* approach.

III. ITS OPPOSING FORCES

This is not a simple matter. The line of cleavage does not run between your denomination (whatever denomination that may be) and all other denomina-

tions. Rather, it criss-crosses. On the one side are all those people who not only *say* that they accept Scripture as the infallible guide, but who also strive to show in their reasoning and in their actions and attitudes that they *mean* it.

On the other side are those who merely pay lip-service to the slogan of the Bible's infallibility. Remember, these are the very people who are ever ready to brand you as "a Biblicist," "a pietist," "a man who worships a book," etc. Did you ever notice that on virtually all matters these people take the more "liberal" view?

IV. ITS DECISIVE CHARACTER

We have called this "*To-day's* Battle." We call it this because *today* it is being waged more treacherously than ever before. Today the devil uses the method of "cryptic infiltration" (to borrow a term from a friend). See what the Rev. Kenneth MacRae says about this in his excellent article "The Strategy of Modernism" (*Reformed Review*, January, 1954). That author shows how today Satan expels conservative leaders from their positions of influence in the Church of Jesus Christ, and how he uses all the old terms which have endeared themselves to the hearts of God's people, and invests them with a new meaning.

Yes, this is *today's* battle. Tomorrow may be too late. Our Lord has predicted the Great Apostasy. In its most sinister form it will occur just prior to his own glorious Return. Hence, we should be *militant*. (There certainly should be no objection to this term!) *One* course of action is entirely wrong. Let us not establish another Maginot Line. *Let us not aim our guns in the wrong direction!* Let us not aim them in the direction of those who are waging a heroic battle against Barthianism! Let us see clearly who is our *real* enemy. Remember, *today's* battle is the *battle against the unbiblical approach*. In this battle let us be sure that we are standing on the right side, on the side of those who really love the Word.

V. ITS FINAL OUTCOME.

Now there are many people who do not seem to worry very much about the final outcome of this battle. They reason this way, "Has not the Lord promised that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church?" As they see it, this means, "The forces of hell will never prevail against *my* denomination. God will certainly take care that my denomination remains sound in doctrine and Godfearing in life. I can safely leave this to God, and I myself need do nothing whatever about it."

I call that interpretation a wicked interpretation. If it were true, then all those denominations which were at one time sound and pure would still be sound and pure. But we know that this is definitely not the case. Surely the worst enemy of any denomination is the man who is constantly saying, "What happened elsewhere cannot happen in my church."

It is true, of course, that the forces storming out of hell's gates will never prevail against the *real* Church,

(Continued on page 23)

The Place of the Decalogue in Divine Worship

by WILLIAM KOK

EVERY Sunday the Law of the Ten Commandments is read in our churches. There has been in the past differences of opinion about the place of the reading of the Law in our order of worship. Some thought it should be read before the sermon and others were convinced it should be read at the end of the service. There has been difference of opinion whether the Law should be read to be a taskmaster unto Christ or whether it should be read as the rule for the life of gratitude. Undoubtedly these differences of opinion still exist. It is, however, not my purpose in this series of articles to discuss varying liturgical opinions.

The introduction to the law reminds us that we have to do with that which happened long ago at Mount Sinai. "God spake all these words, saying . . ." We are thus reminded of the time when God in person came to speak to the people he had chosen as his own. He reminded that people of the fact he is Jehovah, that he is faithful to the covenant he has made and that he does what he promises. He is the God, who brought his people out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

These words, rooted in the historical fact of the Exodus, carry a blessed message to us. We were in the bondage of sin and Satan. The Bible tells us that we are conceived and born in sin and therefore children of wrath. It is good that we often meditate on this fact so that in the moment in which these words are spoken there will go through our mind the glorious consciousness of our spiritual emancipation. God has

set us free, free from the bondage of sin! We now stand in the wonderful liberty of the children of God! If we are prepared to listen, it is amazing how much can go through our mind in a split second. How much we ought to love our God, who brought us out of the prison of sin and death. With rapt attention we ought to listen to the commandments of him, who has the right to order our lives, because he is our Creator and Redeemer.

It is a reminder of the depth of God's love, who sent his only begotten Son to suffer and to die the shameful death of the cross in order that we might have eternal life. We are reminded of him, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death." We see before our mind's eye the picture drawn of him, who "was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not." As a moving refrain there echoes through our soul the song of redemption: "Surely he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We hear the cry of anguish: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see

if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

Such and similar thoughts lift our soul to worship when we hear the words: "I am Jehovah thy God, who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Thus the reading of the Law is lifted out of the deadness of mere routine. On the one hand our soul feels the weight of sin, of our sins, which made such suffering and grief necessary. But, on the other hand, we sing for joy for it is through this suffering in which the righteousness and holiness of God was maintained, that the God, who made heaven and earth, is our God, our Jehovah.

It will cause us to listen with ever deepening understanding to the directions he gives us in his law. We will understand that this God does not lay his law upon us as a heavy yoke, a burden difficult to carry. We will listen with the appreciation of the psalmist when he declared: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever; the ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: in keeping them there is great reward."

We will understand the lesson which Jesus Christ has taught us. He has come to lay the law of God upon our hearts, to make it the warp and woof of our life. It is with this in mind that he invites: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The Law of God is a delight to those who have learned to understand that it is the Law of him, who loved us and led us out of the house of bondage, who by his law again teaches us the way of true living.

Anniversary: The First 25 Years of Prof. Herman Dooyeweerd

by HENRY R. VAN TIL

IT is with a good deal of diffidence that I undertake, at long last, to write a short article to note the twenty fifth anniversary of Doctor Herman Dooyeweerd's professorship at the Free University of Amsterdam. This hesitation stems from the fact that it will soon be thirty years ago that Prof. Dooyeweerd was appointed on October 15, 1924 and here I am almost three years late! My reluctance and shame at such procrastination is, however, overcome by the assurance that in some things it is better to be late than not to be at all. And, further, it is my firm confidence that the task itself has a renewed timeliness. The only excuse I can offer is that the anniversary volume itself came a year after the event.

It is a custom in The Netherlands not only for a new professor to give an inaugural oration, which is usually printed and given wide distribution, but when he has finished twenty five years of distinguished service he is offered, by his appreciative disciples, a volume of essays which they have written for the occasion and which in a measure reflect the influence of the master on their intellectual development. The volume dedicated to Dooyeweerd is entitled: *Rechtsgeleerde Opstellen*. (Essays in Jurisprudence), to which sixteen scholars have contributed. It is impossible to reflect at the present upon the contents of this volume, and it is beyond the competence of this reviewer to do so with any show of justice since they are in the field of the juridical. Suffice it to list just a few of the titles, to indicate the relevance and the ap-

peal of this book. Dr. W. P. Berg-huis has an essay on "Democracy," while Dr. F. T. Diemer writes on "Artificial Insemination in Man." Professor J. D. A. Mekkes sets forth the historic Calvinistic doctrine on "The Right of Resistance," and to mention no more, Dr. J. D. Dengerink discusses a few aspects of the concept "Ordnung" in E. Brunner. The last ten pages of the book present a list of the publications of Dr. Dooyeweerd beginning with his dissertation for the doctorate in 1917 and ending with an article in the *Free University Quarterly* of 1951 on, "The Contest about the Concept of Sovereignty in Modern Jurisprudence and Political Science." Since that time, however, Dr. Dooyeweerd's *magnum opus* (volume I) has been published in English, of which more later.

From the dating of the dissertation it may be seen that Prof. Dooyeweerd will soon (1957) count forty years since his *promotie* (receiving the doctorate) in 1917. At the time he was only twenty-one years of age, which even in Holland is a very precocious age for anyone to have finished his work for a doctorate in jurisprudence. To appreciate fully Dr. Dooyeweerd's genial personality one has to sit at his feet in the classroom or to meet him in his parlor and sit at his table, for he is a superb host and one of the finest conversationalists that one may meet. His ready wit and friendly spirit have made him a great favorite with the Reformed students of The Netherlands. Dooyeweerd has the fine art of making out of students disciples

and friends. This is accomplished as much by his religious fervor as his persuasive manner and brilliant mind.

It is impossible within the short compass of this article to give the history of the rise of Calvinistic Philosophy in The Netherlands. For nearly forty years Dooyeweerd has been occupied with giving a criticism of all immanentistic (those systems which have the final norm of thought within the universe) philosophic systems. For a while he was the executive secretary of the *Dr. Abraham Kuyper Stichting* at The Hague, where he initiated the quarterly: *Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde*. After his appointment at the Free University to the chair of Philosophy of Jurisprudence and Encyclopedia of Juridical Science he devoted himself in collaboration with Prof. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven to building up a system of philosophic thought based upon the Scriptures. He insists that God as the creator of the world must always be properly distinguished from his creation, and that the laws of thought or any other aspect of reality are not eternal but are created. Both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven unashamedly point their students and critics to the Scriptures as the final and absolute authority in philosophy. No interpretation of reality that makes man the end-all and be-all of existence, that is "lost in this round globe," to use Calvin's phrase, can be the ultimate answer since man is finite and his reason cannot plumb the depths of the mysterious universe. Man, by searching, cannot find out God.

Dr. Dooyeweerd insists that all thinking is conditioned thinking, that is, conditioned by the person who does the thinking. And every person is either a lover or hater of God, a covenant-breaker or a covenant-keeper. Out of the heart are the issues of life and faith is the function of the heart. Man in his heart either lives by faith in the Son of God (Christ is the root of the renewed humanity in the covenant of grace) or a man lives out of his apostate faith in human reason, human power or some other created reality. A religiously neutral, objective, a so-called scientific philosophy is for Dooyeweerd a contradiction and an intrinsic impossibility.

In all of this the author claims no originality but holds that he is merely following the footsteps of that great genius of the Reformed faith, Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Free University. Kuyper in his *Stone Lectures*, delivered at Princeton in 1898, had maintained the duality of the human race. He allowed for no common human consciousness out of which a common scientific edifice could be erected, but he held that those born again are "abnormalists" who see everything in this world as changed because of sin and therefore in need of restoration through Christ. The "normalists," on the other hand, will not allow the proposition that nature and man are not normal, neither the claim of the Christian philosopher that he has a right to his own presuppositions. Now Kuyper began to show that the normalist makes his own assumptions, which are of a religious nature. He posited the idea that all men live by faith, and philosophize out of their faith. This root idea of Kuyper has been thoroughly applied by Dr. Dooyeweerd in the first volume of his life's work, which came out in English translation last year.*

Several reviews have already appeared this year from which I offer the reader a few samples. In *The Review of Metaphysics* Dr. Richard

Kroner of Union Theological Seminary has this to say: "The book deals with an important and extremely timely problem, in a most interesting and arresting fashion." Then, after telling us what Dooyeweerd is trying to do — and this reviewer is of the opinion that Kroner has understood Dooyeweerd very well — he goes on: "One cannot deny that this whole undertaking is as bold as it is urgently needed. The author has a penetrating and subtle mind. He exhibits a stupendous learning in many fields. He illuminates many dark corners of thought. His system is like that of Calvin, centered in the sovereignty and glory of God, and he is convinced that this central faith is entitled and able to serve as the basis of a new philosophic fabric which would efficiently and sufficiently supersede the defective modern trends of thought. Instead of being unconsciously and uncritically dependent upon a semi-religious creed, this philosophy will consciously and therefore critically admit the inescapability of an original connection between religious faith and theoretical thought, and it will make this inner unity the cornerstone of the whole building" (pp. 321, 322). It is also striking, in view of the premature criticism and supercilious attitude to be found in certain quarters, that Kroner writes: "A definite judgment about the philosophic value of Dooyeweerd's system has to be postponed, until the other volumes have been published It seems to me that the most difficult question concerning the relation between Christian confessional theology and a Christian philosophy aiming at universal validity is not yet sufficiently answered, perhaps not even fully understood or recognized by the author. He rejects the name of Calvinistic philosophy now, which he had formerly adopted. This shows an uncertainty with respect to the most crucial point Whatever may be the ultimate place of Dooyeweerd in the history of philosophy, the great significance and consequence of his work are already to be seen" (pp. 323, 324).

The Christian Century under the title "Finding a Fulcrum for Reason's Lever," (June 2, 1954, Maurice Natanson as reviewer) has the following

positive evaluation, although admitting that it is "not possible within the compass of this review to attempt a serious philosophical analysis of Dooyeweerd's contribution to philosophy in the present work, or even to evaluate the single theme we have selected for emphasis, that of the 'Archimedean point'" adds: "The philosophic scholarship exhibited is prodigious and deep. The author moves from system to system without sacrificing the quality of his insight and penetration."

For those who are willing to make a sustained mental effort, this book will be a rewarding venture on several scores: it presents a responsible inquiry into root-problems of philosophy which are not well known in this country, and it presents the author's philosophic-religious concept, which he terms the "cosmomic idea."

Rather than enter into a discussion of the philosophical meaning and implications of the 'cosmomic idea', let us turn to Dooyeweerd's conception of its religious aspect. "The problem of the 'Archimedean point' finds its resolution in a religious ground: 'the totality of meaning of our whole temporal cosmos is to be found in Christ, with respect to his human nature, as the root of the reborn human race.' The thought of Calvin is taken as the point of departure for 'a real reformation of philosophic thought'" (p. 672).

This certainly gives some idea of the reception in America, but, since the detractors and scorners, like the poor, are always with us, and some rather flippant, unscientific and indefensible characterizations have been making the rounds in certain circles to the effect that "whatever is good in the system is not new, and whatever is new is not good," allow me just one more very interesting witness as to the profundity and gigantic scope of Dooyeweerd's contribution. In *The Journal of Religion*, Oct. 1954, Dr. Charles Hartshorne of the Federated Theological Faculty, Chicago University, makes this honest confession in his opening statement, "To judge this book calls for an immense effort, which I shall not undertake. One must read several other

*Cf. *A New Critique Of Theological Thought* by Herman Dooyeweerd, Dr. Jur., translated by David H. Freeman and William S. Young, Vol. I, *The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy*. This book may be obtained from The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia.

volumes by the author, in which he expounds his 'philosophy of the cosmomic idea.' One must meditate persistently upon his basic themes. Dooyeweerd holds that the fundamental issue in philosophy is between the immanence standpoint and Christian transcendentalism . . . Detailed and learned examinations of Leibnitz, Hume, Kant, and Fichte, among others, are offered in support of this conclusion . . . This volume often reads almost like a history of modern philosophy — a good history, incidentally . . . This is an extraordinary work, as it stands, to me a rather baffling one. However, the writing is often clear and illuminating, for example, in the denial that 'naive realism' is a theory of reality."

Hartshorne disagrees with Dooyeweerd's evaluation of German idealism as being the last great embodiment of speculative philosophy in view of the achievements of Whitehead. No doubt he has a point there as Dooyeweerd does scant justice to any but continental thinkers, a fault he has in common with most Netherlanders. And after Hartshorne pleads "not guilty" in behalf of Whitehead on the count of absolutizing law with the rationalists or individuality with the irrationalists he concludes: "It will be a pleasure to greet the appearance of the second and third volume of this amazing work" (pp. 297, 298).

Amazing is the word! Especially when we consider that this scholar has written scores of scientific articles of high calibre during the last thirty years and published a dozen books, among them many large volumes on philosophy. And yet this man's scientific field is jurisprudence! He has continued to fulfill his duties in that field and in the chair to which he was appointed. Moreover, he has been invited to lecture in Switzerland, France, Germany and South Africa. It is certainly to be deplored that his spiritual kindred in the new world have thus far not had the opportunity of hearing Dooyeweerd lecture, and it would be an unfortunate mistake should he not be secured for an American lectureship soon!

My personal appreciation for Dr. Dooyeweerd as a teacher and as a Christian philosopher is profound. I

feel something like Keats when first he discovered Chapman's translation of Homer. Having read most of it the first night, he responded with these immortal lines:

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told

That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet never could I judge what men might mean
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with wond'ring eyes
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Prof. Herman Bavinck once said:

No matter how detrimental the endless divisions may be for the unity of the church and of doctrine, nevertheless their testimony for Christendom is not altogether unfavorable. It is a proof that Christianity still lives, that it is a power among the people, that it is something that touches the hearts of thousands. The richness, the universality, the multiform character of the Christian faith is revealed therein. External unity, indeed, is more attractive to the eyes. Roman Catholicism does not fail to take every opportunity to exalt herself in this external uniformity and to place her glittering unity over against the divisions of Protestantism. But under this external uniformity Rome covers the same differences and antitheses, which are left free to develop themselves side by side in Protestantism. Therefore, it is not a curse, but must be counted as a blessing of the Reformation that she did not seek a false, untrue unity and permits that which is not inwardly united to separate also externally.

(Rectoral Oration: "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church")

Dr. Abraham Kuyper once wrote:

For our good and inalienable right, to subject the Synod to our critique, we do not plead with even a word, since this is perfectly superfluous.

De Heraut, No. 828-Oct. 29, 1893

Once the Synodical meeting of the churches has come to an end, then it naturally is our task to test her decisions with the biblical principles.

This is the calling of the ecclesiastical press (Kuyper includes his own *Heraut* and does not restrict this narrowly to some periodicals published officially by the church) and by neglecting this she is withholding the necessary guidance she ought to give to public opinion.

De Heraut, No. 819-Sept. 3, 1893

A Recent Dutch Immigrant Looks at "The Three Pillars"

(A review of and reply to the Rev. Harry R. Boer's article, "The Three Pillars" — *The Reformed Journal*, November, 1954.)

by STEVEN HARKEMA

"Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?"

JUDGES 16:11.

ONCE again were the Israelites ruled by a heathen people, this time by the Philistines. They used to invade the land with strong armies, once we read of 30,000 chariots, and people "as the sand of the sea."

The Philistines had grown into a mighty nation; culturally they were of high development. And it seemed that when once they had established their authority, the Philistines were not bad masters. Life under them appears to be rather bearable. We do not read that their yoke was very heavy. If the Israelites served them and paid tribute to them, the Philistines did not provoke the Israelites. Religiously they were tolerant. Was not the ark of the covenant in Shiloh, and did not the priests of Jehovah fulfill their duties to the law of Moses? By reading this history we get the impression that their subjection to the Philistines did not bother the Israelites too much; they lived peacefully. Only so can we explain how that when Samson started to fight against the Philistines his own brethren went out to bind him and deliver him into the hands of his enemies. They said to Samson "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?"

Obviously the Israelites were right. Why should there be trouble and war? The Philistines were tolerable and reasonable; it was easy to serve them. Samson was a man who disturbed the peace; his action made

the Philistines angry, and their reaction was something to be feared.

* * * *

Yet Samson was right and the people of Israel were wrong. We Christians of the 20th century know that very well now. We know that the uncircumcised Philistine, though tolerant of religious convictions, was still to be recognized as the enemy of Jehovah. Serving him without objection was as good as treachery to the cause of the church of the old dispensation.

In the November, 1954 issue of *The Reformed Journal*, the Rev. Harry R. Boer writes under the title "The Three Pillars" an article about the Dutch and American social situations. In it he gives a nice synopsis of the religious situation in The Netherlands, explaining very clearly that life there politically, socially and culturally is built upon three religious pillars, the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist and the humanist.

The Dutch citizen, voting for the election of parliament-members, is doing a religious act. His voting declares that he stands for Calvinist, humanist or Romanist principles. He does the same thing by being a member of certain social organizations, by subscribing to a paper or joining cultural institutions. This division, says Mr. Boer, does not at all affect the national unity of the Dutch people. Every Protestant, Catholic or humanist is a true Hollander in blood and bone; this division suits the Dutch national situation very well.

So far we can go along pretty well with the writer, but when he comes

to his interpretation of the cause for this situation we must disagree with him. According to the Rev. Mr. Boer, separate organization in Holland did not arise because of the principle that God must be served in the social and cultural organization of public life, but it arose from opportunistic considerations. "*The historical factor gave relevance to the religious factor*" (italics inserted). To quote more fully: Separate organization "did not arise because of a 'principle' that God must be served and 'therefore' there must be Christian organization in public life. That is the way the plea for separate organization is usually made among us. On the contrary the principle of action that motivated Groen and Kuyper was born and formulated in a very concrete situation in which separate Christian organization was necessary, was inescapable, was unavoidable, if the life that they and their contemporaries wanted to live as Christian men and women, not only in the home and in the Church but in the public area of life was to be and remain possible. In short the historical factor gave relevance to the religious factor. Without the historical factor the religious factor would also have received expression, but differently."

First, we will say that this statement as a historical view of the particular Dutch situation is contrary to the facts, and second, we must reject its general meaning as a sample of the liberal approach to the facts of history.

The position that the historical factor gives relevance to the religious factor is in its deeper sense at variance with our Reformed principal stand. Religion comes first of all in the life of man. Man was created as a religious being. The fulfillment of his task was service of God; his whole life-activity was religion, true religion. After the Fall man remained a religious being, but out of his corrupt nature he was no longer committed to the service of the true God but to the service of strange gods, idols. That is, though false, still religion. In consequence, it is religion that determines history. Special situations, political systems or social relationships are in a deeper sense always the ultimate result of religious convictions.

Essentially the view of Mr. Boer is identical with the approach to the interpretation of historical events. The liberal, since he recognizes reason as the basic impulse for human activity, sees religion and consequently the religious factor as the outcome of other factors.

The Christian is committed to see religion, either true or false, as the basic impulse in human life and this impulse, or religious factor, is present and dominant in every situation. This view is, we believe, according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and determines our whole life and world view. Starting from that point we never see a historical situation as any thing else than the ultimate result of the religious factor. So we see the French Revolution as the outcome of the ideology of Rousseau and Voltaire, who are called the spiritual fathers of the French Revolution. So is the situation in Russia today due to the religious convictions of Lenin, Stalin and others. Communism is a false religion. So was the situation in The Netherlands round about 1850 the product of the liberal faith of that time, and the "three pillar situation" of the time being would never have come into being without the religious conviction of Groen van Prinsterer, Bilderdijk, Kuyper, Bavink and that of the Reformed people in their time. The principal testimony of these men found response in the heart of the common man, and that response was

the origin of Christian action in politics and society. This action is born there where the Christian conscientiously answers his calling: the service of God in every sphere of life. In this way is understood the development of the "three pillar situation" by the Calvinists of today in The Netherlands.

We will give proof for it. About a year ago the well-known Mr. K. Groen, librarian in the Dr. A. Kuyperstichting in The Hague, had a meeting with American students. There he reviewed the articles of the Rev. Leonard Verduin, also in *The Reformed Journal*: "Biblical Christianity and Cultural Compositism," in which Mr. Verduin took the same stand that the Rev. Mr. Boer takes in his "The Three Pillars." Mr. Groen says: "Meanwhile, it is evident in that which was written before that Christian organization was not motivated as a necessity evident from the facts in this sense that only the (historical) facts would have furnished us with the norm. The Christian can cooperate organizationally only there where the appeal to the Word of God is recognized as the norm for the test of privileges and actions, and only there where this test is indeed taken. Neither on the one or on the other condition was and is satisfaction given in the Dutch 'common' organization. Is it done in America?"

We could give more of these proofs of the Dutch view about this matter, but we think this sufficient to qualify the statement of Mr. Boer as "contrary to the facts."

* * *

Out of his view Boer very logically, indeed, comes to the conclusion that we in America cannot have the system of "the three pillars." He asks: "Must we try to bring into being in America a situation in which it is not possible to vote for men like . . ." (then follows the name of a Roman Catholic, a Unitarian, a Jew and a Mormon). "These men and many more like them have been or are great Americans, symbols of public integrity. They are the kind of men who maintain the dignity of our country at home and abroad. Is it a requirement of faith that I to the best of my ability try to bring into being a state of things in which conscientious

Protestants must inevitably dissociate themselves politically from them and their kind? I do not believe it is."

The answer of the Rev. Mr. Boer, upon his question is *no*, because to do so means to "undo the history of our country," which implies "to effect a social and political revolution without parallel in our annals."

We fully believe that the men who are mentioned by Mr. Boer as political leaders are to be esteemed as honorable and true statesmen. Also the prime-minister of The Netherlands holding office in the days of Kuyper, Thorbecke, was honorable. He, too, was a great statesman, maintaining the dignity of the country. But to recognize him as a political leader acceptable to the Christian was and is another thing. It involves the recognition of his liberal principles in matters of politics. Whenever a liberal, a Jew, a Mormon, a Roman Catholic performs his task on the basis of his principal commitments, that for the Christian is not acceptable.

Practically, therefore, Boer makes a choice by saying *no* to the need for the application of a principal standard in the social and political sphere. He says *no*, because otherwise things will be turned upside down in America. He, too, knows that biblical demands are not recognized in the American political scene, otherwise their application would not mean "revolution without parallel." But, in spite of this, he says *no!* Boer does not want to raise the principal issue with reference to political and social standards. He stands for the so-called unprincipled situation. He does not want a "Groen" or "Kuyper" for America, but prefers to stay with men who are committed to other ideologies, a Jew, a Mormon, a Catholic, etc.

* * * *

There is a strong similarity in the situations under which the believers in the true God lived in Samson's and do live in our time. In both cases an ungodly system was ruling in public life. In both cases religion is tolerated, but also in both cases the ordinances of Jehovah are not acknowledged as decisive. Samson knew this and that is why he started resistance and declared war on the

ungodly principle embodied in the rule of the Philistines. His contemporaries also knew the situation but they did not want resistance because of fear for the rulers.

In our time, too, there are a lot of Christians who fear the spiritual warfare. They think the present situation rather bearable. After all, there is freedom of religion in the country, isn't there? They do not care much for the position which demands, for reasons of biblical principle, the recognition of the ordinances of God in public life. They, too, would deliver Samson into the hands of the Philistines.

The stand of the Rev. Mr. Boer is actually worse yet! Although he, too, according to what he writes, is aware of the unchristian spirit in the political sphere, he sees in bearers of an unchristian life-view desirable leaders. He does not even want a situation that makes it possible for the Christian to serve God as a Bible-believing confessor in political and social matters. The principal position of the Philistines in matters of political and social organizations is considered to be preferable.

He would not only deliver Samson into the hands of the Philistines. He himself would fight Samson.

* * *

Obviously it is not only a difference of opinion concerning the question how far and in what way we have to apply Christian principles in the public area that comes to the front here. That, surely, would be of lesser importance. The difference between Boer's and our stand in this matter is of much deeper significance because it touches the basic structure for the life-performance of the Christian, namely, God's demand. That demand is not always seen in its full dimension by believers in the true God. Biblical history teaches this. The Israelites did not see this demand when they delivered Samson into the hands of the Philistines. At that time only Samson saw that demand. He felt that the political and cultural rule of the Philistines would result in loss for the spiritual welfare of Israel, the church of the old dispensation. Hence his implacable war with these enemies of Jehovah. This zeal for God's demand also actuated Eli-

jah, Nehemiah, Jeremiah and many others in the national life of Israel, and the same zeal moved Luther, Calvin, Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper, and many others in the new dispensation. They all saw that all of life should be placed upon the basis of the divine ordinances. Real Calvinism will implicate every sector of life in the religious vision.

This can clearly be seen in the following statements which were written by Dr. J. P. A. Mekkes, in connection with a study for the performance of Christian social action.

Mekkes writes:

"What does the performance of Christian political action mean? The political problem is primarily of a religious character, because life is religious. The political task lies in the practical sphere, but cannot succeed without the help of Christian scientific labor."

* * * * *

"The attribute 'Christian' indicates the reality of the religious antithesis."

* * * * *

"In connection with the question about the prospects for the Christian cultural task, we have to realize the law of sin, which hinders us from making common cause with that which historically has grown wrong."

* * * * *

"The power, forcing the process of unfolding that forms the history of mankind, originates from the heart as the individual point of concentration of our religious fundamental relationship to the Creator, and in the course of history reveals itself primarily in religion, in one way or the other."

* * *

"The government will be able to act rightly, that is, according to the demand of God, only if it acknowledges the integral character of the divine law, and of Christ's kingship." (Translation ours, S.H.)

* * *

This is the principal stand of the Dutch Calvinists concerning political action for the Christian. As can easily be seen, they merely interpret Christian principles for the political task *in general*, and therefore these principles have bearing upon the political task not only in The Netherlands, but as well upon this task in

every other country. It is clear, too, that this fundamental study does not fit in with the way of thought developed by the Rev. Mr. Boer.

In the last part of his article Boer invites "those who recently came from The Netherlands," to study the history of Dutch Christian organizations and also the growth of the American situation. He calls it a serious matter that "those in our Reformed community who disagree with their views were not regarded as wholly loyal to the faith they confess." Indeed, brother Boer, we do regard some in our community as not wholly loyal to the "principal stand of Calvinism." That is just what we are trying to prove with this article.

In your article we also observe that the difference in viewpoint with regard to our principal stand in matters of political and social action is of basic character. You see the existing situation that historically has grown in America as a right platform for the Christian's performance of the political and social task. You will leave that platform intact, because you do not want to "undo" the history of our country. You think the existing situation as the right form for American public life.

You do not see that this historically developed situation is the pure product of the rationalistic life-conception. You prefer the unprincipled organization which gives equally a chance to Christian and non-Christian ideas. Also the atheist can propagate his principal view.

You complain in your article about the difficulties and complexity involved in making Christian principles bear upon public life in America. That is, Mr. Boer, because Christian principles do not go together with the neutral conception of American institutions. Principal action is only possible from a principal platform. Principal action as an organization which at the same time will maintain its unprincipled character is an absurdity.

Maintaining the "neutral" base of an institution, Christian action within it is degraded to humanistic action because it only serves man. God can be served only as we recognize him as King and sovereign over every section of our life.

A Theology of Grace

by EARL S. LETTERHOLM

EARLY in the year 1947 the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company sent forth a little book of some ninety-five pages, entitled simply, *Common Grace*. This little book was written by the Rev. Cornelius Van Til, Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. The Christian world was not particularly aroused by its appearance. In the periodicals it was reviewed somewhat apathetically and about the most one might have said of it is that it was quite innocuous.

In recent months the situation has materially changed. Several able men of Reformed persuasion have been studying this and other writings of Prof. Van Til with a renewed interest. These men have been busily engaged in giving a critical evaluation of his position in regard to *Common Grace* and its relation to Christian Philosophy. Almost invariably these men have concluded as they have progressed with their study that Van Til is not the Reformed scholar that he was once credited with being but, rather, that his philosophy is quite unchristian and his theology equally unsound.

Of those who share this opinion the Rev. James Daane, pastor of the Los Angeles Christian Reformed Church, has given to us in his *A Theology of Grace* one of the most exhaustive and critical analyses of Van Til's thought that has appeared in print to date. This 159 page volume is in fact a critical review of Van Til's book *Common Grace*.

If it took Dr. Daane 159 pages to examine Van Til's 95 pages, perhaps this reviewer may be pardoned for extending his remarks to more than three paragraphs; particularly in view of the abuse that has been heaped upon one writer who has tried to keep within the limits of a normal review.¹

When one seeks to evaluate the vigor and intensity of the criticism that has been leveled at Dr. Van Til in recent months, one can only conclude that his critics have found weaknesses and aberrations of astounding proportions in his position. These errors simply cannot be small or insignificant. They must be errors that go to the heart of the Reformed faith. In no other way can we account for the fact that a Reformed magazine of international reputation,² published under the masthead of the faculty of a Reformed college and seminary,

should devote issue after issue to a critical presentation of Dr. Van Til's position. In no other way can we account for the fact that now two of the abler ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are willing to take the effort to prepare sizeable books which carry on the same kind of analyses and critique.³ Surely if these errors, aberrations, weaknesses . . . call them what you will . . . prove to be real there can be no denying the fact that Prof. Van Til has been very thoroughly discredited and must now recede into appropriate obscurity.

Hence it is with no little sense of responsibility that the reviewer undertakes to present an examination of Dr. Daane's book. He does so with the consciousness that his meagre abilities scarcely qualify him to make judgments of such vast import to the whole church. He does so with a sincere desire to see and defend the truth.

Dr. Daane seeks to establish a two-fold thesis expressed in his preface in this way, "One half of my thesis is that Van Til has not delivered *common grace* theology from the Hegelian rationalism underlying the theology of Hoeksema, nor from the non-Christian philosophical remnants which Van Til thinks to discover in the common-grace position of all the leading theological thinkers of the Reformed tradition. On the contrary, he has enmeshed the doctrine of common grace more deeply in philosophical speculation than it has ever been before. Instead of presenting a purged basis for a Christian philosophy of history and a purified common-grace theology he has proffered a compound of Hegelian Rationalism and modern existentialism in which the rational dialecticism of Hegel is not only retained but is enlarged so as to include within itself an existential dialecticism.

"Professor Van Til's less clearly announced secondary objective is to refine the doctrine of common grace as presented and adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. The second half of my thesis seeks to demonstrate that this refinement is in fact a repudiation of the Three Points."

This, then, is the question with which we are faced. Is Van Til's doctrine of common grace the progeny of the union of Hegelian rationalism and existential dialecticism, or is there some other construction that can possibly be placed upon his words; some construction

1. "Banner," Nov. 19, 1954, p. 1436.

2. "Calvin Forum," Aug-Sept. 1953, Oct. 1953, Nov. 1953, Dec. 1953, April 1954, May 1954.

3. W. Masselink, *General Revelation and Common Grace*; J. Daane, *A Theology of Grace*.

not readily understood, perhaps, but none the less true and real? That Van Til's language is not always clear, that there is sometimes an ambiguity and lack of precision, that on occasion illustrations are used whose power to confuse seems to exceed their power to edify, are facts which this reviewer must reluctantly concede. That these rhetorical problems may and probably have led to some confused interpretations of his thinking perhaps cannot be denied. But that his writing is so inept that even with patient and deliberate study and a will to understand, the truth cannot be learned, we make great haste to deny. But it is under just such circumstances as these that we must take great pains to come to a full appreciation and evaluation of a man's thought. Has Dr. Daane failed to exercise this care or are there some basic structural errors in Van Til's thought that place him beyond the pale of Reformed thinking on the question of common grace?

By way of introduction to the establishment of his two theses . . . 1. Van Til's common grace philosophy is a hybrid of Hegelian Rationalism and existential dialecticism; 2. Van Til denies the Three Points⁴ of 1924 . . . Dr. Daane gives a brief historical resume of the events which led up to the now famous pronouncement on common grace made by the synod of 1924. Dr. Daane finds it particularly disturbing that Van Til, after quoting the Three Points verbatim does not proceed to develop his whole book in terms of those points. Since Daane is seeking to show Van Til's disagreement with the Three Points, one can well understand Daane's disquietude at such misconduct. But as a matter of fact, is there not very good reason for such "misconduct"? There are many aspects to the common grace problem and, as we shall see later, common grace is but an aspect of an even larger problem. It is a problem in the realm of philosophy, of theology, of biblical exegesis. It is a problem about which most of the great Reformed thinkers have been concerned, lo, these many centuries. It is also a problem about which the Synod of a small denomination in the United States made a pronouncement in the year 1924. It is indeed a source of no little pride to us that the Christian Reformed Church exerts an influence on ecclesiastical thought and life far beyond what might be expected from its stature. But to insist that the pronouncement of this Synod on Common Grace is so definitive as to determine for all time the very structure and formulation of the problem is to live in a dream world that has lost all touch with reality. Daane seems to feel that nothing may now be written on the subject of common grace which is not immediately rendered suspect unless oriented to the Three Points!

The Synod of 1924, with all due respect to its efforts, its labors, and its personnel, simply did not do more than scratch the surface of the problem and raise a few pertinent questions. Had the church continued to have study committees work at the problem for another decade or two, one might be more ready to grant the definitive

character of its conclusions. These conclusions would then become a real reference point for all future thinking upon common grace, in much the same way that the conclusions of Nicea and Chalcedon are the reference point for the systematic discussion of the Person of Christ. As it is we can be ever so much in agreement with the Three Points of 1924 without in any way being under obligation to do all our thinking and writing in terms of that pronouncement. Thus very early in the book there seems to be a clutching at straws, almost as though a case *must* be made against Van Til at all costs.

In Chapter 2, Daane proceeds to an analysis of Van Til's formulation of the problem. This formulation is of great concern to Dr. Daane because, "His solution of the problem will correspond with the formulation of the problem." p. 20, T.G.⁵ Van Til, it appears, is guilty of formulating the problem somewhat differently from the way it has been traditionally formulated. Since the answer must correspond to the formulation, and the formulation is not traditional, therefore the answer *must* be wrong. One can but wonder how far the Reformation would have gone if Calvin and Luther had made use of that kind of logic. Aside from the fact that it is a complete *non sequitur* (an inference that does not follow from the premises) it takes no cognizance of the possibility that the traditional formulation might be the most felicitous conceivable.

But perhaps it would be interesting to have a look at Van Til's formulation of the problem. Daane finds this subversive formulation on page 68 C.G. where Van Til writes as follows, "The common grace problem deals with this question: What do entities which will one day be wholly different from one another have in common before that final stage of separation is reached."

Dr. Daane proceeds to make a number of observations on this formulation. He takes note that the word "grace" is omitted and that the whole emphasis seems to be placed on commonality, so that now commonality rather than common grace is made the problem. At first blush this might seem unjustified. And if it were strictly true it might well be unstified. But it ought to be noted that what Van Til is doing is this: he is making the common grace problem a facet of a much more comprehensive problem, namely, the problem of commonality in things that are ultimately to be different. This ought to be recognized as a basic philosophical problem. Admittedly Van Til is interested in the philosophical aspects of common grace — not only in those aspects, to be sure, but interested in them none the less. All of which could be sympathetically regarded as somewhat less than heretical. Hence, Van Til goes on to urge that common grace is also a problem in the Christian philosophy of history and he proceeds to deal with it as such. He also argues that common grace deals with the question of the point of contact between the messengers of the Gospel and the individuals to

4. Adopted by the 1924 Synod, broadest assembly of the Christian Reformed denomination, in connection with views developed and defended by H. Hoeksema and H. Danhof.

5. In order to avoid confusion quotations from *A Theology of Grace* will be referred to by page number and the letters "T.G." Quotations from the book *Common Grace* will be referred to by page number and the letters "C.G."

whom their message is brought. So that what Van Til is really trying to show is that the common grace problem has relationships with certain other problems . . . a fact not always recognized in traditional formulations. Van Til is hoping that some of these wider horizons may place the problem in a better perspective. Hence he is not guilty of removing the "grace" from common grace but simply of trying to understand that grace in the broader context of all commonality.

In pursuance of this observation Daane in a footnote on page 21 T.G. says, "Van Til makes the double assertion: 1. The elect and reprobate have everything in common with a difference. 2. That they have nothing in common. He supports the thesis of the possibility of having things *in common with a difference* by an appeal to the reality of universality (commonality) and particularity (difference) in the ontological trinity. The pattern of the ontological trinity cannot possibly be the pattern of the ethically diverse ways in which the godly elect and ungodly reprobate are related to and respond to the common metaphysical situation . . . Consequently Van Til's whole system vacillates dialectically between the affirmation that the elect and reprobate have everything in common and the opposite affirmation that they have nothing in common."

This is the beginning of Daane's case for dialecticism in Van Til's thought. It is, however, an unfortunate beginning because Dr. Daane fails to note that Van Til does not say that every last differentiation in the created order is the reflection of a similar corresponding differentiation in the creator (ontological trinity). All that Van Til is saying is that *the* unity and diversity to be observed in creation is the result of *the* unity and diversity in the ontological trinity. Therefore, Van Til is not forced into a vacillating dialecticism at all. Continues Dr. Daane, "Van Til never succeeds in getting commonality and difference together, as is apparent from the fact that he allows common grace to extend only to pure commonality and denies that it extends to difference, i.e. to men as differentiated." p. 21, T.G. This is not the case. What Van Til is saying is that the individual reprobate, that is, the man who is according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God destined to spend eternity in isolation from God, does in the course of his life come ever closer to his destined end that the intensity of grace is to some extent dependent upon the proximity to which this man approaches his predestined goal so that with the reprobate there is a progressive diminishing of grace and increase of wrath until at last in hell there is all wrath and no grace. At this point the reviewer cannot prove, but he seriously doubts, that Van Til would insist that this decrease is anything like constant nor that it could not even have certain sinusoidal variations. He would undoubtedly insist that it was a general trend, however, and "that the last state of that man was worse than the first."

In connection with this same problem — commonality with a difference — Daane says in a footnote on page 29, T.G., "The untenable and abstract character of Van

Til's formulation of the common grace problem is apparent from still another point of view. He asserts that elect and reprobate have all things, the whole metaphysical situation, in common. Since redemptive grace falls within the total metaphysical situation, one wonders whether Van Til really subscribes to his own position. If in fact Van Til does subscribe to his position that elect and reprobate have redemptive grace in common with a difference, it would be interesting to know how he defines this commonality-with-a-difference possession of redemptive grace."

This is a reference to a paragraph found on page 5, CG wherein Van Til says, "We conclude then that when both parties, the believer and the nonbeliever, are epistemologically self-conscious and as such engaged in the interpretative enterprise, *they* cannot be said to have any fact in common. On the other hand, it must be asserted that they have every fact in common. Both deal with the same God and with the same universe created by God. Both are made in the image of God. In short, they have the metaphysical situation in common. Metaphysically, both parties have all things in common, while epistemologically they have nothing in common."

Now Dr. Daane claims and rightly so, that redemptive grace is a part of the metaphysical situation, and because it is, therefore Van Til's position is untenable. Why it is untenable is only to be discovered as an implication from Daane's statement. What he seems to imply is that redemptive grace, metaphysically considered, is either non-existent as far as the reprobate are concerned, or at best metaphysically different with respect to elect and reprobate. It is possible that Dr. Daane is putting a certain connotation on the word "possess." If he means the possession of that grace as it is enjoyed by those who are in union with Christ, then of course elect and reprobate, or more accurately, believer and unbeliever, do not have it in common. But then Dr. Daane stressing the *possession* has already added a subjective factor to the objective, metaphysical situation and has thus gone far beyond what Van Til is contending for. When Van Til speaks of a common metaphysical situation, he simply means that the objective facts as presented to knowing minds are for all minds, whether elect or reprobate, believing or non-believing, regenerate or unregenerate, identical. There is not one Mount Rainier viewed by the believer and some other Mount Rainier viewed by the unbeliever; there is not one Christ on the cross offered to the elect and some other Christ on some other cross offered to the reprobate. There is not one redemptive grace presented as an object of knowledge to the believing mind and some other redemptive grace presented as an object of knowledge to the unbelieving mind. But with respect to the ethical and epistemological response that these two types of minds make not only to the mountain, to the Christ and to redemptive grace, but to every fact presented to them, they are always and everywhere different. Hence with respect to this ethical and epistemological response there is no commonality.

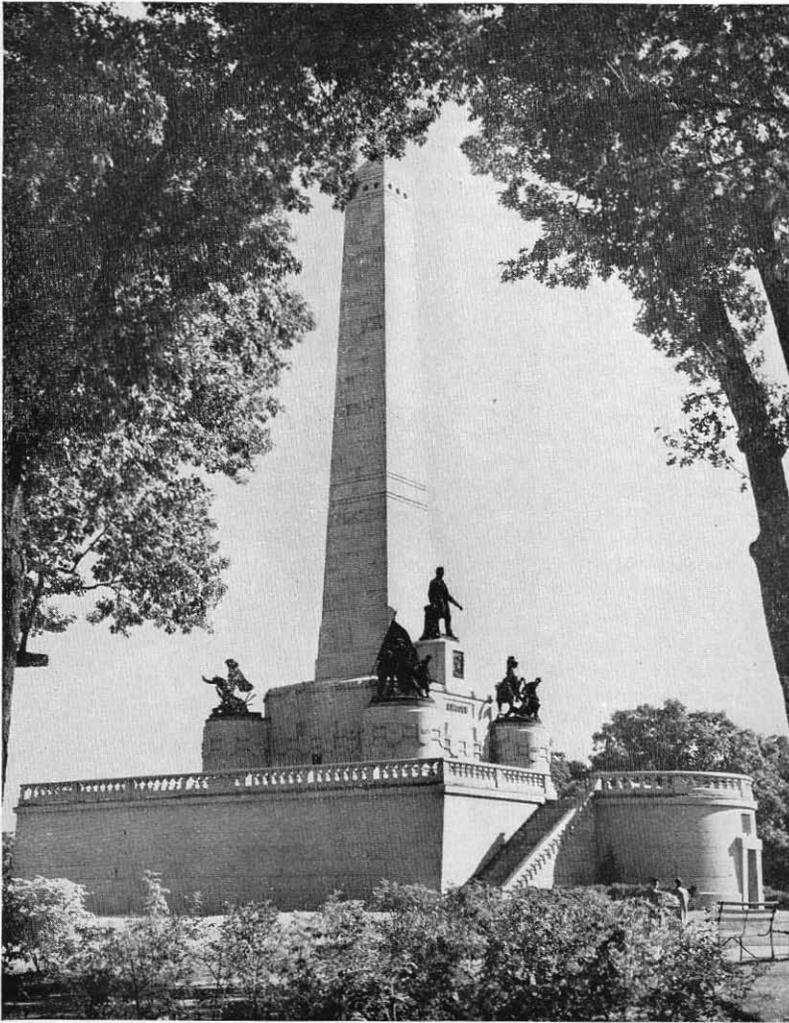
One other observation which Dr. Daane makes with respect to Van Til's formulation of the common grace problem and on which we would like to comment briefly is this: "Finally it must be observed that Van Til's formulation of the problem takes its point of departure in election and reprobation." Page 24, TG. "It must further be observed that Van Til's point of departure fallaciously assumes the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation." Page 25, TG.

It is evident from this, that Dr. Daane insists it is wrong to start the discussion of common grace by taking the divine decree as a point of departure. It is wrong because common grace must be understood in reference "to the moving stream of time," and since God's decree is timeless the whole discussion must remain in the timeless. But it is necessary to point out the all too obvious fact that common grace would provide no problem if it were not for the timeless decree. It is simply and solely because of the timeless decree that common grace is a problem. Are we not faced with this same situation when we consider special grace? Do we not use God's eternal decree and covenant as points of departure for a discussion of this grace? And when we use that point of departure are we forced to maintain the discussion in the realm of the timeless? Of course not.

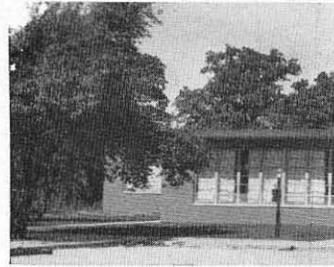
But it is at this point of the eternal decree that we must seek to discover, if we can, Daane's basic meaning because it appears to the reviewer that Daane is quite out of accord with the generally accepted Reformed position with respect to the divine decree. In the first place in footnote 17, page 68, TG., Daane says in part, "Van Til has defined possibility as that which is co-extensive with the counsel of God. Thus in this conception there are no real possibilities except those which already are or shall be actualized. Van Til regards it as inconceivable that the counsel of God should include genuine possibilities that do not become actualities in history. Such a conception of possibility is sheer determinism and cannot be reconciled with the traditionally held position that Adam was created with the freedom not to sin. Nor does the Bible speak as though all unactualized possibilities are unreal and non-existent possibilities." In regard to this point it is Dr. Daane who removes himself completely out of the camp of Reformed and biblical theology. In substantiation of this claim we would like to quote a number of Reformed theologians at this point. Says the great Reformed divine of Scotland, Dr. John Dick in his *Lectures on Theology*, page 184, "In short the decrees of God are as comprehensive as his government which extends to all creatures and all events." Note that the comprehensiveness of the decree does not include possibilities which are not actualized. "Again we may learn what is the extent of the divine decrees from the dispensations of Providence in which they are executed" (p. 184). Dr. L. Berkhof in Volume 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics*, page 84, quotes with evident approval the definition of the divine decree given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby

for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." The decree of God has respect to that which comes to pass, and there isn't the vaguest hint that there are possibilities decreed which do not come to pass. But to quote directly from Berkhof: "There is in God as we have seen a necessary knowledge or knowledge of simple intelligence, a knowledge including all possible causes and results. This knowledge furnishes the material for the decree; it is the perfect fountain out of which God drew the thoughts which he desired to objectify. Out of this knowledge of all things possible he chose by an act of his perfect will, led by wise considerations, what he wanted to bring to realization and thus formed his eternal purpose" (page 84). Here Berkhof rightly makes the distinction which Daane apparently fails to make: the distinction between God's infinite knowledge, and his eternal counsel. The possibility of which Daane speaks lies entirely in that "segment" of God's knowledge which does not come to immediate expression in God's counsel. There is no real possibility of that taking place which has not been decreed by God. In like manner William Cunningham in the second volume of his *Historical Theology*, page 442 says, "God's foreknowledge of all events implies that they are fixed and certain; that from some cause or other it has already become a certain thing, — a *thing determined and unalterable* that they shall take place — a proposition asserting that they shall come to pass being already even from eternity, a true proposition . . . And it is to no purpose to allege as they (Arminians) commonly do, that certainty is not a quality of the events themselves, but only of the mind contemplating them; for, even though this were conceded as a mere question of definition, or of exactness in the use of language, it would still hold true, that the certainty with which the divine mind contemplates them as future, affords good ground for the inference that they are not contingent or undetermined, *so that it is just as possible that they may not take place as that they may*; but that their future occurrence is already, — that is, from eternity — a fixed and settled thing; and if so nothing can have fixed or settled this, except the good pleasure of God, — the great First Cause, — freely and unchangeably foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass." Again concerning things possible, Dr. Herman Bavinck in the first volume of his *Dogmatiek* (Hendriksen's translation), pages 338-339, says in speaking of the decrees, "As such they bear three characteristics: In the first place *all the ideas contained in the divine decrees and thereby designed for realization* outside of the divine essence are derived from the fulness of knowledge eternally immanent in God. The possible and the actual do not coincide: creation does not exhaust God's wisdom and knowledge." (Reviewer's italics). Here again we see that the possible is fully measured only by God's infinite knowledge and not by his counsel. Again Dr. Bavinck affirms on page 369, "Scripture everywhere affirms that whatsoever is and comes to pass is the realization of God's thought and will and has its origin and idea in God's counsel or

(Continued on page 18)



Lincoln's Tomb — Springfield



New Dormitory, Hope Cottage

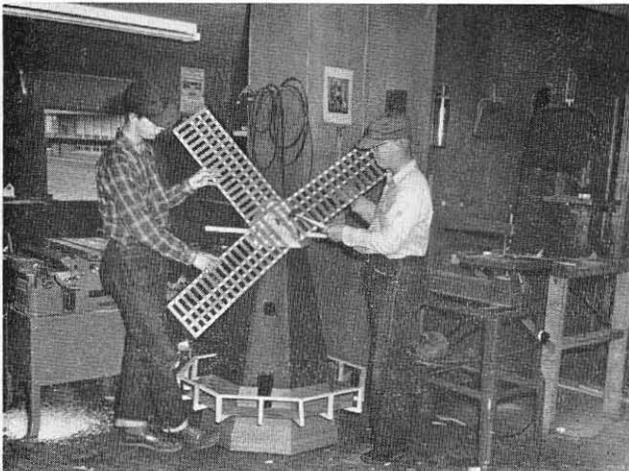
Elim Christian

The Elim Christian School is a part of the Elim Christian Schools. It is our only school for the physically handicapped, that

Historically the education of the physically handicapped much later than the educational facilities of the more recent vintage are the educational facilities for the child. The endeavors of our people for the education of the physically handicapped children has followed a long and noble path. The first school for the physically handicapped in this country was founded in 1827. It was followed by the Children's Retreat in 1853.

This work which began in a small way has developed into a large and noble program. Ever striving to provide the best, a staff of twenty for an enrollment of thirty, the dormitory, Hope Cottage, provides a fine home for the children.

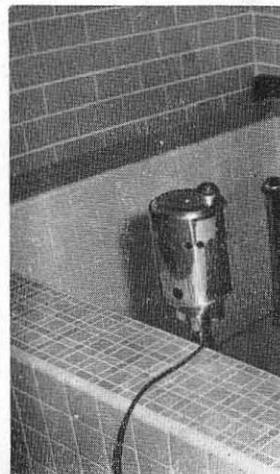
Visitors have been unanimous in their praise of the program and facilities available. Every reader is urged to visit Elim Christian Schools desiring to see the slides and make arrangements by writing to the Elim Christian Schools.

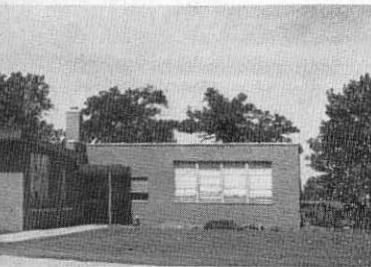


Woodworking Shop



Efficient Equ





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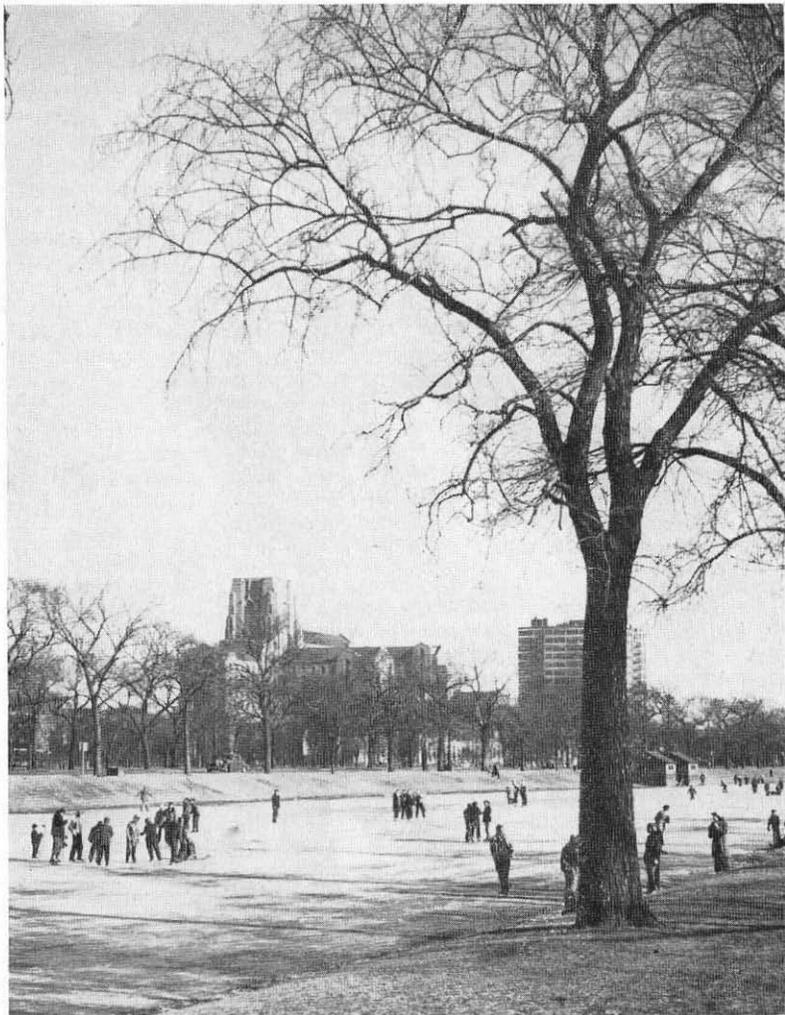
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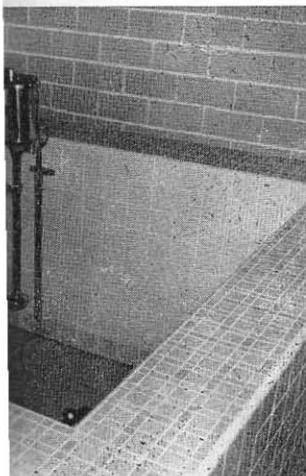
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Winter on the Midway

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Oral-Deaf
Room



A THEOLOGY OF GRACE — Continued

decree." Nothing can be considered as more central to the Reformed faith than the fact that God's sovereign counsel and the whole of creation and history are mutually exhaustive. And thus unactualized possibilities, while they admittedly have a place in the Divine knowledge, have no place in the Divine counsel. This has been the Reformed position. It is not Van Til who is out of line, but rather Daane. It is the latter's position that needs clarification. It is the reviewer's sincere hope that he has completely misunderstood the thrust of Daane's argumentation at this point, but he is at a real loss how else he may interpret Daane's statement: "Van Til has defined possibility as that which is coextensive with God's counsel. Thus in this conception there are no real possibilities except those which already are or shall be actualized. Van Til regards it as inconceivable that the counsel of God should include genuine possibilities that do not become actualities in history. Such a conception of possibility is sheer determinism and cannot be reconciled with the traditionally held position that Adam was created with the freedom not to sin" (page 68, TG.).

But this is not the only place where Daane's view of the divine decree leaves something to be desired. We may concern ourselves with certain statements made in reference to the doctrine of reprobation. "It must further be observed that Van Til's point of departure fallaciously assumes the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation. As will become evident later in my discussion his common grace theology is dominated throughout by the principle that God is as much interested in the damnation of the reprobate as in the salvation of the elect" (page 25, TG). To which is appended this footnote: "Reformed theologians, including Hoeksema, reject the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation, i.e., the principle that both are equally definitive of the sovereign purposes of God. Even the most ardent supralapsarians dare not exclude the fact of man's sin from the fact of reprobation and thereby retain the idea that even the reprobate's sin is in a real sense contrary to what God wills. For this reason alone it is illegitimate to define the common grace problem as real apart from sin, merely by reference to election and reprobation" (page 25, TG).

Beginning with Daane's definition of "equal ultimacy" as "the principle that both election and reprobation are equally definitive of the Sovereign purposes of God," let us go on to see what Reformed theology has had to say on this point. We may begin again with the venerable Dr. John Dick of Glasgow, "According to this system (Supralapsarian), as the name of those by whom it is adopted imports, the divine decrees had no respect to the fall of man except as it was the means of executing them. Men were elected or rejected without any consideration of the fall and were viewed by God not as sinners but simply as creatures. God thought only of his own glory and all the events which take place in time, the creation of man, his apostasy and his recovery

are so many steps in the process" (page 187). Dr. Bavinck in his *Dogmatiek* (Hendriksen's translation), page 386, says: "Faith and good works to be sure are not the cause of election *but neither is sin the cause of reprobation*; God's sovereign good pleasure is the cause of both; hence in a certain sense the decree of reprobation always precedes the decree to permit sin." (Reviewer's italics). Again Bavinck in criticizing the supralapsarian scheme says this, "Finally there is this difficulty with supra, viz., that it makes the eternal punishment of the reprobates an object of the divine will *in the same manner and in the same sense* as the redemption in Christ is a means unto eternal salvation" (page 388, Bavinck's italics). It would seem that according to Bavinck equal ultimacy is of the essence of the supralapsarian scheme. That supralapsarians have maintained this with varying degrees of consistency is scarcely to be denied, and just how far Van Til wishes to carry this equal ultimacy is something which to this reviewer is unknown and is something on which it is to be hoped that Dr. Van Til will in the future elaborate.

With regard to this precise point, we ought to point out that again Daane is not quite fair to Van Til. He accuses Van Til of saying that ". . . the sovereign God has an *equal* interest in damning the reprobate and blessing the elect" (page 26, TG, reviewer's italics). This charge is substantiated by the following footnote, "In the *Reformed Review*, June 1952, Van Til described the purpose of Christ thus, 'He came into the world that they that should believe in him should be saved, and that they who should not believe in him should be damned' and presented this as expressive of Paul's missionary theology" (page 26, TG). This reviewer must confess that he has not examined this article by Van Til and he would have to have access to it before making any too positive assertions with regard to it. But if this is the most offensive sentence in it, he fails to see what there is that a Reformed theologian can take exception to. Certainly the coming of Christ was effectual in bringing those who would not believe into a state of damnation. Moreover, Paul himself calls the Gospel a "savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death" (II Cor. 2:16). Hodge in his commentary *in loco* says, "As Christ is to some a tried cornerstone, elect and precious, the rock of their salvation, to others he is a stone of offense. So the gospel and its ministers are the cause of life to some and of death to others and to all they are either the one or the other. . . . If man rejects the gospel it had been far better for him never to have heard it." Just how this is to be reconciled with John's statement that "God sent not the Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world should be saved through him," John 3:17, is undoubtedly a problem, a problem which the finite, sin-darkened minds of mortals may never solve. But of this much we may be certain: if God in his providence has brought it to pass that the Gospel and its Christ have become a savor of death unto death, then we may be equally sure that this has come to pass according to a divine, eternal, and unchangeable decree. Conversely, if such a result

is the eternal purpose of God we may be certain that it will indubitably come to pass in time. And how shall we evade the fact that what God has predetermined in eternity and brought to pass in time is certainly the object of his "interest"? Just how we are to measure the relative degree of God's interest in any two segments of his decree is difficult to say. All I would point out is that Van Til does not maintain that they are precisely equal. He certainly isn't maintaining that in the brief quotation with which we are furnished. All that Van Til there points out is that there is a dual purpose in Christ's coming. And who can deny that if Christ's coming accomplishes two results, even two such antithetic results, then also there was a dual purpose involved in his coming.

The reviewer must say, however, that Daane is right in calling attention to the fact that there is a *kind* of unequal ultimacy of election and reprobation. We must acknowledge that sin being present in that timeless decree must stand as a contradiction of all the divine perfections even though its total conquest by the omnipotence of God causes it to redound to his glory. And yet having said this, we dare not lose sight of the words of our Lord recorded in Matthew 11:25, 26, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes, yea Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight." If there is sin and reprobation present in the divine decree and brought to futuration in creation and history always we must remember that it is so "for so it was well pleasing in his sight." It is precisely the lack of this emphasis in all of Daane's discussion on reprobation, its equal ultimacy with election, etc., that causes us concern. This concern is redoubled when we read as we do in a footnote on page 26, TG: "He (Hoeksema) has too often been criticized for being too consistently supra-lapsarian, too logical, too rational. Hoeksema rightly perceives that one can no more be too consistent, too logical, *et cetera*, than one can be too good — unless consistency, logical thinking, *et cetera* are theological sins. Similarly the proponents of common grace and the antithesis must learn that it is no mark of theological maturity to assert that we must believe in both but emphasize neither the one nor the other 'too little' or 'too much.' The principle of 'balance' — so often applied to Calvinism — the principle of not 'too much and not too little' is not a theological (nor a biblical) principle. To so regard it is theologically suicidal. A theology that lives by the principle of 'the distribution of emphasis' has not long to live. Truth is objective and is not created by man's proper distribution of accent."

One finds it difficult to interpret these words in any other light than that Daane will be satisfied with nothing less than a complete rationalization of the whole of the theology, the complete reconciliation of each and every doctrine, the solution of every theological dilemma. It evidences a complete unwillingness to hold to any two theological concepts which to our minds may appear even mutually exclusive. One cannot in the name of

consistency demand that we solve a theological dilemma by the simple expedient of cutting off one of the horns. This we fear may be Daane's procedure when dealing with the doctrine of the divine decree in general and the doctrine of reprobation in particular. It is hoped that Dr. Daane in future will consider writing a rather detailed discussion of his views on the whole matter of the divine decree that any misunderstanding may be done away with. It is sincerely hoped that the reviewer's efforts have not contributed to any misunderstanding of Dr. Daane's position in this matter. When one is stumbling about the Himalayan heights of theology as we have just been doing, words may be all too easily twisted out of their desired meaning. They may be colored by prejudice and thus caused to paint a picture which their author never intended. The reviewer has not been willfully guilty of this; he hopes he has not been inadvertently guilty either.

We ought now to proceed to the evidence which Dr. Daane presents to substantiate his allegation that existential dialecticism forms a structural part of Van Til's doctrine of common grace. The following quotations will help us to understand the situation. "Van Til defines mankind as a generality in terms of 1. existence, and 2. non-existence. *Within this basic* definition he operates with the ideas of self-conscious and not yet self-conscious existence. Since the definition in terms of existence and non-existence is basic, we shall deal with it first.

"Concerning mankind as generality, Van Til writes, 'If we make the earlier our point of departure for the later we begin with something that believers and unbelievers have in common. That is to say, they have something in common because they do not yet exist. Yet they do exist. They exist in Adam as their covenant representative.' Page 72. (CG). Thus Van Til defines mankind as a generality *both* in terms of existence and non-existence" (page 36, TG, Daane's italics).

"This then is the meaning that *mankind as a generality* turns out to have when it is defined by Van Til in reference to existence and non-existence. And it is this meaning of the concept that determines the structural elements of Van Til's common grace thought" (page 38, TG, Daane's italics).

These quotations are the foundation upon which Dr. Daane formulates his charge of existential dialecticism. We would do well to investigate this ground rather carefully. The most offensive sentence in this regard is the one in which Van Til says, "That is to say they have something in common because they do not yet exist." Accordingly, Dr. Daane interprets this to mean that what they have in common is non-existence. It is interesting that Van Til nowhere states that what they have in common is non-existence. As a matter of fact he immediately proceeds to describe the kind of *existence* which they do have in common; they have a common federal existence in Adam. "They exist in Adam as their common representative. They have seen the testimony of God in common. They have given a common good ethical reaction to this testimony, the common

mandate of God. They are all mandate-hearers and covenant keepers. God's attitude to all is the same. God has a favorable attitude to all" (page 72, CG). Nowhere does Van Til set up a dialectic between existence and non-existence. He does regard mankind's covenantal existence in Adam prior to the Fall as a significant aspect of the common grace problem, but this would provide little ground for the charge of existentialism. Let us continue, "To the degree that men are differentiated as either elect or reprobate they are, according to Van Til to that same degree no longer mankind as a generality, but are to that degree self-conscious elect or reprobate realities. *This means simply that the degree of religious self-consciousness is not merely correlative to but identical with, the degree of the existence and reality of the elect and reprobate.* To the degree that men are self-conscious religiously, to that degree they exist and to that degree they are real. To the degree that they are not yet religiously self-conscious to that degree they are not differentiated, are still mankind as a generality, do not yet exist and are not yet real" (page 43, TG, reviewer's italics). In connection with this paragraph there is the following footnote, "Because man is a covenantal being and all his acts covenantal acts, self-consciousness for Van Til is always a religious self-consciousness. *Van Til emphasizes that in God being and self-consciousness (or self-knowledge) are coterminous. This thought is transferred to his conception of man in whom according to Van Til, being and self-consciousness, or existence and religious self-consciousness are identical.* For a man to exist is to be self-conscious and for a man to be self-conscious is to be aware of God. Since the latter is a growing phenomenon, a matter of more or less, and therefore a matter of earlier and later, existence is also for Van Til a growing phenomenon, a matter of more or less, a matter of earlier or later. For Van Til existence is not a matter of 'to be or not to be'; it is rather a matter of more or less of being earlier or later in the existential process of coming to be" (page 43, TG).

The statements in italics are sheer gratuitous and unwarranted assumptions. This is to attribute to Van Til what Van Til has never maintained as far as this reviewer is acquainted with his thought. Van Til does indeed emphasize that, in God, being and self knowledge are coterminous. But the reviewer has spent countless hours listening to Van Til lecture on the point that in man being and knowledge are never coterminous, not even the being of self and self knowledge. Van Til has leveled this charge against every non-Christian philosopher from Thales to Russell; namely that they have sought to make being and knowledge mutually exhaustive. This is a most unfortunate misunderstanding and consequent misrepresentation of Van Til's thought!

Since, according to Daane, this is the point at which "an element of Hegelian rationalism appears as a structural aspect of Van Til's thought," it is well that we discover whether this is precisely what Van Til means. Does he claim that some individuals exist more than other individuals? Daane lists four brief passages from

Van Til's *Common Grace* which he thinks supports such a claim. "As a generality man is not yet fully himself" (page 86, CG). "Each man is on the move. To use a phrase of Barth with a Reformed meaning, man is an *Entscheidungswesen*" (page 92, CG). "The purpose of history is to effect the complete individuation of mankind as a generality" (page 32, CG). "And when the elect are fully self-conscious history comes to an end" (page 85, CG).

Let us begin with man, an individual man first as he is only in the mind of God in eternity; let God begin the process of creation and make man in his own image, let the individual originally in the mind of God now become federally identified in Adam and in the fulness of time allow him to be born, mature, and die only to go to the final place of rest, his predestined goal where he shall be received either into the arms of his father, the devil, or into the arms of his ever loving Saviour, Jesus Christ. Is there not in all this a progressive realization of God's counsel? As this man is viewed merely in the mind of God or in Adam he has not yet been truly objectified; God has not yet brought him into objective existence and, of course, he cannot be possessed of any self-consciousness. But as this "idea in the mind of God" is objectified on the stage of history he is brought into existence. When precisely does that existence begin? It is this reviewer's belief that true existence as man begins whenever the soul is united with the body, and he has no idea whatsoever of entering into the discussion as to where in the life history of the embryo that takes place.

The precise point at which this occurs and the precise point at which self-consciousness begins may both remain as unsolved problems when the last trumpet shall be sounded. But the point is that once the individual exists he does not become more existent as time goes on. He may become more self-conscious as time goes on but he does not become more existent as time goes on. But let the last fleeting breath be drawn, then there is an immediate realization of whose side he is on. And at last the Day of Judgment will be the doorway into the last attainable limits of self-consciousness (not existence). His individuation, his identification (not his existence) has reached its ultimate limit. Not in all eternity will he become *more obviously* elect or reprobate, will he become more certain as to which he is, will he become any more or any less the object of grace or the object of wrath. The *status quo* is unchanging.

But this is not to say nor does Van Til either affirm or imply that all this involves a changing existential condition. The individual man is no more existent on the Day of Judgment than he was at the first moment of his coming into being. He is closer, in fact, has arrived at his predestined goal, but he does not have more being. The seedling apple tree in its first summer's verdure is no less existent today than it will be five years hence when its branches are loaded with fruit. But it will have come much closer to its predestined goal and it has become more obvious that it

is an apple tree. The whole thing must be regarded as an organic unity which does not become more existent but simply more identifiable. As a result Van Til holds that common grace is a function of time. Just what equation one might set up to describe this relation is difficult, perhaps impossible, to say. But even Daane admits that it is not constant. "Just as time is a moving, changing stream commonality is a moving, changing situation. By this insistence Van Til has rendered service. Common grace is not a static reality always and everywhere the same" (p. 23, TG).

But we ought to examine more of this grist which Daane finds for his existential mill. On page 42, TG we read the following: "It has already been shown that Van Til makes God's eternal decree of election and reprobation his point of departure. This contention finds support in Van Til's notion of the *earlier*. Van Til states, 'We think that the notion of the earlier must be stressed more than has been done heretofore.' And he adds that we should 'make the earlier our point of departure for the later.' Page 72, (C.G.). This earlier coincides with the point of departure in the divine eternal decree; it is earlier than creation."

If Van Til wanted to put the emphasis on earlier and by earlier meant before creation, there could possibly be some ground for Daane's allegation. But is this what Van Til means by *earlier*? Does he regard it as the time of non-existence? He does so only in this limited sense that all real men have not yet come into being. But let us examine exactly what Van Til means by *earlier*. What is the context in which the word is first used by Van Til in the technical sense he has in mind?

On page 70, CG, Van Til begins a criticism of Schilder's comments on the well-known story of the sons of Eli. It was Schilder's contention that the attitude of God toward any man can be known only in so far as we know the will of God's eternal counsel with respect to that man. He points out that while Eli told his sons to be converted because God did not desire their death, yet the story shows that as a matter of fact Jehovah did desire their death and in the fruition of this desire in the securing of their death is revealed God's attitude; an attitude not of favor but displeasure. The gist of this matter is that God's attitude is made known only in the *later* revelation of his ultimate purpose. Van Til then asks with respect to Adam in Paradise, "Would it be possible to maintain that only by the later revelation of God's final purpose could anything be known of his attitude toward man? Then Adam would at the beginning have known nothing of God's attitude toward him. No revelation of God's final purpose had yet been made" (page 71, CG). Van Til then goes on to speak of Adam's continuing good ethical reaction to whatever revelation God had made. This good ethical reaction Van Til says is *earlier*. And correlative to this good ethical reaction is God's attitude of favor, an attitude of favor revealed as being unto all men by God's offering to make Adam the representative of all his posterity in order that in one probation *he and all his*

descendants might be assured of an indefectable state of goodness and the everlasting favor of God.

Earlier, then, is the time during and prior to the probation, is the time in which God expresses a common favor to all men, to men generally; a favor that is unalloyed with wrath. *Later* is the time when God still displays favor to all men, although alloyed now with a common wrath because of Adam's unsuccessful trial and the resultant plunge of the whole of mankind into the guilt and corruption of sin. It is simply an expression of the temporal and logical priority of grace to wrath *in history* and not a veiled existential dialectic that Van Til is seeking to set forth. No, we must say that Daane's first thesis is completely unsubstantiated. Daane has neither understood nor apprehended Van Til's position and, consequently, the representation which he has given of it can be regarded as nothing less than a caricature wherein any resemblance to the original is purely coincidental.

Does Van Til Deny 1924?

And what of the second part of Daane's thesis, namely that Van Til repudiates the Three Points of 1924? Daane fares no better with respect to this part of his thesis, for it is on the basis of the assumption that the first part of his thesis is true that he establishes the second. It is only on the assumption that Van Til is an existential dialectician and an Hegelian rationalist that it is possible to say that he repudiates the Three Points of 1924. Daane having completely failed to establish this assumption fails equally in his attempts to make Van Til a "repudiationist."

What, then, is Van Til trying to set forth? Is it not that Van Til is trying to see the complete history of the whole human race from its eternal existence in the mind and counsel of God through all time into the final glorification of the elect and damnation of the reprobate? During time men are being born and dying. During each man's life every step he takes, every word he speaks, every thought he thinks, every breath he breathes brings him closer to his final goal. But more than this Van Til tries to keep in mind the core of the Federal theology. He tries to see this whole mass of humanity in Adam. He sees that whole race first of all as the objects of God's free unmerited favor as he comes to Adam with the divine probation. God's gracious offer is simply this, that on the condition of obedience to the divine command to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he will raise man from his position of *posse non peccare et posse peccare* to a position of *non posse peccare*; from a position of contingent unconfirmed, and defectable goodness to one of certain, confirmed and indefectable goodness, from a state of mere legal reciprocity to one of glorious sonship. To say that there was no grace before the Fall as Dr. Daane repeatedly observes in his book (see all of chapter 3) is to deal in a rather cavalier fashion with this offer of grace. To say that grace must be correlative to sin, that grace cannot exist apart from sin is to say that

the existence of one of God's glorious attributes depends on the entrance of sin. For Van Til, at least as this reviewer sees it, this attitude of God which is one of unmerited favor to all men in Adam is the historical source of common grace. At this point of history God comes to Adam with an offer to make him and all his descendants indefectably good even though in the mind of God it was known, and in the counsel of God it had been eternally established that some of these men would be ultimately lost, objects of God's everlasting displeasure and forsakenness. Common grace is by definition "an attitude of favor toward all men as men." It is this attitude of favor which God expresses to Adam for all men, all his descendants which Van Til says is an expression of common grace. Dr. Daane says this is a mere abstraction. But is this more of an abstraction than to say on the day after the Fall that the whole race is guilty in Adam, a race which, except for its parents, had not yet come into existence; any more of an abstraction than to say now with respect to the possibly millions of as yet unborn men that they are guilty in Adam?

Now then, Van Til says that when Adam disobeyed, the whole race became also involved in God's common wrath. Because Adam acted not merely as an individual but as the Federal representative of all mankind, not only Adam but all men in Adam became objects of God's wrath and displeasure even though in the mind of God it was known and in the counsel of God it had been eternally established that some of these men would be ultimately elect, objects of God's everlasting love and covenant mercy in Christ, the beneficiaries of an unending felicity in the presence of God. This, too, it is presumed, is abstraction; but is it any more abstract than God's promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed?

It is at this point that the process of differentiation begins. History now makes possible the ultimate separation of all who up until the time of their birth had existed only in the mind of God and federally in their covenant head. Now each son of Adam in turn is given the opportunity to exercise his rational, moral nature and free agency and thus by his own determination arrives at his predestined goal. To the elect, God freely grants regenerating grace whereby man's free agency is enabled to choose and invariably does choose to serve God in Christ and thus proceeds to abide more and more in the favor of God and less and less under the displeasure of God until the day of the great denouement. To the reprobate God does not grant regeneration so that his free agency continues to act according to its sinful nature in unvarying opposition to God.

But now also in the course of history there comes to expression that favor of God expressed first covenantally to Adam and then also that wrath which was expressed first in the curse. Still, to those who will one day be lost God exhibits an attitude of favor and to those who will one day be glorified he exhibits an attitude of displeasure. One day, too, the reprobate will be the objects only of wrath and the elect, objects only of favor.

There is much that needs yet to be said, but the reviewer would conclude his remarks with the following

rather extensive quotation from Van Til's *A Letter On Common Grace*, pages 27-29 which is a quotation taken from his syllabus, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* . . . a quotation which Daane confesses to have read and in view of which he has none the less allowed his book to be published. Let the reader read and then judge for himself whether or not Van Til is an existentialist, has repudiated the Synod of 1924 and has radically departed from the Reformed tradition.

"With respect to the question, then, as to whether Scripture actually teaches an attitude of favor, up to a point, on the part of God toward the non-believer, we can only intimate that we believe it does. Even when we take full cognizance of the fact that the unbeliever abuses every gift of God and uses it for the greater manifestation of his wickedness, there seems to be evidence in Scripture that God, for this life, has a certain attitude of favor to unbelievers. We may point to such passages as the following: In Psalm 145:9, we are told, 'The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.' In seeking the meaning of such a passage, we must be careful. In the first place, it is to be remembered that God is constantly setting his own people in the center of the outflow of his goodness to the children of men. So, in Exodus 34:6, 7 we read: 'And the Lord God passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.' In this passage we are, as it were, warned to think concretely on the question before us. God's mercy and grace is primarily extended to those whose sins are forgiven. If in any sense it is given to those whose sins are not forgiven, it must always be remembered that God does not overlook iniquity. We may therefore expect that in Psalm 145 the Psalmist teaches nothing that is out of accord with what has been taught in Exodus 34. Thus, the primary meaning of Psalm 145 is again that God's great favor is toward his people. Even when God gives great gifts to non-believers, they are, in a more basic sense, gifts to believers. Gifts of God to unbelievers help to make the life of believers possible, and in a measure, pleasant. But this does not detract from the fact that the unbeliever himself, is in a measure, the recipient of God's favor. There is a certain joy in the gift of life and its natural blessings for the unbeliever. And we may well think that Psalm 145 has this in mind. Such joy as there is in the life of the unbeliever cannot be found in him after this life is over. Even in the hereafter, the lost will belong to the works of God's hands. And God no doubt has joy that through the works of evil men and angels, he is establishing his glory. Yet that is not what the Psalmist seems to mean. There seems to be certain satisfaction on the part of God even in the temporary joy of the unbeliever as a creature of himself, a joy which will in

the end turn to bitterness, but which, nonetheless, is joy while it lasts.

"Another passage to which we briefly refer is Matthew 5:44, 45. 'But I say unto you, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.' In this passage, the disciples of Jesus are told to deny themselves the selfish joy of expressing enmity against those that hate them. They are not to express their attitude of hostility. But this is not all they are to do. They are to replace the attitude of hatred with an attitude of love. He does not know but that this one who now hates him may one day become a believer. This is one factor in the total situation. Yet this is not to be made the only factor. It is not even the expressed reason for his loving his enemy. The one guide for the believer's action with respect to the enemy is God's attitude towards that enemy. And the believer is told definitely to love his enemy in imitation of God's attitude toward that enemy. God's attitude toward that enemy must therefore in some sense be one of love. It is no doubt the love of an enemy, and, therefore, in God's case, never the same sort of love as the love toward his children. And to the extent that we know men to be enemies of the Lord, we too cannot love them in the same sense in which we are told to love fellow-

believers. God no doubt lets the wheat and the tares grow together till the day of judgment, but even so, their destruction and the promotion of his glory through their destruction, he loves them, in a sense, while they are still kept by himself, through his own free gifts, from fully expressing the wicked principle that is in them" (*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 246-248).

TODAY'S BATTLE

(Continued from page 4)

that is, against those who belong to the company of God's elect. But those are also the very people who build on the true foundation. Let us never forget that this true foundation has a seal which most beautifully expresses, on the one hand, God's protecting care with respect to his own, and on the other hand, the believers' responsibility to live a life of spiritual separation from the world.

"Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (II Tim. 2:19).

To those who are thus minded the victory is assured.

THE LAW OF GOD

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" —ROM. 7:14.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" —ROM. 3:20.

By "the Law of God" we mean the moral law of God, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), but expanded and expounded in other parts of the Bible, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the New Testament Epistles.

The Law is Spiritual

God's law concerns not merely outward actions, but the thoughts, motives and intents of our hearts, and even our feelings, our likes and dislikes. Civil or human law concerns only actions. Treason, for example must involve an "overt act"; mere sympathy with the enemies of our country is not treason, if not expressed in some action. Murder must be committed, or at least attempted, to be punishable by human law. But by God's law, the hatred which is the root of murder is sinful. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. The Jews of Jesus' day did not realize that the law is spiritual. Therefore they supposed, in their vain conceit, that they could really keep the law. They thought of external actions only.

God's word says: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his THOUGHTS" (Isa. 55:7). God's law concerns even our thoughts. In Noah's day, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). To Simon the Sorcerer the apostle Peter said: "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:21, 22). God's law is spiritual; it concerns

our inward thoughts, motives, feelings, attitudes, desires and ambitions, as well as our actions.

The Law Crowds us to Christ

To the sinner, God's law is not good advice, but an indictment. It is a mirror that shows us ourselves as we really are in God's sight. It strips away our self-conceit and tells us the humiliating truth about ourselves. It convinces us that we are not really lawkeepers but lawbreakers. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Thus the law of God convinces us that we are lost sinners, that we cannot save ourselves, and that we need a Saviour. The Holy Spirit uses the law of God to bring about this conviction of sin in the sinner's heart.

Have we learned the lesson of the law of God? How do we plead to the Ten Commandments — guilty or not guilty? Do we think we cannot be as wicked as pictured in God's Word? Then it is our feelings and ideas against God's Word; we are fighting against God the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit works his work of special grace in us we will plead guilty. All inclination to argue the matter will leave us completely. We will throw ourselves unreservedly upon the mercy of the court — that is, on the mercy of God.

The Law is the Christian's Standard of Right and Wrong

God's Word commands us: "Depart from evil, and do good" (Psalm 37:27). But what is evil, and what is good? Some go by public opinion, some by their feelings, and some claim mystical "guidance" as their standard. But they are all wrong. God's law revealed in the Bible is the standard of right and wrong. It is the Christian's measuring rod to measure his life day by day. It shows where improvement is needed, where he falls short, what direction he ought to move in. "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

—J. G. Vos

COMMENTS ON:

Some New Books From The Netherlands

by HENRY R. VAN TIL

S. U. Zuidema, VAN GELOOF TOT GELOOF. Franeker: T. Wever. 1954. 184 pp., f4.80.

This book provides little sketches of a heart to heart type for those who would be near unto God. Previously the author has written an interesting treatise on the subject of prayer that belongs to the finest of the literature on the matter. And this book, *Van Geloof tot Geloof*, is equally impressive as one of the very best on the subject of faith.

Zuidema again and again points up the fact that faith is response to revelation in the Word and that it denies the supremacy to experience. In this connection he points to Schleiermacher who, under the title of *The Christian Faith*, actually enthroned human experience and cast out faith, saying that every pious believer could write his own scriptures. But faith starts where the Bible begins. Experience starts with reality, and here we meet the age-old problem of whether we can know God from nature apart from his Word. Zuidema contends that it is impossible to know God or his works except we live by the light of his Word (pp. 53, ff.).

By the way of faith, he continues (cf. p. 59), we come to an understanding of the works of God. "Only in the light of the Word of God, which we know through faith, can we rightly understand what we experience. The facts speak only after the Word of God makes the facts speak." As an example Zuidema cites the case of conversion from vice to virtue. We

can only know whether this is a true conversion (for Satan also has his conversions from vice to virtue) by going to the Word, which tells us that Christ works only in the hearts of those who accept his cross with a sincere faith. Worthless and deceitful, therefore, is the witness of them who can tell us of their turning to Jesus as a mere example, if they deny the cross of Christ. There is no inner light and no other source by which to test the spirits than the Word of God. Only the Bible is a light upon our pathway and a lamp unto our feet.

Under the heading "*Faith and Conversion*" the author indicates the relationship of faith to life. It is a serious self-delusion, the author contends, to think that a man can live his life out of the neutrality standpoint. According to Scripture a man lives out of his faith. True, saving faith brings a conversion, a change into a man's thinking, living and acting. But the common conception is that betterment of life may be obtained without a radical faith (going down to the root, or out of the heart). This is puerile, and a great evil in our day. All renewal of life and betterment of the conditions of life is produced by faith in something. Men act from their faith in reason, in humanity, in the state, in the race, or some other created thing. Every report of conversion must be judged on its own merits and we ought to inquire at once: "Under the guidance of what kind of faith did this con-

version occur?" (p. 67). Without faith it is impossible to please God. This central truth is reaffirmed by the author against the contemporary insistence on the works of the law, or morality, and mistaking them for evidences of true Christianity.

Furthermore, there are chapters on faith as related to works, reason, justification, confession, church, preaching, Baptism and, finally, an exposition of the Creed in relation to faith. All in all, this excellent book is filled with suggestive thoughts that may be expanded into sermons or lectures. It is a kind of seed-bed ready for transplanting. It grips not only the mind but also the heart of the believer.

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S. Greydanus, SCHRIFTOVERDENKINGEN. Compiled by C. Veenhof. Kampen: J. H. Kok N.V. 1954. 108 pp., f3.50.

Here are twenty studies in Holy Writ compiled by Prof. C. Veenhof *Friesch Kerkblad* (Aug. 1916-Dec. 1917). They are still very pertinent since they deal with man's life in a warring world, that is, as directed by the Word. This book speaks of God's greatness and man's smallness; it reminds us that the hand of the Lord is not shortened and that the whole disposition of life (as well as of the lot) is of the Lord. One of the finest studies deals with Paul's statement in II Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God

by us." The learned author here contends that every good and perfect gift to all mankind is through Christ. All of God's promises to the human race are guaranteed in the Son of his love.

Here is a vital discussion of relevant issues in our day. This book has a timeless quality because it deals with the eternal things of God realistically and concretely.

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S. G. De Graaf, HET WARE GELOOF (BESCHOUWINGEN OVER ZONDAG 1-22 VAN DE HEIDELBERGSE CATECHISMUS). Kampen: J. H. Kok N.V. 1954. 465 pp., f13.75.

Those who have learned to know the writings of S. G. De Graaf, former well-known preacher of the Word in Amsterdam, will greet with joy the appearance of this new volume. This great minister of The Netherlands was both a popular preacher and a worthy exegete of Scripture. The evidence is found in his popular series: *Vuur op Aarde* ("fire on the earth") which is a series of the most existential, concrete sermons that this reviewer has ever had the pleasure and profit of reading. Each one is a gem. Beyond that, this author has enriched Reformed theological literature with his incomparable: *Verbondsgeschiedenis* ("history of the covenant") a two-volume work on the history of God's covenantal dealings with his people in the Old and New testaments, especially written and designed for Sunday School teachers. Never have I seen or read a work of its type in which the Biblical-theological approach is worked out so beautifully and the sovereign grace of God is so consistently magnified. De Graaf was also often invited to make public addresses and some of these have been collected in a little work called: *Christus en de Wereld*, ("Christ and the world").

In the work now under discussion the author sets forth the meaning and relevance of a part of one of the historic creeds of the Reformed Churches, namely, *The Heidelberg Catechism*. Typical of the author's approach is the statement on the very first page of his exposition of Lord's

Day one. He notes the fact that we usually speak of creeds having the two-fold purpose of preserving the unity of the church and maintaining the truth over against the world. But, says De Graaf, these are preceded by another, namely, that in the creed the church first of all gives its answer to God, who has willed to reveal his truth to us. That is to say, a confession must always be in the first instance adoration, for our confession is only possible through faith. Now faith attaches itself to God's faithfulness and love. These are so wondrously high that our faith can never comprehend them, hence we simply adore. And there can be no comfort without adoration. To seek the comfort of salvation without praise and adoration is a foolish attempt to plunder the faith.

A creed is the answer to the revelation of God and thus becomes "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). "But that does not mean that the truth as such has need of support and rests in the church. The truth is the revelation of God, and rests in him alone, who is the Truth. In this world, however, the truth finds rest, is confessed, preserved and defended in a fellowship which it has created for itself. In that sense the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth. Therein the value of the confession of the church for us is expressed" (p. 30).

Confession, the author reiterates, is a repeating and answering to what God has first spoken, a speaking of God's thoughts after him, as Augustine used to say. Thus only we can confess that we are the possession of Jesus Christ. This we can never derive from experience. For experience is always the fruit of faith and not the ground of faith.

Here, therefore, we are close to the heart of the typically Reformed confession versus every modern form of experientialism and existentialism. The difficulty of Karl Barth c.s. is that they never get out of the slough of experientialism, and hence they deny that we are the "blessed possessors" (*beati possidentes*) of the great salvation, which is the same as belonging to Jesus Christ.

Those who like K. Barth deny that we have the right to say that we are saved, that we are assured of eternal life, are unwilling to repeat what God says of us. They are unwilling to live by the revelation of God. They seek to make experience ultimate, and then, of course, have to await the event.

The same conception is further worked out by the author in connection with the Heidelberg's famous expression: "thine only comfort." When we speak of our only comfort, we say that life without that comfort is meaningless and death is hopeless. But unless one bow to the authority of the Word such confession is never sincere. The world, in the final analysis, will never admit the absolute bankruptcy of human life. Outside of the Word there is no true knowledge of our extreme need in this life and terrible hopelessness in death." Without this victory of the Word of God the distress of the world becomes reason for an accusation against God" (p. 15). But by faith through the Word we see our misery as guilt. And our life in that misery is without meaning (*zinloos*). For the meaning of life lies in our fellowship with God . . . And how shall we understand the meaninglessness of life, except through the Word of God, which makes known to us the meaning of life" (p. 16).

In the next paragraph De Graaf speaks of restoration of life (*Levensherstel*). This is a promise of God in his Word, for this life as well as the next.

Under Lord's Day two which speaks of the Law of God as the source of our knowledge of misery, De Graaf unfolds for us the nature of Law as an expression of the love of God. He is of the opinion that it is not a scholastic question whether the Law is also above God or is an arbitrary expression of God's will, but that this is a real existential problem.

For all those who read Dutch, and every Reformed preacher ought to do all he can to gain a reading knowledge of it, this is an invaluable treasure. Nor ought Christian laymen to deprive themselves of the joy and the profit that awaits one by reading this book.

Is It Worth Reading?

- **Martin Keuning, ed., CALVINIST CADET GUIDE BOOK.**
- **John Calvin, DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS.**
- **J. D. Eppinga, A PASTOR SPEAKS TO THE SOUL OF THE CITY.**
- **L. Penning, GENIUS OF GENEVA.**
- **Ilion T. Jones, A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO EVANGELICAL WORSHIP**
- **H. Kakes, DE DOOP IN DE NEDERLANDSE BELIJDENISGESCHRIFTEN**
- **Samuel G. Craig, CHRISTIANITY RIGHTLY SO CALLED**

Martin Keuning, ed., CALVINIST CADET GUIDE BOOK. Grand Rapids: Calvinist Cadet Corps. 1954.

When the Federation of Reformed Boys' Clubs (later renamed the Calvinist Cadet Corps) was organized on October 30, 1952 the speaker for the occasion, Mr. Gerrit Likkel of Kalamazoo began his speech with these words: "*Fellow Servicemen!* I greet you this evening in the words of the Apostle Paul, a great serviceman in the Kingdom of God: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service' (Rom. 12:1). You are the leaders of the future leaders in the Christian Reformed Church . . . You have an important job. You are taking our boys at a crucial period in their lives. Just when they need the greatest amount of care. You are moulding characters for life. Think of it, *for life!* Never to be undone again" (p. 1 of the supplement to *Guide Book* for counselors).

To most of us, no doubt, the Calvinist Cadet Corps is still a new name, if not altogether an unknown quantity. But as suggested above, it is simply the boys clubs coming out with a new name. And from the looks of this *Guide Book* this idea

is going to be popular with our boys. It is one of the finest things that I have seen to stimulate real activity and interest in our teen-agers and to guide them in the ways of righteousness and service of the great King.

The *Guide Book* shows concretely and systematically how the youthful member becomes a Recruit in the club, is initiated and then rises through the ranks of Pathfinder, Builder and, finally, to be a Guide himself. The foundation of the building that is visualized under the motto: *Living For Jesus*, is the Bible. The verse of Scripture that sets the tone is: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." And the Corps pledge is: "Thankful to Jehovah, for his gifts to me, I pledge myself to be ready to serve God, my parents, my country, my church, my neighbor and my Corps." The code of the Cadets calls for: reverence, obedience, compassion, consecration, trustworthiness, purity, gratitude, loyalty, industry and cheerfulness. All of these are defined first of all in relation to God and secondly in relation to man. Here is no cheap sentimentality or humanitarianism, a be good, do good modernism, but a deeply spiritual Calvinism. And for that reason this reviewer believes it is just the thing we need in the place of the Boy Scout movement which has once and again

been signalized by our leaders and by the Christian Reformed synod as being humanistic and moralistic.

The main emphasis of the Cadets is to let the light of the Word guide them in every part of life, hence Bible study is an essential part of the program. Bible lessons, Set No. 1, a separate booklet of 86 pages, accompanies the *Guide Book*. Here the basic ideas of the code are worked out in their Scriptural setting, which is followed by a study of the parables.

Let no one conclude, however, that there is an imbalance here. The proper place is given to patriotism and the flag, while first aid and prevention of accidents is given 16 pages. This is followed by wood-working, braiding, plastics, marble painting, etching, soap carving, nature study, etc. Many games are also outlined both for indoor and outdoor pastime. Bible quizzes and Bible puzzles are added at the end for good measure. A model constitution is suggested so that any group of boys with a counselor could start a club of their own without being affiliated necessarily with any particular church or national organization. All in all this is a worthwhile project. Of course, the success depends upon the counselors. They must be consecrated and imaginative!

This booklet is highly recommended not only for the specific pur-

pose which the author has in mind, but to all fathers who would guide their young sons.

HENRY R. VAN TIL
Grand Rapids, Mich.

John Calvin, DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS.
Compiled by Charles E. Edwards.
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 120 pp., \$1.00.

This little, pocket-size guide for devotions contains fifty-two meditations on the minor prophets with an appropriate prayer at the end of each. It is as refreshing as it is profound. It would serve as the finest stimulant and introduction to a study of these prophets not only, but it gives as well an insight into the soul of a spiritually minded man. By way of introduction I can think of nothing better than to quote one of these meditations of Calvin in its entirety. This is number 21, the second of two on the book of Jonah. Here is the Scripture with comment:

Then said the Lord; Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Jonah 4:4, 11.

God shows here how like a father he provides for mankind. Each one of us is cherished by him with singular care; but yet he represents here a large number, that it might be more manifest that he has so great a concern for mankind that he will not inconsiderately fulminate against any one nation. God shows here to Jonah that he has been carried away by his own *merciless* zeal. Though his zeal arose from a good principle, yet Jonah was influenced by a feeling far too vehement. This God proved by sparing so many infants hitherto innocent. And to infants he adds the brute animals. Oxen were especially superior to shrubs. If only Jonah justly grieved for one withered shrub it was far more deplorable and cruel for so many innocent animals to perish. We hence see how apposite are all the parts of this similitude, to make Jonah loathe his folly, and to be ashamed of it; for he had attempted to frustrate the secret purpose of God, and in a manner to overrule it by his own will, so that the Ninevites might not be spared, although they labored by true repentance to anticipate the divine judgment. The prayers likewise are simple and childlike.

H. R. VAN TIL
Grand Rapids, Mich.

J. D. Eppinga, A PASTOR SPEAKS TO THE SOUL OF THE CITY. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1954. 93 pp., \$1.50.

This book is different. I began the reading of it not knowing just what I would find in it. The title and the table of contents had me guessing. After reading two or three pages I knew I had something quite unique in my hands.

Only one who is interested in people could want to write a book like this. Only a pastor whose sights are broad enough to see over the fences of his own parish could be disposed to produce these chapters on, The Ears of the City, The Productions of the City, The Children of the City, The Lost of the City, The Defenses of the City, The Proverbs of the City, The Parades of the City, The Speed of the City, The Fences of the City, The Rival of the City.

It is light reading, but not trivial. It probably will never be quoted in a philosophy classroom, but it has philosophical substance. I doubt whether a professor of literature will take much note of it, but should he do so he will underline some elegant sentences.

Rev. Eppinga writes with a well-furnished mind and with a devout heart — and with a chuckle, too! Perhaps, it is that kind of mind, and that kind of heart, that produces the best humor.

The author is pastor of the Lagrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin and Westminster Seminaries.

LEONARD GREENWAY
Grand Rapids, Mich.

L. Penning, GENIUS OF GENEVA (A POPULAR ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN CALVIN). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1954. 392 pp., \$3.00.

Penning, a Dutch author of historical fiction, writer of many books on the Boer War, here tried his hand at biography. The translation was made by B. S. Berrington, a clergyman who wrote rather pompously for our day. In spite of this fault the book reads rather easily and once one has caught the spirit of the times,

which is graphically communicated to us by Penning's fervent style, the Reformation begins to come alive. This is the real value of the book.

Also, some of the malicious slanders concerning Calvin are shown to be false. But this is counterbalanced by the inadequate theological perception of the author, for he states that the doctrine of predestination was the very heart of the *Institutes*. Fact is, the first edition of the *Institutes* did not include a treatment of this doctrine, and Calvin only added it because there arose certain deniers of this precious truth.

However, the book as a whole gives one a fine perspective of the Reformation as a mighty work of God. And Calvin stands out clearly, as he should, as a great man of God as well as a genius of learning and the literary art. But all of this greatness and fame did not diminish Calvin's humanness and humility. He is seen as a true friend, a loving spiritual brother and a faithful pastor of souls, which he was through all the persecutions of those days.

Finally, Penning makes some pertinent and brilliant observations which we might well consider carefully. He tells us, for example, that it is an impossible task to reform the church from within (p. 36), that Calvin and Farel were actually exiled because they were disturbers of the peace (p. 40), that Calvin would overlook minor points of difference in order to preserve the larger unity (p. 141). The author also shows us that Calvin was not personally vindictive, that he was heroic in face of the dangers of the plague, and that he favored shorter sermons than Farel was accustomed to preaching. Many other personal glimpses are provided of the genius of Geneva. One of the most touching scenes in the book is the description of Calvin's farewell to the members of the Geneva city council.

"Your worships," said Calvin, I cannot thank you enough for the honor and kindness you have shown me, and especially for the inexhaustible patience with which you have borne with my great shortcomings and faults. I have met with many discouragements and great opposition in my career, but that was not your

fault, but was according to the decree of God who tries each of his servants. Wherever I have failed in my duty I earnestly beg you not to impute this to my will, but to my inability. Above all, venerable sirs! am I indebted to you for so kindly and gently bearing with my too great vehemence. This and my other faults I am heartily sorry for, but I earnestly hope that God has pardoned these faults" (pp. 376 f.).

All of which depicts the godliness and childlikeness of this great-souled Reformer. Well might Beza in his funeral oration cry out: "My father! my father! the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

HENRY R. VAN TIL
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Ilion T. Jones: A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO EVANGELICAL WORSHIP, 319 p. Abingdon Press, 1954

There was a time in the history of Protestantism when nearly all controversy involved doctrine. Those days are passed, and we are witnessing at present a serious struggle in the area of worship. Not only have the externals been largely modified during recent decades, but the underlying ideas seem to have shifted. The author is convinced that Protestantism has incorporated many of these changes without realizing what has happened. He thus calls a halt and asks us to consider "the nature of evangelical worship in the light of its history, thereafter lays down a broad basis for formulating a doctrine of worship in harmony with that nature, and to implement the doctrine in respect to the various elements that go to make up a suitable cultus."

This is an ambitious program and in general the author succeeds admirably.

Much material is, of course, considered in the first section which is chiefly historical. Jones is convinced that the evangelical, spiritual tradition of Christian worship is "prophetic" in contrast with the "priestly" or formal and ceremonial which has always threatened the church. The roots of evangelical worship he finds first of all in the Old Testament, especially among the prophets. The movement which they represented he

feels was the most significant of all in human religious history, even though its immediate results were few. Post-exilic Judaism also contributed heavily to the development of the "prophetic" tradition which moulded Christian worship, for in spite of the emphasis placed on the temple worship, the synagogue arose to claim a place in the religious lives of the people and replace sacrifices with prayer.

Jesus regarded it as his function, according to Jones, to bring the word of prophets to completion. Of course, one wonders by what show of right he excludes what our Savior plainly said about the law of Moses which included ceremonial regulations? Jesus is to be regarded as a "layman" who believed himself called by God. We are further told that he never actually made a choice between temple or synagogue worship, but his preference undoubtedly lay with the latter. Yet he left it up to his disciples and the new Christian community to shape its worship according to its own insights and needs.

The author is convinced that the early church began correctly by stressing the prophetic ministry, but soon lost its course and began to emphasize the place of the priestly. Thus the history of the church cannot be properly understood apart from the obscuring of the prophetic voice and the consequent entrenchment of priestly power which brought corruption. As priests and people were steeped in unspirituality and ignorance, the need for reformation became increasingly apparent. The author has done service by pointing up the undeniable fact that the Reformation cannot be properly understood and evaluated apart from the craving for a more spiritual form of Christian worship than that afforded by the medieval church and her ceremonial trappings. This aspect seems to have been too long ignored, with the result that the Reformation is assessed rather as an intellectual and doctrinal revolt instead of a total spiritual reaction against the paganization of the church. The reformers, we are told, found themselves in a major revolution without ever intending this. They only sought to purify the church of some gross abuses. Yet circumstances

compelled them to proceed with a thorough purging. Jones finds Luther too conservative and reluctant, although he agrees that several of his innovations have done great service towards reintroducing evangelical worship. The Strasburg reformers did much for the development of a spiritual form of worship, and their influence upon Calvin as well as others has been too long neglected. The sympathies of the author lie quite clearly and consistently with Zwingli. His interpretation of Calvin, particularly on the Lord's Supper where he affirms that it differs hardly at all from that of Luther, is inaccurate. He goes so far to discredit the positions of both Luther and Calvin that he affirms, "In the last analysis it takes a good deal of fine theological and semantic forensic to distinguish between their views and the doctrine of transubstantiation." It is rather regrettable that Jones feels compelled to make indefensible judgments such as these in an effort to eulogize the position of Zwingli.

In concluding the historical section he directs our attention to the churches in America where the Puritan tradition has bulked large. The change has come in largely after 1850. Today in Protestant churches we find altars and divided chancels, a growing use of the arts and symbolism and vestments, significant changes in the place accorded the Lord's Supper, a lengthened liturgy and a changing ministry in which the preacher is fast being replaced by the priest. This points up the problem with which the book grapples: Is the Protestant movement going in reverse with this return to medievalism? Are we really ready to exchange evangelical for a formal, liturgical worship which our fathers repudiated? Can we truly have an orderly, fixed worship without quenching the Spirit?

In the light of his historical survey the author seeks to construct what he conceives to be a truly evangelical type of worship. In this connection such salient subjects are discussed as the nature of an evangelical cultus, the proper interpretation and observance of the Lord's Supper, the use of the symbolism in the churches, the several materials which may properly be used in spiritual worship and

the order of the service. It is surprising how thoroughly Dr. Jones is able to deal with his material in a book of ordinary size.

Some excellent passages ought not be passed by without careful notice. His trenchant criticism of those who divorce religion (worship) from ethics is much to the point and undoubtedly demonstrates an inherent weakness in much ritualistic worship. There is also an excellent and suggestive passage on the priesthood of all believers and the consequent responsibility of all church members for worship. Jones never pleads for an actual return to the forms of the New Testament, important as these were for those days. This is impossible, since we don't know exactly what did take place at that time. Forms of worship have always been in a state of fluidity, and this is to be preferred since it meets actual needs and prevents formalism. Much attention is given to the place of the Lord's Supper. This is occasioned by the fact that many Protestants are arguing vehemently that this sacrament instead of preaching is the normative and focal point in Christian worship. Without it preaching then is supposed to have but little significance. Jones feels that baptism may be lightly dismissed in this connection, since it happens but once in a person's lifetime and really involves no important principles of worship. With this we would, of course, disagree. Possibly one reason why there is so little evidence of clear insight into the nature and place of the worshipping congregation in this volume may be traced to the author's lack of understanding the significance of baptism.

The book closes with a challenge to the reader. In fact, to present this has been the avowed purpose of the author. He feels that the system of worship is the major factor in shaping the convictions and conduct of Christians. Thus if people are to remain evangelical Christians, they must breathe an atmosphere which is saturated with that spirit. This requires an evangelical form of worship—simple, straightforward, with the appeal to the mind instead of the senses. Sharply he exposes the superficiality of those who would introduce ritualistic elements on the

grounds that these will help create a worshipful atmosphere and hence satisfy the spiritual cravings of the worshippers. His contention that these externals only speak to the Roman Catholics because of the whole theological structure of Romanism is entirely correct. Hence we should beware of dressing up our church buildings, unless we are ready to agree to some of the fundamentals of the Roman theology. Much of the liturgical movement Jones is ready to characterize as a return to "priestly paganism." The dangers inherent in this reversal are serious in his opinion because "when Protestantism goes into eclipse, the Western democratic culture closely associated with it and for which it is partly, if not largely responsible will go into eclipse; and the political and social gains of many centuries will be lost for generations to come."

The great value of this book lies in the challenging way in which the author points up the present-day revolution in American Protestant worship. Too many seem entirely unaware of what is going on, and still more are unwilling to recognize its implications. Jones argues cogently at many points that these changes strike at the very heart of Protestantism. They are not merely externals designed to make our worship a little more beautiful and compelling. Rather, with their adoption the increasing shift from a prophetic to a priestly religion becomes apparent.

Moreover, these innovations have largely been superimposed by the clergy. In but few instances have they been inspired by the will of the majority of members in the churches. Yet the ministers feel they have been quite successful, since the majority have followed. To the author this gives evidence to the point that we have drifted far from our Protestant moorings. To save the churches from becoming formal and ritualistic, the members must again see their duty and consciously choose and work for a free, spontaneous kind of prophetic religion which has made Protestantism strong.

It is regrettable that the author, who says so many stimulating and challenging things on this important subject, fails as we see it at the most

crucial point. He speaks at great length about the difference between the prophetic and the priestly forms, yet he gives no clear-cut definition of the prophetic form of Christianity in terms of the contents of the message. And that after all is the heart of the matter. Unless we believe that the gospel of Christ has been authoritatively revealed and must be accurately transmitted, we will have a church which may speak but which isn't truly prophetic.

Undoubtedly the weakness of the book lies in its admitted presuppositions. The author seeks to defend and justify "evangelical" worship as the only truly spiritual and therefore valid form of Christian worship. Yet he can advance no other arguments than those which are borrowed from the relative historical situation. Nowhere does he intend to claim any normative significance for the Biblical teaching on worship. His view of the Scriptures largely invalidates any claim to the accuracy of his interpretation of this material. Thus we find a person arguing for evangelical worship without stating clearly what the evangelical is.

On such a basis he also fails to explain the strength of the Reformation. Indeed, he points out that it recovered the prophetic task of the church, but he fails to understand that this meant the proclamation of the abiding Word of God called the Holy Scriptures. Jones seems to be enamored of the prevalent liberal notion that the preacher must find his own preaching material. To be relevant to present needs it may be historically conditioned by the Bible but never normatively controlled by it.

Because of these presuppositions and their influence on his thinking, the work of Dr. Jones, valuable as it is in several respects, can only have relative significance for those who take the Bible seriously as the sole rule for faith and practice (worship included). Indeed, he points up the present situation with its grave dangers in a challenging way. To a large degree he is able to analyze some of the fundamental issues which must be and are being decided. Yet he fails to present any adequate solution.

Dr. Jones can and does tell Protestants that with regard to the principles and practice of Christian worship they are largely lost in the woods. That makes it all the more regrettable that he hasn't been able to tell them the real way out.

PETER Y. DE JONG,
Pella, Iowa

Dr. H. Kakes, *De Doop in de Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1953. 174 pp.

Prof. Dr. F. W. Grosheide of the Free University, Amsterdam, said in his review of this book in a Dutch magazine something to the effect that he found the thesis of this work interesting but that he would like to have a talk with the author. This statement summarizes my feelings very neatly.

In 1944 the battle concerning the meaning of the sacraments was at its peak in The Netherlands, with the result that a disastrous schism came about in *De Gereformeerde Kerken* (sister church of the Christian Reformed denomination in the U. S. and Canada). The fury of that struggle has subsided somewhat in recent years, but occasionally a flare-up will re-occur. Dr. Kakes hopes with this book to bring the opposing parties together once again, and so he attempts to give a clear picture of the several factors that are responsible for the perpetuation of the present division among these people of Reformed persuasion. Against the background of the sixteenth century Kakes traces in particular the doctrine of holy baptism as it is taught in the three creeds: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht.

Specifically, the greater part of the book is taken up with an evaluation of questions and answers 65 through 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism, articles 33, 34 and 35 of the Belgic Confession, and with chapter I, paragraph 17 of the Canons of Dordrecht.

In our opinion this work lacks sound Scriptural exegesis. Kakes' method is to exegete the Heidelberg Catechism, for example, come to a conclusion and then superimpose that conclusion upon certain passages dealing with the sacrament of baptism from Scripture.

Ursinus is shown to believe that God *offered* the benefits of the Messiah to the people of the Old Covenant head for head, without exception, but he *promised* these blessings only to the elect. That, declares Dr. Kakes, is the Scriptural line of argument as reflected in Romans 9:6, 8. Once having accepted that he quite easily comes to the following conclusion: The sacraments are only for the believers; others have no right to them whatsoever. It would be unwise, says our author, to assume that children eligible for baptism have been regenerated before or during baptism. The Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* declared in 1944 that such a conclusion would be more or less inaccurate. The sacraments do not signify and seal *present* faith, but they most certainly seal faith unless it appears later in the years of discretion that such an assumption is unwarranted.

Anyone who is looking for debate and argument can see all the makings of a full scale present here. If Dr. Kakes really maintains that the expression "more or less accurate" is actually a piece of theological carefulness and wisdom, then we sincerely doubt whether his attempt to heal the breach in the Reformed community in The Netherlands will be successful. Actually the breach is wider than ever! For it is true that the sacraments are for believers just like that, or are they *for the benefit* of the believer?

The Rev. E. G. van Teylingen wrote in a pamphlet at the time of the aforementioned schism: "The Reformers would be shocked if they heard that baptism administered to an unbeliever is not really a sacrament in the fullest sense of the word." But now writes Dr. Kakes: "The Rev. Mr. van Teylingen never got to the bottom of the problem. Otherwise he would have discovered that Ursinus sometimes refused to speak about sacraments in this connection . . . For the unbeliever salvation is *offered* in the sacraments, not promised or sealed."

I would rather agree with Dr. Oorhuys who comments: "Baptism does not signify and seal unto us that which we can find in the heart of the covenant child, but seals unto us that

which lives in the heart of God with respect to this child."

Actually, however, what does it benefit us to have all sorts of theologians parade down the boulevard of sacramental studies? We know now that there is a difference of opinion between the authorities: Ursinus says one thing, John Calvin another. Let's have more sound Scriptural exposition on this matter!

We can recommend this scholarly investigation into the nature of the sacraments to all who are interested in this particular issue. The book does not read easily — there is a veritable flood of quotations which the author expects one to struggle through, but perhaps that is a sure sign of a genuinely scholarly thesis.

LAMBERTUS MULDER,
Neerlandia, Alberta

Samuel G. Craig, *CHRISTIANITY RIGHTLY SO CALLED*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia. 270 pp. \$2.25.

This is a good book. It is hardly extravagant to say that nothing as good, in this kind of a book, has been written since Warfield laid down his pen or Machen wrote his *Christianity and Liberalism*. Indeed while Dr. Craig often quotes from these two authors and even more often sounds like them it is clear that this is not mere copying but stems from the fact that he has the same deep commitment to historic Christianity that motivated them, the same deep insight into current religious trends and the same happy precision and clarity in style.

In his foreword Dr. Craig declares that he writes to do something to remedy the confused situation in the field of religious discussion resulting from the fact that "those engaging in it have radically different conceptions of what Christianity is." That the book now appears in a third revised edition is only one indication of his success. He holds, and demonstrates, that "whatever may be thought of the truth or value of Christianity there is no good reason why men should be in doubt as to what its essential features are."

Dr. Craig correctly contends that Christianity rightly so called is *supernatural, historical, and redemptive*

and this contention he supports by irrefutable evidence drawn both from Scripture and from history. Especially cogent is his development (chapter 5) that "Christianity consists of facts and therefore of doctrines" and that over against those who would belittle either. An example of the fine biblical balance which marks most of the book is found (chapter 7) in the author's insistence that Christian ethics is essential to Christianity but that it cannot be maintained apart from Christian doctrine. The praiseworthy charter of the chapter on "Christianity and History" (2) is indicated in a concluding assertion: "What is Christianity?, is from first to last an historical question" but how, in the light of this statement can Dr. Craig entertain (p. 23) a hope that those neo-supernaturalists who deny that historical facts are essential to Christianity may have arrived at a "tenable fundamentalism"?

Examples of the uniform value of the book in the way of accurate definition are found (p. 235 ff.) in the discussion of Christian Polemics and Christian Irenics and (p. 87): "*Christianity* is essentially that ethical religion that has its origin and that has its continuance in Jesus Christ conceived as God-man; more particularly it is that redemptive religion that offers salvation from the guilt and corruption of sin through the atoning death of Jesus Christ and the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit." The manner in which he illustrates the various distinctive facets of Christianity is nothing short of compelling. He is both generous and accurate in showing the manner in which various groups within Christendom have been, through the centuries, committed to its essential tenets.

While the author is no doubt right in asserting that the core of the book will be found in the chapter (3) entitled "The Essential Content of Christianity" this reviewer finds great significance in the chapter (9) dealing with "Deformations and Falsifications of Christianity." His distinction between falsification and deformation is both valid and valuable as is his observation that in dealing with the latter (p. 233) "two extremes are to be avoided—that of the

indifferentists and that of the perfectionists and absolutists." When he adds (p. 238) "but whatever the differences between the various deformations—we have previously expressed the view that all present-day expressions of Christianity are in some degree deformed—they are small compared with the difference between all that can rightly be called Christianity and everything that can not," one wonders whether Dr. Craig's attack against falsifications is or can be wisely and fully implemented on the supposition that the differences between a biblical Calvinism on the one hand and either Romanism or Arminism on the other hand are even relatively *small*. Has his irenic temper so silenced his polemic responsibility that he writes such a book as this without so much as hinting that the only ultimate answer to modernistic falsifications is a full-orbed Calvinism? Does his admission (forward vii) that the book is incomplete in containing no discussion of "Christianity and the Church" sufficiently account for his never mentioning the doctrine of election as essential to Christianity rightly so called or is Kuyper's *cor ecclesiae* not essential to true Christianity? Are we right in asserting that the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God in the natural as well as in the spiritual realm is the fundamental doctrine of *consistent* Christianity but nevertheless justified in an evaluation of the present picture which omits that doctrine?

The present reviewer is too impressed with the great value of this book to be dogmatic in adverse criticism but does timidly suggest that the above questions may properly be kept in mind as the book is read. Surely Abraham Kuyper in his famous Stone lectures established that world system must be opposed to world system and that the system which gives expression to the supernaturalistic, historical and redemptive principles which Craig so well sets forth is the Calvinistic and only the Calvinistic. Moreover, the struggle of recent decades in Presbyterian circles, waged so valiantly by Dr. Craig in his editorial labors, demonstrated in a tragic way that victory

can be attained only by an insistence upon the *distinctive* tenets of that system and not by the assertion, however accurate and vigorous, of that which is common to all approximations to Christianity that are not clearly falsifications. Perhaps this is not so much a criticism as a plea that another book should be written even as Dr. Machen added to *Christianity and Liberalism* such forthrightly Reformed volumes as *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* and *The Christian View of Man* before his untimely death ended the series. The book under review is a good book. A book which every Christian should read and in which he should rejoice and this is especially true of those Christians who hold the Reformed Faith.

ROBERT L. ATWELL,
Roslyn, Pennsylvania.

CONCERNING THE ANTITHESIS

(Continued from page 32)

Scriptures. But it is certain that whoever among us confesses the Christ out of vital unity with him, such an one may take no other position than that upon which Christ himself has placed us.

And whoever, on the other side, demands of us that we close our eyes to the Antithesis, does violence to our conscience, by actually demanding of us to deny that which Christ has imprinted upon our minds with such awe-inspiring seriousness. After all, the Christ is, according to the prophets and apostles, "the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence." That was the mission of the Son of God in this world. And this naturally gave rise to the Antithesis in our lives. Disguising this fact is of no avail, and to close one's eye to it is like a game of blind man's bluff. There is not even any ground for *temperate* witnessing. Jesus, who never spoke other than with serious intent, has systematically avoided every moderate word exactly on this point. To express the Antithesis more cuttingly than Jesus did is not possible. On whatever point there may be conciliation, it is not on this point" (pp. 15-18, *Wy Calvinisten*, Kampen: J. H. Kok, N.V., 1909.).

Concerning the Antithesis

(Translation and comment by Henry R. Van Til)

And here I come to the Antithesis.*

The more one chooses to close his eyes of the reality of the Antithesis the more he will weaken the Coalition. But the opposite is also true; the more sharply one focuses his eyes on the Antithesis, the more firmly the Coalition will stand. (Capitals are from Kuyper's original and the "Coalition" refers to his cooperation with the Roman Catholic party against the parties of the Left). To speak of a finding or a fixing of the Antithesis is nonsense. Independent of what any Statesman may opine or any group of people may affirm, there exists such an Antithesis, which forms the fundamental opposition of our lives. It operates in every sphere and in every sensation of the heart, in every tissue of our thinking, in our antipathies and sympathies, in our entire world and life view, and in the whole of our conception of the personal, familiar, social and political existence.

It exists in our science and in our art, in our jurisprudence and in our pedagogy. It has permeated into everything and in everything it is finding expression in two directions. To say that the people of The Netherlands are *one* in mind and *one* in purpose is merely sentimental fantasy. *One*, thank God, we are when the preservation and honor of the fatherland are at stake, and, we stand as one man in support of the House of Orange. But in the general conception of life (*levensopvatting*) we are not *one*, but irrevocably two. Thus it is here and thus it is in all nations living constitutionally; since that which struggles in the hearts of the people looms up in Parliament and comes to expression before the throne.

This was partially so from ancient times, but that opposition has become especially sharp since 1789. In

the "Great Revolution" of that year rebellion against the honor of God has even turned the wheel of political life; bringing to the top what was under and knocking down what should stand on high. At that time a struggle broke out, a principal struggle, a life-and-death-struggle concerning the question whether the norm for governmental policy ought to be deduced out of *the will of man*, or from the *will of God*. Then all those who abandoned Christ and his Cross cried: "Our compass is found in the will of man!" And all those who continued to kneel before the Christ as God revealed in the flesh declared: "For us the revealed will of God remains the only norm!" Thus the opposition of: "Over against the Revolution the Gospel!" arose, and that is the Antithesis, which throughout the nineteenth century and to this day has divided the conceptions of life of our citizens. That Antithesis was not invented or thought up by any one. That Antithesis is there, it exists, and it dominates our lives completely. Only sometimes it envelopes itself purposely in such a mist so that most men do not see it until the sun again breaks through and every one perceives how this rock of offence ever remains lying directly across life's pathway. It is on that account that the Liberals continually tried to deny the existence of the Antithesis, because they knew that a clear conception thereof always results in the revulsion of the masses against them (Note: Kuyper is here assuming the basic Christianity of the Dutch nation). That explains the bitterness of the Liberals against Groen van Prinsterer, and against the Calvinists, and their bitterness also in 1905 (the political campaign of that day in which a lot of mud-slinging took place by the Liberals) because, we on our part, tried to open the eyes of the people to the existence

of the Antithesis. This they decried as sowing dissension among the people.

But that is not the case.

The dissension that is here considered, is not sown by a single thinker, *but by the Christ Himself*. And not only did the Christ and does he still sow discord, but he expressed it sharply and without disguise that this was even the purpose of his mission. That Christ came to bring peace to the earth *with* God the angels sang in Ephratah's fields. But when men called for unity, concord and peace *among the children of men*, then Christ spoke as sharply as possible: "I am not come to bring peace upon the earth, but a sword." Still stronger, indeed, fearfully strong, he expressed himself, when he interpreted the purpose of his coming thus: "I am come to send fire upon the earth: and what will I, if it be already kindled?" And that this did not simply refer to the struggle *in the heart*, but also truly referred to the struggle *in life*, is incontrovertibly clear from the things Jesus said about family life. "From henceforth five shall be gathered in one house, three against two and two against three. The father shall be against the son and the son against the father; the mother shall oppose the daughter and the daughter the mother, the members of one's household shall be his enemies. And they shall hate one another and deliver each other up." Words of such burning earnestness that no mere man would have dared to speak them, and only Christ, because he was God, had the authority and the power to speak thus. That this discord should not come to an end at his departure, but was to continue as long as the Gospel went forth into the world, is clear from his parting words to his disciples: "They have hated me, they will also hate you. As they have persecuted me, so will they persecute you. But be of good courage, I have overcome the world."

And therefore, when they call to us from the other side: "How can you who call yourselves Christians and ought to seek peace, how can you defend such an Antithesis?" Then our answer is ready that whoever speaks thus has never known the Christ and is a stranger in the Holy

(Continued on page 31)

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February 5, 1999

Dear Peter:

You have observed, I am sure, that some churches are using their outdoor bulletin boards to present witticisms to the passing public. Here is one I read the other day:

"If you are a wet blanket, take yourself out for an airing."

Pastor's magazines are carrying columns of "bulletin board suggestions" many of which are compounded of spice and wit with a little "cheerio" mixed in.

This church advertising tactic makes me sad - and also mad. How anxious we are to catch the public eye with something to provoke a smile. The church is trying so hard to be popular with Mr. Man-on-the-Street. By all means humor him!

The modern church threw out the pains of Christianity and its exacting demands on men, and nobody needs to tell us what men we got in return. Having blue-trimmed the Bethlehem bassinet, we need not be surprised at the vapid moralizings of a generation that has taken as its text, "What must I do to be attractive?"

It is getting pretty late in the day, Peter, and we who preach had better trumpet against the current fad of trying to make the Christian faith popular. We have enough silly people in the sanctuary!

Sincerely,

Daghesh von Lene