

Toward A Reformed Apologetic

[Cornelius Van Til](#)

Philadelphia: privately printed, 1972.

In this small pamphlet I am indicating briefly the chief purpose I have had in writing the following pamphlets, books, and syllabi.

Throughout, my aim has been to show that it is the historic Reformed Faith alone that can in any adequate way present the claims of Christ to men for their salvation. The Reformed Faith alone does anything like full justice to the cultural and missionary mandates of Christ. The Reformed Faith alone has anything like an adequately stated view of God, of man, and of Christ as the mediator between God and man. It is because the Reformed Faith alone has an essentially sound, because biblical, theology, that it alone has anything like a sound, that is, biblical method of challenging the world of unbelief to repentance and faith.

1. Three Pamphlets

A. Why I Believe In God

In this pamphlet I tried to point out in simple terminology why I believe in the God of the Bible, the God of historic Reformed theology. The God I believe in is the triune God of the Bible. I believe in this God because He Himself has told me in the Bible Who He is, what I am, and what He, in Christ and by the Holy Spirit, has done for me. Or I might say "has done for men." I was brought up on the Bible as the Word of God. Can I, now that I have been to school, still believe in the God of the Bible? Well, can I still believe in the sun that shown on me when I walked as a boy in wooden shoes in Groningen? I could believe in nothing else if I did not, as back of everything, believe in this God. Can I see the beams underneath the floor on which I walk? I must assume or presuppose that the beams are underneath. Unless the beams were underneath, I could not walk on the floor.

B. Paul at Athens

We may take Paul's method of reasoning with the men of Athens as the model for our method of preaching Christ to the world today. Paul pleaded with the Athenians to recognize (a) that they were creatures of God and (b) that they were in need of salvation from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ and that, unless they should repent, the wrath of God would come upon them to the uttermost at the end.

Thus, Paul presented to the Greeks the high points of a philosophy of history which they, would they save themselves and their culture, must accept. Not to accept it meant death. God had made foolish the wisdom of this world.

C. The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel

The argument presented in the two brief pamphlets already mentioned is treated a little more fully in *The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel*. This pamphlet is geared to high school and college students. It points out more specifically than is done in the smaller ones the fact that Romanism and Arminianism do not follow Paul's method of presenting the gospel. Romanism and Arminianism have, to some extent, adjusted the gospel of the sovereign grace of God so as to make it please sinful man in his would-be independence of

God. Romanism and Arminianism have a defective theology. Accordingly, they also adjust their method of reasoning with men so as to make it please sinful men. They also have a defective apologetics. They tell the natural man that he has the right idea about himself, the world, and God so far as it goes but that he needs some additional information about these subjects. Thus, Bishop Butler tells the Deists of his day that in their study of the world and of themselves they have done justice to the revelation of God the Father but that they ought also to meet God the Son. As soon as they have the proper information about God the Son, he is sure, they will also do justice to Him. They do not need to be regenerated unto a true knowledge of God the Father and God the Son by God the Holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic and the Arminian do not do justice to what Jesus, and Paul after Him, say about the natural man's need of a new birth by the Spirit if he is to believe. The Reformed Faith seeks to be obedient to Christ in calling men to repentance. It urges men to pray earnestly for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit so they might believe. The natural man, says Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, needs not only new light but also a new power of sight.

2. Common Grace

In a number of class syllabi, I worked out the Reformed, in contradistinction from the Romanist and the Arminian, method of apologetics.

Continuing on, I wrote a little book calculated to show that if we are to have a truly biblical method of apologetics we must, with Calvin, Kuyper, and Bavinck, believe in common grace and in a general offer of the gospel to all men.

But we must have a biblically balanced view of common grace. We must not impose a non-Christian type of logical reasoning upon the revelation of God in Scripture. We must not, from the biblical teaching with respect to election, deduce the idea that God cannot have, at any time in history, any attitude of favor to man as man. On the other hand, we must not, from the biblical teaching with respect to the "free offer of the gospel," deduce the idea that there can be no election.

Are we then to say that what Scripture teaches with regard to God's comprehensive control of all things, including the eternal destiny of man, and what Scripture teaches about man's freedom and responsibility, is contradictory?

If so, shall we then follow Karl Barth in saying that contradictions in Scripture do not matter in the least because what the gospel is really all about takes place in a realm "above" ordinary history? Or shall we with Gordon Clark say that the "contradiction" that we think we see is no real contradiction at all?

We cannot follow any of these ways. The trouble with all of them is that they do not ask men to subject their every thought, even their method of thinking, to the revelation of God through Christ in Scripture. We must start with the self-attesting Christ of Scripture. We must start with what is presented to us in Scripture with respect to the whole course of God's dealings with man. We must simply take the biblical story about the whole course of history from its beginning to its end. If we do this we may with all freedom speak of the biblical system of truth. For the biblical system of truth is a different kind of system than is the system of truth of would-be autonomous or self-sufficient man.

This point is of basic importance. It has shown itself to be such with ever increasing clarity through the years. Man thinks God's thoughts after Him. That is to say, his thought is to be reinterpetative of God's original thought. As a being made in the image of God, man is like God but he is also unlike God. His being is therefore analogical being and his thinking is, properly conceived, analogical thinking.

The Roman Catholics also speak of analogical knowledge. But their notion of analogy is the exact opposite from that of the Reformed notion of analogy. The Roman Catholic notion of analogy is based on Aristotle's philosophy of the analogical nature of being as such. And this makes all the world of difference. Aristotle's notion of the analogy of being assumes that man is not a creature of God nor a sinner against God. The argument between the Reformed and the Aristotelian positions is an argument about the very possibility of human thinking and speaking.

The Romanist and the Arminian do not see this mutually exclusive nature of analogy, and the mutually exclusive nature of what should be meant by a biblical system of truth. Accordingly, Romanism and Arminianism try to show that Christianity can meet the requirements of the natural man with respect to logic and fact. The Romanist and the Arminian insist that fallen man's idea of a system of truth is not wrong. The only thing that is wrong with fallen man is that he cannot live up to his own requirement with respect to what a system of truth should be, that is, a frank reinterpretation of the teachings of Scripture in the interest of a deeper understanding of the revelation of God present in every fact of the universe.

3. The Defense of the Faith

This work which was published in 1953 gives a less comprehensive statement with respect to these matters. What I had written out for class purposes on such subjects as Apologetics, Evidences, Psychology of Religion and Ethics is here summarized. In the second part of this book, critics of my views were answered. However, in the second edition this second section was not reproduced in order to make the book more usable for general purposes.

4. The Case for Calvinism

A further statement of my reasons for holding that it is the Reformed Faith that must take upon itself the leadership in Christian apologetics is given in *The Case for Calvinism*. In the early sixties three little 'Case for' books appeared. One was *The Case for a New Reformation Theology* by William Hordern. Hordern represents the neo-orthodox point of view. The second was *The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective* by L. Harold De Wolf. De Wolf thinks that Barth has not slain the dragon of Liberalism. Liberalism needs only to be restated in more modern terms to show that it has what modern man needs. The third was *The Case for Orthodox Theology* by Edward J. Carnell. Carnell thinks of the Bible as the direct revelation of God. He is orthodox. But he is convinced that orthodoxy was very poorly expressed by Fundamentalists. What was needed was a more scholarly presentation of orthodox Christianity. Together with Carl F. H. Henry and others he started what is now known as the New-Evangelical movement. Carnell used what he called the method of systematic consistency. By using this method of systematic consistency the evangelical Christian, Carnell thinks, can show that Christianity alone is true to the requirements of logic and to the requirements of fact. The rational man sitting as the judge will flunk every other view presenting to him a claim to truth. Christianity alone will pass the requirements of logic and of fact and it will pass *magna cum laude*.

I thought I ought to write a little book that presented *The Case for Calvinism*. Not that Calvinism should claim to be able to satisfy the rational man still better than neo-orthodoxy or liberalism or even than new-evangelicalism. The rational man must be told that it is not he who must judge Christ but it is Christ Who judges him. Moreover, the liberal and the neo-orthodox theologians must be shown that their Christs are false Christs, Christs that are projected into the sky by would-be autonomous or self-sufficient man.

5. The New Modernism (1946; Out Of Print)

I have already spoken of neo-orthodoxy. I had my first major confrontation with it in 1946. In *The New Modernism* I tried to show that the philosophy underlying the theology of such men as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner is the same philosophy that underlies liberalism, namely, that of Immanuel Kant and his followers.

6. Christianity and Barthianism

My second major discussion of neo-orthodoxy appeared in *Christianity and Barthianism*. The title of the book imitates Dr. J. Gresham Machen's.

Dr. Machen showed that Liberalism was not really Christian in its thought content regardless of whatever Christian-sounding words it might use.

In the case of Barth, I tried to show that it is even more important than ever to be aware of the fact that the same words may have opposite meanings. The liberals sometimes said that the Bible contains the Word of God. Barth says that the Bible is the Word of God. Is not Barth then obviously more orthodox than Liberalism? Only by the sound of words. Barth himself explains his 'is' activistically. And this makes all the difference. Barth also believes in the trinity, but this too he explains activistically. He believes in the incarnation, and even in the Chalcedon statement with respect to the incarnation. But he qualifies this by saying that he has actualized Chalcedon. This makes all the world of difference.

In a pamphlet on Karl Barth and Evangelicalism I tried to show this briefly with respect to individual doctrines.

7. The Theology of James Daane

There were those in the Reformed Community in general who disagreed with me on the nature of Barth's theology. This was true in particular of Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam. In an early book on Karl Barth, Berkouwer said that Barth was more nominalist than Occam. But in *De Triumph der Genade in de Theologie van Karl Barth* (1954), Berkouwer said that Barth should be placed in the line of Reformation theologians. Being of the same conviction, Dr. James Daane sought to convince the Christian Reformed Church of the truth of this position. Daane

warned the Church against the evil influence of my static type of theology. My theology was too much like that of Hoeksema and of Berkhof. My criticism of Hoeksema in the interest of holding to common grace must now be forgotten. Let us have a progressive Reformed theology, like that of neo-orthodoxy.

Dr. Daane was actively supported by men like Dr. Harry Boer, missionary to Africa. At home and abroad, neo-orthodoxy must be presented as best expressing the claims of Christ to the church and to lost men everywhere. It was therefore "out of concern for the church," more particularly for the Christian Reformed Church, that I wrote the little book on Daane.

8. In Defense of the Faith—A Series of Syllabi

A. The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture

Scripture has been coming anew and afresh into the foreground of discussion. Theologians sympathetic to neo-orthodoxy are seeking to drive a wedge between the views of Bavinck and of Warfield. But Bavinck and Warfield stand together against the activist views of neo-orthodoxy.

B. A Survey of Christian Epistemology

This is an old syllabus tracing some high spots of the contrast between those who believe in Christ and those who do not on the problem of knowledge.

C. Christian-Theistic Ethics

In its goal, the realization of the kingdom of God, in its standard, the revealed will of God, and in its motivation, the glory of God, the Christian position in ethics opposes the notions of goal, standard, and motivation of every school of non-Christian ethics.

9. A Christian Theory of Knowledge

Underneath all forms of apostate philosophy is the notion of man as a law unto himself. Involved in this is the idea that the world is a bottomless and shoreless ocean of chance. Involved in this, too, is the idea that the laws that seem to be operating in this world of chance have their origin in man. Accordingly, when as a scientist, a philosopher, or a theologian, man interprets

the world, his is not a reinterpretation of God's already given interpretation. Fallen man seeks to be the original interpreter of all reality. In all his interpretative activity fallen man does what Adam did when confronted with the instruction of God that he must be a prophet, a priest, and a king under God. Adam declared his independence from God. He, as it were, offered to cooperate with God in an all-out scientific, philosophical, and theological effort to discover what the nature of reality is. Since Adam, Greek philosophy has demonstrated the truth of Paul's contention that the wisdom of this world has been made foolishness with God. Working on the principle of autonomy, man cannot identify himself. How then could he even contradict himself? On the assumption of human autonomy, all predication would cease.

The reason why the scientific, the philosophic, and the theological efforts of non-Christians contribute to the discovery of the true states of affairs is the fact that the world is what Christians say it is and it is not what fallen men say it is. It is only because man is created in the image of God, because the world about him together with himself is created and directed by God through Christ, that even non-Christian thinkers can do constructive work.

In *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* I tried to bring out these matters more fully and more clearly than I had done previously. In this book I also dealt with Dr. J. Oliver Buswell Jr.'s position on apologetics. For many years Dr. Buswell has contended that, with my stress on the idea of the autonomous man, I was not doing justice to the apostle Paul's teaching in Romans and elsewhere with respect to the natural man's knowledge of God. Buswell wants simply to follow in the path of Charles Hodge as Hodge follows Paul with respect to the question of natural theology.

My reply has been that we must indeed follow Paul, but not Hodge, on this point. Paul does not teach natural theology in the first chapter of Romans. He teaches the clarity and inescapability of the revelation of God round about man and within his own constitution. The pressure of God's revelation confronts every man and deep down in his heart every man knows this to be the case. His entire effort at interpretation of himself and the world about him is colored by his religious desire to suppress the truth. The face of God confronts man everywhere and all the time. The natural man concocts his scheme of things in order by means of it to suppress the truth. To say this is, I believe, to say what Calvin says in his *Institutes*. Berkouwer appears to have been in general agreement with this when he wrote his work on *General Revelation (De Algemene Openbaring)*. Together with Dr. K. J. Popma he says that one cannot do justice to Paul's

teaching in Romans if one omits the fact that the natural man seeks to hold under the truth in unrighteousness.

We cannot properly set off the Reformed Faith against the Roman Catholic Faith unless natural theology be rejected as springing from the autonomous man's efforts to keep from facing the claims of his Creator-Redeemer God. We cannot even set off the Protestant view of faith unless we distinguish God's clear revelation speaking to us in man and in nature and man's false response to this clear revelation in his natural theology.

10. The Great Debate Today

Trying still to advance the idea of the necessity of a Reformed Apologetics, I tried in *The Great Debate Today* to show that the argument between Christianity and unbelief must be carried on only in the way that it was carried on by St. Augustine. Augustine pointed out that the City of God and the City of man stand over against one another in their total outlook with respect to the whole course of history. The believer has a new, a Christ-centered, view of origins, a Christ-centered view of the center, and a Christ-centered view of the consummation of history. Along this line I spoke of Christ and Adam, Christ and Noah, Christ and Abraham, Christ and Moses, and Christ and Paul, each time contrasting the biblical, Augustinian, Calvinist approach with the approach of outstanding modern liberal neo-orthodox interpreters of the course of history.

11. The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought

To bring these matters home to the Reformed Pastor who has the responsibility of leading college students out of the fog that surrounds them in the field of supposedly Christian thinking today, I wrote in a more or less popular form about the difference between the traditional Romanist-Arminian way and the Reformed way of dealing with modern teaching today.

The last chapter of this book deals with the problem of ecumenism. Largely influenced by apostate thinking, modern Roman Catholicism and modern Protestantism are joining hands against the faith of historic Protestants. A truly biblical ecumenism should therefore be placed over against the man-centered ecumenism of the World Council of Churches.

12. Five Pamphlets

A. Christ and the Jews

All the while we must not forget the Jews. To them were the oracles of God revealed. Sad to say, the modern Jew whether he belongs to an orthodox, a conservative, or a modern group of his people, follows the Pharisees in their charge that Jesus blasphemed when He made Himself to be the Son of God. The Pharisees interpreted Moses' statement to the effect that the Lord God is one Lord, to mean the same sort of thing that Aristotle meant when he talked of God as abstract thought thinking itself.

Thus, the modern Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's entire I-thou—I-it philosophy is calculated to show that the Pharisees were right, and that Jesus was wrong.

B. The Confession Of 1967

When J. Ross Stevenson, president of Princeton Seminary, got the General Assembly of 1929 of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. to reorganize his institution in the interest of having one great center of theological learning that should train men for the ministry of what has well been called the broadening church, he paved the way for the unchecked growth of neo-orthodoxy in the denomination. By 1967 the liberal neo-orthodox leaders in this church succeeded in convincing the General Assembly that a new confession was the need of the hour. This new confession reinterprets the Christian religion in terms of a modern dimensional philosophy that springs from the primacy of the practical reason as taught by Kant and as further elaborated by the I-thou—I-it philosophy of such men as Buber.

"Let us have a world church in which the ideals of true human personality so beautifully typified by our common master and brother can find a variety of expression." This is the call that goes out to churches everywhere. One after another these churches are "joining up."

C. Chardin, Christ, or Evolution

Is there any reason why the great scientist-philosopher-theologian Teilhard de Chardin should be kept out of this world church? Is not Christ the *Omega* point

for him as he interprets the course of history in terms of self-sufficient cosmic evolution?

Surely the hierarchy will wake up to the fact that Teilhard too is in the church already. Who has not been in the church from eternity? And who is not in the church potentially? Are not the heretics of the Reformation day our departed brethren now?

D. Is God Dead?

And what of the God is dead theologians? They are merely excluding all metaphysics from the creeds of the church. We should thank them for that. They are not denying Jesus as the one through Whom somehow a great change for the better can be made and is being made in society. Surely the authorities at Geneva, (not the Geneva of Calvin) will welcome the 'God is dead' people too.

E. The Dilemma of Education

Looking again outside the Church, why should not Plato and John Dewey realize that they have a "common faith" and that it is in terms of stressing their interdependence rather than the inclusiveness of their views that they can best retain their common independence of the Christ that Paul preached? Surely, Plato and Dewey can heartily agree on the idea that such myths as Paul preached must be kept from the ears of our youth. The state must see to that.

It will take, not merely an Arminian-evangelical, but a Reformed philosophy of Christian education in order that the downward drift toward chaos in education may be, by God's grace, prevented.

13. The Sovereignty of Grace

In recent years Dr. G. C. Berkouwer has been seeking to lead the Reformed community toward a new synthesis, a synthesis between historic Reformed theology and neo-orthodoxy.

By doing so, Dr. Berkouwer places the Reformed community before a basic choice in theology, and, of necessity, also in apologetics. In theology the choice is between making every thought captive to obedience to the self-attesting Christ of Scripture or making every thought captive to obedience to Christ and Kant.

Obviously, to say that this is, ultimately, the choice before which we are put is to indicate disagreement with Berkouwer.

In apologetics the choice is similar to that in theology. Shall Reformed apologetics press forward with a program of challenging the world of unbelief by means of the "system of truth" accepted on its own authority from Scripture, or shall it slide back to the lower, Scholastic level of seeking to show that the Christian view of things is better than the non-Christian view of things? Here, too, we have already implied disagreement with Berkouwer. The disagreement, both in theology and in apologetics, is basic. That is to say, Berkouwer is beckoning the Reformed community to follow down a road that leads to a juncture with the highway that Karl Barth and his disciples are following.

In short, according to Berkouwer, we are to continue to speak of the sovereign grace of God but we are to use the activist categories of post-Kantian I-thou—I-it philosophy in doing so. In his earlier writings Berkouwer warned the Reformed community against going down the synthetic highway with man-centered, subjective thinking.

In his earlier writings Berkouwer warned us not to amalgamate our theology with modern subjectivism (a) in the matter of creeds, and (b) in the matter of Scripture. We must not aim to make a synthesis with the Roman Catholic synthesis and we must not aim to make a synthesis with the Barthian synthesis.

In his later writings, however, Berkouwer warned the Reformed community against trying to express the sovereignty of God's grace in the casual categories of the Synod of Dordt. Instead, we must seek for the real intent of Dordt and express it today in teleological language.

In his later writings Berkouwer also warns the Reformed community against using a formal concept of Scripture, of God, and of His counsel. We must seek for the real intent of Scripture in terms of purpose.

Both in the case of the confession and in the case of Scripture, we must speak doxologically rather than systematically. Only if we do this can we show modern science and modern philosophy that we have a point of contact with them.

Berkouwer is asking the Reformed community to seek for a "live and let live" relation with a modern, man-centered I-thou-I-it dimensional view of life. To follow Berkouwer in his radical change would be no longer to follow Christ's manner of dealing with the Pharisees or Paul's manner of dealing with the

Greeks. To follow Berkouwer in his *Umkehr* would be a tragic mistake for Reformed theology and apologetics. I have given my reasons for coming to this conclusion with heaviness of heart. I think very highly of Dr. Berkouwer's many accomplishments; I would fain be his follower still, but can no longer do so. My reasons for this are found in *The Sovereignty of Grace*.

14. Jerusalem and Athens

A Reformed Apologetic must, I hold, seek to follow the Apostle Paul's example. Paul said that he had come to "proclaim" Christ and His resurrection. Paul had formerly been a Pharisee. That meant that he had formerly been religiously committed to a *paideia* that was, to all intents and purposes, similar to the *paideia* of the Greeks.

Basic to this Pharisaic *paideia* was the presupposition that man is autonomous. In terms of this presupposition of human autonomy Paul, the Pharisee, had, together with the Greeks, assumed that the world of space-time had not been created by God and was not being brought to its consummation by the overruling providence of God. The idea of chaos was involved in the idea of human autonomy. Further, if man was to be a law unto himself he must be the ultimate law-giver of his environment. His thinking must be the legislative source of all the order of the universe. This order must therefore be correlative to chaos as chaos must be correlative to order. And man, the ultimate interpreter, the ultimate subject, must be correlative to what he interprets, his object, as this object of interpretation must be correlative to the subject of interpretation. But the risen-ascended Christ had overwhelmed Paul, the would-be destroyer of the name of Christ. "Lord, what must I do?" Was Paul's reply. "You have conquered."

Paul knew what he must do. He must now proclaim the name which till then he had sought to efface from the surface of the earth. "Of Him through Him, and to Him are all things." This is now his Christ-centered philosophy of history. This is the Christian *paideia* in terms of which he tells the Greeks that their *paideia* is foolishness with God. In his Aereopagus address Paul told the Greeks that they are, as he once was, persecutors of the living Christ. They are still kicking against the pricks. "Knowing God," they ask whether God exists. They are covenant-breakers. Unless they turn about and accept the Christ on the authority of Christ, they will abide under the wrath of God. Has not the Greek *paideia* been made foolishness with God! Can you not see that on your presupposition, man cannot even begin to ask any question about anything, let alone obtain an answer to any question? Socrates may insist that he wants to know the essence of holiness

without benefit of the revelation of God, but unless Christ, in His long-suffering patience, were his Creator and Judge, he could not even open his mouth to express such folly.

In seeking to follow the example of Paul Reformed Apologetics needs, above all else, to make clear from the beginning that it is challenging the wisdom of the natural man on the authority of the self-attesting Christ speaking in Scripture. Doing this the Reformed apologist must place himself on the position of his "opponent," the natural man in order to show him that on the presupposition of human autonomy human predication cannot even get under way. The fact that it has gotten under way is because the universe is what the Christian, on the authority of Christ, knows it to be. Even to negate Christ, those who hate Him must be borne up by Him. A three year old child may slap its father in his face only because the father holds it up on his knee.

Now, if the Reformed apologist is in modern times to do anything like what Paul did in his day, he may greatly profit from a truly Christian, a truly biblical, and therefore a truly Reformed philosophy. When therefore, in the early thirties the present writer first learned of professors Dr. H. Th. Vollenhoven, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Hendrik Stoker and their work in this field, he was much encouraged. In his book on *Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1933) Dr. Vollenhoven spoke of "The Groundmotives of a Biblical Philosophy" and of the "Groundmotives of a non-Scriptural Philosophy."

The new philosophy, taught at the Free University of Amsterdam by Abraham Kuyper, could be nothing other than a truly biblical, and therefore Calvinistic, philosophy. Calvinism, said Bavinck, is Christianity come to its own. Moreover, a Calvinist philosophy is not merely to use certain groundmotives, such as creation, fall, and redemption through Christ as guiding principles. A Calvinist philosopher must seek constantly to understand the specific and positive teachings of Scripture in their opposition to the specific teachings of philosophers who work on the presupposition of human autonomy. To do this the philosopher must, for himself, go directly to Scripture. He may accept the help of theologians as they have spent much time in seeking to understand the Scriptures. But no man must finally be dependent on any other man. Besides, the theologian and the philosopher have different tasks. The difference between their tasks cannot be clearly defined by assigning to them different areas of reality. Both the theologian and the philosopher are concerned that God in Christ may be praised for his work in all of creation and redemption. But the philosopher is more directly concerned with the workings of the created world in all its dimensions. The theologian can

profit greatly from this work of the philosopher as, with the psalmist, he calls upon all men and all things to praise the Lord for His creative and redemptive work.

To put the matter this way is still very inadequate. I am mainly interested in pointing out the fact that the theologian and the philosopher do not have fenced off areas of interest. Neither can say to the other that he has no business entering his field. Both theologians and philosophers are, first of all, simple believers in Christ commissioned by Christ to proclaim His name unto men who are lost. And men are lost because they presuppose their independence from God.

Now, throughout the years, I was greatly helped along these lines by the work of the Calvinistic philosophers mentioned. However, in more recent years, I began to wonder whether Dr. Dooyeweerd was not beginning to waver in his commitment to the idea that it is the concrete body of teaching of Scripture that must, as a whole, be taken as the presupposition of the possibility of human predication. I did not begin to doubt that it is his basic intention to do this. It never occurred to me to think that after having, for so many years, exposed the internal meaninglessness of the form-matter scheme of Greek philosophy, of the freedom-nature scheme of modern philosophy, and of the nature-grace synthesis of scholasticism, he was now capitulating to one of them. What began to trouble me was the fact that in his later writings Dooyeweerd told us about a change of approach in his method.

In his *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Vol. 1, p. 34, Dr. Dooyeweerd tells of a "second way" by which "to subject philosophic thought to a transcendental criticism." Dooyeweerd sets this "second way" over against his "first way" which was the "way from above." "But in this line of thought" of the first way, "we had to start from a supposition about the character of philosophy which is not at all universally accepted in philosophical circles." The "second way" is to remove any occasion that men might seek for the charge of dogmatism or authoritarianism.

In *Jerusalem and Athens* I have expressed my difficulties with Dr. Dooyeweerd's "second way." Dooyeweerd says that his "second way" is only a "sharpening" of his first way. In rereading Dooyeweerd I am beginning more and more to think that this is true. But this only enhances my difficulty. Has there been, as H. Van Riessen charges, a basic antinomy in Dooyeweerd's thinking from the beginning? I am more and more driven to the conclusion that there has been.

At any rate, and this is the point of primary importance now, a truly Christian apologetic must bring in the whole content of biblical teaching as the

presupposition of the possibility of human predication. Dooyeweerd is not now willing to do this. To do this, he now says, is to be scholastic and dogmatic. To be truly critical in one's method, Dooyeweerd now contends, one must first analyze theoretical thought per se and only at a later point bring in the "religious" question.

If we follow this "second way" of Dooyeweerd's it is difficult to see how we can escape following the second way of Berkouwer, and that way leads on to Kuitert's way, the way of synthesis of Christianity with the philosophy of modern autonomous man.

In *Jerusalem and Athens* various writers, committed to the traditional scholastic method of apologetics, have expressed their opposition to my views. I have, as best I could, shown them that I was only trying to follow Paul's example and that it is more obviously necessary to do this now than it ever was before, if we are to win men to Christ in a way that does not compromise the name of Christ.

15. Retractions and Clarifications

Have I been consistent with myself in the writings mentioned in this pamphlet? Shouldn't I now retract certain statements made in earlier days? Wouldn't I approach the subjects on which I have written differently now, if I could?

When I ask myself such questions as these I think that as far as the manner of presentation is concerned, I have often not lived up to my own motto on this point of *suaviter in modo*. I beg forgiveness of those whom I have hurt because of this sin of mine.

Then, so far as content is concerned, I have often not lived up to my own motto on this point either. I have not always made perfectly clear that in presenting Christ to lost men, we must present Him for what He is. He has told us what He is in the Scriptures. Apparently I have given occasion for people to think that I am speculative or philosophical first and biblical afterwards.

A. This has been the case, especially in my earlier days, with respect to the "ontological trinity." I have been told that I first tried to solve the "one and many problem" by the idea of the ontological trinity in order afterwards to find this idea taught in Scripture. Whatever measure of justification there may be for this

charge, I would today certainly try to make it abundantly clear that I speak about the ontological trinity only because it is taught in Scripture. It is, I would repeat, the self-attesting Christ of Scripture as our absolute authority, Who must instruct us on all things. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

B. In the second place, I have given occasion for people to think that I am speculative first and biblical afterwards when I spoke, in the early days, of the "analytical judgment." I am told that for me the model for the divine intellect seems to be the "analytical judgment." Whatever the facts in this charge, I would now stress the fact that to speak of the "analytical" judgment is a pure abstraction. I would seek to make very clear that all our judgments about anything must be subject to the judgment of Christ when He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

C. In the third place, I have given occasion for people to think that, as in the case of "judgments," so also in the case of "concepts" I am speculative first and biblical afterwards. It has been said that I have been trying to construct a "system of truth" which would satisfy the scholastic notion of the adequacy of thought and being. I would now try to make it abundantly clear that by a "biblical system of truth" I mean a system that seeks merely to make such orderly arrangement of the revelational materials of Scripture as it is possible for redeemed man to make. I would try to make plain that the biblical idea of "concept-formation" is the exact opposite from the scholastic one, derived as it is from Greek philosophy.

D. In the fourth place I have given occasion for people to think I am speculative first and biblical afterwards in what I have said concerning "presuppositions." I have been told that on my view the Christian can say nothing more to the non-Christian than: "You work on one set of presuppositions and I work on another set of presuppositions, and that is the end of the matter. There simply is no common ground of any sort between us." I would now make as plain as possible that only because reality is what the self-attesting Christ of Scripture has told us it is do we, as believers and as unbelievers, have common ground at all. If the triune God of Scripture did not exist and if He did not do what He says in Scripture He does, i.e. create and direct the whole course of history, the unbeliever would have no standing place in order to engage in his effort by his false systems to deny the existence and work of God.

16. Aspirations for The Future

My hope for the future is that I may be given grace to be more true to the Christ of the Scriptures.

A. My hope is, first, to publish a work on *The New Hermeneutic*. I mean, first, the *New Hermeneutic* of such men as Ernst Fuchs and Eberhard Ebeling. I mean, secondly, the *New Hermeneutic* of such men as Kuitert and those who, with him, have written a series of pamphlets, all centering on the question of the proper principle of interpretation of Scripture. Fuchs and Ebeling are neo-orthodox theologians. They are indeed speculative first and biblical afterward. Must the same thing be said for Kuitert and his friends? I think it must be said that, to a considerable extent, these men have committed themselves to the idea that a proper synthesis may be made between biblical Christianity and post-Kantian thought. To be biblical first, last, and always, we cannot say with Klaas Runia that there are three views of Scripture, the liberal, the neo-orthodox, and the orthodox. We must classify the liberal and the neo-orthodox view of Scripture together over against the orthodox view. Only then can we escape being speculative first and biblical afterwards.

B. My hope is, second, to publish a work on the new-evangelical movement in America. This movement has taken over much of the leadership of orthodox Christianity. The leaders of this movement are, too often, I humbly submit, speculative first and biblical afterwards. Those who are obviously speculative first and biblical afterwards in the Protestant churches, i.e. the World Council-ecumenical movement, are now seeking alliance with the Roman Catholic church. The new-evangelical leaders appear to be ill-equipped to offer more than guerilla opposition to the Aristotle-Christ and the Kant-Christ alliance that threatens to engulf the historic Christian church. I would plead with my new-evangelical brethren to be truly biblical first.

In short, I would like to be more exegetical than I have been. Dr. G. C. Berkouwer was right in pointing to my weakness on this point. But one can be "exegetical" in terms of the neo-orthodox schematism of thought, and this is, after all, to be speculative first and biblical afterwards. It is only if we are biblical first that we can avoid the modern trap of the Kant-Christ synthesis in our exegesis of Scripture.

Finally, it is my hope for the future, as it has always been my hope in the past, that I may present Christ without compromise to men who are dead in trespasses

and sins, that they might have life and that they might worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. Rather than wedding Christianity to the philosophies of Aristotle or Kant, we must openly challenge the apostate philosophic constructions of men by which they seek to suppress the truth about God, themselves, and the world. To be sure, it is the grace of God which we proclaim to men, and we must proclaim the gospel *suaviter in modo*, but nevertheless, we have not been true to Christ if we do not say with Paul: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor 1:20–21 We are children of the King. To us, not to the world, do all things belong. It is only if we demand of men complete submission to the living Christ of the Scriptures in every area of their lives, that we have presented to men the claims of the Lord Christ without compromise. It is only then that we are truly biblical first and speculative afterwards. Only then are we working toward a Reformed Apologetic.¹

¹Van Til, Cornelius ; Sigward, Eric H.: *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987*. electronic ed. New York : Labels Army Co., 1997