

**The Text of a Complaint**  
**Against Actions of the Presbytery of Philadelphia**  
**In the Matter of the Licensure and Ordination**  
**of Dr. Gordon H. Clark**

*The following is the full text of a complaint signed by a minority in the Presbytery of Philadelphia of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church against the action of that presbytery in the matter of the licensure and ordination of the Rev. Gordon H. Clark, Ph.D. The complaint was presented and read on the floor of presbytery at its meeting on November 20, 1944.*

To John P. Galbraith, Stated Clerk of The Presbytery of Philadelphia:

And now, this sixth day of October, A.D. 1944, come under the undersigned and complain against the action of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in holding a “special meeting” of the Presbytery on July 7, 1944 and against several actions and decisions taken at that meeting, to wit:

1. The decision to find the call for the meeting in order;
2. The decision to sustain the examination in theology of Dr. Gordon H. Clark;
3. The decision to waive the requirement of two years of study in a theological seminary;
4. The decision to proceed to license Candidate Gordon H. Clark to preach the gospel;
5. The action of licensing Dr. Gordon H. Clark;
6. The decision to deem the examination for licensure sufficient for ordination; and
7. The decision to ordain Dr. Gordon H. Clark at a subsequent meeting of the Presbytery called for that purpose.

In support of the complaint against the decision to find the call for the meeting in order the following considerations are set forth:

The special meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia held at the Mediator Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia on July 7, 1944 was an illegal meeting. In support of this conclusion the following evidence is cited:

1. a. The Form of the Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church read, “The presbytery shall meet on its own adjournment; and when any emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator, or, in case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the stated clerk, shall, with the concurrence or at the request of two ministers and two elders, the elders being of different congregations, call a special meeting” (Chapter X, section 9).
- b. The Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church reads, “And in the case of the

moderator of the presbytery, he shall likewise be empowered, on any extraordinary emergency, to convene the judicatory by a circular letter before the ordinary time of meeting” (Chapter XIX, section 2).

c. The moderator of the Presbytery of Philadelphia when requested at the meeting of July 7, 1944 to state the nature of the emergency which provided the occasion for the special meeting offered no evidence of the existence of an emergency, extraordinary or otherwise. Rather, the moderator stated that the meeting was justified because it suited the convenience of Dr. Gordon H. Clark and declared that other special meetings constituted a precedence for this meeting. Nor has any other evidence of the existence of an emergency been presented to the presbytery or the complainants.

d. Thus the meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia on July 7, 1944 was called, and held, in violation of the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

2. a. The provision of the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church quoted above are taken verbatim from the Form of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., except that in the second quotation the word “a” is a substitute for the word “his”. These provisions have stood in the Form of Government since its adoption by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788, preparatory to the convening of the first General Assembly in the following year.

Prior to 1788, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, the parent of the General Assembly, and the highest judicatory then existing, had been governed by the action in 1729 of the Synod of Philadelphia in declaring that they judge the directory for worship, discipline, and government of the church, commonly annexed to the Westminster Confession, to be agreeable in substance to the word of God, and founded thereupon, and therefore do earnestly recommend the same to all their members, to be by them observed as near as circumstances will allow, and Christian prudence direct” (Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Philadelphia, (904, p. 95). Since that directory made no specific provision concerning special meetings, the question arose, in the course of time, as to the calling of special meetings, and a query on the subject was brought in to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1760, which query read as follows:

“How many ministers are necessary to request the moderator of the commission of the Synod, or of any of our Presbyteries, to oblige the moderator to call any of these judicatures to do occasional business?” The Synod replied to the query:

“The Synod judge, that meetings of judicatures, *pro re nata*, can only be necessary on account of important occurrences unknown at their last meeting, and which cannot be safely deferred till their stated meeting, such as scandal raised on a minister's character, tending to destroy his usefulness, and bring reproach on religion; or feuds in a congregation threatening its dissolution; or some dangerous error, or heresy broached; but not for matters judicially deferred by the judicature, except some unforeseen circumstance occurs, which makes it appear that some principal things on which the judgment depends may then be had, and cannot be obtained if it is deferred till their stated meeting; nor, for any matters that ordinarily come in at their stated meetings” (*op. cit.*, p. 305).

This action constituted a precedent for the Form of Government when it was adopted in 1788 and illuminates its meaning. Furthermore the action was printed in Samuel J. Baird: *A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of The Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church, from its Origin in America to the Present Time*, the ancestor of the *Presbyterian Digest*, when it first appeared in 1856. It was reprinted in the second edition. It was carried over into *The Presbyterian Digest* by

William E. Moore and still appears in the latest edition of the *Digest*, that of 1938. It constitutes an unbroken tradition.

b. The special meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia of July 7, 1944 falls under the direct condemnation of this precedent, since it did not deal with an occurrence unknown at the last meeting, nor with a judicial matter, but did deal with a matter that ordinarily “comes in” at a stated meeting.

3. a. The term “*pro re nata*” was used in connection with special meetings by the Synod of 1760. It has been an historical usage of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. since that time, perhaps before it, in application to special meetings. J. Aspinwall Hodge uses it in his *What is Presbyterian Courts?* (Philadelphia, 1882).

The definition of “*pro re nata*” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* reads, “for the affair born, i.e. arisen; for some contingency arising unexpectedly or without being provided for; for an occasion as it arises” (vol. VIII, p. 1398). J. Aspinwall Hodge, in the work just mentioned, says:

“When may '*pro re nata*' meetings be called?

“They may be called 'on account of important occurrences unknown at their last meeting, and which cannot be safely deferred till their stated meeting’” (p. 228).

b. The meeting of July 7, 1944 thus violates not only the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the historical precedence and tradition of the Presbyterian church but the very definition of a *pro re nata* meeting.

4. a. It has been argued that the Presbytery of Philadelphia has occasionally met in special sessions when no emergency was present and that precedent was thus established for such procedure. But that is only to say that Presbytery has at times erred in this respect. It goes without saying that one error does not justify another. However, the complainants hold that there is no evidence that, as a matter of fact, the Presbytery of Philadelphia has in other instances transgressed the provisions of the constitution concerned. The minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia contained in the record books of the Presbytery in August, 1944 record twenty-one special meetings, as distinct from regular or adjourned meetings, whose minutes have been approved to date.

Of that number, nineteen were concerned entirely with the approval of the sending of calls, the reception of churches, the installation of pastors, the dismissal of members, the erasure of the names of members, the dissolution of pastoral relationships, the notifying sessions of dissolutions, the declaring of pulpits vacant, the acceptance of resignations from offices in this connection, the granting of permission to reside without the bounds of presbytery and the ordination of candidates without further examination. In short, they dealt either with changes of pastoral or ecclesiastical status which had arisen in the interval between stated meetings or were for the purpose of ordaining candidates without further examination.

Of the two remaining meetings, one was called in answer to a special request from the Redeemer Church and appointed a committee to confer with the congregation of that church; and the other was called to deal with the report of a committee to prepare an answer to the request of the Presbytery of Ohio and was called in accordance with the direction of the previous regular meeting ordering the committee to present its recommendations at the “earliest possible moment”.

b. The minutes of the Presbytery therefore indicate that in the past the Presbytery has held special meetings only when matters concerning pastoral relationships or the ordination of men already examined were concerned, where a new matter had suddenly arisen, or where the presbytery itself had directed action at the “earliest possible moment”. No special meeting comparable to the meeting of July 7, 1944 has ever been held by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

We conclude therefore that the meeting of July 7<sup>th</sup> was unconstitutional. It was clearly illegal in the light of the specific requirements of the Form of Government that the calling of special meetings is justified only when an emergency exists. It also stands condemned in the light of historic precedent.

In the light of the foregoing considerations the complainants request that the meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia held on July 7, 1944 be found to have been illegally convened and that its acts and decisions and the acts and decisions issuing therefrom be declared null and void.

In support of the complaint against the actions and decisions numbered 2 to 7 the following considerations are set forth:

I. The Christian doctrine of the knowledge of God is distinguished as well by its affirmation of the incomprehensibility of God as by its assertion of his knowability. The point does not need to be labored that the knowability of God lies at the very foundation of Christianity. That God can be known, and that he has given a knowledge of himself through his works and words, is pervasively taught in the Scriptures. The possibility and actuality of true religion depend upon the light and truth which God communicates to men. Skepticism and agnosticism are thoroughly anti-Christian.

In avoiding skepticism and agnosticism, however, Christianity has been insistent that the knowledge of God which is possible for men, possible because of the fact of divine revelation, is not and can never become *comprehension* of God. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is as ultimate and foundational as the doctrine of his knowability. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is not a mere qualification of his knowability; it is not the doctrine that God can be known only if he makes himself known and in so far as he makes himself known. It is rather the doctrine that God *because of his very nature* must remain incomprehensible to man. The question of the power of God to reveal himself to man does not enter into the elements of this doctrine. *Because of his very nature as infinite and absolute* the knowledge which God possesses of himself and of all things must remain a mystery which the infinite mind of man cannot penetrate. “The divine knowledge as divine, transcends human knowledge as human, even when that human knowledge is a knowledge communicated by God.”

Man may possess true knowledge as he thinks God's thoughts after him. But because God is God, the creator,, and man is man, the creature, the difference between the divine knowledge and the knowledge possible to man may never be conceived of merely in quantitative terms, as a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Otherwise the Creator-creature relationship is broken down at a most crucial point, and there is an assault upon the majesty of God.

The doctrine of the divine incomprehensibility is not a specifically Reformed doctrine. In view, however, of the peculiar emphasis of the Reformed theology upon the divine sovereignty and transcendence, it is not surprising that it has been most careful to state and expound it. As indicative of the place occupied by this doctrine in Reformed thought mention may be made of the fact that in the monumental work of Bavinck, the first subject treated under the doctrine of God is his incomprehensibility, and that, only after devoting 28 pages to this subject, does he proceed to deal with the knowability of God.

A few quotations from Reformed writers will serve to set forth more adequately the classic doctrine of incomprehensibility. Calvin's teaching, because of the unique place which his thought occupies in the history of Reformed thought, is of special interest. Calvin says that the divine essence is incomprehensible, that his majesty is not to be perceived by the human senses, that what God is in himself we cannot know, that from the nature of the case we may learn from his divine activities only what he is to us, that it would be presumptuous curiosity to attempt to examine into his essence, that rather we must be content to adore, to fear and to reverence him (*Institutes*, v. 1, 9; ii. 2; x. 2; cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, pp. 150ff.).

Charnock sets forth the incomprehensibility of God both in his discourse entitled, "On God's Being a Spirit" and in that entitled, "On God's Knowledge":

"God is therefore a Spirit incapable of being seen, and infinitely incapable of being understood. . . . There is such a disproportion between an infinite object and a finite sense and understanding, that it is utterly impossible either to behold or comprehend him." (*Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God*, New York, 1886, pp. 184f.).

"We cannot have an adequate or suitable conception of God: He dwells in inaccessible light; inaccessible to the acuteness of our fancy, as well as the weakness of our sense. If we could have thoughts of him as high and excellent as his nature, our conceptions must be as infinite as his nature. All our imaginations of him cannot represent him, because every created species is finite; it cannot therefore represent to us a full and substantial notion of an infinite Being. . . . Yet God in his word is pleased to below his own excellency, and point us to those excellencies in his works, whereby we may ascend to the knowledge of those excellencies which are in his nature. But the creatures, whence we draw our lessons, being finite, it is utterly impossible to have a notion of God commensurate to the immensity and spirituality of his being" (*idem*, p. 196. See also pp. 183, 451, 358).

J. H. Thornwell in his lecture on "The Nature and Limits of our Knowledge of God" (*Collected Writings*, Vol. I, Richmond, 1871) also clearly draws a qualitative distinction between the divine knowledge and the knowledge that is possible to man. While the whole discussion on pp. 104-142 is pertinent a few quotations must suffice here:

"His infinite perfections are veiled under finite symbols. It is only the shadow of them that falls upon the human understanding" (p. 118).

"Again the difference betwixt Divine and human knowledge is not only simply of degree. It is a difference in kind. God's knowledge *is* not like ours, and therefore we are utterly unable to think it as it is in Him. We can only think it under the analogy of ours in the sense of a similarity of relations" (pp. 121f.).

"This protest is only a series of negations—it affirms simply what God is not, but by no means enables us to conceive what He really and positively is. It is the infinite and absolute applied to the attributes which we are striving to represent. Still these negative notions are of immense importance. They are clear and pregnant confessions that there is a transcendent reality beyond all that we are able to conceive or think in comparison with which our feeble thoughts are but darkening counsel by words without knowledge" (p. 122).

"Most heresies have risen from believing the serpent's lie, that our faculties were a competent measure

of universal truth. We reason about God as if we possessed an absolute knowledge. The consequence is, we are lost in confusion and error. . . . It is so easy to slide into the habit of regarding the infinite and the finite as only different degrees of the same thing, and to reason from one to the other with the same confidence with which, in other cases, we reason from the less to the greater, that the caution cannot be too much insisted upon that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor God's ways our ways" (pp. 140f.).

"Our ignorance of the Infinite is the true solution of the most perplexing problems which encounter us at every step in the study of Divine truth. We have gained a great point when we have found that they are truly insoluble—that they contain one element which we cannot understand, and without which the whole must remain an inexplicable mystery. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Prescience of God and the Liberty of Man, the Permission of the Fall, the Propagation of Original Sin, the Workings of Efficacious Grace, all these are facts which are clearly taught; as facts they can be readily accepted, but they defy all efforts to reduce them to science. . . . Our wisdom is to believe and adore" (pp. 141f.).

Although Charles Hodge's particular treatment of the doctrine of incomprehensibility is brief, it is to the point, and likewise bases the doctrine upon the distinction in nature between the Almighty and the creature:

"When it is said that God can be known, it is not meant that He can be comprehended. To comprehend is to have a complete and exhaustive knowledge of an object. It is to understand its nature and its relations. . . . God is past finding out. We cannot understand the Almighty to perfection. . . . Such knowledge *is* clearly impossible in a creature, either of itself or of anything outside of itself" (*Systematic Theology*, I, p. 337).

"It is included in what has been said, that our knowledge of God is partial and inadequate. There is infinitely more in God than we can have any idea of; and what we do know, we know imperfectly" (*ibid.*).

Shedd is also worth hearing. He says:

"Man knows the nature of finite spirit through his own self-consciousness, but he knows that of the Infinite spirit only analogically. Hence some of the characteristics of the Divine nature cannot be known by a finite intelligence. For example, how God can be independent of the limitations of time and have an eternal mode of consciousness that is without succession, including all events simultaneously in one omniscient intuition, is inscrutable to man, because he himself has no such consciousness" (*Dogmatic Theology*, I, p. 152).

"Although God is an inscrutable mystery, he is yet an object of thought" (*idem*, p. 156).

Finally, a few sentences from Bavinck.

"This doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God and of the unknowability of his essence becomes also the point of departure and the foundational thought of Christian theology. God is not exhausted in his revelation, whether in creation or re-creation. He cannot fully communicate himself to his creatures because they would then themselves have to be God. There is therefore no adequate knowledge of God" (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, II, p. 10).

"There is no knowledge of God as he is in himself. We are men and he *is* the Lord our God. . . . He is

infinitely far exalted above our conception, our thought, our language. He is not to be compared with any creature. . . . He can be apprehended, not comprehended. --Thus speaks the whole of Scripture and the whole of Christian theology. And when a superficial nationalism has thought an adequate knowledge of God possible, Christian theology has always fought it most strenuously” (p. 23).

“The knowledge that we possess of God is altogether distinctive. It can be called a positive knowledge in so far as through it we recognize a being who is infinitely different from all finite creatures. It is, on the other hand, negative because we cannot ascribe a single predicate to God as we conceive of such a predicate in his creatures. And it is therefore analogical because it is the knowledge of a being who in himself is unknowable but nevertheless can make something of himself known to his creatures” (p. 24).

“Christian theology beholds here an adorable mystery. It is completely incomprehensible for us that and how God can reveal himself and to an extent make himself known in the creature, the eternal in time, the immeasurable in space, the infinite in the finite, the unchangeable in change, being in becoming, that which is already as if it existed in that which does not exist. This mystery is not to be comprehended, it can alone be gratefully acknowledged” (pp. 24f.)

“Mystery is the element in which theology lives” (p. 1).

That this doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God as expounded by Reformed theology is the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, II, 1, and of the Larger Catechism, 7, cannot be doubted. In the nature of the case the doctrinal standards do not expound the meaning of the word “incomprehensible” where it is employed. Nevertheless, its meaning does not remain uncertain because of its uniform significance in the history of Christian thought which constitutes the background of the formulation of these standards. The context provided by the standards themselves, moreover, serves to confirm this conclusion. In describing God as “infinite in being and perfection” and as “most absolute” (II, 1) and as having “all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself” and as being “alone in and unto himself all-sufficient” (II, 2) the Confession clearly conceives of the nature and attributes of God as being infinitely exalted above the nature and qualities of the creature whether in this life or in the life to come. More specifically, when it speaks of the knowledge of God as infinite (II, 2) that knowledge of God is evidently thought of as differing from the knowledge possible to the creature in a qualitative sense, and not merely in degree. And nothing is more obvious than that in characterizing God as “incomprehensible”, the Confession does not mean merely that God is unknown unless he reveals himself. *God does not become less incomprehensible through the historical process of revelation.* Rather his incomprehensibility is viewed as an attribute of God as he is in himself, without which he would not be God, as absolute and unalterable as his immutability, his omnipotence and the other attributes referred to in the same sentence (II, 1). Now since God is incomprehensible, his revelation of himself cannot have the purpose of providing an adequate or exhaustive knowledge of himself; the revelation is directed to the needs of men (Confession I, 1). Nor does the doctrine of the plainness of Scripture (I, 7) mean that the revelation which God has been pleased to give of himself is meant to be exhaustively understood. It is indeed inherently perspicuous, and it is plain to man in the sense that man “may attain unto a sufficient understanding” of “those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation”, but this is far from implying that there are not mysteries set forth in the divine revelation that are quite beyond the powers of the finite mind to comprehend.

That this doctrine of the divine incomprehensibility is the teaching of the Scriptures does not require any elaborate proof. The doctrine is taught in many passages and is implicit in the doctrine of the divine transcendence which is everywhere taught or presupposed in Scripture. A few of the most explicit passages may be passed in review. The proof-text supplied with the reference in the Confession

is Psalm 145:3. "His greatness is unsearchable." Isaiah 40:28 also states that "there is no searching of his understanding" while Job 11:7 f. asks, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven: what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?" In these passages far more is taught than that man is dependent upon the divine revelation for knowledge of God; there is a reverent acknowledging of the exceeding greatness of God and of his knowledge which man as a creature cannot know in any adequate way. Even more clearly perhaps, the gulf which separates the divine knowledge from human knowledge is set forth in Isaiah 55:8, 9. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." In I Timothy 6:16 the Lord of Lords is described as "dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see", thus indicating not merely that God is invisible because of his spirituality but also that the light in which God dwells is so glorious that man the creature may never trespass or even draw near to contemplate God as he is in himself. Only the divine Son has that adequate knowledge of God which makes a revelation of God possible (John 1:18; 6:46). Only the Son has a knowledge of the Father that is on a level with the Father's knowledge of the Son; only the Son's knowledge of the Father is exhaustive knowledge; the knowledge which men may come to possess of the Father and of the Son is knowledge on a lower level, apprehension but not comprehension, for otherwise mere men would have to be accorded a place alongside of Christ who alone "knows the Father" (Mt. 11:27; Luke 10:22. Cf. Also Romans 11:33; Deuteronomy 29:29).

Now the judgment to which with deep sorrow we have been compelled to come is that the doctrine of the knowledge of God which was set forth before the Presbytery of Philadelphia by Dr. Clark is very far from being in agreement with the high view of Scripture and of the Confession and Catchisms as that has been expounded above. It is true indeed that Dr. Clark accepts the term "incomprehensible" as a quality of God. But the issue of course is not settled by the bare acceptance of the language of the standards. The modernists in our day have frequently indicated a readiness to accept the language of the historic creeds, but have reinterpreted that language to mean something sharply at variance with their historic meaning. It is our contention that Dr. Clark's view of the incomprehensibility of God is definitely at variance with the meaning that this doctrine has had in Christian theology.

In expounding Dr. Clark's views we appeal to the stenographic record of his examination before the presbytery. The record is far from accurate in detail but the expressions on this doctrine are so comprehensive and repeated that no doubt remains as to its essential elements. The references are to page and line in the record.

Dr. Clark's definition of the incomprehensibility of God serves as an appropriate starting point. By this doctrine he means "that God knows every proposition and that those propositions are infinite in number and that we shall not exhaust them when he reveals them to us one at a time" (27:19ff. Cf. 37:19ff.). The Scriptural statement that the ways of God are past finding out Dr. Clark would explain by saying "that no endeavor on our part can discover certain truths about God but those truths can be obtained only by revelations and we cannot solve them on our own initiative . . ." (20:9ff.).

When this definition is analyzed with the help of the rest of his testimony, it will appear that Dr. Clark denies that there is any qualitative distinction between the contents of the knowledge of God and the contents of the knowledge possible to man, but rather in so far as there is any distinction between these two the distinction is merely quantitative. The demonstration of this conclusion may most conveniently proceed by taking note of three stages in Dr. Clark's development of his views.



1. The fundamental assumption made by Dr. Clark is that truth, whether in the divine mind or in the human mind, is always propositional. Truth, it is said, cannot be conceived of except in terms of propositions (*Cf.* 2:9ff.; 11:2, 14f.; and especially 22:19ff.). It will be observed that Dr. Clark does not claim to derive this judgment from Scripture; it is rather regarded as an axiom of reason (*Cf.* 36:13-17; 19:19ff.).

It is not necessary or appropriate to consider here all of the implications of this fundamental assumption. A few observations are, however, of immediate importance. This view of truth, it will be noted, conceives of truth as fundamentally quantitative, as consisting of a series of distinct items. Now even if it could be assumed that human knowledge has this propositional character, it would still involve a tremendous assumption to conclude that the divine knowledge must possess the same character. Since our thinking is pervasively conditioned by our creaturehood, we may not safely infer the character of our knowledge what must be true of the knowledge of the Creator. Even if we could be sure that human knowledge might be resolved into distinct propositions, it would not necessarily follow that the knowledge of God, who penetrates into the depths of his own mind and of all things at a glance, would be subject to the same qualification. And it may not be overlooked in this connection that Dr. Clark does not claim Scriptural proof for his fundamental assumption as to the character of knowledge.

2. The far-reaching significance of Dr. Clark's starting point, as observed under 1. above, is evident when we note that Dr. Clark holds that man's knowledge of any proposition, if it is really knowledge, is identical with God's knowledge of the same proposition. If knowledge is a matter of propositions divorced from the knowing subject, that is, of self-contained, independent statements, a proposition would have to have the same meaning for man as for God. And since Dr. Clark holds that no limitation may be placed upon God's power to reveal propositions one at a time to men, there is no single item of knowledge in God's mind which may not be shared by the human mind.

That the above statement is a fair representation of Dr. Clark's reasoning is abundantly borne out by the record. See 2:22ff.; 18:23f.; 20:22ff.; 28:14-17ff.; 32:25-33:4; 50:11-21; 51:3-7. These include the following statements: "God can reveal any particular proposition to man, and if God can make sons of Abraham out of stones on the roadway, he can make even a stupid person understand a proposition" (2:22ff.). ". . . if we don't know the object that God knows, then we are in absolute ignorance" (28:16f.). In answer to the question, "You would say then, that all that is revealed in the Scripture is capable of being comprehended by the mind of man?", Dr. Clark answered, "Oh yes, that is what it is given to us for, to understand it" (20:22ff.).

It would seem here that Dr. Clark is seeking to work out a theory of knowledge which, over against agnosticism and skepticism, will assure man of actual and certain knowledge. By appealing to the power of God reveal knowledge, and by resolving knowledge into detached items, he argues that man may be assured of true knowledge since his knowledge corresponds wholly with the divine knowledge of the same propositions.

While we appreciate the effort to arrive at certainty with reference to man's knowledge of God, in our judgment this is done at too great a cost. It is done at the sacrifice of the transcendence of God's knowledge. His thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are past finding out. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. If we are not to bring the divine knowledge of his thoughts and ways down to human knowledge, or our human knowledge up to his divine knowledge, we dare not maintain that his knowledge and our knowledge *coincide at any single point*. Our knowledge of any proposition must always remain the knowledge of the creature. As true knowledge, that knowledge must be analogical to

the knowledge which God possesses, but it can never be identified with the knowledge which the infinite and absolute Creator possesses of the same proposition.

3. Finally, however, Dr. Clark seems to reckon with the infinity of God and thus also to hold to a certain conception of incomprehensibility. The divine knowledge consists of an *infinite number* of propositions, and since man *is* a temporal creature, it will not be possible even in eternity to reveal this infinite series of propositions to man (*Cf.* 34:5; 52:15ff.). It is illuminating that Dr. Clark does not base his doctrine of incomprehensibility upon the distinction between God as infinite and man as finite (*Cf.* 45:24f.), nor on the consideration that, if God were fully to reveal himself to his creatures, the creatures would themselves have to be God (*Cf.* 46:16ff.). It is based solely upon the judgment that man as a temporal being cannot be conceived of as receiving an infinite number of revelations. It is clear again that the approach of Dr. Clark is quantitative through and through. It is the number of the propositions, rather than their content as such, not to speak of the inscrutable mystery of the mind of God which is viewed as excluding an exhaustive revelation of the divine mind.

Dr. Clark here, in a very restricted way, takes cognizance of infinity in connection with the divine knowledge but he seems to interpret infinity in terms of mathematical definition rather than as a theological distinction. He constantly appeals to the arithmetical series to illustrate the infinite (11:24ff.; 15:20ff.; 21:12ff.) and even at one point denies that one may properly speak of “all” of the propositions in God's knowledge, since then they would not be “infinite”, appealing (in a remark unfortunately not included in the record) to the help which mathematics affords in this connection (38:19ff.).

Now this view of infinity is altogether inadequate as applied to the knowledge of God. It is at best a quantitative category. And if one may not speak of “all” of the propositions constituting the divine knowledge, it would suggest that infinity means that which is unfinishable. If so, the self-sufficiency, the perfection of God, is not maintained. (At other points, indeed, Dr. Clark seems to be employing a different conception of infinity, as when he states that the attributes are infinite as being “limited by nothing outside of himself” (11:6).

It may be objected to the exposition of Dr. Clark's views presented above that it leaves out of account the important consideration that Dr. Clark allows that beyond the knowledge of a proposition there is the knowledge of the implications of a proposition, and that the knowledge which man may enjoy of a proposition does not necessarily carry with it a knowledge of its implications. This qualification, however, does not affect Dr. Clark's basic position in any substantial way. The implications of propositions are after all, on his view, also propositions. Consequently, the inclusion of such propositions among the number of propositions that are thought of as constituting the divine knowledge does not require any modification of the judgment that the distinction between the divine knowledge and the knowledge possible to man is merely quantitative.

Another possible objection to the foregoing might take the form that he does not draw a qualitative distinction between the knowledge of God and the knowledge possible for men since he freely recognizes a fundamental difference between the *mode* of God's knowledge and that of man's knowledge. God's knowledge is intuitive while man's is discursive (*Cf.* 18:5f., 18ff.). Man is dependent upon God for his knowledge. We gladly concede this point, and have reckoned with it in what has been said above. However, this admission does not affect the whole point at issue here since the doctrine of the mode of the divine knowledge is not a part of the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of his knowledge. The latter is concerned only with the contents of the divine knowledge. Dr. Clark distinguishes between the knowledge of God and of man so far as mode of knowledge is concerned, but

it is a tragic fact that his dialectic has led him to obliterate the qualitative distinction between the contents of the divine mind and the knowledge which is possible to the creature, and thus to impinge in a most serious fashion upon the transcendence of the divine knowledge which is expressed by the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God.

We may also point that, even to the extent that Dr. Clark affirms the incomprehensibility of God, he does not do so in a manner that provides solid assurance that it is a stable element in his thought about God. At the March, 1944, meeting of presbytery, Dr. Clark was not even ready to say categorically that the number of propositions in the divine knowledge was infinite. And in the July examination, he seems at times to have been far from sure of his position. He says, for example, that “it seems to me *entirely likely*, though the exegesis is a little weak; but it seems to me entirely likely that there will always be certain particular truths that we do not know” (2:10ff.). Finally, if “in all probability there will be no end” to the increase of our knowledge of God in heaven (2:4ff.), and if it is only the *infinite number* of propositions in the divine knowledge which distinguishes it from the knowledge which man may receive, this distinction approaches a vanishing point.

We judge then that Dr. Clark's view of the incomprehensibility of God, as presented to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, is not a proper one. And that he is in error seems to be due to the fact that he does not approach the doctrine by way of an exegesis of Scripture. His approach, in the contrary, while admittedly taking into account certain teachings of Scripture, is to a large extent rationalistic. His argument is built up from certain principles derived from reason. One cannot expect a sound theology to proceed from a faulty method. In short, therefore, we hold that both the formulation of this doctrine and the method by which it is reached are out of harmony with orthodox Presbyterianism.

II. If the first error concerns Dr. Clark's view of the relation of man's knowledge to God's knowledge, there is a second error closely related to this one: namely, his view of the relation of the faculty, to other faculties of the soul. Again here, Dr. Clark's statements are a highly unsatisfactory representation of the teaching of Scripture and of our subordinate standards, as well as of the great writings of Reformed theology.

It may be objected immediately that this is not a problem in theology as such, but as a secondary problem of human psychology, of which the Bible and our standards have but little to say, and which cannot be considered essential to orthodoxy or a Reformed position. At least, however, the problem is one of applied psychology, and particularly one of psychology as applied to man's religious activity. Of that subject, the Bible has a great deal to say, and the whole locus of Soteriology is deeply concerned with man's religious activity. Of that subject, the Bible has a great deal to say, and the whole locus of Soteriology is deeply concerned with man's reaction to God's saving work. As can be seen in detail from the following discussion, the supposed psychological problem touches most pointedly on any number of highly essential theological questions.

Any statement of the relation between the intellectual and the other spiritual faculties must needs be concerned with God as well as with man. Although comparatively little was said in the course of Dr. Clark's examination to outline his position. Dr. Clark should certainly not be accused of dividing the nature of God, or even of man into discrete parts which might be labeled “intellect”, “emotion”, and “volition”, or by other terms. However, since he is willing, at least for words as indicating different faculties there is certainly meaning in what has been said on the subject.

First of all, Dr. Clark specifically states (p. 16) that the statement of the Westminster Confession that “God is without . . . passions” means that God is lacking in feeling and emotion. Although he objects to

a definition of feeling or emotion which would make those words mean anything different from “passions”, he does not make provision for any other faculty in God's nature which would be non-intellectual and non-volitional.

Secondly, to round out the picture, Dr. Clark apparently does assume that God has both intellectual and volitional faculties, for he talks about the decretive and preceptive will of God, as well as about God's knowledge.

As for Dr. Clark's views on human psychology and religious activity, the evidence is much more complete. Again, Dr. Clark must not be accused of splitting up man's soul into sections, with one of which he thinks, with another of which he wills, and so on. It would even appear that Dr. Clark is reluctant to speak of distinct faculties (pp. 39-40), but he is willing to do so at least for the sake of argument. Presumably his reluctance *is* in the interests of protecting the unity and integrity of the human soul, which is indeed a commendable motive. However, quite a bit is said about the relation between the various faculties or activities of the undivided human soul, which merits close study.

While Dr. Clark is “willing to admit [that] the intellect and volition and emotion are equally essential to a human being”, he maintains that “they have different functions” and “that the intellect is a supreme function” (p. 13).. The intellectual apprehension of God is man's “method of enjoying God forever and . . . the greatest religious activity” (p. 13), and he equates the contemplation of God with glorifying and enjoying God (p. 14). Volitional activity on man's part is considered a means to the end of intellectual contemplation (29:3-6; 39:15-24; 40:19-41:1; 42:6-10). Of all the activities that are colloquially called “emotions”, love was the only one prominently mentioned in the examination; Dr. Clark considers love, in the theological sense, as volitional (29:11-12). By exclusion, however, Dr. Clark denies any important place in man's religious activity to anything which is colloquially referred to as an “emotion”; at best, that would also be a means to the end of contemplating God.

This statement of the “primacy” of the intellect carries with it certain ideas about volition as such. The activity of the will which Dr. Clark subordinates to intellection seems to be little more than “a voluntary act of paying attention”, which results in an intellectual apprehension (29:3-4). If it may be assumed that outward acts are also the results of volitional activity, then the volitions that give rise to our obeying God's commands also seem to be of a low level, for glorification of God is said to include “the *ordinary* act[s] of obedience on a *purely common* plane such as “Thou shalt not steal” (32:1-4; italics added). In any case, such volitions are held to be on a much lower level than intellectual contemplation of God.

Above all, however, Dr. Clark's statements about the primacy of the intellect in man's religious activity must be connected with what he says about “knowing” in other connections. To sum up in the clearest available quotation what has been clearly stated already, Dr. Clark says, “The only kind of knowledge [with] which I am familiar is the knowledge of the proposition; knowledge is the possession of truth, and the only truth I know anything about is a proposition” (22:18-21). The clear meaning of Dr. Clark is, then, that man's highest religious activity is to have an intellectual apprehension of propositions contained in God's knowledge, such as “two plus two equals four”, or “God is love”. Dr. Clark frankly says that he does not know what is meant by knowing the love of God (22:10-21); man's religious activity must be confined to knowing such things as the fact that God is love. This knowledge, to be sure, is supposed to include volition and perhaps even emotion, but aside from merely paying attention in order to learn, nothing is said about any but the purely intellectual activity of apprehending propositions. In fact, it is perfectly clear, from the statements that man's highest religious activity is intellectual and that intellection means knowing propositions, that Dr. Clark conceives of man's religion

as nothing greater than knowing propositions as such. This knowing of propositions cannot, in the nature of the case, reflect or inspire any recognition by man of his relation to God, for the simple reason that the propositions have the same content, mean the same, to God and man. It would seem clear without going any farther that Dr. Clark has done one of two things: either he has emasculated the words “emotion” and “volition” so that they imply almost none of the ideas that are customarily assigned to them in colloquial usage, or he has ruled them out of the intellect in spite of his statements to the contrary. Dr. Clark deserves the highest commendation for his faithful opposition to any form of humanistic emotionalism in theology. However, when his position is compared with the teachings of the Bible, the Westminster Standards, and also with the writings of Reformed theologians, it unfortunately begins to appear that he is in grave danger of falling into the equally serious error of humanistic intellectualism. No Calvinist would for a moment deny the tremendous importance of knowledge and of the intellect; a Calvinist might even say that knowledge is the first requirement of such a religious activity as faith. However, neither the Bible nor the standards nor the theologians of the Reformed tradition support such a view of the primacy of the intellect as that outlined above.

What, in the first place, is the Reformed teaching about the aspects of God's nature, or, if you will, the faculties which reside in God? That God has knowledge and will is agreed by all. The questions that must concern us are two: Does God have what may properly be called “emotions”? and, what is the relation between God's faculties?

If we assign to the word “emotion” an *a priori* definition which in the nature of the case identifies emotion with “passions”, it would obviously be denying our standards to say that God has emotions (Westminster Confession, II, 1). God does not change; there is no shadow of turning in him; he is not a man that he should repent; he is immutable. Certainly, also, God does not share certain of the qualities which we call “emotions”, such as fear, longing, and surprise. If we are to speak of feelings or emotions in God at all, we must confine ourselves to his attributes which are sometimes summed up under the word “benevolence”: love, goodness, mercy, and grace. Even here, we must be careful to defend the immutable self-determination of God. But the question still remains, can these be identified with, or associated with, the idea of “emotion” or “feeling”? Obviously, we define those words in their narrow but perfectly good colloquial sense as something which arouses the will and thus determines action. In fine, is there any quality or faculty in God which is neither intellectual nor volitional, and which underlies or accompanies volitional activity? That question, in similar words, Dr. Clark studiously avoided answering (p. 16).

On precisely the same subject, Charles Hodge makes a very clear statement (*Systematic theology*, vol. I, pp. 428-9):

“Love of necessity involves feeling, and if there be no feeling in God, there can be no love. That he produces happiness is no proof of love. The earth does that unconsciously and without design. Men often render others happy from vanity, from fear, or from caprice. Unless the production of happiness can be referred, not only to a conscious intention, but too a purpose dictated by kind feeling, it is no proof of benevolence. And unless the children of God are the objects of his complacency and delight, they are not the objects of his love.”

Although love may, perhaps, be volitional, it must involve feeling or emotion—not in the sense of passions, passivity, or change, but feeling in some sense akin to those which we have, which determine our will and action. It is necessary to deny external determination in God's pity, compassion, jealousy, hatred, love, and “repentance”; but it is difficult to see how internally determined feelings can be eliminated.

As to the relative prominence or functional level of the various faculties which God possesses, nothing in the Bible or in Reformed theology indicates that any one is to be set above the others. The Bible states with precisely the same absolute force that God knows the end from the beginning, that God is a jealous God, and that God imparts gifts as he wills. The Westminster Shorter Catechism makes no distinction when it says that God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being and in all of his attributes. It may seem that Hodge, in the above quotation, subordinates volition to emotion, and that in the following quotation he subordinates intellect to volition:

“God knows himself by the necessity of his nature; but as everything out of himself depends for its existence or occurrence upon his will, his knowledge of each thing as an actual occurrence is suspended on his will” (*Systematic Theology*, vol. I, p. 397).

However, in each case Hodge is making no reference at all to a difference of functional level, but only to a logical order of economic succession. Reformed theology seems to be barren of any references to a primacy of the intellect in God. In fact, every indication is that whatever distinguishable faculties exist in God are equally prominent, equally significant, and of equal functional level. God is “a personal Spirit, infinite, eternal, and illimitable alike in His Being and in the intelligence, sensibility, and will which belong to Him as a personal Spirit” (B.B. Warfield: “God”, *Studies in Theology*, p. 111).

As for human psychology and man's religious activity Dr. Clark's position again seems to be at serious variance with Biblical, confessional, and traditional statements. From the viewpoint of abstract psychology, it is perfectly true that Reformed theologians have not been in complete agreement as to the number and names of the faculties of the human soul. In speaking specifically of the human soul Calvin mentions by name only the intellect and will (*Institutes*, Book I, Chap. XV, Sect. 6). Augustine refers to the perception, understanding, and will. The more recent theologians, however, seem to agree in large measure on the threefold distinction of intellect, emotion, and will (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. III, p. 35; A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p. 217; Warfield, *loc. cit.*; Abraham Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, Vol. II, *Locus de Homine*, pp. 68-88). There would also seem to be considerable disagreement on the relations between the faculties: Calvin bluntly says that “the intellect rules the will” (*loc. cit.*), while Bavinck (*Gereforemeerde Dogmatiek*, Vol. I, pp. 227ff.) seems now and then to think in terms of a primacy of the will. However, in both of these cases it soon becomes clear that the reference is not to functional levels; both Calvin and Bavinck insist on the total activity of the human being in religion, with no subordination of one faculty to another.

It is specifically in the sphere of religious activity, then, that the question of the relation of man's spiritual faculties to each other must be settled. The Christian, regenerated and effectually called by God's Spirit, is active in faith, in repentance, and in sanctification—though, of course, not exclusively nor initially active. In each of these three activities, the clear statements of the Reformed Faith are at variance with Dr. Clark's views of intellection, as knowledge of propositions, being man's highest religious activity.

As for faith: The Westminster Confession, Chap. XIV, Section II, says, “But the principle acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone . . .” This is in accord with Biblical language which speaks of knowing Christ, receiving him, and hoping or trusting in him. That “accepting” Christ has to do with intellectual activity, “receiving” him with emotional activity in relating him to our personal cases, and “resting upon” him with volitional activity is the universal witness of Reformed theology. A.A. Hodge combines all three in the following quotation (*Outlines of Theology*, pp. 353-4):

“The one indivisible soul knows and loves, desires and decides, and these several acts of the soul meet on the same object. The soul can neither love, desire nor choose that which it does not know, nor can it know an object as true or good without some affection of the will towards it. Assent to a purely speculative truth may be simply an act of understanding, but belief in a moral truth, in testimony, in promises, must be a complex act, embracing both the understanding and the will. The understanding apprehends the truth to be believed, and decides upon the validity of the evidence, but the disposition to believe testimony, or moral evidence, has its foundation in the will. Actual trust in a promise is an act of the will, and not a simple judgment as to its trustworthiness.”

Compare this with Dr. Clark's statements that intellection is the highest act of man, and that intellection consists in knowing propositions such as “Two plus two equals four”.

An even clearer statement of the equal function of man's various faculties in faith is given by Warfield (“On Faith in its Psychological Aspects”, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 337, 338-9, 340-341):

“The mode of the divine giving of faith . . . proceeds by the divine illumination of the understanding, softening of the heart, and quickening of the will [*cf.* Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 31]. . . . Man . . . is conscious of his dependence on God. . . . In unfallen man, the consciousness of dependence on God is far from a bare recognition of a fact; it has a rich emotional result in the heart. This emotional product of course includes fear, in the sense of awe and reverence. But its peculiar quality is just active and loving trust. Sinless man delights to be dependent on God and trusts Him wholly. . . . In this spontaneous trust of sinless man we have faith at its purest . . .

“In accordance with the nature of this faith the Protestant theologians have generally explained that faith includes in itself the three elements of *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia*. Their primary object has been, no doubt, to protest against the Romish conception which limits faith to the assent of the understanding. [!] The stress of the Protestant definition lies therefore upon the fiducial element. This stress has not led Protestant theologians generally, however, to eliminate from the conception of faith the elements of understanding and assent. . . . In every movement of faith, therefore, from the lowest to the highest, there is an intellectual, an emotional, and a voluntary element, though naturally these elements vary in their relative prominence in the several movements of faith. . . .

The central movement in all faith is no doubt the element of assent. . . . But the movement of assent must depend, as it always does depend, on a movement, not specifically of the will, but of the intellect; the *assensus* issues from the *notitia*. The movement of the sensibilities which we call 'trust', is on the contrary the product of assent. And it is in this movement of the sensibilities that faith fulfills itself, and it is by it that, as specifically 'faith', it is 'formed'”.

As for repentance: The Shorter Catechism could not be more clear in regard to the three aspects of man's soul being active in repentance (Q. 87):

“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”

If a sense of sin and apprehension of God's mercy are not intellectual, if grief and hatred are not emotional, and if turning with purpose and endeavor is not volitional, then words do not mean

anything; and these are all equally “high” aspects of this particularly religious activity of men. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 includes precisely the same elements: the knowledge of sin instilled by Paul's first epistle, godly sorrow for sin (accompanied by indignation, fear, longing, and zeal) and an earnest care which manifested itself in clearing themselves and avenging the wrong done. Again, there are three equally important and lofty functions in repentance: intellectual, emotional, and volitional.

As for sanctification: “we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God” (Shorter Catechism, Q. 35). Sanctification is, in a sense, continual or repeated repentance, so far as man's activity in it is concerned. Accordingly, all that has been said about repentance applies here with equal force. There is an important additional point, however, and that has to do with the specific words that we are “renewed in the whole man after the image of God”. That very work was begun and, in its essential form, accomplished in regeneration. In regeneration the original moral image of God, consisting of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, was restored to us. Sanctification is a continual progress toward that image in our outward lives. But if that process includes intellect, emotion, and will, then surely we would expect to find all three of those aspects in the image of God in man. The conclusion is justified: we find precisely that in Biblical language and in Reformed theology. Just as God has those three faculties, so man, created in God's image, has them. Man is intellectually created in God's image, emotionally created in God's image, volitionally created in God's image.

A recollection of Dr. Clark's forthright denial of anything that might be “emotion” in God, cited above, will thus impress us that he not only does violence to the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine of man's religious life, but also to the tremendously important doctrine of God's creation of man in his own image. To defend the doctrine of God, to defend the doctrine of creation, to defend the doctrines of salvation, we must protest against any sympathy toward this idea of the “primacy” of the intellect.

As for man's religious activity in a more general way, Reformed Theology is equally vigorous in upholding the equal importance of all man's faculties. The Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us that “man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever”; we are to learn how to do this from the Bible alone, and the Bible teaches “what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man” (Qs. 1-3). Obviously duty, which is volitional if anything, is placed side by side with knowledge, and that duty is “obedience to his revealed will” (Q. 39), again a matter of volition. The sum of that obedience is love. (Q. 42), which just might be an emotion; and even if it is not an emotion, we are to love God with our heart, which is the best Scriptural indication of emotion.

Calvin, who so clearly gives the intellect a control over will, though not by virtue of that a primacy over will, speaks along the same line (*Institutes*, Bk. I, Ch. II):

“Properly speaking, we cannot say that God is known where there *is* no religion or piety. . . . By piety I mean that union of reverence and love to God which the knowledge of his benefits inspires. For until men feel that they owe everything to God, that they are cherished by his paternal care, and that he is the author of all their blessings, so that nought is to be looked for away from him, they will never submit to him in voluntary obedience; nay, unless they place their entire happiness in him, they will never yield up their whole selves to him in truth and sincerity.

“The effect of our knowledge rather ought to be, *first*, to teach us reverence and fear; and *secondly*, to induce us, under its guidance and teaching, to ask every good thing from him, and, when it is received, ascribe it to him. For how can the idea of God enter your mind without instantly giving rise to the thought, that since you are his workmanship, you are bound, by the very law of creation, to submit to his authority?—that your life is due to him?—that whatever you do ought to have reference to him? If



so, it undoubtedly follows that your life is sadly corrupted, if it is not framed in obedience to him, since his will ought to be the law of our lives. On the other hand, your idea of his nature is not clear unless you acknowledge him to be the origin and fount of all goodness. Hence would arise both confidence in him, and a desire of cleaving to him, did not the depravity of the human mind lead it away from the proper course of investigation. . . . He by whom God is thus known, perceiving how he governs all things, confides in him as his guardian and protector, and casts himself entirely upon his faithfulness,—perceiving him to be the source of every blessing, if he is in any strait or feels any want, he instantly recurs to his protection and trusts to his aid,—persuaded that he is good and merciful, he reclines upon him with sure confidence . . . —acknowledging him as his Father and his Lord, he considers himself bound to have respect to his authority in all things, to reverence his majesty, aim at the advancement of his glory, and obey his commands,—regarding him as a just judge . . . , he keeps the judgment seat always in his view. . . .

“Such is pure and genuine religion, namely, *confidence in God coupled with serious fear.*”

Pure and genuine religion is not, then, merely intellectual apprehension of propositional truths.

So also Bavinck (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Vol. I, pp. 276-277):

“The result is, therefore, that religion is not limited to but one of man's faculties, but pervades the whole man. The relationship to God is a total and central relationship. We must love God with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength. Precisely because God is God he claims us completely in body and soul, with all our faculties and in all our relations. To be sure, there is also order in this relationship of man to God. Here also each faculty exists and works in man according to its own nature. Knowledge is first; there is no true service of God without true knowledge: *ignoti nulla cupido*, Unknown is unloved. He who goes to God must believe that he is the rewarder of them that seek him: Hebrews 11:6. Belief cometh from hearing: Romans 10:13, 14. The heathen came to ungodliness and unrighteousness, because they did not retain God in their knowledge: Romans 1:18f. But the knowledge of God works itself out in the heart and awakens there all sorts of emotions of fear and hope, despair and joy, guilt and forgiveness, misery and release, as the whole Scripture witnesses, particularly in the Psalms. And through the heart it works in turn on the will; faith reveals itself in love, in works: James 1:27, 1 John 1:5-7; Romans 2:10-13; Galatians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 13, etc. Head, heart and hand work together, each in its own way, taken captive by religion; religion takes the whole man, body and soul, into her service.”

*Cf.* also Deuteronomy 29:29: “the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we man do all the works of this law”.

“The knowledge of God, which is set before us in the Scriptures, is designed for the same purpose as that which shines in creation, viz., that we may thereby learn to worship him with perfect integrity and unfeigned obedience, and also to depend entirely on his goodness” (Calvin, *Institutes*, Bk. I, Ch. X, Sect. 2).

It may be said, indeed, that the whole glorious climax of the covenant relationship which is so essential a part of the Reformed Faith is, as witnessed by Scripture, our standards, and Reformed writers, *obedience* to God. This is still no “primacy” of the will or of any other faculty; it is simply an eminently Reformed statement of the nature of the Christian's religious activity. It certainly goes far beyond an exaltation of the apprehension of propositions.

It may be noted that the discussion so far has assumed throughout that the religious man in question is a Christian, regenerated by God. The assumption has constantly been that the unregenerate man is polluted in every thought, every emotion, and every act of his will. Precisely here must be raised a final objection to Dr. Clark's view of the primacy of the intellect. Dr. Clark does not deny the necessity or the fact of regeneration but he makes no absolute qualitative distinction between the knowledge of the unregenerate man and the knowledge of the regenerate man. With the same ease, the same "common sense", the unregenerate and the regenerate man can understand propositions revealed to man (p. 20; 28:13-16; 31:13-17; 34:13-35:2).

The result is simply this, that all men have a certain amount of religious activity, some more and some less, some with more falsehood mixed in and some with less, but all with some; there is not one shred of evidence that man's religious activity undergoes any qualitative change through regeneration. That bears all the earmarks of rationalism, humanistic intellectualism. It seems to share the very same vicious independence from God that obtains in the voluntarism and emotionalism to which Dr. Clark is so unalterably opposed.

To sum up briefly a few of the conclusions of this section, Dr. Clark's view of the primacy of the intellect is at serious variance with Scripture, with our standards, and with recognized Reformed writings, not only in the general concept of human psychology or of man's religious activity, but specifically in the doctrine of God's spiritual nature, in the doctrine of the image of God in man, in the doctrine of man's spiritual nature, in the doctrines of faith, repentance, and sanctification, in the doctrine of the covenant, in the doctrine of sin, particularly as regards its noetic effects, and in all the ethical implications of these doctrines. The variance is no minor matter; it is the product of a rationalistic dialectic. The approval or overlooking of such a variance is a matter of the utmost gravity.

III. Dr. Clark Asserts that the relationship of divine sovereignty and human responsibility to each other presents no difficulty for his thinking and that the two are easily reconcilable before the bar of human reason. He expresses surprise that so many theologians find an insuperable difficulty here. In his second examination little was said on this matter (3:11-4:7; 47:13-16), but in the first examination it received considerable attention. Reference was then made to Dr. Clark's article "Determinism and Responsibility", which appeared in the January 15, 1932, issue of *The Evangelical Quarterly*. In that article he said that it had been stated by his denomination—at that time The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.—"that the reconciliation of man's free agency and God's sovereignty is an inscrutable mystery", but he added: "Rather the mystery is—recognizing that God is the ultimate cause of man's nature—how the Calvinistic solution could have been so long overlooked" (p. 16). In the first examination he made the remark that the Stoics had already solved this problem.

It needs hardly to be said that "the lazy man's argument" does not hold. In other words, the fact that God foreordained from all that comes to pass in time, and in his providence brings it to pass without fail, does not deprive man of freedom and thus absolve him from all responsibility. To say that it does is to destroy the problem. An obvious truth, on which all Reformed theologians are agreed, is that the exercise of human freedom is itself included in the divine decree of foreordination; in a word, that this decree embraces means as well as ends. There is also perfect agreement among Reformed theologians on the presupposition that human responsibility is a corollary of divine sovereignty; that is, that man is responsible to God because God is sovereign. Again, not one Reformed theologian teaches that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are actually contradictory. However contradictory they may seem to the finite and sin-darkened minds of men, both are taught unmistakably in Holy Writ, and this must mean that for the mind of God they are perfectly harmonious.

Nevertheless Reformed theologians readily grant that there are difficulties here which they are unable to solve. L. Berkhof has stated succinctly one aspect of the problem. Speaking of the fact that God not only planned all events from eternity but also brings them to pass by his providence, he says:

Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, and Arminians raise a serious objection to this doctrine of providence. They maintain that a previous concurrence, which is not merely general but *predetermines man to specific actions*, makes God the responsible author of sin. Reformed theologians are well aware of the difficulty that presents itself here, but do not feel free to circumvent it by denying God's absolute control over the free actions of His moral creatures, since this is clearly taught in Scripture (*Systematic Theology*, Second Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1941, p. 174).

Berkhof admits the difficulty, but, instead of seeking to solve it, is content to abide by the plain teaching of Scripture. The greatest Reformed theologians have always done likewise.

After setting forth the doctrine of reprobation Paul says in Romans 9:19, “Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? The point of this objection to the apostolic teaching is that divine sovereignty as manifested in reprobation leaves no room for human responsibility. Paul's answer begins: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” (Romans 9:20). Calvin comments:

In this first answer he does nothing else but beat down impious blasphemy by an argument taken from the condition of man: he will presently subjoin another by which he will clear the righteousness of God from all blame.

He proceeds:

But they who say that Paul, wanting reason, had recourse to reproof, cast a grievous calumny on the Holy Spirit: for the things calculated to vindicate God's justice, and ready at hand, he was at first unwilling to adduce, for they could not have been comprehended; yea, he so modifies his second reason, that he does not undertake a full defense, but in such a manner as to give a sufficient demonstration of God's justice, if it be considered by us with devout humility and reverence.

And then Calvin says:

He reminds man of what is especially meet for him to remember, that is, of his own condition; as though he had said,—“Since thou art man, thou ownest thyself to be dust and ashes; why then dost thou contend with the Lord about that which thou art not able to understand?” In a word, the Apostle did not bring forward what might have been said, but what is suitable to our ignorance. Proud men clamour, because Paul, admitting that men are rejected or chosen by the secret counsel of God, alleges no cause; as though the Spirit of God were silent for want of reason, and not rather, that by his silence he reminds us, that a mystery which our minds cannot comprehend ought to be reverently adored, and that he thus checks the wantonness of human curiosity. Let us then know, that God does for no other reason refrain from speaking, but that he sees that we cannot contain his immense wisdom in our small measure; and thus regarding our weakness, he leads us to moderation and sobriety.

It is evident that Paul, instead of seeking to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility by means of human logic, silences those who regard them as contradictory by a strong assertion of divine sovereignty. It is equally clear that Calvin follows faithfully in the apostle's footsteps.

In perfect harmony with his comment on Romans 9:19, 20 is Calvin's comment on the rhetorical

question of Romans 11:34, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” Says Calvin:

If anyone will seek to know more than what God has revealed, he shall be overwhelmed with the immeasurable brightness of inaccessible light. But we must bear in mind the distinction, which I have before mentioned, between the secret counsel of God, and his will made known in Scripture; for though the whole doctrine of Scripture surpasses in its height the mind of man, yet an access to it is not closed against the faithful, who reverently and soberly follow the Spirit as their guide; but the cause is different with regard to his hidden counsel, the depth and height of which cannot by any investigation be reached.

In his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* part I, p. 115, Geerhardus Vos compares the teaching of Romans 9:1-29 with that of Romans 9:30-10:21. He says:

For the apostle both are certain: the free, sovereign counsel of God, which does not derive its motives from the works of man, and the full responsibility of man to his Creator. He discusses both in order. An attempt to reconcile the two logically with each other the apostle has not made. And we too may make no such attempt. But it is much more reprehensible still so to pervert and distort the content of Romans 9:1-29 as to fit it somehow into what follows. Both sides must stand next to each other, unreconciled for our thinking, but each in its full right. To wish to explain Romans 9 from Romans 10 is rationalistic exegesis.

In his *Outlines of Theology*, pp. 221f., A. A. Hodge considers the contention that the Reformed doctrine of predestination is inconsistent with the liberty and accountability of man. He says:

Paul answers this objection by condescending to no appeal to human reason, but simply (1) by asserting God's sovereignty as Creator, and man's dependence as creature, and (2) by asserting the just exposure of all men alike to wrath as sinners.

The reference is to Romans 9:20-24. Elsewhere he says:

We have the fact distinctly revealed that God has decreed the free acts of men, and yet that the actors were none the less responsible, and consequently none the less free in their acts.—Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:27, 28; Genesis 50:20, etc. We never can understand *how* the infinite God acts upon the finite spirit of man, but it is none the less our duty to believe (p. 210).

Abraham Kuyper comments in his *Dictaten Dogmatiek, Locus de Deo*, part 3, p. 108, on Matthew 26:24, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born”. Says this outspoken supralapsarian:

Jesus says three things here: (1) this crime with reference to me *must* be committed, (2) he who is to commit this crime will suffer eternal *condemnation*, (3) to prevent that he should not have been born and he was born *according to the decree*. However man may talk, the fact that this culminating sin *was included in the decree* is not only taught definitely in Holy Scripture by apostles and prophets, but by the Lord Jesus himself, while he who commits this sin, *far from being innocent, is punished with everlasting damnation*. After these two have been placed alongside each other, the Lord Jesus ventures no attempt at solution; on the contrary, he confronts his disciples still more pointedly with the impenetrability of the mystery by saying: “It had been good for that man if he had not been born.”

Here then is a situation which is inadequately described as amazing. There is a problem which has

baffled the greatest theologians of history. Not even Holy Scripture offers a solution. But Dr. Clark asserts unblushingly that for his thinking the problem has ceased being a problem. Here is something phenomenal. What accounts for it? The most charitable, and no doubt the correct, explanation is that Dr. Clark has come under the spell of rationalism. It is difficult indeed to escape the conclusion that by his refusal to permit the scriptural teaching of divine sovereignty and the scriptural teaching of human responsibility to stand alongside each other and by his claim that he has fully reconciled them with each other before the bar of human reason Dr. Clark has fallen into the error of rationalism. To be sure, he is not a rationalist in the sense that he substitutes human reason for divine revelation as such. But, to say nothing of his finding the solution of the problem of the relation to each other of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the teaching of pagan philosophers who were totally ignorant of the teaching of Holy Writ on either of these subjects, it is clear that Dr. Clark regards Scripture from the viewpoint of a system which to the mind of man must be harmonious in all its parts. The inevitable outcome is rationalism in the interpretation of Scripture. And that too is rationalism. Although Dr. Clark does not claim actually to possess at the present moment the solution of every Scriptural paradox, yet his rationalism leaves room at best for only a temporary subjection of human reason to the divine Word.

The history of doctrine tells us that the view under discussion is far from innocent. The tenet that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are logically reconcilable has been held by two schools of thought, both of which claimed to be Reformed but neither of which was recognized as Reformed by the Reformed churches. One of these schools is Arminianism. It meant to uphold both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, especially the latter, but in its rationalistic attempt to harmonize the two it did great violence to the former. The other school is Antinomianism. It also meant to uphold both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, especially the former, but in its rationalistic attempt to harmonize the two it did great violence to the latter. Dr. Abraham Kuyper has described Antinomianism as “dreadful sin which occurs almost exclusively in the Reformed churches”. He says that what accounts for this phenomenon is a one-sided emphasis in much Reformed preaching on God's decretive will at the expense of his preceptive will. He deems it essential to hold that Scripture distinguishes between the sphere of divine sovereignty and the sphere of human responsibility and “that this distinction is so absolute that one can never pass from the one into the other” (*Dictaten Dogmatiek, Locus de Deo*, part 3, pp. 113f.). In light of history we cannot but hold that his rationalism exposes Dr. Clark to the peril of Antinomianism.

Here attention must be called to his treatment of human responsibility in the article “Determinism and Responsibility”. Reformed theologians generally are exceedingly circumspect when they discuss the relation of the divine decree and divine providence to the sin of man. There is excellent reason for their carefulness. They are zealous to maintain God's holiness as well as his sovereignty, and they are just as zealous, while upholding divine sovereignty, not to detract, after the manner of the Antinomians, from human responsibility. But Dr. Clark says boldly: “Does the view here proposed make God the Author of sin? Why the learned divines who formulated the various creeds so uniformly permitted such a metaphorical expression to becloud the issue is a puzzle. This view most certainly makes God the First and Ultimate Cause of everything. But very slight reflection on the definition of responsibility and its implication of a superior authority shows that God is not responsible for sin” (p. 22). It is meaningful that Dr. Clark is not careful to say, as so many Reformed theologians are, that God is not the efficient cause of sin (e.g. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 108.)

Dr. Clark adds significantly:

It follows from this that determinism is consistent with responsibility and the concept of freedom which

was introduced only to guarantee responsibility is useless. Of course man is still a “free agent” for that merely means, as Hodge says, that man has the power to make a decision. It is difficult to understand then, why so much effort should be wasted in the attempt to make the power of deciding consistent with the certainty of deciding. If there be any mystery about it, as the Brief Statement says, it is one of the theologian's own choosing. For God both gives the power and determines how it shall be used. God is Sovereign (p. 22).

To sever human responsibility from human freedom, as is here done, is a serious departure from generally accepted Reformed theology. Charles Hodge says that a truth “of which every man is convinced from the very constitution of his nature” is “that none but free agents can be accountable for their character or conduct” (*Systematic Theology*, vol. II, p. 293). He contends further that the Bible teaches “that man is a free and responsible agent, because he is the author of his own acts, and because he is determined to act by nothing out of himself” (p. 307). But Dr. Clark contends without qualification that God both gives the power of deciding “and determines how it shall be used”. The Westminster Confession of Faith also links together human liberty and human responsibility when it says “God from eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established” (III, I). To be sure, the term “responsibility” is not employed here, as is the term “liberty”, but in the statement that God is not the author of sin it is plainly implied that man is the author of sin and hence responsible for it.

We conclude, in spite of Dr. Clark's professed adherence to chapter III, section I, of the Confession (3:11-19), that his rationalism has resulted in his departing from the historic Reformed doctrine of human responsibility. In his attempt to reconcile by human reason divine sovereignty and human responsibility he has done decided violence to the latter.

IV. In the course of Dr. Clark's examination by Presbytery it became abundantly clear that his rationalism keeps him from doing justice to the precious teaching of Scripture that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect, and that he has no pleasure in any one's rejecting this offer but, contrariwise, would have all who hear accept it and be saved.

Dr. Clark constantly speaks of the gospel as a command. That it is a command permits of no doubt. But only reluctantly does he admit that the gospel is also an offer and an invitation (8:9, 10; 23:5-24; 48:21-25). This is strange, to say the least. The Westminster Confession of Faith (VII, III) say that in the covenant of grace God “freely *offereth* unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ”. And the Shorter Catechism (Q. 86) defines faith in Jesus Christ as “a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is *offered* to us in the gospel”.

Dr. Clark steadfastly refuses to describe as *sincere* the offer which God makes to sinners in the gospel (e.g., 7:8-15; 10:10-18; 24:3f.). This is surpassing strange. To be sure, the Westminster standards do not employ the word *sincere* in this connection; but is it not a foregone conclusion that the offer is sincere? Would it not be blasphemy to deny this? For that very reason there was no need of the Westminster divines' describing the gospel offer as sincere. Its sincerity goes without saying. But obviously that is not Dr. Clark's reason for refusing to characterize it as sincere.

When the Arminian controversy was at its height the Reformed churches faced a different situation. It was contended emphatically by the Arminians that the Reformed doctrine of reprobation rules out the

sincerity of God's offer of salvation to the reprobate and that, consequently, the Reformed faith has a gospel only for the elect. Precisely the sincerity of the gospel offer was now at issue. And so we find the Synod of Dort, which was summoned to deal with the Arminian heresy and which consisted of representatives of the Reformed churches of almost all of Europe, declaring unmistakably and emphatically:

As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word what will be acceptable to him; namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation (Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 8).

In the course of his examination Dr. Clark did indeed express agreement with this teaching of Dort (24:5-20), but he made it clear in doing so he conceived of the gospel as a command (48:24-49:9. See also 8:9f.). He said that it is the preceptive will of God that those who hear shall believe the gospel, and it is “acceptable” to God that they do so because he insists on being obeyed. But the Synod of Dort *obviously* meant much more than that when it employed the word “acceptable”. That appears from its description of the gospel as an invitation, from its insistence that all who are called are called “unfeignedly”, as well as from the fact that it was refuting the Arminian contention that the Reformed faith leaves no room for a sincere offer of salvation made by God to the reprobate. What the authors of the Canons had in mind was that God has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11).

In this connection reference must again be made to Dr. Clark's view that God has no emotions. If this definition of emotions be granted, God certainly has none. But at this point in the examination it appeared that Dr. Clark regards God as being without feelings of any kind. He denied emphatically that Ezekiel 33:11 and the statement in the Canons of Dort which was just discussed can have any reference to emotions in God, for God has no emotions (49:15-50:1). See also 29:11f.). Clearly Dr. Clark is consistent here in his rationalism.

The reason for Dr. Clark's failure to do justice to the aspect of the gospel under discussion is apparent. He believes—as do we all—the doctrine of reprobation. But he cannot allow of any conception of the gospel which to his thinking might do the slightest violence to this doctrine. Thus he is compelled to bring his view of the gospel into harmony with this doctrine. Having done that, he can say, as he does, that he sees no logical conflict whatever between the gospel and reprobation. In a word, his rationalism does not permit him to let the two stand unreconciled alongside each other. Rather than do that he would modify the gospel in the interest of reprobation. Otherwise expressed, he makes the same error as does the Arminian, although he moves in the opposite direction. The Arminian cannot harmonize the divine reprobation with the sincere divine offer of salvation to all who hear; hence he rejects the former. Neither can Dr. Clark harmonize the two, and so he detracts from the latter. Rationalism accounts for both errors.

It is not difficult to show that both Calvin and the outstanding Reformed theologians of recent times stressed, on the basis of Holy Scripture, which is the primary standard of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the sincerity of the divine offer of salvation in the case of all to whom it comes, the reprobate as well as the elect, even though these theologians confessed to their inability to harmonize this view of the gospel with the scriptural teaching of reprobation.

Ezekiel 18:23 reads:

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God?; and not that he should

return from his ways, and live?

Calvin comments:

God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the Gospel spread abroad in the world, but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined he is to pity . . . What the prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of a sinner, because he meets him of his own accord, and is not only prepared to receive all who fly to his pity, but he calls them towards him with a loud voice, when he sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety . . . If one again objects—this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God *always* wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God's will is simple, yet great variety is involved in it, so far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish.

In 1 Peter 3:9 it is said that the Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”.

Says Calvin:

So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost . . . But it may be asked, If God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish? To this my answer is, that no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his will as made known to us in the gospel. For God there stretches forth his hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to himself, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world”.

In Matthew 23:37 Christ, addressing Jerusalem, says

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Calvin remarks:

We now perceive the reason why Christ, speaking in the person of God, compares himself to a *hen* . . . By this he means that, whenever the Word of God is exhibited to us, he opens his bosom to us with maternal kindness, and, not satisfied with this, condescends to the humble affection of a *hen* watching over her *chickens*.

In his volume *Calvin on Common Grace* Herman Kuiper enumerates a long list of passages in John's gospel, to take but a single book, in which Calvin finds “the idea that God invites both elect and reprobate men to salvation and offers salvation to all men promiscuously”. The list follows: John 1:6; 1:11; 1:29; 1:36, 37; 1:43; 3:14, 15; 3:16; 3:17, 18; 3:36; 4:19; 5:35; 5:40; 6:31, 32; 6:36; 6:49, 50; 6:66; 8:21; 12:47, 48; 15:22; 17:3; 20:23 (p. 148). The same writer puts the question:

How can it be said that God is solicitous for the salvation of and wills the repentance of those whom he has predestinated to everlasting perdition in His eternal counsel?



Speaking of Calvin's teaching of reprobation on the one hand and on the other of his teaching of the sincere offer of salvation to all to whom the gospel comes, he asserts:

We may as well try to budge a mountain of solid granite with our finger as endeavor to harmonize these declarations.

He reasons on:

Must we then conclude that Calvin taught that God has a double will and is at variance with Himself? Our author [Calvin] expressly declares that he emphatically repudiates the view that God has more than one will. He explicitly teaches that we must not think that God has a double will. God does not in Himself will opposites. But it is impossible for us to comprehend and fathom the Most High. To our apprehension the will of God is manifold. As far as we can see, God does will what seems to be opposed to His will.

Kuiper concludes:

In short, Calvin makes it plain that in his view the paradoxes which we have just reviewed are paradoxes involved in the teaching of Holy Scripture itself (pp. 223f.).

In his *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, p. 644, Charles Hodge says:

It is further said to be inconsistent with the sincerity of God, to offer salvation to those whom he has predetermined to leave to the just recompense of their sins. It is enough to say in answer to this objection, so strenuously urged by Lutherans and Arminians, that it bears with equal force against the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, which they admit to be an essential attribute of his nature . . . There is no real difficulty in either case except what is purely subjective. It is in us, in our limited and partial apprehensions; and in our inability to comprehend the ways of our God, which are past finding out.

And after quoting 1 Timothy 2:3, 4, "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth", together with Ezekiel 33:11, he says:

God forbid that any man should teach anything inconsistent with these precious declarations of the Word of God. They clearly teach that God is a benevolent Being; that He delights not in the sufferings of his creatures . . . God pities even the wicked whom He condemns, as a father pities the disobedient child whom He chastises. And as the father can truthfully and with a full heart say that he delights not in the sufferings of his child, so our Father in heaven can say, that He delights not in the death of the wicked (p. 651).

Says Herman Bavinck in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. IV, p. 7:

Although through calling salvation becomes the portion of but a few, . . . it [calling] nevertheless has great value and significance for those also who reject it. It is for all without exception proof of God's infinite love and it seals the statement that He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but therein that he turn and live.

In *The Christian View of Man*, pp. 74f., J. Gresham Machen says:

The doctrine of predestination does not mean that God rejoices in the death of a sinner. The Bible

distinctly says the contrary. Hear that great verse in the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel: 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

He goes on to say that in his opinion 1 Timothy 2:4 “means very much what that great Ezekiel passage means”.

Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology*, pp. 460ff., upholds both the universality and the sincerity of the gospel invitation. He says:

It is not confined to any age or nation or class of men. It comes to both the just and the unjust, the elect and the reprobate.

He offers as irrefutable proof Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else”. He proceeds:

The external calling is a calling in good faith, a calling that is seriously meant. It is not an invitation coupled with the hope that it will not be accepted. When God calls the sinner to accept Christ by faith He earnestly desires this; and when He promises those who repent and believe eternal life, His promise is dependable. This follows from the very nature, from the veracity, of God. It is blasphemous to think that God would be guilty of equivocation and deception, that He would say one thing and mean another, that He would earnestly plead with the sinner to repent and believe unto salvation, and at the same time not desire it in any sense of the word.

And when faced with the objection that according to this doctrine God offers the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to those for whom he has not intended these gifts, Berkhof admits frankly that there is “a real difficulty” at this point, but insists that it may not be assumed that there is a contradiction.

Incidentally it maybe remarked here that when, in 1924, one of the very few churches in this country which takes the Reformed faith seriously deposed certain ministers of the gospel, one ground, among others, for this action was the denial by these ministers of the sincerity of the divine offer of salvation to all men.

The supreme importance for evangelism of maintaining the Reformed doctrine of the gospel as a universal and sincere offer of salvation is self evident.

Again we are confronted by a situation which is inadequately described as amazing. Once more there is a problem which has left the greatest theologians of history baffled. The very Word of God does not present a solution. But Dr. Clark asserts unblushingly that for his thinking the difficulty is non-existent (35:20-36:2; 47:1f.). Here is something phenomenal. What accounts for it? The most charitable, and no doubt the correct, explanation is that Dr. Clark has fallen under the spell of rationalism. Rather than subject his reason to the divine Word he insists on logically harmonizing with each other two evident but seemingly contradictory teachings of that Word, although in the process he detracts from one of these teachings.

The conclusion is inescapable that Dr. Clark's rationalism has resulted in his obscuring—to say the very least—a significant teaching of Scripture—a truth which constitutes one of the most glorious aspects of the gospel of the grace of God.

\* \* \*

It will appear from the above examination of the views of Dr. Clark as they were propounded to the Presbytery of Philadelphia that these errors are far from being peripheral. The very doctrine of God is undermined by a failure to maintain a qualitative distinction between the knowledge of God and the knowledge possible to man, thus denying the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God and impinging in a most serious fashion upon the transcendence of the Creator over the creature. The interpretation of Christianity as being fundamentally intellectualism subordinates the volition to the intellect in a manner that is flagrantly in violation of the teaching of Scripture and of the Reformed theology. Similarly emotion as an element in the mind of God and in the mind of the Christian is disallowed. And the views concerning human responsibility and of the free offer of the gospel likewise clearly affect decisively one's conception of matters that are of the greatest possible moment to every Christian.

Nor do these errors concern only isolated details. In all of these matters there is manifest a rationalistic approach to Christian theology. The highest activity in man is the intellectual activity; his highest goal is the intellectual contemplation of God. In connection with his answer to the question as to the extent to which man may comprehend God, Clark admits the dependence of man upon the revelation of God but, on the basis of a rationalistic dialectic, maintains that any knowledge that man possesses of any item must coincide with God's knowledge of the same item in order to be true knowledge, thus failing to distinguish between the Creator's knowledge of any thing and creaturely knowledge of the same thing. And, even though he speaks of the infinity of God's knowledge, he does not rise above a quantitative distinction between the content of the knowledge of God and the content of the knowledge which man may possess. And in pursuance of his effort to penetrate into the mind of God he sets aside, or attempts to set aside, by resort to reason, the paradoxes which Reformed theology has recognized as existing for the human mind between the divine foreordination and human responsibility and between predestination and the divine offer of salvation to all men, with the consequences that the doctrines of human responsibility and of the free offer of salvation to all fail to be set forth in any adequate way. These innovations are then not curiosities of an innocent sort, but concern some of the most central doctrines of the Christian faith, including even the all-decisive subject of the doctrine of God. And the result of this rationalistic approach to theology is a failure to maintain the balanced, comprehensively Biblical, character of historic, classic Calvinism which is set forth in the standards of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

In bringing this complaint to the attention of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the complainants further petition the Presbytery to make amends as follows:

If the Presbytery is not ready to acknowledge that the meeting of July 7<sup>th</sup> was illegal and that all of its acts and decisions are therefore null and void, the complainants request that it acknowledge that various views of Dr. Clark as set forth in that meeting, and with which this complaint is concerned, are in error and in conflict with the constitutional requirements for licensure and ordination, and that, therefore, the decision to sustain his theological examination, the decision to waive two years of study in a theological seminary, the decision to proceed to license Dr. Clark and the action of licensing him, the decision to deem the examination for licensure sufficient for ordination, and the decision to ordain Dr. Clark, were in error and unconstitutional, and are, therefore, null and void.

*(Signed)*

JOHN WISTAR BETZOID  
EUGENE BRADFORD

R. B. KUIPER  
LEROY B. OLIVER  
N. B. STONEHOUSE  
MURRAY FORST THOMPSON  
WILLIAM E. WELMERS  
PAUL WOOLLEY  
CORNELIUS VAN TIL  
EDWARD J. YOUNG  
DAVID FREEMAN  
ARTHUR W. KUSCHKE, JR.

The undersigned hereby subscribes to the complaint against certain actions of the Presbyery of Philadelphia taken at its meeting on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944, to the extent of concurring in the statement of the reasons for the complaint as set forth herein: LESLIE W. SLOAT.