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BASIC REQUISITES IN OUR THEOLOGICAL THINKING

POLESTAR, chart and compass, necessary as these are for the safety of navigation, furnish striking illustration for the method of our theological thinking. Our polestar is special revelation; our chart is Holy Scripture; and our compass is the theologically scientific mind which is able to keep the right course as indicated in the chart, as it points absolutely true to the polestar. The Modernist has no polestar, but he is charmed by a *Fata Morgana*, as Kuyper has so ably developed in one of his brilliant lectures. The chart of the Modernist is the crazy patchwork of biblical excerpts and evaluations, of philosophical speculation, and of selections from other religions. The compass of the Modernist is a complex of the aberrations of thousands of subjectivities. And what is the result? The heavens have been falling. The foundations of things are being overturned. Men are running bewildered in all directions. According to much testimony, the power of the Church is lost, and its dissolution is but a question of time. It is boldly asserted that missionary work must be thoroughly overhauled, if it is not unnecessary altogether. Even truth has become an unknown quantity. Morality is represented as but a conventional arrangement. What shall we believe, say the people, when even ministers of the Gospel have no definite convictions? And as for education, even our Christian colleges are with small exception no longer true to the wisdom of their founders and are gravitating to the dead level of religionless state universities; some of them without compunction of conscience as respects the dead when they disregard the purposes of funds left by last will and testament for specific Christian ends. Small wonder that atheism is boldly lifting its head and bids fair to prosper as never before.

We most solemnly believe that at the root of the trouble lies a mistaken standpoint in theological thinking. Certain basic requisites are little known; and even when pointed out, are not perceived. Theological craft of all descriptions are sailing stormy seas; anchors are being thrown out to ensure safety; and it is often discovered that even then ships are constantly dragging anchor, for there is no firm hold, no basic truth, no reality.

I. THE SITUATION

We begin our discussion with a reminder of the wide differences of opinion in theological thinking. Our denominations and sects arose on account of divergent views of doctrine and polity, but always on the common basis of evangelical belief. These divergences were, of course, sad enough, but they are not to be compared with a greater evil which has latterly arisen and affected them all alike. We may conceive of the Church as having been divided, formerly, by vertical lines; today all of them alike are divided by a horizontal line, so that they each and all are wrestling with the same basic problem. It is the question as between orthodoxy and modernism, the former standing for a bona fide acceptance of Holy Scripture in its entirety, with a prima facie interpretation of its contents; while the latter rejects much of it and interprets the remainder according to subjective ideas. The former holds Scripture in peculiar reverence and regards it as authoritative; while the latter may admire much of it, but is inclined to treat the old feeling for Scripture as antiquated, outworn, taboo. In *The Christian Century* of January 3rd, 1924, appeared an editorial entitled: "Fundamentalism and Modernism: Two Religions." With sharp discrimination that article correctly sized up the situation. It asks: "Or are the fundamentalists right in claiming that the issue is a grave one, going to the roots of religious conviction and involving the basic purpose and almost the genius of Christianity itself?" It continues: "A candid reply to such inquiries must be of agreement with the fundamentalist claim. It is to be doubted that the average churchman whose sympathies are in the main with modernism has any adequate appreciation of the sharpness and depth of the issue . . . that they are foundation differences, structural differences, amounting in their radical dissimilarity almost to the differences between two distinct religions."

All Modernists may not quite agree with this and declare that this is an extreme position. However, the principle tends in that direction. If one begins to set his foot upon the diverging path, the logical destination is certain. I say: the *logical* destination. For though many hold the principle, the old tradition still exerts its benign influence, and a subconscious fear restrains many from fully committing themselves to its implications. Not all are as considerate. Dr. William Newton Clarke wrote: "Many too are wondering whether they shall be compelled

to go, and are looking with alarm on the perils that beset the way. Is it possible, these inquirers ask, for a man to make the change with regard to the Bible without losing his faith, not to say his soul?" But Dr. Clarke had no compunction. It has shocked and grieved me to read in the same book: "Students are very slow to accept a considerable alteration of their general conception of the Bible. . . . But it may be the duty to shock him out of some of the ideas that he brought with him" (*Sixty Years With the Bible*, pp. 214, 215). But these were the ideas of pious parents who had felt in their own experience and shown forth in their lives the powers of the heavenly world. Dr. Clarke, alas, succeeded but too well in committing spiritual murder.

Dr. Robert Norwood, of St. Bartholomew's, New York City, wrote: "There are three forces revealed in the life of the Church today. They are materialism, scepticism and mysticism. Scepticism is manifested in what is called the Liberal movement, Modernism. Although it has set the Bible free of fetishism and taboo, it is essentially sceptical and too closely identified with the academic method which we believe is the essential evil of the hour. We can make no compromise with a system of education that is turning infidel youth out of America" (*The Christian Century*, December 31st, 1930).

It is notorious that seminary after seminary has left its ancient moorings and has been flooding the world with men who no longer proclaim the evangel of repentance from sin, faith in the atoning blood of the Redeemer, and a final judgment based on the acceptance of God's unconditional terms of entrance into eternal life.

Our opponents themselves, Christian and non-Christian, bear witness. Listen to what Walter Lippman said at a testimonial dinner to him: "If we ask ourselves what it is that we are certain of in our national life, what it is that we are surest of, what it is that we can defend with our clearest conscience, with the least hesitation and doubt, I do not think we can name a single, concrete policy or principle. We do not know the answer to all our problems. We do not even know what all our problems are. . . . We are compelled to say that the goal is hidden, that we can see only a little of the road and that the road we see is not very clearly marked" (*The Christian Century*, May 30th, 1931). What a testimony to doubt and darkness; what closing of the eyes to the light that has actually shined from heaven! It is all a groping about of blind

men. It is asking for the way whilst refusing Him who is the Truth and the Way and the Life. For note again this striking title of an editorial in *The Christian Century*: "The Cult of the Questers," and we read in it: "Liberalism in all fields, but especially in religion, is plagued with a sense of irresponsibility arising from this one-sided devotion to the sheer process of seeking" (May 20th, 1931). In the same journal a review of Dr. C. W. Gilkey's, "Meeting the Challenge of Modern Doubt," appears, in which "Dr. Gilkey offers the outstanding arguments for the interpretation of religion based on our modern scientific knowledge of the origin and development of the race." And the author says in his book: "Christianity has silently cast off its ancient moorings and like a ship leaving the harbour lights astern, is now voyaging towards a new world beyond an uncharted sea" (*The Christian Century*, October 7th, 1931). Here you have the open confession that Scripture cannot serve as a chart: modern scientific knowledge as an evolutionary process is the *ignis fatuus* which is sure to lure the self-deceived seeker into deeper difficulty, if not destruction.

Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, of Union Theological Seminary of New York City, himself a Liberal, has a self-condemnatory article in *The Christian Century* of March 25th, 1931. The astonishing title is: "Let Liberal Churches Stop Fooling Themselves." He writes: "The dogma is that the world is gradually growing better and that the inevitability of gradualness guarantees our salvation. The Liberal Church has held to this dogma ever since John Fiske and his school made the doctrine of evolution acceptable to the religious mind and heart. The moral obfuscation which has resulted from this ethical interpretation of the doctrine of evolution is difficult to measure. . . . The real fact about our civilisation is that it is flirting with disaster. . . . We conduct our international relations with a social imagination hardly worthy of primitive savages. . . . The mistake of the Liberal Church lies in its identification of an easy evolutionary optimism with the desperate and heroic optimism which can arise out of and be justified by only a heroic defiance of the forces of nature which so largely control the life of human society. . . . The result is that it fails to understand the diabolical aspects of human life."

The Rev. William Henry Spence writes in *The Congregationalist* on the subject: "Modernism Begins to Take Inventory."

We quote in part : " The destruction of the Bible's infallibility, has ruined its authority for multitudes. In reaction from the doctrine of literal inspiration they have thrown over all dependence upon it as a spiritual guide-book. To some Liberals it has become little more than a source-book of rather doubtful value for historical study. In the resulting confusion both the man in the crowd and the Liberal scholar often are like a sailor who has thrown over chart and compass, and vainly tries to steer his course under a sky whose stars are hidden by the clouds. When one thinks of what the old faith in the Bible did for our fathers and mothers and the kind of family life it inspired them to create, one feels less and less inclined to swagger over the fruits of the so-called modern view of the Bible. . . . But what of us, the sons of such parents, with the advantages of our higher learning, real or supposed ? Must we not confess that a glory has departed from us ? Has our Liberalism given us an equivalent for that which we surrendered when we gave up our parents' belief in the Bible ? The necessity is upon us to find something to give us what the Bible gave them, the feeling of security in a trouble-ridden world, clearness and definiteness in religious convictions, the accent of authority in our testimony of religious experience, and a firm, sure hold of faith in Christ—or else Liberalism will yet become the great apostasy" (*Christianity Today*, November, 1930).

New England today is a striking example of this very process with its bitter fruits, and the blight is rapidly spreading westward. In 1808 Andover Seminary was founded by the strictly orthodox in protest against the Liberalism which was then already invading Harvard. Moneys were left to Andover for those express purposes. Professors were to sign an iron-clad statement, to be repeated every five years, certifying to their orthodoxy. However, the apostasy has slowly gone on, so that today orthodoxy has disappeared and Andover has been merged in a Liberal institution, flouting the last wills and testaments of the fathers, and this sustained by the Supreme Court of the State of Massachusetts. What must we think of the morality of these "enlightened" men ? And what is New England today ? Its churches lie in spiritual death. " For a generation a majority of its communities have been slipping into a state of spiritual apathy that is appalling. There are eight hundred closed churches, scores of towns without a single church service. . . . I know of counties in Vermont

where less than four per cent of the population attend any Protestant church regularly. In one city the total church attendance for a week averages about three hundred, and the sale of movie tickets 13,500. New England, soaked with blood and sacrificial gifts, the heart-cries of God's children, the seed-plot of most all that is worth while in America today, has been and is the most neglected part of America. This is due to Unitarianism and its later counterpart Modernism. The home of Puritan virtue and political liberty has become a stronghold of Romanism, and Boston, the Cradle of Liberty, is the seat of a Cardinal and so intolerant that in its public library, the second largest in the United States, and built up exclusively by Protestant donors, a book like Robertson's 'The Roman Catholic Church in Italy,' praised highly by both King and Premier fifteen years ago, was taken from the shelves and put in the 'Inferno' where improper books are kept and is not allowed to go out" (in part quoted from *The Sunday School Times* of July 11th, 1931).

The Christian Century of March 18th, 1931, had a striking article on "The Impotence of the Modern God," by Prof. W. M. Horton, of Oberlin, O. We quote: "A certain woman spoke with a rush of pent-up vehemence, a touch of bitterness of 'the impotence of your modern God.' This unspoken protest lies rankling in the breasts of multitudes today. They have seen in the sturdy lives of their Puritan fathers, and in the serene faces of their Puritan mothers, what invigorating and sustaining potency can flow into human existence when it is rooted and grounded in God. But their fathers' God is no longer theirs; and in the modern 'improved' concepts of God which are proposed in place of the one they have abandoned, they sense a fatal lack. . . . If the God of modern liberal religion impresses people as impotent, then he is doomed, and liberal religion is doomed, no matter how rationally satisfactory it may be."

Prof. Horton continues rather disappointingly: "The *idea* of God, then, is eternal; but *ideas* of God are temporal. . . . Let us lay hold upon the worthiest and mightiest deity man is capable of embracing; and may the best man's God come out victorious! The event is in the hand of God—not my God or your God, but the Unknown God, half-veiled and half-revealed, who draws us all on in the quest of self-fulfilment, of which he is

the goal." Again we remark, how much doubt and darkness reside in this professor of theology in the seminary which the saintly and mighty Finney founded !

We refrain from giving further quotations, and we cry out in alarm and indignation, What is the matter with these people professing the Christian religion ? They have lost sight of the polestar, and they have cast chart and compass overboard. The captains are steering the ship according to individual whims and guesses. There is nothing objective. Editorials in outstanding periodicals, best-seller books, reviews, all betray the unmistakable tendency that things pertaining to the Christian religion are objectively on a very doubtful and insecure footing. Scarcely any reckoning is made with Scripture ; whatever is taken from it, is "evaluated" so as to accord with subjective apprehensions. The Bible is allowed to contain much that is good, but the large admixture of the crude and false needs to be thrown out, and everything must be brought up-to-date. However, the standard to which this is to be brought up, is subjective. And by this token the number of standard tallies with the number of subjectivities. As in olden times the Chinese vendor of weights and measures made them to order, less or more, according to the purposes of the customer, so the modern theologian creates his own god as he thinks he ought to be. To the Modernist a paramount authority in religion does not exist. The word of the one is as good as that of another. So, where is the polestar by which the ship is to be steered ? Whose compass of all these modern brand-new varieties, many "made in Germany," but not a few in the United States as well, will you choose ? In the storms of life and thought with which our frail enough barque has to contend, steersmen are obliged constantly to cast anchor, and these are found as constantly to be dragging. In other words, all systems of theology and thought which are not based on what is bed-rock truth cannot but constantly shift ground as the winds of criticism blow upon them and rocks loom ahead. The various philosophies have been changing to the present hour. Even Natural Science, part of which, at least, goes by the name of "exact" science, is in a remarkably *inexact*, almost inchoate condition. For listen to Prof. Northrop, of Yale University : "Thus we find ourselves at the end where we were at the beginning. In truly Greek fashion thought has run full circle" (*Science and First Principles*, p. 288). "This throws an entirely new light upon the nature of

the course of Western civilisation, and upon the degree of finality of modern thought. In fundamental matters we have not gone beyond the Greeks. We are still facing their problem" (*Ibid.*, p. 51). If such is the situation in "natural" matters, how great the need of something beyond the human in things spiritual! What guarantee can there be for the truth of any religion which has no objective authority? And Liberals feel this themselves, for many of them openly give warning of their plight. Says Dr. Abba Hillel Silver in his book, "Religion in a Changing World": "Much of our religious thinking in recent years has been characterised by nervousness and timidity. In the face of the widely-heralded new world of the scientific mould and temper, religious thinking, especially of the liberal type, has become diffident and panicky. Never was liberal theology in such a mortal funk as it is today. For it has finally come face to face with its real foe—the Apollyon of materialism, agnosticism and atheism. Heretofore, the religious liberal was engaged rather pleasantly in attacking orthodoxy. In his onslaught upon the crumbling citadels of orthodoxy, the liberal could command all the battering rams of modern science. . . . But the battle suddenly swept far beyond the fundamentalist-modernist sector. The main positions of religion itself, of all religion, the liberal's included, are now attacked by the ancient and bitter and powerful enemy—materialism and atheism. And this time it is the enemy who is in possession of the weapons of modern science. In this major attack upon religion, the orthodox religionist finds himself in a stronger position than the liberal. The orthodox entrenches himself in a supernaturalism against which the attacking waves of scepticism hurl themselves in vain. He is bulwarked behind revelation and tradition. The liberal, however, must fight in the open, and with weapons which, he suspects, are not as strong or as modern as those of the enemy" (pp. 1, 2).

And Protestant theological thinking need not be orthodox even to come to the same conclusion. The late Prof. C. A. Bennett, of Yale University, wrote a small book on "The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge." In *The Christian Century* of September 2nd, 1931, Prof. F. S. C. Northrop writes an able review of this book. In referring to the dilemma, he says that "Protestantism is intellectually bankrupt," because it affirms a religion, as Bennett indicated, which "is a sham and a pretence without metaphysical foundations"; with "preachers who are

intellectual side-steppers who cover their inherent atheism and agnosticism with a torrent of metaphysically empty phrases: it has no metaphysical foundations for its claims." What Prof. Northrop wants is this: "Obviously, the only adequate solution of this problem is the discovery of a metaphysics which enables one to accept the verified first principles of modern science and at the same time provides metaphysical foundations for the ontological claims of religion. A religion which is worth anything must make ontological claims which can be justified only by a metaphysical theory of the nature of things." Prof. Northrop puts the matter correctly, and though his terms are susceptible of some interpretation, we accept the challenge and propose in this paper to squarely meet the conditions, doing so on the basis of the far too little known works of the Dutch professors, Kuyper and Bavinck (both deceased), men of great learning, of clear vision, and having a consummate grasp of the full range of all knowledge as it is related to the Divine purposes. Dr. Bavinck was also an expert in philosophical thought.

Prof. Bennett insisted that "religion is not religion unless it raises the question of fact." Just so. The ontology of the matter is that religion must be a reality and as such must be truth in every way. In other words, our Christian religion is not a merely subjective something without objective content, but it has a veritable object, or rather a complex of objects to which the mind is directed, and which induces faith, adoration and devotion. And, just as botany has its own distinctive objects to be investigated, and just as astronomy has another distinctive class of objects for investigation, so likewise the Christian religion has its own generic object or complex of objects which appeal to the human intellect. And this investigation also must be done in a careful and discriminating manner. This process we call *science*.

Before proceeding it will be necessary to examine the rather arrogant attitude of so-called "scientists," as if they only have "science" and the theologian not. Webster defines science thus: "Science is any branch or department of systematised knowledge considered as a distinct field of investigation or object of study." Herbert Spencer says in his "First Principles": "What is science? To see the absurdity of the prejudice against it, we need only remark that science is simply a higher development of common knowledge. . . . Nowhere is it possible to draw a line and say: here

science begins." It has been attempted to save the situation for unbelieving scientists by speaking of the "exact sciences." But mathematics is perhaps the only really exact science, as even chemistry is losing this distinction because the very constitution of matter is becoming more and more a mystery. It is also predicted that within twenty-five years geology will undergo a radical revision. *Exact science?* What arrogance to so denominate it, when it rests upon such insecure foundations! For, listen again to Prof. Northrop: "Certain things have happened in contemporary science which are of great importance. . . . It is evident something has happened which must eventually change the philosophy of each one of us. . . . Nor must anyone suppose that the problem which we face affects only philosophy; a solution of it is even more necessary for science. . . . Stated bluntly, this means that scientists do not fully understand their own discoveries because the first principles, which make all technical discoveries intelligible, are in a state of flux. . . . A change which strikes the very foundation of things is upon us" (*Science and First Principles*, pp. 1, 2). It must, therefore, be strictly kept in mind that science is a *method*, so that it is not determined by its object. Hence, although metaphysics, psychology, etc., are not within material reach of the investigator, they are nevertheless important objects of research, and this research is *science*. Likewise the Christian theologian has his complex of objects which severely tax his mental powers, and this too must be done in a well-reasoned manner, and thus it as well is *science*. Bavinck has written a fine book on *Christelijke Wetenschap* (translated "Christian Science," but this term must not be confounded with the Eddy cult). He argues that as God is the Creator of all things, He is to be considered in every branch of learning in the light also of that Word in which the God of truth and of all wisdom speaks. He writes in another notable book: "It is often represented as if only the special science of theology concerned itself with God and divine things, and as if all other sciences, particularly the natural sciences, have nothing whatever to do with God; nay, as if they would forfeit their scientific character and become disloyal to their task should they refer to Him or take account of Him. However, a chasm is thus created objectively in the sphere of reality between God and the world; and subjectively in man, between his intellect and heart, his faith and knowledge, even if the very existence of God be not denied

and all right of existence be refused to faith" (*Phil. of Revelation*, p. 83). Furthermore, when one speaks of Naturalistic sciences, it must not be forgotten that even these contain elements which cannot be separated from philosophy and subjectivity. The wise of this world, therefore have no monopoly on science. And far from being bluffed by them, we most resolutely and emphatically believe that Christianity is the most objective truth: it possesses the most important facts of existence; they are the most real and best authenticated facts. Their investigation still constitutes theology the *Queen of Sciences*.

II. THE REMEDY

Having pointed out the very serious harm which is entailed in thinking along ill-conceived principles in theological science, we now proceed to indicate the remedy which ensures safety, power and comfort as the result of correct theological thinking with its benign effect upon life in all its aspects.

The twenty-seventh Psalm concludes with a moving statement: "If I did not believe to see even yet Jahve's grace in the land of the living —." As you know, the apodosis is lacking in the Hebrew text. Supply anything you like. This very omission is eloquent. Indeed, what is life without something tangible, reliable, solid, true? Without these things despair lurks at the door. We want none of that. Thank God, we are in possession of the most solid and reliable good: *there is revelation!* God has spoken. He has spoken clearly. He has spoken with sufficient clearness to comport with our range of apprehension. Besides, in His marvellous grace He has caused what is necessary for us to know, to be recorded, and to be handed down to us to this very day. Surely, it is recorded in such a way, that there need be no doubt. Doubt in this case is simply the *unwillingness* to see what there is to see! Unbelief, even that of the Modernist variety, *will* not see. It is pathetic to note how averse learned men are to accept the explanations which remove so-called difficulties in a simple, and adequate way. (Example: God "repents" and cannot repent.) Unless we accept special revelation, we have no polestar in guiding our course, and we run grave danger of spiritual shipwreck.

First of all we call the attention of the reader to a book of exceptional value and directly pertinent to our subject. It is

that which contains the Stone Lectures, delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1908-1909, by the late Prof. Dr. Herman Bavinck, of the Free University of Amsterdam. The book has the title : *Philosophy of Revelation*. In ten chapters, Dr. Bavinck, whose reading was of the widest, including the most of our modern languages, sweeps the field of philosophy and theology. The chapter headings are : The Idea of a Philosophy of Revelation ; Revelation and Philosophy ; and then he treats of Revelation respectively as related to Nature, History, Religion, Christianity, Religious Experience, Culture, and the Future. He fairly exhausts all that has been thought and sought by all kinds of thinkers in their quest for reality, and Bavinck patiently and thoroughly examines them and shows how unsatisfactory and empty they all are. He ends his chapters in every instance by pointing out the sufficiency of divine revelation to fully meet every requirement of mind and heart. In my judgment the book is a most magnificent performance, and deserves repeated perusal. A book like this takes away every cause for such apprehension as the Psalmist mentions in the verse of the Psalm quoted above.

My main object in writing this paper is to point to another work, which is even more basic than that of Dr. Bavinck. It is written by his famous predecessor in the chair of Dogmatic Theology in the same Free University of Amsterdam. This writer is the late Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper. He again raised Calvinism to honour, and under God was instrumental in rehabilitating true religion in the Netherlands which had suffered under a withering blight of liberalism for upwards of a century. He was also a statesman of the first rank, the leader of his party which idolised him. As politics in the Netherlands is based largely on religious ideas, he led those of the orthodox persuasion. In the middle of the nineteenth century the cultured and fine-grained Groen van Prinsterer had been its lone representative in the States General, and fought against overwhelming odds ; and in his latter days, Groen, almost disheartened, gave over the reins to the then youthful Kuyper. The liberals dubbed him and his class as " the night-school," " the non-thinking part of the nation," etc. However, founding a weekly paper and a daily, Kuyper so ably laboured in his cause that eventually his party actually gained a large number of seats in the States General and in coalition with the members of the Catholic political party more than once formed the government of the Queen. At one time

Kuyper himself was Prime Minister for four years. In the days of the Reformation little Holland occupied a front rank among the nations of Europe, the blessing of God upon her orthodoxy. But she went down to weakness and obscurity as for about two centuries rationalism and modernism held almost absolute sway. Today, however, the once all-controlling Liberal party is about played out, its place taken by the Socialist and Communist parties, while those of the Right, among whom there is faith in special revelation, viz. Catholic and various Protestant groups, dominate the national policies. And again, so it seems, little Holland is once more gaining a considerable place in the sun, through the blessing of God on her return to His word and His truth.

Kuyper's great work is his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, issued in 1894. The original Dutch edition consists of three volumes. The second volume has been translated into English and contains an introduction by Dr. B. B. Warfield. We fear that altogether too many of these volumes stand unsold on the shelves of the Scribners. It is a shame! It is to weep over! Our theological public is so charmed by the glitter of theological brass and tinsel, that this pure gold is recognised about as well as to its intrinsic value as the Hottentot children understood the value of the stones with which they were playing and which eventually proved to be diamonds!

Kuyper's *Encyclopedia* goes to the roots of matters. It lays foundations. Whoever is willing to stand upon them feels firm. You actually have there what Prof. Bennett calls for in his *The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge*. And you have there what Prof. Northrop calls for, who states that our intellectual Protestantism is bankrupt, and he declares that provision must be made for "metaphysical foundations for the ontological claim of religion." He repeats it thus: "Truly there can be no adequate theory of religion without a metaphysical philosophy of religion." This is the very thing the *Encyclopedia* in question gives.

Let us first of all quote what the author says about the need of such an *Encyclopedia*: "Having had my own university education under Scholten and Kuenen in a sphere of wholly different theological ideas [than the orthodox Reformed], and having been charmed later on in no less a degree by the *Vermittelungstheologie*, he found no rest for his heart and mind than when his eyes were opened to the depth, the earnestness and the beauty

of the Reformed Confession which has come to us out of those spiritually rich days when Calvin was a world-power, not only in the theological but also in the social and political world" (Introd., I, vi.).

"However, much as I value the fresh exuberance of mystic life, which nowadays can be observed even among extreme tendencies, nevertheless without something additional, theology can never be built up out of mysticism. Theology has never lived nor flourished than out of the root of its own principium; and this principium cannot be found outside of Scripture unless its character as a principium for the conscious life of the Church be lost. It was therefore decidedly necessary to return to the old doctrine of the *Principium Theologiæ*. Not simply to take this over bodily out of the older theology, but by means of further development to enclose it in the forms of our modern consciousness. It will be a matter of gratitude to me if this exposition of the *Principium Theologiæ* shall contribute if but something to put solid ground under the feet of our Reformed theologians" (Introd., II, v., vi.).

From this the reader will notice wherein lies the strength of this Encyclopedia; namely, to indicate our one sole authority: and that Scripture *is* this in such a manner as to constitute it a *principium*. You cannot go *back of*, or *under* a principium. You have no Christian religion and you can do little with it unless, as Aristotle says of every subject of investigation, you *assume* it. What this means, Kuyper explains in this Encyclopedia, and we shall come to it.

As has already been stated there are three volumes in the original Dutch. The first is the introductory volume, and the third discusses particulars. It is now in order to give a general, but necessarily very short account of the argument pursued in the second volume, since that gives us the basic requisites in our theological thinking. One's heart sinks within him when he is obliged to pass by and adequately summarise so much wealth of thought whose beauty and grandeur can best be appreciated when its very presence and fulness is enjoyed, as he who climbs the Alps best feels its indescribable thrill and awe.

It is a great gain for theology today that the mechanistic conception of the universe has well nigh been generally given up by scientists of note, who now feel that a Prime Mover must be postulated as the only source and origin of the kosmos. And this

very situation, which was not yet in evidence when the Encyclopedia was written, adds to the clinch of Kuyper's argument. It is as follows :

Theology is one of the sciences because it respects a very important realm of thought and life. The Creator has constituted an organic relation between the kosmos and the human mind. Hence the human mind perceives not only the facts, but also enters into their relations. The facts of the kosmos are not only of a material, but also of a spiritual character. The investigation of the latter is rather elusive, because of the subjective element, which has acquired a dangerous exponent from the fact of sin which has darkened the clearness of perception and vitiated the honesty of the disposition.

The object of theological study is not, strictly speaking, God Himself. We cannot know Him unless He places Himself within the reach of the investigator. Hence the need of revelation, even special revelation, so as to be sufficiently understood. It gives us the complex of objects for our theological investigation. Theology is, therefore, the science, not of God, but of the *knowledge* of God. Nature, indeed, reveals God, but, unassisted, man gains little from this. Intentionally, and very well knowing what He did, the Lord God has communicated a knowledge of His being and His ways such as He wished it to be and in such a manner that this revelation, though not containing His absolute image, still gives it in that definite form which alone can be used by man. Only in Holy Scripture have we the deposit of the knowledge of God. Every form of rationalism and modernism builds its theology out of subjective factors, which judges by its own insight and estimation, and is loth to accept God's.

In Chapter Two (Sec. 32) Kuyper touches the very nerve of orthodox theology. He speaks of the *principium theologiæ*. A *principium* respects the *means*, not the source of acquiring knowledge. There obtains a particular and only way whereby we can acquire knowledge of God, namely, His *self-revelation*—He must *give* it. And it is given in Holy Scripture ; it is to be found *nowhere else*. Hence Scripture is called the *principium unicum theologiæ*. Scripture IS our knowledge of God.

The connection of this *principium* with our consciousness is *immediate*—not acquired by reason or argument. It is an awareness which stands upon the same level as other primordial perceptions, as, our Ego, our continuity, etc. Scripture is seen

to be such by those only who have eyes to see. The Holy Spirit gives these. Hence the Reformers grounded their faith in the Scriptures as the very Word of God on no other ground than the *testimony of the Holy Spirit*. Scripture proves itself as such in the same manner as one's person photographs itself upon the negative. Faith gives its highest certainty where in our consciousness it rests immediately upon the witness of God. Just as it is the *testimonium Dei creatoris* which gives us certainty of natural perceptions, so the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* gives us the certainty of things spiritual.

In Scripture the Lord God offers His revelation in an organically connected piece of life shot through with all kinds of Divine words and acts against the background of the human element. The Bible is so constructed that it requires one's utmost powers to obtain its import. The theologian may not proceed empirically or speculatively, but must strictly conform himself to the complex of objects *given* him. In so doing, he is dealing with the highest of realities, because God the Holy Spirit who gave the Word, also indwells the believing theologian and in him testifies to His Own. Here is the union of a sound intellectualism and a sound mysticism.

Theology can only thrive in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and in which the Holy Spirit, as the Divine Teacher, resides. Through the Holy Spirit there comes sufficient knowledge to us in three ways: (1) A personal theology, which avails to give every child of God his personal peace and comfort; (2) An ecclesiastical theology, which places the confession of the Church before the world; and (3) A scientific theology, which brings the knowledge of God in its fullest measure into the consciousness of the Church and enables it to be enjoyed the more.

It is not the manner of the Holy Spirit to have everything proceed in a mechanical and infallible way. He designs that there be spiritual struggling. This prevents stagnation and petrification. Thus the theologian is kept awake and is constantly obliged to give account of himself.

A Section then treats of the Freedom of Scientific Theology. This expression sounds strange, perhaps, as coming from this conservative theologian. Some would expect only rigid, static orthodoxy. However, numerous instances could be given to show how surprisingly broad-minded Kuyper is after all. He says: "Every study is bound by the nature of its object, and subject to

the laws which govern the activity of our consciousness. This is the freedom of the train on the rails. The theologian is bound by his *principium*, but he may not be hindered in having his studies pursue its course. The Church need not be afraid of critical studies. Pure gold invites testing. God has been pleased that in the appropriation of the truths of His revelation the human factor shall have full sway. But, provided the basic principles are right and the disposition of the theologian true, there may obtain struggle enough, but we need not fear a good outcome. The event shows that thousands come to assurance of mind through the leading of the Holy Spirit, who in the free working of our spirit, causes His rule and truth to triumph."

We conclude our digest at this point. There remains a chapter with the subject: "The Organism of Theology"; and an interesting final chapter on the "History of Theology" in its general scientific progress.

There are numerous works of a similar sterling quality. The older Protestant divines furnished material of first-class quality, and thence the later orthodox theologians drew their inspiration. Kuyper acknowledged his deep indebtedness to them and simply brought their material up to date in the best sense of the word. And thus we have rock-bottom foundation, and it is imperative that our theological thinking proceed along those lines or our safety is imperilled. Of all perils that which concerns the welfare of the soul with its eternal issues, in which the will and the honour of God are involved, ranks as the very highest.

The reader will remember the sneer which not so very long ago often met the word "theology." The result was that doctrinal study was neglected. Eyes were struck out in those days, and, blinded as we have become, we are now required to see! The problems of life and thought today press upon us harder than ever, and how pitifully inadequate is the power to meet and resolve them! Superficiality and misapprehension run riot these days. No wonder that our age has no great religious orators for the lack of great themes to stir them! Samson has been shorn of his strength and the Philistines are making sport of him. Men of massive mold, of sterling character, of strong convictions are needed today as never before. But such are not born of doubt and hesitation. And so the world around us has lapsed into indifference and godlessness and coolly ignores the spineless preaching of a denatured gospel.

Because the generality of ministers acclaims the merits of the newer theological conceptions, no one can resist following the crowd. However crazy a fashion may be (the modern short skirts, for example), even the modest fall for it. Real independence of thinking and staunch adherence to convictions, are scarce.

“ Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!”

We honour the heroism of a lone Elijah, of a Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul, Athanasius, Savonarola, Luther, Calvin, Knox, etc. We can speak with power when we have the message straight from the Throne and have the mind of the Holy Spirit. The orthodox message is that one which has gripped hearts and transformed lives! It carries an air of genuineness; it comes with authority; and has ever been well-nigh irresistible. The Chalmers, Guthries, Edwards, Whitefields, Wesleys and Spurgeons were men of might for that very reason. Modern preachers advertise their own weakness as they beg each other to do something to make their new views effective. Indeed, something very, very effective is required in these times in which cries for help from a sinking world rise up from all directions. Amid the howling storms of our times, in the darkness which has enveloped the nations of the world, there is imperative need that our steersmen once more get the position of the polestar and examine the official chart for our course. Theologians are in need of repentance as this consists in *μετάνοια* and *ἐπιστροφή*—a “change of mind” and a “return” to the Way of Life. Kuyper had to do so, and with what powerful results! Drummond nestled closer to the Blood of the Atonement on his death-bed. Chalmers and Thomas Scott are notable examples. When the evidence against Modernism is so strong and general, when even from their own midst confessions of weakness come, it seems strange that the way to safety, peace and power is not more generally sought. One cannot help being struck with the lack of appeal to Holy Scripture in much of our modern theological writing. There is seeking enough, as witness the examples we have given above, but there is no eye for the precious gold of Revelation.

Sir Isaac Newton was, according to Sir J. J. Thompson, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, “the greatest man of

science the world has ever seen." And Dr. J. H. Jeans, one of the most widely quoted of modern students in astronomy and scientific research, says of Newton that he was "the greatest man of science, perhaps the greatest intellect the world has ever seen." But, says Sir David Brewster, his biographer; "He dissolved the league which genius had formed with scepticism and added to the cloud of witnesses the brightest name of ancient or of modern times." Now Newton exalted Scripture and bowed to its absolute authority. He wrote: "I can take my telescope and look millions and millions of miles into space, but I can lay it aside and go into my room, and get down on my knees in earnest prayer and see more of heaven, and get closer to God than I can assisted by all the telescopes and material agencies of earth." An eminent mathematician of Geneva, sick unto death, wrote to Newton: "I thank God that my soul is extremely quiet, in which you have had a chief hand." Dr. Morland, F.R.S., wrote to Newton from his death-bed: "I have done and will do my best while I live, to follow your advice, to repent and believe. I pray often as I am able that God would make me sincere and change my heart." These eminent men had not thrown chart and compass overboard, and looking to the polestar, they found safety and peace for their souls.

The professors in our seminaries had better not follow the evil example of Prof. William Newton Clarke, who conceived it as his "duty to shock the student out of some of the ideas what he brought with him" from God-fearing parents who had grounded him in the Word. An infinitely better course is to electrify these charges by establishing a still stronger and living contact with the inspired Word, the condition on which the Holy Spirit will make it powerful as a two-edged sword. To that end it is indispensable to begin their introduction to the study of dogmatic theology with a thorough grounding in the foundations, in Encyclopedia according to Kuyper's acceptance of that term. Thus these young minds upon whom the future welfare of the Church so largely depends, can become "*fit*," "*competent*" (so the Greek) as ministers of the New Testament (2 Cor. iii. 6).

And all our brethren who are now in the active ministry of the Gospel do well once more to examine the foundations, and so execute their commission that like Paul they can say: "Holding forth the word of Life, that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labour in vain"

(Phil. ii. 16). " But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble ; each man's work shall be made manifest : for the Day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire ; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is " (1 Cor. iii. 12, 13).

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