

Speech in Behalf of Our School Movement"

Not so very long ago I spoke at one of your meetings which was held in the parlors of our Fuller Ave. church. I feel that I owe you some sort of apology. At that time, during recess time, some of you asked me whether I thought that your society was guilty of a Jack of enthusiasm, when I asked and tried to answer the question: Why the delay? However, that thought did not live in my soul, but I also wish to remove any doubt which might possibly exist. And, in the second place, before I speak to you for a few moments, I am glad that I need not discuss at this time the matter of our moral obligation. The editor of our Standard Bearer has very aptly treated that subject about two months ago.

As a Protestant Reformed people we are characterized by a two-fold distinctiveness. Actually but one outstanding principle characterizes us. We believe that Zion is the people or the party of the living God, who owe their existence exclusively to the sovereign grace of Jehovah in order that all glory and praise may be the Lord's, as it is beautifully expressed in that well-known passage of Rom. 11:36 where we read that all things are out of, through, and unto the Lord, unto Whom be all the praise and glory. We may view this one outstanding truth from a two-fold point of view. In our so-called ecclesiastical life, as in the preaching of the Word, we emphasize, according to the Holy Scriptures, election, man's utter depravity, particular atonement, the efficacy of grace, and the certainty of our ultimate salvation, otherwise known as the perseverance of the saints. In short we may state all this briefly by declaring that salvation is from the beginning to the end from and through our God alone.

The practical aspect of this same truth is that we must walk, with our children, as a separate people of that living God in the midst of the world. To preserve this practical aspect of the truth we fought some twenty to twenty five years ago. The now famous Three Points may indeed be regarded as having been brought into the world by those who love synthesis rather than the antithesis, amalgamation with rather than separation from the world. Worldly and carnal-mindedness is always the mother of heresy-1924 was no exception. And it is only from the practical aspect of our antithetical calling that the place and importance of the school can be rightly understood. We with our children whom the Lord has given us must walk antithetically in the midst of the world. It is surely the calling and task of the school to prepare our children for their place in the midst of

the world, in distinction from the church which prepares the same children for their future place in the sphere of the church. Our children have been receiving their instruction from those who advocate the very principles we reject. On this particular point there is no doubt among us, also among those who do not warmly advocate a school of our own. The Christian schools are surely controlled by those churches who expelled us some twenty years ago. Must we, then, not also be Protestant Reformed in the instruction of our children?-the very heart and fibre of our cause will stand or fall on the basis of your answer to this question. The antithetical instruction of our children is of paramount importance, of such importance that there is no time to lose.

In the second place our calling is clear and undebatable. We may debate this question, pro. and con., but the matter of the instruction of our children and the nature of that instruction is undebatable. We do not and may not decide what the content of that instruction shall be. Just as we may not decide whether we shall have Christian schools at all, so also we may not decide what the content of that instruction shall be. This has been decided for us. The Lord has not only commanded *Israel* that they must instruct their own children, He has also laid down the rule for us as far as the content of that instruction is concerned. This is clearly stated in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, where the people of the Lord are instructed to hear that the Lord their God is one Lord, Whom we must love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Hence, our calling is clear. On this point the Lord has not left any doubt. We must not only instruct our children. But we must ever hold before them that the Lord our God is one Lord, one in Himself and therefore one in all His dealings with the children of men, that we must love Him and Him alone with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Our children must receive Protestant Reformed instruction. This is also our baptismal pledge when we vowed before the Lord and His Church that we will instruct and help instruct our children in the doctrine of this Christian Church. And, inasmuch as we, as parents, cannot ourselves provide our children this instruction, it is therefore our calling to organize into a society in order that they may receive this instruction according to the Word of God.

In the third place I would emphasize that this can only be done by organizing into a Protestant Reformed school society wherever possible. We must certainly understand that cooperation with others, as far as the instruction is concerned, is wholly impossible. The argument of the editor of the Standard Bearer is surely pertinent in this respect. To cooperate with others in order that the schools of our day may be as pure as possible will result in the loss of our posi-

tive Protestant Reformed principles. At best, the result will be negative. We may gain the concession that they will not instruct our children arminianism but does this necessarily imply that the content of that instruction will be distinctly Protestant Reformed? The best that we may expect is a colorless instruction devoid of all distinctiveness, of all lines of demarcation. That is all that we could hope to obtain. But this, my friends, is looking at this possibility with the greatest optimism. Cooperation with others is impossible. We do not, we will not cooperate with the lie, with the principles of synthesis and worldly amalgamation which we rejected some twenty years ago. They must see things our way, or else. . . .!

Only then can we fulfill our baptismal pledge, 'carry out' the Lord's command, and safeguard our Protestant Reformed cause if we continue to develop and expand the cause for which you stand. It is twenty years ago this year that we were rejected by those churches among whom we formerly held a name and place. Not long ago we commemorated this event at our annual Field Day held in Ideal Park. Twenty long years we have testified against their heresy of "Common-grace" as taught in the churches wherein we formerly had a name and place and as set forth in the Christian schools of today. Twenty years have passed by and in the meantime at least 2 of our generations have been instructed in that dangerous world and life view which we heartily oppose. All we need to be convinced that the schools of today are controlled by the Christian Reformed Churches and that their 'conception of the Scriptures is taught there is read their annual report of the yearly gathering of the Union of Christian Schools. Twenty years already we have denied our children that which the Lord demands we bestow upon them, namely, to instruct them in the doctrine of their own Christian church. You have made a beginning to fulfill that covenant obligation. May our God grant that others in our churches may understand the calling wherewith the Lord calls them and the blessed privilege which is ours to bestow upon the seed which God has given us an instruction which is bared upon the Holy Scriptures, the privilege which is ours while it is day before the night cometh when no man can work. And may God continue to bless you and give you grace and strength to carry on, that we may speedily have a school of our own in order that the cause which we represent, which we believe to be God's cause, may be safe-guarded also for our children, and that God's covenant may therefore be continued with us and with our children.

H. v.

*Speech given at a picnic of the auxiliary of our school movement.

Natural Theology

Since the above term is historically a shifting conception an attempted definition must serve provisionally to bring our discussion under way.

We may, then, provisionally define it as the knowledge or system of knowledge of God derived from a reflection upon nature (embracing man himself, creation, and history) or an attempt to form such a system. And our interest in the discussion shall not be from a neutral History-of-religion viewpoint, but an approach and evaluation from the viewpoint of Reformed Theology.

The main material for such a discussion may be found in the well-known standard Theologies of Calvin, Brakel, Ch. Hodge, Kuyper (Dict. Dogm., Encycl. Uit het Woord, III and Bavinck). However the old sources of Reformed and Catholic theology are very desirable. Besides these there is very valuable material in the newer writings such as Schilder "Heid. Catech." Van Til's Thesis on "Common Grace," p. 66-87; Dooyeweerd, Wijsbegeerte der Wetsides, especially Vol. II, 214-259, 474-534 though this entire titanic work has rather direct bearing on the subject. Since the validity and value of this Natural theology is even today an unsettled question, it appears that not only the various spokesmen differ in their evaluation, but that they evaluate differently also the historical course of the conception. Bavinck (Dogm.) in his characteristic "dogmengeschiedtliche" method shows its general acceptance from Justin Martyr (d. 166) to Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and the highest point of theological development in the middle ages.

The Reformation brought a new development in this question as it did in so many other questions, and perhaps shows best the various phases of the problem. The Roman Catholic Theology, boldly admits and confesses a twofold theology (Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, Apr. 1870 chap. IV and Canon II, see Schaff, Creeds, Vol. II, p. 234ff.) but in its Papal Syllabus of Errors 1864 plainly shows that the two are dualistically left unrelated (same p. 213). Luther, we may recall from some of his little-known Ninety-nine Theses that appeared in our S.B. some time ago, strongly opposed the natural ability and integrity which Rome still assumed in the natural man. But Luther and his followers also lose the problem by a dualism, for on the one hand they admit that natural man may have some little obscure glimmer that God is, and he may keep a little of the law, yet in things spiritual and Divine he can have or think nothing good. See J. Mueller, Chr. Doct. of Sin II, p. 227ff). This we may observe introduces the distinction between saving and non-saving knowledge; the two spheres can even be held as contradicting