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The Christian Philosophical Enterprise
in the
Light of Biblical Prophecy

Speech
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by

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Mr. Chairman, Colleagues and Friends,

I was glad to be a participant in the First International Symposium that was held in 1976 in Driebergen, and now it is very good to be here among you in the Netherlands once again. This is the land where, under men like Professor Klaas Schilder and Professor S. Greydanus at the Kampen Theologische Hogeschool in the academic year 1939-40, and especially under the genial guidance of Professor D. H. T. Vollenhoven and -- from a bit more of a distance -- Professor H. Dooyeweerd in the years immediately after World War II, my grasp, my understanding of covenantal religion in the biblical sense greatly deepened and was very much enlarged while for the first time I really familiarized myself with the philosophy that the beloved founders of our Association were developing. Thus this land, through these experiences of mine here, is where the future course of my life was to a large extent determined. This also is the land that gave me my wife of 35 years, the place where our first child was born and spent the first year of his life and made himself ready to speak Dutch, which he still can do. So it is always good to be among Reformed Christians in the Netherlands, and I am delighted that your kind invitation has made yet another visit possible.

Much of what I came most to esteem in the Reformed circles of the Netherlands seems lately to have vanished into thin air or at least to have been muted or shunted onto the sidelines: the bold confession of the sovereignty of Almighty God, the Creator, the Lord of hosts; that He has subjected all things to His Law (ordinances); that Jesus Christ is the risen and ascended Lord of the creation; the straightforward acknowledgement that as a result of the gracious election of God in Christ, the Mediator of a new covenant, the battle of spirits is being and to be waged constantly everywhere we find men in action; the recognition that in and through that battle the Kingdom of God is coming; the clear prophetic discernment of the

simple and radical secularism of western civilization as it emerged from the Enlightenment and the French and subsequent revolutions and then boasted of an age of permanent revolution. That Reformed world is rapidly disappearing, it would seem, in family life as well as in schools and institutions training a new generation for leadership, having given way to a world characterized by the attitude of dialogue and dialectic. We live in a time that loves to erase boundaries, even the boundaries between truth and falsehood. There has been, in more than just a theoretical sense, a Hegel revival, and 'falsehood' turns out to be partial truth. The result seems to be that in many places what I knew as Reformed Nederland has lost a sense of its original aim and thus lost much of its power to give new direction to our faltering western society. For the power was in the aim: to allow the Word of God free course in our hearts and lives, thus in our acts, both individual and societal, confessing it to be the only Power capable of bringing new life and giving new and salutary direction to all our undertakings.

Such Reformed commitment to the living and active Word of God still exists here and there, but it now lacks -- what it has got to have -- effective institutional and organizational focus, first of all in the church. Accordingly, I am particularly happy to be here among my fellow-members of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy, and particularly to note, as I believe, the following two fairly recent developments: (1) a more determined effort on your part here in the Netherlands to reach out to the youth generation to form leadership cadres for a new generation of renewed Reformed life and action if God permit, and (2) -- what I believe is extremely important -- increasing zeal for reaching out with what our Association stands for to people in all the nations of the world who are pursuing academic vocations and confess Jesus as Lord. I am very glad to note what I believe is a new

sense of international responsibility in this Association. How far we have travelled from our First International Symposium of 1976, with Drs. Son and Haruna, respectively Korean and Japanese representatives of our movement listed among our speakers at this Symposium! Personally I have worked to strengthen this effort towards greater international involvement by bringing along a former student of mine, the son of Mennonite missionary parents in Japan, himself raised and schooled with Japanese children, who is, I assure you, stalwartly Reformed and greatly concerned to relate the work of our Association to the Japanese mind and experience. I am grateful that Mr. Philip Blosser has been given a part in this Symposium.

I am, I must say, very pleased indeed with the theme that was chosen for this symposium: "Christian Philosophy in the Light of Biblical Prophecy". And I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the symposium for not further burdening me as to what I should deal with in my paper. I feel that this is a critical moment in the life of our Association and I do want to be entirely free to speak to you from my heart. At the same time, please remember that I probably speak with something of a North American accent. At any rate, I speak from the distance of another continent, and there is always something precarious in that. I hesitate to speak my thoughts so freely; yet in the weeks that I have reflected on what I should say here I have continually and even increasingly felt myself moved in one certain direction. If in any way I should speak amiss or prove to be beside the point, please excuse me, ascribe it to human fallibility and limitations. But know that I only wish my words to be helpful to this Association in the carrying out of its important work for our common Lord.

For my own paper, at least, I'd like to change the wording of the theme slightly to read: "The Christian Philosophical Enterprise in the Light of Biblical Prophecy". I'm not even sure the organizers of the symposium would

consider that a change or an expansion of their intention; for I'm confident all of us have learned from our founders to think of the philosophical result as proceeding from the preceding activity of philosophical thinking, and too, to think of the philosophical task as integral with the whole of mankind's covenantal walk before God and in particular with our obligation to pass on to future generations by means of the nurturing and paedagogical processes what we ourselves inherit and accomplish.¹

So, in short, I am delighted to be one of your invited speakers because it allows me to say here some things that have been very much on my mind of late. And I am happy with the theme of our symposium because it confronts us, head-on, at this critical juncture in our history, with what I am persuaded we most need to think about: who we are and what we are about. With the precious gift of firm biblical insight our founders bequeathed to us and the example they have given us in their work, we must not make ourselves guilty of the phenomenon which Professor Santayana called fanaticism, the phenomenon of "redoubling our effort when we've forgotten our aim". Our theme is a fitting one to remind us, in rapidly changing and perilous times on a global scale, but also in the immediately surrounding environment, of our aim as an Association.

First, then, I should like to say some things about the phrase 'biblical prophecy' in our theme. I have taken that phrase, as I'm sure the organizers of this symposium meant it, not in the narrower, merely eschatological sense, as many evangelicals in my country would undoubtedly do, even though the foretelling of future events does indeed constitute an element of prophecy in the biblical sense, but

1. In its educational system and program, as in family nurturing, any culture or society discloses, in its conscious and deliberate preserving and transmitting of its character, its deepest sense of its identity in its awareness of a standard. See Werner Jaeger, Paideia I, xiii - xiv.

rather in the radical and full sense that the word 'prophecy' has in Scripture: a speaking for, a speaking on behalf of, a speaking in the name of God. A prophet is God-possessed, is possessed by the Spirit of prophecy, as John, the author of the last Bible book, was "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10) when he received his revelation. Thus a prophet, as the speaker for Jehovah, or the mouth of the Lord, declares the Lord's will ("I take no pleasure in the death of anyone .. repent and live" -- e.g. Ezekiel 18: 25-32) and the Lord's intention or plan (wrathful judgment on covenantal disobedience, victory over sin, the establishment of Jehovah's supremacy, blessing on covenantal obedience, the fulfillment of the creation design). He is under compulsion to speak (Amos 3:8); the words of God are in his soul as a burning fire until he utters them (Jeremiah 20: 7, 9).

Old Testament prophecy aims to establish the supremacy of Jehovah, binding man and all creation to the Law-word of God. It views detailed events in their relation to the divine plan, which has for its purpose the absolute establishment of the supremacy and glory of Jehovah in Israel and eventually on the entire earth. This involves the Messianic prophecies: the person of the Messiah and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The two outstanding figures among the Old Testament prophets are Moses and Elijah -- Moses, the lawgiver (cf. Deut. 18: 15, 18 with Numbers 12: 6-8 and Hebrews 3: 1-6) and Elijah, representative of the prophet's calling to bind the covenant people to the law of the Lord. The last prophetic word of the O.T. mentions them together (Malachi 4: 4-6), and in the last New Testament book the vision of the two witnesses (Revelation 11), having reference to the Church of God in its prophetic capacity, uses language (verse 6) reminiscent of the prophetic work of Moses and Elijah. Christians think at once of the scene of heavenly glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, where these two men,

Moses and Elijah, talked with the transfigured Jesus, prophetically still, about his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

The ultimate meaning and ground of possibility of prophecy becomes clear in the coming in the flesh of the Son of God, the Messiah. The incarnation, the life and public ministry, the trial and death, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is the culmination of prophecy because of the unique relation between Him and God. Matthew 11: 27 reads: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him". Geerhardus Vos, commenting on verses 25-27,² says that this passage "expresses that God has devolved upon Jesus what is his own special prerogative: the task to reveal the whole truth in all its wide extent". The term Father, Vos writes, "serves to account for the absoluteness and comprehensiveness of the task of revelation entrusted to Jesus. Because God is His Father and He the Son of God, such a delivering of all things in the realm of revelation was possible. Here, therefore, the Messiahship on its revealing side ("all things were delivered") is put on the basis of sonship ("by my Father") ... the Messiahship is of such a nature, even so far as its revealing function is concerned, that it demands for its prerequisite a wholly unique relationship to God. That the Son possesses this is guaranteed by his name and dignity as Son. The intimacy is such that God alone can know Him, and that He alone can know God. God knows Him and He knows God with an exclusive knowledge ... Jesus has this exclusive knowledge of God in virtue of His being the Son; God has this exclusive knowledge of Jesus in virtue of His being the Father.... It scarcely needs pointing out", Vos concludes, "that in this great deliverance Messiahship and sonship are distinguished.

2. Geerhardus Vos, The Self-Disclosure of Jesus, N.Y., Geo. H. Doran Co., 1926, see esp. pp. 147 - 151.

The Messiahship appears in the reception on Jesus' part of the commission to reveal all things. But the sonship underlies this as the only basis on which it could happen, and on which it can be understood. And the sonship of this Messianic Person" -- the Prophet of Old Testament prophecy (Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18) -- "altogether transcends his historic appearance... He is called 'the Son' not simply because of His being the Messiah, but because His Messiahship is determined by an anterior sonship lying back of it".

Here, then, at the point of culmination, the phenomenon of prophecy we see running through the Old Testament and culminating in the coming of the promised Prophet becomes identical with the process of God's self-revelation in His covenant. And revelation is, essentially, God coming down to our level -- think of the Old Testament theophanies --; through the Word, the Logos, by whom all things were created and in whom they all hang together; and in the Spirit, Who is the Spirit of God and of His Christ, the Spirit of Christ who, the apostle Peter tells us (I Peter 1: 10, 11) was in the O.T. prophets, pointing forward to "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow". It is interesting to note that in the first three verses of the last Bible book the words 'revelation', 'word of God', 'testimony of Jesus Christ', and 'prophecy' occur in close proximity and approximate juxtaposition. Thus too the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word". And the Epistle to the Colossians tells us (1: 15, 19; 2: 9) that "He is the image of the invisible God... For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him in Christ

all the fullness of the Deity (godhead) lives in bodily form".

That brings me to what remains as a key passage for our present special consideration. In Revelation 19: 10b we read: "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". Of it Professor S. Greydanus has written (in his commentary on the book of Revelation in the Korte Verklaring series, 3e druk, Kok, Kampen, 1955, p. 287): "For the testimony of Jesus, that is, what Christ the Lord says and witnesses about God, about Himself, about the Kingdom of heaven is the Spirit of prophecy, its content, the working of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit Himself!" We might think in this connection of what the apostle John wrote in his gospel (15: 26): "When the counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about me." In his larger commentary on the Revelation passage in the Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament series (Amsterdam, Van Bottenburg, 1925, p. 391) he says this: "These too are the angel's words, by means of which he indicates the exalted station of them who have the testimony of the Lord Christ. In or with this testimony they have the spirit of prophecy. Thus they all are prophets and therefore are all equals with John and with the angel himself. Though there may be some difference of degree, there is no essential difference. The angel said that he is a fellow-servant with John and with his bretheren who have the testimony of Jesus. To this he adds an illuminating remark to stress the exaltedness which is contained therein, namely, prophetic dignity and service, a worth equal to his own work. If the angel first came down, as it were, to all true believers by placing himself on one line with them, he now leads them up, so to speak, to the height of his own service: they are what he is, just as he is what they are: each other's fellow-servants, all of them equally inspired and qualified by God for the same exalted service of being His prophets... The genitive 'of

Jesus' in this connection is first of all a subjective genitive, indicating that the Lord Christ gave that testimony, cf. 1: 2, 9; 6: 9 etc.; 22: 16. But since the Lord's testimony was also a witnessing about Himself, Who and what He Himself was (Luke 4: 17-21; Matthew 12: 41, 42; John 8: 23-26 and others) that genitive is at the same time also an objective genitive, which speaks of a witnessing about or regarding the Lord. To possess in faith the testimony of Christ the Lord regarding Himself in such a way that it governs your inner being and very existence, all that you do and say, is to have the Spirit of prophecy. He of whom this can be said is a prophet. Since the spirit of prophecy manifests itself in causing one to have and to speak about the Lord Jesus' testimony regarding Himself,... 'all true prophets are witnesses of Jesus, and all who have the witness of Jesus in the highest sense are prophets', H. B. Swete."

All who have the Spirit will be witnesses of Jesus, and all who have the witness of Jesus are possessed by the Spirit of prophecy. Since Pentecost, the Spirit of God is poured out on all Christ's people, on each one of us, qualifying and enabling us to be prophets, to be witnesses of Jesus, that is, to have the witness respecting Jesus that Jesus had regarding Himself, a witness, as Greydanus remarked, about God, about Himself, about the Kingdom of heaven. On Pentecost Peter, standing up and quoting the prophet Joel (2: 28-32), said of the wondrous events of that day: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2: 17, 18).

We come now a step closer to the theme of our symposium: Christian Philosophy in the Light of Biblical Prophecy, or, as I have modified it for the purposes of my

paper: The Christian Philosophical Enterprise in the Light of Biblical Prophecy. For we who wish to work at our philosophical task in the light of the witness of Jesus, -- we are prophets. Let me now, then, outline very summarily what we find in the Scripture about prophet and prophecy, in order then finally to relate it to the work of our Association.

A prophet is a spokesman; he is God's chosen spokesman (נָבִיא, *nabhi*). The spirit of the prophet is taken possession of by the Spirit of God and he feels compelled to speak. He cannot help but speak the things that he has seen and heard (Acts 4: 20). There is passionate commitment, firmness of will, the fear of the Lord. The prophet, in his prophecy, is God-possessed, God-driven. And it is the witness of Jesus that is the Spirit of prophecy. What, in summary, is the prophet authorized to speak about?

First, he is a witness to God's being exalted and glorious above all that He has created, to His holiness, as when Isaiah (57: 15) speaks of "the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy".

Second, he is a witness to the sovereignty and glory of God in all His created works. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about. It is what the first section of Genesis is all about. As S. G. De Graaf writes (Promise and Deliverance I 29, 30 = Verbondsgeschiedenis I 15, 16), "In this first section of Genesis we are not just told that God created all things. What is revealed to us first and foremost is the Kingdom of God... The Kingdom of God can be described as that Kingdom in which all things have been subjected to man while man is subjected to God in voluntary obedience. It is not enough", De Graaf writes, "to tell the children that the world was created by God. They must learn more than that. If a child's heart has been touched by the Spirit of the Lord, he will also long to hear more; he will want to hear about God living in constant communion with the entire creation. This communion was present in the Kingdom

of God: man, exercising his dominion, served God... Central to this section, therefore, is the institution of the Kingdom of God. The surrounding and supportive context of this central point is the revelation that all things are from God, through God and unto God. This is exactly why God was able to institute His perfect Kingdom. Man, as king, was to direct all things unto God, that is, to God's glory. Man could do so only because all things, himself included, are from and through God". Since man fell, Christ, the God-man, had to come and give us God's communion again and through that communion revive our life. (See S. G. De Graaf, Promise and Deliverance IV 11-13 = Verbondsgeschiedenis II 311-313). This is what is meant by the coming of the Kingdom. God's grace, God's Spirit reign over us again because of Christ's obedient life and atoning death, and we are once more made glad to serve God in our lives, for His glory. But because of the presence of sin in the world there is also judgment. In this way, then, the prophet, in witnessing to the sovereignty and glory of God in all His created works, is a witness to the coming of the Kingdom. [Herman Ridderbos, De Komst van het Koninkrijk, p. 36 (italics at bottom), 39 (last 9 lines)=The Coming of the Kingdom, p. 19 (last 7 lines), p. 23 (middle)]

Third, the prophet is a witness to man's sinful condition of being in a state of rebellion within the sphere of God's Law and Covenant, thus in a state of alienation from God and of hatred not only of His sovereignty and glory, but also of himself and his fellow-man seen as (the) imager and servant of that God, a condition which has darkened his understanding of his nature and situation and of the nature of the (encompassing) world in which he finds himself. In this way the prophet is a witness to covenant wrath. God is high and exalted; He is holy. He is the sovereign Lord of hosts. Accordingly, he holds all men to the conditions of His Law and He does this through His

spokesmen, the prophets. Again, Elijah is the great example of this, as he is also of the following two points. [See Van't Veer, My God is Jahweh, Paideia/Premier, 1980, esp. pp. 39-58.] Elijah, and every true prophet, ministers to the real needs of the people. These real needs involve the economic, social and political injustice in their lives, but the true prophet recognizes that in and through all those dislocations their real need is to be reconciled and bound to the Law of God. That is why the true prophet always points to Christ, who in His active and passive obedience has reconciled to God all those who are in Him, justifying them and giving to them the Spirit of sanctification. I am reminded of Karl Barth's famous address to the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. Prof. Berkouwer writes of it³ that "in one of his side remarks, Barth said he had been dismayed to discover in the preparatory papers so little awareness of the fundamental significance of that which had happened, once for all, in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ". Reinhold Niebuhr criticized Barth's speech for its quietism, for encouraging flight from struggle and cultural obscurantism. "For Barth", though, Berkouwer contends, "the significance of God's salvation for this world was not really at issue. He called for the sort of activity in the world that would get at what was most essential in the gospel: freedom and righteousness, fellowship and responsibility. Barth had no quietistic impulse. His was not a quietism as opposed to concrete obedience. But he did want a christological analysis of authentic obedience".

(Emphasis mine)

Fourth, prophets, in bringing the Word they receive from God, are to distinguish the spirits that are in the world. Possessed by the Spirit of God, we recognize that Spirit in the world in the testimonies of men, in their actions, in their lives. I John 4:1 says: "Beloved, do not

3. G. C. Berkouwer, A Half Century of Theology, p. 184 ff.

believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world...(vs. 6) We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood." Of this last verse Professor Greydanus writes (in his commentary in the Korte Verklaring series, p. 96): "There are two kinds of people; they are completely different and the exact opposites of each other, and they show that in their whole way of life. The way a man speaks and his attitude towards the Christ of God and the word of the Gospel that preaches Him as He is and as God sent and gave Him reveal what spirit possesses him, out of what spirit he lives. The spirit of the truth is the Spirit of God's revelation in Jesus Christ."

In short, the true prophet -- and that is now a description of all of God's people -- is engaged in a fundamental battle of spirits with false prophets by witnessing to the truth. [Again, Elijah is the prime example: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand..."] He is qualified and enabled to do this by the indwelling Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth (John 14: 16,17). This involves witnessing to, pointing to the presence of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world, the community of those whom the Spirit of truth gathers out of the world. For we who by the Spirit are brought to the light are united in one Christ (John 15) and by one Spirit, and "if we walk in the light we have fellowship (community, communion: $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omega\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$) with one another (I John 1:7; cf. I John 4:13). The Church, as Paul is concerned to communicate to Timothy, is the pillar/support and foundation/bulwark of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). The truth is all that God has revealed in prophecy, i.e. in His Gospel. There follow in I Tim. 3 words that suggest an early creedal hymn which speaks of the pre-existence (by implication) and incarnation, resurrection, ascension and glorification of Christ, and of

a gospel to be proclaimed to the nations. Again we see that "the witness of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy".

One last thing must be mentioned in speaking of this battle of spirits in which, as true prophets, we are of necessity engaged. I mean the note of triumph that characterizes Jesus' own witness and all biblical prophecy. God's plan will be carried out. His Kingdom will triumph. Christ, the second Adam, overcame the temptations of Satan. "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ arose from the dead, and became the firstfruits ($\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\chi\eta$) of them that have fallen asleep (I Cor. 15: 20-23). That beautiful 'firstfruits' is a most important revealed truth the prophet is always to keep before him. In Romans 8: 23-25 we see it applied to the blessings which we receive now through the Spirit, the earnest of greater blessings to come, namely, the redemption of our bodies and the deliverance of the whole creation. After disarming the powers and authorities and triumphing over them (Col. 2:15), Christ leads us in triumph (II Cor. 2:14). So Paul speaks of hope, which produces patience. With this triumphal note, which characterizes all true prophecy, we are simply making a return to the sovereignty of God and the prophet's task to witness to that sovereignty and the absolute establishment of the supremacy and glory of Jehovah in the entire earth. "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4). But this brings us to our fifth and final point.

Beginning with Christ (John 10:16; Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:47,48; Acts 1:8), the consummation of all that it is to be Prophet, -- though there are intimations of this in all biblical prophecy (in the Old Testament) -- prophets are to extend their witness outward to the ends of the earth. Original prophecy had an ecumenical -- in that word's original meaning of "the inhabited world" -- range; only subsequently was it narrowed down to Israel, though with the promise that with the coming of the Lord's Anointed One

prophecy would extend again to all mankind, again have ecumenical range. Paul, the untimely-born apostle, was God's chosen instrument to bring His Gospel to the gentile world and its kings (Acts 9:15). The Spirit possessing the prophets drives them farther and farther afield. God's plan will not be thwarted. His Kingdom has come, is coming, will come throughout the length and breadth of His creation.

* * * *

Well, why have I taken all this time to develop these thoughts, and how had I thought to relate them to us of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy? I wanted to bring out clearly that we who are members of this Association and are Christ's men -- we are called to be prophets, we are meant to be prophets, in our thinking, critiquing, writing, publishing, in our instruction of the new generation, in the way we organize and finance (budget) our Association's efforts. That means that we are to be God-possessed, possessed by the Spirit of God, God-driven in our personal lives and work as members, and in our organized activities. Remember Professor Greydanus' words, "To possess in faith the testimony of Christ the Lord regarding Himself in such a way that it governs your inner being and very existence, all that you do and say, is to have the Spirit of prophecy. He of whom this can be said is a prophet."

We members of this Association are prophets. That means -- let us make bold to say it -- that we are not in the first place philosophers, that is, that is not the ultimate truth about our lives and work, either as individual members of this Association or in our collective work as an Association. We are prophets, and our being philosophers, or, to put it more modestly, our being engaged in philosophical work, must be understood as a moment of our lives as prophets. We may not, we cannot, actually,

separate our philosophical task from our prophetic calling as men, and it is the prophetic calling which works through in our philosophizing, not vice versa.

Our task as Christian men who are engaged in philosophical work is to be witnesses to God's glory, to glorify God in His exaltedness far above all His created works, in His holiness.

Further, our task, again as Christian men engaged in philosophical work, is to be witnesses to the sovereignty and glory of God in all His works of creation, to the reconciliation of all things to God's sovereign Rule through Jesus Christ, to the coming of the Kingdom.

Again, as Christian men who are engaged in the work of philosophy, we are to point men to their lostness, their alienation in the creation, to their having lost the meaning of their lives in the world, the meaning of experience, to point them to the fact that the real nature of the transcendental and transcendent horizons of human experience -- the continued revelational witness of God's Order -- escapes them.

Once more, in the philosophical work that we as Christians engage in, we are prophetically, thus not by our own wisdom or in our own strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring to the light in our critical analyses the spirit of the lie, of suppression and distortion that is at work in the world, however many traces of the truth may be found, and at the same time to point to the gracious revelation of the Way, the Truth and the Life and the age-old community of the Truth and fellowship in the Way and the Life, the Church of Jesus Christ, already known in the Old Testament [בְּיָדָם], out of which our analysis springs. It is in the Church of God that the community of scholars is born and flourishes, nowhere else.

Finally, as Christians engaged in our philosophical task, we are to go on the offensive to extend God's prophecy to the ends of the earth, to all the nations of the world,

and, in pushing outward, always to be busy proving, that is, putting to the test, the spirits that are at work everywhere in the world, confident that He who is in us, and who by His Spirit binds us together in the bonds of love, is greater than he that is in the world, and that our Lord's intention is, as He has told us, the establishment of His supremacy over all His creation and the fulfillment of the creation design. All, however, in His own time and in His own way.

The Spirit of truth, dwelling in the hearts of believers and there bearing witness to the testimony of Jesus (John 15:26), urging them forth into the oikoumené to witness to the testimony of Jesus, -- He it is who effects in us the fervency of a genuine faith, the passionate commitment, the determination of will, the enthusiasm, the zeal, the spiritual power of witness that is associated with the fear of Jehovah. The only enlightening, convincing power there is in the whole wide world is the working of God by His Word and Spirit in the community of reborn mankind. I think first of all of the dynamism you feel in the Acts of the Apostles. But I think also of the life work of an Augustine, a Huss, a Bradwardine, of a Calvin, of 19th century pioneer missionaries, of so many others whom we honor in the history of the church.

Is our Association marked by these characteristics? Do we have this prophetic power? The power, the will to extend our witness to the nations of the world, to set aside and overcome other spirits (again not in our strength, but in the power of the Spirit), to exult (by faith) in God's sovereign working in the world, to glorify God and enjoy Him -- always? Does this not all arise from what the Scripture calls "the fear of the Lord"? Is this prophetic power clear in our work? Is it sensed by our students? Is it felt in our working environments? Or are we, in our philosophical work, cool and detached men of Wissenschaft, impressing upon our students and colleagues all the true insights there are in the non-Christian cults of the world and the

philosophies of unbelievers.

I put these questions with this amount of emphasis, first because, in general, I am, and have long been, troubled by the image of itself that the Dutch Reformed world, whether here in the home country or in Dutch communities overseas, seems to project to the broad Anglo-American evangelical world. Often it seems to be the image of an ethnically introverted, too cerebral, 'cool' group of Christians enjoying their heritage of Dutch art, for example, and their "gezellige" family life, but lacking in prophetic intensity. I know that a number of misunderstandings enter into this image that Anglo-American evangelicals throughout the world so frequently have. Some of the misunderstandings are fundamental, as, for instance, the failure to understand the nature of our covenantal life with God in the family relationship. But these misunderstandings, I am sure, are not the chief reason for the image that is received. And now, of course, the situation is complicated by the extreme and pervasive secularization of all classes of the society, and even of traditionally Christian communities, and the rapid falling away from a biblically grounded life-style and way of thinking that appears to characterize the Dutch Reformed world, especially noticeable since the 1960's, but in reality detectable in significant ways at least since the passing of Kuyper (1920) and H. Bavinck (1921).

Since the rise of the neo-evangelical movement in the U.S.A. I have heard spokesmen of that movement refer a number of times to the U.S. Christian Reformed Church as a "sleeping giant". Undoubtedly the World War I experiences of a young generation, combined with a generational reaction against the older immigrant 'narrowness' and 'isolatedness' led in that Reformed community to an overemphasis on certain passages of A. Kuyper's De Gemeene Gratie (Common Grace) and a misreading of his intention with the reviving and development of that doctrine. The result was a muting of

the prophetic voice of this Reformed community in our North American society just at a time of gross self-indulgence (the 1920's). Many of our most gifted students from that time drifted off into the secular universities, humanist political parties and labor unions, and the N.Y. world of the arts and media just in an age when all the restraints a Christian witnessing community had preserved in our North American society were being broken down and a hellishly destructive egocentrism was breaking out all over, too rapidly for us to get any hold on it in order to deal with it, to attempt to redirect it.

Recently, Richard Lovelace, making a plea for evangelical renewal in his book The Dynamics of Spiritual Life (published by Inter-Varsity, 1979), wrote that "one of the few parts of the church which was still intelligently seeking the biblical-cultural synthesis dreamed of by Comenius and Edwards was one which was still feeling the impact of the Reveil.. At the end of the 19th century, the great Dutch theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper, inaugurated a tradition of theological integration which took seriously both the ... antithesis between redeemed and unredeemed thinking - and common grace... - God's blessing of all men, converted and unconverted alike, with gifts of truth and beauty and ethical value.... While Kuyper himself incorporated a powerful experiential core in his theological outlook, the later Amsterdam school has sometimes been hampered by an incipient aversion to Christian experience, the effect of the reaction in Dutch Christianity against the excesses of Dutch Puritanism. This may explain why the movement has so far failed to have the impact and the growth associated with intellectual leaders in the Awakening tradition... (but) it is not hard to imagine what a powerful intellectual force would be released in Western culture if the Reformed orthodox community... would recover the dynamics of renewal which characterized the earlier awakenings." (p. 181 f.) Now I know there are

misunderstandings involved here; I am not interested at this point in discussing them. I am concerned about the projected image. About that, it seems very clear, there can be no doubt.

As for the Dutch Reformed community in the Netherlands itself, I read recently that in an interview in Nederlands Dagblad Dr. Willem Glashouwer spoke of plans that were crystallizing for a new International Christian University in the Netherlands, to be opened possibly in 1983. The reason, Glashouwer was quoted as saying, is the humanistic-materialistic spirit of the present universities. No exception was mentioned. Abraham Kuyper's instinct in founding the Free University was good, he is reported as saying, yet Kuyper was too much a cultural optimist. [Is that again a reference to his exposition of the doctrine of common grace?] Though the Free University still has professors who are positively Christian in their scientific work, the school, in the judgment of Glashouwer, can no more be called a Christian university.

Now -- let me say it again --, I do not bring up these matters in order to argue with anyone about any one of them. I want simply to indicate the image the Dutch Reformed world too often -- whether rightly or not -- seems to project. And of course the rapid changes in the traditionally Reformed world here in the Netherlands in the course of the past decade or so simply complicate and intensify the picture.

I bring these things up in this paper only because the Dutch Reformed world is, after all, the matrix and home-base of our Association's life. What happens there, or is true of it, is bound to have an immediate effect on the life of this Association.

At the same time, it must be recalled not only that the movement represented by this Association from the beginning voiced certain biblically supported criticisms of what was then the prevailing Reformed mind, but also that a lack of

prophetic intensity, of evangelical fervor, of the fear of the Lord as the fundamental guiding principle of Calvinistic living in no way characterized the lives and the work of the founders of our Association -- and, indeed, of many others with them, but I shall limit myself to them. While recognizing that they too were sinful men, we remember, especially on this occasion because of the theme of this symposium, the religious intensity there was in their work that clearly derived from their strong desire, their will, to live wholly by the light of God's holy Word.

They were the inheritors of such a biblically-directed way of life. I think of Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer's "The Gospel against the Revolution", and his identification of European liberalism as a muted advocacy of the principle of the Revolution and its continuation, and especially of this seminal assessment he once made of 19th century society: "Modern society, with all its excellences (emphasis mine, the development of creational potential and recognition of traces of truth in the Lie), having fallen into bondage to the theory of unbelief, is being enticed more and more to a systematic repudiation of the living God" (the Antithesis, the Battle of spirits). I think of Abraham Kuyper's Pro Rege, which, published just a few years after De Gemeene Gratie, seems to indicate that a different interpretation of the latter work will be required than has generally been given to it hitherto in my North American Reformed circles (though not only there).

But their own witness -- I'm talking about our founders -- was unambiguous and emphatic, and they can not justly be made the butt of the evangelicals' criticisms.

I remember it as though it were yesterday, and I can never forget how my whole being thrilled when I read for the first time Professor C. Veenhof's moving description of his experience as a theological student in the 1920's and early '30's of the time in which our Association was organized in

Amsterdam.⁴ Veenhof described that low-point in Reformed life as

"a heyday of criticism and relativism in theology and philosophy. The best spirits struggled against the flood; they felt it to be a question of life and death, for the church and for themselves. But in their work, in their study, they were unable to cope with the situation. The leaders did not fathom the danger; they were, though entirely unawares, deeply entangled themselves in the snares of all kinds of accommodation to the ideas of their mortal enemies. A paralyzing defeatism took possession of large groups. A subtle psychologism destroyed in many the power and glory of a childlike faith... The ethicistic religiosity of the N.C.S.V. [Nederlandse Christelijke Studenten Vereniging, Dutch Christian Student Union] infected the entire student world. A man was almost ashamed of being Reformed... Moreover, already an emerging bourgeois spirit, a spirit of rigidity, a growing spirit of worldliness in political activity in leading circles of the Reformed world had become offensive to men of a fine and keen spirit."

It was in the midst of this crisis, as Veenhof tells the story, that S.G. De Graaf, A. Janse, K. Schilder, Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd and others appeared upon the scene. Of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd Veenhof writes that the Kampen students -- he was one of them -- heard them and were convinced by them in the student congresses held at Lunteren. "A new world", as he recalls it, "was opened up to us".

"Everywhere God's Spirit was at work. Oh, no, nothing special happened actually. It was just that for a great many people the Scripture suddenly became clear. It was as though God's loving hand brushed away the dust that scholasticism and mysticism, pietism and every other kind of subjectivism and individualism had heaped upon His Word, in order that that Word might once again send forth its clear sound and shine forth as a lighthouse to give direction in a dark night."

4. C. Veenhof, Om de "Unica Catholica", Oosterbaan en Le Cointre, N.V., Goes 1949. See esp. pp. 51-58.

When this Association for a scripturally grounded and directed philosophical enterprise was established in 1935, Professor D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, the man who was to be its president for the next 28 years, spoke the following telling words. We do well to ponder them often in private and to remind ourselves of them regularly in public. "It is a glorious and blessed thing", he said on that auspicious occasion,

"that brings us together here. It is not philosophy; for that is not the first thing in our life. It is rather the attachment to God's Word, because we have learned by grace to want to live only out of the Christ, and religion, as a matter of the heart, has become the root-center of our life in its totality; because we have learned that only in attending to the commandments of the Lord are peace and life to be found, not only for the individual, but, to be sure, also for all those associations of life in which we find ourselves. This is why philosophy does not occupy the first place here. It has never held that position in our circles, and if the Association which we now propose to erect remains faithful (emphasis mine) to its task, it will not be its fault if philosophy should ever become the prime consideration. We wish only to take that which is the main thing seriously in the philosophical work that we do... That is something we badly need; for the philosophy that is current knows nothing of all this that is so dear to us: nothing of God, if you understand by that the God of the Scriptures; nothing of a heart that can find rest only in Him; nothing of a world-history that is bound up with the first and the second Adam; even very little of any difference between the spheres, the distinguishing of which in the practice of life proves to be so very essential."

Although Professor Dooyeweerd's utterances are often found in the midst of a philosophical discussion, often one of great complexity and abstractness, their meaning is not one bit less unambiguous. Very simply, they all the more strikingly illustrate the point I am trying to establish.

In the Foreword to the New Critique of Theoretical Thought there is the passage celebrated everywhere the name of Dooyeweerd is known:

"The great turning point in my thought was marked by the discovery of the religious root of thought itself, whereby a new light was shed on the failure of all attempts, including my own, to bring about an inner synthesis between the Christian faith and a philosophy which is rooted in the self-sufficiency of human reason. I came to understand the central significance of the "heart", repeatedly proclaimed by Holy Scripture to be the religious root of human existence. On the basis of this central Christian point of view I saw the need of a revolution in philosophical thought of a very radical character. Confronted with the religious root of the creation, nothing less is in question than a relating of the whole temporal cosmos, in both its so-called 'natural' and 'spiritual' aspects, to this point of reference."

Dooyeweerd then goes on to declare the Kantian "Copernican" revolution in philosophy to be "unacceptable" because, in merely making "the 'natural-aspects' of temporal reality relative to a theoretical abstraction such as Kant's 'transcendental subject'", it "proclaims the self-sufficiency of the latter" and "withdraws human thought from the divine revelation in Christ Jesus".

For Dooyeweerd, the work into which he was thus newly projected as a result of this scriptural enlightenment was not just a personal project, by working at which he might gain wide recognition and secure for himself a successful career. "The question", he writes at the very beginning of the New Critique (I viii), "is not a matter of a 'system' (subject to all the faults and errors of human thought), but rather it concerns the foundation and the root of scientific thought as such". Then, at the end of the Foreword, this (I ix): "I do not consider it to be a disadvantage if this philosophy does not enjoy a rapid and easy success". After quoting to the same effect Kant in the Foreword to his Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic,

Dooyeweerd proceeds:

"If the elaboration of the Kantian philosophy was deemed worthy of this self-denial, it is certainly obvious that those interested in the Christian foundation of theoretical thought should not be concerned with personal success, which is after all of no value. Rather, they should be willing to carry on a long and difficult labor, firmly believing that something permanent can be achieved with respect to the actualization of the idea concerning an inner reformation of philosophy.

"For, as a matter of fact, the precarious and changing opinion of our fellow-men is not even comparable with the inner happiness and peace that accompanies scientific labor when it is based upon Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

There is the magnificent passage (N.C. II 362-5) entitled "Final Remarks on the Christian Idea of Cultural Development". I wish I could take the time to read every word of it to you. "Holy and without any inner contradiction is the world-order, even when it binds the possibility of a defective positivizing of Christian principles to a historical basis of power and to the guidance of true Christian faith... Holy and without inner contradiction is the world-order when it avenges itself on the process of disclosure in which the civitas terrena has gained the power to direct the formation of history". But let me quote just his very last observations.

"[The Christian Idea of cultural development] continues to observe the inner tension between sinful reality and the full demand of the Divine Law... This demand is terrifying when we consider how much the temporal ordinances labor under the destructive power of the fall into sin. Terrifying also, when it puts before us our task as Christians in the struggle for the power of cultural formation. For it makes a demand on us which as sinful human beings we cannot satisfy in any way. And it urges us, in the misery of our hearts, to seek refuge with Christ, from Whose fulness, nevertheless, a Christian can derive the confidence of faith to carry on the ceaseless struggle for the control of cultural development. This is the remarkable 'nevertheless' of Christian faith... Christian philosophic thought has to fight shy of

self-exaltation, because it is directed in its root to Christ. The whole struggle that positive Christianity has to carry on for the direction of the opening-process is not directed against our fellow-men, in whose sin we partake and whose guilt is ours and whom we should love as our neighbors. That struggle is directed against the spirit of darkness who dragged us all down with him in the apostasy from God, and who can only be resisted in the power of Christ... As Christians we shall hate that spirit because of the love of God's creation in Christ Jesus."

There is one more passage in the New Critique that I simply have to mention even though I cannot take much more of your time in order to quote from it. It is the sublime passage on "the perspective structure of the horizon of experience" (N.C. II 560-598) with which Dooyeweerd concludes his masterful analysis of the epistemological problem. I quote a brief passage:

"But man cannot attain to true self-knowledge without true knowledge of God, which cannot be gained outside of the Divine Revelation in Christ... At this point, many a reader who has taken the trouble to follow our argument will perhaps turn away annoyed. He will ask: Must epistemology end in a Christian sermon or in a dogmatic statement? I can only answer by means of the question as to whether the dogmatic statement with which the supposed autonomous epistemology opens, viz. the proclamation of the self-sufficiency of the human cognitive functions, has a better claim to our confidence as far as epistemology is concerned... Our philosophy makes bold to accept the 'stumbling block of the cross of Christ' as the corner stone of epistemology. [Here Dooyeweerd refers in a footnote to I Cor. 1:23.] And thus it also accepts the cross of scandal, neglect and dogmatic rejection. In the limitation and weakness of the flesh, we grasp the absolute truth in our knowledge of God derived from His revelation, in prayer and worship. This knowledge in the full sense of the word contains the religious principle and foundation of all true knowledge, and primarily has a religious enstatic character. It no more rests primarily on a theoretical meaning-synthesis than does the cosmic self-consciousness... The knowledge about God in which religious self-knowledge is implied is not primarily

gained in a so-called theological way. That which is very inadequately called 'theology' is a theoretical knowledge obtained in a synthesis of the logical function of thought and the temporal function of faith. It is a knowledge which itself is entirely dependent on the cosmomic Idea from which the thinker starts. The true knowledge of God and of ourselves is concerned with the horizon of human experience and therefore also with that of theoretical knowledge. It rests on our trustful acceptance of Divine revelation in the indissoluble unity of both its cosmic-immanent sense and its transcendent-religious meaning; an acceptance with our full personality and with all our heart."

Why, now, all these quotations from Dooyeweerd for a group very much at home in his work? Because here we see Dooyeweerd's passionate prophetic witness in the very midst of his philosophizing. From such passages as these we hear Dooyeweerd saying, with Vollenhoven, that not philosophy but religion -- in its biblical sense of our life in its totality as our walk before the high and holy and jealous God in terms of His covenant Law -- is first with us and is what brings us together, not just in this room, but in this Association and its work.

Indeed, to return to the point, the need for a revolution -- better, reformation -- in philosophical thought of a very radical character derived from an antecedent passion for the supremacy of the Word of God, in the lives of individuals, of nation-states and societies and of the world-community, a phenomenon in our time reminiscent again of the prophetic mission of Elijah in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. A passion for the Word of God as the only Power to sustain us, to heal us, to renew us, to liberate us, to bring the whole of the creation to its intended fulfillment. That Word, we know, had again been mightily at work in the Netherlands since early in the 19th century to call men and churches and a nation back to a whole-hearted service of God according to His ordinances. Recently I have heard some pretty strange accounts of Abraham Kuyper's life by men of a social scientific bent within the Gereformeerde

community, which stressed, somewhat cynically, it seemed to me, Kuyper's flair for the political manipulation of the "Gereformeerde volksdeel" just before every election. I will not argue the question of Kuyper's political tactics, but it must in all honesty be acknowledged that pointing to that kind of a talent is not the way to understand the gigantic figure of Abraham Kuyper, or the power he commanded to control affairs in his life time, or to appreciate God's work in him. Nor is it possible to see him as in any way the precursor of present day liberation theologies. Recall what was said about a true prophet's meeting the people's real needs (above p. 12). Kuyper himself revealed the deepest secret of his life when he wrote:

"As for me, one holy passion rules my life,
One supreme impulse prompts my mind and soul,
And may breath fail me
E'er I lose this sacred urgency.
It is this: to establish once again,
For the people's good, God's holy ordinances,
In home and church, in school and state,
Despite the world's remonstrances;
It is this: to engrave the Lord's ordinances,
Which Scripture and creation witness to,
So sharply in the people's conscience
That they once more pay homage to their God."⁵

It is in that line of reformation and of biblical prophecy that the philosophical efforts of our founders are to be placed and understood. "The men of the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea", Veenhof writes (op. cit., p. 56), "aimed very high. They undertook the formidable task of not

5. "Voor mij, één zucht beheerst mijn leven,
Eén hoger drang drijft zin en ziel,
En moog' mij d'adem eer begeben,
Eer 'k aan dien heil'gen drang ontviel.
't Is om Gods heil'ge ordonnantiën,
In huis en kerk, in school en staat,
Ten spijt van 's wereldds remonstrantiën,
Weer vast te stellen, 't volk ten baat,
't Is om die ord'ningen des Heren,
Waar Woord en Schepping van getuigt,
In't volk zóó helder te graveren,
Tot weer dat volk voor God zich buigt".

coming to the Scripture with a philosophy, but with the Scripture to philosophy. They labored at the construction of a truly Scriptural philosophy. What motivated them, as they themselves declared, was not in any sense an intellectual passion, a mere craving for knowledge and facts. On the contrary, they confessed it openly as their conviction that the scientific enterprise also had to be a moment of true religion and thus a service of God in a distinct way" (emphasis mine).

Thus the ecumenical nature of their work had to come more and more clearly to light. This work was not properly the project of just one particular association, even though, given the history and divisive consequence of synthesis thinking in the world Christian community, one particular association such as ours might in the present situation first be required in order to bring the world community of Christians finally to address itself to it. Our founders were not out just to develop a philosophy for Calvinist circles (much less for Dutch Calvinist circles), as opposed to Lutheran or Anglican or Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox circles. While recognizing (N.C. I 523-4) that their philosophical work could "only be understood as the fruit of the Calvinistic awakening in Holland since the last decades of the 19th century, a movement which had been led by Abraham Kuyper," Dooyeweerd was very clear on the point that their "philosophy is not to be understood as the exclusive thought of a small clique of Calvinists. On the contrary, according to its basis, by reason of its transcendental ground-idea, it includes within its range all of Christian thought as such... No Christian can escape the dilemma that it sets forth if he really takes seriously the universality of the Kingship of Christ and the central confession of God's sovereignty over the whole cosmos as Creator".

In the eyes of our founders, then, the work of this Association concerned, besides the Dutch Calvinists from

whom they were sprung, Scottish and North American Presbyterians - of Vollenhoven I knew this from an intense personal relationship over a number of years --, Lutherans, Baptists, Anabaptists and Mennonites, Anglicans, Roman Catholics of all sorts and orders, the Orthodox of the Eastern churches and all for whom Christ is God come in the flesh -- that to begin with. And then, beyond that, it concerns the other great world cults, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in their many varieties of expression, Taoism, and all the various manifestations of religious experience that have been designated by the word 'animism', etc. In this connection I should like to remind the members of our Association of Professor Berkouwer's discussion (in his volume General Revelation, pp. 165-172 =De Algemene Openbaring, pp. 138-145, with references to A. Kuyper's Encyclopaedie and other writings and to Dooyeweerd's Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee) of Kuyper's way of viewing and dealing with pseudo-religion and the great variety of non-Christian religious expression. This matter will require our most serious attention in the coming days of our increasingly village-like globe, and the attack which some of us have been associating with the name of John Hick has just come again in the publication last year, by -- just imagine! -- Westminster Press, of the book Toward a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a professor at Harvard University, who is described as "a Harvard authority on world religions". But for the founders of our Association recovering the principle, that is, the foundation and root, of Christian thinking involved the prophetic-missionary task of confronting men the world over with the light and enlightenment of the revelation of the God who in Jesus Christ became man for us men and for our salvation.

It is now almost 50 years, almost half a century, since the day Professor Vollenhoven spoke those words of such great moment -- I quoted them to you -- in inaugurating the

work of this Association. I want to repeat them now.

"It is a glorious and blessed thing that brings us together here. It is not philosophy, for that is not the first thing in our life. It is rather the attachment to God's Word, because we have learned by grace to want to live only out of the Christ, and religion, as a matter of the heart, has become the root-center of our life in its totality; because we have learned that only in attending to the commandments of the Lord are peace and life to be found, not only for the individual, but, to be sure, also for all those associations of life in which we find ourselves. This is why philosophy does not occupy the first place here. It has never held that position in our circles, and if the Association which we now propose to erect remains faithful (emphasis mine) to its task, it will not be its fault if philosophy should ever become the prime consideration. We wish only to take that which is the main thing seriously in the philosophical work that we do."

So now there is every reason for us of this Association, after 50 years, especially after these particular 50 years, so full of strife and of changing perspectives, both world-wide and very close to home, to ask ourselves how we stand with respect to this stated purpose of our Association. Could the projected image of the Dutch Reformed world in the minds of the evangelicals be more true of us now? Could the complaint of a Richard Lovelace be more truly lodged against us today than against our founders? Or are we just as conscious as our founders were that our first calling in our work is to be prophets of the living God? Do we all have the same passionate commitment, the fervency, the zeal, the urgent sense of calling, that "ecumenical" vision, -- in short, the sense of prophetic mission -- in all the work we do daily as Christian philosophers, the work we do in and for this Association?

Of course, in one sense we do. Why else would we be members of this Association? And yet there is reason to ask ourselves this momentous question in this age of

dialectical discussion, in a time that loves to erase boundaries.

I am fully aware that it is always very difficult to address a question like this. But I think that everyone will sense the need of doing it who understands what is at stake and who has known something of what the recently deceased great preacher at Westminster Chapel in London, England was getting at when, in the preface to his book The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, an Exposition of Ephesians 3: 1-21, he writes: "If I were asked to name the greatest trouble among Christians today, including those who are evangelical, I would say that it is our lack of spirituality and of a true knowledge of God. We have a certain knowledge about God, and we are experts in the 'Christian attitude' toward politics, social affairs, drama, art, literature, etc., but do we, with Paul, say that our deepest desire is to 'know Him'?" And, just speaking generally, it was not without reason grounded in experience that Professor Santayana warned against "redoubling our effort when we've forgotten our aim". That has been the experience repeatedly of organizations -- even of the instituted church in human history. This is why I was so happy with the theme that was chosen for this symposium. It encourages us honestly and forthrightly to address ourselves to the question who we are as members of this Association, and what the nature is of the task we have undertaken to work at together.

And there are, as a matter of fact, a number of indications that something about us has changed, and that not everything is as it should be. At least, there is a spirit of disquiet and discontent. Let me just quickly point to a number of observations I have noted, and these are probably not even those most important perceptions which most of us receive through our spiritual antennae (voelhoorns) in the regular course of our daily living.

First, then, I would note that the letter of invitation that went out to us for this Symposium, signed by the

members of the Board of the Association, included the words: "We are afraid that at present our Christian philosophizing has become introverted. Perhaps we have lost the spiritual awareness of being called by God to work, be it on a modest scale, on the reformation of a secular culture".

To this I would add, in the second place, a personal comment of my own regarding some impressions I received during our First International Symposium held at Driebergen six years ago. Without denying that good and solid contributions were made, I had a general very uncomfortable feeling that we were a very small bunch of extremely theoretically oriented Dutchmen and Afrikaners talking to ourselves, often about things long debated among us, as, for example, whether scientific thought is analytically or lingually qualified. I also felt that men had been asked to address us who did not share what is foundational, in our view, to Calvinistic or adequately scripturally grounded philosophy. I am referring, of course, to representatives of a more traditionally scholastic patterning of biblical revelation. Permit me to refer to something related to that patterning that I briefly remarked on years ago in my lectures collected under the title The Relation of the Bible to Learning. I shall refer to the recently published fifth revised edition since it will allow me at the same time to correct a serious mistake that has crept into this otherwise greatly improved edition. On page 143, just below the middle, where I am discussing a remark someone made to the effect that "our theological heritage is a rich mine with educational implications", I refer, between parentheses, to the "familiar scholastic idea of theological Lehnsaetze [it reads wrongly: Lehrsaelze] for the educational theory of the Christian, instead of an integral scripturally directed paedagogics". And in that other collection of lectures of mine entitled Scriptural Religion and Political Task (p. 121 bottom), quoting Alsted, again I refer to "theological Lehnsaetze, 'principial' deductions

from a theological system which are a kind of marginal correction setting limits within which, for a life that possesses its own laws of development, not a reformation of that life from its religious root. I would suggest that present day discussions of control beliefs, from the point of view of the founders of this Association, is very similar to, if not identical with, this scholastic notion of Lehnsaetze, and that both are borrowed from an extraneous theological system to be applied to a world of rational thought having a life of its own, governed internally by its own (rational) laws.

Do not misunderstand me. I think it is both a fine thing and proper to encourage thinking Christians who entertain such traditional scholastic views to attend our gatherings and, in the course of our gatherings, to engage them in intense (prophetic) discussion. But I am asking how representatives of such views, as principal speakers at our gatherings, could possibly contribute to the promotion of what our founders saw as the aim or task of this particular Association? To that task in the light of biblical prophecy as I have outlined it? And this confusion I see not only as particularly characteristic of our day, but also as rendering the trumpet call to the battle -- not against persons, but of principle against principle -- unclear, something Paul, in a passage encouraging prophesying, warns against. (I Cor. 14:8)

Could it be that there is a spiritual relation between the phenomenon of talking to ourselves, where I felt prophetic passion lacking, and the other phenomenon of requesting the guidance of men who accept a separate world of rationality? I am only asking the question, because at this point I am simply enumerating certain observations.

Third, I noticed that in the September/October, 1981 (25th anniversary) issue of Perspective, the newsletter of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (p. 22), Dr. Bernard Zylstra, the Principal of the AACCS's

Toronto-based Institute for Christian Studies, speaking of the Institute's academic future and particularly of its connection with the Free University, had this to say: "On a select basis, we will advise our philosophy students to complete their Ph.D. studies there... And we do so with our eyes open, recognizing that the Free University as a whole is caught up in the spiritual confusion of western Europe and being fully aware of the fact that the 'Dooyeweerdian' school of thought is fragmented and has lost a great deal of its initial vibrance and vitality" (emphasis mine). Here are two things: fragmentation, and loss of initial vibrancy and vitality. Could they be related? Now of course I realize that when Zylstra speaks here of the "'Dooyeweerdian' school of thought" he has in mind the Centrale Interfaculteit at the Free University and not our Association. Yet I hope legalistic sophistry has not penetrated our circles to such an extent that we would avoid seeing at once the close connection between what he is speaking of and us.

Finally, as a fourth indication, I would point to the January/February 1982 issue of The Guide, organ of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, where Dr. Hendrik Hart, in a requested exchange of views with Dr. Bernard Zylstra, makes this remarkable comment, significant, I think, for our present purpose (p. 10): "Two decades ago, individuals and organizations in the reformational movement seemed to speak with one voice. Today this is no longer the case". Again, "reformational movement" is not exactly the same as the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. But no one acquainted with the developments of the last three decades will fail to recognize the very intimate connection between the so-called "reformational movement" and the philosophical movement represented by our Association. Here again there is the suggestion of fragmentation and also perhaps, by implication, of lost vitality.

These four indications of change and disquiet will suffice to suggest the possibility of some dislocation in our life as an Association.

The presence of some dislocation since 1935 should not at all be surprising when we consider the great and rapid changes that have taken place in our surroundings in this last half century, both in the world at large and here in The Netherlands, the "bakermat" or home-base of this Association, and, indeed, even in the Dutch Reformed community. And particularly when we consider the sense of foreboding, of impending doom, of threatening fundamental collapse that has accompanied so much of this change. The renowned Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, from his own perspective of epochal cycles, has captured the feeling well in these oft quoted dread lines from his poem "The Second Coming":

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

Indeed, we have lived through, we are living in "an age of hot ideologies and global crusades"⁶, of reviving nationalisms, of sporadic advocacy of anarchism and increasing international terrorism. And while, on the one hand, the incredibly rapid development of current technologies, almost too rapid for us to keep abreast of them -- think only of computers, of satellite communication and the latest military weapons -- not only accelerates the advance towards a global village but at the same time holds most scientific technicians and generally educated people in the West or wherever the western mind has penetrated to the ideology and paradigm of progress first clearly articulated by Jacques Turgot at the Sorbonne in 1750 in two

6. So Ronald Steel, in the Prologue to his remarkable book, Walter Lippmann and the American Century, p. xvi.

Discourses and afterwards elaborated by Auguste Comte in his "Law of the Three Stages"; on the other hand, not only do men like Jeremy Rifkin (in Entropy: A New World View) and Rifkin and Ted Howard (in The Emerging Order: God in the Age of Scarcity) say that the mechanical worldview, developed by Francis Bacon, René Descartes and Isaac Newton, is crumbling, to be replaced by the Entropy Law, but many of our contemporaries are becoming increasingly aware of "the disintegration of world public order and the consequent spread of anarchy, fear and panic in many parts of the world", as was stated by Eugene Rostow, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in his agency's recent annual report, an awareness that only intensifies the efforts, for example, of the World Order Models Project⁷.

Ronald Steel, speaking of Walter Lippmann's book, Essays in the Public Philosophy, reports that the notes for the book, published when Lippmann, clearly the greatest journalist and political commentator America has ever had, was 65 years old [in 1955], reflected a time when "totalitarian movements had captured the allegiance of what he [Lippmann] called the 'deracinated masses'.... A civilization must have a religion... Communism and Nazism are religions of proletarianized masses".⁸ By the 'public philosophy', Lippmann wrote his friend Bernard Berenson, he meant the "natural law on which Western institutions were originally founded"; it was a time in his life when Lippmann was strongly drawn to Catholic theology. Lippmann's analysis was that "the democracies had suffered paralysis and given way to authoritarianism because the people had

7. See "On the Creation of a Just World Order: An Agenda for a Program of Inquiry and Praxis", by Saul Mendlovitz, in Alternatives: A Journal of World Policy, Vol. VII No. 3 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 355-373. This entire number of this journal, published by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, India and the Institute for World Order in New York City, is most provocative reading.

8. R. Steel, op cit., p. 491.

imposed a veto 'upon the judgments of the informed and responsible officials'. As the people became sovereign, their governments lost authority and were unable to preserve the peace and uphold standards of 'civility'. The problem, in short, was that the people had 'acquired power they are incapable of exercising, and the governments they elect have lost powers which they must recover if they are to govern'." Interesting sequel, in the mind of this "modern" man, to the natural law theory behind Rousseau's state absolutism, based on the volonté générale, and to radical forms of democracy!

In the wake of this breakdown of public order and the concomitant rise of psychology as a cult of self-worship⁹ has come the fruit of all this self-centeredness, the breakdown of married life and family life and of all meaningful personal relationships. Divine institution has been replaced by the claims of "situation ethics" and the outcry for "maximum individual autonomy". Yet loneliness has become the agony of the century, to be repressed by drugs, for example, all kinds of experimentation in the 'social' use of drugs, by sexual promiscuity and experimentation, by violent and unnatural sexual activity and by 'social' or gang criminality.

I know that there have been many wonderful achievements in our time, and output of outstanding 'quality' in all the arts and sciences. [I have placed single quotes around that word 'quality' to indicate that my use of it here has abstracted it from one fundamental criterion of quality, an obedience, out of faith, to the Law-word of Almighty God, the Lord of hosts, as a condition for the salutary functioning of all created being. See my remarks on "Structure and Direction" below.] In fact, one of the problems of our time is just that there is so much. [But should that ever be a "problem" unless it is complicated by

9. See Paul C. Vitz, Psychology as Religion, Eerdmans, 1977 (reprinted, 1980).

the issue of distortional direction, even the question of the focusing of all our energies upon the accumulation of 'facts' in the special sciences?] The rapid development of all the special sciences, the sudden blossoming of a host of behavioral sciences, has often been commented on. But if I think of the field of philosophy itself, then it is the rapid succession of 'schools' or, better perhaps, the short-span rise and fall of movements (with the great expectations attached to them), some striving for comprehensiveness but missing certainty, others determined to save certainty if not the phenomena (comprehensiveness), that produces in me a feeling of exhaustion. In a recent review in The New York Review of Books¹⁰, John R. Searle, speaking of what he calls "the great dream of the human sciences in the twentieth century", all the efforts towards realizing which, he says, "have been, in varying degrees, failures", goes on to declare: "The most spectacular failure was behaviorism, but in my intellectual lifetime I have lived through exaggerated hopes placed on and disappointed by games theory, cybernetics, information theory, generative grammar, structuralism and Freudian psychology, among others" (emphasis mine). At the moment I have in mind not the repeated failures so much as the flood of theoretical constructions in so short a time-span, the mere enumeration of which is wearying. And all the while there is a still more fundamental anxiety. For the other developments that I have only very briefly touched upon threaten to undo everything. Man, nay, rather mankind, recipient of covenant blessing or covenant wrath, is central to all created being.

The Netherlands, since 1935, besides suffering all the traumatic effects of these more global developments, experienced the ugly dividedness of its citizenry around the N.S.B. (National Socialist Movement) and finally -- what it had escaped in 1914-18 -- the horrors of becoming an active

10. Issue of April 29, 1982, p. 3.

participant in a 20th century total war, one that had a peculiarly divisive effect on the populace in that it sprang up, in part, from the rapidly spreading infection of a "hot ideology and global crusade". Then the need for a 'renewed' Netherlands gave rise to a discussion of the need for a 'doorbraak', a breakthrough in the Dutch political climate. In the atmosphere of a growing acceptance of a synthesis of Christianity and humanism in a personalistic socialism which could make an appeal to a broad European tradition in both Protestant and Roman Catholic circles, the Dutch National Movement encouraged a widening discussion about the evils of 'verzuiling' (pillarization), with the result that patterns of public behavior that by now had become widely accepted (due in large part to the Reformed Christian struggle for a rightful place in the public life for Christian schools and a university, for Christian social, political and economic action) were first called into question and then began to disintegrate, amid much bitter personal wrangling, family feuding, generational clashing -- and everywhere: frustration, suspicion, alienation.

In the midst of all this distress the increasing attraction of the possibility of emigration to a new world lightened the lives of many families, but it also broke families up. Considering emigration often only increased the tensions. It also caused Dutchmen to turn their attention more outward and be influenced by conditions and developments in the non-Dutch world (which, incidentally, had generally not experienced the revival of Reformed religion of 19th century Holland or the changes it had effected in the organization of Holland's national life -- remember Romein's remark about Abraham Kuyper's influence in this regard), thus strengthening other influences from without that came with the end of the war, like the awareness of European Catholic socialist thought that Catholic men in the new post-war government brought with them and the ideas, attitudes and strategies that returning

Dutch missionaries from the East Indies had gained from their association with British Anglicans / missionaries there.

Meanwhile, the rapid economic and industrial recovery of Europe under the Marshall Plan brought an understandable, perhaps scarcely noticed, obsession with material things, like the latest models of radios, stereos, nylons, TV's, refrigerators and freezers, and, of course, automobiles, a quite predictable reaction to years of terrible deprivation. But I said "obsession with", and I believe it is clear that only a Christian community already greatly weakened in its commitment to live in covenantal obedience according to the Word of God, and now exhausted and divided, could so easily, along with the rest of the nation, have fallen into such an engrossing concern with things and with fashion ("wit is 'in'").

At the end of the '60's there came the shock of the student rebellions and the growing assertive acceptance among the young of marxist and neo-marxist viewpoints and of so-called alternative life-styles. There even developed, to my knowledge, a curious "playful" experimentation with Eastern and African cults, which spoke, I believe, of the emptiness of whatever Christian profession was left and of a scarcely conscious search in other directions for a source or locus of power.

The traditionally Reformed Christian community in the Netherlands, which since the early '20's had been experiencing a rapid weakening of Reformed consciousness, no doubt played its part in these national developments. The words of C. Veenhof which I read to you earlier spoke of how the founders of our Association, and others who were with them in the struggle, sought to address that crisis with a powerful biblically prophetic witness. Global and national developments, on the other hand, were having their own effect on the Reformed Christian community. By the end of the '60's many theologians and other intellectual leaders,

it was clear, had consciously, deliberately rejected what they called the old "Gereformeerdendom" and its "provincial" ways. Moreover, rather than maintain the Free University as an intensely and consistently Reformed Christian university, it was decided, as it is said, to fulfill Kuyper's vision of a complete, up to date university even if it meant filling out the staff with non-Reformed and even non-Christian instructors rather than having a smaller institute. [Here, with a vengeance, is emphasis on Structure with an ignoring or minimizing of Direction, for which see below. Undoubtedly the alleged "cultural optimism" reading of Kuyper coming to full practical fruition.]

In the meantime, this Reformed Christian community, for reasons not unrelated to all these developments, experienced the bitter, heart-rending events that led to the ousting of Professor Schilder and the separate existence of the Liberated Churches, and their own riven history.

Into these terribly troubled, sorely divided and significantly uprooted Reformed communities of post-war Holland the big outside world penetrated increasingly, affecting long cherished family ways. Bible reading at table often became something of a formality, an embarrassment to be over with quickly, or one of the "provincial" ways of that old "Gereformeerdendom" from which people were experiencing liberation, as it was said, and thus brought into the more enlightened and globe-wide accepted ways of modernity. Prayer at the family table, instead of being offered on behalf of the family by its responsible head, very often became the silent prayer of individuals, at times to be dispensed with altogether. Therewith, in growing families, an awareness in the young of the meaning of 'office' (ambt), which is fed from such daily experiences, was greatly reduced and often to all intents and purposes lost. Individualistic practices became more visible in behavior at meals. From such little changes as these in the intimate family circle one could get a sense of

the great spiritual changes that were taking place in society.

* * * *

In one sense it may seem quite superfluous to rehearse all these developments here. Still, I think we ought not to deceive ourselves. They all have had their own way of exhausting us, not only emotionally, but especially spiritually. In that way they have been a factor affecting our work. Just how they may have affected our work I'll say a word about in a moment. But right here I wish to repeat that the theme chosen for our symposium has indeed been happily chosen; for after these years we must recall to mind what our Association was organized to work at: the Christian philosophical enterprise in the light of biblical prophecy. I have therefore addressed myself to what it means to be a prophet, because the years of our lives demand all the spirituality we can muster. By spirituality, let me repeat, I mean our daily walk before God, in His covenant, according to all the words of His Law, in union with Christ, in the power of His Spirit, responding to His Word in unceasing prayer, meditation, witness and service as prophets¹¹, living in the fear of the Lord and to His glory. Originally God's gift, this new life in Christ is ours to exercise and develop. And develop it we must, intensely, calling on the Spirit of God to help us, as individuals and in the work we undertake together.

11. In the light of biblical prophecy we are, in Christ, not only prophets, but also priests and kings unto God. We have, for example, if we are to live our lives unto God's glory, to render up our renewed philosophical work unto God as the sacrifice of our hearts. In this paper I have limited myself to developing something of what, in the light of biblical prophecy, it means to be a prophet. The rest will have to await some future occasion.

I should like now, without losing sight of all the developments we have but lightly touched upon (in order to suggest something of the 'rapidation', complication, intensification and 'ecumenical' nature of the events of this end-time), to get back to the more immediate context of our Association. For I suspect that whatever dislocations have been felt in the Association's work are much more likely to be due to factors closer to home and to our own philosophical heritage (even though strongly supported sometimes by developments in the wider world).

Earlier in my paper I spoke of the precious gift of firm biblical insight bequeathed to us by our founders, and for any consideration of the subject of the Christian philosophical enterprise in the light of biblical prophecy our founders provided us with many valuable insights that have stood the test of time. Originally I had intended to comment on several of them, but now there is not time for that. For now, then, I wish to focus our attention on one such insight. After 35 years it assumes in my mind the importance of the principal precept for biblically grounded and directed thinking, and thus also for our philosophizing. Prof. Vollenhoven formulated it somewhat aphoristically and constantly reiterated it in order to stamp it indelibly on the minds of his students. He did that because he was firmly convinced it was the way to keep our prophecy, also in our philosophical account of the world and man's life in it, comprehensive and balanced in a biblical way, and to keep us from falling back into the onesidednesses that have characterized so many movements in the history of Christianity. If the witness of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy, and if the Power of our prophecy is in the Word, then the biblically balanced comprehensiveness of our prophecy is a matter of the utmost importance, certainly when it comes to our philosophical articulation of it. Vollenhoven's formula: Structure and Direction.

I suppose he came to it as he reflected on the somewhat different emphases of Abraham Kuyper (his so-called cultural optimism, arising from a perhaps too one-sided emphasis on the structures of creation in connection with his development of the theme of common grace) and Herman Bavinck (who, in addition, stressed the theme of the imitation of Christ), and then there were the later attacks on Kuyper's view, not only by Haitjema and van Ruler, but also by S.G. De Graaf and K. Schilder.¹²

By means of his little device Vollenhoven meant to indicate that God's creation, according to Scripture, involves not only the presence of a Law-order -- not an agglomeration, mind you, but an Order -- of different modes of functioning (kinds of lawfulness) in an indissoluble coherence that points beyond itself to an underlying unity (the structural component), but also of man in his relation to the God of the covenant -- religion -- and his heart-response to the Law of the covenant with the covenant-favor and -blessing that follows upon the newly learned obedience the Spirit instills and the covenant-wrath and -curse that is the consequence of rebellious disobedience (the Antithesis, or the directional component). The created reality about which we are to philosophize never presents us then with a merely structural or a merely directional given. The two components are everywhere intertwined. [For Dooyeweerd's similar position one need only read New Critique I 114-124.]

In the short time remaining I should like to suggest that it would be very easy for us in this Association at any time, but particularly in these times, to lose our grip somewhat on this balance that biblical prophecy presents,

12. For an excellent current discussion of the different emphases of Kuyper and Bavinck see John Bolt, The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck, an (as yet) unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, Canada, 1982.

and to do that in either of two ways.

The reawakening evangelical world of North America with its aroused sense of Christian responsibility for the direction of our culture is inclined to emphasize the Battle of spirits (Antithesis) in a way that is too simplistic because the structural component, for lack of analysis, gets ignored. Good in this response is the recognition of the fiercely anti-God dynamic that is at work in our society. Unfortunate is the failure to see effects of the impingement upon the unbelieving mind of the (revelational) Order of creation and thus to credit the scientific labors of unbelievers or the serious human reflection in the various non-Christian cults of the world with traces -- I prefer that word to 'elements' -- of the truth even while seeing them as vitiated by the immanentistic and reductionist tendencies of unbelieving thought.

There's the rub: For the mind that has not been renewed in Christ, just because of the revelational reality of creation sensing the need for a place of unity but because of the alienation of sin no longer knowing the religious walk of man before his covenant God, is driven to locate the religious point of concentrated unity within the cosmic diversity as this presents itself to us all (immanentism), and that leads to a reducing of the diverse sides of creational activity to some putative unity (like Matter, or Mind). If the Battle of spirits is to be waged effectively, the involvement of the structural in the directional must be acknowledged and worked out. If this were done, for example, North American evangelicals would be less deceived into thinking of natural law theories as essentially Christian. [For this the invaluable historical work of Prof. Vollenhoven must become better known.]

On one of his trips to the United States, Hans Rookmaaker took me aside at the close of one of his meetings to tell me -- it was obviously very much on his mind and important to communicate to me -- that the modal analysis

he had attempted in his 1946-47 articles in Philosophia Reformata was just too much and too heavy intellectual baggage for North American students and they would not accept it. Hans and I had been good friends since late 1946 or early 1947, and I have always had great respect for the work he undertook. But I confess I was a bit shaken by his "advice". My difficulty is that I don't know for sure whether his remark was just an impression of the moment or if perhaps he meant it only as a guideline for our easing ourselves into the North American situation. He cannot have meant it as absolutely as it sounded; for I note that in his article "De Constituerende Factoren ener Historische Daad" [Philosophia Reformata, Vol. 19 (1954)] he acknowledges that one's insight into an historical situation, while dependent on one's life- and world-view, must also surrender time and again to the world-order (p. 101; 120), and at the close of his Modern Art and the Death of a Culture (p. 234ff.) he discusses, though somewhat sketchily, decorum, righteousness and purity in art, a bare and belated suggestion of modal analysis.

The fact is that once we have broken with the immanentistic-reductionist way of dividing the world into 'the material' and 'the mental' or 'the intelligible', have recognized the great diversity of lawfulness in the world and acknowledged that the creation must somehow in its diverse ways fundamentally reflect the unity of its Creator, modal analysis, sphere irreducibility and sphere universality thrust themselves upon us.¹³ In this sense modal analysis is inescapable. And where we take it seriously good progress is made. Recent examples of such work are Stafleu's Time and Again, an article by André

13. Dooyeweerd, N.C. I 507: "The intermodal coherence of meaning is not a construction of philosophical thought but is rather sustained by the divine temporal world-order, which is also the condition of theoretical thought."

Troost in the May 22, 1981 issue of Opbouw and Doug Blomberg's Sydney (Australia) University dissertation.¹⁴

Nevertheless, I have heard voices now and then suggesting that we discard or at least play down modal analysis, and this I see, for the reason just given, as threatening the health and the vigorous prophetic witness of our Association, particularly as we penetrate more and more deeply into the Anglo-American world.

There is another very closely related matter. There have been here and there attempts at revising the modal scale as Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd presented it. There is nothing wrong with that; in fact, these attempts suggest that serious efforts at modal analysis are continuing, and that is good. I begin to fear, however, when various attempted revisions are made the starting-point paedagogically for introducing a new generation of students to what God has so signally blessed us with. While we are seeking more of a consensus, let us have our students, just as a matter of paedagogical wisdom, be introduced to a common starting-point, -- certainly our North American evangelical students, for whom the whole theoretical enterprise and its relation to revelation is so completely strange. In other words, behind our struggle in systematics there is a revealed Order. Let us give our students the time necessary to grasp the significance of that. It is enough of a temptation for a student in his 20's to get too wrapped up in the systematics of his present professor. But this brings me to the second way we might tend to lose our grip on the comprehensive balance of biblical prophecy that Vollenhoven meant to incapsulate in the apothegm "Structure and Direction".

14. D.G. Blomberg, The Development of Curriculum with Relation to the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea, Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Sydney, 1978.

This second way involves our becoming too completely absorbed in our philosophical systematics. This possibility gives me, in a way, greater concern than the former one. For one thing, I think that for a number of reasons it is more likely to happen. But, far more important, it would tend to diminish our sense of the directive Power of the revelational given in our systematic investigations.

Most of us, I am sure, can recall Dooyeweerd's words in the Foreword to the New Critique (p. VII):

"I am strongly convinced that for the fruitful working out of this philosophy in a genuinely scientific manner there is needed a staff of fellow-laborers who would be in a position independently to think through its basic ideas in the special scientific fields. It is a matter of life and death for this young philosophy that Christian scholars in all fields of science seek to put it to work in their own specialty."

And Prof. Langemeijer, in his appreciation of Dooyeweerd's work marking Dooyeweerd's 70th birthday (Trouw, October 6, 1964), said this:

"It can be said, I believe, that the theories of Dooyeweerd lend themselves, to a greater degree than is normally the case, to an exchange of thought with persons of a different persuasion. The reason for saying this lies in the fact that he has drawn the implications of his doctrine concerning the supratheoretical presupposition of philosophy very far -- farther than other movements which at this point are akin to him -- even into the special sciences. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in the problems and perplexities, in the 'impasses' of the special sciences that he has demonstrated his thesis."

Indeed, the great gifts God's Spirit bestowed on Prof. Dooyeweerd reveal themselves, in the New Critique and elsewhere, in the rich suggestions he made for a number of special sciences, and our present (potential) weakness, as I see it, may derive in part from these very riches he left to us. It may also derive partly from our own incapacity to keep such a mass of learning under control. No one of the

second generation has, in my estimation, approached the level of performance of either Vollenhoven or Dooyeweerd. That ought not to surprise us, or discourage us, either, but it has taken a whole generation for us to learn the meaning of Prof. Langemeijer's assessment of Dooyeweerd's great gifts.

As I was writing this I remembered something that Prof. B. B. Warfield (Princeton; died 1921) wrote about his teacher, Dr. Charles Hodge, one of the "founders" of American Presbyterianism. "We think", he wrote, "that though learning is fuel to the mental fire, yet there is such a thing as smothering the flames with a superabundance of fuel. But 'so intense and ardent was the fire of his mind that it was not only not suffocated beneath this weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superabundant mass with its own heat and radiance'."¹⁵ Not all of us will fit that description. The result that threatens is that our prophecy becomes suffocated in the details of scholarship. And we who are the heirs of a great tradition of prophecy must not let that happen to us. We must beseech our faithful God not to let it happen to us. But there are things we can do and must see to.

It was Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy (modal analysis) which led to his call for workers in the several special scientific areas. Modal analysis requires for its realization the clearest possible conception and formulation of the structural states of affairs encountered in the various areas of scientific inquiry. The heed that was given to Dooyeweerd's appeal for help -- let us thank our covenant-keeping God for that response -- meant that now a considerable amount of attention would be given to systematic inquiries in every one of the special sciences. Add to that a number of problems in Dooyeweerd's own

15. Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield-I, edited by John E. Meeter, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Nutley, New Jersey, 1970, p. 440.

philosophical systematics, and differences between his and Vollenhoven's, and we see that work in systematics was quite naturally going to demand a very great deal of our time.

There is nothing at all wrong with that, and not for one moment am I so much as even suggesting that the doing of all this systematic work was or is improper in itself. It is not a question of quantity, but of the qualitative nature of our work in systematics. Systematics is a great part of the Christian philosopher's work, and of the Christian's work in the special sciences. It also constitutes a considerable amount of the work of an association organized to promote and propagate Christian philosophy. It is only when something happens that causes us to become too much, too exclusively absorbed in these systematic investigations, as if the systematic accounting for states of affairs existed by itself, that a radical shift in us as individual philosophers and as an association can very subtly, and perhaps almost imperceptibly at first, take place.

All the sciences direct their investigations to structural states of affairs grounded in the creation-order, structures which urge themselves upon everyone who is seriously confronted with them (N.C. II 577). In this way, and to this extent, these structures are commonly experienced, and it is the task of all practitioners of a particular special science to attempt to account for the ones that belong to their field of investigation. This leads very naturally, in each field, to discussions, exchange of ideas with fellow-practitioners in an attempt to reach a statement all can agree on as to the nature of the states of affairs being investigated. Science aims at common agreement, publicity, possibility of repetition of experiment or investigation by anyone properly qualified. Of course, the other side of Dooyeweerd's statement (II 577) is as follows: "It may be that no true philosophical insight can be gained into the Divine world-order if our

cognitive selfhood does not abide in the full religious Truth of Divine Word-revelation".¹⁶ Here we have that play of the directional component in the structural accounting we give of the (revelational) creation-order.

Now I am convinced that no one in this Association would ever intentionally allow himself to get lost in structural analysis and thus no longer acknowledge the engagement in it of the directional component. That would be to abandon the very purpose that led to the setting up of our Association. Nevertheless, every one of us who belongs to Jesus Christ and has vowed to live by His Word must constantly give heed also to that admonition of Paul to the Corinthian Christians: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (I Cor. 10:12)

There are, indeed, a number of forces at work in our society which, sometimes in combination, tend to encourage a scientific analysis that concerns itself exclusively with what we speak of as structural matters. During our lifetime, for example, all the sciences, not just the natural ones, have developed so fast that one can properly speak of an 'explosion' of scientific activity: a proliferation of 'sub-sciences', i.e. subdivisions of the special sciences; masses of practitioners; a multiplication of centers of scientific inquiry; organization of scientific communication on a global scale; in all fields a staggering increase of periodicals and abstracts. All this means that it takes as much of a man's time as he is willing (the will!) to give -- it will promptly take all if he permits it to -- just to try to keep on top of the continuous influx of data in his field. The

16. The 'may be' here, it should be clearly stated, suggests nothing of hesitation or doubt; it has simply to do with the structure of this and the following sentence. Also to be borne in mind here, in contrast to the still widely current largely positivist view of the matter, is the intrinsic relation of philosophy and the special sciences. Recall what is said in footnote 13 on p. 47.

limitations of many of us probably play a subtle and usually unacknowledged role here.

Closely related to this development -- it is felt as a necessary consequence of it -- is the trend, even pressure, towards earlier specialization in the training of students and the early determination of career-field, which frequently brings with it an earlier narrowing of the mind's focus, following which, after the achieving of doctoral status, the awful pressures to produce and publish in one's increasingly narrow area of specialization come with a prompt insistence. I have no doubt that especially the younger generation of members in this Association have experienced what I am talking about.

In these circumstances one inadvertently finds oneself using one's time and employing one's energies analyzing and describing relevant states of affairs and relations holding between them, discussing with one's fellow-practitioners differing opinions, suggested hypotheses and theories respecting these, and summarizing all that one thus finds. These days one travels, if one can find the funds, from one center of scientific activity to another to talk to one's colleagues and to observe their work -- a time-consuming matter -- and then tries to give as complete a survey as one can of the various opinions and of what is going on in one's field. Much of all this is proper if kept in restraint and governed by our vocation, in the light of biblical prophecy, to be prophets first, as Vollenhoven said, even in this Association, to be prophetic voices in the philosophical work that we do. To be philosophically engaged is a moment in our religion. The generation of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd struggled spiritually to recover the meaning of biblical prophecy for our philosophizing.¹⁷ It is easier

17. Professor Kohnstamm in discussing Dooyeweerd remarks that recognition of the gap between biblical and Greek or 'idealistic' thinking was the result of the thorough biblical studies of the past century. Cultuur-geschiedenis van het Christendom V, 426.

for the next generation, without experiencing this struggle to the same degree, to take the results of their experience for granted, so that the matter is removed a bit farther to the periphery of consciousness unless consciously and regularly renewed.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the vast humanistic world of scientific investigation is organized in the way I have just been describing, grounded as it is in that philosophical intellectualism which it tends to think of as axiomatic. It requires on our part an ever-present sense of our primary vocation as prophets not to begin to fall in with that world's way of doing things. A man accommodates himself in order not to stand out as so "peculiar" as to be ignored in scientific circles, and in order to become recognized there so as to obtain the grants, the opportunities, the professional appointments that are absolutely necessary if a scholar is to establish himself and gain a reputation. And isn't all this accommodation justifiable if we can gain recognition "for Christ's sake"?

There is, I am confident, something more. The deeply experienced insecurity and frightful rivenness of our time, which I referred to earlier in this paper, not only exhaust us both emotionally and particularly spiritually, but also work on us to induce us, all subconsciously, to seek in our theoretical work a security and a unanimity we cannot find in the world at large. The building of the tower of Babel is only a striking early example of men's determined effort to create security for themselves and to find community outside the safety and community which God in His grace has provided in His Son, Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Basically, then, it is the dividedness of our hearts and the remaining sin that still always cleaves to every one of us which, when appealed to by the great majority of practicing scientists around us, and especially under the constant stress of the spiritually enervating developments of our time, detracts our attention from our

prophetic task, in every aspect and at every stage of our work, to a purportedly purely structural engagement. In our particular case we may not fail to recognize the influence, in traditionally Dutch Reformed circles, of the virulent reaction that has been occurring, on the background of a reading of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace as emphasizing creation-structures and expressing cultural optimism, against an external, formal, perhaps not always sufficiently informed application of the doctrine of the Antithesis that has been identified with the 'provincial' character of the so-called old "Gereformeerdom".

It is not for me in this paper to say how much, or just where, these ungodly forces at work in our society may have begun to take hold among us, in our hearts. But I must say that it troubles me to hear mathematics or logic being described as independent or almost independent (of philosophy) sciences, to read of one's choosing one's point of departure within logic, for example, itself, and wondering out loud what one could possibly mean by the term 'christian logic'.

It troubles me to read again in a letter I received some years ago from a student I sent to study in the Centrale Interfaculteit of the Free University that his instructor, although, as he writes, "undoubtedly presupposing the vision", was "himself caught in a theoretical 'Grundlagen-krisis', pointing constantly to unresolved problems in Dooyeweerd, hinting at remnants of synthesis and suggesting areas of capitulation to the problematics of immanentism, and rejecting any effect of a scripturally grounded 'wetsidee' on the field of mathematics". It is not the critical systematic work that I have objection to. It is the degree to which emphasis on that had apparently all but drowned out the life-giving, life-sustaining Power of biblical prophecy in that student's classroom experience. "Undoubtedly presupposing the vision" is not enough.

Again, it troubles me that since the early '70's at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, with the establishing of which and setting the direction for which I had something to do, and of which I am still a Fellow, I have regularly been hearing from students how far some of their instructors have got beyond Dooyeweerd. Now quite apart from the truth of the claim -- why shouldn't we get beyond Dooyeweerd if God bless our work? -- if this is what students are going to be exclaiming about, and not the marvellous break, through the Power of the Word of God, from the stifling hold of scholastic and all synthesis thought regarding an autonomously operating Rationality, then systematics, and perhaps even our own career- and image-building are looming too large and our prophetic witness (servanthood) grows relatively weaker, God being glorified less in the immediate classroom experience of each day. From the beginning of the Institute we have also frequently heard it said that the philosophy of Dooyeweerd would only be used as a "tool". That can only be said if we remove Dooyeweerd's 'system' from what he himself called "the foundation and root of scientific thought as such", which it is impossible to do if we are to work in the spirit of his philosophy.

It also troubles me to read in Moratorium (published 1977) of a shift within the Committee on Justice and Liberty (C.J.L.) of Canada which emphasizes structural problems, solidarity and creaturehood and softpedals the biblical prophecy from which real justice and liberty spring.

I am greatly troubled by the article in Calvinist Contact (March 26, 1982) about the participation of the Curriculum Development Centre (C.D.C.) of Toronto in the Educational Task Force of the Grassy Narrows Band, which, according to the report, involves the C.D.C. in "designing an educational model which would be more in line with native spirituality and ways of life" and "in the workshops held on the reserve to reawaken the Band's sense of identity and

spirituality". "Both the natives and the Christians on the Educational Task Force", I read there, "could agree on the importance of having an awareness of the unity of life and a respect for nature and for the dignity of each human being".

I say, all these things, arising from the so-called "reformational" movement, trouble me. I do not wish to argue with anyone about any one of them here. My purpose is not to cause argumentative division, but to call for prayerful reflection on what has been brought forward.

The corrective for any dislocation that may have occurred or be occurring in the direction of becoming too much absorbed in philosophical systematics (or with the structures such systematics study) Dooyeweerd himself offers us in his Foreword to the New Critique. The words occur in that very section in which he calls for assistance from special scientists and then addresses those "who still resist the Christian Idea of science". They are a prayer, a prayer that such persons "may be convinced that the question is not a matter of a 'system' (subject to all the faults and errors of human thought) but rather it concerns the foundation and the root of scientific thought as such" (emphasis mine, I viii). This is what elsewhere is called the revelational given. Dooyeweerd himself says expressly what he means by this foundation and root of scientific thought. It occurs in the longer passage I have quoted earlier (see above, p. 26), but let me repeat just these words: "In the limitation and weakness of the flesh, we grasp the absolute truth in our knowledge of God derived from His revelation, in prayer and worship. This knowledge in the full sense of the word contains the religious principle and foundation of all true knowledge..." (II 562)

In the Christian philosophical enterprise 'system' has a very different place and authority than in a humanistic one. William James tells us (Pragmatism, ch. 1): "The actual universe is a thing wide open, but rationalism makes systems, and systems must be closed". After Hegel, many

philosophers of name had only contempt for system-making. Robert Heiss (Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Delta, p. 35) says, "Whether [systems] are completely over and done with .. is open to doubt. Man's bent to see the whole from one visual angle is ineradicable". For the humanist there is need for a closed system to guarantee that there is system at all. The Christian believes that only God can tell us about the origin, unity and end of the heavens and earth He created and all the creatures that dwell in them to serve His glory. There is a revealed Order, and that puts in their proper place and relativizes, but also directs, all our efforts at systematization. In these systematic efforts of ours differences will continue to show up, but we must know how to assign these a relative importance within the total framework of our philosophizing, and how to witness to the unity of our prophecy, which our efforts in systematics are trying to exhibit and work out in a scientific way. To fall into a humanistic confinement to systematics in philosophy and in each of the special sciences is, for the Christian philosophical enterprise, an extremely pernicious form of myopia and can only lead, indeed, to fragmentation (the specialist in each science who can't speak with any assurance about anything outside his special field), and also to a loss of vibrancy and of vitality. Only the Power of the Word can move us fruitfully to systematic work and vitalize our activity in the light of the Truth. The life we share in this Association is by the Word. Our fellowship is in the Spirit, in the fellowship of the Truth (577).

Constantly we must remind ourselves that it is a wonderful thing what God did in the generation of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, a wonderful thing in the long history of Christ's Church. The Spirit of prophecy (the witness of Jesus) was at work to sanctify and to protect the Church. The break with synthesis thinking, allowing the Word of God more completely to govern our thought, was a liberation from a tradition that takes us back to the so-called "Christian

philosophy" of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century. The famous Berlin church historian, Hans Lietzmann, says¹⁸ that "it is obvious that Justin's Christianity is divided into two halves; one is a philosophical religion which clothes Greek ideas and conceptions in a loose biblical garment, and which in the end issues in man's self-redemption by means of an ethical decision", and of this element in Justin he also writes (p. 241) that "Justin and his fellow-warriors introduced it into speculative theology, placed it immediately on the throne where it kept its place victoriously for many centuries". When we know the long, sad history of the christian churches in these matters, we can only continuously be filled with joy and thanksgiving at the liberation our founders experienced and passed on to us.

But we do have to know something about that tradition, and about the meaning of Greek philosophy. I'm not talking about specialists in Greek philosophy or specialists in church history. I'm talking about the need for every one of us, in a sense, to be generalists to a degree. Even if that means sacrifice in our "careers" as specialists. Christians may have to pay a price in this world in order to maintain their own community. We must all make more use of, and work more with, the extremely important work that Professor Vollenhoven did in revising the history of ancient philosophy, thus shedding light on the nature of the fundamental question the Greek philosophers were concerned about (LAW). And if, for example, our christian classical high schools (gymnasia), with all their instruction in Greek and Latin often oriented too much to the classical humanist viewpoint, fail to let our young people see the pagan (immanentistic-reductionist) nature of Greek society and thought, let us work to change that instruction, and, if

18. Hans Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal (= Vol II of The Beginnings of the Christian Church), Scribner's, N.Y., 1938, P. 244.

that should prove impossible, to find other means to educate our children in the fear of the Lord. In this age of computers and video-cassettes, schools no longer have the monopoly they once had on education. We have got to have a younger generation that has been educated out of the "foundation and root". We have got to train a leadership.

If we possess the Spirit of prophecy and the witness of Jesus, and have seen what Dooyeweerd calls the necessary inner connection between that and our theoretical work, then we will be qualified and empowered to work in the oikoumené as agents of reconciliation and redemption in our philosophical work. The Lord will push us outward, ever outward, in the great battle of the spirits, to the ends of the earth. Our number -- let us always remember this -- is not important. The Power is in the Word of God, which goes forth in victory, conquering and to conquer. We should not allow our personal reaction against a certain worldly triumphalism that crept into many cultural activities of Dutch Reformed Christians in the early part of this century to blind us to the signature of triumph inherent in biblical prophecy, although we must remember that it is God's triumph, to be accomplished in His way, at His time, but through his servants who ask Him to use them to that end. Let it be our constant and fervent prayer that we may so be used. Let us always be actively seeking opportunities where we can so be used. Let unhesitating obedience, ineradicable joy, unquenchable hope, invincible courage, irresistible longing to glorify God -- and deep gratitude -- be the spontaneous expression of our lives, until our Lord return.

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