

THE ANSWER

TO A COMPLAINT AGAINST SEVERAL ACTIONS AND DECISIONS OF THE

PRESBYTERY OF PHILADELPHIA TAKEN IN A SPECIAL MEETING HELD

ON JULY 7, 1944

Proposed to the

Presbytery of Philadelphia of The Orthodox
Presbyterian Church by the Committee Elected
by Presbytery to Prepare Such an Answer.

Alan Tichenor, Chairman.

Robert Strong, Secretary.

Floyd E. Hamilton.

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Gordon H. Clark.

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The transcript of the theological examination of July 7, 1944, is extremely inaccurate. Many of the words do not make good sense because of errors in reporting. It is quoted, however, without any attempt to correct the language. The references in this Answer are made in the following style:

(P. 10, 2; O. 40) indicates the Complaint, Printed Copy, page 10, column 2; Original, page 40. The transcript of the theological examination of July 7, 1944 is cited by page and line.

THE LEGAL QUESTION

The Presbytery of Philadelphia hereby replies to the Complaint of Mr. John W. Betzold *et al.* against certain actions of the Presbytery in connection with its decisions to license and ordain Gordon H. Clark, Ph. D.

The Presbytery denies that the special meeting held on July 7, 1944, was illegal. The Complaint alleges that the meeting was illegal, on the ground that no emergency existed that justified the calling of the meeting. The Complaint seems to hold that even if a situation had prevailed which Presbytery would ordinarily regard as an emergency, yet even then the meeting would be illegal, since the particular business for which the meeting was called was not proper business to be conducted at a special meeting.

The special meeting in question was called in accordance with Form of Government, Chapter X, section 9. The Presbytery holds that there was an emergency which justified the calling of the meeting and that the calling of the meeting accords with accepted Presbyterian practice of many years' standing. The uniform practice of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in this matter indicates the meaning which has consistently been placed upon this section of the Form of Government. A perusal of the minutes of any number of presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. will indicate that for many years special meetings have been called when a sufficient number of presbyters felt that the convenience of the Presbytery or of some persons involved in the business created an emergency. This has been the consistent practice of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. Of the special meetings of the Presbytery recorded in the Minutes probably not one was called in an emergency that conformed to the Complaint's definition of the word—*i.e.*, "important occurrences unknown at their last meeting, and which cannot be safely deferred till their stated meeting, such as scandal raised on a minister's character, tending to destroy his usefulness, and bring reproach on religion; or feuds in a congregation threatening its dissolution; or some dangerous error, or heresy broached . . ." (P. 1, 3; O. 4). All the special meetings held by this Presbytery have been held in accordance with recognized Presbyterian practice—*i.e.*, they have been called when the postponement of the business until the regular meeting would seriously inconvenience a candidate, a minister, a church, or the Presbytery. The complainants have all previously taken part in such meetings without complaint.

To refer to one of several instances that could be cited, on July 8, 1941, a special meeting was held to ordain Licentiate Eugene D. Bradford. The Minutes of Presbytery do not record what the emergency was that prompted the call for this meeting, but it is within the recollection of presbyters that Mr. Bradford had received and accepted a call to an independent church and that he and the church would have been seriously inconvenienced if his ordination had been delayed until the regular meeting of the Presbytery. The moderator and a sufficient number of other presbyters had judged that this was an emergency in accordance with the terms of Form of Government, Chapter X, section 9, and the Presbytery concurred in this judgment by proceeding with the business for which the meeting was called. There is no indication in the record that the actions of this meeting were not unanimous. Of the seven ministers present at the meeting, four are now among the complainants!

A postponement of the examination of Dr. Clark would have seriously inconvenienced him. For well over a year the matter of his ordination had been before the presbytery. Dr. Clark had made two

trips from Wheaton, Ill., to Philadelphia to appear before the Presbytery or before its committee on candidates. He had traveled at his own expense about 3000 miles for these appearances. He had had to postpone planning his future until the matter of his ordination was settled. Further delay in planning his future would seriously have affected his usefulness in Christian service. At the time of the special meeting Dr. Clark was in the East on other business. He did not plan to be East at the time of the regular meeting, and could not have made a special trip at that time. Courtesy to Dr. Clark and consideration for him dictated the call of a special meeting at a time convenient for him. Those who were responsible for calling the meeting were careful to set a day when no impediment seemed to obtain to prevent the attendance of any member who could attend the regular meeting. That the date set was a most convenient one for the Presbytery is evidenced by the fact that the meeting was the most largely attended one in the history of the Presbytery.

The Presbytery would point out that a judicatory has a simple and most effective way of dealing with meetings for the calling of which it thinks there has been insufficient warrant. It can simply refuse to do the business for which it was called. This the Presbytery did not do on July 7, 1944, but proceeded with its business, in accordance with the terms of the call of the meeting.

There is no provision in the Form of Government of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church that a special meeting can be held only *pro re nata*. As a matter of fact, this term is not used in our Form of Government, nor in the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., upon which our Form of Government was based. To be sure, as the Complaint indicates, the Synod of 1760 judged that meetings *pro re nata* can be held "on account t of important occurrences unknown at their last meeting, and which cannot be safely deferred till their stated meeting" (P. 1, 3; O. 4). Yet the Synod of 1788 when it came to adopt a Form of Government, which made provision for special meetings, did not provide for special meetings to be held only under these restricted terms. It is significant that this Synod, although it had the precedent set by the decision of the Synod of 1760 before it, did not denominate special meetings *pro re nata*. This expression has never occurred in the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. from the first edition, published 1789, to the present date. There is no evidence that the Synod of 1788 in its Form of Government ever intended to restrict special meetings so drastically as the Synod of 1760 had indicated, and the Complaint certainly offers no evidence that the Form of Government of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church intended thus to restrict them. No presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is known, in practice, to have so restricted the calling of special meetings, and certainly the Presbytery of Philadelphia of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has never so restricted them. The Form of Government does not concern itself with the question whether the business to be done has newly arisen since the last regular meeting of the presbytery, but simply with the question whether an emergency exists important enough in the judgment of the moderator and of sufficient other presbyters, to warrant the calling of a special meeting.

The Presbytery thus maintains that the meeting of July 7, 1944, was legal in every respect, and it denies the plea of the complainants that this meeting "be found to have been illegally convened and that its acts and decisions and the acts and decisions issuing therefrom be declared null and void" (P. 2, 3; O. 7-8).

ON INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

In turning from the legal aspect of the Complaint to the theological aspects, the Presbytery wishes first of all to underscore the tenuous subtlety of the questions involved. Note well that Dr. Clark without equivocation subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The second examination concerned itself largely with the philosophical implications of certain phrases in the Confession and the particular interpretations which the questioners, now the complainants, placed upon them. This fact must be made clear to everyone who desires to see this Complaint in its true light. Dr. Clark accepts the Westminster Confession of Faith. The complainants found no objection to Dr. Clark's doctrinal views under the heading of the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, the creation, providence and miracles, or the fall of man. The complainants have not attempted to attack Dr. Clark's doctrine of the atonement, effectual calling, justification by faith, sanctification, or eschatology. It is therefore not surprising that at the most largely attended meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in history Dr. Clark's examination in theology was sustained by more than three-fourths vote of the Presbytery. Even some of the complainants themselves at that meeting of the Presbytery voted to sustain the examination in theology. More than three-fourths of the Presbytery of Philadelphia were satisfied of Dr. Clark's adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

And now a Complaint against the Presbytery is signed by thirteen persons alleging errors in Dr. Clark's views regarding (1) the incomprehensibility of God and the relationship of God's knowledge to man's knowledge; (2) the relationships among the intellect, will, and emotions; (3) the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility; (4) the offer of the gospel to man. Underlying all the charges is an assumption that Dr. Clark's thinking "bears all the earmarks of rationalism, humanistic intellectualism" and "vicious independence from God" (P. 10, 2; O. 40).

The first section of the Complaint is concerned with the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. Before analyzing this section step by step the Presbytery thinks it best to make some general observations on the doctrine in question. The Complaint, as will be seen, charges "that Dr. Clark's view of the incomprehensibility of God is definitely at variance with the meaning that this doctrine has had in Christian theology" (P. 5, 1; O. 18). This charge assumes that throughout Christian theology this doctrine has had but one definite meaning, for the Complaint (P. 4, 2; O. 15) also refers to "its uniform significance in the history of Christian thought"; the charge assumes that the complainants' theory is the one definite meaning, and that Dr. Clark in disagreeing with them rejects this uniform element in Christian theology. These assumptions, however, are false. The incomprehensibility of God, as explained by Dionysius the Areopagite, is quite different from the doctrine as explained by Charles Hodge. A comparison between two other theologians might show other differences, even though less violent. The assumption that it is possible to determine "*the* meaning that this doctrine has had in Christian theology" is therefore a false assumption. Furthermore, several of the particular points at issue in this Complaint have received far from exhaustive treatment in the history of theology. The Presbytery cannot assert that no book or manuscript has ever discussed these points, but it can assert that there is no well defined position recognized by any large number of theologians.

The view of the Complaint is that "God because of his very nature must remain incomprehensible to man" (P. 2, 3; O. 8); it is "not the doctrine that God can be known only if he makes himself known and in so far as he makes himself known" (*ibid.*). Moreover all knowledge which man can

attain differs from the knowledge of God “in a qualitative sense and not merely in degree” (P. 4, 2; O. 15). Thus God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge do not “coincide at any single point” (P. 5, 3; O. 21)¹. A proposition does not “have the same meaning for man as for God” (P. 5, 2; O. 20)². Man’s knowledge is “analogical to the knowledge God possesses of the same proposition” (P. 5, 3; O. 21)³. “The divine knowledge as divine transcends human knowledge as human, even when that human knowledge is a knowledge communicated by God” (P. 3, 1; O. 9). “Because of his very nature as infinite and absolute the knowledge which God possesses of himself and of all things must remain a mystery which the finite mind of man cannot penetrate” (*ibid.*). This latter statement does not mean merely that man cannot penetrate this mystery unaided by revelation: it means that even revelation by God could not make man understand the mystery, for the preceding sentences assert that it is the nature of God that renders him incomprehensible, not the lack of a revelation about it. As the analysis proceeds, these quotations with the argument from which they are taken will be seen to imply two chief points. First, there is some truth that God cannot put into propositional form; this portion of truth cannot be expressed conceptually. Second, the portion of truth that God can express in propositional form never has the same meaning for man as it has for God. Every proposition that man knows has a qualitatively different meaning for God. Man can grasp only an analogy of the truth, which, because it is an analogy, is not the truth itself.

On the other hand Dr. Clark contends that the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God as set forth in Scripture and in the Confession of Faith includes the following points: 1. The essence of God’s being is incomprehensible to man except as God reveals truths concerning his own nature; 2. The manner of God’s knowing, an eternal intuition, is impossible for man; 3. Man can never know exhaustively and completely God’s knowledge of any truth in all its relationships and implications; because every truth has an infinite number of relationships and implications and since each of these implications in turn has other infinite implications, these must ever, even in heaven, remain inexhaustible for man; 4. But, Dr. Clark maintains, the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God does not mean that a proposition, e.g., two times two are four, has one meaning for man and a qualitatively different meaning for God, or that some truth is conceptual and other truth is non-conceptual in nature.

Here is the crux of the issue. By insisting that God’s knowledge is qualitatively different from that of man and that “his knowledge and our knowledge” do not “coincide at any single point,” the Complaint is advancing a theory of a two-fold truth; while Dr. Clark holds that the nature of truth is one, that if a man knows any item of truth, both God and man know that same identical item, and that on this item God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge coincide. According to the Complaint man can

¹ “If we are not to bring the divine knowledge of his thoughts and ways down to human knowledge, or our human knowledge up to his divine knowledge, we dare not maintain his knowledge and our knowledge coincide at any single point.”

² “The far-reaching significance of Dr. Clark’s starting point,...is evident when we note the Dr. Clark holds that man’s knowledge of any proposition, if it is really knowledge, is identical with God’s knowledge of the same proposition. If knowledge is a matter of propositions divorced from the knowing subject, that is, of self-contained independent statements, a proposition would have to have the same meaning for man as for God.”

³ “Our knowledge of any proposition must always remain the knowledge of the creature. As true knowledge, that knowledge must be analogical to the knowledge which God possesses, but it can never be identified with the knowledge which the infinite and absolute Creator possesses of the same proposition.”

never know even one item of truth God knows; man can know only an “analogical” truth, and this analogical truth is not the same truth that God knows, for the truth that God knows is “qualitatively” different, and

God cannot reveal it to man because man is a creature. To repeat: the truth that God knows and the truth that man knows are never the same truth, for they do not “coincide at any single point.” God’s knowledge therefore would be incomprehensible to man for the specific reason that God could not reveal any particular fact about it without destroying the “Creator-creature relationship.” Dr. Clark holds that God can reveal any item of knowledge in propositional form without destroying the Creator-creature relationship, and that such a revealed proposition has the same meaning for God and for man when, as is sometimes the case, man understands it.

Now, what is the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God taught in Scripture and the Confession of Faith? Though the Complaint asserts that its “doctrine of incomprehensibility is the teaching of Scripture” and that it is “Taught in many passages and is implicit in the doctrine of the divine transcendence which is everywhere taught or presupposed in Scripture,” it cites only a few passages, doubtless chosen because they are thought to present the strongest Scriptural proof of the doctrine. The first of these passages is Psalm 145:3, “His greatness is unsearchable.” And the third is from an uninspired speaker in Job 11: 7, 8, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven: what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?” The Hebrew root for search on these three passages is *chaqar*, which means to search or to examine. The passages all teach that man by his own unaided efforts cannot search out God’s greatness or understanding. They do not teach that God cannot reveal any particular proposition about his greatness, for they are in fact themselves propositions about the greatness and understanding of God. How much God will reveal to man is quite another question; but these verses do not imply that there is a phase of God’s knowledge that God cannot reveal, if he chooses to do so. And they certainly do not imply that some truth is non-conceptual in nature. Just what sort of truth would non-conceptual truth be?

I Timothy 6:16, “dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see,” is quoted as proving that “man the creature may never trespass or even draw near to contemplate God as he is in himself” (P. 4, 3; O. 17). But this is not what the verse says. The verse does not say that man cannot contemplate or think about God; it says that man cannot see him. Theophilus, quoted by Meyer, in loc., understands the verb to see literally, and makes the verse mean that God is an invisible spirit. It is the mystic Dionysius who takes the verb to see in the intellectual sense of to contemplate, and makes the verse mean that God is unthinkable. That this mystical interpretation of negative theology is wrong, and that the verb to see in this particular verse must be understood literally, is sustained by Job 19: 26, 27, “yet in my flesh (or, without my flesh) shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself.” Superficially, Job seems to contradict Paul. The Hebrew verb in Job, *chazah*, often means to contemplate. It must mean contemplation here, for the literal meaning of physical sight would make the verse inconsistent with the Scriptural teaching of the spirituality of God. The literal meaning in Job would make the verse untrue. Hence Job definitely asserts that man will contemplate God. Since I Timothy 6:16 cannot contradict the teaching of Job, it must refer to literal sight, not to contemplation, and therefore the exegesis of the Complaint is thus shown to be mistaken. The spirituality and invisibility of God, not his unthinkability, is also taught in John 1:18 and 6:46, and to this teaching the former of these verses expressly adds the fact

of revelation. Therefore these verses should not have been cited to prove that God has knowledge which he cannot reveal to man.

Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever," also supports Dr. Clark's view of the knowledge of God. Man cannot of himself discover God's secrets; he can know only what God reveals to him; but when truths are revealed, they are revealed to be understood, for they "belong unto us and to our children forever." Further, no one has a right to set a limit on the power of God to reveal in heaven any item which is now among secret things. Until it is revealed, man cannot discover it; it is indeed incomprehensible because it is unrevealed.

Two other passages cited likewise agree with Dr. Clark's view: Matt. 11:27 (and Luke 10:22), "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." Only the Son has that original and underived knowledge of the Father, which can initiate a revelation. Man cannot know God unless the Son "willeth to reveal him." But when the Son reveals God, man can know him truly insofar as he is revealed, and that knowledge is true knowledge, true both for God and for man.

Romans 11:33, cited in the Complaint but not quoted, also teaches the same Scriptural doctrine that Dr. Clark accepts. None of these verses gives a hint of the Complaint's strange teaching that there is a part of God's knowledge which he cannot reveal to man, did he choose to do so, without destroying the distinction between the Creator and the creature. It is pertinent to ask just how the distinction between the Creator and the creature would be destroyed, if God made man understand some given item of knowledge so that God's knowledge and man's knowledge coincided at the point revealed by God to man. Of course God's knowledge of the subject would not be exhausted by what he revealed to man, but insofar as man understood the one revealed truth, his knowledge would coincide with that part of God's knowledge that God had chosen to reveal. The given proposition would be true both for God and for man; but what God does not reveal remains incomprehensible.

The most plausible passage that the complainants cite in support of their position is Isaiah 55:8, 9. If their doctrine is not found here, it is difficult to see where in Scripture it may be found. The passage is: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." At first glance this passage may seem favorable to the position of the complainants. It seems to teach that we cannot think God's thoughts—we cannot even think God's thoughts after him. But since, as has been seen, this idea is not supported by the other passages cited, one should be wary of jumping to the conclusion that it is inescapably taught here. The context of these verses aids in understanding the prophet's meaning. In a wonderful passage commanding the wicked to return unto the Lord, the promise is held out that God will abundantly pardon, "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." The point is that man would say that the wicked should never be pardoned, or could never be pardoned. That is the way a man would think. God, however, thinks differently. He knows something that man does not know. God knows that he will send his Son to bear the penalty of sin, so that justice and mercy may meet. Thus God's ways and thoughts with reference to salvation were as different from man's as heaven is high above the earth. The significance of the verses therefore lies in a comparison between human thoughts about salvation and God's thoughts about it. God had plans about sending a substitutionary Saviour, which were not revealed to

man, and those plans were so wonderful that there was no comparison with earthly standards. Of course there are two levels indicated in this passage: on the divine level there is rational knowledge, while on the human level are ignorance and false ideas. There are two levels, to be sure, but not two levels of knowledge. One should therefore hesitate to claim that this passage teaches that the “gulf which separates divine knowledge from human knowledge” is unbridgeable by God if he chooses to bridge it, for in the case in question as a matter of fact he did bridge it in sending the Saviour. Now we can see and understand partially, at least, but nevertheless truly, the reason why God could pardon repentant sinners in the Old Testament dispensation. We conclude therefore that even this most plausible passage cited does not really support the complainants’ position regarding the incomprehensibility of God.

Brief reference should be made to certain passages which among many others more pointedly support Dr. Clark’s contention that God is truly knowable insofar as he reveals himself to man. John 17:3 says, “This is life eternal that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.” Knowing God is said to be the essence of eternal life. No limits are placed on the amount of knowledge man may have about God. Other verses teach that man can know only what the Son reveals, but the assumption is clear that the Son can reveal to his people whatever he chooses. And it is assumed that such knowledge is true and valid for both God and man. Doubtless it would be only such knowledge as a creature could comprehend, but no limit is set for the comprehension of revealed truth. The manner of God’s knowing would of course be different, and would eternally remain incomprehensible to man, but there is no evidence that there are any items of knowledge about God which God could not reveal to us, if he choose to do so.

The second passage is John 7:17, “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God.” Here we have described the true way to true knowledge of God-revealed doctrine. Willing to do God’s will is the way of knowledge of God’s revelation. Certainly knowledge of God-revealed truth is here set as a goal before the man who wills to do God’s will. Man may never reach the goal of perfect knowledge of revealed truth, but no barrier or mystery is here “set forth in divine revelation that” is “quite beyond the powers of the finite mind to comprehend.” On the contrary it is implied that there are no such barriers in revealed truth for one who wills to do God’s will.

The third passage is: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4; cf. I Cor. 10:11). Insofar as God has revealed truth to man he clearly intends man to strive to understand God’s meaning. The Presbytery finds nothing in Scripture implying that God places a different meaning on a proposition from that which he intends man to understand. When Scripture says, “Ye shall know the truth” (John 8:32), certainly the assumption is that it is the same truth for both God and man. When Christ told the disciples “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13), he certainly implied that under the Holy Spirit’s guidance man can investigate all revealed truth, and the assumption seems to be that the Holy Spirit could, if he chose, reveal any particular truth to man. That is not to claim that man can sometime in eternity become omniscient by the comprehension of one truth after another as God reveals them to him. Man’s knowledge would always be temporal, and could never include either the immediate, intuitive knowledge of God, or the knowledge of all the relationships and implications of any and all propositions. The necessary content of omniscience includes knowledge of what is to man the infinite future, the past in all its content, and all the infinite relationships and implications of all items of knowledge, past,

present and future, as well as the infinite self-consciousness of God, both of his own Triune nature and of the manner in which he knows the universe, including the knowledge that God has of what is possible for him to do but which he will never do. Man can never become omniscient by adding one item of knowledge to another throughout eternity.

Several other passages of Scripture set forth Dr. Clark's view of the matter. Psalm 36:9, "In thy light shall we see light," does not say that we shall merely see some analogical reflection of the light. A similar meaning is embedded in Psalm 43:3, "Send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me." Particularly significant is I Cor. 13:12, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known," for no limit is placed on the knowledge redeemed men may acquire in heaven. If the redeemed are to know as God knows them, it would seem that God will reveal a much greater amount of knowledge in the future life than we now expect. Furthermore, this verse implies that though our present knowledge is partial, it is nevertheless true knowledge and is knowledge of the same meaning that God has.

This is far from the so-called quantitative view of truth which the complainants charge would destroy the gulf separating divine knowledge and human knowledge, and so break down the distinction between the Creator and the creature. They have failed in their theory to grasp the correct meaning of omniscience, and they also fail to see the significance of the Scriptural injunction to "grow in knowledge" (II Peter 3:18). Where in Scripture is there evidence that a truth or a proposition is qualitatively different for God and man? Where can one find the idea in Scripture that God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not coincide at any single point?

Even on the complainants' charge, that "Dr. Clark denies that there is any qualitative distinction between the contents of the knowledge of God and the contents of the knowledge possible to man, but rather in so far as there is any distinction between these two the distinction is merely quantitative" (P. 5, 1; O. 19), it does not follow that the distinction between the creature and the Creator is broken down thereby, or that there is "an assault upon the majesty of God" (P. 3, 1; O. 9). When the meaning of omniscience is understood as above, man's increase by revelation in knowledge on the temporal plane would, throughout eternity, still fall infinitely short of omniscience. As a matter of fact, however, as will be seen later, Dr. Clark does not deny the qualitative distinction between God's knowledge and man's.

In the Confession of Faith there is even less support for the strange doctrine that there are mysterious areas of knowledge which God has, incapable of being revealed by God to man or of being understood by man even if God revealed them. In the Confession, II, 1, and the Larger Catechism, question 7, the word "incomprehensible" occurs as one of the attributes of God. No theory of incomprehensibility is taught, and no explanation is given of the sense in which the term is used, though a hint is perhaps given as to the meaning by the choice of the proof text selected. The text chosen is Psa. 145:3, "His greatness is unsearchable." As already shown, this supports the view of Dr. Clark, that man cannot by his own efforts search out or discover knowledge about the greatness of God. Dr. Clark stands by the doctrine taught in the Confession.

The Presbytery concludes, therefore, that neither in Scripture nor in the Confession is there any evidence that God, if he chooses, cannot reveal any item of knowledge to man; nor would man cease to be a creature by understanding or seeking to understand such a revelation; nor is there any evidence that a proposition is qualitatively different for God and man; nor that God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not coincide at any single point.

Having contrasted the basic contention of the Complaint regarding the knowledge of God and his incomprehensibility with the position taken by Dr. Clark on these points, and having shown that both Scripture and the Confession of Faith support Dr. Clark's position rather than that of the Complaint, it is necessary to proceed to an analysis of the Complaint itself.

The first of the three numbered steps asserts that "the fundamental assumption made by Dr. Clark is that truth, whether in the divine mind or in the human mind, is always propositional." The Presbytery replies to this assertion by pointing out that there is nothing in the transcript to justify it. The transcript is very imperfect and at times unintelligible, but the passages cited in the Complaint have nothing to do with truth as it is in the divine mind. The three passages cited speak only of truth as it is in the human mind, and therefore the Complaint misrepresents Dr. Clark. Dr. Clark has said that all truth can be expressed in propositions, but this does not mean that God thinks in propositions. The complainants in order to be fair should have noted that in the transcript (26, 1-9 and 27, 27-28, 22) Dr. Clark denies what they assert in the Complaint.

The first of these passages reads: "Q. Dr. Clark, you have said that man's knowledge is a series of propositions, that is, discursively. A. Yes. Q. That God's knowledge is intuitive. A. Yes. Q. Do you mean by that, that God sees everything in all its infinite relation, all at one glance? A. Yes, that is awkward language but I don't know any better, if you don't press me too hard on it." The second passage contains these words: "Q. Do you believe that God's intuitive knowledge is the same as our discursive knowledge? A. Well, I guess not, two times two is four, both for God and for us, that is the expression of God's knowledge and if we don't know the object that God knows, then we are in absolute ignorance. Q. Would you mind repeating your statement or Mr. Andrews' statement, what was it? Mr. Andrews: As I recall it, it was: 'God's knowledge is intuitive and He sees and knows everything in all its infinite relations at one glance.'" These two passages of the transcript, though brief, incomplete, and defective, show clearly that Dr. Clark does not hold God's knowledge to be propositional. The complainants in their charge above have ignored the record.

With this first point based on a false statement, the remainder of step one loses all compulsion. For example, the complainants say (P. 5, 2; O. 19)⁴, "This view of truth, it will be noted, conceives of truth as fundamentally quantitative . . ." Even in the case of Man, who can think only discursively, this conclusion does not follow. From the fact that each proposition may be numbered the complainants have inferred that truth is numerical or quantitative. This is extremely bad logic. The fallacy consists in stressing a fact of minor importance so as to give the impression that no other factor is involved. It is true that men know several propositions, and each proposition is distinct. A mind that knows nine propositions may be said to know more than a mind that knows six. But how insignificant the mere quantity is may be grasped if we consider that one mind may know six integrated propositions, while the other mind has nine pieces of disconnected information. Not only may the information two minds have be distinguished by the degree of logical connection among its parts, but also there is a difference in the relative importance of the judgments. For example, two minds may both know six propositions, but one mind knows six general rules while the other has six particular facts. The number of propositions, the

⁴ "The fundamental assumption made by Dr. Clark is that truth, whether in the divine mind or in the human mind, is always propositional. ...This view of truth, it will be noted, conceives of truth as fundamentally quantitative, as consisting of a series of distinct items."

quantity as the Complaint calls it, is the same in both instances, but the former is the better mind. The complainants therefore have no evidence that Dr. Clark holds truth to be fundamentally quantitative.

Hence the complainants have failed to understand Dr. Clark and have seriously distorted and misrepresented his views. They imply (P. 5, 2; O. 20) that Dr. Clark considers that "Knowledge is a matter of propositions divorced from the knowing subject, that is, of self-contained, independent statements." This is entirely gratuitous, for there is no evidence whatsoever to support it. Dr. Clark rejects the idea that truth is independent of God. The complainants (P. 6, 1; O. 22) also say "the approach of Dr. Clark is quantitative through and through." They are also wrong (P. 5, 3; O. 21) where they say he resolves "knowledge into detached items." It is therefore by a disregard of both logic and of the evidence that the Complaint can conclude that (P. 5, 2; O. 19) "This view of truth, it will be noted, conceives of truth as fundamentally quantitative." As has been shown, the Complaint is at least inaccurate where (P. 5, 1; O. 19) it says that Dr. Clark holds that the distinction between God's knowledge and man's knowledge is "merely quantitative."

The method the complainants have pursued is to center attention on one accident of a proposition and then tacitly to assume that there is nothing more to be said. Because each proposition is numerically distinct, they infer that there is nothing except numerical distinction.

Later in the Complaint they offer a reason for their concern over what may seem arid logical technicalities. They assert (P. 7, 3; O. 28) "This knowing of propositions cannot, in the nature of the case, reflect or inspire any recognition by man of his relation to God, for the simple reason that the propositions have the same content, mean the same, to God and man." If this pronouncement be applied to a concrete case, it means that the truth "Christ died for our sins" cannot reflect or inspire recognition of man's relation to God. Why propositions, such as "Christ died for our sins" cannot reflect the truth of God, the complainants do not explain. They simply make an ex cathedra statement. One may ask, of what use are all the propositions of Scripture, if they do not reflect God and his relation to man? And if propositions cannot inspire any recognition by man of his relation to God, why should anyone preach the gospel? Dr. Clark believes that the preaching of the gospel, not without the regenerating or illuminating power of the Holy Ghost, is for the express purpose of teaching man what to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man. Since Scripture is in propositional form, the assumption of the Complaint that no statement in the Bible can reflect or inspire any recognition by man of his relation to God is both absurd and unscriptural. The second part of the same sentence purports to give a reason for the first part: propositions cannot inspire recognition of God, "for the simple reason that propositions have the same content, mean the same, to God and man." The complainants therefore deny that propositions have the same meaning for God and man. But this denial nullifies the Bible from cover to cover. The same idea is found in another place. The Complaint infers as an untenable conclusion from Dr. Clark's views that therefore (P. 5, 2; O. 20) "a proposition would have to have the same meaning for man as for God." Here is the basic difference in this matter between Dr. Clark and the Complaint. He holds that propositions have a single meaning, the same for God and man. The Complaint evidently assumes that a given proposition has two entirely different meanings. One of these meanings man can grasp; the other meaning God alone knows and man has no idea at all of what God means. But if this were so, what would become of the doctrine of verbal inspiration? The proposition, Christ died for our sins, has a single, definite, plain meaning. To say that God places some

other, undiscoverable meaning upon these words is to empty the Bible of truth, and to deny that it really reveals God's mind. This logical deduction from the Complaint is to be repudiated.

Involved in the discussion of these same pages of the Complaint is the role of reason in religious knowledge. "It will be observed that Dr. Clark does not claim to derive this judgment from Scripture, it is rather regarded as an axiom of reason" (P. 5, 2; O. 19). The complainants also say (P. 5, 2; O. 20) "And it may not be overlooked in this connection that Dr. Clark does not claim Scriptural proof for his fundamental assumption as to the character of knowledge." One might guess that the complainants would demand exegetical proof even for the theorems of geometry. Later they say (P. 6, 3; O. 24, 25) "And that he is in error seems to be due to the fact that he does not approach the doctrine by way of an exegesis of Scripture. His approach, on the contrary, while admittedly taking into account certain teachings of Scripture, is to a large extent rationalistic. His argument is built up from certain principles derived from reason. One cannot expect a sound theology to proceed from a faulty method. In short, therefore, we hold that both the formulation of this doctrine and the method by which it is reached are out of harmony with orthodox Presbyterianism."

It has already been shown that Dr. Clark's position agrees with Scripture, but the implication of this charge seems to be that an appeal to principles of reason is out of harmony with orthodox Presbyterianism. Now in the first place, some of this discussion is not so far removed from Scripture as the complainants seem to think. It is true that the assertion "truth may always be expressed in propositions" is not a conclusion based on the exegesis of a certain number of Scriptural passages. The doctrine of the federal headship of Adam may be deduced by exegesis from Romans 5:12 ff.; and the unity of the covenant of grace is supported by Galatians 3. There is no single passage from which by exegesis one can deduce that truth may always be expressed in propositions. But it must be insisted upon that the Bible as a whole is written in propositional form. The propositions of the Bible are not propositions about propositions, that is, the Bible is not a textbook on logic. But the Bible is logical; its teaching is propositional; and in view of the fact that God chose words and propositions for his revelation, in view of the fact that God did not choose some non-propositional form of revelation, one should be cautious of disparaging propositions. There is therefore Scriptural support, even if not exegetical support, for a propositional view of truth.

In the second place, and now directly to the point, an appeal to principles of reason is not out of harmony with orthodox Presbyterianism. We trust it will be granted that William Brenton Greene, late professor of apologetics in Princeton Seminary, was an orthodox Presbyterian. The following quotation from *The Function of the Reason in Christianity*, by W. Brenton Greene, Jr., in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Vol. VI, 1895, pages 499 ff., illustrates a view that has had wide acceptance.

"For all that logically precedes the Scriptures, as the being of God, the need of a written revelation, etc., we must go back to philosophy, to reason pure and simple. . . . Hence Henry B. Smith has well said: 'If we cannot construct the foundations and the outworks of the Christian System on impregnable grounds; if we cannot show the possibility of miracles, and of a revelation; if we cannot prove—absolutely prove—the existence of a wise, intelligent, personal, and providential Ruler of all things: then we are merged in infidelity, or given over to an unfounded faith. If we cannot settle these points on the field of open discussion, we cannot settle them at all.' . . . Reason should distinguish among the interpretations of the Scriptures between what is above reason in the true sense of beyond it, and what is above reason in the wrong sense of out of relation to it or contrary to it. That is, as a

revelation must evince rationally its right to be believed; so, as has been seen, it itself can contain nothing irrational or impossible. In deciding what is thus, however, the reason must act rationally and not capriciously. Its judgments must be guided by principles which commend themselves to the common consciousness of men, such as, that that is impossible which involves a contradiction; that it is impossible that revelation should deny any well authenticated truth, whether of intuition, experience, or science; *that it is impossible for what reason cannot try to comprehend to be true*. All this must be so; for God, who is the Supreme Reason, cannot but be rational and hence self-consistent."

The italicized phrase is a little awkward in expression, but its implications for the doctrine of incomprehensibility are tremendous.

This quotation from W. Brenton Greene, Jr., particularly his approval of the two sentences from Henry B. Smith, may seem rationalistic to those who have not been raised in the Presbyterian tradition. The Presbytery does not insist that Greene's position must be accepted. The point is that here is a man whom all ought to recognize as orthodox; he was not only a Presbyterian minister, he was the professor of apologetics in what was at that time the citadel of Presbyterian orthodoxy. And this professor of apologetics gives a wider scope to reason than does Dr. Clark. If, as the Complaint argues, "One cannot expect a sound theology to proceed from a faulty method," if, that is, a faulty method vitiates a man's doctrine of the atonement and all other doctrines, then according to the argument of the Complaint Greene's theological views must have been thoroughly heretical because his method is even more "rationalistic" than that alleged of Dr. Clark. If The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is ready to change its test of orthodoxy, if it is ready to require subscription to a particular apologetic, let this change come by an open attempt to amend the Confession of Faith and not by the indirect method of a Complaint against a particular action of one Presbytery.

A.A. Hodge, also, in his *Outlines of Theology* appeals to reason. On page 19, 8, 2d, he refers to "the light of nature." Just below he speaks of "the demonstration of the a-priori possibility of a supernatural revelation." On page 37 he answers Hume by an appeal to "a universal and necessary judgment of reason." On page 45 he says, "It is certain that the intuitions of necessary truth are the same in all men. They are not generalizations from experience, but presupposed in all experience." See in particular his defense of natural theology on page 53, 1, 1st, page 54, 2, 2d; also page 61, 10. On page 62, 14, 1st, he also says, "Reason is the primary revelation God has made to man, necessarily presupposed in every subsequent revelation of whatever kind . . . Hence no subsequent revelation can contradict reason acting legitimately within its own sphere . . . To believe is to assent to a thing as true, but to see that it contradicts reason, is to see that it is *not* (italics his) true." Again on page 63, 15, 1st, "The first principles of a true philosophy are presupposed in all theology, natural and revealed. 2d, The Holy Scriptures, although not designed primarily to teach philosophy, yet necessarily presuppose and involve the fundamental principles of a true philosophy."

If the complainants object to Dr. Clark's method as unsound, they must also repudiate the methods of old Princeton as "out of harmony with orthodox Presbyterianism." The Presbytery does not assert that the Confession requires adherence to everything in the Princeton apologetic. Other forms of apologetics may also be permitted. But without specifically amending our standards any attempt to exalt one method as alone orthodox and to repudiate all appeal to the a-priori truths of reason is intolerable.

Here some analysis is required of the charges of “humanistic intellectualism” later made against Dr. Clark at two points (P. 7, 3; O. 29; and P. 10, 2; O. 40)⁵ and of rationalism in the theological sense (P. 10, 2; O. 40; and P. 10, 3; O. 41; P. 6, 3; O. 25)⁶. The Complaint does not charge Dr. Clark with the Sophistic man-measure theory or its modern equivalent, pragmatism. It is therefore admitted on all hands that Dr. Clark does not make the human mind the standard of truth. Intellectualism, as opposed to pragmatism, holds that truth is immutable and independent of man. Dr. Clark holds the usual form of intellectualism, that truth is indeed independent of man, though not independent of God; and this position coupled with Dr. Clark’s acceptance of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice disposes of the added charge of rationalism.

While the tenor of the Complaint is anti-intellectualistic, it is hard to find in a doctrinally conscious Christianity any reason for opposing intellectualism. The Complaint, however, goes further and charges Dr. Clark with “humanistic” intellectualism. In using the notion of humanism, the Complaint obviously does not refer to the Renaissance phenomenon of the study of the classics or to the modern study of the humanities. Humanism in modern philosophical terminology is but a polite term for atheism. Although humanism is predominantly pragmatic and anti-intellectualistic, a theory of humanistic intellectualism would hold that immutable truth depends neither on God nor man, but finally and ultimately upon the spatial, corporeal universe or some other alleged ground. It is questionable whether the Complaint really means what it seems to say in charging Dr. Clark with “humanistic intellectualism,” for this would be to accuse him of atheism. Such a charge would be nothing less than calumny and slander.

Since step two of this part of the argument of the Complaint depends on or repeats step one, not much more in the way of reply is needed. It ought to be pointed out, however, that step two begins with a false statement. The Complaint says, “Dr. Clark holds that man’s knowledge of a proposition, if it is really knowledge, is identical with God’s knowledge of the same proposition.” The complainants refer to seven passages in the transcript to support their contention. Not one of the seven references says anything remotely resembling the sentence above, and two of the seven directly contradict it. Page 18, line 23 of the transcript is one of these references. The passage, obviously incorrectly reported in detail, reads, “I know of two points, often this subject. That is—the method of knowledge—knowing, is, in the case of God not aquisitional, but in our case it is. This is one point of it, and the only other point that has

⁵ “Dr. Clark deserves the highest commendation for his faithful opposition to any form of humanistic emotionalism in theology. However, when his position is compared with the teaching of the Bible, the Westminster Standards, and also with the writings of Reformed theologians, it unfortunately begins to appear that he is in grave danger of the equally serious error of humanistic intellectualism” “Dr. Clark does not deny the necessity or fact of regeneration but he makes no absolute qualitative distinction between the knowledge of the unregenerate man and the knowledge of the regenerate man...there is not one shred of evidence that man’s religious activity undergoes any qualitative change through regeneration. That bears all the marks of rationalism, humanistic intellectualism.”

⁶ “Pure and genuine religion is not, then, merely the apprehension of propositional truths.” “We judge then that Dr. Clark’s view of the incomprehensibility of God, as presented to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, is not a proper one. And that he is in error seems to be due to the fact that he does not approach the doctrine by way of an exegesis of Scripture. His approach, in the contrary, while admittedly taking into account certain teachings of Scripture, is to a large extent rationalistic. His argument is built up from certain principles derived from reason.”

reference to the subject is: The object known, such as two times two equals four. I hold that that is the same as it is for God, but the method of knowing it, is entirely different.” On the same page of the transcript (18, 5) Dr. Clark had said, “Briefly I should say God’s knowledge is intuitive and ours indispersive?” (*sic*). The other of the two references expressing essentially the same thought is 28, 14-22. In other words, Dr. Clark in the transcript says God’s knowledge of a given object is not the same as man’s knowledge of the same object. And the complainants after reading these passages say that “Dr. Clark holds that man’s knowledge of a proposition . . . is *identical* with God’s knowledge of the same proposition.” The Complaint therefore has attempted to put into Dr. Clark’s mouth the very position he explicitly denied.

In studying this subject one should be careful to avoid certain apparently common confusions. Strict accuracy is required. The word *knowledge* has two meanings; both are good English; but the one should never be taken for the other. When one says, This man has great knowledge, the word refers to the objects, *i.e.*, the truths or propositions he knows. On the other hand when one says, Man has discursive knowledge, the word refers, not to the objects known, but to the manner of knowing. The simple phrase *God’s knowledge* may bear either meaning, but what is true of one meaning is not necessarily true of the other meaning. In the phrase *God’s knowledge of a proposition* the word *knowledge* refers to the intuitional character of his knowing. It cannot refer to the content known, for if it did, the phrase could be exactly reproduced as *God’s object of an object*, or, *God’s truth of a truth*, or, *God’s proposition of a proposition*. The complainants in attacking Dr. Clark’s position are not concerned with knowledge in the sense of the manner of knowing. They distinguish and they admit Dr. Clark distinguishes between intuition and discursion, but they claim that the manner of God’s knowing is no part of the doctrine of incomprehensibility. Hence the theory of the Complaint is that the objects or truths known by God are different from those known by man. Another possible confusion arises from the ambiguity of the word *meaning*. Sometimes *meaning* means implication; as for example when one says, The clouds in the sky tonight mean rain tomorrow. Thus it is possible to say that God sees more meaning in a particular proposition than man does because he sees its far reaching implications. This, however, is not the meaning of *meaning* in this discussion. The Complaint (P. 6, 1-2; O. 23)⁷ definitely sets aside this meaning as irrelevant. Therefore those who study the Complaint and this reply must restrict themselves to another and more basic meaning of *meaning*. This more basic meaning is simply the particular truth itself. The proposition, Two times two are four, apart from anything it implies, means just what it says. It is difficult, in fact it is impossible to express the meaning of this proposition in any terms simpler than the words, Two times two are four. It is in this sense that the Complaint asserts

⁷ “It may be objected to the exposition of Dr. Clark’s views presented above that it leaves out of account the important consideration that Dr. Clark allows that beyond the knowledge of a proposition there is the knowledge of the implications of a proposition, and that the knowledge which man may enjoy of a proposition does not necessarily carry with it a knowledge of its implications. This qualification, however, does not affect Dr. Clark’s basic position in any substantial way. The implications of propositions are after all, on his view, also propositions. Consequently,...the distinction between the divine knowledge and the knowledge possible to man is merely quantitative”

that such a proposition has two different meanings. Though these distinctions are clear and elementary, experience shows that they are often confused.

What Dr. Clark said was that though God's knowledge of a truth is different from man's knowledge of the same truth, it is none the less the same truth that they both know, if indeed man knows anything. The Complaint avers that it is a prerequisite of ministerial good standing to believe that God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not "coincide at any single point" (P. 5, 3; O. 21). It tries to set up as a test of orthodoxy the denial that man knows even one truth God knows. If therefore God knows that two times two are four, and that Christ died for our sins, man cannot know these propositions. Man and God, according to the Complaint, cannot know the same truth, because God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not "coincide at any single point." And this view the complainants are attempting to make a test of orthodoxy. In reply the Presbytery wishes to suggest that if man does not know at least one truth that God knows, if man's knowledge and God's knowledge do not coincide in at least one detail, then man knows nothing at all. God knows all truth, and if man's mind cannot grasp even one truth, then man's mind grasps no truth. Far from being a test of orthodoxy, this test imposed by the Complaint is nothing else than skepticism and irrationalism.

The Church has a right to know what sort of strange doctrine the Complaint is making a test of orthodoxy. Does it mean that God in knowing two times two are four also sees intuitively the logical connection with some theorem of higher mathematics not yet discovered by man? Does the Complaint mean that as God thinks "Christ died for our sins," he also understands far-reaching consequences man has not dreamed of? No, this is not the point the Complaint is making. As the transcript shows Dr. Clark holds that God knows all these implications. But this view of Dr. Clark is what the Complaint rejects as a "quantitative" view of truth. The Complaint is not arguing that God knows more propositions. Its point is that the first proposition itself, viz., two times two are four, in its narrowest and minimal significance, is qualitatively different for God. What is this qualitative difference? This is a question the Complaint has not answered. The ordinarily recognized qualities of simple propositions are: affirmative, negative, universal, particular, true, and false. Do the complainants hold that a proposition which is affirmative for man is negative for God? Or is a proposition that is true for God false for man? What the qualitative difference is that they have in mind, they have not divulged. But if they cannot state clearly what this qualitative difference is, how can such an unknown quality be made a test of orthodoxy?

At any rate the Complaint definitely states that man's knowledge and God's knowledge do not "coincide at any single point." This assertion does not refer to the modes of knowing truth, as will be made quite evident in step three. It refers strictly to the truth itself. The Complaint teaches that any given proposition does not mean the same thing for God as it means for man. "Two times two are four" is a given proposition; therefore it means one thing for man; and something qualitatively different for God. The truth "Christ died for our sins," does not have the same meaning for man and for God. May it mean for God that Christ did *not* die for our sins? The complainants of course would deny that it could quite mean that. But does their philosophy give them reasons for making such a denial?

The Complaint teaches that the truth man may have is an analogy of the truth God has; *i.e.*, man may have a resemblance of the truth God has; but he cannot have God's truth itself. He has only an analogy of it. The complainants would doubtless say that we must accept this dogma because God reveals it in the Bible. But where in the Bible is such a revelation found? It is not a valid deduction from the Creator-creature relationship. A valid deduction from this relationship would be that man can think

only God's thoughts after him and cannot originate thoughts not already in God's mind. And such thoughts would have to have the same meaning for both God and man; they would not be mere analogies of God's meaning. The manner of God's thinking is different from the thinking processes of man, but the result of man's thinking, if his thinking is true, is that he understands at least one truth that God thinks. Furthermore, the assumption that man knows his truth to be analogical of God's truth because God reveals it to be analogical, results in startling consequences. How could one know that this assumption itself is the truth as it is for God? On the complainants' theory the proposition "the truth man has is analogical" is itself only an analogy. It is not the truth that God has. Nor could man know that it was God who was revealing such a proposition, for again the proposition "God is revealing that truth is analogical" is only an analogy of the truth. On the complainants' theory there is no way of ever crossing over from an analogy of truth to the truth itself. All our thinking is shut up in analogies and resemblances and cannot coincide with God's truth at even a single point. This position really cuts all connection between God's knowledge and man's knowledge and plunges us into unmitigated skepticism.

If the complainants cannot know what God means, how can they know God does not mean this or that? They affirm that there is a resemblance or analogy between the truth God knows and the qualitatively different truth man knows. But by what right do they assert a resemblance when they cannot describe the qualitative difference? Or, how can they assert that two things resemble each other when they have never known and can never know one of them? One can say that two men resemble each other if one has seen both men. But one cannot legitimately affirm a resemblance between a man one has seen and a man one has not seen. Similarly, if a man knew God's meaning, he could compare it with his own and remark the similarity or difference. If I know your opinion, I can say it is similar to or dissimilar from mine. But if I do not know your opinion, I have no way of knowing whether your opinion is the same or the contradictory of mine. Similarly if man's knowledge and God's knowledge do not "coincide at any single point," then for all we know, perhaps Christ did not die for our sins. And the complainants wish to make their views a test of orthodoxy! Where in the Westminster Confession of Faith is there any such philosophy?

[During the preparation of this reply, a phrase was noted in *The Presbyterian Guardian* to the effect that those who signed the Complaint do not altogether agree with what it says. On page 351, column 3, of *The Presbyterian Guardian* of December 10, 1944, this sentence appears: "The complainants, to be sure, have made plain that, on their view, the knowledge which man may come to enjoy of a proposition cannot be at variance with the meaning of a proposition for God, since it must be analogical." If, however, the complainants have made this plain, they have not made it plain in the Complaint. It is in fact doubtful that they have made it plain anywhere. They have not made it plain in the editorial from which the sentence is quoted. Aside from the absence of any definition of the word "analogical," the phrase "at variance with" is unsatisfactory. The proposition "Joseph was sold into Egypt" is not at variance with the proposition "David was a great king." Are we therefore to suppose that one of these is analogical of the other and that God may place the meaning of the first of these propositions upon the second? If one is interested in a philosophic theory of knowledge, the phrase "at variance with" does not solve any epistemological problem. Undefined words and sweeping phrases do not help one to think clearly. A moment's reflection will suffice to show that no true proposition is "at

variance with” any other true proposition. Note the usage of this phrase in the Complaint (P. 5, 1; O. 18), quoted above in the third paragraph of this section *On Incomprehensibility*. Therefore, to say that the meaning God places on a proposition is not “at variance with” the meaning man finds in it, is to say very little indeed. The serious matter, however, is not what the complainants say they now believe. The serious matter is what they wrote and signed in the Complaint. If The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in an unfortunate moment approves the Complaint, it will be the wording of the Complaint that will define the position of the Church. The Presbytery cannot take into account the changing views of the complainants as individuals. It is called on to answer the Complaint. And the action of the Church in any formal vote will be an action on the Complaint as written and signed.]

In step three of the argument the complainants make certain admissions. They admit (P. 6, 2; O. 23)⁸ that Dr. Clark distinguishes between God’s knowing a truth and man’s knowing a truth. But then the complainants fail to give due weight to these, their own, admissions. Though they admit that Dr. Clark asserted this distinction, they have argued as if he had not. They attempt to justify their ignoring of the evidence. The complainants admit that Dr. Clark makes a qualitative distinction between God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge because he recognizes the fundamental difference between the mode of God’s knowing and that of man. Then the complainants make the astounding statement, “however, this admission does not affect the point at issue here since the doctrine of the mode of the divine knowledge is not a part of the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of his knowledge. The latter is concerned only with the contents of the divine knowledge” (P. 6, 2; O. 23). The complainants actually assert that the mode of God’s knowledge is not a part of the doctrine of incomprehensibility. One or two quotations from great Reformed theologians will suffice to disprove this assertion. A great theologian of the Northern Presbyterian Church, Robert J. Breckenridge, in his *The Knowledge of God Objectively Considered*, (1858), page 275, says “the mode in which the divine Intelligence conceives all things, distinctly, at the same time, and by one act, is wholly beyond our comprehension; that intelligence is therefore incomprehensible” (cf. pp. 285-287). Dr. Breckenridge says that the mode of God’s knowing is indeed a part of God’s incomprehensibility. Charnock also shows that the complainants have misunderstood the doctrine of God’s incomprehensibility. In Discourse VIII, *On God’s Knowledge*, he first speaks of the infinite number of truths God understands. On page 408 he says, “Who, then, can fathom that wherof there is no number?” This is the quantitative or mathematical concept of an infinite number of propositions which displeases the complainants. After enumerating through many pages the numberless objects of God’s knowledge, Charnock finally (page 451) comes to the mode of God’s knowing. There he says, “As God therefore is in being and perfection, infinitely more above a man than a man is above a beast, the manner of his knowledge must be infinitely above a man’s knowledge, than the knowledge of a man is above that of a beast; our understanding can clasp an object in a moment that is at a great distance from our sense; our eye, by one elevated motion, can view the heavens; the manner of God’s understanding must be inconceivably above our glimmerings; as the manner of his

⁸ “Another possible objection to the foregoing exposition of Dr. Clark’s views might take the form that he does draw a qualitative distinction between the knowledge of God and the knowledge possible for men since he freely recognizes a fundamental difference between the mode of God’s knowledge and that of man’s knowledge. God’s knowledge is intuitive while man’s is discursive.”

being is infinitely more perfect than all beings, so must the manner of his understanding be infinitely more perfect than all created understandings. Indeed, the manner of God's knowledge can no more be known by us than his essence can be known by us; and the same incapacity in man, which renders him unable to comprehend the being of God, renders him as unable to comprehend the manner of God's understanding." And then follows a discussion of the manner of God's knowing in which the usual distinction between intuition and discursion is made, as Dr. Clark made it in his examination. In the face of this the Complaint asserts that the mode of God's knowing is not a part of the doctrine of incomprehensibility, and on the basis of this ex cathedra pronouncement tries to justify its ignoring and distorting of the evidence.

The numerous quotations made by the complainants at the beginning of their argument will now be seen to have little to do with the charges against Dr. Clark. In general, the quotations say that man's knowledge is finite, limited, and partial; it differs from God's knowledge not merely in degree but also in kind. "To comprehend," says Charles Hodge, "is to have a complete and exhaustive knowledge of an object." But the quotations provide no basis for asserting that God cannot express himself in words; that words cannot inspire any recognition by man of his relation to God; that the statements in the Bible mean one thing for man and something qualitatively different for God; or that the mode of God's knowing is not a part of the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility.

The Presbytery must emphasize that on these matters concerning the philosophic implications of God's knowledge and man's knowledge very little has been written by Reformed theologians. It is a field of doctrine that is almost unexplored. In fact it is remarkable how little appears in print on the subject beyond first generalities. In view of this situation it is highly improper for the Complaint to dogmatize. It may be that this discussion will further the search for the truth, but it most certainly calls for caution and humility rather than for a Complaint.

In conclusion the Presbytery believes that this section of the Complaint utterly fails to prove that Dr. Clark is out of accord with the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith; the items which the complainants insist upon are far removed from the system of doctrine of the Confession; they are not strictly theological doctrines at all, but tenuous implications from these doctrines; and the implications may well be fallacious. Therefore this section of the Complaint fails to show that the Presbytery of Philadelphia was in error in licensing and ordaining Dr. Clark.

ON INTELLECT, WILL, AND EMOTIONS

The second theological section of the Complaint treats of two subjects: first, the problem of emotions in God; and, second, the problem of the relation between man's intellectual activity and his emotional and volitional activities. The first of these problems is discussed in pages 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, and 36 of the Complaint. The Answer will consider this problem before commencing discussion of the remainder of pages 25-41, in which the complainants state their views of the second problem.

The dispute takes its rise from the statement in the Confession that "God is without body, parts, or passions." The continental creeds generally do not contain this phrase. It is found in the Irish Articles of 1615, and seems to have been adopted by the Westminster Assembly from the Thirty Nine Articles of 1563. The first of these Articles says, "Deus aeternus, incorporeus, impartibilis, impassibilis," *i.e.*, "God everlasting, without body, parts, or passions." As the Latin text was definitive, and as the meaning of *impassibilis* in the previous history of philosophy and theology is fairly clear, the basic theological problem is whether or not an emotional God is *impassibilis*.

The concept of passion or possibility as a technical term, here denied of God, was originated by Aristotle. His basic definition in *Metaphysics* D 21 is, "'Affection' means (1) a quality in which respect a thing can be altered . . . (2) the already actualized alterations; (3) especially, injurious alterations and movements, and, above all, painful injuries; (4) experiences pleasant or painful, when on a large scale, are called 'affections.'" In *De Anima* III, 3, 429 a 7, he uses the same word for emotions. Cf. Notes, R.D. Hicks, in *Aristotle, De Anima*, 403 a 16. St. Augustine lists (*Confessions* X, 22) lust, happiness, fear, and sadness as the four perturbations or passions of the soul. Descartes wrote a *Treatise on the Passions of the Soul*. He lists six basic passions: admiration, love, hate, desire, joy and sadness; and connects them closely with bodily disturbances. Very obviously emotions are included in the sphere of passions. In the history of theology, philosophy, and language, therefore, it is not unusual, rather it is usual, to find emotions classed as one species of the genus passion. Passion is the wider term and emotion is included under it. Therefore, the complainants ought not to object to this linguistic usage. They may themselves wish to define the term so as to exclude emotion from passion. Let them do so: they have no right to object to the more usual usage. Emotion, therefore, as Dr. Clark defines it, is included in the concept of passion which the Confession denies to God.

The Complaint (P. 8, 1; O. 29)⁹ suggests that Dr. Clark's definition of emotion is an a-priori oddity. If this were true, which it is not, still there would be no ground for complaint. The confusion in the argument of the Complaint becomes obvious by an analysis of the definition of emotion which the complainants wish to substitute for Dr. Clark's definition. The complainants want to define emotion as (P. 8, 1; O. 30), "something which arouses the will and thus determines action." From this definition there follows one of two consequences. First, if the term retains any of its colloquial connotations, then anger and hate may determine actions, for colloquially they are emotions; but the cool, unemotional calculation of a business venture could never arouse the will, for such an activity is intellectual. Or,

⁹ "If we assign to the word "emotion" an *a priori* definition which in the nature of the case identifies emotion with "passions", it would obviously be denying our standards to say that God has emotions."

second, if the complainants admit that considerations of truth sometimes influence conduct, then they are guilty of the a-priori oddity of calling intellectual activity an emotion. The desire to substitute another definition of emotion for Dr. Clark's definition is not a proper ground for a complaint.

The final reference to this subject is (P. 9, 2-3; O. 36), "A recollection of Dr. Clark's forthright denial of anything that might be called 'emotion' in God, cited above, will thus impress us that he not only does violence to the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine . . ." Dr. Clark never made any "forthright denial of anything that might be called 'emotion' in God." Love or wrath "might be called an emotion." Dr. Clark did not deny love or wrath to God. He holds that while some people might call God's love and wrath emotions, it is better to classify them as volitions. In this Dr. Clark is in accord with a large section of the history of theology, and even of literary usage. As an example of literature (not of Reformed theology), it is possible to cite Pascal on page 24 of *Everyman's* translation: "It is natural for the mind to believe, and for the will to love." As an example of Calvinistic thought these phrases of Augustus Toplady are appropriate (*Complete Works*, 1869, pp. 106, 107, and 687): God "is not, for instance, irascible and appeasable; liable to the emotions of joy and sorrow; or in any respect passive." "When love is predicated of God, we do not mean that he is possessed of it as a passion or affection. . . . Love, therefore, when attributed to him signifies . . . his everlasting will, purpose, and determination to deliver, bless, and save his people."

R. L. Dabney, *Syllabus and Notes*, 1927, page 153, supports Dr. Clark's views in a particularly clear manner: "Our Confession says, that God hath neither parts nor passions. That He has something analogous to what are called in man active principles, is manifest, for He wills and acts; therefore He must feel. But these active principles must not be conceived as emotions, in the sense of ebbing and flowing accesses of feeling. In other word, they lack that agitation and rush, that change from cold to hot, and hot to cold, which constitute the characteristics of passion in us. They are, in God, an ineffable, fixed, peaceful, unchangeable calm, although the springs of volition. That such principles may be, although incomprehensible to us, we may learn from this fact: That in the wisest and most sanctified creatures, the active principles have least of passion and agitation, and yet they by no means become inefficacious as springs of action—*e.g.*, moral indignation in the holy and wise parent or ruler. That the above conception of the calm immutability of God's active principles is necessary appears from the following: The agitations of literal passions are incompatible with His blessedness. The objects of those feelings are as fully present to the Divine Mind at one time as another; so that there is nothing to cause ebb or flow. And that ebb would constitute a change in Him. When, therefore, the Scriptures speak of God as becoming wroth, as repenting, as indulging His fury against His adversaries, in connection with some particular event occurring in time, we must understand them anthropopathically. What is meant is, that the outward manifestations of His active principles were as though these feelings then arose."

The evidence in the Complaint is that the complainants know and admit that Dr. Clark is in agreement with the Confession. On page 51 the complainants admit: "In this connection reference must again be made to Dr. Clark's view that God has no emotions. If his definition of emotion be granted, God *certainly has none*." In other words, the complainants know and admit that when Dr. Clark says that God has no emotions, his thought is correct. And yet knowing this, they spend some six pages trying to represent him as seriously out of accord with the Confession.

The second problem of this section is one of human psychology, and its discussion will again underline the fact that the Complaint is not a matter of the doctrines of the Westminster Confession but

of technical and abstruse subtleties more suitable for philosophers than for preachers. The charge made against Dr. Clark is that he arranges the several types of the soul's activities in a hierarchical scheme with the intellectual acts as the highest. The position, the complainants assert, is "humanistic intellectualism" (P. 7, 3; O. 29). That the position is a form of intellectualism is not denied; that it is humanistic is a charge so completely at variance with the evidence that it could only have been made in a moment of rashness. The complainants again virtually give their case away, for they quote (P. 8, 3; O. 32) Calvin, *Institutes* I, xv, 6-8, as saying "the intellect rules the will"; and then they try to argue that he did not mean it. A summary of these sections of Calvin may prove instructive.

Calvin begins these sections on human psychology by singling out Plato as the heathen philosopher who more clearly than the others saw that the soul is immortal. He makes a brief mention of the soul's relation to the body, and emphasizes that the soul with its innate knowledge, including the seeds of religion, finds its chief purpose in worshipping God. He then analyzes the soul. He repudiates the theory that man has two souls, a sensitive one and a rational one. But the whole discussion he prefers to leave to philosophers as being remote from theology. Yet he does not prohibit the study of such philosophy and in fact finds it useful and entertaining. He then sketches the usual Aristotelian hierarchy of the soul's functions: the special senses, the common sense, the imagination, the reason, and lastly, the understanding. This scheme of itself is sufficient to show that Calvin placed intellectual activity at the apex of the soul's functions. It becomes still more clear as we proceed. The will, he continues, chooses what the reason and the understanding propose to it; the irascible faculty embraces what reason and imagination offer; and the concupiscible apprehends objects presented by imagination and sensation. All this is strictly a form of intellectualism. Calvin admits that such discussions are obscure, and if someone prefers a different distribution of the powers of the soul, he will not object, for the discussion hardly touches any article of faith. He even suggests a simpler division that would suit him: "the human soul has two faculties which relate to our present design, the understanding and the will. Now, let it be the office of the understanding to discriminate between objects as they shall respectively appear deserving of approbation or disapprobation; but of the will to choose and follow what the understanding shall have pronounced good." The understanding, he continues, is "the guide and governor of the soul; the will always respects its authority and waits for its judgment." Beyond these "no power can be found in the soul which may not properly be referred either to one or the other of these two members," *i.e.*, the will or the understanding. (Emotion is not mentioned.) And to emphasize the primacy of the intellect still more, Calvin applies to it the Stoic term *to hegimonikon*, the principle or governing part. So far Calvin.

Thus it is obvious that Calvin is far from holding the theory of the complainants. Their theory is not well worked out in the Complaint, but clearly they reject the notion that the intellect has any superiority over the emotions. The Complaint (P. 8, 3; O. 32) says, "both Calvin (!) and Bavinck insist on the total activity of the human being in religion, *with no subordination of one faculty to another.*" It also speaks (P. 9, 1; O. 34), "of the equal functions of man's various faculties." And it also says (P. 9, 2; O. 35), "Again, there are three equally important and lofty functions." Obviously therefore the complainants hold that emotion and intellection are exactly on the same level; there is no superiority or subordination at all. But if this theory were true, if emotion and intellection are equally lofty, then it would be a matter of indifference whether one followed one's anger or his sober judgment of truth. If emotion is not subordinated to the intellect, then emotion could reject one's own best thought—through despair or

fear—with as much right as the intellect could judge such despair or fear unfounded. In fact, if emotion were the equal of the understanding, there would be no need of the understanding to direct conduct or to judge between right and wrong: emotion could govern us just as well. And this theory of the complainants is what they wish to make a test of orthodoxy! They ask Presbytery to declare various decisions and acts null and void because the man involved agrees with Calvin rather than with some more modern tendencies.

To show that Calvin and Dr. Clark are not alone in holding their position, a few quotations without discussion are here added. Note that the intellect is placed first, the will second, and note that the emotions receive a rather minor emphasis.

Charnock, *Discourse IV, On Spiritual Worship*, page 210: “With the same powers of our soul whereby we contemplate God, we must also worship God; we cannot think of him but with our minds, nor love him but with our will; and we cannot worship him without the acts of thinking and loving.” *Ibid.*, page 211: “This excellent Being was to be honored with the motions of the understanding and will, with the purest and most spiritual powers in the nature of man.” “Prayer (*i.e.*, vain prayer), is muttered over in private, slightly, as a parrot learns lessons by rote, not understanding what it speaks, or to what end it speaks it; not glorifying God in thought and spirit, with understanding and will.” *Ibid.*, page 212: “A sincere act of the mind and will . . . was required by God.” *Ibid.*, page 248: “He bestows upon man a spiritual nature, that he may return to him a spiritual service; he enlightens the understanding, that he may have a rational service; and new moulds the will that he may have a voluntary service.” Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, page 99, says: “His (man’s) reason was subject to God; his will was subject to his reason; his affections and appetites to his will.” See also the quotation from Breckenridge, below. These considerations show that Dr. Clark’s view of the intellect, will, and emotions follows a distinguished line of Reformed theology.

The argument so far is quite sufficient to dispose of this section of the Complaint, but certain minor insinuations and misrepresentations ought to be noted in passing to prevent the Church from attributing to Dr. Clark the implications that the complainants attempt to force on him.

First, there is a certain method of argumentation that is pervasively prejudicial. The Complaint continually quotes standard theologians and makes statements of sound theology in a manner calculated to give the impression that Dr. Clark does not accept these standard positions. It would be laborious to examine each case separately. But since the Complaint misrepresents Dr. Clark when it cites evidence (and the evidence often contradicts what is asserted), the reader should be wary of accepting as true insinuations without evidence. Second, the Complaint says (P. 7, 2; O. 27), “The activity of the will which Dr. Clark subordinates to intellection seems to be little more than ‘a voluntary act of paying attention,’ which results in an intellectual apprehension (29:3-4).” However, the transcript contradicts this assertion. The transcript (29: 3-4) reads, “The intellectual apprehension is the result of a voluntary act of paying attention. You can’t know anything unless by an act of will, and yet, the knowing itself is an act of intellectual apprehension because of its volitional aspects.” The last five words of this quotation from the transcript do not make sense, yet the preceding part of the sentence is clear. It says that with every intellectual act there must be a voluntary act of paying attention. From this familiar Augustinian position the complainants deduce the absurd conclusion that the only action of the will is a voluntary act of paying attention. One might as well argue that since some Greeks are Athenians, all Greeks are Athenians. The complainants argue that since intellectual apprehension requires voluntary attention,

there is no other form of volitional activity. Aside from historical background and aside from questions of logic the transcript itself furnishes sufficient evidence to show the falsity of the assertion now under discussion. In the transcript (17, 3), Dr. Clark refers to the fourth commandment as an object for voluntary obedience; and on page 32, 4 he mentions the eighth commandment as requiring an act of obedience. Obviously obedience to these is not merely voluntary attention to their words so as to understand them. Such attention is necessary but it is not the only form of volitional action.

A third of these minor points—minor for the purpose of refuting the Complaint—is the attempt to understand Dr. Clark as predicating of God the same hierarchical relationship as the discussion has attributed to man. Now, aside from denying emotional upsets to God, and this is good Reformed theology, Dr. Clark said nothing about the relation of intellect and will in God. But the general argument (P. 8, 1-2; O. 30, 31), proceeds on the assumption that Dr. Clark asserts a primacy of the intellect in God as well as in man. Because of this underlying assumption they assert (P. 8, 2; O. 31), “Reformed theology seems to be barren of any references to a primacy of the intellect in God. In fact, every indication is that whatever distinguishable faculties exist in God are equally fundamental, equally prominent, equally significant, and of equal functional level.” Since Dr. Clark made no remarks on this subject, the argument is beside the point. But since the complainants have introduced such extraneous matter, it is wise to include in this reply the quotation from Breckenridge referred to above.

Robert J. Breckenridge, *The Knowledge of God Objectively Considered*, 1858, page 289, writes: “Intellect and Will appertain exclusively to that which is spiritual; and Power is inseparable from our primary conception of Will, directed by Intelligence. When we add to the infinite spirit thus endowed, Wisdom and Knowledge as infinite as they, and all as infinite as the essence of which all of them are Attributes; we may be said to have as complete a conception as we can entertain of the sublime outline of God’s *rational* nature, considered separately as far as we are able to do so. Whatever may be the nature of that ineffaceable distinction, which we express by *The True* and *The False*; it is inconceivable that such a Being should not eternally perceive it and eternally respect it. If his own nature is the foundation of the distinction, then the distinction is commensurate with his Being; that is, it is an infinite and eternal distinction. It is in the light of that distinction that our rational faculties take cognizance of whatever is submitted to them; it is on its reality that all increase in knowledge and all growth in wisdom on our part depend. Without it, it is not easy, if it be possible, to affix any idea to what we call Intelligence; and if it be obliterated, we obliterate at the same time the distinction between *Good* and *Evil*, since the Good is always the True, and the Evil is always The False. It is thus the rational nature of God underlies the moral nature of God; and while both aspects of his Being afford the most distinct means of surveying and comprehending it, the rational goes before the moral.” *Ibid.*, page 426: “Passing to the moral nature of God, and to such infinite Perfections as Love, attended by Goodness and Mercy, and ordained in Justice and Longsuffering, we readily see the connection of all such affections with the divine Will; and as we contemplate in man’s moral nature the image of the moral nature of God, we perceive the same connections of these moral qualities with each other, and with his Will.”

As a matter of fact Dr. Clark does not hold to a primacy of the intellect in God, but the above quotation shows that contrary to the assertion of the Complaint, this view has appeared in Reformed theology.

A fourth of these minor points is the accusation that Dr. Clark “studiously avoided answering” a certain question (P. 8, 1; O. 30); the reference being to page 16 of the transcript. Dr. Clark did not

studiously avoid answering the question. The question as reported in the transcript is as follows: “Q. When the Confession of Faith says: ‘God is without body, parts, or passions,’ does it mean God is lacking in feeling or emotion? A. It does. Q. I’ll define feelings and emotions: I mean—affection in the sense of principal activity with reference to objections. Now I’ll repeat the question, if you wish. A. Go ahead. Q. The Confession says: ‘God is without body, parts, or passions.’ Does it mean God is lacking in feeling or emotion? A. God ahead. Q. And by feeling or emotion I mean—in the sense of principal activity with reference to objects. A. I forget which way to answer that—yes or no. Q. The Confession of Faith says: ‘God is without body, or parts.’ A. The answer is yes, but I protest against the awful English of your statement, the word: ‘emotion’—never mind that English. Q. You mean that God has never acted upon anything aside from himself? A. I don’t understand you. Q. What I would like to know is this: We can call these feelings or emotions in God, and I would define them as analogous to our feelings and emotions and affections in the sense that they are active principles, active with reference to objects. For example: God is angry with the wicked, God loves his people eternally, would you deny that? A. That is right, right; what you say is right. Q. That is what the Confession means? A. No, what—not what it means right there—not what the Confession means.”

Obviously Dr. Clark was merely telling the truth when he said, “I don’t understand you.” The question is virtually unintelligible. There is no evidence of intent to avoid an answer. The transcript shows that Dr. Clark holds that God is angry with the wicked, that God eternally loves his people; but this is not what the Confession is talking about when it says God is without body, parts, or passions.

Fifth and last: the Complaint asserts (P. 10, 2; O. 40), “Dr. Clark does not deny the necessity or fact of regeneration but he makes no absolute qualitative distinction between the knowledge of the unregenerate man and the knowledge of the regenerate man. With the same ease, the same ‘common sense,’ the unregenerate and the regenerate man can understand propositions revealed to man (p. 20; 28:13-16; 31:13-17; 34:13-35:2).” If the complainants had quoted these passages from the transcript instead of merely referring to them, everyone could have seen that all but the last have nothing to do with the matter of regeneration, and that the last is contradictory to their assertion. The discussion had entered on the proposition “two times two equals four.” Dr. Clark had asserted that any man who knows this proposition knows it by means of the definitions of the numbers and by the laws of logic. Then the transcript continues: “Q. Where do we get those laws of logic? A. ‘Every man that cometh into the world.’ (Obviously the transcript omits part of the quotation.) Q. Is it possible that by the effective sin, man will not be able to deduce by the propositions concerning God? A. That is often the case.” In other words, the complainants imply that Dr. Clark holds that regeneration does not renew the mind or that sin has not affected it; whereas Dr. Clark said specifically that sin often causes men to commit logical fallacies. Thus the complainants cite evidence that is not only irrelevant, but also evidence that contradicts their charge. Some further study of the knowledge of a regenerate man and of an unregenerate man might prove profitable, but the subject can be accorded only the briefest mention. Both the regenerate and the unregenerate can with the same ease understand the proposition, Christ died for sinners. Regeneration, in spite of the theory of the Complaint, is not a change in the understanding of these words. The difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate lies in the fact that the former believes the proposition and the latter does not. The regenerate acknowledges Christ as Lord; the other does not. The one is a willing subject; the other is a rebel. Regeneration is not necessarily a change in understanding propositions. An unregenerate man may understand the

proposition “Christ died for sinners,” but far from knowing it to be true, he thinks it to be false. Strictly speaking he knows only that “the Scriptures teach Christ died for sinners.” When he is regenerated, his understanding of the proposition may undergo no change at all; what happens is that he now accepts as true what previously he merely understood. He no longer knows merely “the Scriptures teach Christ died for sinners”; he now knows “Christ died for sinners.” Nothing in these considerations is intended to suggest that regeneration is here completely described. These remarks only bear briefly on the change of knowledge involved in regeneration. The renewal of the original image of God and the Spirit’s implantation of new “habits” would require extended treatment.

The complainants continue with their accusation, saying “there is not one shred of evidence that man’s religious activity undergoes any qualitative change through regeneration.” This accusation is more sweeping than the former; the former referred only to change in knowledge and understanding, while this is an accusation that covers all religious activity. But the admission of the Complaint itself that “Dr. Clark does not deny the necessity or fact of regeneration,” undermines its whole position on this matter. To grasp the situation correctly, it must be noted first that the examination before Presbytery did not concern the matter of regeneration. There is no reason therefore to expect much on the subject in the transcript. In the six-hour examination at the March meeting of Presbytery, Dr. Clark satisfied the Presbytery on this subject as well as on the remainder of the Confession, so that there was no need to repeat the matter. The complainants wanted to discuss these other philosophical subtleties, with the result that the transcript contains little on regeneration. And in these circumstances, the complainants now charge Dr. Clark with “rationalism, humanistic intellectualism . . . vicious independence from God” (P. 10, 2; O. 40). As there is little evidence in the transcript, it may be permissible to refer to some of Dr. Clark’s writings. In another section of the Complaint the complainants make such a reference; and presumably this answer to the Complaint may do the same. This then is what Dr. Clark says in his *Readings in Ethics*, pp. 115-118.

“But Christianity has not merely a totally different aim but a radically opposed one. In the New Testament instead of the development of the natural abilities the desirable thing is found to be the death of the natural man and the birth of a new and supernatural man. The death of the old nature is necessary because of its corruption. Even before birth every individual is implicated in Adam’s original sin and alienated from the life of God. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.’ The result is that all have sinned, there is none righteous or capable of pleasing God in any respect whatever. . . . This new birth is accomplished not by the will of man but by the will of God which gives to those who believe on his only begotten Son the power to become the sons of God. . . . Since then man must be redeemed from sin by the blood of Jesus before he can live a truly moral life, the chief end of man will not be the development of his corrupt, unspiritual nature.”

And these are the words of one whom the complainants charge with “humanistic intellectualism” and “vicious independence from God.”

In conclusion the Presbytery believes that this section of the Complaint utterly fails to prove that Dr. Clark is out of accord with the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith; the items which the Complaint insists upon are far removed from the system of doctrine of the Confession; they are not strictly theological doctrines at all, but tenuous implications from these doctrines; and the

implications are fallacious. Therefore this section of the Complaint fails to show that the Philadelphia Presbytery was in error in licensing and ordaining Dr. Clark.

ON SOVEREIGNTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The third theological section of the Complaint runs from page 41 to page 50, and treats of the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The charge made is that Dr. Clark “has done decided violence to the latter,” *i.e.*, responsibility. But a study of the Complaint fails to discover any evidence that Dr. Clark has denied or done violence to human responsibility; and there is no comparison between Dr. Clark’s view and the Westminster Confession. There simply is no evidence.

The complainants instead of supporting their charge have used the space to object to Dr. Clark’s statement that sovereignty and responsibility do not appear contradictory to him. The complainants hold that responsibility and sovereignty ought to appear contradictory to everyone. This raises two questions: Does the Scripture encourage us to attempt the solution of paradoxes? And, does the Scripture provide any hints for the solution of this particular paradox?

With respect to the first of these questions it may be noted that the Westminster Confession I, vi, says, “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” The Confession, therefore, instead of considering a logical approach to Scripture as rationalistic, approves of logical deductions from Scripture; in fact the Confession is itself largely a set of such deductions. B.B. Warfield in *Revelation and Inspiration*, page 12, says, “But revelation, after all, is the correlate of understanding and has as its proximate end just the production of knowledge, though not, of course, knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of salvation.” How can anyone suppose that God would reveal to man something irrational or non-understandable? To be sure there are “some things hard to be understood,” but if the Bible actually reveals God, it cannot be non-understandable. God commands us to search the Scriptures; we are encouraged to understand. Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxi, 3, replies to those who think one ought not to investigate the doctrine of predestination, by pointing out that such an attitude is in effect a charge that God did not know how much he should reveal. No doubt this doctrine, and all doctrines, should be studied with care and caution; but the Scriptures nowhere prohibit us from attempting to solve revealed paradoxes. Nearly any two propositions could appear contradictory to someone; the less a person has studied the Bible, the more likely he is to encounter difficulties; and the advice usually given is to study further and understand more. The Complaint may easily be interpreted to preclude all further progress in the understanding of God’s revealed word. The position of Presbyterianism, however, has never been that the confessions of faith are the ultimate of man’s understanding of the Scriptures. The Complaint seems to imply that those who seek to advance theological knowledge through exegesis of and deduction from the word of God are thereby guilty of heresy. Such a position is to be rejected.

Conversely, anyone who argues that a given revealed paradox cannot be solved is virtually claiming omniscience. He who says a given paradox cannot be solved, logically implies that he has examined every verse in Scripture, that he has exhausted every implication of every verse, and that there is in all this no hint of a solution. Such a person must have a tremendous knowledge of the Bible. And this is exactly what the complainants claim. They assert (P. 12, 1; O. 46) “Not even Holy Scripture offers a solution.” This is a claim to an exhaustive knowledge of Scripture. Certainly it is more modest to believe that one has solved a paradox than to assert that it cannot be solved. It is true that certain

theologians have called this paradox insoluble; but if Scripture does not forbid, this is no reason why other men should not attempt to solve it.

Furthermore, to solve a paradox may not be such a superhuman task as the complainants seem to think. They say (P. 12, 1; O. 46) “Dr. Clark asserts unblushingly that for his thinking the problem has ceased being a problem.” The apparent intention is to make Dr. Clark claim that there are no problems connected with sovereignty and responsibility. Many problems remain. The one problem that Dr. Clark thinks he has solved is the anti-christian allegation that sovereignty and responsibility are contradictories. To say, even mistakenly, that one can show they do not contradict each other, is not to say one knows everything about the subject.

The second question was, Does the Scripture provide any hints for the solution of this particular paradox? Dr. Clark thinks he has found the key to such a solution. He may be wrong, but how can the complainants, lacking omniscience, assert that there is none at all? Before A.D. 325 someone might have said that the Scriptural teaching on the Father, Son, and the Spirit is self-contradictory. But Athanasius solved the paradox—without exhausting the subject of the Trinity. The two natures of Christ might have appeared contradictory in those early days; but the Council of Chalcedon solved that paradox. In the history of secular logic certain problems were, during the Middle Ages, called insolubilia. But in 1850 and English logician thought he had found a solution. He had not; but he had made a start toward a solution, and later logicians improved upon him, until today logicians do not consider the insolubilia insoluble. It is just possible that Dr. Clark, even if mistaken, may have discovered a hint leading to a solution. He claims, at any rate, that the solution lies almost on the surface of Calvin’s *Institutes*. To develop Calvin’s hint, one must readjust Calvin’s exegesis of Romans 9. Calvin, as the complainants are careful to quote, says that Romans 9:20 is a preliminary answer, and that the verses toward the end of the chapter and the following chapter are the beginning of a more fundamental solution. Dr. Clark, on the contrary, thinks that Romans 9:20 is the fundamental and ultimate principle, as Calvin virtually admits in *Institutes*, III, xxiii, 2; and that the later section consists of deductions, applications, or elaborations. That would not be the only instance of a lack of complete consistency between Calvin’s *Commentaries* and his *Institutes*.

Since everyone makes mistakes in exegesis, it is beside the point whether Dr. Clark is right or wrong on this point. All that should be of concern to Presbytery is whether Dr. Clark asserts both sovereignty and responsibility. The fact that he attempts to solve the paradox is itself proof that he accepts both propositions. The complainants try to compare Dr. Clark with the Arminians and the Antinomians (P. 12, 1-2; O. 47). These two groups, the complainants claim, also attempted to solve this paradox. But in fact neither of these groups tried to solve the paradox. Paradoxes are not solved, they are merely denied, by rejecting one of the parts. The Arminians rejected absolute predestination; the Antinomians rejected morality. In neither case were two apparently contradictory propositions shown to be consistent. Each group simply denied one of the two propositions. This is not what Dr. Clark has done; he has asserted both and has tried to show that they are consistent. Now, the complainants do not charge Dr. Clark with Arminianism; they charge him with Antinomianism (P. 12, 2; O. 48). For those who wish to judge further on this charge, since there is no evidence for it in the Complaint, the Presbytery draws attention to Dr. Clark’s eight-page tract on Romans VI, distributed by our Committee on Christian Education.

It is pertinent to note that Dr. Clark, instead of approaching these problems on a rationalistic basis, reaches his conclusions from an exegesis of Scripture.

As in the other sections of the Complaint, here too there are incidental misrepresentations and fallacious inferences.

For example, there seems to be the impression that it is unorthodox to quote the Stoics because they were heathen. Aside from the fact that Calvin borrowed parts of his psychology from Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, one might also ponder Acts 17:28-29, where the Apostle Paul approves a certain Stoic teaching on the nature of God.

Next, the attempt to find by a deeper study of Scripture the solution of paradoxes—a use of exegesis that the complainants call rationalism—is in the eyes of the complainants incompatible with subjection of human reason to the divine word (P. 12, 1; O. 47).¹⁰ In other words, a man who tries to understand what God has revealed to him cannot be subject to revelation, and if the more he understands, the less he is subject; probably the less he understands, the more subject he is; so that the really obedient and devout man must be completely ignorant. By what right do the complainants imply that the attempt to understand Scripture is inconsistent with believing Scripture?

Again, the complainants assert that Dr. Clark “sever (s) human responsibility from human freedom” (P. 12, 3; O. 49). But a study of Dr. Clark’s article shows that he accepts Hodge’s conception of “free moral agency”; he rejects that freedom of contrary choice on which the Arminians wish to base responsibility. It should be noted that “human freedom” has many meanings. It may mean political freedom, freedom from mechanical causation, freedom of the will from the intellect, freedom from sin, freedom of contrary choice, freedom from God, and free moral agency. When an author argues for or against “freedom,” the critic should determine which freedom the author means. To apply to one meaning of freedom what the author says of another meaning of freedom, as the complainants do here, is not a scholarly procedure.

In view of all these considerations the Presbytery concludes that this section of the Complaint fails to prove its charge.

¹⁰ “...it is clear that Dr. Clark regards Scripture from the viewpoint of a system which to the mind of man must be harmonious in all its parts. The inevitable outcome is rationalism in the interpretation of Scripture. And that too is rationalism...his rationalism leaves room at best for only a temporary subjection of human reason to the divine word.”

ON THE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL

The last theological section of the Complaint treats of the offer of the gospel. Since the answer to the Complaint is already so voluminous, brevity at the end might be appreciated. And brevity will be sufficient, for one again the basic accusation is rationalism, and this accusation has already been refuted.

Once again also the complainants show their unwillingness to be satisfied with the wording of the Westminster Confession. In the first section of the Complaint they were not satisfied with the statement of the Confession on the incomprehensibility of God, but wished to impose on it a strange mystical irrationalism; in the second section they were unwilling to be satisfied with the Westminster doctrine which excludes passions from God's consciousness: admitting that Dr. Clark's view is correct, nevertheless they attack it; in the third section the complainants show themselves dissatisfied with the Confession's encouragement of a logical or rational approach to Scripture: here again the complainants take a position that reduces to irrationalism; and now in the last section they ignore the Confession, and appeal to an earlier and inferior creed.¹¹

The Church should note that Dr. Clark is in full accord with the Westminster Confession on the offer of the gospel. The Confession VII, iii, states: "Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." With this Dr. Clark is in full accord. The complainants, however, were not satisfied with Dr. Clark's acceptance of the Confession's statement, but insisted on the word *sincere* in describing the offer of the gospel.

Now as the Complaint (P. 13, 1; O. 51)¹² admits, the word "sincere" is of little significance in any particular phrase because God is sincere in everything he does. There was no need of the Westminster divines' using it; and there was no need of the complainants' using it. It is superfluous. This was one of two reasons for Dr. Clark's reluctance to use the term. It has been made clear how necessary it is to define terms accurately. The qualitative difference between the truth of a proposition for man and the same truth for God remains undefined in the Complaint. The word "emotion" is defined carelessly. In this case also Dr. Clark could not know what meaning was to be placed on the word "sincere." And for this reason he refused to use it. The second reason is closely allied to the first. Because the word "sincere" is of such general application and can be used with various connotations, the Arminians have used it to distinguish their doctrine from ours. The Lutherans do the same thing with the word

¹¹ "And so we find the Synod of Dort, which was summoned to deal with the Arminian heresy and which consisted of representatives of the Reformed churches of almost all of Europe, declaring unmistakably and emphatically: 'As many as are called by the gospel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word what will be acceptable to him; namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation' (Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 8)."

¹² "To be sure, the Westminster standards do not employ the word sincere in this connection; but is it not a foregone conclusion that the offer is sincere? Would it not be blasphemy to deny this? For that very reason there was no need of the Westminster divines' describing the gospel offer as sincere. Its sincerity goes without saying."

“earnestly.” According to W.G. Polack, in *The Building of a Great Church*, page 151, the Missouri Synod in 1881 adopted the following point among others: “We believe, teach, and confess that God has loved the world from all eternity, has created all men for salvation and none for damnation, and earnestly desires the salvation of all men.”

These then are the words used by the enemies of Calvinism to make it appear odious. Dr. Clark’s refusal to use such words springs from his desire not to be charged with Arminianism. He seems to have been successful, for Arminianism is one accusation the complainants do not make.

The Church would do well to compare the careless questions of the complainants in examining Dr. Clark and their careless language in the Complaint with the excellent precision of a careful theologian like R.L. Dabney. In his *Syllabus and Notes* (p. 559), he says: “Fifth: When we assert the sincere compassion of God in His common calls to the non-elect, we do not attribute to Him anything futile, or insincere; because, in the expression of this compassion, He always makes an implied or expressed condition: that they shall turn. He does not say anywhere, that He has any desire to see anyone saved while continuing a rebel. Nor does He say anywhere, that it is His unconditional purpose to compel all to turn. But He says, He would like to see all saved provided they all turned. So that His will in the universal call is not out of harmony with His prescience. And last: God’s invitations and warnings to those who, He foresees, will reject them, are the necessary expressions of His perfections. The circumstance that a given sin is foreseen, does not rob it of its moral character; and hence should constitute no reason why a righteous God shall forbear to prohibit and warn against it. That God shall yet permit creatures to commit this sin against His invitations is, therefore, just the old question about the permission of evil. Not a new one.”

Though the complainants might reproach Dabney for trying to answer questions and solve paradoxes instead of letting things stand without explanation, Dabney’s statement is the kind of careful wording that is to be approved; this is the form of doctrine that Dr. Clark accepts; and this is sufficient.

Preliminary to the final conclusion of this answer to the Complaint, the Presbytery calls attention to what is required of a Complaint intended, in this case by indirection, to prove a charge of heresy. In the famous Briggs trial fifty years ago, Mr. John J. McCook, a member of the prosecuting committee argued: "It is not necessary to dwell upon the fact that a minister cannot be tried for consequences which may be deduced from his doctrines" (page 4). In the present case, however, it *is* necessary to dwell upon this fact. The standards the prosecuting committee in the Briggs trial set for itself are not the standards of the present Complaint. This Complaint makes extremely tenuous deductions from Dr. Clark's statements, at times directly contradicting the evidence; Dr. Clark does not acknowledge these deductions; and yet on the basis of these unacknowledged and repudiated deductions the Complaint asks that his licensure and the decision to ordain him be declared null and void. This procedure once noticed ought not to require comment. Would church administration be at all possible if ministers are to be condemned on the basis of their opponents' questionable deductions?

In Conclusion, the Presbytery denies that the meeting of July 7, 1944, was illegal and that its actions are thus void. The Presbytery judges that the Complaint fails to prove that Dr. Clark's thinking "bears all the earmarks of rationalism, humanistic intellectualism . . . vicious independence from God" (P. 10, 2; O. 40). The Presbytery denies "that various views of Dr. Clark as set forth in that meeting, and with which this Complaint is concerned, are in error and in conflict with the constitutional requirements for licensure and ordination, and that, therefore, the decision to sustain his theological examination, the decision to waive two years study in a theological seminary, the decision to proceed to license Dr. Clark and the action of licensing him, the decision to deem the examination for licensure sufficient for ordination, and the decision to ordain Dr. Clark, were in error and unconstitutional, and are, therefore, null and void" (P. 15, 3; O. 61). The Presbytery urges the complainants to study this answer to the Complaint; to acknowledge that they have misrepresented Dr. Clark's views, and that they have wronged him in charging that "Dr. Clark studiously avoided answering" (P. 8, 1; O. 30) a question asked him during his examination; and to desist from their Complaint.