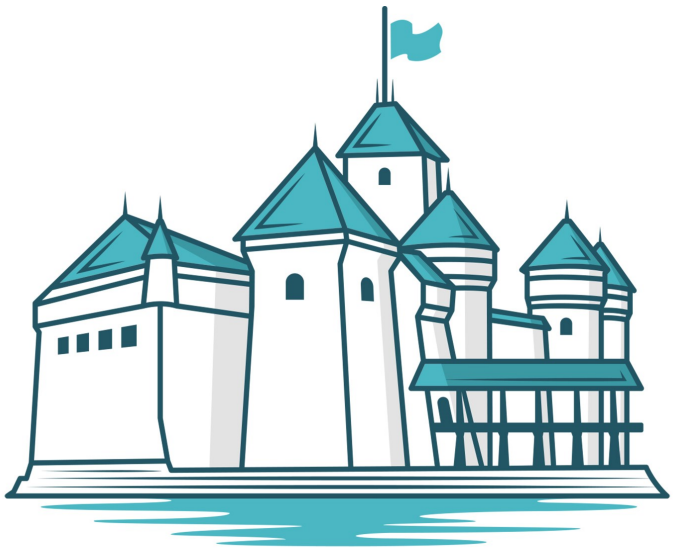

REFORMED PAVILION

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For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5

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Thou shalt not kill.

—Exodus 20:13

Sixth Commandment

Thou shalt not kill.

It is a commandment about life and death. And therefore, it is a commandment that exalts God.

God gives man life. So it was in the beginning, when God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). So it is now, when God fearfully and wonderfully makes every child in the womb by his sovereign work (Ps. 139:14). God gives to all life and breath and all things (Acts 17:25). In God we live and move and have our being (v. 28). The Holy Ghost is the Lord and Giver of life (Nicene Creed).

God gives man life, and God alone has the right to take man's life. God appoints to each man the day of his death (Heb. 9:27). God returns man to the dust from whence he came (Gen. 3:19). God sends forth the corpse-pale horse into the earth to kill with sword and with hunger and with death and with the beasts of the earth (Rev. 6:8). The crucified and risen Jesus Christ, who is alive forevermore, has the keys of death and the grave (1:18) and thus is sovereign over death and the grave. God arms the magistrate with the sword to take the life of the criminal; but even then, the lawful killing of the criminal by the sword of the state is of the Lord (Rom. 13:4).

Thou shalt not kill.

It is a commandment about life and death. And therefore, it is a commandment that abases man.

Man does not give life. Though man brings forth children and advances medicine and makes artificial intelligence, man does not give life. Man has never breathed and shall never breathe into man's nostrils the breath of life. Even the seed that quickens in the womb is the work of God and not the doing of man. For God gives children and God withholds children according to what he has written in the book of his eternal counsel (Ps. 139:16).

Man does not give life; and therefore, man does not have the right to take man's life. To murder is to usurp the right and the prerogative of God over life and death. To murder is to declare oneself to be God in place of God. The murderer does not merely take his neighbor's life; the murderer attempts to take God's throne. Murder is a crime against man, but murder is first of all a crime against God and his sovereignty.

Thou shalt not kill.

It is a commandment about life and death. And therefore, it is a commandment about the passions of man. For in forbidding murder God teaches us that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge, and that he accounts all these as murder (L.D. 40, Q&A 106).

Thou shalt not kill.

It is a commandment about life and death. And therefore, it is a commandment about our positive treatment of our fellow man: prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; do good, even to our enemies (L.D. 40, Q&A 107).

Thou shalt not kill.

It is a commandment about life and death. And now, behold the man who has kept this commandment. Jesus Christ was never gathered with bloody men (Ps. 26:9). And Jesus Christ died under the law's curse in place of us murderers. Because of his substitutionary atonement and substitutionary obedience, we are righteous before God and before his sixth commandment.

How shall we show our gratitude for this salvation? This way: "Thou shalt not kill."

—AL

Editorial

Psalms in the Night

Last week we left our little band of Dutch forefathers waiting out a storm in Buffalo, New York.[1] Behind them were the perils of their ocean voyage. Before them were all the uncertainties that belonged to colonists seeking to settle in a new and strange land. But the Lord was with them, going before them as their good shepherd and following them with his goodness and mercy.

When the storm in Buffalo broke, the Reformed colonists boarded a steamship for the three-day journey across Lake Erie to Detroit, Michigan. As we rejoin them today, we find them disembarking in Detroit on November 30, 1846—exactly 178 years ago today. They disembarked in Detroit with plans to continue on to Wisconsin. The next leg of their journey would take them by steamship up Lake Huron, through the Straits of Mackinac between the two Michigan peninsulas, and into Lake Michigan, from thence to step ashore in Wisconsin.

But upon arriving in Detroit, the colonists learned that it was too late in the season to cross the Straits of Mackinac. Winter was almost upon them, and the straits would freeze long before the colonists could reach them, making passage impossible. No steamships were leaving Detroit until spring. Passage overland during the winter was possible but tremendously expensive. Wisconsin would have to wait. Plans would have to change. The Reformed colonists settled down in Detroit to wait out the hard midwestern winter. Many plans of men would change in Detroit that winter; but the colonists' God was Jehovah, who changes not, and therefore they were not consumed. On this November 30, 2024, let us revisit our brethren on November 30, 1846.

When the colonists learned that they would be stranded in Detroit for the winter, their immediate priorities were housing and work. But where could they stay, and who would hire them? They had no contacts with whom to seek jobs, and they had made no provision for housing, for they had expected to be in Wisconsin by now. But the Lord led them to meet a sympathetic Scottish baker, who saw in the Reformed Dutch immigrants a reflection of his own Scottish Presbyterian struggle for religious freedom. The man had a warehouse downtown where the immigrants could stay. Reverend Van Raalte and his family stayed at a nearby boardinghouse, and the four dozen or so other Dutch immigrants—husbands and wives, parents and children—spent the first few weeks of their first Michigan winter huddled together in a baker's warehouse near the shores of the Detroit River. How wonderful are the ways of God, who hid away his little flock—all but unnoticed and unremarked in the teeming city of Detroit—in the palm of his hand.

The Lord also provided work. The captain of the steamship who had ferried them on Lake Erie

[1] See Andrew Lanning, "Weathering the Storm," *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 33 (November 23, 2024): 5–8.

from Buffalo to Detroit was building a ship in St. Clair, Michigan, close enough to employ workers from Detroit. When the captain learned that the Dutchmen would be wintering in Detroit, he hired some of the men to help build his ship. Thus it was that some of these Reformed colonists spent the first part of the winter of 1846 working in a shipyard on the St. Clair River. The home for these men and their families was again a cold warehouse. From the Michigan shore of the St. Clair, they could throw a stone across to the Canadian shore. Amidst these new nations and all these people, how it must have seemed to them that they were very far away from home! But though far from native land, they were at home with the Lord.

In the meantime it fell to Reverend Van Raalte to find a place for the Lord's little flock to settle. This would require him to leave his fellow Dutchmen behind in their winter quarters in Detroit and St. Clair while he went to observe firsthand those places where they might settle. That winter Van Raalte became representative, scout, explorer, cartographer, surveyor, advocate, interpreter, and travel guide for his little band. Van Raalte cultivated contacts among the political and social leaders in Michigan, who began to open his eyes to the advantages of settling in Michigan instead of Wisconsin. Indeed, Michigan's leaders were enthusiastic to have Dutch colonists in their midst—with more Dutch families on the way—who could help settle the wild lands of West Michigan.

So it was that Reverend Van Raalte and one Bernardus Grootenhuis—a friend and able coworker from among the colonists—set off from Detroit to seek out a place for the fifteen or so families of the Dutch colony to settle. In a letter to Reverend Brummelkamp in the Netherlands, Van Raalte expressed his utter dependence upon God to show them a place.

> I feel oppressed by cares; upon my choice much will depend. Please pray together for me that God may guide me in this matter, yea, pray fervently. I have already heard much that makes me think seriously about remaining in Michigan, but I shall withhold the final decision until I have learned more.[2]

The first leg of their journey took them by train from Detroit to Kalamazoo. In Kalamazoo they were introduced to one John R. Kellogg, a judge in the city of Allegan, Michigan. This meeting proved to be key, for Van Raalte ended up staying in the Kellogg home in Allegan and using it as his base for exploring the wilds of West Michigan. From Allegan, in the dead of a Michigan winter, Van Raalte and Grootenhuis, sometimes with local Indian guides, scouted all along the Black River, Kalamazoo River, Grand River, and Rabbit River.

The wintertime exploration was hard on Van Raalte. Van Raalte was a relatively short man, which made the hard work of wading through the heavy snows that much harder. Exhaustion in the snow is deadly, and Van Raalte's life was in danger more than once. On at least one occasion, the much larger Grootenhuis had to pick Van Raalte up out of the snow and carry him. On another occasion Van Raalte could not take another step until the Indian guide who was traveling with them pulled Van Raalte up and set him on the guide's snowshoes, making it possible for Van Raalte to continue. Van Raalte wrote about the trials of exploring and the sustaining strength of his God:

> Such exploration is by no means a simple task; on several occasions it made me completely exhausted. As a result I was unable to take more than a few steps at a time, and then I have to sit down in the snow...
>
> At one time we were in serious difficulty, in those forests. Darkness had befallen us, and we could not find our way; the dangers and fatigue were nothing compared to the misery of having lost

[2] As quoted in Albert Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), 67.

> one's way. Moreover, I was so tired that I could not walk more than fifty steps without a rest…But the Lord helped us, and after a few hours of uncertainty we suddenly recognized the place where we were and observed that our course through God's care was the right one. The barking of a dog led us to the home of the missionary Smith, who labors among the Indians between the Kalamazoo and Black rivers. How gratefully we ate our evening meal and went to bed, although I could not sleep much, as is often the case with me lately.[3]

After scouting all around the area and talking it over with several well-informed people, Van Raalte decided that the land where Holland, Michigan, now sits would be the ideal place for the Dutch colonists to establish themselves. At the time the location that Van Raalte selected was nothing but forests and swamps. A few Indian villages were there, but there were no roads or other connections to the cities. Nevertheless, there were rivers for industry; timber for construction; and, when the forests were cut, fields for crops. Best of all, the Michigan Central Railroad was planning a rail line between Kalamazoo and Chicago, which railroad would connect the colonists with the West (Chicago) and the East (New York). The decision was made: no longer would the colonists go to Wisconsin, but they would stay in Michigan and establish a colony named Holland.

Meanwhile, back in Detroit and St. Clair, the colonist families were suffering greater and greater hardships. The men who worked at the shipyard in St. Clair had no time to learn the English language and thus could not work the better-paying jobs in the shipyard. They could only serve as greenhorns and errand boys, earning barely enough for themselves, much less for their families.

> All that they earned there was "housing, food, fuel, a pair of boots for each (until now we had worn wooden shoes), and sundry other merchandise."[4]

How encouraged the saints must have been, then, when Reverend Van Raalte returned to Detroit late in January 1847 with news that God had provided a suitable location. In short order the government of the state of Michigan gave its approval to the little band of Dutchmen to purchase land and establish its colony of Holland. As many families as could travel made all due haste to Allegan, where the wives and children would stay with friendly families that Van Raalte had met. The men walked the twenty-four miles through snow and woods from Allegan to where the Black River (known as the Macatawa River today) emptied into Black Lake (known as Lake Macatawa today). The remaining families in Detroit would join them as soon as possible in the spring.

The burdens of that first winter in Holland were heavy for the colonists. They did not have adequate tools for chopping Michigan's giant hardwood trees. When they did fell a tree, they had no oxen to move it. The snowpack was two feet deep, so that every step sank a man up to his knees. A freezing rain glazed the surface of the snow with half an inch of ice, so that the men had to break the ice around their legs with their fists before they could lift a leg to take the next step. Their only food was wheat, bran, and corn—mashed and cooked as a pancake over the fire. Their "coffee" was burnt corn steeped in hot water. The first log home that they were able to build was just one large room to be used as a common dwelling until individual log homes could be built. Five families lived in the first structure, and the roof leaked. Within a very short time, the young wife of one of the families—Mrs. W. Notting—died and was the first one buried in the frozen soil of the new colony. She would not be the last.

God provided much help for the colonists in those early days. The local Indians shared their

[3] As quoted in Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements*, 85–86.

[4] Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements*, 84.

food and knowledge. Some of the colonist families even had to live with the Indians in their tepees for a few days while their own log cabins were being built. Friendly Americans from New York, Albany, Kalamazoo, and Allegan provided many supplies. Men from Allegan accompanied the colonists to teach them how to properly fell the trees. Little by little, tree by tree, cabin by cabin, the little Dutch colony—called *de Kolonie* by the settlers—began to take shape.

> The axes the Hollanders had brought with them were small, which made chopping the huge trees difficult, and their method, until the native tribesmen of the district and Americans who lived nearby showed them a better way, was to chop near the ground, all around the tree in a circle, chipping away until "the huge tree stood and swayed on a small spindle." Many colonists suffered injuries from a mis-stroke of an ax, or by being struck by a falling tree, and a few were killed...
>
> Notwithstanding all such difficulties, many colonists cleared four or five acres of land in the colony's first year. After pushing aside the stumps, the process of tilling the soil and sowing of grain began.
>
> The original colonists were fortunate to receive assistance from the Indians, earlier white settlers and occasional passers-by. They learned quickly how to fell trees in such a way that a whole row of trees would fall when the last tree in line was chopped down.[5]

In that first winter the colonists were always in danger of getting lost in the woods. God provided a wonderful means of guiding them that will warm the hearts of readers of *Reformed Pavilion*.

> One result of settling in a richly-forested area was that it was easy to get lost. The trees blocked out the sky, so travelers could not look to the position of sun or stars for direction. Marshes and swamps made it impossible to walk in a straight line. Little light penetrated the heavy foliage, so that during the day it was difficult, and at night it was impossible, to see the markings cut into trees to blaze a trail. Members of *de Kolonie*, however, devised strategies to help themselves and each other. Staying home after four o'clock in the afternoon was a sensible policy; when this was not possible, travelers usually carried a lighted stick of pinewood as a torch. Those who waited at home blew horns or rang bells as signals to guide family members home, or those at home and those on the trail called back and forth to one another, a method one early historian called "antiphonal shouting." Many times travelers were guided by the sound of psalm singing.[6]

Oh, what a blessing of God to those poor Reformed folk in the deep, dark woods of Michigan. "Many times travelers were guided by the sound of psalm singing"! Remember what those saints had endured for the sake of the psalms. Back in the Netherlands the Dutch government had required the congregations to sing the hymns of the *Evangelische Gezangen* hymnbook instead of the psalms. It was partly for the sake of the psalms that the congregations of the *Afscheiding* had left the corrupt state church. The ministers and elders of the *Afscheiding* had been fined and imprisoned for leaving the state church. Satan had been hard at work to put a lid on psalm singing in the Netherlands.

But deep in the woods of Michigan, there were no fines and no imprisonments for psalm singing. In the dark of the winter's night, surrounded by woods on all sides, the colonists could sing psalms to their hearts' content. How happy the mother and children must have been

[5] Jeanne M. Jacobson, Elton J. Bruins, and Larry J. Wagenaar, *Albertus C. Van Raalte, Dutch Leader and American Patriot* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1996), 39.

[6] Jacobson, Bruins, and Wagenaar, *Albertus C. Van Raalte*, 40.

in the door of their log cabin at night, singing the songs of Zion while they awaited father and brother. And how thrilled and thankful they must have been finally to hear father's and brother's answering singing from far off in the woods.

And is that not a beautiful parable of the Christian life? "Many times travelers were guided by the sound of psalm singing"! In the weary and sightless and cold night of this life, God's people traveling home to the kingdom of heaven are guided there by the sound of psalm singing. By the lovely strains of the sweet psalmist of Israel, Jesus Christ, we are comforted and guided and blessed amidst the sorrows of our night. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Ps. 23:4). Just as the psalms were the anthems of those homes in the Michigan woods, so the psalms are the anthems of our eternal home. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (v. 6).

In the little but bustling colony of Holland, the colonists' first winter eventually gave way to spring and summer. The poor food and the hard winter left many colonists susceptible to disease. Out of the swamps there rose armies of mosquitoes. Malaria and other maladies stalked the colony. Even as more Reformed Dutchmen began to arrive from the Netherlands to join their compatriots in Michigan, many in the colony fell sick and died. One of the colonists wrote this about the ravages of that first summer:

> Many became ill and were unable to get medical aid (there was no doctor to be gotten) and besides lacked for everything the sick needed. The bedding was poor, the food bad and nursing inadequate. *Ach!* if ever a people was poor and distressed, then we were that first summer. We were severely tried. It must have come into the heart of this one and that to say, "But were we brought here for this, to die in this wilderness! Were there in the old father land no cemeteries! *Ach*, if only we had stayed there!" The mortality was great. The burial could sometimes not be decently performed. There have been parents who have had to bury their children with their own hands...It was a fearful time.[7]

Nevertheless, in spite of their grief and sorrow, the colonists were happy. Surrounded by a forested, swampy wilderness and on the brink of death, the colonists nevertheless rejoiced in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The freedom to worship God according to his word was a thrill that the colonists never tired of. Many years later Reverend Van Raalte would reflect on God's care of his wife and family while they lived in a disease-ridden swamp in an unfinished house. "I thank God that my wife without hesitation, and with the singing of psalms, occupied our unfinished house."[8]

One young woman wrote in her diary about those days,

> On Sundays we all met with Dominie Van Raalte. His preaching and prayers were so excellent that it gave us renewed courage. Many people came together and all were happy that God had brought them to free and big America [where] they could worship God as they pleased, each according to the dictates of his own conscience.[9]

Another colonist wrote this:

> There were many prayers and petitions sent up to the Lord in those days. There was much grace needed to remain true to the faith, but the Lord gave much grace. Even in the midst of all these miseries men sang of the mercies of God and made the forests re-echo with His praise.

[7] As quoted in Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements*, 112–13.

[8] As quoted in Jacobson, Bruins, and Wagenaar, *Albertus C. Van Raalte*, 43.

[9] As quoted in Jacobson, Bruins, and Wagenaar, *Albertus C. Van Raalte*, 44.

> No matter how poor our homes, how plain our fare, how simple our clothing, still the Lord was good in the land of our pilgrimage. *Ja*, the Lord was with us, also, when it seemed that He was against us. We continued believing that we had gone forth with Him, and we had experienced in many instances His care and help. In this faith we went on, trusting in His promises that for us the light should arise out of the darkness and better times be at hand.[10]

More and more Dutchmen continued to arrive in Holland over the next few years. Who could have foreseen the Reformed colony that the Lord would build in the little corner of the Michigan forests? Even Reverend Van Raalte, standing, exhausted, upon the snowshoes of his Indian guide in 1846 could not have envisioned what the colony of Holland would become. But God, who declares the end from the beginning, had prepared that place for his people, where they could hear his gospel and sing his psalms.

As the colony began to grow and even to prosper in its own way, a new danger arose. This danger did not come from a snowstorm or from a mosquito but from the offer of American men back East that the colonists join what we know today as the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The danger of entangling themselves ecclesiastically proved too strong for the colony, and the colonists would become Classis Holland of the RCA. But, as we shall see, Lord willing, even this was in the Lord's hands. For he used the colony's joining the RCA to bring about the next great stage of reformation for his church.

To be continued (in April 2025, the Lord willing)...

—AL

[10] As quoted in Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements*, 113.

The Banner September 16, 1920 (pp. 568–69)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article LXXXVI. The New King and His Kingdom: Sons of God (continued)

It is, of course, not our purpose to enter into a detailed discussion of the question of higher criticism with regard to the Old Testament. This would lead us entirely too far away from our subject. Nevertheless, I feel constrained in this connection to call attention to a few principles which, according to my conviction, always have been and still are accepted in our Reformed churches as fundamental.

If I am mistaken in my view as to the acceptation of these principles in the Reformed church, I will gladly stand corrected.

If I am correct as to the official character of these principles in our churches, but if these principles themselves are incorrect or questioned, let us come to an open discussion of these matters, and if the official stand of our churches has been faulty, let us correct it.

But by all means let us come to a clear understanding in regard to these principles.

The first of these principles is that we are expected to approach the Word of God from the standpoint of faith, that we study Scripture with a heart and mind controlled by the power and the principle of faith. Or to express myself in a form directly opposite to the claim of modern criticism, that we approach the Bible in a biased state of mind and heart.

It is this principle that is most strenuously denied by modern criticism. It is denounced as unscientific. And instead we are told that science requests an absolutely free and unbiased attitude over against the Sacred Book. We must come to Scripture without any prepossessions, without any conviction at all as to its real character. We must approach it without any preconceived theory of inspiration, divested of all pre-established doctrines of revelation, etc. We must start by being absolutely neutral. What really is the character of the Word of God, whether or not it contains any supernatural revelation, whether or not it is the inspired Word of God, and what is implied in this idea of inspiration? All these questions can only be answered after Scripture has been critically investigated, has been called before the bar of reason in order to be closely examined and cross-examined. Only after proper scientific investigation has been made into the records, the authors, the veracity of its statements and the historicity of its narratives can we make any statement as to the truthfulness of the Word of God. He that approaches the Bible for study with the pre-conceived notion in his mind that it is the Word of God and with the pre-established convictions as to inspiration and revelation and the supernatural, can find no grace in the eyes of the modern critic. For such an attitude is unscientific. It is the "dogmatic position"; it is the traditional view. It starts to investigate while the conclusion to be reached is already certain. No, "criticism refuses to be fettered in its work by any traditional views. If inquiry is not to be worthless, it must be free. No investigation can merit confidence if it carefully works towards a goal fixed at the outset...What cannot commend itself to the reason cannot be permanent in our faith, and what will not bear the light of searching inquiry is doomed to pass away. It is the glory of Christianity that it appeals to the reason." (Peake, "The Bible, Its Origin," etc., pp. 91, 92.)

We claim that our Reformed conception forbids this so-called freedom and unbiased attitude over against Scripture.

Of course, it is not difficult to point out that this attitude of absolute neutrality over against the Word of God is an impossibility. No one can divest himself of preconceived notions, not even the modern critic. The unbelieving critic is no more unbiased than the believing scholar. Also the modern critic reaches his conclusions not simply because of the presence of undeniable facts, but because of pre-established convictions with regard to the supernatural, the character of inspiration, the possibility of the miraculous, the development of religious ideas, etc. I know that they deny this. Kuenen, for instance, claims that not one single miracle in Scripture can be accepted as historical reality. But he maintains that he started from the faith that miracles are possible. And thus others claim that they started from the standpoint of blank neutrality. But the facts are against them. In the first place it is a rather strange phenomenon that the modern theory of the O.T. finds its origin entirely in the camp of rationalistic infidels. It is rather inconceivable how unbelief could ever assume an unbiased attitude over against the Word of God. But there is more. It is simply a fact, plain to all that will acknowledge it, that the fathers of this modern criticism entertained certain convictions as to the development of religion and religious ideas in history before they ever set themselves the task of giving a new interpretation and offering a new arrangement of the books and documents contained in the O.T. Vatke was a Hegelian pantheist and approached Scripture with his preconceived notion of history. And the entire Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen school are guilty of the same prejudice. It is said, for instance, that the patriarchs, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, cannot have been historical persons because of the religious ideas that are ascribed to them in Scripture. Often it is claimed that a certain passage was interpolated or composed at a later date simply on the basis that a certain lofty conception of God, or a high moral ideal could never exist prior to the time of the prophets of the eighth or seventh centuries before Christ. That is, the assumption that at a certain period religion and morality must have been in a rudimentary stage is first. On its basis critics start. With it they approach Scripture. And whatever does not harmonize with that assumption in the Word of God is declared to be interpolated or composed at a far later date than Scripture claims for it. And, therefore, the demand that Scripture be approached in an unbiased state of mind must not be taken too seriously. It rather reminds one of the days of the Scribes and Pharisees who understood how to make precept upon precept and lay the burden of them upon the accursed mass while they themselves would not even touch them with a finger!

But, regardless of the question how faithfully the critics adhere to their own claim of neutrality, we maintain that such an attitude is neither possible nor scientific. And we maintain that the Christian, whether he be layman or minister or professor, is expected to approach the Word of God in an attitude of faith. His faith controls his reading of the Bible. His faith controls his preaching from Scripture. I do not see how preaching remains possible except on the basis of the faith that Scripture is the absolute truth of God, coming to us with God's own authority. And thus it is also with the man of critical science. In his scientific research as well as in his teaching he proceeds from the principle of faith. And this is simply expected of him. Neither is this unscientific. Scripture expects, presupposes the attitude of faith. It is not unbelief, it is not rationalism that can properly understand the Word of God. But it is faith, controlling the mind and heart, ultimately submitting even reason to the testimony of the Word, that can assume the only, truly scientific attitude over against Scripture.

It is not difficult to see the difference in results that will naturally follow this difference in standpoint and attitude.

Unbelief, reading the first three chapters of the book of Genesis, finds in them a representation of a crude conception of God. God appears to

him in these chapters as a physical God, who takes pleasure walks in the cool of evening. He is a God that is afraid and jealous of his glory; for He comes down to see men after they have eaten of the magic fruit of knowledge, and is evidently afraid that they will be like Him, and that He will be robbed of his absolute and sole sovereignty and divine glory. The stories of the origin of man, formed from the dust of the ground, of the original state in a beautiful garden, of the formation of the animals and of woman—all these are read through the same colored spectacles of unbelief and ultimately declared to be legendary. They serve simply to give us an idea of the conception man used to have in his lowest stage of development of God. The same is true with the narratives of the patriarchs. Unbelief reads them, questioning from the outset whether they give us historical reality or not. The result is that when they find in these narratives something that does not harmonize with their preconceived notion of history, they reject these narratives as unhistorical. The books of the law, especially the portion that pertains to the priesthood and a central sanctuary, were composed at a very late date; perhaps they find their beginning in the last chapters of the prophecies of Ezekiel. And many of the psalms are found to be post-exilic. In short, Scripture is read from the point of view of unbelief, and the result is a rationalistic interpretation of the Word of God. Instead of an objective revelation of God we have in Scripture a record of the subjective experiences and ideas of the authors, and instead of an authoritative Word of the Most High we have nothing but a history of religion in the O.T.

But faith approaches Scripture in the confidence that it will find simple truth and reliable history in the Book. I do not maintain that all the difficulties that are brought to our attention by modern criticism are solved by faith. Difficulties exist and, no doubt, difficulties will remain. But it is one thing to acknowledge that there are actually existing difficulties in Scripture that are extremely hard to explain and quite another to select these difficulties in order to build an entirely new conception of Scripture upon them. Faith, reading the first three chapters of Genesis, finds nothing primitive or strange, but reliable history. It finds in these chapters the first fundamentals of all Christian dogma, that of creation, of sin and punishment, of righteousness and holiness, but also of grace and redemption. And it finds that these doctrines occur again and again in ever clearer rays of revelation in Holy Writ. And to faith Scripture does not become a hopelessly confused mass of documents, a labyrinth of material in which he can never find his way, but a beautiful organism, finding its highest purpose in the realization of God's covenant and the very principle of its life in Immanuel, God incarnated.

This principle, then, I feel the need as emphasizing first of all. I think it belongs to fundamentals. The Christian is not neutral. He is biased. He must be biased. The testimony of the Spirit in his heart impels him to be biased. He knows no other freedom than the freedom of the standpoint of faith over against the Word of God.

The Reformed Christian, specifically the Reformed theologian, is expected to be biased in still a narrower sense, however.

But about this next time.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.