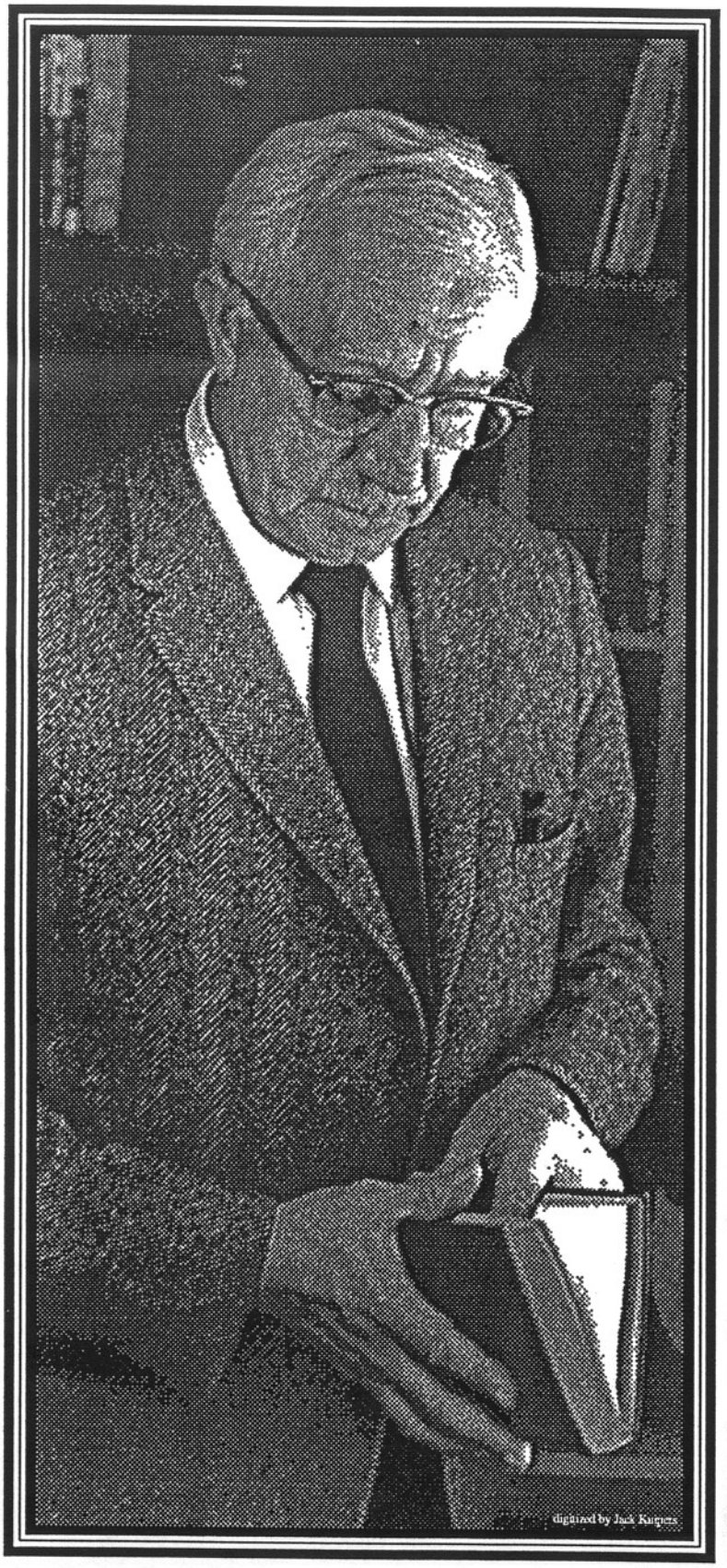

THOUGHTS

by

Henry Stob

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These all are **THOUGHTS** articulated by Henry Stob in his retirement.

1. While it is true that **faith** directs **understanding**, it is equally true that understanding is prerequisite to faith.

2. **Revelation** is dipolar. It comes into existence when a word spoken is heard, when a disclosure is apprehended. No revelation occurs without the experience of it.

3. **Jesus** is neither God nor man simpliciter; He is best described as the **God-Man**, a complex being who came into existence in Time.

4. It is false to declare that **faith in Christ** is justified only when the Bible is received as infallible.

5. For our knowledge of such things as can be perceived by the senses we are not dependent upon the Bible.

6. **The Bible** is best described not as Revelation, but as a **Witness** to revelation.

7. While nature should be viewed in the light of Scripture, it is equally true that Scripture should be interpreted in the light of our knowledge of nature.

8. **Time** is a mode of finite existence. God exists beyond Time, although He operates within it.

9. **God** draws persons to Himself, not by force, but by persuasion.

[1]For how these THOUGHTS came about read the **Postscript** on pages 50 and 51.

10. Although Faith is in some sense a risk, it is not a sheer leap into the dark. It is based upon an **awareness** of a daunting yet alluring Presence who evokes response.

11. All of us are descendants of Adam, but not of Noah.

12. The course of events is **not** to be regarded as the unrolling of a scroll written from the beginning of time (or in eternity).

13. God's omnipresence means, **not** that He fills all space, but that there are no spatial barriers to His presence.

14. Eternity is not to be conceived as **before** Time, but as **above** Time, over-arching it, and in a sense, embracing it.

15. While a given **theory** of evolution may conflict with biblical teachings, the **concepts** "creation" and "evolution" do not stand in an antithetical relation. Because they direct the mind to two distinct features of finite reality (Origin and Development) they need not come into conflict.

16. It is the faith of the Christian that in the miraculous birth, the atoning death, and the bodily resurrection of the man Christ Jesus, in essense one with God, the destiny of man and cosmos is ineluctably involved.

17. The mission of the church is to represent on earth the reality and promise of Christ's kingdom. In pursuit of this end the church reaches out with the Gospel to the unsaved, nurtures in the faith those embraced within its fellowship, and involves these in a beneficent engagement with the world.

18. Although God did create something (Light? Energy?) by direct fiat, it is permissible to suppose that other things came into being in the course of time through the divinely controlled unfolding of increated potentialities.

19. Sin is the root cause of all the evil in the world.

20. God did not, and does not, intend or decree that man should sin.

21. God's permitting, or even causing, human suffering is not in conflict with His absolute Goodness.

22. For both God and man, hate of persons is morally illicit.

23. For man to be totally depraved he must retain many natural excellencies.

24. God loves all human beings with an agapic love, but this love can be, and is, spurned by some.

25. **Election** to salvation in Christ is best understood **not** as an eternal divine "selection of some" to the exclusion of others, but as the profession of Christians that they have been saved by the grace of an initiating God.

26. That "**Grace is irresistible**" is **not** a factual statement about the nature of grace, but the profession of each Christian that in his case he could not but succumb to the blandishments of God.

27. To say that man is "**totally depraved**" is **not** to say that he is without a moral sense or without increated excellencies, but that he is oriented at the center of his being to ends other than his true end.

28. Christ's atonement is limited **not** in the sense that he died only for some, but that through human perversity it is not effectual in all.

29. It is not the Bible, but the Word of God, that is infallible, and that Word can be discovered through the careful and prayerful study of a Scripture which contains errant, irrelevant, and superseded passages.

30. The heart of the Gospel is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

31. When God created man in His image He put Himself at risk and exposed himself to opposition.

32. Man was introduced to the notion of Evil **not** when he ate of the tree, but when he was told that such eating was forbidden.

33. That God knows the number of hairs on our head is **not** a factual statement, but an epigrammatic way of saying that we can keep no secrets from God.

34. He who is forgiven but does not accept forgiveness remains unforgiven.

35. It is **not** by God's will, but in His presence, that sparrows fall to the ground.

36. Abortions may be performed only after moral consideration and for due cause.

37. A fertilized egg, simply as such, is not a veritable person. It is not even a **potential** human being until it is attached to the uterine wall.

38. One may assume that all human beings who die in infancy are alive in Christ.

39. The implicative **knowledge** attained in mathematics and formal logic is improperly called "**belief.**"

40. God does not pre-determine all that occurs in the course of time.

41. God's sovereignty may be thought of as His ability to move with certainty through the free choices of men towards the fulfillment of His purposes.

42. Christianity asserts, **not** that all those are lost who have not confessed the Christ, **but** that if anyone is saved it is by virtue of Christ's atoning work.

43. Hell is neither a creation of God nor a place in space, but the condition of those (if such there be) who unto the end have persisted in their opposition to or their flight from God.

44. The Male-Headship principle should be abandoned in home, church, and society in favor of universal gender equality.

45. By God's Immutability we mean the stability of His nature and the unswerving direction of His will, **not** His inability to make ad hoc decisions, or to adjust to changing circumstances.

46. Rightly to understand the human situation three categories are to be employed: Nature, Sin, and Grace (Creation, Fall, and Redemption).

47. In the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity did not "change" into a man, but "took human-ness upon himself" and thus "became" both God and Man in indissoluble union.

48. The doctrine of "Verbal Inspiration" is unacceptable if it means that each and every word in the Bible was chosen by the Holy Spirit or received His direct imprimatur.

49. The view that Christ builds His church primarily along covenant lines, gathering it from believers and their children, lacks warrant and inhibits the work of missions.

50. He who denies the possibility of miracles denies the Lordship of God over the work of His hands.

51. Miracles are not to be understood as violations of permanently established "natural laws," but as variations in the way God ceaselessly works in the world.

52. It is not likely that all the feats of strength and ingenuity ascribed to Samson actually occurred.

53. One may affirm that God is "Triune" only if one can give some intelligible account of what, in this instance, is meant by "Three in One."

54. The confession we make that God is "single and simple" does not permit us to posit within the Godhead three distinct centers of consciousness.

55. It is permissible to regard the "dust" from which God made man as "organic material," and to think of the "breath of life" that He breathed into man's nostrils as effecting "God Consciousness."

56. That God inscribed with His fingers the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone is not to be taken as a straightforward factual statement.

57. The Athanasian Creed errs when it declares that everyone who does not "keep it whole and undefiled shall without doubt perish everlastingly."

58. If God is a "suffering" God attentive to our daily cries, laments, and sorrows, can His life be one of "perfect bliss"?

59. There is in God an erotic love as well as an agapic love.

60. A theological model which places God at the **center** of the world is as legitimate as one that places Him **above** the world.

61. While government is **for** the people, and preferably **by** the people, it is not **from** the people.

62. The psycho-somatic Unity espoused by Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd reflects the teaching of Aristotle.

63. It is untrue that facts are inseparable from the interpretation put upon them.

64. Not all that occurs in the physical world can be accounted for in terms of intra-cosmic forces.

65. The whole of Ethics is situational in the sense that no proper moral judgment can be made when circumstances are ignored.

66. The Just War Theory does not claim that certain wars are "just," but that they are "justifiable."

67. Although the Bible itself should be taken as it is, a doctrine about the Bible may well need revision.

68. Neither Determinism nor Indeterminism is true; Freedom is always linked to Destiny.

69. It is only Ontological Reason, not Technical Reason, that has been significantly affected by Sin.

70. Untended and uncontrolled nature threatens civilization and culture.

71. The existence of Physical Science is one of many indications that man transcends nature.

72. The God who reveals Himself is also the **Deus Absconditus**, the hidden God, whose being and ways are past finding out.

73. The creation of the world is an expression of God's agapic love, a manifestation of His will to impart gifts to others, and to provide them a share in the fellowship of the Holy Trinity.

74. The Bible nowhere ascribes Self-Love to God.

75. Theocentrism is false if it is taken to mean that God is wholly turned in upon Himself, and does not exist **pro nobis**.

76. What to some may appear to be Calvin's undue orientation to Old Testament motifs is in fact his Christocentrism, his conviction that it is the whole of Scripture **was Christum treibet**.

77. The "Rhythm Method" sponsored by the Roman Church is not in accord with its view that sexual intercourse is for generative purposes only.

78. The Christian doctrine of Divine Providence asserts that the world is governed by a loving Creator, whose concern for the establishment of a Kingdom of Life never suffers abatement, and whose determination to effect it cannot be thwarted. It does not assert that all that occurs in the world is in accordance with the intent and purpose of God's rule.

79. The Church, though formed by Grace, rests on the fact that man is by nature a social being inclined toward Fellowship.

80. Grace does not destroy Nature, but perfects it.

81. Whatever the Incarnation did effect, it did not effect the humanization of God or the deification of Man.

82. The doctrine that asserts "The Perseverance of the Saints" does not preclude "apostasy"; it expresses the faith of a Christian that God's preserving power will not fail him.

83. At least some truths are relational: That Christ died for me is true if I believe it, false if I don't.

84. Only he who has transcended the world can live Christianly in it.

85. Not all happenings, but only culture-forming happenings, become grist for the historian's mill.

86. That God is "glorified in the death of sinners" means **not** that God takes pleasure in their death, but that in the overcoming of those who oppose Him his divine sovereignty is disclosed and vindicated.

87. It is not the literal turning of the cheek that Christ commands, but the development of a peaceful and non-retaliatory disposition.

88. To take the measure of a man, one should observe whether or not he dots his i's and crosses his t's.

89. Although God is an Individual, He is not a **Whole** embracing all that exists, nor a **Unit** bordered and defined by another; He is the **All** in the realm of the Divine, and an unconfined and ubiquitous Presence in the realm of creation.

90. Through the testimony of the Holy Spirit within, a word from the Bible can become for man the very Word of God.

91. Christian Monotheism declares that only the God of the Bible is God; it makes no overt declaration concerning the numerical character of God.

92. It is unwarranted to declare that Masturbation is evil **per se**.

93. It should be acknowledged that there are some who are constitutionally pre-disposed toward homosexuality.

94. It is morally permissible, under some circumstances, to speak contrary to fact: some "lies" are White.

95. Sunday, the Lord's Day, is best spent in an assessment of one's behavior during the preceeding week, and in an endeavour, through prayer and worship, to re-establish and re-invigorate one's Christian discipleship.

96. An Ethicist should avoid the "Ideal World Fallacy," and seek to determine, not what ideally would be the right thing to do, but what, in a broken world, and under prevailing circumstances, is the best thing to do.

97. Capital Punishment is permissible, but not mandatory, and should only in rare instances be exercised.

98. Although "Christian Education" does not necessarily require "Christian Schools," the nurture of covenant children is best advanced when home and school join forces.

99. Since some things exist, Something (or Someone) must always have been in existence, for from Nothing nothing can come.

100. God did not create the world at some time, for Time is itself a creation.

101. The Bible reflects both the science and the social patterns of its era, and in these respects it is not normative for us. It is the Bible's "Weltanschauung" not its "Weltbild" or its "Gesellschaftsauffassung," that needs adopting.

102. That Ordination conveys Grace, and enables the Ordinand to impart Grace, is a Roman Catholic idea, and should have no place in Reformed Church Polity.

103. There are biblical Psalms some portions of which a Christian cannot in good conscience sing.

104. It is not to be believed that the real Samuel made an actual appearance in response to the Witch of Endor's necromancy.

105. Since there is only one God, and since He alone is self-existent, all else that exists was called forth by His power out of nothing.

106. God's **omnipotence** enables him, not to do every conceivable thing, but to do whatever He **wills** to do.

107. To achieve "excellence" is not the same as to "excel."

108. Although Sin is disruptive, it can operate only within and through the stable structure of creation. To exist at all, Evil requires the Good, and conflict requires order.

109. Man is neither divorced from Nature, nor immersed in it. In relation to Nature he is both Immanent and Transcendent.

110. Unlike a "sign," which remains external, a "symbol" participates in what it symbolizes.

111. In a Christian College, Academic Freedom should be confined within the parameters of the school's constitution.

112. A Republic, in which people are governed by chosen Representatives, is better than a Democracy, in which things are settled by Plebiscites.

113. The Apologetics question is: How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

114. To flee God is to leave the Rock of Defense and stumble upon the Rock of Offense.

115. Conscience serves as a brake upon proposed or contemplated action, but is no true guide to positive action.

116. That the Son is **begotten** of the Father indicates that the Son is of the same **nature** as the Father, but it does not indicate that the Son is **equal** to the Father, or **eternally co-existent** with Him.

117. The End toward which history moves is not a Terminus, but a Goal.

118. What **Is** is finally determinative of what **Ought to Be**.

119. Problems are solved by further inquiry; Puzzles are dispelled by clarification of what is already known; Mysteries remain mysteries even when disclosed.

120. The Christian life recapitulates the Christ events. It is by dying to oneself, rising with Christ into newness of life, and ascending to God in prayer, that a Christian is able to go into the world with saving power.

121. The "God Question" is not whether God exists, but how He is to be conceived and responded to.

122. Central to Faith is not **assent** to church dogma, but **Trust** in the person Christ Jesus.

123. Although the Antithesis is to be recognized, it is not to be embraced, since it is that which the Gospel is out to destroy.

124. Philosophy inquires, not about the whole of the world, but about the world as a Whole.

125. None but the most naive of worshippers believes that an Idol is a God. To most the Idol **represents** a god, or is **inhabited** by one.

126. No society can endure without an accepted code of Morals, Manners, and Procedures.

127. That God is a Jealous God means, **not** that He desires what others have, but that He is vigilant in maintaining His unique status, and unable and unwilling to share with others His sole and exclusive Divinity.

128. What centrally characterizes Humanness is man's awareness of and responsiveness to God.

129. Just as Man, the rational animal, transcends the beast, so Christ, the divine man, transcends the merely human.

130. Historical Christianity arose at the confluence of two streams — the Greek and the Hebrew — in both of which the light-shedding Divine Word was active in preparation for the Final Disclosure.

131. Since the Christian Faith rests upon an historical figure, and upon actual historical occurrences, it is vulnerable to historical criticism, and open in principle to refutation by historical evidence.

132. The acceptability of a philosophy rests upon its explanatory efficacy, upon its ability to illumine and integrate human experience, and to lay bare the structure of reality.

133. Although the Church is blessed with a Mighty Presence, and has been made a witness of Saving Truth, its membership is composed not of the Upright, but of the Forgiven; not of the Perfected, but of those in training for Discipleship.

134. One fasts properly not out of disdain for the body, but out of concern for the soul.

135. It is Religion that engenders and sustains Morals. With the decline of religion morals collapse.

136. It is not the case that love to God is fulfilled in love to neighbor; the love commandment moves one in both a vertical and horizontal direction.

137. Religious faith and the faith that underlies the scientific enterprise are two very different things.

138. We may distinguish between the Sacred and the Profane, but not divorce the two.

139. One's theory of Atonement hinges on one's conception of Sin.

140. Our profession that the Bible is perspicuous is in tension with our demand for an educated clergy.

141. Not scientific Certainty, but religious Assurance, lies at the heart of Christian Faith.

142. The presence of Sin is sometimes psychologically determined; one who does what one considers sinful, sins, even though what was done conformed to the Law.

143. The Westminster Confession errs when it declares that "God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."

144. That the Father delivered Christ into the hands of sinners, who freely and willingly put Him to death, is true; but this is not to say that the Father planned, decreed, ordained, and orchestrated the crucifixion of His Son.

145. One acts immorally when, without due cause, one acts contrary to the group Mores.

146. **Sola Scriptura** was enunciated to counter the claim that Tradition had the same authority as the Bible. The phrase should not be used to deny that God reveals Himself in Nature, History, and Conscience, nor to deny that sound biblical interpretation takes place within an historic community of faith and against the backdrop of a shared tradition.

147. Although faith in Christ does not **consist** in assent to certain propositions, it does not **exist** apart from such assent.

148. Since Hell is depicted in the Bible as either a fiery furnace or a bottom-less pit, Sin is best conceived as either a hostile ascent to the Holy One, ablaze with glory, or a flight from Him into outer darkness.

149. It is not Self-Centeredness that marks the presence of Sin in man. At bottom no sinner considers himself of central importance, or the object of ultimate concern; his inexpungible sense of divinity, his inescapable religiousity, compels him to bow at some point to something or someone recognizably greater than himself.

150. **The Testimonium Spiritus Sancti.** The Holy Spirit does **not** testify to Christians that just these books constitute the Canonical Scriptures, nor that every word in them has His imprimatur, but He does testify that God speaks to us through them, and that in Christ, God has acted for us.

151. The Protestant is less a Protester than a Pro-Testant, one who stands For or Witnesses to something.

152. Under the conditions of our existence it is Un-Christian to propose the creation of a Christian State.

153. The Devil can be a devil only in so far as he retains the image of God.

154. The Heidelberg Catechism misinterprets the Second Commandment, and does a disservice to Christian Art, when it declares that "God ... may not be visibly portrayed in any way."

155. Life after death is based, not on the supposed indestructibility of soul-substance, but on the Resurrection of Christ.

156. Suicide is possible, but self-annihilation is not.

157. In the Christian's love for God and Man both Eros and Agape come into play.

158. While their Sin drives men towards social alienation and disruption, their Finitude draws them toward social complementation, cohesion, and cooperation.

159. Not all sinful and immoral acts should be made into criminal offenses.

160. What is entailed by the confession that the Bible is inspired is to be determined, **not** from a consideration of the Spirit's perfections, but from an empirical study of the composite biblical text.

161. Although God's ways are not our ways, I find it impossible to ascribe to God what I find detestable in myself.

162. One may endorse the separation of Church and State, but not that of Religion and Politics.

163. As technology develops it is well to remember that "can" does not imply "may."

164. Because Divine Revelation is always mediate, God cannot disclose Himself as He Is.

165. Although Mysteries are beyond comprehension, they can, when contemplated, operate heuristically, and advance understanding.

166. Every Ethic is defective which fails to recognize the force exerted upon morals by the principle of Natural Law.

167. The task of Apologetics is not to demonstrate the Faith, but to stand upon it and set forth its explanatory efficacy.

168. It is strange, but true, that it is amidst pain, sorrow, and danger, that God is most frequently sought and found.

169. The traditional **Ordo Salutis** tends to obscure the fact that the distinguishable elements that go into the making of a Christian are **not** separate and successive, but simultaneous and co-joined. By grace-induced faith one is joined to Christ, in and through whom one is at once regenerated, justified, brought to conversion, and set on the path of sanctification.

170. It is incontrovertible that those who do not profess the Christ perform deeds that are in a significant sense "good."

171. The aim of Missions is to falsify the claim that certain persons now living will suffer the torments of Hell.

172. That Paul is the chief of sinners is factually false, but, in his mouth, religiously apt.

173. Although God can make a Man out of an Animal, an Animal cannot bring forth a Man.

174. While justifiably employing the categories of Sin and Grace, traditional Reformed Theology has not given due weight to Nature and the stable structures of Creation, and has, in consequence, denied to Reason its true role in shaping thought and practice.

175. To deny the historicity of the Fall of man or angel is to impugn the Goodness of God, and to weave Evil into the very fabric of creation.

176. Underlying the Antithesis, and making conflict possible, is the shared nature which Christian and Non-Christian have in common.

177. The course of Nature is predictable since it rests on inner necessities; the course of History is unpredictable since it is largely shaped by the free actions of men.

178. Pacifism suffers from a lack of love for those whose life and liberty are threatened by hostile forces.

179. Love is strung between the poles of Faith and Hope.

180. One may be tempted to act in accordance with an inner inclination toward some evil, or be tempted to embrace some evil repugnant to the inner self. Jesus was tempted only in the latter way.

181. Sinners may be tempted to act in accordance with their sinful inclinations, but they do not act sinfully until they yield to the temptation.

182. If Space is defined as that which lies between two objects, there is, of course, no space beyond the outer limits of the physical universe. It is in this non-space that the One Only God is said to "reside."

183. Beauty is not merely in the eye of the beholder; it is embodied and disclosed in an Object of sight or sound, the incorporated features of which arouse and satisfy one's aesthetic sensibilities.

184. To fear the Lord is not to "be afraid" of Him, but to stand in awe of His majesty and be disposed to do His bidding.

185. Because of God there is for Man no Privacy in this or any world.

186. To say that it is Unreasoned is not to say that it is Irrational.

187. Morality may at some time require us to act illegally.

188. One should always speak the truth, but the truth need not always be spoken.

189. We are saved neither by works, nor without them.

190. The cross of Christ is at once God's greatest gift and the world's greatest crime.

191. Amidst the ruins of the Corpus Christianum the Corpus Christi stands secure.

192. It is a gross misreading of man's existential predicament to regard as pathological his sense of guilt and shame.

193. No full-bodied Theology can be elaborated without the use of categories and insights developed in Philosophy and the various Sciences.

194. It is not the case that God can work in the world only through human agency.

195. It is impossible to see ourselves as others see us.

Version #1
thru #195
04 Jan 93

196. The Unity of the church is not to be purchased at the price of its Fidelity.

197. Since Logos includes both Ratio and Verbum, it is likely that an inadequacy in Expression betrays a lack of clarity in Thought.

198. Not what is said, but what is meant, is the issue in biblical interpretation.

199. A man in flight from God does not pray, for to pray is to draw near to God.

200. Every Worldview is achieved within a perspective **chosen** by the observer.

201. Facts function as legal tender in the realm of the Mind.

202. To propose a scientific explanation for the appearance of Bethlehem's Star is to misconstrue the event and to obscure its religious significance.

203. Knowledge is not only for utility; it is also for satisfaction and enrichment.

204. There are no things too great and marvelous for men to inquire into. There is no point at which human curiosity ought to be arrested.

205. God's redemptive disclosures of Himself in the course of Israel's history culminates in Jesus Christ, the focal point not only of **Heilsgeschichte** but also of History in general.

206. "The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry" translates into "The church will care for its own."

207. He who trusts in the Lord will walk through the midst of the sea upon dry ground.

208. The atheistic Existentialist is mistaken. It is not the circumambient Void that fills him with Angst and Despair,

but the awesome Presence of One who, to the alienated and hostile, cannot but appear as a Threat.

209. What centrally characterizes Divinity is Holiness.

210. For the understanding and interpretation of the Bible no special or unique Hermeneutics is required.

211. The processes of Nature are cyclical, but History does not repeat itself.

Version #2
thru #211
27 Jan 93

212. God instructs us in Nature and in History, and **Theology** can ill afford to ignore such instruction.

213. The reality of the external world is evidenced by the limitations it places on the operation of human wills.

214. It is upon certain tenets found exclusively in Christianity that modern science is built.

215. **Rights** are generated by **Duties**.

216. A true **Leader** is both with the people and in advance of them.

217. Although people are, on account of sin, undeserving of salvation, they are, by virtue of creation, intrinsically salvageable.

218. He who celebrates his growth in **humility** proclaims the absence of it.

219. Generally speaking, what the Greeks called "**Virtues**" are a-moral; they can be put into the service of rival Kingdoms, and directed towards evil as well as good ends.

220. The decisive factor in our thought-life is not our exercise of reason, but rather what we take and trust as significant for reason, what first premise we allow to govern our reason, what definitive apriori controls our reason.

221. A natural or formal science can be "Christian" or "non-Christian"only in so far as, within it, decisions have to be made on matters of philosophical import.

222. It is not by **Nature**, but by **accident**, that we are sinners.

223. Change is intelligible only when viewed against the background of stable structures.

224. Theology employs concepts, categories, reasonings, and assumptions open to philosophical scrutiny and appraisal.

225. Because Nature is a dynamic process, it is less a "book" to be read than a "discourse" to be heard.

226. The "laws of nature" that we formulate are nothing but our transcripts of God's "customary ways" of acting in the world. They are not prior to, but after, God; they record His habits.

227. One becomes like the god one worships (Ps.115:8)

228. On matters of ultimate concern no thinking is "unprejudiced"; it is governed by the thinker's basic loyalties.

229. Since the Cosmos is a creation, everything in it is contingent, and nothing within it can account for its existence, order, meaning, or purpose.

230. Both the Idealist and the Materialist speak truly, for both Mind and Matter are real; yet they both speak falsely, for Mind does not derive from Matter, nor Matter from Mind.

231. The distinction between Philosophy and Theology fades when these disciplines are Christianly pursued.

232. God can be truly known only when He is loved and obeyed.

233. Eros, or Desire, is universal in humankind, for it is grounded in an essential Finitude in need of complementation and support.

234. Since God is genderless, neither the **feminine cause**, nor true religion, is advanced by thinking of God as a woman.

235. To advance the **feminine cause** we need not rewrite the Bible. We need only to learn that God transcends the distinction between male and female, and that He is impartial in his dealings with men and women.

236. For the Christian, **Gratitude** is the dominant **Motive** for living a life of moral rectitude.

237. When it comes to counting, weighing, and measuring, Christians and non-Christians are, or should be, in aggreement.

238. **Being** is real, but of two sorts: Necessary and Contingent. "Being" is therefore **not** to be taken as a univocal term embracing both Creator and Creature.

239. The extra-biblical conviction that God exists is best arrived at and sustained, **not** by logical inference from em-

pirical givens, **nor** by the analysis and clarification of terms, but by direct non-inferential awareness.

240. The Christian thinker, though open to paradoxes, can embrace **contradictions** only by abandoning Reason, and waiving Sanity.

241. The Christian is confident that whatever has been **revealed** by God will not, and cannot, be in conflict with that which has been **discovered** by man.

242. When theologians speak of God, the terms they use are meant to be taken analogically.

243. Prayer is **not** to be confused with Meditation. **Meditation** is a withdrawal into oneself; **Prayer** is an address to Another.

244. Among the central affirmations of the Christian Faith are these:

    (a) God **exists**, is real. He is an infinitely good, wise, and powerful personal being, who, lifted above the world in true transcendence, is yet always and everywhere present to it in grace and judgment.

    (b) God **created** the world, not out of himself, and not out of some co-existing matter, but out of nothing.

    (c) **Man** was created in God's image, is in unbreakable touch with God, and was made to be — in free responsibility — a member of that enduring fellowship of love and justice called **The Kingdom**, a kingdom which God is historically bringing into being, and of which the Christian Church is the earnest and symbol.

(d) The human race — contrary to God's will — fell from rectitude into the power of **Sin**, with the result that man, while retaining his humanness, came to exist in alienation from God, self, and neighbor.

(e) God, from the very moment that man fell, out of pity for man's isolation and brokenness, reached out to **restore** him to self-integration, social cohesion, and divine kinship.

(f) God's nature and purposes are fully revealed in **Jesus Christ**, not only or even primarily in his words, but especially in his person and deeds, and particularly in his death and resurrection.

(g) Those who believe in Christ, trusting him for their salvation, are in principle New Creatures, made privy to the meaning of existence, empowered for self-mastery, commissioned for social service, and destined — in the economy of grace — to enjoy forever, and in God's presence, the **Eternal Life** in which they already now participate.

245. Underlying the authentic practice of **Prayer** is the manifold belief that God exists, that God can hear or take notice, and that God can help. It is because God is a Person — a centered Self — that he can be addressed at all.

246. God is such a one as will not let Himself be unknown to any man. He allows men to repress their consciousness of Him, and He allows them to misconceive Him, but He does not allow them to be **ignorant** of Him.

247. God approaches men not only through the misty corridors of Nature, where His entrance into mind can be barred by inattention and penultimate preoccupations; He enters

men's minds directly by registering His claims upon a **conscience** which, though it can be seared, can never be silenced.

248. When one chooses to follow Christ, a perspective of the world is opened up which brings the whole of reality in support of the choice.

Version #3
thru #248
18 Feb 93

249. History will be fulfilled, **not** from within, but through an incursion from above.

250. The Jew is saved, **not** by the God of Abraham, but by the Father of Jesus.

251. The Kingdom of God — God's rule over persons and peoples — existed from the beginning of time, but it did not come with **saving power** until Christ appeared.

252. Faith is a many faceted thing. Believing **that** something is the case is not the same as believing **in** something or someone.

253. It is not by scientific observation, but by spiritual discernment, that one finds God's fingerprints on everything His hands have made.

254. **Idols** appear when in the broken and fragmented mind of fallen man God is refracted into the likeness of a creature.

255. Empirical givens acquire meaning only when rationally construed, which means that **Information** becomes knowledge only through **Formation**.

256. It is unwarranted to conceive of the Divine Trinity as a society of constituent selves. The one God we confess is

in His Unity a centered Self, a concrete Individual. From within the singleness and simplicity of his nature there shines forth, however, a complex tri-dimensional Personality.

257. Seeking is more arduous than Finding.

258. Although I do not deny that Angels and Demons exist, I do not recall ever having been engaged by any of them, and I have not consciously shaped my life and thought with reference to them.

259. The Will by which we are set upon a fixed End is not to be confused with the Volition by which we make adventitious choices.

260. **The Past** is made Present in Memory, **the Future** in Expectation or, perchance, in Foreknowledge.

261. The Stone that sealed the Grave, and blocked the way to Life, has once and for all been rolled away.

262. When Jesus died He entered the New Age, and when He arose He neither left it, nor failed to provide evidence of its amazing reality.

263. **Prayer** is less a way to move God into compliance with our wishes than a way to receive the gift He freely offers — communion with Himself.

264. Man is free; he can under ordinary circumstances do whatever he wills to do. But the Will is not free; it is bound by man's nature, which is what it is by sin or by grace.

265. **The created world** is not self-sustaining, but utterly contingent. Called forth out of Nothing and hovering over the brink of Nothingness, it requires for its continuance the **Preserving** Grace of God.

266. God moves with infinite resourcefulness around the obstacles human agents place upon His path and so **over-rules** all **Evil** that, so far from frustrating His ultimate design, it is woven into the divine web, and made serviceable to the establishment of the Kingdom.

267. Although the **Plan of God** is fixed upon a determinate goal, it is flexible in the arrangements of its parts, and so loosely woven as to accommodate and domicile the adventitious **Prayers** of petitioning saints.

268. God can and does perform **miracles**, but He is also concerned to preserve the stability of the **Natural Order**. The thoughtful and sensitive Christian will therefore hesitate to **pray** that the ascent of a hill be made as facile as the descent, that a fractured bone be knit in an instant, that water be made to flow upward, that a plane which has lost its wings be kept cozily aloft, and other such things.

269. It is better to think of Man theomorphically than to think of God anthromorphically.

270. Although it is Religion that undergirds Morality, it is Morality that refines religious conceptions, institutions, and practices.

271. It is because God is Triune that the Incarnation does not cancel Transcendence.

272. Although Christianity as an historical magnitude is in flux, its theme — "God in Christ for Sinners" — is fixed forever.

273. A human **Individual** is not an isolated atom, but a unique **Center** in a web of particular relationships.

274. The theologian who does not remain in intimate touch with the teeming life of Church and World makes overtures to a barren scholasticism, and the Preacher who neglects the discipline of theology gives hostages to a vacuous psychologism.

275. Although Jesus is **in** history, He is not wholly **of** history. There is that in Him which transcends the temporal.

276. It is unwarranted to set against the authority of the Bible the authority of our spiritual intuitions and religious experiences.

277. The walls that surround the Church should have gates that swing outward as well as inward.

278. Christian Missions are possible because God, in His Common Grace and General Revelation, has been beforehand with the people to whom the Gospel is addressed.

279. There is no one of whom it can be said that he is entirely — and finally — forsaken of God.

280. The Prophets are characterized not so much by the fact that they spoke, as by the fact that they were spoken to.

281. The External Law becomes meaningful and effective when it is transformed into an Inner Witness.

282. The **Kingdom of God** is at the center of Christ's mission. His appearence was the harbinger of its coming. His teaching was a setting forth of its rules. His life was a display of its spirit. His death was the seal of its establishment. His resurrection was the sign of its triumph.

283. That all men possess the idea of God, and acknowledge that the good is to be preferred to the bad, is owing not to a process of Discovery, but to an act of Revelation.

284. The God of Plato is an Impersonal Ideal; the God of Jacob is a creative and redeeming Spirit.

285. In the context of religion "moral evil" is "Sin."

286. That Christ died is a fact, historically attested and verifiable. That He died for our sins is not given with the event, or open to observation; it can only be believed.

287. Christ's Resurrection encompassed more than the survival of abiding elements in the human Jesus; it brought forth Life in a radically new mode of existence.

288. What has happened cannot be undone, for Time cannot be rolled back.

289. In most instances the wisest path to follow is that of **Moderation**.

290. We are called to **love** even those we do not **like**.

291. Since they facilitate social intercourse the prevailing **Customs** should not lightly be put aside.

292. That we shall drink wine with Christ in His Father's Kingdom (Matt 26:29) gives to the **Blessed Future** an earthly cast.

293. Both the Law and the Gospel invoke in man a sense of **Obligation**.

294. An Atom is a mathematical impossibility.

295. Freedom **from** is in the interest of Freedom **for**.

296. To treat two persons **equally** it may be necessary to deal with them **unequally**.

297. It is not so much Happiness as **Contentment** that characterizes the life of the Christian.

298. To get **married** is not quite the same as to be **wedded** by church or state.

299. Whoever receives Christ as **Savior** must acknowledge Him as **Lord**.

300. What can be tempered with Mercy is the **Administration** of Justice, not **Justice** itself.

301. **Change** can occur only in that which in some sense remains the same.

302. **Possibilities** do not exist in any "actual realm"; they possess an ideal being in the Mind of God.

303. When the **being** of any subject is denied, what is denied is not its **essence** but only its **existence**.

304. A church that neglects **Catechesis** will soon have no spine.

305. Although the Ethnic Religions are false, man's capacity for religion and the impulse to religious expression is divinely caused.

306. The issues of life and death can be decided only with reference to that which happened in Judaea in the first century A.D.

Version #4
thru #307
16 Jun 93

307. Of nothing can we say: "It is no good".

308. Greek philosophy appraising Greek religion is simply the human spirit engaging in self-appraisal.

309. **Faith** is grace-induced human Receptivity to divine revelation.

310. While the Thomist insulates Philosophy against the deliverances of Faith, the Calvinist integrates the two.

311. Officials are too often Officious.

312. In a broken world, where old age is attended by many maladies, **death** is a blessing.

313. **Intelligence** is not the same as **Wisdom**.

314. The **Utopia** that once was will one day be restored and enhanced.

315. The evil that infects the world cannot destroy the cosmic order or rob created beings of their value.

316. He who draws Near unto God must respect the Distance that separates him from God.

317. Where Christian service is required Purity should be prepared to risk Contamination.

318. Time modifies all human institutions and makes them candidates for reconstruction.

319. What is Holy is meant to touch and sanctify what is Profane.

320. Love brooks no subversion of the Good, no violation of the Right.

321. The bane of Church life is an **Ecclesiola** in **Ecclesia**, an assembly of the "like-minded," organized into a party, and making use of power-techniques to achieve a spurious hegemony.

322. The maintenance of a Liturgical Tradition tends to stabilize the church's faith and witness.

323. Although there is only One God, the word "god" is used to name whatever one takes as an object of ultimate concern, or whatever one venerates and worships with religious devotion.

324. The Son of God is said to have been generated eternally out of the substance of the Father. Is the Son, then, to be regarded as an Emanation from, or a Prolongation of the Father, or perhaps as none other than God's Self-Objectification?

325. Self-Affirmation is in the interest of Self-Sacrifice.

Version #5
thru #325
14 Jul 93

326. St. Paul's "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1) enlists the Christian against **Anarchy**, but not against **Revolution**.

327. The call to minister in Christ's name goes out to every believer, and in the exercise of discipleship no office held or vocation followed is more sacred than another.

328. Whatever is not God was called into being by God.

329. Before God dispenses Pardons He purchases them.

330. It is principally in the divine-human encounter that a person's identity is disclosed.

331. The winds of the Spirit blow at God's bidding, but to be moved by them we must hoist our sails.

332. Although Religion can please God, it cannot appease Him.

333. Dykes and Levees are no match for Raging Waters.

334. Cultural developments may open our eyes to aspects of the truth not previously discerned, but the Christian faith may not be tailored to fit the culture that evoked the new awareness.

335. **Self-Acceptance** is attained when one accepts Divine acceptance.

336. **Imperatives** rest upon Indicatives.

337. **Freedom** does not release a man; it engages him.

338. In exercising **BirthControl** human beings distinguish themselves from animals.

339. One may assume that before **The Fall** big fish ate little fish.

340. Authentic **Religion** is the centered response of the whole self to the Divine disclosure.

341. God loves us as we are so that we may be other than we are.

342. Since there is a Record stored in **Memory** of our every thought and word and deed, there is no **Forgetting**: there is only a relative absence of **Recall**.

343. It is evident that the Bible not infrequently conveys its Message in **Mythical** form.

344. The **Church** has come into existence, not to accommodate itself to the **World**, but to lay the world under judgment and entice it into repentance and conversion.

345. God is the great Unavoidable, whom no way can circumvent, whom no manuever can evade, whom no flight can elude.

346. In the human will to Peace God himself is active.

347. Christianity is distinguished from all mystical religions by its steady appeal to an historic figure of the past. It proclaims that in a single individual — Jesus Christ — a final and authoritative disclosure is made of the nature, will, and purpose of the One Only God.

348. The Horizon recedes as we advance.

349. Did Chalcedon perhaps err when it equated the **Biblical Image** "Son of God" with the **Metaphysical Concept** "Very God"?

350. Of the origin of Evil the Bible gives no account. In the Genesis story its existence is presupposed; the Serpent simply appears upon the scene.

351. Those who turn their backs on God can get neither Truth nor Goodness in focus.

352. A Theology grows, not by adding something to the Word once and for all delivered, but by coming to that Word with new questions, and hearing it give answers which we had not heard before because we had not previously put the questions.

353. One cannot fall when grounded.

354. A Church which defines itself negatively in opposition to the World, rather than positively in affinity to Christ, will be victimized by the World it negatively honors.

355. We are Animists when we get angry with a shoe-string that wont untie.

356. The concern for Doctrinal soundness and Moral rectitude must not be allowed to lure us into monastic retreat where, through excessive preoccupation with ourselves, we become introspective, myopic, and domesticated, and thus unable to venture out with poise into a sinful world that needs nothing so much as the service of Christian hands and hearts.

357. To demean Another is to diminish Oneself.

358. Although a man may be held accountable for his opinions, he may not be reduced to them.

359. Those who are only half-right are wrong.

360. Authentic Christian Theology is not to be thought of or proposed as a deductive system derived by logical inference from some governing principle, but as a theoretical restatement of the correlated Scriptural givens in their fulness and with their paradoxes and mysteries left intact.

361. Christian Love is meant to be spent entire upon all we meet upon the way.

362. Dogmatism is the habit of regarding as closed what is open-ended.

363. The God of Scripture is a God of double aspect. He is both attractive and forbidding. One face enchants and captivates, the other evokes terror and consternation. Yet the two are not in balance. God's grace outshines his judgments. His love is in the foreground; his wrath is in the shadows. God is essentially and primarily the Savior; He is only accidentally and derivatively the Destroyer.

364. Nothing that exists is self-caused.

365. The Church should not set up extra-biblical rules that deny mature persons access to the secular world, for grace is there as well as sin, and the gifts of grace are waiting to be thankfully accepted no less than the effects of sin are awaiting expiation and removal.

366. A person achieves Self-Identity when he insinuates himself into a community, a history, a tradition, an encompassing whole.

367. The World being what it is, the healing ministry of the Church cannot dispense with surgery, and the peace the Church envisions cannot be established without wearing down the stubborn will in ways which do not always please the object of its solicitude and care.

368. The only Leader a Christian can follow in the deepest things of life is the one who travels with him in the Way.

369. Evil is no more than adjectival, modifying while never becoming part of the substance of the world. Essentially parasitic, it never appears in isolation, but always in conjunction with some Good, upon which it feeds, and without which it would simply cease to be.

370. Although **Love** is long-suffering and kind, it has in it a flaming jealousy, which brooks no profanation of the holy, no subversion of the good, no violation of the right.

371. The presence and operation of **Common Grace** keeps the world from being burdened with the extremist outworkings of man's radical perversity; it enables society to establish a tolerably just order in which men of every faith can live their common life; and it preserves that solidarity of mankind which makes possible the association of Christian and non-Christian in all sorts of cultural enterprises.

372. The **World** as God's **Creation**, is well and permanently structured and thus never beyond salvaging.

373. While encouraging periodical critical reappraisals of its **theological formulations**, the Church can give no comfort to those who in their effort to make the bitter medicine of the Gospel palatable to the taste of sinful men dilute it to the point where it soothes without restoring.

374. In Christian perspective the **Moral Imperative** rests upon the **Evangelical Indicative**.

375. **Love** precludes all assaults upon men with a view to their destruction, or with intent to hurt or damage their true humanity.

376. While discouraging all merely mystical flights to spiritual ivory towers, authentic Christianity imposes upon its adherents the obligation to sometimes turn away from the **World** in order in solitude to face **God** in acts of pure devotion.

377. **Happiness** eludes those whose life is spent in its pursuit.

378. While the gates of the Church must always be open **on the side of** the World, they must never be open **to** the World in such a way that through the intrusion of a debilitating worldliness the Church loses all power to exert **upon** the World the redemptive influence it was appointed to exercise.

379. To be **Finite** is to be positioned between Being and non-Being.

380. The rule that we should not try to **excel**, but to attain excellence, does not hold in the realm of competitive sports. Here a carefully structured adversary relation is set up, and rule-regulated rivalry is playfully enacted. Under

these conditions one should seize every advantage, give the opponent no quarter, and strive to come in first.

381. **Education** is the process, not of informing, but of forming students, of patterning them according to the structure of reality, of imprinting on them the face of being.

Version #6
thru #381
05 Nov 93

382. We sometimes fail to fit the **word** to the **idea**. With inept language we falsify the truth. Through the employment of ill-chosen words we corrupt good notions.

383. One may object to **Natural Theology** when it is defined as "a theology based on human reason apart from revelation," but there is no cause to reject Natural Theology when it is defined as "a theology which sets forth what is revealed about God in Nature."

384. God's love casts out our fears.

385. At day's end there is one day less in which to do what needs doing.

386. The essence of **Justice** is the right ordering of social relationships.

387. Brought into being by God's Spirit within the womb of Mary was One who, born of a woman, was truly human, yet One who, born of the Spirit, was in the likeness of God, and celebrated as God's only begotten Son.

Version #7
thru #386
dated 13 Jan 94
the day brother
Martin died.

388. The moral behavior of human beings is significantly influenced by the community in which they are imbedded, and by the social history which is their heritage and, in a sense, their destiny. Yet, because they reside on a vertical as well as on a horizontal plane of existence, they are

able through the exercise of their God-oriented freedom to transcend the social matrix.

389. In Christian perspective true Personhood is attainable only in and through a conscious and affirmative relation to God.

390. What a well-regulated society seeks to secure is that delicate adjustment of **Freedom** and **Order** which will prevent the rise of both **Anarchy** and **Tyranny**.

391. God is called "good," not because He conforms to some standard outside Himself, but because He is **Goodness** itself, the source and guarantor of all good.

392. Since man is an agent as well as a patient, it is important to distinguish between the **Causes of** and the **Reasons for** human behavior. Besides the physical there is in man a **Rational Will** which can be engaged by a transcendent Good, attachment to which evokes behavior inexplicable in terms of natural stimuli.

393. Among humankind only the **Individual** is truly personal; no group or society is this.

394. **Life** is not sacred. Neither life nor health is of ultimate value. One may have to sacrifice both in the interest of being good.

395. **Conscience** naturally apprehends the distinction between good and evil, is charged with an innate sense of obligation, and ineluctably makes judgments of approval and disapproval.

396. **Love** is that which always, and in every circumstance, ought to be done.

397. The virtuous man, in pursuit of his duty, may sometimes be required both to cause and to suffer pain.

398. Every obligation demands ultimate validation, there being no genuine "ought" that does not need the whole universe to back it.

399. A **Principle** that does not issue into **Practice** is empty; a **Practice** that does not flow from **Principle** is blind.

400. **Truth** and **Goodness** are inseparable, and our view of the one determines our view of the other.

401. God is not an **Object** that is searched out, but a **Subject** who invades.

402. God proclaims His will to His children less as imperious demands than as gracious prescriptions for enjoying His fellowship.

403. When it comes to religious and spiritual matters, the path to **knowledge** leads through the valley of **obedience**.

404. **Christion doctrines** can be recommended as true only as they can be presented as practically efficacious.

405. A distinction should be made between God in His Being and God in His Act, between the God who inhabits eternity and the God who has entered into a covenent with man in time, between the God who in His aseity is wholly independent of the world and the God who, having created the world, is ineluctably involved with it and ceaslessly concerned about it.

406. Having become a slave of God, the Calvinist has lost the capacity to act slavishly toward any man.

407. The Christian Church is made up of people who were social before they entered the fellowship, were religious before they were reconciled to God, and were morally expressive before they took on the yoke of Christ.

408. The central function of the Christian doctrine of **creatioex nihilo** is to cut off any thought of the continuity between God and man.

409. God is directly active in **the order of nature**, where no so-called **natural laws** exist to obstruct the free exercise of His power.

410. Jesus Christ, the repository of all grace, is the true **blessed possessor**.

411. It is not possible to be in Christ without being in the Church, for to be a member of Christ is to be a member of Christ's body.

412. The **Reformation** put God back into the common life and into the work-a-day world of man. It bridged the gap between the secular and the sacred, and it left no sector of life profane.

413. He who recognizes Religion as embracing every area of existence ought not on this account fail to distinguish, **within** religion, between worship and work, for he should know that religion is an ellipse with two foci, and that the practice of it is a matter of inhaling and exhaling.

414. Only as we love God can we truly love our fellows, and only as we love our fellows are we fit to enter into God's presence.

415. **History** is too real to allow us to think of returning someday to a primeval Eden.

416. The biblical characterization of Satan as the Prince and Ruler of this world obliges us to draw a distinction between God's Sovereignty and God's Kingdom, between God's will to be **in se** and His will to be **pro nobis**. God's Sovereignty is His inalienable property. His Kingdom is an historical magnitude. God's Sovereignty is a possession; His Kingdom is an achievement. The divine sovereignty is; the divine kingdom comes. The divine sovereignty is given in and with God's being; the divine kingdom is bought at an incalculably high price.

417. God demands and expects the service of his own children, but He is not bound to this, and those who do not know Him, or do not know Him yet, are often made serviceable, beyond their willing or knowing, to the ends of His Kingdom.

418. The **Civitas Dei** and the **Civitas Mundi** are founded on antithetical principles, but their boundaries overlap. Each interpenetrates the other, and before the end time the ground they are struggling for cannot with full title be assigned to either city.

419. The **Church** is the burning center of Christ's Kingdom, a witness to its presence and power, and a harbinger of its final coming.

420. Because the **World** is sinful the Church condemns the world and calls members out of it. Because the World proceeds from the hands of a benevolent Creator and was reaffirmed by Him in redemptive grace, the Church affirms the world and settles its members in it.

421. In human virtue, in the forms of human goodness, the nature of God is disclosed.

422. Christians are required, among other things, to go out into the public arena in order with disciplined vision and balanced judgment to work upon socio-political structures and institutions. The Kingdom will not be established that way, but signs and tokens of its presence will thereby be set up.

423. The Christian is a transplanted being.

424. The good man is not to be defined in terms of the particular providences to which he is subject, but in terms of the attitude he takes toward them.

425. When one is moved by **Gratitude** duties are no longer onerous.

Version #8
thru #425
10 Aug 94

426. **Friendship** needs reciprocation; it dies when unrequited.

427. **Nature** is the Arena in which Sin and Grace collide.

428. **Scepticism** is dubitable.

429. We wouldn't know we were moving if nothing stood still.

430. **Misfortune** breeds resolve as well as resentment.

431. The Elect should remember that it was Cain's sons who established cities, fashioned musical instruments, and forged industrial tools.

432. That teacher succeeds whose students surpass him.

433. **Principles** should be so fitted to experience so as to transform it.

434. **Eros** is acquisitive; **Agape** is a spend-thrift.

435. **Self-love** affords no gateway to that self-denying service into which Jesus bids us enter.

436. One's basic **Right** is the right to do one's duty.

437. Better than the double-minded and the simple-minded are the single-minded.

438. Although **Love** requires that we act justly, **Justice** does not require that we act lovingly.

439. **Truth** is not disclosed to those who sit in ivory towers, but to those who are set in life's arena, and who there grasp truth in relation to the existential situation.

440. In **Repentance** and **Belief** one turns from the slavery of Sin to the bondage of Christ.

441. **Creation**: moved by **Agape**, the essential divine will to impart and enrich, God said: "Let there be **Man**, male and female, made in my image, and fit for my fellowship; and to house him, let there be a **World**, rich, variegated, adapted, and adaptable to the Kingdom of Love that I envision."

442. **The Fall**: The bad news is that, through pride-induced disobedience, Man fell into the bondage of Sin, from the guilt and pollution of which he can by no effort of his own find release.

443. **Redemption**: The good news is that God pities his perverse and recalcitrant creatures, takes no delight in their death, has made provision for their entrance into life and happiness, and invites all to join his blessed fellowship.

444. One enters **Purgatory** when one is thrust out of one's home and placed in a nursing facility.

445. Divine Love operates within the order of Justice. It finds no passage to a broken world except though a cross.

446. The commands of the **Decalogue**, particularly those of the second table, are to be regarded as Principles of behavior, not as practical Rules or straightforward Prescriptions amenable to direct and immediate application.

447. It is arrogant to declare that **Calvinism**, and it alone, gives full expression to the Gospel.

448. The new wine of Love tends to break the old skins of a literally construed Law.

449. Our love of neighbor requires more than charity; it requires that, through the institutions and structures of society, his human rights are met and his legitimate claims are satisfied.

450. Just legislation and the just administration of the law tends to reduce not only public discrimination, but also private prejudice.

451. The right to express one's opinions does not entitle one to hold them.

452. There is enough food for dinner guests only when there is more than enough.

453. God punishes to save.

454. Since a tight prescription cannot be saddled upon a vital process, life cannot be lived by Rules alone.

Version #10
thru #455
09 May 96

455. Principle should guide Practice and Practice should refine Principle.

This is the end of the Henry Stob **THOUGHTS** – in this life.

Our dear friend went to be with his Lord on 27 May 1996.

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The following Postscript must be included with every copy — **in particular, to honor Dr Henry J. Stob's stated purpose for these THOUGHTS.**

Postscript

How these **THOUGHTS** came to be

Several years ago a few of us from Woodlawn CRC, including Dr Henry Stob, began meeting for breakfast every Wednesday morning. We conversed light-heartedly on current events, but occasionally an idea of considerable mystery would surface. Once we happened on the subject of space and time – and how inscrutable any understanding of the nature of these seemingly familiar terms actually are. I offered: perhaps God exists and has His being in some n-dimensional space where, of course, n would very likely be infinite. In this God-space our 4-dimensional space is a miniscule or infinitesimal subset. Admittedly, interesting ideas can often be addressed in this context, but — to think that one can somehow plumb the depths and dimensions of what is *ultimately real — to God* — requires the most absurd speculation and ridiculous presumptuousness.

After breakfast that day I drove Henry back to his residence in Raybrook. He asked whether I would come to his room. There, he hauled out a yellow legal note pad – dog-eared, quite obviously from his reading and rereading. On the top of the first sheet was pencilled the title, *Thoughts*, and then followed successively enumerated pencilled "thought" statements – each often only one or two lines. After a brief search he selected certain items in the tablet and said, "Jack, read to me #8, #13, #100, and in particular #182." This I did. These selected thoughts had significant bearing on what we had discussed earlier that morning. In fact, the spatial notions which I had expressed earlier, although in some sense intellectually teasing, are foolishness – God is not in (bound by) space and/or time. Can you think of something (an object or being) outside of space and time? And our tendency to anthropomophize God (which we often do) is more foolishness. No, from outside of space and time God created space and time. And so again we are left with the age-old dilemma often voiced by the Psalmists,

O God, Who and where are You;
who and where are we?

Thought #451 offers wise caution regarding our speculations, but little comfort. Comfort must come, at least for now – maybe always, from the faith of our fathers. As we talked about this further, I began paging carefully through the tablet. At that point in time, he had enumerated 195 thoughts in this dog-eared tablet.

"Henry," I said, "you must let me put this in a more permanent and reproduceable form; this tablet and its pages are quite fragile. I would very much like to do this for you. These are *your* Thoughts. So it would require no creative input and very little effort from me. And I admit a selfish interest – I would learn much." He finally consented. I assured him of the tablet's safe-keeping and of its prompt return. I began what resulted in Version #1. The ensuing short years brought us to this final Version #10.

For one who spent his life so deeply immersed in his discipline and in the concerns of the church, there was little else Dr Stob cared to do now in these days of moderate solitude (Tht #444). He spent his days thinking – thinking *Thoughts*. It is our good fortune that he chose to write them. He had shared several of these thoughts with others, mostly with those whose intellectual bent is, like his, one of constant searching, affirming and reaffirming. He was cautious that he not offend; he especially did not want to incite controversy – not in our church nor in any Christian community. And before he died he insisted that certain of these thoughts be eliminated. They were. He also emphasized, "These statements are not presumed to be expressions of ultimate truth; they are merely intended to provoke thinking and, hopefully, friendly discussion." They may be quoted or cited only with that understanding.

I am grateful that Henry Stob allowed me to put these, his *Thoughts*, into a permanent and more easily shared and distributable form. And I did learn much.

J.Kuipers – Oct 96

PS: I learned recently that the picture on the cover of the copies which were distributed was taken several years ago by David Hoekema, the current Academic Dean at Calvin College, when he was a student at Calvin and on the Chimes Staff.

PPS: The limited distribution was due in part to time and resource constraints. There probably are many who wanted and should have gotten a copy. The Alumni Association in conjunction with the Henry Stob Lecture Commitee and/or Foundation is now making an effort to publish these *Thoughts*. Please, help **stifle** those who would edit.

The final version of
THOUGHTS by Henry Stob
Version #10 dated 09 May 1996
Compiled by Jack Kuipers using LaTeX
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