

October 22, 1974

Dr. Gordon H. Clark
Covenant College
Lookout Mountain, Tennessee 37350

Dear Dr. Clark:

Paul Gilchrist wrote you concerning your appointment to the Study Committee on Amsterdam Philosophy and of my having been asked to "chair" the Committee. This work flows from the Synod's action in response to Overture E submitted by the Pittsburgh Presbytery. (A copy of the Overture, Response, and Action are inclosed).

There are two directly related "links" to our assignment with some specific areas of potential concern under each part, to which we must address ourselves. Our work should minimally cover:

- (A) The Amsterdam Philosophy as it touches upon:
 - (1) The Word of God;
 - (2) The Church's task relating to the missionary and cultural mandates of scripture.
- (B) The way part (A) above finds expression in the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada.

The first thing I would ask you to do would be to evaluate the above paragraph and send me any suggestions you have on the advisability of our including other considerations under (A) above -- only if they are needed for clarification or interpretation -- or new specific concerns that would be important in understanding the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto as they might relate to our reformed Christian position.

The second thing I request is that you tell me just as soon as possible the part or parts of (A) and (B) above on which you would personally like to work. I want to make individual assignments within our group as soon as possible so that we may individually prepare ourselves for a meeting of the Committee. Our get-to-gether should be a working session and one gathering of the body could well do if we each properly prepare before attending. Hopefully we can achieve the rest of our work through the mail.

October 22, 1974

The third thing I request is that you set aside on your calendar Saturday, January 18, 1975 for a full Committee meeting to be held at Covenant College. The meeting will begin at 9:00 A. M. and I ask you to plan on staying through the entire day.

Just as soon as I hear from all of the Committee members, I will write you with a specific assignment to be prepared for our committee meeting in January.

I look forward to working with you. I hope to hear from you soon with any suggestions you may have concerning other areas the study should cover to make it understandable in a proper context and to learn of your particular area of interest in the work.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Chewning
7 Ridge Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229

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OVERTURE E—Study on Synod's Stance Relative to Amsterdam Philosophy

The Pittsburgh Presbytery received the following Overture from the Christ Presbyterian Church, South Beaver Township, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, at the Spring Stated Meeting of Presbytery. The Bills and Overtures Committee of Presbytery upon reviewing the Overture moved that it be forwarded to Synod. This motion was seconded and carried.

Whereas the congregation of Christ Presbyterian Church, Beaver Falls, Pa., has had tension within its membership for the past two years relative to the "Reformational" movement as represented in the Institute For Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, and in view of the congregation's desire for clarification the congregation of Christ Church overtures Pittsburgh Presbytery to Overture the 152nd Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod to prepare a study of the Reformational (Amsterdam) Philosophy and bring advice to the churches at the earliest possible time consistent with proper study.

RESPONSE:

We recommend that Synod establish a study committee to report on the views of the Amsterdam philosophy as it finds expression in the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario.

The committee should give special attention to such sensitive aspects of this philosophy as touch upon the Word of God, and the church's task relating to the missionary and cultural mandates, and should report to the 153rd General Synod in 1975.

We also recommend that Synod warn against an allegiance to any movement that would tend to disrupt the relationship of members with their local church (FOG Chp. II, section 2) or of ministers with their presbyteries (FOG Chp. III, questions 3 and 4).

ACTION:

The committee recommendations were adopted. It was then moved and carried that the study committee be composed of not less than five members.

November 11, 1971

Rev. Richard L. Chewning
7 Ridge Road
Richmond, Va. 23220

Dear Mr. Chewning,

Your letter of Oct. 22, which I received this week, for I had been lecturing in Geneva College for a month, seems to outline very well the work of the Synod's committee on the Amsterdam philosophy.

The Synod's motion does not really instruct us to write a critique of Dooyeweerd -- which would take more than the length of his four gigantic volumes. Rather it says to consider that philosophy as it expresses itself in the Toronto group.

I would be happy to write something on their view of the Bible, particular on their reaction of the Ten Commandments as applicable to us today.

Even without a critique of Dooyeweerd, this committee might be tracked in a very long study. I suggest, for your consideration, that we construct a bibliography and refer our assertions and conclusions to these documents. For example, we could refer to Harry L. Downs, when speaking on the three fold form of the Word of God. And so on.

Otherwise the committee might be tempted to sue in full my speech before the ETS: but when they see how long it is, I anticipate that they will resist the temptation.

The date and place for our committee to meet are of course very suitable to me.

I am glad to see that you have initiate the work after the delay of changing the chairman.

Cordially yours,

Gordon H. Clark

November 21, 1974

To: Study Committee on Amsterdam Philosophy
Dr. Gordon H. Clark Rev. C. Howard Oakley
Dr. James B. Hurley Dr. John W. Sanderson
Dr. Synesio Lyra, Jr.

Gentlemen:

This is an open letter to the Committee with personal sections. I felt this would be the best way of keeping us all informed on what each person was being asked to do. It is also a means of highlighting the necessity for each one of us to do our respective part if our task is to be done fairly and thoroughly.

Saturday, January 18, 1975 is our date for a Full Committee meeting to be held at Covenant College.

Several of you have counseled wisely that "we keep in mind that this is a pastoral problem, not a problem in theoretics"; that we are "not really instructed. . . . to write a critique of Dooyeweerd"; and "that brevity for the sake of easier acceptance by the whole Synod" is a sound goal to strive toward.

Personal Instructions

(Will each of you please read all of the instructions given to every member of the Committee).

Dr. Clark: I would first ask you to please serve as the Vice Chairman of this Committee with three specific assignments in view: (A) Serve in a coordinating capacity at Covenant College to minimize the potential duplication of effort that could occur between yourself and Drs. Hurley and Sanderson; (B) Assume the responsibility for relaying Dr. John Sanderson's thoughts and work to our Committee in January as he will be in St. Louis on that date; and (C) Be willing to assist me this coming May when our Committee reports on the floor of Synod.

Next, I would ask you to work on "The Amsterdam Philosophy as it touches upon the Word of God and the way this finds expression in the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto." [Letter of October 22, paragraph (B) as it refers back to paragraph (A) Sub. (1).]

Your suggestion "that we construct a bibliography, and refer our assertions and conclusions to these documents" seems to me to be a very wise one. (Will all members of the Committee please keep this in mind and retain your bibliography as you proceed.)

Dr. Hurley: Would you please undertake an examination of "The Amsterdam Philosophy as it touches upon the church's task relating to the missionary and cultural mandates of scripture as it finds expression in the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto." [Letter of October 22, paragraph (B) as it refers back to paragraph (A) Sub. (2).]

Would you please involve Dr. John M. L. Young and Dr. Henry Krabbendam in your particular study and/or the overall study as "resource persons". If either or both of them feel they could make a contribution to our meeting on January 18, please feel free to invite them.

Dr. Lyra: Your round trip transportation expenses for the January 18 meeting will be paid by Synod.

Would you please work on "The Amsterdam Philosophy as it touches upon the Church's task relating to the missionary and cultural mandates of scripture." [Letter of October 22, paragraph (A) Sub. (2).] If you "spill-over" into (B), that is permissible.

Please involve George Knight as a "resource person" and bring any pertinent input from him to our Committee in January.

Rev. Oakley: Would you please assume primary responsibility for making certain that our Committee addresses itself to the interrelationship between the "Technical" aspects of the study and the third paragraph of the Bills and Overtures Response to Overture E which reads:

"We also recommend that Synod warn against an allegiance to any movement that would tend to disrupt the relationship of members with their local church (FOG Chp. II, Section 2) of ministers with their presbyteries (FOG Chp. III, questions 3 and 4)."

Feel free to pursue other areas of special interest you may have in this matter.

Dr. Sanderson: I rejoice with the people at Covenant Seminary and lament for our Committee that you will not be able to be with us on January 18. I have asked Dr. Gordon Clark to assume the responsibility of bringing your work and views to our Committee on January 18.

Would you please work on "The Amsterdam Philosophy as it touches upon the Word of God. [Letter of October 22, paragraph (A) Sub. (1).] Please try and communicate your ideas and intensity of feelings on this entire matter to Dr. Clark so that we can reflect as accurately as possible your contributions in the first draft of our report. I will see that a first draft is circulated soon after our meeting and you will then have a good opportunity for reacting to the work of the body.

Dr. Chewning: I have arranged to take my family to Canada for the Christmas holidays and have an appointment to meet with the majority of the staff (faculty) at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. I need each one of you to send me a list of specific questions (5 to 10) you feel it would be beneficial for me to ask them. Our conclusions and recommendations may well affect the lives of a number of people and for this reason I do not want to limit my perspective to a scholastic study. Please let me have your questions as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Chewning
7 Ridge Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229

RCC:mb



April 21, 1975

To: Study Committee on Amsterdam Philosophy
Dr. Gordon H. Clark Rev. C. Howard Oakley
Dr. James B. Hurley Dr. John W. Sanderson
Dr. Synesio Lyra, Jr.

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is the final draft of our report on the Amsterdam Philosophy that will be presented to the General Synod this June. I mailed this to Paul Gilchrist on Friday, April 11.

The work contributed by each of you is deeply appreciated. The entire process which we have gone through leads me to a much deeper appreciation of the wisdom contained in Scripture concerning the seeking of council.

I hope that each of you will feel free to comment on the report to Synod as you feel it appropriate to do so. As individuals each of us might say something a little differently than the report contained but on balance I am very pleased with the intent and spirit of the report.

Thank you very much for your patient and spirited cooperation.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Rich'.

Richard C. Chewning
7 Ridge Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229

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Enclosure