

December
fifteen
1948

The Rev. Professor Kenneth S. Kantzer
Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois

Dear Professor Kantzer

With reference to your inquiry about the meeting ~~last~~ Saturday with Professor Van Til, whereas I wrote Professor Tratebas that we could not very well arrange for any transcription, after the meeting had started a student from the Reformed Episcopal Seminary appeared with a wire recorder. He got, I think, about half of the discussion. I did not get his name, but if you write to the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, doubtless the office secretary will know who he is.

Just to put the case very briefly, I think the following points were constructively covered. (1) Professor Van Til conceded that the "traditional view" which he has frequently said gives up the Christian viewpoint in order to talk with the unbeliever, is a view which no one, or scarcely anyone, has ever held. I must add that whereas he said this quite distinctly, yet on the contrary he stated that that view is set forth in Butler's Analogy. When I asked him for a reference, he said, "On every page." Of course one can search throughout Butler's Analogy in vain to find any page, or word, or phrase in which Butler gives up the Christian point of view in order to talk with the unbeliever.

(2) Professor Van Til further conceded that his denial of common ground in epistemology between believer and unbeliever only applies to the unsaved "new man" who is wholly committed to the cause of the devil. Therefore the denial of common ground does not apply to all unsaved people in general. At the same time Professor Van Til insisted repeatedly, as he so often does, that all unsaved people without exception are committed to the denial of God and the setting up of chance in the place of God.

(3) Professor Van Til further conceded that the unsaved under conviction do go through stages in which probability arguments are of some value to them. This he said, however, after denying that the Bible contains or leaves any room for a probability argument.

(4) Professor Van Til indicated that he does not take pleasure in paradoxes (this was a clear contradiction of what he said in his Common Grace) but that he seeks to eliminate them.

I must make it very plain that the above summary is only my own personal

impression.

Scarcely anything was said about my review of Common Grace, and it seemed to me that no attempt was made to ~~answer~~ what I said about Hegelianism, limiting concepts, etc. The discussion lasted from 2:00 p.m. until after 5:00 p.m. Much more was said, of course, which does not occur to me at the moment. I have doubtless left out many things which seem important to others.

Among other things Professor Van Til did say that he thought I had taken his words out of their context and misrepresented them. I had already stated, in reply to an inquiry, that we shall be glad to give him space in "The Bible Today". I urged him to *specify* any misrepresentations. He said that he knew I had not intentionally misrepresented and I gained the impression that he is reluctant to pursue the matter of misrepresentation or quotation out of context. I cannot see that I did in any way unfairly represent what is taught in his book, but if I have done so, I shall of course be glad to print an appropriate correction.

Of course you know that my deep concern over this whole matter is ^{that} some of the young men of genuine promise in Christian apologetics are led by this philosophy into a position where they are paralyzed in their effectiveness in using the great arguments which have been so used by the Holy Spirit throughout the course of Church History. If our young ministers cease to use the cosmological and teleological arguments in the plain sense of the first chapter of Romans, the church will be greatly impoverished.

May the Lord's abundant blessing be with you.

Yours in Christian fellowship

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.
President

job/h
Copy to
Professor Van Til