

MODELS OF SCHOLARSHIP IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

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SAMEVATTING

Hierdie studie is 'n vergelyking en evaluering van sekere “modelle” vir Christelike wetenskap wat voorgestel en ontwikkel is deur Reformatoriese denkers (in sommige gevalle vanaf die 1930s). Hierdie modelle het die veronderstelling in gemeen dat 'n bybels-sensitiewe wetenskap moontlik en noodsaaklik is. Maar die voorstelle om so 'n wetenskap te implementeer en te bevorder bevat groot verskille in klem en strategie. Afgesien van periodieke verwysings na Kuyper se sienings, is veral die modelle van die (1) Dooyeweerdiaanse en (2) Reformatoriese skole, die (3) Van Til-beweging, (4) Jakob Klapwijk en (5) Nicholas Wolterstorff geanaliseer.

Die evaluering van elke model fokus op vier hoof areas:

- 1) Die verband tussen Skriftuur en wetenskap met spesifieke aandag aan die oorbruggingsmeganismes wat nodig geag word, of meer geskik geag word as andere, om 'n band tussen die twee te bevestig.
- 2) Die verwantskap tussen wetenskappe (ensiklopedie van die wetenskap). Die gevolglike hiërargie tussen wetenskappe en die superioriteit van sommige van hulle met betrekking tot ander.
- 3) Die verstaan van religieuse antitesis en die gevolg vir konkrete wetenskapsbeoefening.
- 4) Die siening van wetenskap wat in elke model na vore tree.

Met hierdie analise word gepoog om die sterk en swak punte van elke model uit te wys en om te fokus op elke probleemareas in 'n poging om 'n bydrae te maak vanuit 'n bybelse oogpunt. Die vergelyking toon aan dat die mees onlangse modelle nie altyd 'n verbetering op vorige standpunte is nie.

Hoewel evaluering en opmerkings deurgaans in die studie gedoen is, formuleer ek in die laaste hoofstuk my eie siening duideliker. In sommige areas stem ek min of meer saam met die standpunte van 'n spesifieke model. In ander opsigte voel ek dat 'n nuwe benadering nodig is en probeer ek dus voorstelle ter vernuwing aan die hand te doen.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the nature and possibility of a Christian Scholarship continues to haunt Reformational philosophy! One can think, for example, of the International Symposium held (in 1986) by the Association for Calvinist Philosophy, in celebration of its 50 years of theoretical labors. It was on this occasion that Jacob Klapwijk directed the attention of the participants to seven issues that, in his opinion, needed careful consideration. And the first two themes that he discussed were the old issues of the relationship of the Bible to scientific thought and the role of religious antithesis in scholarship (Klapwijk 1987, 103- 110). In this study I will explore the same issues (and some others that are related) in the conviction that they are still relevant today, for Christian scholars and scholarly Institutions of the Third Millennium.

Reformational Philosophy proposed from the beginning a reformation in the field of science. The new approach, unlike the others, would have taken into account (in addition to creational revelation) also the biblical revelation. The antithesis in the Christian scientific reflection, which was (in the past) supposed to separate a “sacred theology” from the secular sciences, was now imagined to cross equally all sciences, giving rise to a Christian science as an alternative to a non-Christian one.

This new project resulted in the elaboration of a Christian philosophy under the direction of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, and much progress has been achieved in special philosophy as well, sometimes influencing even the special sciences. One can remember, in this regard, the work of Verburg and Bakker (linguistics), Troost (ethics and anthropology), Rookmaker and Seerveld (aesthetics), Skillen and Marshall (politics), Goudzwaard (economics), Glas and Olthuis (psychology), Stafleu (natural sciences) and so on (Dengerink 1988, 29- 30).

However, more recently this reformational enterprise seems to lose its confidence. Some point to the fact that in some sciences (especially the natural sciences) the progress has been limited to an exploration of the philosophy related to such sciences, and little has changed in the special sciences themselves. The idea of antithesis is also coming under scrutiny. Its oppositional nature seems to obtain little sympathy within a late (or post) modern atmosphere that seems to promote the systematic blurring of all differences.

But it might also be that our difficulties in continuing the reformation of science are due to a lack of clarity concerning the practical methods and roads to be followed. For example Klapwijk (1987, 107) points out that the relationship between Scripture and philosophy still continues to produce “some headaches within the Association” [for Christian Philosophy]. Klapwijk himself asks: if philosophy borrows from the Bible its guidelines, is it not transformed into a theology in disguise? Or at least, are not theology and philosophy mixed together in this case? (106). I am certain that questions like these continue to trouble not only Christian philosophers but also scholars, lecturers, scientists and many among those who are in some way involved in the practice of scholarship.

As Klapwijk pointed out, several models have been created, within Reformed circles, to clarify how the biblical yeast could (and should) penetrate the dough of scholarship. In other words, how a Christian scholarship is possible and why it is necessary. Klapwijk only mentioned the models of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, then he proposed his own model, as an alternative. These are the models that are nearer to the kuyperian tradition. However, in this study we will also take into consideration other models that have been proposed more recently by Reformed authors like Frame and Wolterstorff. I will try to individuate the weak and strong sides of each model and to find, if possible, new orientation. Concerning my own perspective, I would simply say that it remains also inscribed within the neo-Calvinist tradition.

THE LINE OF DOOYEWEERD. It does not include only the Dutch philosopher, but all those who follow a similar approach (e.g. van Eikema Hommes). This model tries to avoid the need for an exegesis of the Bible, in the elaboration of a Christian philosophy. Probably this option was in part suggested by concrete problems which Dooyeweerd had to face at the time (the heavy theologico-exegetical criticism).

Dooyeweerd found his main scriptural reference point in the so-called religious ground motive, a central and spiritual *dunamis* that is grasped by the heart rather than by scientific thought. It had the advantage of shaping theoretical thought and to guide it in a certain direction.

Dooyeweerd could maintain, in this way, the idea of a religious antithesis, expressing itself within science. And he avoided a biblicistic view that sees the Bible as a collection of proof-texts for all possible scientific arguments.

On the other hand philosophy seems to become, in this model, a necessary bridge between religion and the special sciences. The special sciences seem to be dependent on the mediation of philosophy for their own reformation (the way some authors establish the mediation of one science for the others is, in my opinion, a most fascinating sub-topic within this area of study).

THE “REFORMATIONAL” MOVEMENT.¹ This is the line of scholars like H. Van Riessen, H.E. Runner, J.A.L. Taljaard and so on. In this approach, according to Klapwijk (1987, 107- 8) philosophy (and presumably the sciences in general?) experience more freedom in their access to the biblical text. Here, the Bible can be quoted in a scientific context with much more “candor” (Klapwijk’s term). Forgetting about the religious ground motive, philosophy is based on Revelation: on the written revelation, but also on the creational revelation.

¹ I follow Wolterstorff’s use of *reformational* to indicate the neo-Calvinist branch that is more influenced by Vollenhoven. I am aware that this use of the adjective can be disputed: many scholars outside this movement see themselves as reformational thinkers as well. But I have not yet found a better appellation for this school of thought.

Because the non-believer takes into account only the creational revelation, the results of non-Christian science will most probably differ from those of a Word-bound Scholarship. In non-Christian scholarship, the Bible is usually substituted by some set of religious presuppositions, very often not openly declared by the scientist himself. In this model, the idea of antithesis is therefore maintained.

But how is it possible to maintain that science has access to the Bible and at the same time is not transformed into theological reflection?

THE VANTILIAN LINE (C. Van Til, J.M. Frame, V.S. Poythress and others). Here we have a more “traditional” trend, in which theology is much more relevant. The Bible is understood by exegesis, therefore theology is in a position of mediator for the other sciences. Theology is also “superior” (to a certain extent) to the other sciences, because it is the science of the special revelation.

The medieval ideas of *regina scientiarum* and *ancillae theologiae* are therefore re-proposed to the Reformed reflection. Theology has a supra-scientific character as well and, in the end, it tends to include in itself all sciences (and activities) that follow a Christian direction.

The idea of antithesis is not denied in this model but it seems to create a distinction mainly between (inherently) Christian theology and (inherently) secular sciences. No real need for the *internal* reformation of the sciences seems to emerge, but rather the need for a submission to the science of the Bible (theology), the only one that can “sanctify” the otherwise secular character of the other sciences.

One question that should be asked, in this case, is whether this model represents a distinctive alternative, or tends rather to prolong the Catholic tradition in this field.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PHILOSOPHY (J. Klapwijk, R. van Woudenberg, etc.). Klapwijk tries to promote Christian scholarship by emphasizing the role of worldviews. In his opinion, the “missing link” in this discussion, has been the mediating role played by worldviews. Klapwijk maintains that the Calvinistic worldview has always been operative, in the Reformed scientific tradition. But it has not been recognized as a central element.

In Dooyeweerd it has been hidden behind so-called religious ground motives (which were in reality worldviews) and in Vollenhoven it was again there to interpret the Bible according to the specific sensitivity of the *Gereformeerde* community of the time. Although every worldview, according to Dooyeweerd, historicizes and in a sense relativizes science, this must be considered, according to Klapwijk, a strong point: “philosophy on the spot”.

The idea of antithesis is also reshuffled by Klapwijk and a new approach is proposed. Christian philosophy should be transformational: it should incorporate in itself themes and elements deriving

from non-Christian environments, after providing a sort of “purification”. Interestingly, Klapwijk quotes many biblical texts to support this idea: for example the theme of the *Spoliatio Aegyptiorum* from the book of Exodus.

Yet it would be possible to ask, with Groenewoud, whether Klapwijk is providing a real solution or just shifting “the discussion to the question how a worldview may enter into philosophical discourse” (Groenewoud 1987, 167).

THE LINE OF WOLTERSTORFF. Wolterstorff is not sure whether the connection between religion and scholarship has been explained in a satisfactory way by the neo-Calvinist “fathers”. In this regard he regrets their excessive use of metaphors and proposes a re-analysis of the issue. The idea that religion simply determines our theories is simplistic. We should distinguish between different kinds of beliefs, of commitments and of theories. Religion is not all.

The antithesis between Christian and non-Christian scholarship has been posed, according to Wolterstorff, in simplistic terms as well. If religion is not the only source of theories and science, then things are more complicated than neo-Calvinists would admit. In fact, sometimes Christians agree with non-Christians, disagree with fellow-Christians, and so on! The kuyperian equation “two kinds of people - two kinds of science” should be rejected. The role of religion in scholarship should be reshuffled. The view that religion shapes our theories in a one-way direction should be replaced by an “interactive” view of science. It is true that religion is among the factors shaping our science. But it is also true that our science sometimes modifies our religious beliefs! How many Christians today still hold the view that the sun moves around the earth?

These are the models that will be described. I will try to examine their views, and the pre-suppositions behind their logic. I will also provide evaluations and comparisons of the different models.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM. Such analysis and comparison will focus in particular on the following questions.

- 1) Is the relationship between Scripture and science portrayed in a way that a substantial (but plausible) influence of the biblical text is envisaged? Is it possible for the different sciences to find their own access to the biblical revelation?
- 2) Which idea of the encyclopaedia of the sciences does the specific model suggest? To what extent is it compatible with a biblical view? What is the role of eventual “mediators” (a worldview, a particular science etc.)? Do they promote or hinder the relationship between Bible and science(s)?
- 3) Is the idea of a religious antithesis in science proposed in (biblically) plausible terms? Is this antithesis, for example, supposed to create a “conflict” between different scientific disciplines, or

between different “schools” or approaches in all the disciplines? Is it rather considered uninfluential at all?

4) Is a different idea of science (in the broad sense of scholarship) implied by each model? Is it perhaps responsible (at least in part) for the existence of these alternative views?

5) Is it possible to find a new orientation in the discussion? Which model should be commended? Which modifications suggested?

HYPOTHESES. I will indicate just a few guidelines, following the 5 points as elaborated above. Starting from the relationship between Bible and science:

1) The dooyeweerdian and reformational models should not be considered alternative but complementary. It is possible to use different strategies to maintain philosophy and science “in line” with Scripture. The religious ground motive has shown to be an essential source for Christian reflection. But it is also possible to quote Bible texts with more “candor”: not as proof texts but in order to show that a certain biblical perspective is taken into account in one’s philosophical (or special scientific) investigation. However, the possibility that in the dooyeweerdian approach the mediation of philosophy might be a structural necessity and not just an option is examined in the first chapter (see 1.10).

The problem of theological expertise in the access to the Bible, should be seen in a new light. Exegesis is not always a theological matter, just like hermeneutics is not necessarily theological. Theology performs its own exegesis, from a certain focus (that is pistical). But other focuses and perspectives can be used to channel other types of exegesis, for other sciences. Scripture is not only a book for theologians, and this is an important ingredient of the faith of the Reformation. It is therefore open to the questions of all sciences and all scientists. In addition, not only exegesis (on a scientific level) allows us to come into contact with the biblical text. There is also a pre-scientific approach that, as such, is not dependent on theology or any other science in particular.

2) Concerning the theme of the encyclopaedia of sciences, it is important not to resort to relativism. It is rather evident that the model proposed by the Catholic tradition is the same that shaped a Catholic view of the church, of human nature and of society. It cannot therefore be imported without problems into the Reformed reflection. On the other hand the recommended model for Christian scholarship should be sensitive to issues like mediation, sphere sovereignty and to a biblical worldview in general.

The inclusion of a worldview as a pre-scientific “bridge” between religion and theoretical thought is not, in my opinion, a terrible threat to Christian Scholarship, as many seem to believe. On the contrary, it can be helpful, especially when it is not regarded as the only bridge between Scripture

and sciences. Nevertheless, I don't believe it to be the universal *panacea* that Klapwijk seems to have in mind. In other cases, the (scientific) mediation of theology or philosophy between Scripture and (special) sciences is in my opinion more problematic.

3) Concerning the idea of antithesis, Christian scholarship will have to find a plausible position between a rigidly oppositional idea of antithesis and extreme relativism. On the one hand it should be admitted that the antithesis is primarily religious and that its manifestations within science are not always regular. The "difference" may appear on the level of the presuppositions in some cases, and on the level of the results in others.

On the other hand, one should avoid the conclusion that antithesis is (or should be) irrelevant or that it cannot "emerge" more clearly in future in new areas or at certain levels. The relativism of the present day cultural climate should not be allowed to dictate our views on the matter.

4) Dooyeweerd sees science as structurally linked to religious presuppositions. In Frame, science tends to be reduced to theology (or theology tends to include all sciences). Wolterstorff re-evaluates the impact of science on our Christian commitment. It is possible that these fundamental ideas do play a role in a different understanding of Christian science.

5) As an example of "new direction", the sketch proposed by B. Duvenage (1985) seems to offer valid suggestions concerning the relationship Bible-science. It distinguishes a plurality of levels within scientific research, but (most important) a plurality of channels through which the Bible can enlighten scientific reflection. This sketch is compatible, to a certain extent, with my own idea of a "plurality of reference points" that are available to the Christian scholar looking for direction in his field of study.

METHOD. Basically the method will consist in transcendental criticism. The latter will be applied to the models that are studied, together with consequential criticism.

Transcendental criticism tries to individuate the deeper foundations of a system of thought. It tries, in other words, to evaluate the pre-suppositions, rather than to remain at the level of the arguments, ideas or suggestions of a certain author. The theoretical level, however, cannot be ignored. This is why consequential criticism will be used as well. The latter tries to evaluate whether there is coherence between the basic pre-suppositions and the concrete ideas proposed by each model of thought.

Both methods are appropriate and even necessary in the present study. Although all the authors place themselves within the Reformed tradition, it cannot simply be assumed in advance that the "religious ground motive" (as Dooyeweerd would say) directing the elaboration of their models, is

the biblical fundamental motive. A critique of the pre-suppositions remains appropriate. But it is also necessary to explore the coherence between the concrete suggestions of a model and the presuppositions that each author is supposed to hold.

The study follows a chronological criterion in the presentation of the five models: from the oldest to the more recent ones. This is necessary (or at least comfortable) because the new ones react to (and build on) previous ideas and approaches. I will therefore start with the dooyeweerdian and the reformational models. One of the most “classical” responses to the “Amsterdam philosophy” is constituted by the vantilian approach. Therefore a chapter on this school will follow. The last two chapters present the respective suggestions of Klapwijk and Wolterstorff. They do not interact very much with the vantilian movement, but mostly with the line of Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and their “heirs”, without avoiding, here and there, important re-discussions of Abraham Kuyper’s views.

CHAPTER 1. THE DOOYEWEERDIAN MODEL

1.1 Christianity and scholarship: a brief historical overview

Dooyeweerd's achievements are recognized by friends and foes alike. Although many propose modifications and sometimes alterations to his ideas, all usually recognize in the Dutch philosopher one of the greatest promoters of Christian Scholarship in the 20th century. Although many Christians have been scholars and philosophers during the 20 centuries of existence of the Church, probably the link between philosophy and Scripture has never been as firmly established as in the neo-Calvinist line of thought. And within this movement, Dooyeweerd is a major figure.

Part of the merit must be attributed, of course, to the predecessors, Abraham Kuyper first of all. With Kuyper, the idea of the influence of religion on all aspects of life had a new and vigorous impact. This meant, concerning science, that it is possible to conduct science in a Christian perspective, and that such a perspective can be distinguished from the others. Christians know, perhaps even from the 3rd century,² that it is possible to produce a Christian reflection on life, a *theology* (or *philosophy* as Clement or Augustine would say). Such distinctive reflection was considered possible because of the distinctive character of the Christian religion. There were even initial discussions³ concerning the possible impact of the religious antithesis in other academic disciplines. But certainly there was not yet a project of creating seven "different" (i.e. Christian) liberal arts...

During the Middle Ages the nature-grace pattern of thought gradually gained control of the intellectual community. As a consequence, human beings were considered to be "equal" on the natural level. To be sure, Christians were supposed to add on top of it a supernatural kind of knowledge, which is a gift from God. But, as Aquinas used to say: *gratia naturam non tollit sed perficit*.⁴ Faith and theology were supposed to direct and keep under control the lower sphere of natural reason and science. But the content of science itself was not supposed to differ. The light of natural reason (even after Adam's transgression) was good enough: even to direct the natural man to recognize the truth of Christianity.

² According to Evans (1980) theology as a *discipline* was not available before the 12th century. However, for Cairns, the treatise *De Principiis* (3rd century) can be considered the first example of "systematic theology" (Cairns 1970, 42).

³ See Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*.

⁴ Grace does not cancel nature but rather perfects it.

However, with the modern era we have an increasing differentiation of perspectives. It started with the philosophers, somewhere in the 17th or 18th century and the difference seemed to follow religious lines. It was what Vollenhoven called the anti-synthetic period of Humanistic thought: the “compromise” with Christianity was increasingly rejected, and a clear antithetical line began to develop.

From philosophy, in the 19th century the antithesis spread into the new sciences. Christians felt that the theories of Darwin contained something threatening for their faith. Freud developed theories that were experienced as not less threatening in psychology and psychiatry. In the social and political fields Marx was not the only one to propose analyses and solutions that opposed Christianity and religion in general.

In the 19th century, however, Christianity broadened its antithetical approach as well. The synthesis with Humanistic science and philosophy became increasingly difficult to perform, and many sought an alternative approach. The Encyclical letters of several Popes, in the second half of the 19th century, provided fundamental guidelines for a Catholic social and political thought. In Italy, after a parenthesis in which Catholics voluntarily withdrew from political life, they returned back into the arena with renewed strength (Cairns 1970, 411- 13). In Holland, in the meantime, a Catholic “revival” resulted in the creation of new universities, schools and even a political party. In philosophy, one must remember the efforts of French Catholics like Maritain (1978) and Gilson, who started to speak openly of a *philosophie chretienne*.

Yet a greater impulse to the cause of Christian Scholarship in general must be recognized as a merit of Dutch Calvinism. This short survey, brings us back to the “kuyperian revolution”, that was born out of the 19th century Reveil in the Netherlands. Dooyeweerd is of course one of the heirs of the great kuyperian tradition, which he continued, especially in the field of philosophy. And Christian philosophy, as I have said in the introduction, promoted the development of (Christian) special sciences.

1.2 The relationship between Scripture and science

Dooyeweerd wrote in the first of his *Cinq Conferences* that times had changed. The idea of a religious neutrality of science had demonstrated to be untenable. He urged Christians to recognize the religious background of theoretical thought (Dooyeweerd 1959, 3- 19). Dooyeweerd’s great discovery was the pre-scientific engine of thought, the “religious ground motive”. The fact that religion does influence theology, was known even in the medieval era. But now, as Wolterstorff says:

“one of the most insistent and provocative claims of the neo-Calvinist movement in our century and at the end of the last, is that scholarship as a whole is not religiously neutral. And it was competent scholarship on which they had their eye” (1989, 56).

According to Reformational philosophy it is not only Christian theology that has a religious basis, but scholarship in general, both Christian and non-Christian! This implies, of course, a view of religion that is not exclusively related to cultic or ecclesiastic activities.⁵ Prayers, hymn-singing and public worship are only possible expressions of one's religion. But religion, in addition, encompasses the whole of life. It is not simply a "sector" of life (van der Walt 1994, 171-2). In the neo-Calvinist view, it has rather to do with the totality and each aspect of our existence (Schrotenboer 1978). The essence of life lies in our relationship with God, which encompasses every aspect of human existence. Religion is manifested not only in our faith, but in our love, in our language, in social and economic behavior, in the juridical aspect and so on. In this sense it represents our whole response to God.

Religion is not a monopoly of the members of the classical religions of this world. Even the Agnostic and the Atheist, in the neo-Calvinist view, are religious people. The etymology of the word itself allows this view. The Latin *religio*, points towards the idea of binding together (*re-ligare*). Another possible meaning is "to read again" (*re-legere*). In both cases the emphasis falls on the *interpretation* of the facts of life. Clouser's definition of religious belief is quite appropriate:

"A belief is religious provided that (1) it is a belief in something(s) or other as divine or (2) it is a belief concerning how humans come to stand in proper relation to the divine. (...) "Divine" means having the status of not depending on anything else." (1991, 22- 23).

As a consequence, it is not only the Christian who relies on something "divine". It is a normal and universal attitude, which is necessary for the "spiritual" survival of every human being. The difference is not between those who are religious and those who are not. We all are religious; but we differ in our religions.

This "discovery" helped Christians to reject the idea that they were "prejudiced", not "objective" enough if they tried to introduce into their science and philosophy presuppositions of a non-scientific nature. One could suspect that "non-believers" were in a better position to conduct scientific activities, being more protected against religious or metaphysical considerations. With Dooyeweerd, Christians discovered that there is always an "I" behind theoretical thinking and that

⁵ Roy Clouser observes that in some religions there are no temples, in others no prayers, or no public gatherings, no "holy books" or even no god(s) (in the traditional meaning of the term) to be worshipped. He mentions, as an example, the Pythagoreans and reports the text of an ancient "prayer to number ten" (Clouser 1991, 17).

this “I” has a religious character. A few years later Thomas Kuhn as well agreed, broadly speaking, with Dooyeweerd’s view. He was convinced that there is no science without “paradigm”.⁶

Dooyeweerd went a long way to demonstrate that theoretical thought is usually directed by a religious ground motive. He revisited the whole history of Western philosophy and identified the four main religious motives that dominated the development of theory and culture in the West, from the Greeks to the 1960s (Dooyeweerd 1984, vol. I). He identified the four motives as:

- 1) form- matter (Greek philosophy)
- 2) creation- fall- redemption (the biblical religious motive)
- 3) nature- grace (Scholastic thought)
- 4) nature- freedom (Humanist period)

These religious motives, are not to be imagined only as things of the past. Apart from the Greek motive of matter and form, the other motives are still operative today, although only the Humanistic motive of nature and freedom is the dominant one in modern Western culture.

Dooyeweerd demonstrated that each religious motive constituted the real reference point for the cultural realizations of those who operated under its specific influence. Understanding this fact is essential, according to Dooyeweerd, in order to understand philosophy and culture in general, including of course scholarship.

Christian scholarship, then, is not structurally different from any other kind of scholarship. It is not “supernatural” while the others are “secular”. And it is possible to speak of a Christian scholarship exactly because there is also a Christian religious ground motive. This motive is not a human invention. It is the central motive of the Holy Scripture. It is the only motive which is non-dualist. Its main “elements” are: 1) the Creation of all reality by God, 2) the Fall of humanity into sin, and 3) the Redemption in Christ, in the communion of the Holy Spirit (Dooyeweerd 1979, 18 ff.).

Christian philosophy then, according to Dooyeweerd, finds its basis in the whole Bible, not in specific verses or books. The way philosophy approaches the Bible is not through exegetical analysis. The latter would require a particular exegetical expertise (1980, 148) which philosophy doesn’t have. Such exegetical approach would also make philosophy dependent on theology. No: there is, for philosophy, an “independent” access to the Bible. Or, if we prefer, there is a particular way in which the Bible influences philosophy.

⁶ Paradigms are not related to “religion” in Kuhn, and he differs from Dooyeweerd in other respects as well. Yet both Dooyeweerd and Kuhn “agree” in making scientific knowledge dependent on a pre-scientific “background” which is not adopted on the basis of scientific arguments.

It is via the biblical motive of creation fall and redemption. This is the central motive of the Bible, one could say its “concentration point” (as Dooyeweerd used to call the heart with respect to man). It is, in a sense, the “summary” of the Bible. This is something that philosophy can deal with. It is from this basis that Christian philosophy looks at the whole of creation as its field of study. And of course one must remember that creation itself is a form of Revelation, and it is therefore essential as well, for Christian Scholarship.

We reach here a crucial point of Dooyeweerd’s view. Philosophy is indeed based on the Bible, but not in a naive, simplistic way. It does not try to prove its conclusions in a literalistic or exegetical way. It rather founds itself on a broader perspective, the one “summarizing” in itself the whole biblical revelation. Such a religious ground motive is “independent from every theological exegesis”⁷ (Dooyeweerd 1959, 65). We need to pause for a moment here. The idea might imply, in a sense, a certain dichotomy between the text of the Bible and its religious ground motive, which is supra-theoretical.⁸ After all, the religious ground motive is not identical to the Bible, although it is considered its summary, its heart, its power etc. Also the vantilian school expressed some perplexities in this respect. Perhaps Dooyeweerd’s position can still be defended and considered orthodox. I will discuss the issue in the next section (1.3).

But a most important question would be: is such a solution necessary? Is the religious motive the only independent access to the Bible, for the non-theological sciences? Is it really unthinkable that these sciences may understand the biblical text as well? Many among the reformational scholars are convinced that it is possible, and that the consultation of the biblical text would not transform any science into a “theology”. Why, in fact, should the religious ground motive be accessible to science, but not the biblical text itself? Do we not need some exegesis as well in order to understand the meaning of the biblical motive of Creation, Fall and Redemption? On the other hand: is theological and scientific exegesis the only key to understand the biblical text? I will elaborate more, on this crucial issue, in the next chapter (see 2.2). I believe, in fact, that the reformational school does offer important insights on this point.

One could simply observe, for the moment, that Dooyeweerd shaped his particular solution also to avoid skirmishes on the exegetical ground. Many Dutch theologians of his time, in fact, were often rather suspicious of the new philosophy and usually reluctant to accept with sympathy the new and sophisticated *ancilla*. In Klapwijk’s opinion (1987, 107) in fact, one of the main reasons why Dooyeweerd chose to link philosophy to the religious motive and not to the biblical text itself,

⁷ All direct quotations from now on, from Dooyeweerd 1959 (the *Cinq Conférences*) are my translations of the French text.

⁸ We encounter here the same problem that some authors (e.g., Taljaard 1976) have suspected in Dooyeweerd’s thought, namely a tendency to create a “duality” between temporal and supratemporal, in the context of a monarchian pattern of thought. For a discussion of his supposedly “monarchian” anthropology, for example, see Fernhout (1979).

was that he suffered the extenuating attacks of theologians, who criticized the new philosophy on exegetical grounds.

1.3 Excursus: vantilian objections.

I must briefly mention, at this point, an objection to the idea of religious ground motive that rose in vantilian circles. Authors like Frame and Coppes (1972, 32- 40) asked what exactly this “religious ground motive” was. Dooyeweerd’s idea of a *dunamis* (power) of the Word of God was rather suspect to others (e.g. Sheperd 1969). What kind of “power” did Dooyeweerd have in mind? Was it a power apart from the text, or in the text itself?

The embarrassment of the vantilian school in this regard was caused, at least in part, by its acquaintance with theological problems. Theology studies, so it is usually said, biblical verses, themes, books. It always studies written propositions that are open for everybody to consult. The idea of a “power” hidden “behind” the text necessarily caused some perplexity among these scholars. It is typical of certain spiritualist traditions to create a distance between the Word and the Spirit.

But Dooyeweerd was not a follower of this trend. He did not want to promote any individualism. He considered the communion of the Holy Spirit as a “greater protection against spiritualist individualism than any ecclesiastical authority” (1959, 66). And the Spirit brings us back to the Word. As a consequence he (or rather his “disciples”) defended his view on the basis of biblical texts (not on the basis of a “religious motive”)!

The Bible itself, says Schrottenboer (1969), teaches that the Word of God is a power (I Tess. 2, 13; Heb. 4, 12). It cannot be reduced to a certain amount of propositions to be apprehended logically. The Scripture cannot be logically qualified. Its central religious motive is supra-theoretical, and it addresses human hearts (Isa. 6, 10; Acts 16, 14) not only (or especially) human brains! Those afflicted by a certain rationalism, can only consider the Bible as a series of propositions (Schrottenboer 1969).⁹ Rationalism is the main reason, according to Schrottenboer, behind the vantilian embarrassment. Also Dooyeweerd accused Van Til of being tendentially rationalist (1971). Thus went the reply, and no doubt there is much truth in it. Still today we have Frame instituting detailed discussions to prove that “God is logic”!¹⁰ (1987, 253- 4). However, the basic distinction between temporal and supratemporal, as elaborated by Dooyeweerd, was questioned by some dooyeweerdians as well.¹¹

⁹ In this respect one should take into account the long tradition according to which Scripture and faith are said to be “logical”. The idea can be found already in Augustine (*De doctrina christiana* II, XXXIX, 59).

¹⁰ In Frame’s case, however, I am not sure whether one should speak of rationalism or rather of irrationalism (see 3.7). In any case, there is a long tradition, going back to Aristotle via Augustine and Anselm, presenting God as rational and/or intellectual. Anselm for example, says that God’s will in our salvation is never irrational (*Cur Deus Homo* I, 8).

¹¹ See for example Hart 1973.

1.4 Back to Scripture and science: the problem of worldviews

Initially Dooyeweerd accepted the idea that between the religious ground motive and philosophy there was another “filter” or bridge: the worldview. According to Wolters (1989, 22-23) the Dooyeweerd of the 1930s saw no particular problem in admitting the presence and the usefulness of a Calvinist worldview between philosophy and Scripture. Yet already from 1935 things started to change. According to Wolters, while Vollenhoven, maintained his simple conviction that philosophy is an elaboration of one’s worldview, Dooyeweerd developed a new position.¹²

Philosophy, in his view, could not be simply the elaboration of something personal, or local. Otherwise it would loose its own claim to universal validity. It is not by chance that philosophy is considered the development of a worldview especially in the Romantic tradition. It is what Klapwijk calls the “expressivist” view. Every community develops its own worldview, even its own philosophy and science which are in the end “expressions” of its own spirit (Klapwijk 1989, 51). But in this way the claim to universality is abandoned in favor of a fascination with the particular and the local. Dooyeweerd was determined to avoid this solution.

From the middle 1930s, according to Wolters, Dooyeweerd started to develop a new position: a worldview is not the basis for philosophy and science, but rather “flanks” philosophy. Worldview and philosophy are like two different trees that grow on the same soil (i.e. on religion). Philosophy therefore is not like a branch that grows on the trunk of a worldview. No, a worldview flanks philosophy, according to a model that Wolters (1989, 22- 23) is even tempted to consider as related to the Lutheran worldview: “*grace alongside nature*”.

Yet, as Wolters admits, the difference is that in Dooyeweerd’s case both philosophy and worldview are based on religion. This model can rather be seen, therefore, as something original. In addition, Klapwijk objects to Wolter’s opinion that the relationship between philosophy and worldview might be parallel to the relationship between nature and grace (Klapwijk 1989, 48- 50). (Dooyeweerd, therefore, remains a Calvinist and not a Lutheran!)

Klapwijk agrees with Dooyeweerd that when a worldview functions as the basis of philosophy, it historicizes the latter. And relativism was exactly what Dooyeweerd tried to avoid. In his view philosophy has the task of providing an account of reality that can have universal validity. Its claim should transcend both local community and historical epoch, to propose itself to everybody. This is, by the way, the reason why Dooyeweerd preferred to speak of a Christian (and not of a Calvinist) philosophy (Dooyeweerd 1984, I, 524). He wanted to produce a philosophy based on the

¹² For the initial position of Dooyeweerd, Wolters mentions:

Dooyeweerd, H. 1924- 25. In den strijd om een Christelijke Staatskunde. Proeve van een fundeering der Calvinistische levens-en wereldbeschouwing in hare wetstidee. *Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde*, (I):7-25. (See also subsequent issues until 1927).

Dooyeweerd, H. 1937. De plicht der jongere generatie tegenover Kuyper’s geestelijke nalatenschap. (*In* Volhardt, Proceedings of the 19th Annual Convention of the Bond van Meisjesverenigingen op Gereformeerden Grondslag in

Word of God, not on the relative basis of the worldview of the Reformed community in the Netherlands in the first decades of the 20th century.

Does then the Calvinist worldview play no role at all in Dooyeweerd's philosophy? For Klapwijk it plays a fundamental role. We will come back to the issue, in the chapter dedicated to Klapwijk's view. For the moment I would simply say that although philosophy, for Dooyeweerd, is not "based" on a worldview but rather "flanks" it, this does not (in my opinion) eliminate all possibilities of a relationship between the two. Not a relationship such as "the worldview determines philosophy" (to use Wolter's phrase) but there is still room for some kind of interaction (see 4.2).

For the moment we have sketched an overview of Dooyeweerd's idea of Christian Scholarship. It is a scholarship that wants to be based on the Bible, but not in a literalist or exegetical sense. It must be directed by the biblical religious ground motive, just like all (non-Christian) scholarship is directed by some kind of religious motive.

1.5 Encyclopaedia: the relationship among sciences

According to Frame, this topic is a real obsession for the "Amsterdam Philosophy". Yet Dooyeweerd never dedicated any book or article specifically to this topic. He did, however, hit a probably sensitive nerve of the vantilian tradition. He directly attacked the primacy of theology, its supra-scientific character, its supposed superior authority and certainty, its role of necessary mediator between the Bible and its readers. Such ideas, he said, are the result of a way of thinking that is subjected to the Scholastic motive of nature and grace (Dooyeweerd 1980, 113- 172). He pointed out that it is in the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition that the idea of a "queen of the sciences" originated and developed. Theology is supposed, according to this view, to be the only possible foundation for Christian scholarship (1980, 115- 16).

However, theology is not in a position, declared Dooyeweerd, to perform this foundational role. One of the reasons is that theology is only a "special" science (Dooyeweerd 1980, 133- 56). In Dooyeweerd terms, this means that it is a science that studies reality following a specific point of view or modality. Dooyeweerd, as it is well known, identified and described fifteen (modal) aspects or modalities of created reality. Each modality can be considered as the point of view of a special science. Psychology, for example, studies our world from the perspective of the psychic aspect.¹³ Mathematics concentrates on the numerical modality of our experience and so on. There are of course exceptions and specifications in this dooyeweerdian line of thought, and certain sciences are said to "use" more than one modality as their point of view (Skillen 1988).

Nederland held in Zwolle, 1937. Kampen.) For Dooyeweerd's position on worldviews, after 1935, see Dooyeweerd 1984, I, 114-164.

¹³ For a defence of this view of psychology as opposed to the traditional view of a "study of human behaviour" see De Graaff 1982.

But our concern at this point, is simply to clarify that theology, for Dooyeweerd, is a science linked to the pistical (i.e. faith) aspect of created reality (1980, 133; 143). It is not a science that studies the Bible, nor God, as it is sometimes affirmed even in Protestant circles. Theology is like any other Christian science: it studies (*in the light of* the Word of God) the whole of reality, but from the point of view of a specific modal aspect.

In addition theology cannot be said to have “the Word of God” as its object of study, according to Dooyeweerd. The reason is that the central religious ground motive of this “Word” has a supra-theoretical character, and cannot become the field of exploration of a science. Sciences are rather directed and influenced by religious ground motives. There is therefore, for Dooyeweerd, a confusion in the traditional view of theology, between its field of research and the religious motive that drives theology as a science (Dooyeweerd 1980, 133- 56).

Others have explained the same idea from a different point of view. According to Kok (1988, 120) Vollenhoven insisted that we should be able to indicate the field of research (*grens*) of each science with precision. We should not, therefore, define the field of study of (e.g.) psychology as something like “human behavior” that is the object of study of many other sciences as well, from other points of view (e.g. history, sociology, economy, politics). Coming back to theology, the Bible must be consulted by all sciences that are conducted from a Christian perspective. It cannot therefore be the field of study of a single science.

This solution, in addition, would bring us back to the division among the one science of Special Revelation and the sciences of General Revelation, which, I suspect, is a view more consonant with Roman Catholicism than with the Reformation. In fact, the view of Scripture that the Reformation promoted is the view of a Book that is open to all believers, not only to theologians or the clergy. The Bible speaks to the whole Christian community. The artisan has a contribution to make, for the understanding of Scripture, like the theologian.

The Bible therefore, is not a theology book. It does not speak to us as theologians but as religious beings. And it speaks to all scientists and to all sciences as well, not only to theology. Here Dooyeweerd’s distinction between faith and religion (1984, II, 303) can be elaborated in a fruitful way. As Olthuis (1985, 29- 32) points out, the distinction allows us to retain the particular “spirituality” of faith without limiting religion to faith. Religion is kept in “contact” with all other aspects of life. Therefore the Bible can be considered a book with a religious focus, not only with a pistical focus.

Vander Stelt added something else to the discussion. Theology cannot be defined as the science of the Bible because it is not only or always Christian. It is also the science of the Koran, of the Gita and so on. We must be allowed to speak of an Islamic theology, a Buddhist theology etc. Should we then call it “the science of the true or pretended Written Revelation of God”? The

problem is that theology, even when it is Christian, does not only investigate written revelations, but extra-biblical data as well.

"theology studies not only Scripture but also language, archeology, tradition, rhetoric, liturgy, counseling, art etc. As a matter of fact, even a theological study of Scripture is in itself impossible without a study of extra or non-biblical facets of life and reality" (Vander Stelt: 1989, 16).

Vander Stelt proposes therefore, in the same article, to substitute the name *theology* with *pistology*,¹⁴ in order to describe more precisely what theology actually studies: the pistic aspect (i.e. the aspect of faith) of our experience.

Vander Stelt rejects also the idea that the field of study of theology is (not Scripture but) God (Vander Stelt: 1989, 16). This is another way in which theology tries to receive its superior status from a superior field of investigation. The etymology itself of the word *theology* (discourse about God) indicates this direction. But the word in question is of Greek, not of Christian origin and it is obviously burdened by pagan philosophical connotations.

The Greek philosophers could of course suppose that theoretical thinking can cross the border of creation and come to grips with the divine. The gods could, for them, become objects of theoretical inquiry. See for example the etymology of the word *theoria*: a vision (*orao*) of God (*theos*). But can Christians attribute such a power to reason? Can the Almighty be enclosed in our concepts or become the subject of our studies? Can theoretical thought cross the border of created reality? The answer must be a simple no!

Science can only investigate temporal realities. It is not supra scientific in character. But it is important also to accept that it is not pre-scientific either. Sometimes the term *theology* is used in a pre-scientific sense that creates the impression that theology is something like a worldview, or even a religious motive. From there, it is easy to imagine that theology can perform the role of a pre-scientific basis of science. But Dooyeweerd established a clear distinction between scientific and pre-scientific. Between the two, there is a structural difference. Therefore theology cannot be both theoretical and naive thought.

Theology, in addition, does not provide, according to Dooyeweerd, a general view of the difference and coherence among the various modalities (Dooyeweerd 1980, 130; 152). This pertains rather to philosophy. Theology is related to the pistic modality, and it does not have the resources to direct all the "lay" sciences as a mediator.

For Dooyeweerd, such a mediating role is not only impossible for theology, it would be dangerous as well. It would in fact create a necessary mediator between Scripture and other

¹⁴ The term *pisteology* was suggested as a more elegant alternative by Abraham Bos during a "workshop" presented by professor Vander Stelt in 1994 (in Hoeven, The Netherlands).

sciences, and also between Scripture and the ordinary believer. For the latter, it would mean that in order to understand the Bible one would need the mediation of theology or theologians. Which would bring us back to the pre-Reformation era. Dooyeweerd points out (1980, 116) that according to Aquinas theology was even necessary to salvation (“*ad humanam salutem*”)! But this is unacceptable.

“Its elevation to a necessary mediator between God’s Word and the believer amounts to idolatry and testifies to a fundamental misconception concerning its real character and position. If our salvation be dependent on theological dogmatics and exegesis, we are lost. For both of them are a human work...” (1980, 135).

Concerning the sciences, the mediation of theology would block the access of the other sciences to Scripture. It would become the true normative reference for the sciences, in substitution of the Scriptures. This would not only make difficult the inner reformation of science. It would in fact make it impossible (1959, 66). Philosophy, depending on theology and not on the word of God, would be cut off from the only *dunamis* that would allow its reformation, and would be obliged to move in a vicious circle. Being in the power of theology it could only repeat what theologians say, in a philosophical language.

In summary, these are the relevant reasons why Dooyeweerd believes that theology cannot be the foundation of all the sciences, and a mediator between the Bible and the other sciences.

- 1) Theology is a science, while the ultimate basis of science is pre- scientific.
- 2) Being a special science, it does not have a general insight into the relationship between modalities. Which would be necessary to perform a foundational role.
- 3) Theology cannot have a monopoly on the Bible as its field of study.
- 4) Theology does not have a superior authority, is not linked to a superior norm or field of investigation.
- 5) A mediator between the Scriptures and the sciences would block the independent access of the sciences to the Bible, preventing their inner reformation (and destroying their independence).
- 6) Such mediator (e.g. a worldview) would in some cases historicize and relativize philosophy and its claims to universal validity.

1.6 A new mediator?

With this, Dooyeweerd gave an important contribution for the promotion of Christian scholarship and for the rejection of a Scholastic pattern of thought that considers theology as the queen of sciences and the lay sciences as *ancillae*. It is the same Scholastic motive that made of the Bible a book for the clergy, the latter becoming in turn the mediator for the lay population of the church.

Dooyeweerd wanted to place all sciences *Coram Deo*, and surely it is not difficult to identify again the biblical religious motive prompting his desire.

I must however warn the reader that when we deal with the issue of mediation, in the context of the encyclopaedia of sciences, we are exposed to some strange discoveries. In this field, logic seems not to be always the main factor behind the decisions of the authors. One has the feeling that personal preferences still play a relevant role.

I don't know how else to explain the fact that Dooyeweerd, in a sense, substituted theology with philosophy, as a new "mediator" for the special sciences. The statement must be immediately qualified, however. Dooyeweerd had no intention of transforming philosophy into the new "queen" (1959, 69). Philosophy did not assume, in his model, the functions and characteristics of medieval theology. Philosophy was not intrinsically Christian, nor could have a privileged access to the Word revelation. It did not study supratemporal realities. It had no call to "direct" other disciplines and was, as a matter of fact, often legitimately contradicted by the special sciences. Philosophy was not allowed to ignore the results of the special sciences (1984, I, 565). In addition, it must be pointed out that Dooyeweerd's criticism of the Thomistic idea of theology created a situation in which it was impossible, at least for neo-Calvinist philosophers, not to be sensitive to the problems involved here. The gaps which were left by Dooyeweerd could be tackled by the next generation.

And yet one must admit, together with Wolters, that "a significant and perhaps dominant strand in the tradition represented by the Free University of Amsterdam and its younger Reformed sister institutions has always been that philosophy is a key link between faith and scholarship, like the gearbox which connects the motor of a car to its wheels" (Wolters 1989, 14-15).¹⁵

One should then be aware of the fact that many of the arguments that Dooyeweerd used against the mediating role of theology do apply to philosophy as well. Philosophy should not be conceived as having a privileged access to Scripture (or does it have a monopoly on the religious ground motive?). It does not have a special authority, derived from a superior field of study. Philosophy, like theology, is scientific and therefore should not be seen as the ultimate basis for science. As a mediator it could block the access to the Word revelation and become, in practice, an ultimate foundation for the special sciences. Its mediating role, could produce the same negative effects as theological domination of other sciences. It could prevent the inner reformation according to biblical lines. Finally, sciences based on philosophy and not on the Word Revelation are under the risk of historicization and relativization, and could see jeopardized their claim to scientific (universal) validity.

Van Belle points to another problem. Special sciences don't need, he says, to wait until the "immaculate conception" of a Christian philosophy is completed before starting to work on their

¹⁵ More recently, Strauss writes quite explicitly: "The Bible exerts its authority therefore only through the mediation of a Christian philosophy which ought to provide the special sciences with a Scriptural view of reality" (Strauss 2001, 87).

scientific tasks (1985, 21). He then suggests that from a Christian point of view all sciences should have direct access to God's revelation(s). He touches a sensitive nerve, in my opinion, in the dooyeweerdian tradition. If we maintain that the reformation of the (special) sciences depends always on philosophy or necessarily "starts from philosophy" (Troost 1983, 43) we could prepare a paralysis for Christian scholarship.

Yet in Dooyeweerd's definition (1986, 60) of sociology, for example, we understand that social philosophy is based on the Bible, but sociology, as a special science is based on social philosophy (Scripture is not mentioned). I still remember my admiration and puzzlement at the same time, when as a (lonely) *amateur* of Reformational philosophy in Northern Italy I was trying to make sense of a statement by one of my favorite authors:

"It may also create the impression as if, in this writer's view, it is no longer Theology which gives a Christian character to Philosophy, but Philosophy to Theology. This is not the intention by any means. The fact remains though, that seen encyclopaedically, Philosophy fulfills a foundational function" (van der Walt 1983, 188 fn. 30).

1.7 Religious antithesis

Both Klapwijk and Wolterstorff, I have the impression, tend to read Dooyeweerd's idea of antithesis keeping Kuyper's view quite prominent in the background. They refer mainly to Kuyper and do not seem to detect in the following developments of neo-Calvinism any fundamental difference. Wolterstorff tends to store these developments together under the label "neo-Calvinism and its Reformational branch" (1989, 65). Of course, there is a link between Dooyeweerd's and Kuyper's conception of antithesis, but there are differences as well.

It might be true (as Klapwijk and Wolterstorff affirm) that Kuyper had a rather oppositional view of antithesis. After all, the big discovery of his life was the possibility of an alternative culture, based on the alternative Christian religion. This religion was seen for the first time as the possible source for Christian involvement in the world of culture. Kuyper's enthusiasm, possibly, led him to pronouncements that were a bit one-sided. Let us accept this hypothesis, although Ratzsch (1987) comes to very different conclusions concerning Kuyper's philosophy of science.

But it is also true, it seems to me, that Dooyeweerd had a more nuanced and refined view of the religious antithesis. As far as Dooyeweerd is concerned, this antithesis did never represent an obstacle to the dialogue between scientists of different persuasions (Dooyeweerd 1959, 70- 72). There is an equilibrium in Dooyeweerd's position: the latter can be criticized from different sides, but it remains a balanced view. I suppose that this balance is the result of a double anchorage in his epistemology. On the one side he acknowledged the importance of the religious ground motive, which indeed creates a difference in the interpretation of creational data. This is true for philosophy

as well as for the special sciences. But on the other hand Dooyeweerd was bound by the other pole: creation itself. There are created structures and conditions “out there” that are not simply a construction of the knower (Dooyeweerd 1959, 72- 73). And creation is revelation as well, just like Scripture.

No matter what the convictions of the scientist are, he will have to deal with real laws, with structures, with “states of affairs” that are not dependent on his views. By “states of affairs”, however, Dooyeweerd did not simply indicate a reality disconnected from mankind. A reality that could, as such, provide the basis for scientific communication. His doctrine of naive experience, does not wish to imply a *realistic* conception of reality (1984, III, 34). And this is even more the case with theoretical thought. Nevertheless, Dooyeweerd believed that when the creational data are neglected or interpreted incorrectly, theoretical thought itself will end up in antinomies and contradictions of every kind (1959, 74). The views of the different scientists, both in philosophy and special science, are not considered “incommensurable”. Creation itself is the judge of our theories and it will continue to remain a normative source for all knowers, Christians or not (1959, 72).

Dooyeweerd believed the biblical ground motive to be preferable to all the others. He denied, however, that Christians be always in a better position to interpret reality scientifically (1959, 73). The antithesis, which is an undeniable fact of life, does not magically divide Christian from non-Christian scientists in two well delimited groups. This antithesis crosses the life of the Christian scientist and of the Christian scientific community as well (1984, I, 524). Its fruits, both positive and negative, are reaped in both Christian and non-Christian scholarship. The antithesis is not at all simple to determine. Scientists who are Christians sometimes adhere to unbiblical ground motives when it comes to science. And apart from that, they are still under the influence of the Fall. Non-Christians, on the other hand, can be right on a lot of issues because the religious ground motive is not the only reference point for scientific knowledge (Dooyeweerd 1959, 69). The “states of affairs” can be discovered by all.

The only radical kind of antithesis is the religious one (1984, I, 123). Other expressions of such antithesis are therefore relative. In addition, Dooyeweerd makes clear from the *Foreword* to his *New Critique*, that his Transcendental Critique is not intended to reveal the religious or spiritual condition of a thinker (1984, VIII. Cf.. also I, 137 and 524).

“An act of passing judgment on the personal religious condition of an adversary would be a kind of human pride which supposes it can exalt itself to God’s judgment seat. (...) the philosophy which I have developed, even in the sharp penetrating criticism which it exercises against non-Christian immanence philosophy, constantly remains within the domain of *principles*” (1984, VIII).

The reality of antithesis does not allow to evaluate persons but principles.

Dooyeweerd speaks very clearly about the possibility of cooperation, about a “healthy and noble emulation” between philosophical schools (1959, 73). He takes for granted that Christians should be able to learn from their non-Christian colleagues. He takes for granted that Christian scholarship is not bound to an oppositional attitude. The challenge for all schools of thought is to provide a reliable account of creational data, not to jealously defend their own views.

Dooyeweerd believed in the possibility of real dialogue, and his transcendental critique was intended to promote this dialogue, not to suffocate it.¹⁶ He contended that it is exactly the “dogma” of the autonomy of theoretical thought that made genuine dialogue impossible. The different schools, in his opinion, are usually not aware of the deeper causes of their disagreement, which are often related to the religious motives. Once these motives are uncovered, it should be easier to come to a more open comparison of ideas and theories (Dooyeweerd 1959, 71).

There was, for Dooyeweerd, a common call that was directed to all scholars and scientific communities, Christians and non-Christians alike. It is easy to guess that this position was a consequence of his Reformed belief. Notwithstanding the apostasy of mankind, God’s cultural mandate to humanity is not canceled. In this view, the parable of talents can be read in a radical way (Marcel 1983, 49- 54). God gives talents and tasks to all his servants, to be productive in his service, until his return. It is true and unfortunate that only some of the servants respond positively to the call. But the warning is issued for the Christian as well!

The Christian is not above the call to serve his Lord, in a position from which he can safely judge his non-Christian colleague. On the contrary they both are in the same position, exposed to the same risks, called to the same task. Even apostate thought contributes to the “fulfillment of the Divine plan” (1984, I, 119). It is not possible to gather the faithful servants in a separate “school” in the present era (1984, I, 524). It is the common task that imposes the necessity of humility and dialogue.

In addition, it seems to me that Dooyeweerd was not obsessed by the necessity of providing the evidence of a “difference” between Christian and non-Christian scholarship. As we have observed, Christian and non-Christian scholars have many things in common. Creation is the same for both of them. They deal with the same “states of affairs”. They have received the same call. The religious antithesis runs through both their ranks. True, they see things differently. But this difference does not always mean different scientific results. Dooyeweerd’s classical example centers on the proposition $2+2 = 4$ (Dooyeweerd 1959, 72 ff.).

Although he uses the example to show that there are indeed different views and schools in mathematics, the argument implies the recognition that, ontologically, there is a common ground

¹⁶ Of course there are, on this point, different evaluations of Dooyeweerd’s endeavour. See for example the doctoral thesis of Conradie (1960) and the recent one by Choi (1999).

between all schools of thought. Only when we have recognized this, can we proceed further and acknowledge that even $2+2 = 4$ is interpreted differently in different mathematical schools. Which Dooyeweerd did point out sharply (1959, 73). But, evidently, the antithesis does not always mean that different religious ground motives create different scientific results, or alternative languages, or incommensurable views. $2+2$ continues to make 4 for everybody. When comparing Christian and non-Christian science probably the degree of consensus and dissent varies from one discipline to another.

The following quotation from Dooyeweerd summarizes many of the themes that must be taken into account, to understand Dooyeweerd's view of antithesis.

“The judgment $2+2 = 4$ corresponds to a state of affairs which is independent from every subjective theoretical view (...) a principal difference is immediately manifested between the different currents of the philosophy of mathematics. The logicist tendency is thus opposed to the intuitionist, the formalist, the empiricist or to the sensualist tendency. However, the structural order of the temporal horizon of experience, with all the states of affairs which are founded on it, is indubitably the same for every thinker, irrespective of the orientation of his thought. Once they are discovered, the structural facts impose themselves to everybody and it would make no sense to try to deny them. All school and currents of philosophy receive the common task of accounting for them in a philosophical way (...). These schools are inter-dependent, and must learn the ones from the others (...). The Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea does not claim any privileged position, as if it would attribute to its provisional and fallible results the infallible character of its religious starting point” (Dooyeweerd 1959, 72- 3).

1.8 Inner reformation: between dialogue and antithesis

I think that Wolterstorff (1989, 68) points out correctly that the aim of Christian scholarship should not be to create a difference with other traditions. If this were the case, Christian scholarship would become a mere reaction. It would be dependent on non-Christian scholarship, always inclined to affirm the opposite (or something different) in any case. But this is neither Christian science, nor Christian life. The latter does not find its purpose in creating a difference with whatever non-Christians do. Christian life is a life of faithfulness, and Christian scholarship should be the same. The criterion and standard will always be God's Word, both in creation and Scripture, not the desire to create a difference.

But this should not become an excuse to cover an attitude of compromise. Dooyeweerd was probably more reluctant than Klapwijk, Wolterstorff and Frame to allow the possibility of some kind of synthesis between Christian and non-Christian thought. Ideas and theories that are born under the influence of a non-biblical ground motive should not, for Dooyeweerd, be incorporated into a Christian system (1984, I, 119). Historically, in his view, the Catholic tendency to synthesis has produced many unbiblical results. Calvin, on the contrary, rejected the attitude of

accommodation and compromise with unbiblical ideas (1984, I, 516). It is not possible to advocate a simply “formal” use of philosophical ideas and categories. The operation always implies a contact with the content itself of a philosophy.

All operations of synthesis are, according to this model, quite dangerous, and history is called to testify to this fact. The best way to proceed, for Reformed philosophy, is therefore “inner reformation”. Christian philosophy can learn from non-Christian philosophies and interact with them. But the elaboration of a Christian philosophy should proceed without “borrowings”. It cannot proceed following an eclectic attitude. Is this not a contradiction? How is it possible to be involved in a cooperation with all schools of thought, even to “learn” from them, and yet to develop an alternative approach? Is not philosophy always bound to its own historical situation and to its own interlocutors? Here is Dooyeweerd’s answer.

“whoever takes the pains to penetrate into the philosophic system developed in this work, will soon discover, how it is wedded to the historical development of philosophic and scientific thought with a thousand ties, so far as its immanent philosophic content is concerned, even though we can nowhere *follow* the immanence-philosophy. The philosophical elaboration in this book of the basic principle of sphere sovereignty, for example, would not have been possible without the entire preceding development of modern philosophy and of the different branches of modern science. Nevertheless it is just with the philosophic idea of sphere-sovereignty that we turn on principle against the humanistic view of science. In like manner it can be said that our transcendental critique of theoretical thought has an inner historical connection with Kant’s critique of pure reason, notwithstanding the fact that our critique was turned to a great extent against the theoretical dogmatism in Kant’s epistemology” (1984, I, 118).

Dialogue and antithesis proceed hand in hand, for Dooyeweerd. He does not deny the historical situatedness of his philosophy. Nor the fact that “insight into the wealth of meaning of the cosmic order may grow even through the work of schools of thought against which our own starting point is set” (I, 119). He insists that “no single serious current of thought, however apostate in its starting-point, makes its appearance in the history of the world without a task of its own, by which, even in spite of itself, it must contribute to the fulfillment of the Divine plan” (I, 119). But there remains a crucial difference between interacting and borrowing. Between debating the same problems (or even learning from others) and importing the presuppositions or theories of immanence-philosophy. This is, it seems to me, the crux of the dooyeweerdian position.

The dooyeweerdian view has been criticized from opposite fronts. There are those, namely the vantilian school, who accused Dooyeweerd of creating a neutral area, a common denominator for all, where religion does not play any role. They accused Dooyeweerd of supposing the existence of neutral “states of affairs” independent from the Word revelation (Van Til 1971). On the opposite

front are those who feel that Dooyeweerd's idea of antithesis is still too oppositional. This includes of course Klapwijk and Wolterstorff, but also others.

Dooyeweerd has replied to the vantilians that he had no intention of creating a neutral common ground which can be understood in the same way by all, independently from religious presuppositions. But that nevertheless these "states of affairs" can be discovered by all scientists, irrespective of the presuppositions they hold. These scientists can, it is true, mis-interpret again such states of affairs, after their discovery. But this does not change the fact that there are states of affairs independent of our scientific interpretations (Dooyeweerd 1971, 79- 80). It is in this particular sense, it seems to me, that they constitute a "common ground".

I wonder if an important question is not missing, even today, when the discussion on this topic is prolonged. The question is: a common ground *for what purpose*? Dooyeweerd, as a philosopher, had in mind the appeal to "evidence" for the purpose of discussing scientific and theoretical problems. Van Til, as a theologian and apologist, had in mind an appeal to "evidence" in order to convince the unbeliever of the truth of the Christian faith. Van Til concluded that the un-believer can never be convinced only by such "evidence" in itself. Dooyeweerd, on the other hand, could not eliminate completely the appeal to evidence from science. Could a difference of purpose, and object, have been part of the misunderstanding?

Opposite to the vantilian side, however, are those critics of Dooyeweerd who prefer a "milder" view of the antithesis. In their opinion the common ground between Christian and non-Christian scholars is larger than Dooyeweerd imagined. But later we will have ample time to discuss their contributions as well (see ch. 4 and 5).

1.9 Idea of science.

Dooyeweerd offered a thorough analysis of scientific thought. In a time in which positivism was teaching that it is healthy and necessary to keep metaphysical convictions out of science, Dooyeweerd investigated science anew. He prepared a *new critique* of theoretical thought. The essential conclusion of his analysis is that the structure itself of science points towards the pre-theoretical basis of our knowledge (Van Peursen 1995). Science could not exist without the human ego and the ego is religiously oriented. All this posed serious objections to the positivist project of an "objective" science. In the following decades the philosophy of science received a new direction with Popper, and then Kuhn. The new direction was not determined by Dooyeweerd, of course, but it confirmed in many ways his position.

The two proposed versions of the transcendental critique are well known, and I think it would be un-necessary to expose them again in detail. I will rather try to (briefly) focus on their similarities and on their purpose, not excluding a few critical remarks.

Van Heikema Hommes (quoted in Choi 1999, 44) points out that there is a big difference between the first and the second “way” of theoretical critique. In fact, Dooyeweerd’s first attempt did not analyze the theoretical structure of thought itself. However, there are several similarities between the two strategies. Very similar “ingredients” are used in both methods. The supra-temporal heart, the problem of the Origin as related to the “archimedean point”, the difference between naive theoretical thinking and so on. In both methods, the necessity of transcending the boundary of cosmic time is fundamental, because:

- a) Philosophy, or theoretical thought in general, must perform an investigation of the totality of meaning.
- b) They both observe this totality from the necessary archimedean point (first way).
- c) They operate a synthesis of the aspects that are set apart in the theoretical attitude of thought (second way). And also because
- d) the reflection concerns the human ego itself (first and second way).

Transcending the boundary of temporal reality makes it necessary to presuppose a connection between science on the one hand, and the self, religion, the archimedean point and the totality of meaning on the other.

Perhaps a few problems might be mentioned. Why should we think of the above mentioned realities as supra-temporal? Why are the human self, religion and the totality of meaning above time? On this issue, Dooyeweerd has been criticized from the beginning. And one might point to a certain “duality” in Dooyeweerd’s ontology as the deep reason for such a view. Dooyeweerd’s ontology “divides” reality into a temporal and a supra-temporal section. Diversity is to be found especially in time, but unity especially above time. The human self is above time, as the unifying point of different functions. Religion is above time, as the unifying force behind the diversity of human actions. Religion is especially related to the heart. According to Taljaard (1976, 180) and others, the ontology underlying this view is more “monarchian” than biblical (see 1.2, fn. 8).

Another problem is to know whether Dooyeweerd’s critique can be considered as a “proof”. Does it prove that this is how science functions, or does it simply assume from the beginning what is declared in the end? This was Conradie’s (1960) critique to the “first way”. But it seems to be applicable to the “second way” as well, and it is not easy to dismiss. Dooyeweerd’s argument is a proof only if the supra-temporal character of the ego is pre-supposed. Only if we accept that the archimedean point has certain characteristics, and so on. It might be that “too much” must be implied or assumed in order to accept the final “proof”.

However, if this is our conclusion, then we have to dismiss Van Til’s critique according to which Christian presuppositions are not implied in the first two “steps” of Dooyeweerd’s “second version” of his critique. According to Van Til (1971, 99- 113) Christian presuppositions are

introduced only in the third and final phase of Dooyeweerd's ("second way" of his transcendental) critique, and are absent in the first two phases. The critiques of Conradie and Van Til, therefore, can only be alternative, not complementary.

A short survey of other critical observations about Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique has been provided by Choi (1999, 67- 69). Van Riessen, for example, contends that "Dooyeweerd's idea of intentional *Gegenstand*-relation is not a proper attitude of scientific thought (...) it cannot explain logic itself and also the *Gegenstand* of philosophy is difficult to determine" (quoted in Choi 1999, 68). But Dooyeweerd's idea of science is questioned by Van Riessen more or less in general. In his opinion it is difficult to understand the synthesis of two modalities as a scientific concept, in spite of the irreducibility of the modalities. Abstraction and analysis are rather, according to Van Riessen, the key-concepts to define science (Choi 1999, 68). Similar critiques have been proposed even by "pupils" of Dooyeweerd¹⁷ and appear to Choi as "very persuasive" (68). Perhaps the above mentioned difficulties can be regarded as some of the reasons why Dooyeweerd's critique "seems to have failed in creating the sought after dialogue with other philosophers" (Choi 1999, 67).

Yet, according to Choi himself, we should not conclude that Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique is untenable. Likewise in the case of the religious ground motives, we might find inappropriate several sides of the idea. Yet there is something in the idea itself which deserves attention. I agree with Hoogland, when he says that Dooyeweerd's critique should be considered an evocative, minimum-argument (quoted in Choi 1999, 69). Dooyeweerd's criticism is an heuristic tool. It can be used at least indirectly as a theoretical or cultural critique. There are probably aspects that should be re-defined and sharpened. But some of the critiques should be re-defined as well.

Dooyeweerd provides an account of science itself, which has not been offered by all the authors that we are going to analyze. Perhaps only Wolterstorff, among Reformed philosophers, has attempted a similar investigation of the structure of science in more recent times. With the difference that Wolterstorff's analysis appears in a much more sketchy and tentative form. In addition, Dooyeweerd's account is valid for both Christian and non-Christian scholarship. The "two sciences" are structurally the same, both developing from religious ground motives, via philosophy, up to the special sciences. While the structure is the same, the direction changes.

Dooyeweerd includes among the sciences disciplines that in some traditions are not considered fully "sciences", like theology, psychology, or history. As already observed, each special science investigates reality from a precise point of view, which corresponds to a modality. Yet it must be recognized that this is not true of all sciences. Philosophy itself is not "bound" to a specific modality. Other sciences utilize more than one modal point of view in order to investigate their

¹⁷ Cf. the contributions of Strauss (1995), Hart (1985) and Geertsema (1995).

field of study. Education is one of them, in my opinion, and Skillen (1988) would add politics. There are also sciences like medicine, engineering and so on, that need more than one point of view in order to accomplish their task. But science, Christian or non-Christian, is always related to the modalities, and therefore to laws. Science is not only the expression of a religious motive.

1.10 Two questions

After this overview of Dooyeweerd's ideas, one question that I would like to ask is the following. Is it really true that Dooyeweerd made little use of biblical texts, or in any case a more moderate use than Vollenhoven or the reformational school? After all, when we read his contributions, we find many references to the Bible. Dooyeweerd did probably refer to more biblical verses (or themes) than one could imagine by reading Klapwijk's account (or the vantilian complaints). One mustn't forget, for example, that the very ideas of creation, fall and redemption are in themselves very important biblical themes. Dooyeweerd used the well known biblical image of the "heart" and quoted the relevant verses (especially Prov. 4, 23). He quoted Jesus' reproach to the Pharisees (Lu. 11, 52) to show that the knowledge of God has a supra-temporal character (1980, 45). He refers to the parable of the tares (Mat. 13, 24- 30) arguing that there is no dualism between common and special grace (1984, I, 523). He discusses the dubious exegesis of Acts 17, 26 by Christians who support social universalism (1979, 181). The first chapter of the Letter to the Romans is discussed (1979, 119 ff.) in the context of the Roman Catholic view of nature and grace. As already mentioned, scholars like Schrottenboer could defend the idea of the *dunamis* of the Word of God by quoting the Bible. These are just a few examples: there are too many others to be quoted.

Dooyeweerd could have quoted the Bible much more, should he have had the intention of demonstrating that his philosophy was consistent with biblical texts. But this was not the case. He was convinced that philosophy should not simply look for extemporary "agreements" with biblical verses or themes, in a biblicistic way. Klapwijk is probably right when he says that Vollenhoven's intention was to link his philosophy more closely to the biblical text. But this observation should not make us imagine that the dooyeweerdian model is in some way "allergic" to the Scriptures! That it is not really sensitive to the message of the Bible, or not really shaped by the Word of God.¹⁸ This, unfortunately, seems to be the underground conviction of many, within the vantilian tradition (cf. Frame & Coppes, 1972, 32 ff.). I hope the above discussion will help to reconsider this unfair critique of the dooyeweerdian school.

¹⁸ For example Frame and Coppes (1971, 37) observe that Dooyeweerd's view of the six days of Genesis 1 "does not arise through study of the Hebrew text". Yet Berkouwer (1971) asks: "if Scripture has such primacy for Van Til, why is his method not more "exegetical?" (quoted in Frame 1976, 27). Indeed, the vantilian school is often more "systematic" than exegetical in its approach. Frame admits that "Berkouwer has chastened Van Til" on this point, and the latter "has admitted guilt". Nevertheless, Frame replies that "we must rethink (...) what "exegesis" is", and asks: "is Van Til not doing "exegesis" when he translates the biblical concepts into philosophical language? (...) When all is said and done it

A second question, in my view, should be dedicated to the role of theology in Dooyeweerd's model. It seems to me that many theologians and pastors feel that Dooyeweerd has reduced theology to a very little thing, in his model. It is true that many of them also support the view of theology that is promoted by the vantilian line, and therefore they have, in my opinion, an inappropriate view of this science (see chapter 3). Yet one should ask himself if theology, in Dooyeweerd, does have any role to play, any contribution to offer to other sciences.

As I say sometimes to friends who sympathize with the vantilian line, Dooyeweerd had to fight against a view of theology that was still medieval. Although the discussion was held especially within the Reformed community, it was precisely there that a Catholic view of theology had taken deep roots.¹⁹ It is in this context that one must understand some of his "attacks" to theology, some "declarations of independence" from a "queen" still prisoner of the nature-grace motive, and unwilling to free herself.

Yet I also ask myself if precisely this context, in which the discussion was held, did not cause some over-reaction. I agree heartily with Dooyeweerd when he attacks the Scholastic idea of theology. He gave a great contribution to the Reformed community by showing that such a view is not compatible with the biblical view. I also believe that Dooyeweerd is right when he says that philosophy should be independent from theology. In the sense that philosophy should find its own access to the Word of God, without depending on the theologians and being obliged to move in a vicious circle. Philosophy should therefore be independent from theology as it was conceived in the Medieval tradition.

But then, is philosophy in some way related to theology? And in which way? From Dooyeweerd we hear rather somber comments on theology. Like the opinion that "all heresies have a theological origin" (1959, 135). We learn that theology needs a (Christian) philosophical foundation and this is "the first service which the new reformed philosophy can render its theological sister" (1980, 156). But we never hear of a possible utility of theology for philosophy. We rather learn that "dogmatic theology is a very dangerous science" (1959, 135). We miss a more positive pronouncement. Interestingly, Kok detects exactly the same problem in Vollenhoven.²⁰

One could have the feeling that this reformation of theology is in part also a "punishment" for the previous arrogance of this science. It is then necessary to ask: what kind of contribution could

will be seen that Van Til's work is indeed exegetical" (1976, 28). If the argument is applicable to Van Til, I hope it will be applied to Dooyeweerd and his school as well...

¹⁹ A major study analyzing the influence of Scholasticism on Reformed thought is van der Walt's doctoral thesis (1974). Aquinas' view of theology (and its impact on Protestantism) is presented in a more "popular" style in van der Walt 1983, 174-196.

²⁰ Kok writes that in Vollenhoven "a positive formulation as to what theology should be and do, is not to be found" (1988, 124).

theology provide for the other sciences, in Dooyeweerd's model? ²¹ Does it still have something to say to philosophy, for example, or not? Kuyper was determined to allow theology a respected place in his encyclopaedia:

“If non Christian philosophy ignores the results of theology, as though it was no science, theology is in duty bound to enter her protest against this. If, on the other hand, the philosopher himself is regenerate (...) then of course in his studies he includes the results of theology, together with the results of all the other sciences, and it is his care, architectonically, to raise such a cosmological building that the results of theology also find their place naturally in it” (quoted in Spykman, 1991, 98).

Is it still possible with Dooyeweerd, or with some of his disciples? When reading Troost's beautiful book on philosophical ethics for example (Troost 1983) one discovers that there is still a role to play for ethics as a special science and for philosophical ethics as well. But theological ethics can be safely eliminated!

This science, according to Troost, is still trying to do what it did in the Middle Ages. It claims “to be able to provide the supernatural complement in the way of biblical insight, biblical concepts and indications” (Troost 1983, 47). This approach is blind to the need of reformation of the special sciences, says Troost, and tries to supply a biblical insight that is supposed to be the monopoly of theological investigation. All right and well. But when Troost describes the role of special and philosophical ethics he begins from what these sciences *should be doing* (according to a Reformed approach). He does not start from how they still *are conducted* in certain circles.

The question therefore remains: is there any role to play, according to Troost, for theology in relationship to ethics? Troost had already said that ethics, as a special science, has no monopoly on issues of “right and wrong”. As a matter of fact ethics cannot face all moral issues that originate from all fields: from economics, politics, biology and so on. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the special sciences themselves to provide an answer: to say what is “right or wrong” within their domain. Then why is not theology as well included among the special sciences that deal with such ethical questions? One has the feeling that there might remain, in the dooyeweerdian tradition, a certain feeling of uneasiness towards theology, probably due to the arrogance of this science in the past, and more recently due to occasional attacks against Reformational philosophy.

Yet the communication between sciences, the interdisciplinary effort, constitutes a great resource for the scientific community, still too little appreciated. In the Scholastic model (and I think in the vantilian one as well) it is exactly the supposed superiority of theology that in the end hinders its communication with the “secular” sciences. The relationship, in fact, is often one of domination,

²¹ Geertsema (1995, 21- 26) poses the same question after admitting that in the dooyeweerdian tradition too little room is made for theology. Then he suggests a remedy as well, but I am far from convinced, personally, that the blurring of the

not of cooperation. In these views, it is the dependence on theology (and not the interrelation of all sciences) that is regarded as crucial. This is a factor that definitely hinders the interdisciplinary work. And, in addition, a science that intervenes “from above” in the discussion, somehow claiming to be based on a superior knowledge (but having little insight in the concrete problems of the special sciences) creates sometimes a legitimate irritation among scientists.²²

I am not, therefore, recommending these models. I am only asking if Dooyeweerd’s model improves the possibility of communication among sciences and encourages the dialogue among scholars. I am ready to believe that it does allow, potentially, for more communication. But perhaps the positive contribution that theology can offer should be worked out better.

distinction between (central) religion and (modal) faith, would constitute an improvement.

²² This is what often happens, according to Troost. In his passionate style, Troost adds that in many cases those in the special sciences just let the theologians (and philosophers) “go on talking”. He concludes: “in my opinion they are quite right in doing so” (45)!

CHAPTER 2. THE “REFORMATIONAL” MOVEMENT

In this chapter I will focus on the contribution of authors that follow and develop the model of Vollenhoven (without ignoring Dooyeweerd).²³ Wolterstorff (1989) calls it the “Reformational branch” of neo-Calvinism. Unfortunately, due to the fact that I cannot read Dutch, I will not be able to provide a solid analysis of Vollenhoven’s own writings.²⁴ I will have to comment rather on the English texts provided by scholars who follow this “line” of thought. I will try to analyze the contribution of authors like Spykman, Van Riessen, van der Walt and others. But I will concentrate especially on Runner’s book *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*.

The similarity with the model of Dooyeweerd, is quite evident. For example, the distinction between scientific and pre-scientific, a certain view of religion and the theory of the modal aspects are essential elements of both models. The respective views of science and antithesis have many common traits. Because of this similarity, this chapter will be shorter than the previous one. However there are a few differences between the two models that are important and that should be analyzed properly.

2.1 Bible and science: which relationship?

According to Klapwijk, the scholars who follow this model promote a more direct interaction between Scripture and philosophy. There seems to be no real necessity of a bridge, of a mediator between the two. In this model Christian philosophy finds its starting point in the Written Revelation (Klapwijk 1987, 106-7). “Of course, for them too the Word of God is a driving and inspiring power” says Klapwijk, “yet they believe that through a direct appeal to Holy Writ, the

²³ According to Bartholomew (2000, 3, fn.1) Calvin Seerveld was the first to use the term *Reformational* in 1959. He tried to “catch several related meanings”. My use of the term doesn’t pay attention to all of them, but especially to the fact that scholars in this movement “build on Dooyeweerd’s and Vollenhoven’s work”. I would also add that usually Vollenhoven is slightly more important than Dooyeweerd in this school. Sometimes, however, the term *Reformational* is used more or less as a synonym of neo-Calvinist, Reformed, Christian and so on (see also fn. 1 in this study).

²⁴ I could however read the two texts by Vollenhoven listed in the bibliography (Vollenhoven 1935 and 1953) in the (unpublished) translations kindly provided by prof. J.J. Venter. Unfortunately, having access only to the translation, I was not able to quote the precise pages of the original text.

light of the biblical revelation must still be allowed to shine in all its fullness in philosophical discourse” (1987, 107- 8). In addition, science investigates Creational Revelation as well. This is in common between Christians and non-Christians. But the Christian scholar refers also to God’s written Word, and this can make a crucial difference.

It is not usual, in this circle, to hear of a religious ground motive that summarizes the Bible and makes it understandable for science. Klapwijk quotes from Vollenhoven a passage that can illustrate very well the position of this school.

“If you believe God’s Word, and trust that Word, you obtain a philosophy the basis of which is formed by that non philosophical, non scientific belief in Holy Scripture and in God” (quoted in Klapwijk 1987, 106, fn. 6).

Klapwijk reveals that in a private conversation, Vollenhoven himself confided to him that in his opinion it was impossible “to summarize the richness of the biblical message in “such a formula” (he meant Dooyeweerd’s religious ground motive)” (Klapwijk 1987, 107).²⁵ Being educated in theology as well, Vollenhoven seemed to resent or to fear much less than Dooyeweerd the “incidental attacks” on exegetical ground. And indeed when one reads authors like Taljaard, it is undeniable that the Bible is referred to continually, in the context of philosophical argumentation.

Runner’s approach confirms this attitude. For example, when discussing the idea of sphere sovereignty, he does not only refer to Althusius, Kuyper, and others who elaborated this idea. He tries to show, in addition, that the idea itself plunges its roots in the Bible. We find in Marshall (1991, 7- 10) the view that sphere sovereignty is derived, basically, from the biblical worldview. But this seems not to be enough for Runner. He prefers to quote specific verses as well!

He starts from broad biblical themes: the heart (1970, 144), then the idea of “office” (145) the central rule of Christ and the church-institute (147). Then when he is ready to discuss the limits of the authority accorded to every sphere, the Bible is quoted more in detail.

“Thus, for instance, the husband’s authority is not derived from the state, of which he is a citizen or subject, but from Christ himself (cf. Eph. 5: 23 ff. with ICor. 11: 3)” (Runner 148).

And he continues, a few lines below:

²⁵ Yet Vollenhoven (1935) did provide his own summary of the biblical text and even called it “groundmotive”! Runner seems to be very friendly as well towards Dooyeweerd’s idea of religious ground motive in the first chapter of his *The Relationship of the Bible to Learning*. Van der Walt seems to be quite convinced of the strategic importance of worldviews (1994). My impression is that, although the reformational emphasis on a direct access to the biblical text is real, eventual (pre-scientific) intermediaries are not totally excluded by all authors. Such intermediaries are given a rather “peripheral” function, and their role is often not analyzed in detail. They don’t become monopolistic “mediators” and, in general, the main emphasis remains on the biblical text.

“With this construction [sphere sovereignty] a great mass of biblical data falls into place, not only the limited authority of the king in the Old Testament theocracy (II Cron. 26) but also such apostolic instructions as are given in Ephesians 5: 15 - 6: 9. The divine delegation of office in the life of the state is clear from many places in Scripture, especially from what Jesus said to Pilate. And the interesting passage in Psalm 82 relating to the judges in Israel (“I said, ye are gods... nevertheless ye shall die like men”) simply cannot be understood apart from a distinction between the office and the man who holds the office” (Runner 1970, 148- 9).

Runner admits that there is no mention of the term “sphere sovereignty” in the Bible. So the “scriptural proof” is in a sense “indirect”. He is not inclined to biblicism. Yet the whole Bible supports the idea of sphere sovereignty, in his view, just as it supports the idea of Holy Trinity, which is nevertheless never mentioned as such in the Bible.

“I am sometimes asked what proof-texts there are for sphere sovereignty (...). No; there are not, if you want a single verse. But at least the theologians among us know that a similar state of affairs prevails with respect to such a fundamental doctrine as that of the Trinity (...). In like manner I would say of sphere sovereignty that its biblical proof is the integral meaning of scriptural revelation; without sphere sovereignty the Scriptures simply cannot be understood” (151).

The purpose of the quotation is to show Runner’s sensitivity to exegetical problems. Spykman shows the same sensitivity towards biblical hermeneutics (1985, 48- 69). The model proposed by this school is fascinating and challenging, provided, I would say, a few preliminary issues may be addressed. There are, in fact, a few questions that might be raised by this type of approach.

- 1) Is philosophy (or any other science) equipped for an exegesis of the Bible? How will it understand the text and avoid arbitrary or incorrect interpretations?
- 2) Can the Bible speak to philosophy and to the other sciences as well?
- 3) And if it can, we have Klapwijk’s question:

“Let us suppose for a moment that Christian theology may be described as theoretical reflection on the biblical revelation (...) where then remains the difference between such a scriptural philosophy and Christian theology?” (Klapwijk 1987, 106).

Unfortunately, it seems to me that a truly systematic answer to these questions is not provided by the supporters of this school, although there are many interesting “hints”. We have for example Greidanus expressing the view that Christian scholarship should make a broader use of biblical texts and perspectives.

“The point is that Christian scholars can make more specific use of the Bible than the general (often rather vague) notions of “my faith” and “the biblical framework”. It will be clear however that by this more specific use we do not mean some kind of proof-text method but the uncovering and use of genuinely biblical themes that have developed progressively in the history of revelation” (Greidanus 1990, 13).

But he does not explain to the vantilian or to the dooyeweerdian if (and how) the Christian scholar is properly “equipped” for biblical exegesis.

We have Taljaard quoting many biblical verses, and yet insisting that he is providing a philosophy and not a theology. But instead of clarifying the matter (e.g. for Klapwijk) he simply says that the difference between the two approaches will appear more clearly in the course of his book (Taljaard 1976, 30). (Knowing Frame’s tendency to consider all sciences simply as “theology”, one might indeed wonder whether the difference will be evident to everybody).

2.2 Is the project viable?

Yet the model is fascinating. And although we miss the systematic answer, we can find here and there, the major lines of a project. One must admit that Runner, for example, offers several guidelines. Furthermore, I would like to supply a few additional thoughts that could represent a kind of “apology” of this model, in order to demonstrate that it is viable.

First of all, we must admit (see the second question above) that this approach implies a view of the Bible that is definitely Protestant. The Scripture is not suitable only for theologians, understandable only by a clergy. No, the Bible is clear enough to be understood by all believers, including the scholar, whatever his field of research is. This view is possible because this model accepts the fundamental presupposition that Scripture presents all the aspects of our experience. The Bible can be read from many perspectives, not only from a pistical point of view.

If we accept that the focus of the Bible is religious (like in the dooyeweerdian model) and not only pistical,²⁶ then we admit that one can read the Bible from different points of view or perspectives. Not only from the perspective of faith. And all these perspectives are rooted into the religious focus of the Bible. If this is true, then the Bible, although not offering any scientific theory, does indeed speak to the different sciences. In van der Walt’s words:

“[the Bible] does not speak in economic categories, but it addresses economics. It does not speak political language, but it definitely addresses politics. It does not use educational concepts but it indeed addresses education. It addresses all spheres

²⁶ I am not sure how it is to be understood Spykman’s choice of the word “confessional” to describe the focus of the Scriptures. It could simply be a synonym of religious, yet the latter adjective is systematically avoided, for some reason (Spykman 1985). “Confessional” could refer to the pistical aspect. If this is the case, Spykman’s position would imply, in my opinion, several problems.

of life including our scholarly activities, but in its own unique way. It focuses on the deepest, the core of our existence (...) our relationship with God” (van der Walt 1994, 88- 9).

We are dealing here with the *purpose* of the biblical revelation and the extent of its authority. Although Olthuis (1976, 15) seems to limit this purpose to a soteriological scope, Duvenage²⁷ correctly points out that:

“A redemptive historical or soteriological narrowing of the scopus of the Inscripturated Word to our mind, goes against the line of thought of the Reformational tradition, as disseminated especially by Calvin, Kuyper and Bavink, but what is more important, it is also against the testimony of the Scriptures. The over-accentuation of the redemptive work at the cost of the creational and upholding work of God leads to a new sort of dualism, viz. that the inscripturated word does have to do with faith, but that the intellect of man should be directed to creation” (Duvenage 1985, 10).

Duvenage prefers therefore another definition of the purpose of Scripture, which is provided by Helberg: “the aim of revelation is that man has to take note of God’s sovereignty and of his communion with man” (quoted in Duvenage, 1985, 10). Duvenage continues with an overview to show that, at least tendentially, Calvin Kuyper and Bavink did maintain a view of Scripture that does not curtail its authority and scope.

Let us now pay some attention to the first question above: can the sciences interpret the Bible? It is often doubted that the different sciences may be equipped for biblical exegesis, especially when we compare them with theology. Yet there is a distinction that should be taken into account in the context of this discussion. It is the distinction between scientific and pre-scientific (Runner 87-130). The Bible is not only open for scientific investigation (exegesis). It is also open to a pre-scientific approach. And pre-scientific does not necessarily mean less correct.

The sciences therefore can obtain information and direction from the Bible on the basis of their pre-scientific reading. Is this reading still “theological”, i.e. depending on theology? No, because theology operates on the scientific level, and we are now talking about the pre-scientific level (the idea that theology can be both scientific and pre-scientific is simply untenable). In addition this reading, being pre-scientific, does not focus on a particular modality (e.g. the pistic modality). In this reading the various perspectives are not distinguished, but are rather merged together.

But is a pre-scientific reading the only way for non-theological sciences to approach the Bible? And are they not, in this case, definitely in a position of subordination when compared to theology? The question is very important. At this crucial point, we have to remember the difference between

²⁷ B. Duvenage is not formally linked to the reformational movement. He is rather a South African theologian in the “school” of H.G. Stoker.

the modal aspects of created reality. Theology performs its own exegesis, which focuses on the pistic modality. Theology wants to solve faith problems and reads the Bible from the perspective of faith. But this does not prevent other sciences from reading the Bible from other perspectives, to find guidelines for their particular fields of study. Therefore the sociologist, for example, can consult the Scriptures according to his own focus, having in mind social problems.

This implies that (see the third question above) sociology, for example, will never be transformed into theology simply because it consults the Bible. There is in fact a crucial difference: sociology approaches the Bible from its own perspective (the social aspect of experience) and with its own questions. Klapwijk shows a rather naive attitude in his question concerning the transformation of philosophy into theology. First he supposes that theology might simply be defined as “theoretical reflection on the biblical revelation” (1987, 106). He shows to be rather unaware of the real field of investigation of theology (Vander Stelt 1989). Secondly he does not reflect on the fact that all sciences investigate reality according to a specific perspective. Why should this not be possible when they investigate the Bible? He does not, in this case, profit enough from a few themes that are crucial in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, namely the distinction between different modalities and their relation to theoretical thought.

It might be that we have only started to consult the Bible. We use it mainly for theological purposes. It might be that its potential for other sciences has remained mainly hidden until now, for several reasons. Conversely, the scientific disciplines are supposed to be lacking all exegetical skills to approach the Bible. We have even tried to separate the Bible from the scientific disciplines because we have been afraid of arbitrary interpretations. We have thought that, to avoid literalism or biblicism, theological tutelage should be promoted. Slowly but surely, in the end the habit determines the rule: *de facto* becomes *de jure*. Perhaps this model can help us to see better. Perhaps the Bible is not there just to inform a Christian theology or philosophy. It can inform a whole Christian scholarship.

2.3 Encyclopaedia

The issues discussed under this heading, are not sharply separated from the issues that can be discussed under the previous heading. This should be acceptable: the way we design the relationship between Scripture and scholarship is often the first step of our design of the relationship among sciences in general. Sometimes, therefore, the issues are discussed under one heading or the other without strict borders.

I have praised the reformational model because it does not introduce a necessary mediator between Scripture and philosophy. Yet we should be aware of the fact that philosophy could still function as a mediator for the special sciences, just like in the model of Dooyeweerd. According to Kok, this is in fact the case in Vollenhoven’s model. Philosophy has a “priority” on special

sciences. It is placed between pre-scientific knowledge and special sciences, as a necessary bridge (Kok 1987, 125).

Yet one could ask if the presence of this mediator is a necessary consequence or only a possibility in the reformational model. Perhaps, when the religious motive is not considered a necessity, and the emphasis is shifted more generically on pre-scientific knowledge and the biblical text itself (like in the present model) the mediating role of philosophy tends to become less important. For example, when Runner has derived from Scripture the idea of sphere sovereignty, will it be necessary to incorporate it firstly into a philosophy of society? Must it become first a philosophical theory in order to be available, at a second stage, for sociology as a special science? Or can sociology, directly, gain this insight from Scripture and elaborate it for itself? If all sciences could do that, we would then have the situation sketched by Greidanus:

“In the discipline of ethics, for example, one can draw on the biblically revealed norms for right conduct. (...) In political science one would be guided by such biblical themes as the sovereignty of God, the God-given authority of government (...) to promote (the biblical norms of) justice liberty and peace, and the required obedience of citizens. In sociology one would take into account the biblical norms for marriage, family, and other social structures. In psychology one would view man not as an animal that can be conditioned, nor as a machine that can be programmed, but as a creature of exceptional worth. (...) In history one would be guided by the biblical theme that God acts in history, that he is bringing his kingdom into the world, and by biblical insights concerning humanity’s origin, purpose, and destiny, the cultural mandate, and the antithesis (...). In economics one would want to take into account the biblical ideas of justice and stewardship, of ownership, of work and play” (Greidanus 1990, 12- 13).

Coming back to Runner, there is a section in his book that makes me think that this model is open for such an approach. I must admit that the section that I consider is not highly systematic, and perhaps I am drawing the conclusion a bit indirectly. In addition, the context is a discussion about “scientism” in theology, and therefore the value of pre-scientific knowledge is emphasized, without paying too much attention to eventual scientific “bridges” between disciplines. Nevertheless, the discussion (Runner 1970, 115 ff.) might contain some important clues.

Runner comments on a discussion, reported by a newspaper, between a pastor and a member of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. The two disagree on the theme of the proper foundation of Christian education. Rev. Koops suggests that Mr. Geerdes is wrong when he looks for such foundation in the doctrine of the Covenant. Therefore he asks: “Is Christian education so bankrupt that it must turn to another discipline to find a foundation for our schools? (...) Let Christian educators define Christian education in educational rather than in theological principles” (116). Mr.

Geerdes replies: “ Our theological heritage is rich with educational implications (...) the ground that to the Rev. Koops is shaking earth, is to me the *terra firma* of God’s truth” (116).

How does Runner react to the discussion? He says that both parties are wrong. On the one hand, the biblical idea of Covenant is not to be called “theology”. But on the other hand the idea of Covenant should not be kept separate from sciences like education (117).

“Indeed the Word of God, which makes us aware of the reality of the Covenant, and of much more, is the Renewing Word which makes both our theology and our education new” (117).

From Runner’s comments we learn that he (1) rejects the necessity of a theological mediator and more in general of a scientific basis for the sciences. He (2) wants to demonstrate that life and pre-scientific experience come before science and are more fundamental. It is science which is based on a pre-scientific ground, not vice-versa. When we look for the foundation of education, therefore, we don’t have necessarily to look for a science (like Mr. Geerde’s theology). But (3) this does not mean that education has nothing to do with the biblical theme of the Covenant (“and much more” says Runner) which can constitute the foundation, directly from the Bible, for pedagogy itself. Most important (4) the necessity of a philosophical bridge is never mentioned.

It might be that Runner still believes in its necessity and simply does not want to mention it here, to avoid complicating further an already complex issue. Yet something new might be potentially at work in Runner. Perhaps his confidence in the Bible allows him to imagine a situation where all the sciences can find in the biblical text guidance and direction, without scientific mediators. Philosophy and theology need not necessarily be “annihilated” in this scheme. What would probably be rejected is their mediating role. But they could remain valid reference points, in dialogue with the special sciences. This is certainly Spykman’s understanding of the role of theology (Spykman, 1992).

The problem with this model, for many, would surely be the danger of arbitrary interpretations of the Bible (see again our first question above). But why should the scholar not be able to pay attention to the same exegetical rules that the theologian pays attention to? The principles for a good interpretation of the Bible are not, in themselves, an exclusive product of theology, and are not understandable only by theologians. These principles are rather (or should in any case be) the result of an interaction between hermeneutics, logic, philosophy, linguistics etc. Such principles are the product of an interdisciplinary effort. Therefore they are nothing so specialistic that only

theologians can deal with.²⁸ Greidanus for example points to several “hermeneutical considerations that should be taken into account by all Christian scholars” (1990, 3-9). His conclusion is:

“If Christian scientists would adopt the same standards in applying the Scriptures to their particular discipline they could avoid arbitrary interpretations of the Bible as needless conflicts between the Bible and their sciences” (1990, 9).

Duvenage (1985, 19- 26) proposes exactly the same idea. With disarming simplicity he delineates “a few orientating remarks so that the scientist who has no theological training might, with the aid of commentaries and concordances, come to a scientific study of Scriptural data relevant for his discipline” (1985, 24). We should not look at biblical exegesis and hermeneutics as at matters pertaining strictly to theologians and forbidden to the others. The Bible is not a monopoly of the clergy, and theology is not the only “tool” for its interpretation. This could constitute a reply to the vantilian school. To the dooyeweerdians, on the other hand, we might ask if the exegesis they try to “bypass” is not in some way already necessary to understand concepts like creation, fall and redemption in the context of the Bible!

2.4 Idea of Antithesis

Authors like Runner and Taljaard are perhaps slightly more antithetical than Dooyeweerd, in their approach. Or at least, let’s say that in their writings they tend to emphasize more often the dangers of the synthetic approach (Spykman 1985).

Taljaard for example, in his book *Polished Lenses* (1976) insists that only the Bible can enable people to look properly, without distortions, at the world around us. Every time that a philosopher does not rely on the Bible for this operation of cleansing, and relies rather on the past philosophies of pagan origin, the result is some distortion. Even Dooyeweerd, according to Taljaard, in many instances relied in some philosophical ideas (often inherited from Thomism) and did not promote the kind of “radical biblical thinking” that is necessary. The adjective “radical” in Taljaard, means especially “without compromise”.

We find the same idea in Runner. He goes a long way to explain to the Dutch immigrants in Canada that Dutch Calvinism is different from the other Christian traditions exactly because it was not born from a spirit of compromise and synthesis. It aimed at antithesis. This is the reason why it could offer real Christian alternatives (1970, 85). Runner can therefore boldly quote the motto: “in our isolation is our strength”.

²⁸ Admittedly, only theologians are taught the biblical languages, and in this sense other scholars are often “limited” in their exegesis. Yet nothing prevents them from learning these languages! Theologians, on the other hand, can also be “limited” in their exegesis when we consider their philosophical expertise, knowledge of ancient history and cultures, literary or logical skills and so on.

Runner, Spykman (e.g. 1985, 79) and Vollenhoven (1953) do not deny that there are moments of truth in paganism. But they cannot be separated from their systems and “transported” into Christianity. Runner’s beautiful exposition of the development of an ontology of the Law in ancient Greek thought is a fitting illustration (53- 60). In this development, says Runner, the Greek philosophers struggled with God’s reality, not with some imaginary problem. It is indeed difficult to try to understand the nature and function of the Law in our world. The Greeks proposed the best ideas that could be forged, and tried to explore all the possible solutions. But they did not have the Word revelation at their disposal, so they could not interpret the Law in a proper way.

Their views are often absolutizations and distortions. Yet the development of their thought is interesting for many reasons. It shows us the different available options. It shows the implications and consequences of each solution. It also shows that these attempts could not offer a real answer. It makes us aware of theories and views that have already been offered and that could be re-proposed in a Christian context, maybe in a modified version, maybe unintentionally.

Vollenhoven (1953) was of the opinion, that those who are interested in the relationship between Scripture and philosophy should consider synthetic thought as very important. The history of non-Christian philosophy remains interesting for Vollenhoven’s “heirs”. But often, its value is in a sense “negative” or indirect. It shows especially the pitfalls of a kind of thought which is not informed by the biblical revelation. Dooyeweerd’s ideas of “common task” or “inter-dependence” are not equally prominent here (although some authors, like Van Riessen, are more nuanced in their view of antithesis).

The best way to proceed, for Christian scholarship, remains “inner reformation” on the basis of the biblical insight (Spykman 1985, 6- 10). Sometimes the threats of non-Christian theories and ideas are subtle and difficult to detect. To play with such doctrines is in any case dangerous. They can enter the Christian reflection and bear their bitter fruits. This happened even with very popular Christian authors, says Runner. It happened with Jonathan Edwards, who is considered by many a “great Calvinist” (81). It happened with New England Puritanism (80). The problem, in each case, was the synthetic attitude.

In Edwards’s case the synthesis was ignited by an irresponsible sympathy for the Cambridge Platonists (80). In other cases it was a synthesis with Scottish Realism. In any case, the results for the Presbyterian theology in North America have been disastrous, especially for its more “synthetic” wing. Concerning the latter, even William James in his *Pragmatism* could say: “It is eclectic, a thing of compromise, that seeks a *modus vivendi* above all things (...) It lacks the victorious and aggressive note. It lacks *prestige*, in consequence” (quoted in Runner, p. 84). Runner’s point is that even non-Christians, often, find the spirit of synthesis in Christianity rather despicable. And there is often a process of deterioration at work in the synthetic attitude of Christians.

“Lacking the truth, the synthesis mind occupies itself with seeking moments of truth in the Lie. Sooner or later, lacking divine intervention, it will find itself *in the grip of the Lie*” (85).

Why are reformational philosophers more inclined to be “integralist”? (Spykman’s term, intended to have positive connotations 1985, 9). Is it because of a certain “candor” that Klapwijk detects in this school of thought? Is Wolterstorff right when saying that it is due to “religious totalism”? Or is the influence of Vollenhoven the reason for a more oppositional tendency? One is tempted to remember, in this regard, that the general structure of Vollenhoven’s method for the study of the history of philosophy, is imbued with the theme of synthesis and antithesis. The three main periods of Western philosophy are respectively a pre-synthetic period (ancient philosophy) a synthetic one (medieval) and an anti-synthetic period (modern). If this is true, we now live in the era of antithesis!

However, it could also be observed that Vollenhoven’s idea of antithesis is slightly “milder” than Kuyper’s one. Being opposed to synthesis, Vollenhoven (1953) tends to shift the discussion from “two kinds of people” to “different approaches” in scholarship. The religious antithesis therefore, is primarily a matter of approaches, rather than persons. In this Vollenhoven agrees with Dooyeweerd.

It is true that Kok finds Vollenhoven’s attitude to be rather antithetical. Nevertheless, at the end of his inquiry, Kok himself feels entitled to say: “I do not think it would be amiss to conclude that in spite of Vollenhoven’s antithetical attitude towards unscriptural philosophy, he also realizes that it is at least a catalyst for Scriptural philosophizing” (Kok 1987, 138). In a similar way, one can notice that Runner welcomes as a sort of blessing, a few currents in modern (non-Christian) science that recognize the importance of the pre-scientific and therefore oppose the attitude of scientism (118- 21). Apparently, although non-Christian scholarship has many faults, there are currents that are more acceptable than others!

2.5 Idea of science

Dooyeweerd’s idea of scientific thought, as we know, has been studied in detail by Van Riessen. Dooyeweerd related pre-scientific thought especially to the structures of individuality, and scientific thought to the modal aspects. Yet according to Van Riessen this does not offer a real description of what happens in reality. In concrete life, scientific thought can deal with individual entities and pre-scientific thought can think “modally” as well (Van Riessen 1992). Other “reconstructions” of Dooyeweerd’s epistemology have been offered in the dooyeweerdian tradition itself, for example by Strauss (1995) and Hart (1985).

However, these modifications do not necessarily imply a rejection of the most basic elements in Dooyeweerd's idea of science. Namely, that science is a normative enterprise, related to laws, and yet connected to religious ground motives. Van Riessen, although finding Dooyeweerd's view a bit "simplified", intends to confirm the idea that scientific knowledge is a knowledge of the law.

"That scientific knowledge can be true or untrue is as such no argument in the present discussion. Still, we need to pause here. According to the view adopted here, the touchstone of whether or not it is true is to be found in the laws. "True" here means an accurate knowledge of these laws, while "untrue" means a faulty knowledge of them" (1992, 65).

In this sense, this model does not imply a completely different understanding of science when compared to the dooyeweerdian model.

Most importantly, there is no doubt that, in this model as well, science is very much related to the religious dimension. In the reformational model science is even dominated by religion, in Wolterstorff's opinion. This is probably the reason why Wolterstorff is particularly severe with "the so-called Reformational movement" (1989, 64). For authors like Runner, the whole of life is religion. Science is therefore shaped, directed by religion. But science has often been regarded, in the West, as more important than religion and faith. How is it possible? Runner's answer is explicit: the role of science can be exaggerated because of scientism (1970, 95- 119). Scientism is however a "faith" (95- 96), a belief that cannot be demonstrated. It expresses, again, a certain kind of religion, that prescribes the absolutization of science.

In concrete life, science is not such an all-important thing. Scientific thought is based on pre-scientific knowledge and experience, which comes "first". Science depends on life: the natural sciences depend on the physico-chemical world, sociology on society, theology on faith and so on. Science does not simply depend on religion only. The two poles of the dooyeweerdian model are basically maintained: religion on the one side but also "states of affairs" on the other. Science develops between both of them. The awareness of this dependence should make us regard science as a "modest" human enterprise.

But the moment scientism takes place, it suggests a strange reversal: science becomes the basis of life and reality! (Runner 1970, 98- 99). Science is the only way to understand life and in the end it constructs reality theoretically. Science in some cases requires the abolition of naive experience in order to produce a scientifically correct view of the world. Scientism presents himself in many sciences. We can speak about scientism in Law studies (111 ff.) or in logic (112- 15). We can speak about logicism, biologism and even theologism. In the latter case, for example, it is theology that "produces" the orthodox faith, through its investigations.

This kind of science, of course, challenges and threatens the Christian religion. Not because it discovers facts that are in conflict with Christianity. But fundamentally because it is shaped by another religion, which absolutizes science and opposes Christianity. Could science, in this model, change even our religious beliefs or commitment as Wolterstorff affirms? Could we lose our religion because of science? The question is not to be found in Runner. But probably his answer would be that only science shaped by a religion which is hostile to Christianity could have such consequences. At least, this is exactly Vollenhoven's reply:

“Whoever loses his faith because of the academe does not lose it as a consequence of any investigation: he lost in the struggle against that unbelief which also supports itself among others with the help of many a pagan tradition in science” (Vollenhoven 1953).

There is another aspect that has a certain importance for a dialogue with Wolterstorff. We have just learned from Runner and Van Riessen that science cannot function without concrete life. It is at this point, as I have said, that a second “pole” for science, apart from religion, is introduced in this model. Wolterstorff should recognize that such normative reference has an important function. The idea might be considered obvious, yet it means that religion cannot be all, for these scholars. Science is the result of the interaction between personal convictions and the data of reality. For Van Riessen, a third element should be recognized as well: the existence of the law (1992, 83). According to him, although an analysis of the structure of science shows that science itself is dependent on belief in several ways, science cannot function only on the basis of belief (1992, 90).

I point out this fact because Wolterstorff accuses this movement in particular of “religious totalitarianism”. Before I start a more detailed discussion (see ch. 5) of Wolterstorff's charges, I think the previous few observations will help forming an initial and non-caricatural picture of the views of the reformational movement.

2.6 The idea of multiple reference points: a preliminary sketch

One question that could be asked to the supporters of this model, is what happens to the “mediators”, once they have been retrenched from their role! The question is not totally inappropriate. After all, the *raison d'être* of a worldview, theology or philosophy, is for many exactly the ability to provide a mediation. Once they are not supposed any more to provide a certain kind of link will they still have meaning? Or will they be considered useless? What will their role be? Will they be cultivated with the same passion, in Christian circles, even when they will no more be mediators?

Klapwijk's solution is very simple: the mediator (worldview) is always there, and it functions as a filter, irrespective of the awareness of the scholar. Even Dooyeweerd's religious motives were in

fact nothing else than worldviews, according to Klapwijk (1987, 109). The problem is that in this case Klapwijk tends to affirm rather than demonstrate his point. Apparently, he can detect a worldview that operates as a bridge even when a particular author is not aware of it, or does not want to use it!²⁹ However, the question that we should pay attention to is another. Is there still a meaningful role to play for philosophy, worldview, and even religious motives apart for their mediating role?

I would like to propose a parallel here, with the role of the pastor in the Protestant churches. The Reformation rejected the mediation of the clergy that was typical of Roman theology. It was said that all believers should have access to the Bible, without being submitted to the authority of a specialized tribunal. There was no more space for a *sacerdos*, mediating between men and God. Yet the pastor retained a meaningful role in the Protestant community. It was no more a magisterial role, but it was still a role: a ministerial one. The pastor did no more represent the *necessary mediator*. Yet he was a plausible and still relevant *reference point* for the Christian community.

I suppose something similar should happen to Christian philosophy, theology and the pre-scientific “mediators”. They should not be considered necessary mediators for “lower” sciences, but important reference points. They should not block the access of other sciences to the Word, trying to bind them to their conclusions. But they should be consulted, and taken into serious consideration. Philosophy, for example, can enrich tremendously other sciences. It can help them to avoid certain mistakes, it can give depth and a broader view.

This is not only true of philosophy or special philosophy of course. Important insights can be offered by theology, history, and basically all other sciences, depending from the particular circumstances. A scholar does not need to become dependent on philosophers or theologians, in order to be a Christian scholar. But it will be wise of him to value the insight offered by other Christian scholars. And probably there are reference points that are more relevant than others for this inter-disciplinary service. Philosophy and theology would not, therefore, become useless once they renounce their mediating roles. The importance of inter-disciplinary studies can be mentioned here, an urgent need and an opportunity that (in my opinion) is still too neglected in the Christian academic community.

I have mentioned especially philosophy and theology: what about the pre-scientific mediators like worldviews and religious motives? They should also be considered important reference points. Science should develop in interaction with them. The mediation of worldviews and religious ground motives is different, in my opinion, from the mediation of scientific disciplines. It does not present the same problems and dangers. Yet it would be better to relinquish the idea of mediation and to see them as valid reference points. I will return on this matter later and I will add more

²⁹ for a discussion of this point see 4.2.

detailed information on the idea of multiple reference points (see 4.2 and 6.1). For the moment it is sufficient just to introduce the idea itself and to indicate its links with a Protestant worldview.

2.7 A comparison with the dooyeweerdian model

I am sure that many have the feeling that the first two models that we have explored could be regarded as complementary rather than alternative. They are rather similar. The main difference seems to be located, as Klapwijk says, in the more direct access of science to the biblical text³⁰ which is promoted by the reformational line. This freedom of access, and lack of mediators, seems to be not only possible for philosophy, but tendentially and ideally for all sciences.

It is also possible to say that Dooyeweerd preferred to use broad biblical themes or perspectives while reformational philosophers preferred to quote precise verses, and therefore to remain “nearer” to the Bible. But Dooyeweerd’s religious ground motive could also be seen as related to precise Scriptural texts (concerning creation, sin, redemption and so on). From this point of view, the difference of approach seems to become rather relative.

The difference seems to be even more elusive when we consider that the dooyeweerdians quoted the Bible more often than is usually thought (see 1.10), and the reformational school was certainly not afraid of referring to broad biblical perspectives. In fact, Vollenhoven himself provided a “summary” of the main themes of the Bible (Vollenhoven 1935). Although it is considerably broader than Dooyeweerd’s “formula”, it remains indeed a summary. Finally, with due respect for Klapwijk’s opinion, Vollenhoven did not quote biblical verses as often as some of his followers... Therefore, I should just conclude that the two models present many similarities and in general they should be seen as complementary and enriching each other. This is also Klapwijk’s conviction (1987, 110).

Yet, in another sense, there is something disturbing in Dooyeweerd’s view of a supratemporal “concentration point”³¹ of Scripture. I would like to explain my worries a bit in detail. Taljaard, Fernhout and others believe this is due to a certain “monarchian” tendency in his thought. They pointed out that he created such supratemporal concentration points also in his anthropology, in his ontology of the law, in his theory of modalities, in his social philosophy and so on (Fernhout 1979 and Taljaard 1976, espec. p.157). If we ask ourselves whether this supratemporal “heart” of the Bible allows a broader access of the sciences to the Scriptures, probably we have to admit that it is not the case.

³⁰ Given the fact that the two models differ in some aspects of their ontology, epistemology and anthropology, it would be interesting to investigate to what extent the difference in the basic approach to the biblical text might be partially responsible for the subsequent philosophical differences.

³¹ Dooyeweerd never uses this phrase to describe the biblical religious ground motive, but rather to indicate the human “heart”. Yet the analogy between the two ideas seems to me quite clear.

My question is: does it tend to create a Bible that is especially open to theological exegesis on the temporal level (the text) and to philosophical analysis on the supratemporal side (the religious motive)? After all, in the dooyeweerdian model, theology remains the only science that seems to be equipped for biblical exegesis. On the other hand philosophy is the science that “discovered”, in a certain sense, the religious ground motive of the Christian religion.

Which science could explain the implications of such a religious motive, its meaning, its three transcendental ideas, if not philosophy? If this is so, the vantilian theologians had some reason to feel that their access to Scripture was a bit “reduced” by such idea of the Bible. Exegesis has no way to analyze the meaning of this supratemporal motive and its implications, while it appeared evident that philosophy could offer several insights (Dooyeweerd 1984, I, 68- 69 and II, 25- 54). And without this access to the biblical ground motive, every exegetical analysis of the biblical text might result in a deformation (Dooyeweerd 1980, 157- 173).

Although I welcome the idea that no science can have exclusive “control” of the Bible, the dooyeweerdian arrangement seems to split the monopoly between two sciences. If this is true, the difference between the two approaches can be seen as more substantial, and due to a specific theoretical architecture in Dooyeweerd. The mediation of philosophy then, could be seen as a structural necessity, not only as a peripheral issue. And mediations, as we know, imply several dangers.

This is, however, only a concern. Probably it can be demonstrated that all sciences can “have access to” the central religious ground motive of the Word Revelation. The possibility is not excluded at all. After all the religious ground motive is a cultural motive, guiding the culture of a certain community as a whole. The philosopher does not have access to it as a philosopher, since the religious motive is supra-temporal. One could even say that a religious motive is not something to be explored and analyzed, something to “have access to”. On the contrary, it is a power that takes control of a scientific community and determines the direction of its research. If this is true, the mediating role of philosophy for all other sciences would not be, strictly speaking, necessary.

The reformational model, introduces a few other questions I would like to mention two in particular. Are we sure that all sciences need to study both revelations in the same measure? It seems obvious that chemistry, for example, will have to insist on Creation more than on Scripture. Will this not introduce again some kind of hierarchy among the sciences? And does it still make sense to say that all sciences have access to the Word revelation? What can geography, for example, get from this “access”?

A second question: if this openness of the Bible to science has always been there, why are we still rather “behind” in the elaboration of a Christian view, in some disciplines? It is undeniable that for some disciplines the possibility of a Christian direction is quite evident. It is certainly so for politics, history, philosophy, theology, education and so on. For the natural sciences, it seems to be

more difficult. Authors like Ratzsch (1986, 136) present as plausible the view that the influence of religion on science might in practice be limited to the humanities. What can our answer be? We will have to discuss these two questions in our final chapter, when looking for a final summary and possibly for a new orientation (cf. 6.2 and 6.3)

CHAPTER 3. THE VANTILIAN LINE

After the exploration of two models that stem from the kuyperian tradition, we should pay attention to a different voice. A voice that in some cases resisted the innovations proposed by the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, although remaining within the Reformed tradition. I am thinking of authors like J.M. Frame, V.S. Poythress and others from the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

They are, at various degrees, the heirs³² of Cornelius Van Til, the famous apologist who interacted with Dooyeweerd on the issue of the transcendental critique of theoretical thought.³³ The interaction with the neo-Calvinist school has continued up to our days, but some disagreements seem to persist as well. Is there a basic difference causing these clashes? Is it a difference in worldview, theology or philosophy? The question, although fascinating, goes beyond the purpose of the present study. We should rather concentrate on the issue of Christian Scholarship. We will do so by focusing on a book from J.M. Frame: *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (1987).

By exploring this new “line” we enter a quite different climate of thought. The vantilian approach focuses more on theology. Terms like worldviews, philosophy or religion (although not absent) emerge less frequently in the discussion. The focus is rather on exegesis, doctrine, biblical texts. The reflections of the vantilian school, in this specific area, have their roots in the Reformation, of course, but also in Protestant Scholasticism and sometimes the views of Thomas Aquinas seem to emerge as well in the background.³⁴

3.1 The relationship between Scripture and sciences

Both Scripture and Creation are forms of God’s revelations according to Frame. Scripture does not have a “centre” or a fundamental theme. If there are “centers” they are many, and none of them can

³² There are other “heirs” of Van Til, those related to the movement called “theonomy”, but nowadays the more moderate vantilian wing has taken its distance from theonomist authors like J.R. Rushdoony, G. North or G. Bahnsen

³³ See a “dialogue” between the two in: Dooyeweerd 1971, and Van Til 1971.

³⁴ When compared with the kuyperian school, the vantilian tradition is usually much more inclined to the appreciation and defense of “Scholastic” Protestantism (see for example: Gaffin 1994, 379- 390). In this review of G. Spykman’s book *Reformational Theology*, Gaffin criticizes the author for not being very fond of 17th century “Reformed Orthodoxy”. A current that, in Gaffin’s opinion, is essential in the Reformed theological tradition. Concerning the influence of Thomism, the analysis of Frame’s view of theology will produce, I believe, sufficient proof.

be regarded as more important than others (1987, 193- 4). This idea looks like a more or less direct reply to Dooyeweerd's idea of a biblical religious motive. The Bible shouldn't be summarized or concentrated, according to Frame. Scripture can be approached directly, in its rich diversity (in a certain sense this is an agreement with the reformational school).

Concerning science, on the other hand, I would like to start precisely at the point where, in my opinion, we find the basic weakness of Frame's view of scholarship. I am referring to the distinction between the one science studying Special Revelation and (all) the other sciences studying Creational Revelation (Frame 1987, 85- 86). Once one accepts this initial duality, the following steps are more or less determined and there is no real possibility of reforming the whole approach. One should, perhaps, indicate the main problem even in a previous distinction: the one between Special and Creational revelation (van der Walt 1994, 62- 70). But even if the latter distinction is accepted, there is no reason to establish a science for the Bible and the others for creation.

When the latter distinction is accepted in a naive form, theology is supposed to be inherently Christian, to be always and only a study (or "application") of God's written word, while the other sciences are imagined as inherently neutral. This view causes a more or less automatic secularization of the sciences that are supposed to be involved with creation and not to have their own access to the Scriptural Revelation. This initial "split" among the sciences reveals a more or less dualistic pattern of thought that grabs from the start the whole reflection about Christianity and science. Unfortunately, this is what happens to Frame as well. Notwithstanding some nuances, theology is basically the science related to the Bible (1987, 85) and the other sciences are related to creation (86). The idea is implied, for example, in the following argument.

"He [Abraham] was too old to beget a son, and his wife was far too old to bear one. Thus he had every "scientific" reason to say that the promise could not be fulfilled. Yet he trusted God's Word, forsaking the obvious scientific conclusion. In that sense, Abraham's theology ruled his science" (Frame 1987, 316).

Frame affirms that in our knowledge there are three main perspectives (normative, situational and existential) that focus on the same knowable reality from different but complementary points of view. Yet this idea does not eliminate the traditional view of theology as related especially to the Bible (73- 75). There are, it is true, attenuation of and specifications to this idea. His theology aims at balance and wisdom, it tries to take into account all factors. In some instances, for example, Frame says that theology does also use, to a limited extent, extra-biblical data. But to be able to comment on this, we must first provide an overview of his model. We will then be in a better position to understand the nuances and the fine details.

Let's come back to the first distinction: science of the Bible and sciences of creation. Probably, the main "technical" reason why this idea is simply accepted in a Reformed context, is that it is difficult to imagine how other sciences could approach the Bible without the necessary exegetical and hermeneutical tools. The idea, is simply regarded as inevitable. We have already discussed this problem in chapter 2.

However, neither in the Catholic nor in the Reformed tradition, theologians have simply been satisfied with this duality within science. Should the division be all one has to propose, it would simply create a "secular" area that could be seen as independent from the sphere of grace. Therefore nature and grace, once distinguished, have to be re-connected in some way.

We know from van der Walt's analysis (1994, 99- 108) that there are different ways of creating this connection and that precisely the way of designing this connection determines the worldviewish identity of the major Christian confessions. The Catholic way, or at least the most accepted way among Catholic thinkers,³⁵ could be summarized and described by the formula *gratia supra naturam* (grace above nature). The science of grace, must direct the sciences of nature and inform them about the superior norms of Special Revelation. Theology, in this case, is not only distinguished from the secular sciences, but it is placed *supra* (above) as well, because the sphere of grace is a superior sphere. The first result is that a certain hierarchical arrangement is introduced among the sciences.

But hierarchy is not all. Frames tries to create a complementarity as well, between nature and grace. He tries to say, for example, that special and creational revelation are both important and can only function together. They should never be separated rigidly. The one explains the other, and they should always be understood as an organic unity (1987, 144- 48). In the field of science, the same cooperation is envisaged: the secular sciences are important even for theology. He tries, in other words, to introduce a renewed appreciation of the natural sphere, to underline its validity and necessity.

But, as van der Walt has warned often, once the initial distinction or separation has been made, there is no successful way of re-uniting the parts: the duality (and hierarchy) remain. As a consequence, although Frame goes a long way to indicate the organic unity of special and creational revelation, he must in the end admit that in his own view the biblical norms are superior to other (creational) norms (1987, 137- 8). This is why theology remains superior, in the end, to the other sciences.

Then he tries to relativize this hierarchy of norms by distinguishing between the Bible, our understanding of the Bible and the different "perspectives" of our knowledge, in order to show that

³⁵ Van der Walt (1983, 60- 87) agrees with Vollenhoven (1953) that there have been other ways as well, for Catholic thinkers, to connect nature and grace, during 20 centuries of activity. Apart from the *grace above nature* scheme, one can

this superiority is neither automatic nor simplistic (163). In other words, if scriptural norms are superior to other norms, my understanding of scripture is not to be confused with Scripture, and is not superior to other norms.

He even introduces the concept of a “circularity” in order to show that there is a circular relationship of inter-dependence among norms and revelations, the ones referring to the others. They do not function independently. On the contrary there is organic unity. Yet he must also admit that this circularity will never abolish the effective superiority of scriptural norms above other norms (89). In the end, the hierarchy of norms must be acknowledged and it is reflected in a hierarchy of sciences. The old idea of a “queen” of sciences, therefore, returns. A bit reluctantly, Frame must nevertheless admit:

“Is theology the queen of the sciences? Not in the sense that theologians are always more correct than other scientists (...) But there is another sense in which theology governs other disciplines. Theology expresses and applies the ultimate presuppositions of the Christian, which must take precedence over all our other ideas. In that sense my theology must take precedence over my geology, or my psychology” (Frame 1987, 316).

And coming back to a previous quotation, concerning Abraham’s faithfulness to God’s Word rather than to “scientific” evidence (when God promised a son to him and Sara) Frame adds:

“Yet he trusted God’s word, forsaking the obvious scientific conclusion. In that sense Abraham’s theology ruled his science; Theology was “queen”” (316).

The distinction between God’s Word and Abraham’s understanding of God’s Word becomes irrelevant here. The same applies to Frame’s distinction between creation and our (Abraham’s) understanding of it. My impression is that the dualistic pattern of thought is strong enough to impose itself on Frame, once he has accepted its basic premises. When we finally compare, for example, the authority of theology and philosophy:

“the theologian seeks a formulation that is an application of Scripture and thus absolutely authoritative. His goal is a formulation before which he can utter “thus saith the Lord”.³⁶ A Christian philosopher, however, may have a more modest goal -a wise human judgment that accords with what Scripture teaches, though it is not necessarily warranted by Scripture” (85).

recognize an attitude rejecting nature and one strictly associating (or even identifying) nature and grace. Vollenhoven however grants that the *gratia supra naturam* scheme had a much greater “recruiting power” in the long run.

³⁶ Note, in these phrases, the identification (or confusion, or close association) of theology and Scripture.

3.2 The nature and role of theology

What is theology, then, for Frame? Is it still a science? Is it more? He makes no mystery about the supra-scientific character of theology. This being “above” does not mean, however, that theology itself is not a science. Supra-scientific must be understood as “not only scientific”.

“Theology is not only a science. It uses not only the methods of science but also those of art, literature, philosophy, law and education. Indeed, since theology must be lived as well as spoken, it uses all of the methods by which human beings accomplish things in God’s world” (Frame 1987, 316).

In the last phrases of this quotation we can already see that theology undergoes such an “inflation” that it tends to include in itself virtually all sciences and activities. In addition, theology is almost identified with religion when Frame says that it “must be lived as well as spoken”. We will return on the problem of theology being sometimes confused with (or including in itself) faith, religion, worldview or even Scripture. For the moment, we have established that theology is more than science.

The idea that there seems to be a definite connection between Frame’s idea of theology and the scheme of grace above nature seems to become increasingly plausible. Although it would be difficult to explore, in a single chapter, all the mechanisms and characteristics of this Catholic pattern of thought, we can simply point out that this basic scheme was also operative in the Catholic idea of the church, of the human being, of science and of society. It divides reality in a sphere of grace and a sphere of nature, and then it chooses one element among others to be placed above, in the sphere of grace. From this position, the superior element directs and controls the lower sphere, where the lower elements remain bound to the sphere of nature (van der Walt, 1994, 99 ff.).

This pattern of thought has been clearly rejected, by the Reformation, in its ecclesiology. But the suspicion remains that many Protestant authors continue to adopt it when dealing with themes that have received less attention by Protestant theology (e.g. science or social institutions). In my opinion Frame’s conception of scholarship might continue to be informed by the scheme of grace above nature, although in some respects the author has tried to modify its most evident expressions. However, the pattern that in the Catholic church demands a distinction between lay members and *ecclesia docens*, seems to be the same pattern that establishes a science of the Sacred and the sciences of the natural.

If we prolong the example of the Catholic clergy, something important to observe is that the same clergy becomes the mediator between God and the lay section of the church. The laity does not have a direct access to the sacred or divine. This is why the clergy provides the necessary

mediation. The same happens with the sciences. Theology becomes a mediator between the Scriptures and the “lay” sciences. The latter do not have a direct access to the Bible but, according to this scheme, they can be directed by theology. My impression is that in Frame’s scheme, only theology is based on the written Word of God, while the other sciences should be (ideally) based on theology. I will discuss this phenomenon especially in section 3.4. But we can recall the idea of mediation even from the definition of theology that Frame provides.

3.3 Excursus: Frame’s definition of theology

Theology, in Frame’s opinion, is an “application of God’s Word by persons to all areas of life” (Frame 1987, 76). We can immediately individuate the two spheres: (a) God’s Word and (b) all areas of life. Theology, in between, performs the necessary mediation, which is essentially an application.

I venture to say, *en passant*, that such a definition is perfect to avoid the critical questions of the dooyeweerdian school. Questions concerning, usually, the field of research or the modal point of view of a science. Frame’s definition, curiously, is extremely vague on these issues. It is also vague on the scientific nature of theology. The latter does not, according to Frame, “study”, for example, or “investigate” something: it rather “applies”.

As we have already noticed, Frame tries to avoid giving theology a clearly identifiable scientific status. This would imprison theology within the bounds of scientific thought. And yet, Frame has to recognize that theology has often been regarded as a science, e.g. by Aquinas. Or take for example the three classical tasks of medieval theology. *Applicatio* was usually complemented by *meditatio* and *explanatio* which were regarded as theoretical activities (Bolognesi 1980, 11- 17). Actually, many Medieval doctors considered *applicatio* as something theoretical as well, something that usually found its expression in disciplines like homiletics and liturgy. Theology, although having a “practical” outcome, was definitely considered a science. How does Frame try to avoid considering theology simply as a science?

First, he reduces the three classical tasks of theology to *applicatio*. Application does not sound necessarily scientific. In Frame’s model application means “teaching” (82). From there it is easier to say that “theory is one kind of application” (84), but not the only possible one: practice is another kind of application. “Theology is thus freed from any false intellectualism or academicism” (81). Theology is a science, but also a practice. It is not primarily theoretical and academic “as opposed to the practical teaching” (85). It can be “lived” (316). It can be applied to “all spheres of life”, without restrictions. One should however ask, *en passant*, why the basic terminology is still derived from the Scholastic tradition. And why the other sciences are not “more than sciences” if they have a very practical impact as well.

Concerning the field of research, as we have noticed, Frame's definition gives us no clear indication. However, there is a clue: theology must apply *God's Word*. How will it apply the Word without studying it first? We can safely assume, therefore, that the field of study is Scripture. However, the definition mentions also "all areas of life". It seems that the sciences of nature help theology to understand these areas of life, where the application is to take place (315).

3.4 Theological mediation

Let us return to the theme of mediation. We have noticed that Dooyeweerd was aware of the dangers implicit in the function of the mediators in science. However, while he concentrated in theological dangers, he considered the mediation of philosophy rather necessary and obvious. The theme of mediation provides us with a rather fascinating sub-topic in this study. It teaches us that behind every scientific theory there is always a human being!

Is Frame aware of the dangers implicit in the function of the mediator in science? As a theologian he should be sensitive to the problems that the doctrine of mediation created for the Catholic church. And in fact there are instances in which he appears to be sensitive to the problem.

"What we must categorically reject, however, is some mysterious, intermediary thing called "the meaning" that stands between the text and its application. Instead of increasing the objectivity of our knowledge, such an intermediary is a subjective construct that inevitably clouds our understanding of the text itself" (98).

In the following quotation, again, the issue is the possible mediating role of something (apologetics) between theology and Scripture.

"Insofar as the apologist (reasoning non- neutrally) establishes such truths as the existence of God and the authority of Scripture, one may say that he is developing a "basis" for theology, but only insofar as he is himself a theologian. It is best to say that the basis of theology is the Word of God. There is no other discipline or body of knowledge that mediates between the Word and the theologian" (88).

Ironically, however, he seems to be aware of the problem only when the direct access of theology to the biblical text is threatened. When the same problem concerns other sciences, Frame doesn't recognize it any more. He even wonders why people should worry about it!

"If we find our "starting point" in Scripture, then it really doesn't matter so much which science is based on which. The important thing is that all are based on the teachings of Scripture, and beyond that they can work out their interrelations as seems wise" (92).

Frame is determined to show an open minded attitude: it is not important “which science is based on which” as long as “all are based on the teachings of Scripture”. But the problem is precisely that in his scheme, it is only theology that is based directly on Scripture. The other sciences are (ideally) based on theology.

Notwithstanding his own recommendations, in the quotation from page 88 Frame is very much concerned about “which science is based on which” (although both theology and apologetics are supposed to “find their starting point in Scripture”). It should also be observed that Frame is willing to concede the role of mediation to the apologist “but only insofar as he is himself a theologian”. Only theologians can mediate between theology and the Bible!

In the same paragraph Frame denounces the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic idea of being obsessed with these problems.

“There are those, such as the great Dutch thinkers Kuyper and Dooyeweerd who believe that “encyclopaedia of the sciences” is terribly important (...) One almost gets the impression that for some Dutch thinkers this is the supreme problem of philosophy, perhaps the only problem, so that once one determines the relationship of the sciences no more problems remain.” (91).

Fortunately, this does not happen in the vantilian circles.

“Interestingly Van Til, Dutchman though he is, seems to be closer to my view (...) In the Introduction to Systematic Theology, Van Til recognizes mutual dependence of different disciplines (...) He argues that the distinction between dogmatic theology and systematic theology is unimportant” (91).

Does Frame realize that systematic theology and dogmatic theology are not at all two different sciences? I have already warned the reader that the issue of the primacy among sciences presents us with several amusing moments, and that even respected authors can assume curious attitudes.

In the same context Frame expresses his fear that the interest of the kuyperian movement for the relationship among sciences may be due to a perverse will of substituting the Bible with some other “starting point”:

“My fear, in relation to the intense concern with encyclopaedia among some thinkers is that that concern represents in part a search for a kind of unequivocal “bedrock”, an ultimate priority, an absolute “starting point” other than Scripture.

I am afraid I cannot follow Frame’s logic in this passage. In which way should the interest about the interrelation of sciences cause the creation of an ultimate “bedrock” that would substitute or even eliminate Scripture? My suspicion is that he sees no real difference between a science based

on Scripture and one based on theology: in both cases the lay sciences would be based “on the teachings of Scripture” (92).

It is probably again the scheme of grace above nature that causes this “confusion” or close association of theology and Scripture. In Roman Catholicism the element that mediates between the sacred area and the inferior sphere of nature is usually strictly associated (even confused) with the sacred reality that it mediates.

The clergy, for example, is strictly associated with the divine. Every *sacerdos* of the Catholic church is an *alter Christus*. The Pope, as *Vicarius Christi* represents Christ on earth. He is the mediator par excellence, as indicated in his title of *Pontifex* (etymologically: builder of bridges!). Mary, as a mediator and symbol of the whole Church, is given titles that are typical of Christ.³⁷ The tradition (the “word”) of the church has equal authority with the Word of God.³⁸ In other words the mediator, who represents and mediates the Sacred, becomes in the end strictly associated with the divine.

This is the deep reason why, in my opinion, Frame sometimes confuses theology and religion (as indicated before) theology and worldview (the two, in practice, cannot be distinguished in Frame) or theology and Scripture. In the following quotation there is an example of the confusion between theology and the Word of God.

“The comprehensiveness of philosophy has often led philosophers to seek to rule over all other disciplines, even over theology, over God’s Word” (p. 86).

Of course, sentences like this are not the rule in Frame’s writings. As a good theologian he distinguishes between Scripture and our interpretation of it. On this point he can even criticize Hodge for not distinguishing clearly enough between the two (77- 80). And yet, in some cases, the identification of mediator and mediated, I suspect, emerges in Frame as well.

³⁷ I am referring, for example, to the following titles that Mary has received in the Catholic liturgy or by way of an official pronouncement by a Pope:

She is the *Regina Apostolorum* (Jesus is also given royal dignity in the Scriptures). She is the Door to Heaven (*Janua Coeli*. John 10, 7 presents Christ as the “door”). Mary is the Mother of God (*Mater Dei*, while Jesus is the Son of God), she is also Mediator and co-Redeemer. Like Jesus she is born without sin (Pope Pious IX, December 8, 1954), and ascended to Heaven (Pope Pious XII, November 1, 1950).

³⁸ The long process through which the authority of Scripture was made equal to the authority of ecclesiastical Tradition is reported in Venter (1981, 52- 132). Augustine identified two main reasons why Christ’s authority is to be accepted: his miracles and the mass of people believing in him (*De utilitate credendi* XVI, 34). The multitude of believers ensures the transmission of a tradition. Popularity and enduring tradition constitute also the authority of the Bible (*De moribus Catholicae ecclesiae* XXIX, 60- 61). But similar reasons confirm the credibility of the Catholic church as well (*Contra epistolam manichaei quae vocant “fundamentum”*, IV, 5,2). Ferrandus and Facundus, in the struggle against state intervention in the ecclesiastical sphere (6th century) modified Augustine’s view by transferring the authority of the church on the Councils (provided they met certain conditions). There are therefore circumstances in which the teachings of the Councils are above reproach. With Lanfranc of Bec this line of thought seems to reach full maturity. In his dispute on the Holy Communion against Berengarius, Lanfranc affirmed that the doctrine of transubstantiation is to be believed because it appears in the writings of prominent members of the clergy (*De corpore et sanguine domini*).

One of these instances is his insistence that, concerning the Bible, “its application is meaning and meaning is application” (82- 85). There is no difference between the two. There is no difference between Scripture and its meaning as well (83). There seems to be, therefore, no difference between Scripture and its applications (84). If the application is correct, what is applied is only the Bible, not something else. The authority of application (i.e. of theology!) is therefore equal to the authority of Scripture. Unless we adopt this position, says Frame, the authority of Scripture becomes “dead letter” (84). He even recurs to the Westminster Confession of faith, that speaks about deducing a “good and necessary consequence” from Scripture (84). The final result seems to be once again a strict identification of the Word of God and its application (theology).

In the next section we will observe another particular “behavior” of theology as a science that is probably caused again, in my opinion, by a Roman Catholic pattern of thought.

3.5 Theological “inflation”

The mediator, placed in the sphere of grace, summarizes in itself, represents and sometimes even “includes” in itself the elements that are placed in the lower sphere. The Catholic clergy, just to remain with the same example, in Italy is referred to as “the church”. The church, of course, includes the lay members as well, but in a certain sense the clergy *is* (the most solid, authentic expression of) the church. The mediator represents the whole church and in the end “includes” the whole church in itself.

A similar mechanism allowed the Catholic conception of society to consider the state (or the church: both can be seen as authorized mediators) as including in itself all the lower institutions of society. The relationship between social institutions was therefore a part-whole relationship, the state (or church) including in itself the whole society.

What happens is that the mediator “invades” the lower sphere and tends to transform the elements contained there into “parts” of itself. After all, as mediator, it has always been their “representative”! Being “in between”, the mediator in the end synthesizes in itself both the supernatural and the natural worlds. He is mediator of both and for both. A consequence of this mechanism, for the encyclopedia of sciences, is that all the sciences that seek to be “based on the teachings of Scripture” tend to be considered as (parts of) theology. They have to be(come) “theological” in order to deal with Scripture.

This is exactly what happens in Frame: a gigantic operation of theological inflation, in which not only the sciences, but all human activities in general tend to become “theology”. I have already quoted the passage where Frame says that theology uses “all the methods by which human beings accomplish things in God’s world” (316). Then, Christian epistemology for example becomes a synonym for “theology of knowledge” (XV). Christian philosophy is “a subdivision of theology” (85). The scientist “will be doing theology (i.e. applying Scripture) much of the time” (86).

Apologetics “can be considered a subdivision of theology” (87). There is “no sharp distinction between the translation of Scripture and theology” (216) and “all confessions of faith and creeds are examples of theology” (310).

Even geography tends to become part of theology, when Frame observes that the sentence “Sacramento is the capital of California” has a theological character. The reason is that:

“Scripture commands us to use all diligence to discover the truth and to live by it. When we seek to obey this scriptural principle, it leads to affirm, among other things, that Sacramento is the capital of California. In one sense then, even beliefs of this sort are applications of Scripture [i.e. theology]” (p. 128).

In addition, “everyone is a theologian!” (including women... assures Frame, p. XVI). He therefore maintains, like Henri Blocher,³⁹ that man is essentially a theological being. Furthermore, “all human actions constitute responses to and applications [note the term] of the Word of God” (319-20). And to conclude, Frame enthusiastically declares:

“all knowing is theologizing!” (Frame 1987, 128).

Stuart Fowler comments this attitude with a few sentences (not directed to Frame) that balance sense of humor and fraternal exhortation in an admirable blend:

“The difficulty then, is that we are using one word to describe several different things that really ought to be distinguished from each other. It is something like entering a fruit shop and using the word “carrot” to describe beetroot, parsnip, turnip and potatoes” (Fowler n.d., 1).

One of the ways to achieve this invasion of everything, by theology, is to relativize the distinction between scientific and pre-scientific (228- 9). Should the latter distinction be taken seriously, theology could be enclosed within the borders of either scientific or pre-scientific reflection. As a consequence theology would then find its own limits. But this is very far from Frame’s intentions.

In fact, we often find in the vantilian circle precisely this resistance against the distinction scientific/ pre-scientific (Poythress 1976, 175 -189). On the other hand, one must understand that this theologization of everything is not always caused by some kind of “imperialistic” spirit. It represents the only plausible solution for those who love the Christian cause but are imbued by the idea of *gratia supra naturam*. They do not clearly recognize the need for an inner reformation in the realm of nature (science).

³⁹ Blocher, a supporter of the vantilian line himself, in a discussion about evolution defines the man “suitable for a covenant with his Creator” as: “*Homo theologicus*, or even better *Homo theologus*” (Blocher 1984, 319 translation mine).

What remains, the only possible alternative, is an external “sanctification” of secular sciences by way of an (external) contact or link with theology. It is the same Scholastic pattern of thought that, in society for example, did not recognize the possibility of a Christian state in itself, but tried to sanctify the state by submitting it to the authority of the Church.⁴⁰

3.6 Encyclopaedia of the sciences: completing the picture

Frame does not discuss the problem of the encyclopaedia of sciences either systematically or openly in his book. I had to deduce his views through a careful scrutiny of the text. From his side, Frame declares that he is not very much interested in this topic (91- 92). Even when it concerns the relationship between theological disciplines the argument is “boring” to Frame (3). Great freedom should be granted to everyone in this area, because “there are many ways of cutting a cake” (i.e. defining the borders of sciences, p. 91). Frame does not realize that the way we arrange our encyclopaedia usually expresses our worldviews.

Surprisingly, however, he devotes a large part of his (429 pages) book precisely to this topic and the picture that he offers in the end is quite precise. A relevant part of his book, after all, is dedicated exactly to issues like the difference and relationship among sciences, theology, philosophy, Scripture, knowledge and so on. Why is Frame therefore so unwilling to admit the necessity of a proper investigation of this topic?

In his opinion it is especially the “Amsterdam Philosophy” that is obsessed by such problems, although he does not quote a single book that has been dedicated to the issue by this philosophical school. Is he really trying to avoid the morbid interests of the dooyeweerdian school? Or is he perhaps aware that he is proposing a model that does not distinguish itself sufficiently from the Scholastic position? Can the reasons of his (pretended, in my view) lack of interest derive from the fact that he does not want to face openly the critical questions of the movement he labels the “Amsterdam Philosophy”?

It is simply not true that all encyclopaedic models are equally acceptable. On the one hand, like all theories, they have implications for scholars, universities and society in general. On the other they express our worldviews and ultimate commitments. There is no doubt, for example, that the Thomistic view of the encyclopaedia of sciences expresses such a commitment. This Roman Catholic model is directly connected to the scheme “grace above nature”. The superior certainty and authority of theology as the science dealing with the sacred, the subordination of the sciences dealing with creation etc., are all consequences of the same scheme.

⁴⁰ I find most telling, in this regard, the following quotation where Frame explains one of the characteristics of an eventual Christian state: “The church elders would come to overshadow the state courts, pretty much the reverse of the situation today. Most disputes within the society would be settled by the church elders. But some state courts would remain (staffed by Christian elders probably, for who else would be wise enough to solve disputes in a godly way?) to serve the small unbelieving remnant of the population” (Frame 1989, 222).

Using another example, the tendency to “free” the special sciences from the influence of philosophy, in some Humanistic circles, shows that there is a link between our view of the encyclopaedia and our general presuppositions. In this case, the encyclopaedic construction reflects the ideal of the autonomy of the special sciences from “metaphysical” presuppositions (Dooyeweerd 1984, 545- 566). It can also reflect a tendency to isolate the field of study from the “whole of the knowable” (Stoker 1970, 197- 98). The main consequence, in recent times, has been hyper-specialization and the disintegration of science in infinite sub-sections. This is what our postmodern universities look like.

It is therefore highly unsuitable to import such models in a Reformed context, even after a few superficial alterations. One may wonder, for example, if Frame would accept with the same ease a conception of the church constructed according to this Catholic basic model. Surely he wouldn’t! He would never accept ideas like a “king of the bishops” or a distinction, in the church, between clergy and lay members. He would stand for the Reformed view. If such a view, then, is so important for the church, why is it unimportant for science or society?

But let us complete Frame’s picture of the encyclopaedia with the analysis of another phenomenon that is directly related to Thomism. I am referring to the idea of *ancillae theologiae*. In the Thomistic scheme, theology is placed “above” the natural sphere. This is, in the end, an uncomfortable position for theology itself. For example when theology wants to bring a contribution in discussions concerning concrete economic problems, political dilemmas and so on. Many do have the feeling that the intervention of the theologian, in some cases, seems to occur “from above” without a real competence in the specific field (Troost 1983, 45).

Being “above” is uncomfortable because it separates the mediator from the sphere of creation. This means that the mediator has no direct access to it. The idea is illustrated by the fact, for example, that the Catholic clergy is not allowed to marry nor to be directly involved in secular affairs like work, business, politics, etc. And yet, the clergy does need social, economic or political support. Where will it find it?

It is the laity that will support the clergy economically, politically and so on. In a sense, ironically, the mediator needs the mediation of the lower sphere! But it would be exaggerated, in this case, to use the term “mediation”. One can rather say that the lay sphere can render important services. It becomes the instrument, the tool that the mediator uses for its own necessities.

The same idea applies to the relationship between sciences: the secular sciences become *ancillae theologiae*. Although they cannot be inherently Christian, they can serve the queen. They become tools for theological support. This is what Thomas Aquinas taught us. It is also what Frame continues to teach today, apparently without worrying for the fact that he comes so near, both in terminology and content, to the medieval Thomistic tradition.

Frame dedicates a long section of his book (25% !) to the demonstration that basically all sciences are “useful” for theological purposes (215- 318). Interestingly, theology always seems to maintain the control of this service. What is proposed is not the idea of a cooperation among sciences and scholars, on the same level. That would not be possible, because there is no equal authority. What is proposed is a theological “use” of the sciences in the lower sphere. The impression is that it is theology that decides the content and the limits of this service. And when theology “serves” the lower sphere by applying God’s Word on its behalf, it is again theology that controls the operation.

Frame mentions many sciences (linguistics, logic, history, natural sciences or philosophy) that are useful as theological tools. But theology in the end, although it can be enriched by the services of other sciences, does not absolutely need their cooperation. The latter can be nice and well, but theology can also proceed alone, with the Word of God. This would not cause great damages to theology. In fact, theology *must* proceed alone when the service of the other sciences is considered to be inadequate or not in line with the Scriptural presuppositions (86). Then “the line must be drawn” and such *ancilla* must be “rejected”. On the contrary, theology is absolutely necessary for the correct functioning of the sciences in the lower sphere.

3.7 Religion and antithesis

Frame’s position is disputable also concerning the issue of antithesis. He tends to draw the line between Christian and non-Christian scholarship exactly on the borders of theology. Or, if we prefer, the antithesis distinguishes on one side theology and the sciences that are oriented by it, on the other side sciences that have no theological guidance. It is in any case theology that creates the antithesis. In addition, the sciences who are theologically directed, as we have seen, tend to be called “theology” themselves, together with faith and religion. We could therefore say, in a sense, that the antithesis divides theology from non-theology!

What Frame proposes is not an inner reformation of science. He proposes, it seems to me, a submission of all sciences to theology. Curiously, Frame never uses the phrase “Christian science(s)”. In one of the main sections dedicated to science (p. 86) he repeatedly uses the phrase “Christians who are scientists”. It is apparently relevant, for Frame, to ask whether the person that studies (e.g.) psychology is a Christian or not. (Probably because, as a Christian, such scholar could be willing to accept theological guidance?) But it seems not terribly important that psychology itself might be Christian. And it is not important that theology may use the services of Christian sciences. One gets the impression that what really counts is that theology may remain in control.

Although Frame realizes that, historically, philosophy has often shown its power over theology, he insists that theology can simply use the philosophy that it prefers. It is, if I understand Frame properly, a temporary use, not a necessary cooperation. And it implies a formal use of

philosophical categories, a use of skills, which doesn't concern the content of a philosophical system. He does not tell us which philosophy he prefers for his theological work. But he tells us: "I do not believe, however, that a Christian philosophy now exists that is reasonably adequate for the needs of the modern Protestant theologian" (318).

And when Christian philosophy is not "reasonably adequate" the theologian feels free to recur to any other philosophy. He is in a position to judge for himself what is suitable as a philosophical tool. It is theology itself that enables this discernment. And yet it is with a sense of concern that one follows the theologian Frame in his dialogue with Wittgenstein (97). He assures the reader that he is just borrowing from the philosopher a few valuable ideas. But one has the feeling that Frame is neither well equipped nor fully aware of the implications he is dealing with.

"That is the account of meaning that I find most helpful: a Wittgensteinian "use view", that is grounded in distinctively Christian norms. That helps to explain my earlier statement "meaning is application" (97).

All the Protestant theologian has to do is to "separate wheat from chaff" (314) and in this way he will be allowed to profit from non-Christian authors.

"There are points at which a discerning theologian, operating on biblical presuppositions, can profit from the insight of non-Christian philosophers. The reader will have noticed favorable references in this book to Ludwig Wittgenstein, Thomas Kuhn, Irving Copi and others. I see no reason why we should not "spoil the Egyptians" by making use of their able minds" (Frame 1987, 318).

One is tempted to observe that the authors he mentions are linked by their irrationalist approach. And one is also tempted to remember Frame's observations against intellectualism (78) and for a more "practice-oriented" view of theology. Does Frame profit from non-Christian philosophers, or vice versa?

The reference to the *Spoliatio Aegyptiorum* is also quite interesting in this context (we will see Klapwijk's use of the same idea). Christian scholars, according to this view, are allowed to "use" non-Christian "materials" to promote Christian scholarship. The Jews performed a similar operation when they, before leaving Egypt, asked for (and obtained) golden objects from the Egyptians. They brought this gold with them into the Promised Land, and the same gold was later used in the building of the temple.⁴¹ Although I will propose a deeper analysis of this idea in the next chapter, I must at least point out, provisionally in this context, that Frame's idea is rather dangerous. The metaphor of the gold used in the temple, hides the problems implicit in every operation of synthesis of ideas (Bos 1987).

Perhaps to illustrate these problems one could recur to a different metaphor: a transplant of organs. It is not possible to simply implant in any body any organ taken from any species. The danger of rejection or even of creating “monsters” is evident. The metaphor should be taken into consideration by any scholar, who imagines that it is possible and easy to “construct” a theoretical system by using or adding “pieces” collected from other systems. This eclectic or synthetic attitude, nowadays, is unfortunately becoming even more popular, in the shade of the postmodern culture. It is not at all my intention to deny that Christians can learn from non-Christian philosophers and scholars. The idea was proposed by Dooyeweerd as well, long before Frame’s book. But in Dooyeweerd we also have an awareness of the importance of the idea of inner reformation. What we have in Frame is, on the other hand, a simple declaration of indifference.

It does not matter what kind of philosophy or science the theologian uses as a tool, as long as theology is in control. All we need is sound theology. Once we have it, we can discern easily, we can keep the wheat and throw away the chaff. We can learn a lot from secular philosophy. “From a Christian philosophy, theoretically, we could learn much more” admits Frame (318). But then, it is only “theoretically” (i.e. in theory). Christian scholarship is not a dramatic necessity and it can wait...

3.8 Idea of science

I have already touched on several aspects of Frame’s view of science in the previous sections. For example, the idea of “circularity”. The ample discussion on theology is also a discussion on Frame’s idea of science. But there is something else that I would like to add in this section. Frame, unfortunately, has not offered a systematic account of the nature of science. Yet we can find many hints in his writings. Christian scholarship is definitely a possibility, for Frame. It is founded on the Bible, which contains the basic presuppositions of the Christian, the Word of God. Theology applies such presuppositions and teachings to the various situations and areas of human life. In the process, theology can be helped by the services of other sciences, more directly related to the area of application of the Word.

Yet this structure of scholarship seems to be valid mainly for Christian scholarship. While scholars like Dooyeweerd (and Wolterstorff to a certain extent) provide a view of science that accounts for the structure of both Christian and non-Christian science, it seems to me that Frame cannot do it. The two types of scholarship cannot have the same structure. The main reason is that theology (see its definition) can only be Christian. Non-Christian scholars do not have a “theology” at their disposal, to guide their science. In fact, non-Christian theologians could not “apply” the written Word of God. Perhaps they might have a philosophy substituting theology, but this would

⁴¹ The Latin phrase (meaning “the plundering of the Egyptians”) refers to the biblical text of Exodus 3, 21-22 and others.

already imply two structurally different “kinds of science”. Christian science develops via theology, while non-Christian science via philosophy...

One can find a sentence in which Frame affirms that theology can be non-Christian (1987, 319-20). But then he immediately adds: “theology as it should be done, can be done only by believers” (320). The statement already prompts a few side-questions. Is this true only for theology? Is science also properly conducted only by believers? Or is it well conducted by non-Christians as well? Does Frame imply that when non-Christian scientists are successful (e.g. in some discovery) they become Christian theologians? The question is not merely provocative: it seems difficult to deny that in such cases there has been a correct “application” to a certain area of life. And truth has been the result...

But the main question remains to know whether a non-Christian theology is thinkable. Frame assures: “of course the ungodly can do theology” (319). But how can the “ungodly” apply the Word of God that, in some cases, he doesn’t even know? Frame probably realizes the difficulty here. He tries to solve the problem by saying (320, fn.1) that God’s Word is “known not only through Scripture, but also through nature”. But theology is not supposed to investigate or to apply “nature”! In addition, following this argument, creation, as a revelation would be “applied” to creation as an “area of life”: creation applied to creation! Which sounds rather strange.

Probably, in the case of the non-Christian, Frame would maintain that his presuppositions or his scientific discipline “function as” theology. “For all human actions constitute responses to and applications of the Word of God” (319- 20). It is to be expected that, in a system in which everything tends to be regarded as theology, something to be called “theology” in the end will be found within non-Christian scholarship as well! Something; but not a separate science, parallel to Christian theology and yet applying the Word of God, or another “word”, or belief. This is in fact not available to non-Christian scholars. At least not to all of them. It might be possible perhaps to speak about an Islamic scholarship, developing via Islamic theology. But there is no Marxist scholarship developing via a Marxist theology.

One could observe, in conclusion, that when Frame says that philosophy is part of theology, he means “Christian philosophy” (85). The impression is re-inforced, therefore, that true theology cannot contain in itself non-Christian elements. The idea of a non-Christian theology, in the end, probably remains for Frame a contradiction in terms. The consequence is that the Christian and the non-Christian models for scholarship are not only directionally but also structurally different. And this is a problem deserving attention in the present model.

Another serious (potential?) problem is what Wolterstorff (1976, 24- 58) calls foundationalism. Foundationalism is the idea that there is a foundation of indubitable propositions that are demonstrable to all and constitute the basis of true science. From these propositions one can derive, using logic, indubitable axioms. From this arsenal of axioms it is possible to deduce, logically,

other truths. The latter are regarded as valid because they are “founded” on the indubitable foundation. Together the deduced truths constitute, therefore, correct science. The whole approach is characterized by a solid rationalism.

Does Frame have anything to do with this approach? I have already mentioned his view that an application of Scripture is as authoritative as Scripture itself (84). In the Christian tradition the Bible was sometimes seen as the arsenal of indubitable propositions provided by God that were rational themselves. By using logic, it was possible to deduce the “good and necessary consequences” from the store of truths and to construct, therefore, true and authoritative theories.

It is true that Frame seems not to correlate strictly application (theology) and rationality. I have even suggested that there are instances when Frame seems to prefer irrationalism. He does not regard theology only as a science, as we know. He does not emphasize logic in the application of the Word of God. Yet here and there, one finds “strange” statements:

“Certainly God’s truth is coherent. God is a God of order, not of chaos. (...) Therefore our God is rational and logical. Coherence then, is a mark of his truth” (1987, 133).

In this context “coherent” seems to mean “logically coherent”. God himself is logical, therefore the Bible is logical (cf fn. 9 and 10 in this study). Its “internal coherence” and “cogency” can be demonstrated in a logical way to all, even to the Muslim. The latter will be “able to see the cogency of the Christian circle [circularity] and the implausibility of his own” (132). In addition, Frame affirms that one of the three perspectives of our knowledge, the normative perspective, “represents a kind of Christian rationalism” (133). I have not reached yet a clear conclusion on the issue. I don’t want to attribute to Frame ideas that he doesn’t accept. Yet it seems to me that the doubt, at least, should be allowed (cf. 1.3).

3.9 A few evaluations and suggestions

It could be said that my reading of Frame is too severe. Frame does not openly support any Thomistic or Scholastic line in general. He never mentions the scheme of *gratia supra naturam*. He admits ideas like “the queen of sciences” only in a limited sense. He offers ideas that appear as innovative. He supports the necessity and validity of general revelation, which he sees as organically united to Special revelation. He supports the validity of all kind of sciences, including non-Christian sciences. Is my evaluation of Frame too narrow minded?

In my opinion, one can find, it is true, sentences that seem to alter Frame’s basic system. But then one finds also statements that pose clear limits to the experiment, and it seems to me that the fundamental scheme of grace above nature is in the end left intact. In Frame, this basic Scholastic

pattern of thought is mitigated, and left “open”. And yet it is left intact. I would like to offer an example.

I have said that theology, according to Frame is a study of the Bible. Yet one can also find instances in his book where he says that theology is not limited to biblical data but uses “extra biblical data” as well (215). His definition of theology is non-exclusive and he is ready to recognize the validity of other definitions. One can say, if one prefers, that theology conveys information about God (76; 321). Did we really understand, then, Frame’s position?

Concerning the idea of theology as study of God, I would say that Frame means that it is always the Bible that must be examined, in order to obtain this information. So there is nothing really new in the statement. Concerning the idea that theology uses extra-biblical data, we must take into account the mechanism of “theological inflation”. Theology, according to this view, studies creation by including in itself the sciences of the lower sphere.

From a slightly different point of view, theology studies extra-biblical data through the “mediation” of the sciences in the lower sphere. “Sciences analyzing such data serve as “tools” of theology”, says Frame (215). Finally, these extra biblical data form a limited source of information for theology, while Scripture remains the main source. Likewise, creation is the main source for the other sciences (85- 6). The classical and basic position is enriched and presented in a refined version. But basically it remains the same, so that Frame in the end can simply say that “theology is the use of Scripture” (215).

I still believe that the first mistake that Frame commits is to accept the necessity of a science of special revelation as distinct from the sciences of general revelation. This basic division is responsible for the subsequent moves and one can say that the whole model is already “implied” from the start. He does not need to invent anything here: he just follows a well established tradition. The origin of this tradition, however, is not in the Reformation. This should be enough, in itself, to suggest a more careful attitude.

But something more specific should be said on Frame’s model, in order to show that it is not at all inevitable and that alternatives are available. I have already said (see 2.2) that there is no reason to suppose that the Bible is a book especially open to theological inquiry. Scripture is directed, according to the Reformed tradition, to all believers! Let us quickly summarize the discourse already elaborated in the section devoted to the reformational school.

Theology conducts its own exegesis, which is “in line with” the faith modality. But this does not prevent other sciences from investigating the Scriptures along other lines, focusing on other modalities, in order to find answers to problems of their own (social, economic, historical questions). Theology does not have a monopoly on the Bible, nor should be considered the necessary mediator of the Bible. I have also said that the hermeneutical expertise is not in itself a

theological tool, and that the Bible can be read also in a pre-scientific way that does not imply scientific (theological) expertise.

A contribution that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven could offer to Frame's model would consist in defining the nature of theology more accurately. This requires a limiting of its extension. Some scholars did not like this operation.⁴² This "limiting" however, should not be interpreted in a negative sense. Theology, trying to be everything, ends up simply being nothing! Only an accurate definition of its nature can rescue theology from loosing its identity. According to Kok (1988, 119-124) Vollenhoven rightly insisted on the necessity of finding the *grens* (border) of all disciplines not only of theology.

Theology, according to Dooyeweerd, is first of all a science (1984, II, 562). This means that it is neither pre-scientific, nor supra-scientific in character. Therefore, reading the Bible, drawing confessions of faith, praying etc., although being possibly link-able to the scientific level, are not scientific activities and therefore should not be regarded as "theological" activities. Dooyeweerd provided a clear distinction between scientific and pre-scientific, although, as pointed out before, many vantilian theologians argue that the difference between the two is only gradual and cannot be clearly defined (e.g. Poythress 1976, 175- 189). But theology, we insist, must be distinguished from religion, faith, worldview and Scripture and recognized for what it is, if it wants to avoid the traps of the Catholic schemes of thought.

In addition, for Dooyeweerd theology was a special science (1984, II, 662- 3). This means that its field of study is delimited by a specific point of view, which is the faith modality. Theology is not different from other Christian sciences. It studies (in the light of the Word of God) the whole creation, but from a specific point of view: the modality of faith (Vander Stelt: 1989, 19- 21). Theology focuses on faith-life, tries to solve faith problems, and reads the Bible from this perspective being its exegesis also focused on faith issues. Other sciences approach the Bible from a different focus.

This alternative view would free the theologian from the absolutization of the pistic modality and of theology, a process which is in the end an illegitimate form of reductionism. These processes have been studied deeply by Dooyeweerd, especially in relation to Humanistic philosophy and I don't need to say more on the topic.

However it is necessary to point out a final and potentially negative consequence of Frame's line of thought. The inevitable consequence of his scheme is the neglect of the "secular" sciences. If their reformation is not terribly important, their cultivation as well is not crucial. It will always be more commendable, for a devout Christian, to study the science of the Bible, rather than the sciences of creation. And even though Frame does not realize it fully, this would amount to a

⁴² See for example Stoker's comment: "according to my opinion theology should not be "degraded" to a mere particular science (*vakwetenschap*) as the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* does" (Stoker 1971, 456).

severe impoverishment of Christianity. Deprived of authentic expertise and leadership in education, politics, journalism, artistic activities, psychology, sociology, economy, law and so on, Christianity would become more and more irrelevant and society in general would suffer, in the long run, the loss of a Christian voice within our culture.

Christianity would then be reduced to theology and the church, a risk that is already quite relevant in today's world. We would eventually end up with a Christianity enclosed within the walls of the church, and with a theology that imagines it can face all the needs, without having the resources to do so.

It is not accidental that the vantilian school, in general, has not yet produced anything relevant outside the field of theology and apologetics! While the kuyperian line has been active all around the world in the creation (or support) of Christian schools, universities, political parties, artistic centers, a philosophical movement, labor unions and so on, the vantilian line (even including its "theonomic" wing) cannot be said to have been active in anything outside the church and theology studies. We have to take into account that the kuyperian line is older, and therefore it had more chances and more time to develop its programs. But it seems to me that the real issue is not one of time, but of vision. The vantilian vision, although not well known by the scientific community in the broad sense, today has a huge impact on many churches and theological institutions. It could become the vision of a large number of Christians. Yet Kuyper's warning, pronounced more than a century ago, is still relevant for the vantilian project today:

"If we console ourselves with the thought that we may without danger leave secular science in the hands of our opponents, if we only succeed in saving theology, ours will be the tactics of the ostrich. To confine yourself to the saving of your upper room when the rest of the house is on fire is foolish indeed..." (Kuyper: 1978, 139).

CHAPTER 4. JACOB KLAPWIJK: TRANSFORMATIONAL PHILOSOPHY.

Moving from Frame to Klapwijk, the reader will gradually start to experience the atmosphere of the so-called Postmodern times.⁴³ With this new model we recognize that, for Reformational philosophy, a previous phase of “boldness” is gone, and there is now a tendency to be more careful, more modest perhaps, more uncertain. The last two models that we are going to analyze seem to be more “personal” as well. They have not produced large “movements” or “schools”. Perhaps, in Klapwijk’s case we should not even speak of a new *model*. We are rather introduced to several suggestions that would provide a number of modifications to the “classical” models of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Klapwijk develops his own views especially in dialogue with these two “fathers” of neo-Calvinism. The proposed changes, for scholarship, concentrate especially on the role of worldviews and the impact of the religious antithesis. In other areas, Klapwijk often agrees with the previous models.

Let us begin with the analysis of yet another proposed mediator: the worldview is invited by Klapwijk into the philosophical discourse, as a necessary bridge between philosophy and Scripture. What is a worldview for Klapwijk? He does not attempt a very systematic explanation. He rather praises Olthuis (1989) for not trying to offer a too strict definition of worldviews. A worldview, he says, is a fragile creature: by trying to grasp it firmly, one might kill it (Klapwijk 1989, 42).

4.1 Bible and science: the mediating role of worldviews

Klapwijk has a new proposal to offer, in the discussion concerning the relationship between Scripture and science (i.e. philosophy). In his view the “missing link” between the Bible and philosophy is exactly “the so-called life and world view” (1987, 108). The reason why the philosophies of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven are so similar, for example, is to be found in the use of the same (Reformed) worldview.

⁴³ I say “so-called Postmodern” because I am not sure whether we have really entered a new historical and cultural period that is sufficiently different from Modernity itself. My use of “postmodern” tends to mean late- or hyper-modern.

“Thus Vollenhoven could speak of “Scriptural philosophy” and Dooyeweerd could mention a “central biblical ground motive” as long as (...) in doing so they understood “scriptural” and “biblical” within the historical tradition of the “calvinist” worldview. The context provided by this worldview (...) can be traced in retrospect as the binding element” (Klapwijk 1987, 108).

Klapwijk is aware that his view “is fraught with not insignificant systematic considerations” (109). He is aware that “perhaps some will experience this turn to matters of worldview as a historicizing, yes a relativizing of our own position” (109). Yet the latter is not Klapwijk’s intention. “My position does not imply a kind of Christian relativism”, he assures us (109). His purpose is rather to show two things. First, all philosophy has worldview roots, not only Reformed philosophy. Secondly, Reformed philosophy is neither simply founded on Scripture, nor driven by a religious motive. It rather “has concrete historical roots” in a certain worldview (109).

Klapwijk wants to show, in practice, that what Dooyeweerd called “religious ground motives” in the Western philosophical tradition, were actually worldviews. In fact “according to the doctrine of the religious antithesis”, says Klapwijk (109), one can speak at most of two religious motives: the biblical and the unbiblical one. According to him, Dooyeweerd had rather in mind “four religiously oriented worldviews” (109), and it is not difficult to see that he borrowed the idea from the *Stone Lectures* of Kuyper “who speaks there (...) more specifically, of paganism, romanism, modernism and calvinism which he calls all-embracing worldview positions” (109).

It was only because Dooyeweerd was actually speaking of worldviews that he could show how religion, via the so called “cosmonomic idea”, can influence philosophy.

“Yet such an endeavor is impossible if indeed religion, in the Dooyeweerdian sense of ultimate commitment, is at stake, because religion transcends all scholarly exposition” (109).

Dooyeweerd could accomplish his task because he demonstrated not how religion, but how worldviews do enter philosophy (109).

This view has, for Klapwijk, two immediate consequences. First, the difference between the models of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven is relativized. The one spoke about the “inspiring power” of religious motives and the other appealed to the “witness of Holy Scripture”. But the two should be seen as complementary: “for in living with God’s Word the Christian receives both instruction and inspiration” (110).

Secondly, Klapwijk comes back to a previous observation: “Vollenhoven’s philosophy entails a serious difficulty, namely the question of its relation to theology” (106). Now he can say that, for those who accept his view, “there is no need to convert such a “scriptural” philosophy itself into theology” (110). Klapwijk means, if I understand him well, that the introduction of the worldview

between philosophy and Scripture allows philosophy not to be, directly, “a theoretical reflection on the biblical revelation” (106). Philosophy would rather be a reflection on the biblical worldview, thus avoiding to be confused with theology.

But now Klapwijk has to face the possible objections of those who could consider his operation a relativizing of Christian philosophy. Klapwijk declares, as he did in another contribution (1989), that he has no sympathy for such a “German romantic and historicist notion of *Weltanschauungsphilosophie*” (1987, 110) as promoted for example by Dilthey. He is fully aware of the dangers implied in this “expressivist” vision of philosophy (the latter as mere “expression” of a particular worldview). Such a philosophy would forfeit its claim to universality (as already discussed in 1.4) and Klapwijk here agrees with Dooyeweerd.

“Although philosophy is inevitably conditioned by worldview, that cannot mean the philosopher’s task is restricted to giving philosophical articulation and expression to the *Gemeingeist*, to the spiritual heritage of his group. With such an “expressivist “ vision of life (C. Taylor) calvinists, catholics and humanists would foster spiritual in-breeding, yes, contribute to a perspectivizing of the truth” (Klapwijk 1987, 110).

Klapwijk, however, does not provide more explanation, in this article, to those who fear his relativism. He just refers (in footnote n. 17) to his contribution of 1989 for a clarification of his views.

The problem is that Klapwijk never answers this question in his contribution of 1989. In the latter he points out that it is necessary to safeguard both the universality of philosophy (Dooyeweerd’s concern) and the impact of worldviews (Kuyper’s concern, in Klapwijk’s view). In order to do so, he declares that a transcendental and hermeneutical idea of philosophy is needed. Transcendental because it recognizes the transcendental presuppositions of theoretical thought: worldviews and religious motives. Hermeneutical because only in a hermeneutical analysis can an account be given of the impact of worldviews on philosophy (1989, 54). Unfortunately, Klapwijk continued to delay a more systematic elaboration. The article is concluded by these words:

“I shall break off my contribution at this point. It would require a separate article (...) to explain how such an idea can allow both worldview commitments and well-founded claims to universality” (1989, 54).

4.2 Preliminary comments

One is tempted to join Dengerink in the complaint (1988, 29) that Klapwijk’s writings do not show a solid systematic nature. And one is also tempted to attribute it, just intuitively, to the late-modern atmosphere in which we philosophize. The times of the lengthy discussions, of the *opera magna*

are gone. Perhaps we abhor the too systematic endeavors because, like narratives, they try to explain everything. Yet perhaps we are left with more fragmentary products and we already miss a bit the strive for “complete” systems of a Dooyeweerd or a Vollenhoven...

I would like to begin my comments from the fact that Klapwijk does not see any danger in mediations in general. Yet it must be pointed out again that every mediation usually implies the fact that the relationship between the two factors that we try to link (e.g. Scripture and science) becomes more distant, not closer. The direct “access” is denied. The only way for science to know the Bible is, in the specific case, through the worldview, with all the limitations of the latter. In a sense, one could even say that philosophy has no way to know the Bible; it knows only worldviews.

In my opinion, therefore, the first problem of Klapwijk’s proposal lies exactly in the fact that he proposes a new mediation. In Klapwijk, as we will see in the next section, the mediations are even multiplied. The worldview is the mediator for philosophy, but what about the special sciences? Most probably philosophy itself remains their mediator.

However, I consider the kind of mediation proposed by Klapwijk as less “dangerous” than the mediation of theology or other sciences. The reason is that a worldview can be seen as a “common denominator” of all sciences, their common ground. It is not the “property” of a particular science which then becomes a kind of “owner” or interpreter of the Bible. The mediation of theology, for example, tended to place, historically, this science above the others, creating all the problems related to the devaluation and secularization of other sciences. In my view, the mediation of a worldview is less dangerous. The worldview might be considered as the pre-scientific background of each science and it might not obstruct the access of each science to Scripture in a radical way. However the fact remains that the access to Scripture is probably hindered, rather than promoted, by such a mediation.

I propose (see 2.6) to substitute the idea of mediation itself with the idea of “reference point(s)”. A worldview, for example, can surely function as a reference point for a Christian science, without excluding the direct access of this science to Scripture, or to a religious ground motive, or to other sciences. I would list, among these reference points the religious motive, the worldview, philosophy, special philosophy and special sciences as well. All these elements can constitute legitimate reference points. They can all be consulted (e.g. by a special science) to receive information in a Christian perspective. These reference points do not exclude each other and more than one can be consulted at the same time: there is no rigid sequence to be followed. I am not implying that all reference points have something to say in all circumstances or that they are all equally important. But they should always be consulted, when they have something to say. A broad consultation of these reference points would be a guarantee of sound scholarship.

This is perhaps what van der Walt has in mind as well, when he supposes an interaction, in human knowledge, between (the Scriptural text), the religious motive, worldview, philosophy and

sciences (1994, 123-26). As I understand it, in van der Walt all “phases” of knowledge are continually accessible to the scholar in a continuous and complex interaction. The increasing complication of the perspectives, from religion to science, is recognized, but this does not create a rigid system of subsequent “filters”. In addition, there is a “double sense” of influences, says van der Walt (1994, 125). Science, for example, influences our worldview as well. There is no simplistic “one way” direction. Perhaps one could still argue that there is a strong *sequentiality* in this scheme, and that each element seems to be in contact mainly with its antecedent and subsequent. However, in real life, it seems to me that all these elements are connected in a complex network. Religion influences science, science influences philosophy and worldviews, worldviews influence our understanding of the Bible, and so on.⁴⁴

If this is the concrete functioning of things, why worry so much about the models which propose different kinds of mediation? After all, such mediations are not real. However, although these mediations do not function in practice, still the model has its influence. It can lead the Christian community, for example, to an over-estimation of worldviews, the relativizing of truth being among the possible consequences. It can also lead to the over-evaluation of some sciences and to the neglect of others. In both cases scholarship is damaged.

The idea of multiple reference points allows to re-consider a question that we have formulated in 1.4. Does the worldview play no role at all in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy? Dooyeweerd, although recognizing the existence of worldviews, excluded their impact on his philosophy. Klapwijk, on the contrary, detects in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy (and in every philosophy as well) the full mediating role of a worldview. The idea of multiple reference points could suggest, in this context, a different state of affairs.

Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, probably, was not simply “based” on a mediating worldview, as Klapwijk believes. Yet it was not totally severed from it (as Dooyeweerd perhaps thought?). In Dooyeweerd’s opinion, worldview and philosophy grow, like two distinct plants, next to each other and on the common soil of religion. Yet one can still suppose that there might be some cross-fertilization between the two plants! After all, as Vollenhoven said “scientific knowledge never loses all traces of what is non-scientific” (quoted in Klapwijk 1987, 108, fn. 11). The worldview functioned in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy as a reference point.

One might argue that even such an indirect influence of the worldview tends to historicize philosophy. But then, if the reference points are many, there are other influences on philosophy that compensate and balance such tendency. The impact of worldviews on philosophy does not exclude other impacts, influences and references. When the “references” for philosophy are *multiple*, the risk of one-sided emphasis is reduced.

⁴⁴ Wolterstorff would go as far as maintaining that science can even change our religious commitment. But on this delicate point I maintain a reserve. It will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to Wolterstorff (see 5.7 and 5.8).

The idea of multiple reference points, for example, would solve Klapwijk's problem of guaranteeing both the claim to universality and the historical situatedness of philosophy. First of all, worldviews are not shaped only by everyday concrete experiences but by (universal) religion as well. It is in their nature to be historically conditioned while at the same time claiming general validity (van der Walt 1994, 45- 46). Secondly (and more important for the present argument) if philosophy is under the influence of a plurality of reference points, it will not only claim either universal validity or relativity. The "historicizing" effect of the worldview can be balanced by the universalizing effect of the religious ground motive.

The idea of multiple reference points is indirectly suggested by Groenewoud (1987, 175) as well when he says that the mediating role of the worldview, should not be eliminated but just reshuffled, reduced a bit by Klapwijk. I agree with this suggestion. But the idea itself of mediation is jeopardized when we consider its "reduction". A mediator is not a mediator if it allows another access to the Bible, independent from its mediation. The alternative is to substitute it with (a multiplicity of) reference points. The mediation of the worldview for the sciences is less dangerous than others, as I have suggested before. But at the same time I do not believe that the introduction of a worldview into the picture might result in the universal *panacea* that Klapwijk sometimes seems to have in mind. Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and others offered good philosophical theories without referring explicitly to the worldview. The latter will not solve all the problems, although it can, I believe, constitute a legitimate reference point among others.

Klapwijk's argument is that both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven did use (without being aware of it!) the Calvinist worldview. But how does he know? How can we detect the presence of a worldview even in the philosophies of authors who did not want to refer to any worldview? His answer is that the worldview's presence explains why their philosophies are sufficiently similar (1987, 108). But was not their basic religious motive also the same? Would this not explain the agreement between their philosophies as well as the disagreement with their Catholic, Lutheran or neo-Orthodox colleagues, all depending on another religious motive?

Klapwijk's objection, probably, would be that religious motives "transcend all scholarly exposition" (109). Therefore they cannot have a direct impact on philosophy. Yet Dooyeweerd's efforts to demonstrate the link between religion and philosophy should not be dismissed in such a haste. They deserve a bit more consideration. I am not only thinking of the transcendental critique, that tried to prove the existence of this inner contact between religion and theoretical thought. I think also of the lengthy and detailed discussions provided by Dooyeweerd to show how a religious ground motive directed, historically, the concrete developments of philosophy (1984, vol. I).

I have already discussed (see 2.2) Klapwijk's concern about philosophy being confused with theology, so that the "solution" offered by Klapwijk (philosophy based on worldviews) can be considered unnecessary. Klapwijk's solution, in fact, creates even bigger questions. Firstly,

philosophy in order to be distinguished from theology, is condemned to be separated from Scripture. This appears quite evident from Klapwijk's idea that the problem is solved with the introduction of a worldview between the two (which causes their separation)! In this way Scriptural philosophy cannot be confused with theology, but one has to admit that the adjective "Scriptural" is indeed weakened in the operation.

A second question: in Klapwijk's view any "theoretical reflection on Scripture" is to be called theology. Is the Christian worldview "theological" as well? After all it is formed (in part at least) by the interaction with Scripture. If the answer is positive, we end up in a position which is not very different from the model of Frame: theology as the real mediator for philosophy. Yet it might be possible that Klapwijk calls theology only the "theoretical" reflection on the Bible. This is the traditional view of Dooyeweerd. The issue, however, of the relationship between worldview and theology is not discussed at all by Klapwijk.

Finally, there are a couple of questions that cannot be ignored. The first one is posed by Groenewoud (1987, 167). Does Klapwijk's model really explain the relationship between Scripture and science better or does it simply "shift the discussion to the question how a worldview may enter into philosophical discourse"? The second question is posed by Geertsema (1987, 160). Is a transcendental critique of theoretical thought, in the dooyeweerdian sense, still possible for Klapwijk? The possibility of such a critique is given, for Dooyeweerd, by the recognition of an inner point of contact between religion and theoretical thought. And in Klapwijk's model this direct contact is no more possible. Both questions insist on problems that are related to the theme of mediation.

4.3 Encyclopaedic view

Unfortunately Klapwijk does not offer an encyclopaedic view of the sciences. He rather concentrates on the relationship between philosophy and Scripture. We have to acknowledge this limit in his discussion of Christian scholarship.

We can only speculate on the reasons for such a gap. Is Klapwijk simply satisfied with the "classical" view of the Association? In this case we should have philosophy as a mediator for the special sciences. In addition, we have the mediation of the worldview, for philosophy. The worldview is the mediator for philosophy, but most probably philosophy is the mediator for the special sciences, according to the traditional view of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. The problem, in this case, is that Klapwijk would deprive the special sciences of the mediation of the worldview that he considers so beneficial and essential for philosophy. The question would then rise: why such a radical difference between philosophy and the special sciences? Is it not a pity that all the advantages that Klapwijk sees in the mediation of a worldview are excluded from the special sciences?

Another possibility would be to acknowledge a sequential “double mediation” for the special sciences (worldview’s plus philosophy’s mediation). But are we not then instituting some kind of “chain” of the mediators? In another article Klapwijk recognizes also the existence of religious ground motives (1989, 54) as a “transcendental presupposition” similar to the worldview. We can therefore suppose that between the Bible and the worldview there is another mediator, namely the religious motive. This is why, in the previous section, I have said that in Klapwijk the mediations are even multiplied. Geertsema believes that according to Klapwijk “the contact between religion and science takes place via a number of intermediate levels”. And further he says that “Klapwijk identifies these intermediate levels as one’s religious commitment, personal conception of life, worldview and the practical ethos of one’s community” (Geertsema 1987, 146).

I have nothing against the “multiplication” of the intermediaries, as it should be clear from my idea of *multiple* reference points. But when these intermediaries are arranged in a *sequence*, as successive filters, they are not directly available in the same way to all sciences. Apparently, each *level* mediates the previous one to the next one, like in a chain. Probably one can still say, for example, that something of a worldview is “transmitted” to a special science, via the mediation of philosophy. But there is still no access to the worldview level, for a special science, apart from the mediation of philosophy.

But let us return to the relationship between sciences. Should we consider the strategy of transformation as normative and valid for all sciences? Or is it only applicable to philosophy? If the latter is the case, what is the reason for such an exclusive position of philosophy among the sciences? Are we allowed, for example, to imagine a transformational theology? Would such a theology import the ideas that it wants to transform even from non-Christian theologies? Or is transformation only possible for philosophy? But in this case, would this not pose new problems and questions to the transformational project? Why have such problems never been discussed and even envisaged? With many of these questions we can only speculate: Klapwijk does not sketch a more encyclopaedic view of science.

To conclude this section, I would like to quickly mention two minor issues, in the form of questions. The first concerns the relationship between ontology and special sciences. The second one focuses on the nature of theology. We find an interesting note on ontology and sociology in the context of his discussion of sphere sovereignty (1987, 110- 15).

“Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd used this doctrine to express the idea that in human society there are various structures (“spheres”) such as church, state, family (...) Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd added to this *sociological* theory of sphere sovereignty a *cosmological* theory of sphere sovereignty. The cosmos as a whole and all things in the cosmos exhibit in principle various distinguishable *modal* aspects (...) most surprising is the way Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd tied the

sociological and cosmological theories of sphere sovereignty together. The sphere sovereignty of the different social structures was said to be grounded in the sphere sovereignty of the modal aspects” (1987, 110- 11).

Why is it so strange that ontological theories might be prolonged and developed in sociology and in the special sciences in general? The concord between ontology and special science (and vice-versa) is usual and normal and it gives systematic coherence to scholarship in each tradition. In this case the roots of the similarity might lie in the idea of sphere sovereignty elaborated at worldview level. Why should it be so incredible to Klapwijk? Is it only *the way* the two doctrines are linked that he considers “surprising” or the fact, in itself, that there might be a correspondence, a concordance between cosmology and the special sciences?

Concerning theology (my second issue) it seems to me that Klapwijk is exposed to the same kind of criticism that I have expressed to Frame. If theology “may be described as theoretical reflection on the biblical revelation” (1987, 106), is it possible to speak of a non-Christian theology? What does non-Christian theology study? Or is theology an inherently Christian science, that appears only in a Christian encyclopaedia of the sciences?

4.4 Idea of antithesis

With the risk of being a bit irreverent, one could say that one of the most practical denials of the mediating role of worldviews is Klapwijk’s own article on antithesis (1986)! The elaboration of this text does not seem to proceed from a Calvinist worldview at all. Instead, in the 13 pages of this contribution there are no less than 10 direct (and many more indirect) quotations from the Bible. Together they constitute a continuous appeal to Scripture that could convince some of the readers that Klapwijk is a member of the reformational school of thought! I am tempted to speak (borrowing Klapwijk’s phrase) of “happy inconsistencies”...

Klapwijk has again a very personal and original contribution to offer to the discussion about the antithesis. In his opinion the founding fathers of Reformed philosophy have emphasized this idea too much, thus jeopardizing the possibility of dialogue and interaction with non-Christian philosophical schools. On the other side we have the danger of synthesis, that Klapwijk does recognize as well. To avoid both dangers, he suggests the idea of a “transformational” philosophy. The process of transformation, he says, is a very common phenomenon in philosophy. It is the re-elaboration, according to one’s framework, of themes and concepts that are borrowed from other philosophies and then introduced into one’s own philosophy.

Klapwijk affirms that the idea of antithesis promoted by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven was too oppositional. Kuyper is quoted for having said that “parallel lines never intersect” (Klapwijk 1986, 134). But one has the feeling, to be honest, that the positions of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd are presented a bit in caricatural terms. When one reads Kuyper’s passage concerning

the parallel lines, for example, one realizes that he is referring to the “origin” or “starting points” of the two “systems of science”, not to the systems themselves (Kuyper 1978, 134).

Now, Klapwijk usually seems to agree that there is antithesis at the religious level (1987, 103). He only asks himself to what extent and with which consequences it is prolonged into concrete scholarship⁴⁵ (1986, 141). Klapwijk, subsequently, admits that there are many nuances, in the writings of both Dooyeweerd and Kuyper, concerning the antithesis. But at this stage these nuances are already contrasted with the caricature of his own construction, and therefore considered as contradictions of a previous (supposed) “hard-line”.

“Kuyper did not always honour his confident pronouncements and likewise often suggested various forms of cooperation that would be possible on the basis of God’s “common grace” (...). And later, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, each in his own way, spoke of signs of God’s “general grace” and also of “elements of truth” in non-Christian cultural life, of which Christians, as they saw it, might make grateful use. Are those all concessions that would render it impossible to carry through without curtailment the antithetical approach envisioned by Kuyper? (Klapwijk 1986, 142).

The real question, according to Klapwijk, is to know whether the religious antithesis “must lead in all seriousness to an exclusively antithetical stand at all levels of philosophical and scientific praxis” (142). However, one might wonder if Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven really promoted an “exclusively antithetical stand” in scholarship. Concerning Dooyeweerd, for example, the quotations that I have reported in the chapter dedicated to his model seem to deny such a caricatural view. Klapwijk himself, in a previous article (1987a) admits that Dooyeweerd’s idea of antithesis was not simply oppositional. On the contrary it was a matter of “critical solidarity” for a “philosopher of the dialogue” who “wanted no closed fronts” and “was devoted to breaking through old battlelines” (1987a, 92). The article in question (although published in 1987) was written originally in 1977. But a few years later Klapwijk accuses Dooyeweerd of an “exclusively antithetical stand” (1987, 142)!

⁴⁵ In the neo-Calvinist line of thought, and particularly in Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, there is definitely a difference between two levels of antithesis. The fact that the antithesis is absolute at the religious level does not imply that it remains absolute at the level of the concrete theoretical systems that are elaborated by different schools and traditions. When Klapwijk (1986, 140) reports Vollenhoven’s opinion that “synthesis is impossible” (and then asks why there should be opposition against something which cannot take place), he doesn’t realize that Vollenhoven (just like Kuyper in the passage concerning the “parallel lines”) is speaking about synthesis at the *religious* level. Geertsema here recognizes (1987, 155, fn. 24) that Klapwijk confuses the two levels, yet is inclined to believe (concerning the impossibility of religious synthesis) that “Klapwijk himself would not be able to disagree in this sense”. Klapwijk, however, sometimes seems prepared to relativize even the antithesis at the religious level. In his article of 1987a, his reflections on this point look rather peculiar, from a theological point of view. For example when he states: “Is there in fact an absolute contradiction between God’s guidance and Satan’s strategy, if Satan can, as Luther said, only imitate God?” (Klapwijk 1987a, 97).

What does Klapwijk propose, in alternative? Philosophy, he says, needs communication. This “arises not only from the demands of contemporary research in a complex society. It arises also from the nature of the scholarly, scientific way of thought as such” (1986, 143). Given this need, and given the fact that an “exclusively antithetical posture” would be detrimental to Christian philosophy, Klapwijk introduces the theme of Transformation (144). Transformation is a critical appropriation of themes and ideas that are present in the philosophical and scientific environment of a certain era. But it does not simply mean the introduction of non-Christian elements into Christian thought. Transformation points in fact towards the idea of a purification. Here Klapwijk refers to the theme of the *spoliatio Aegyptiorum*,⁴⁶ which can be found already in Augustine and in the Church Fathers (145-6).

He has to admit that the synthetical attitude of the Church Fathers did indeed create enormous problems, it caused “grandiose mistakes” that had detrimental effects on theology, church doctrine and practical life. But Klapwijk assures:

“One thing is certain: it should never be our intention to accept uncritically ideas from pre-Christian or post-Christian cultures. Equally unacceptable it would be to make an external adaptation of such ideas to Christian doctrines (...) The appropriation of non-Christian learning (...) must consist rather in critical assimilation *into* a Christian view of reality” (1986, 146).

And here he can return to the example of Israel plundering the Egyptians. He can point out that there are different forms of transformation: initially the children of Israel used the gold they obtained from the Egyptians to set up the golden calf. “Only later did the Israelites learn to appropriate the gold in a much deeper and indeed critical sense of the word (...). They melted it down to make the furnishing for the tabernacle (Exodus 35)” (1986, 146).

Transformation was abundantly used by Humanistic philosophy as well. What did it transform? Very often Christian ideas! There was a critical appropriation of themes and ideas that definitely had a Christian origin. In this case we have to speak about “inverse transformation” (1986, 147). If Christians are not willing to proceed with their own transformation, non-Christians will operate an inverse transformation.

One has the feeling, however, that with Klapwijk every *de facto* tends to become a *de jure*. The fact that the theme of the *spoliatio* was applied all along the history of the Medieval church, seems to justify its exhumation today, by Reformed philosophy. The fact that Humanistic philosophy used it as well is supposed to make it acceptable for Christians. In the process, however, Klapwijk forgets to ask if this *spoliatio* is intellectually acceptable... Cornelius Van Til would have much to

⁴⁶ Augustine discusses the idea of *Spoliatio* and others that are the result of allegorical exegesis in *De doctrina Christiana*, II, XI, 60 (also referring to II, XVIII, 28). Although Klapwijk uses for the plural genitive the form *Aegyptiorum*, I follow

say about this attitude of Humanistic philosophy and would not see its “transformations” as something intellectually decent!⁴⁷ And of course Dooyeweerd as well had much to say on the topic...

4.5 Re-appropriation and transformation

Klapwijk’s idea of transformation is related, first of all, to the re-appropriation of Christian ideas. In a world that has been heavily influenced by Christianity, many philosophical schools have adopted and transformed for themselves ideas that originally belonged to the Christian tradition. It is time to claim back these intellectual treasures. For example:

“One of the most important categories in modern humanistic philosophy would be the concept of “alienation”. Now, I believe that I as a Christian, may adopt such a key concept if I separate it from the ideological context of historical materialism and show that for me alienation means something just a little more concrete (...) we have to dissect this marxist notion until sin is disclosed at the foundation of all human and societal alienation: man, estranged from God” (146-7).

Such re-appropriation, might look as a simple re-affirmation of Christian ideas. What is supported here doesn’t even look as an appropriation, by Christians, of ideas that come from “outside”. It rather looks like a re-appropriation. In this case Christians claim what was initially their own. Coming back to the gold of the Egyptians:

“The children of Israel were only reclaiming what was itself plunder: the results of four centuries of repression and exploitation at the brick kilns (...) One could argue as follows. The modern mind lives on the cultural treasures it looted from Christianity. Christianity would have the right to reclaim these cultural treasures: an “expropriation of the expropriators” to speak with Marx (...) Why should a Christian not be permitted to profit from a neomarxist philosophy of hope, if this hope, notably in the case of Ernst Bloch, is itself drawn from the springs of the Judaeo-Christian tradition?” (150).

The metaphor of spoliation gives the impression that when golden objects (i.e. ideas) are “taken away” from their original context and introduced into a new system it is no more in possession of the original owners. This is certainly possible with gold. But ideas can continue to be present in two different systems at the same time. We mustn’t forget that when we talk about “property” of ideas (terms like *possession*, *appropriation*, *fief*, *exchange* are frequently used by Klapwijk) we use just a metaphor. If this is true, do Christians really need to re-appropriate ideas that have

Bos’ spelling *Aegyptiorum*, which I consider the correct one.

⁴⁷ According to Van Til (e.g 1971a), non-Christian thought cannot survive on its own pre-suppositions and is obliged to integrate them, at least in part, by borrowing “theistic” ideas. The latter, however, continue to clash with the non-Christian system into which they are introduced.

remained in their possession all the time? We must admit that in every epoch there are ideas that are “lost” by Christians, forgotten for a while. Such ideas need to be revived and re-shaped for the new context. But why is it necessary to recover them from non-Christian philosophies? They are always available in their original form...

After all, in the process of (inverse) transformation, ideas are adapted to the system in which they have been introduced. In the process of appropriation and (inverse) transformation, they must be “altered” to a certain extent. Why then, should Christian scholars recover such ideas in their altered version, and work on them, instead of going back to the original idea itself? I am not asking, of course, of abandoning the interaction with the “transformed version”. I am asking why Klapwijk prescribes such a *tour de force*. After all, Christians would in any case not be able to interact with the “transformed” ideas without returning first to the original idea itself, in its Christian version.

Perhaps what Klapwijk wants to achieve, up to this point, is simply a wider openness of Reformational philosophers towards non-Christian philosophy. He wants to avoid the kind of isolationist spirit that, in the Reformed community, could have been perhaps understandable in the past but is no more viable in today’s world. But if this was the simple purpose, was it really necessary to depart from the neo-Calvinist basic strategy? He could have promoted this openness, for example, simply by supporting and elaborating the view that among the reference points that philosophy has at its disposal there are all the ideas and theories which become relevant in the course of history, irrespective of their religious root (Duvenage 1985, 34; see also 6.2). A Christian philosophy will not ignore them: it will remain in dialogue with them.

But transformation does not only consist in the re-appropriation of one’s own ideas. For example, Christian ideas are often appropriated by other philosophies. Klapwijk calls it “inverse transformation”. It could even be called a *negative* transformation: one could say a *spoliatio Christianorum*. But Klapwijk never uses the adjective “negative” in this context. Transformation, in the end, is always reciprocal and is part of the normal course of events, in philosophy (1986, 149-50). The history of philosophy reveals an intricate inter-exchange of themes and ideas from Plotinus to Augustine, from Bonaventure to Calvin, from Kant to Dooyeweerd. Therefore:

“The progress of Christian philosophical thought is determined not only by an *internal* dynamics whereby Augustine learned from Ambrose and Origin (...) Dooyeweerd from Kuyper and Calvin, and so forth. The progress of Christian philosophical thought as transformational philosophy is also determined by an *external* dynamics, say by developments that have led from Plato to Wittgenstein’s notion of a diversity of lingual fields” (149).

There is, moreover, a complication.

“In the relation between Christian philosophical tradition and other philosophical developments, the matter is one that goes forth and returns again. We must not forget that this so-called general history of philosophy, even after it has loosened itself from the Christian intellectual tradition at the beginning of modern times, remained ineradicably marked by such dominant conceptions as those of Augustine, Thomas and Luther. (...) I cannot imagine the modern philosophy of emancipation without Luther’s treatise on *The Freedom of the Christian Man*” (149-50).

Let us make sure about Klapwijk’s intentions.

“To indicate this returning mutual influencing I use the term “reciprocity of transformation” (...) I mean to say that in history a constant interchange takes place not only between ideas that are of Christian and ideas that are of humanist origin but also between ideas that are present in the one camp or the other as fiefs that actually ultimately belong - if one may put it that way - to the opposing party. To me, one of the most telling examples of this sort of thing is the secularized messianic expectation of salvation underlying Marx’s coming kingdom of freedom. Certainly that can be called a Judaeo-Christian fiefdom, a fiefdom that is presently being reclaimed...” (150).

Continuing the discussion above, Klapwijk comes back immediately to the idea of reclaiming Christian ideas that have been “captured” by another party. Yet, in just a few short phrases Klapwijk here presents a second and fundamental aspect of transformation. He is proposing not only the re-appropriation of concepts that have been Christian from the start. He also proposes the appropriation of non-Christian ideas. The example that he uses concerns Marxism appropriating the Christian themes of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. But the implication is that Christians should do the same. After all, this is the way philosophy has always proceeded. And there is no modern philosophy that in the end is not influenced, in some way, by the Christian heritage. It is at this point that Klapwijk, in my opinion, has too much to offer. The critical reactions of Bos (1987) Groenewoud (1987) and Dengerink (1988) express a similar disappointment.

4.6 Transformation: a few critical remarks

Klapwijk, by using the umbrella-adjective “Christian” does not distinguish clearly between confessional traditions that, according to Dooyeweerd, originate from different religious ground motives. Very often the “Christian” reflection has been forged by the motive of nature and grace. Not everything that can be called “Christian”, therefore, is to be called “biblical” as well. In this sense Klapwijk tends to obscure the differences between (Christian) worldviews and strategies, and to emphasize the need for interaction. He also minimizes the difference between Christian and non-Christian philosophy by pointing to the continuous exchange and transformation of ideas. He quotes Hegel’s dictum that all modern philosophy occurs “*innerhalb des Christentums*” (1987,

106). But if all modern philosophy has learned from the Medieval Christian background, the pagan background influencing Medieval Christianity should also be taken into account.

It is true that both “Christian” (one should say especially Catholic) and Humanistic philosophy have often re-elaborated ideas of others. But this *de facto* should not automatically become a *de jure* for Reformed philosophers. There have been several reasons why the Catholic tradition (and others as well) have followed this path, but not all of them are commendable. In the Roman tradition pagan thought is often seen as a “preparation”, a *praeambulum* to Christian thought (van der Walt 1983, 74- 84). In this sense it remains potentially accomodable to Christianity as a kind of natural sub-structure under the control of theology. Reformational philosophy, on the other hand, has chosen the path of inner reformation, of “grace penetrating nature” (van der Walt 1994, 100-105). Pagan philosophy should not be included within Christianity as its natural pre-supposition, but rather re-formed, in the sense that a Christian philosophy is provided. These are historical choices that should not be forgotten.

Of course, historically, Augustine did not ignore Plato, and Dooyeweerd did not ignore Kant. Philosophy is always placed in a historical context. But these historical links do not prove that the transformational approach is something usual or necessary. Dooyeweerd interpreted these links in a different sense. He did not see them as the result of an exchange of ideas (1984, I, 118- 9). It seems to me that we need to go back to a crucial distinction proposed by Dooyeweerd and other neo-Calvinists. It is legitimate to promote interaction, emulation, to learn from each other, to accept that there is a common task and even “a thousand ties”. But the introduction of non-Christian ideas into a Christian system is something else. The difference between inner reformation and accommodation remains crucial. The difference between sensitivity towards the spirit of our age and adaptation to this spirit, is crucial as well. According to Strauss, there remains:

“a reliable and trustworthy anchorage, transcending the relativity of our unique historical situation (...). The dynamics of our on-going calling to be sensitive to the spirit of the age in a changing world does not ever manage to eliminate the constancy of God’s creation order, since the dynamic disclosure of creation cannot take place at the cost of this order, but only on its basis” (Strauss 1999, 137- 8).

Klapwijk does not, to be sure, openly declare that he is promoting a new synthetic attitude. But I am afraid this is simply what he will achieve in practice. Of course, for Klapwijk (as for Frame) appropriation must be accompanied by some sort of purification, transformation as it is. But it is not clear how non-Christian ideas might be successfully severed from their own context or system, and then inserted into a Christian worldview, thus becoming Christian after a purification (Bos 1987). Will they not simply remain non-Christian ideas within a Christian context? And how many of these ideas can a Christian worldview or philosophy incorporate into itself, before altering its

own identity? Is the difference between “synthesis with” and “assimilation into” a Christian view of reality (Klapwijk 1986, 146) really decisive? These are my worries when I think about Klapwijk’s project. And Klapwijk, unfortunately, never offers concrete examples of an acceptable or successful transformation that has already been accomplished.

One of the greatest examples of the transformational approach, it seems to me, was Thomas Aquinas. He transported into Christian theology and philosophy themes which he borrowed from Greek philosophy. Such themes were indeed transformed and “purified”, detached from their original context and collocated “into” the context of a Christian worldview. Yet the operation did result in a mixture of Christian and pagan ideas. Was Aquinas not expert enough as a transformational thinker? Is there a brighter and more successful example of Christian transformation in history that Klapwijk would like to commend?

The ideas within a system are often linked to each other. And according to Dooyeweerd, the chain is tied to a religious motive! Klapwijk ignores also Dooyeweerd’s warning concerning the impossibility of a purely “formal use” of theoretical concepts (e.g. 1980, 154- 56). In addition, it would be important to know: are we allowed to transform and incorporate units that are broader than ideas? Theories like evolution? Are we allowed, to introduce them into the Christian context after a purification? Klapwijk mostly mentions ideas or concepts to be transformed. But if we accept the principle of transformation, why should it not be possible to deal with larger units?⁴⁸

Another question that Klapwijk never raises is why Christian thinking needs the operation of transformation. Is it because it does not have in itself all the resources to investigate philosophically the world? Could we not, as Christians who contribute to a debate outside our own circles, elaborate and propose our own ideas on the basis of our resources, in dialogue with (and careful listening of) others? What would be missing, precisely, if we follow this kind of strategy? Or what is missing in the Christian worldview, or religious motive, so that an “integration” becomes necessary?

Or is transformation necessary because the questions that are relevant in today’s world’s agenda might not be the same that are considered relevant by the Christian community? But are we sure that we should always follow this agenda and not have also our own priorities? Alvin Plantinga, for example, urged the Christian philosophical community exactly to develop its own agenda. To be bold, and not to depend only on the priorities of others! To show more independence from mainline establishment philosophy (quoted in Kok 1988, 101- 2).

A final question cannot be avoided: what is the “spirit” behind Klapwijk’s approach? Klapwijk seems to think that all ideas are potentially part of a Christian philosophy. The history of

⁴⁸ Geertsema (1987, 161, fn. 33) presents a similar objection by saying that Klapwijk does not distinguish clearly between philosophical ideas and conceptions. He asks: “if philosophic conceptions were thought of as a coherent unity of ideas

philosophy consists of a “pre-Christian”, a “Christian” and a “post-Christian” period (1987, 146). One wonders whether there is anything anti-Christian available... Apparently all views can be appropriated by Christianity. Is Klapwijk’s emphasis on the appropriation of ideas influenced, perhaps in a mild form, by an urge to embrace the world, to comprehend it within Christianity, so that the latter may be truly universal (catholic)? ⁴⁹

4.7 Excursus: on the elaboration of ideas

I am not recommending, as alternative to Klapwijk, that Christian philosophers adopt an attitude of isolation and mere opposition. I am ready to recognize the importance of dialogue with non-Christian philosophy. It is not at all my intention to deny the “thousand ties” (Dooyeweerd’ terms) that historically link Christian and non-Christian philosophy. It is true that non-Christian thinkers sometimes open our eyes to discover our own possibilities and strengths. And apart from our strengths (or weaknesses) they open our eyes to their own achievements, and this goes far beyond the borders of philosophy. Sometimes we wish that certain ideas, certain scientific discoveries or even moral battles were proposed or realized by Christians. But often, Christians have just followed, and sometimes a bit reluctantly. The discussion on human rights and the abolition of slavery can represent a couple of good historical examples.

I am therefore ready to recognize, that non-Christian thinkers can propose or invent something “good”. And when Christians see this good they should be ready to appreciate it. Probably, this same “good” will often be wrapped in (or linked to) something else that Christians might not like. Usually, the presuppositions on the background are not acceptable *in toto*. As Wolterstorff realizes, low-level theories are always linked to high-level theories. This “good” is not a piece of something, isolated from its context and origin. When we think about human rights, for example, there are many objections that Christians can legitimately rise against the humanistic view of such rights (Marshall 1995; van der Walt 1999, 35- 58). This is, after all, the reason why Klapwijk himself supports the necessity of a sort of purification.

Christians, as I said, should be ready to appreciate this good. But what should happen then? Should we appropriate this “good” within our framework of thought, after a process of sanctification? The main risk implied in this “transplant”, as Bos (1987) points out sharply, is that the specific idea may not be successfully severed (or even severable) from its original organism. In this case we would introduce into the Christian system, together with the new idea, a host of connections, implications, presuppositions that, perhaps in the long run, would cause new

then, could they be as easily as philosophic insights “shelled from the pods of their worldviews”? (...) Can a philosophic conception survive such operations?”

⁴⁹ From a theological point of view, Conte’s penetrating analysis (1997) shows that precisely the urge to include as much as possible into its own universal “synthesis” is one of the most fundamental characteristic of Catholic thinking.

problems. History, indeed testifies of such a possibility. In other words, the risk is that the “purification” may not be possible or not performed successfully.

But is there some alternative available? Are we condemned to isolation? Do we never agree with other thinkers? Is this not a proof that there is an *exchange* of ideas? I would like to briefly sketch a few hypotheses.

First of all, it would be necessary to distinguish, in this context, between ideas, presuppositions, consequences, practical proposals, theories and so on. They are not just identical. Probably nobody would object, in fact, to the observation that Christians and non-Christians do share, for example, practical proposals (e.g. concerning the care for the environment), or certain scientific theories. But I don’t think we (both Christians and non-Christians) normally or easily “borrow” from each others or even “exchange” the presuppositions behind such proposals. Even to be able to recognize some idea, theory or proposal as “good”, we normally have first to go back to our own deposit of “beliefs” and “weigh” such idea (Wolterstorff 1976, 59- 66). There we move between our central presuppositions and our secondary beliefs.

In this way, we usually start to develop a cluster of initial opinions on the topic. Later, we might develop a more coherent and articulated view. This might be the way we form our own ideas: in dialogue with others but on the basis of our own pre-suppositions. There remains a clear difference, it seems to me, between “bearing” our ideas from within our own system, and trying to import ideas from outside, after adapting them. In the process of self-development we can be more sensitive to ideas (or aspects of an idea) that are not “sustainable” on the basis of our own convictions.

It might be that we normally generate new theories or views (e.g. concerning the abolition of slavery) from within our own systems. Yes, our new-born opinions might look very similar to those formulated by others. But if we agree with non-Christians, for example, on the concrete proposal that “slavery should be abolished”, does it necessarily mean that we have “borrowed” their views (e.g. about freedom or human nature)?

We might have rather weighed the proposal on the basis of our own presuppositions (and of the concrete reality of slavery). We might have returned to our beliefs, our worldview and so on, and we might have formulated our own ideas on the topic. Is it possible simply to deny this possibility? But if the hypothesis is plausible, perhaps the transformational strategy is not absolutely necessary.

By imagining an alternative to Klapwijk’s view, I am not saying that transformation is impossible in the sense that it cannot be realized. Even synthetic and eclectic philosophies can be created. Even Kuyper or Dooyeweerd, who wanted to avoid the synthesis, could not completely avoid the influence of disputable presuppositions on their views (Strauss 1999, 137). Yet the fact that synthesis is possible and does occur does not, in itself, prove its validity or its necessity. The same argument is applicable to transformation. Let us distinguish *de facto* from *de jure*! We could continue (both Christians and non-Christians) to develop our ideas on the basis of our own systems,

although we can be stimulated to do so by the interaction with the ideas of others (as well as by practical circumstances).

In any case, the strategy of transformation, if it is accepted, should not represent an alternative to inner reformation, but, at the most, a complement. In fact, the transformational project focuses mostly on the modifying of *existing* ideas or theories and not on the devising of new theories. Transformation is an exchange and modification of existing goods, rather than a creation of new riches. But the activity of devising is absolutely necessary for the creation of the new. And this new is necessary for a truly vibrant Christian (and even non-Christian!) scholarship.

4.8 Klapwijk's view of science

Likewise in the case of encyclopaedia, Klapwijk does not say very much on his idea of science. We might however notice a few interesting aspects. Klapwijk apparently rejects both the “expressivist” view of science and the views of Kuhn (1986, 143, fn. 9). In both cases the pre-scientific presuppositions of science imprison science itself. Kuhn’s “normal science” is science “within the bounds” of a paradigm. Expressivist science is also prisoner of a worldview, or a community. But, we might ask, does not Klapwijk himself propose a certain worldview as the basis of scholarship? Is his proposal different from the views he criticizes? I think the main difference is that Klapwijk’s emphasis lies on the interaction with other worldviews, paradigms and ideas. Paradigms cannot be more or less incommensurable, as in Kuhn’s view. On the contrary, they must be involved in “reciprocal transformation”. Science mustn’t express only the Calvinist or the Humanist worldview, it must remain open to (and even reflect) other views.

One would like worldviews to represent also the real world... But the recognition of a “reality out there”, it seems to me, is not a prominent element of Klapwijk’s view of science. One would expect that at some stage the importance of “states of affairs” (to use Dooyeweerd’s terms) independent from our (world)views, might be introduced in the discussion. One would expect to hear about the importance of created reality, posing the possibility and at the same time the limits to our own ideas, views and theories. Yet I am not sure whether this expectation is met by Klapwijk.

This is the impression, I think, the reader gets even from a rapid survey of Klapwijk’s discussion of creation ordinances (1987, 110-15). Klapwijk does not like, for example, the idea of social “spheres”, but as the discussion develops it becomes clear that the real issue, the basic idea that Klapwijk rejects, is the idea of creation ordinances. Already in the 19th century the idea “began to smell of conservatism and restoration politics” (112). The theme of creation, when taken in itself, seems to be “dangerous”. It must be constantly tied to the messianic perspective of the kingdom of God, otherwise it could deviate Christian philosophers towards conservative positions. “There arises in that case as of itself an appalling, backward-looking Christian conservatism that is blind to the dynamics of the creation” (114). Here Klapwijk praises Wolterstorff, who can link the

perspectives of creation and of shalom (1981, 172). Klapwijk and Wolterstorff share a “progressist” spirit when it comes to their social philosophy.

However, if Creation pertains to the past and the kingdom of God to the future, none of them seems to belong to the present. And what do we have in the present? “In a world (...) in which the slums of Rio de Janeiro and Bombay cry out for justice, the prevalent secular science speaks only of facts” (114). But now, it is exactly the status of *facts*, of concrete reality that might be a weak side in Klapwijk’s view of science. True, he shows appreciation for Dooyeweerd’s doctrine of a divine world order.

“Somewhere there is a limit to human autonomy and autcreation. Somewhere our modern societal experts’ urge to control everything runs up against an impenetrable wall: the divine structural framework of the creation” (113).

Dooyeweerd expressed the conviction “that the whole of created reality (...) is and remains subject to the will of God the creator, no matter how sinful man deals with reality or with the whole of society” (113). But then, Dooyeweerd can only “teach us how transparent the creation is” (116). We need Dostoyewsky or Ricoeur to learn how “demoniac evil has penetrated to the basement vaults of human existence”, not a Calvinist philosopher...

When it comes to knowledge and science Klapwijk says: “I too regard naive experience as fundamental for all theory. But I would never call it a “datum”, an unarguable *given* for science and philosophy because naive experience is neither unproblematic nor innocent experience. Naive experience is *never naive!*” (116). Klapwijk quotes approvingly Cornelius Van Til, who “has correctly taken issue with Dooyeweerd on this point”. I can agree with Klapwijk that naive experience is not that naive. But what about data? Klapwijk, like Van Til understands the importance of presuppositions. But Van Til could also speak of “states of affairs” as a “common ground” (Van Til 1971a, 16; 21). Is there, still for Klapwijk, a *given*, accessible to all scholars, apart from their different worldviews?

He rejects the idea of a “fusion of horizons” in which “the horizon of an original writer or agent and that of a current interpreter would in some way or another coalesce and fuse in the concentration upon the object...” (118). This fusion, says Klapwijk, can only be achieved to a certain extent. “As soon as we focus on a crucial phenomenon (...) take the rise of Christianity (...) take the class struggle (...) between the interpreters there unavoidably arises a “conflict of interpretations” (P. Ricoeur)”. Then he continues: “the so-called “fusion of horizons” (...) obscures what is really going on, to wit: trying to convince each other from conflicting perspectives”. And in addition: “Understanding our World” (I allude to the title of Hendrik Hart’s latest book) is always a controversial act of hermeneutical *re-interpretation* because it is based on transformation from

conflicting worldview horizons. Viewed from a broader context, every act of interpretation results from a choice, a power play, a struggle of the spirits” (118).

It cannot be denied that the role of worldviews, perspectives, horizons, interpretations and so on is highly emphasized in Klapwijk’s view of science. What remains a bit in the shadow, it seems to me, is the existence of structures, of entities and laws that ultimately must be accounted for. The very idea of transformation focuses on ideas, personal choices, views that are borrowed, exchanged and modified. As if science and the world itself were just what we decide it is. Dengerink is struck by this attitude as well. In his opinion:

“The basic reason for the stated deviations is, I am convinced, that the creation-motif does not continually function as an inescapable constant in Klapwijk’s philosophizing” (1988, 31).

4.9 Final remarks

To summarize, and in conclusion, I consider Klapwijk’s idea of the mediating role of worldviews as not particularly dangerous but as not particularly promising as well. I consider the transformational approach in philosophy as not particularly promising as well. If Klapwijk’s purpose was to underline the necessity of communication and dialogue for Reformational philosophy it was, in my opinion, not necessary to abandon the classical neo-Calvinist strategy. The latter did not constitute a sectarian approach, it was in many respects well balanced and it could have been improved. In the case of Dooyeweerd, this was recognized by Klapwijk himself (1987a).

In some instances, it seems to me, Klapwijk has too much to offer. In fact, he promotes the incorporation of non-Christian ideas into a Christian philosophy or system. Although he does not openly speak of a synthesis, I cannot see a dramatic difference between transformation and accommodation. In addition, he fails to offer concrete historical examples of a (successful) transformation of unbiblical ideas by Christians. He does not explain in details the functioning of an operation that represents the central core of his project.

Nevertheless we must admit that Klapwijk tries to propose something that is not simply alien to the Reformational spirit. He is not throwing stones to the windows of Reformational philosophy from the streets of this world. Like every credible prophet he identifies himself with the people he is trying to talk to. His ideas are carefully proposed and evaluated in the light of previous Reformed thought, which he knows deeply. We must appreciate all this. Probably we should also evaluate, in future, each concrete result, or proposal, of such a transformational approach. It would be good at this point, to have some concrete examples to discuss, rather than just the general theory. The concrete fruits will perhaps show that Klapwijk’s project is viable to a larger extent than my critiques are presently ready to admit.

CHAPTER 5. NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF: FROM CERTAINTY TO FAITHFULNESS

Although proposing important alternatives, Klapwijk considers himself as collocated within the tradition of neo-Calvinist philosophy. And where is Nicholas Wolterstorff situated, with respect to this same tradition? He can say: “I have spoken of the neo-Calvinist movement (...) as though I were not a part of it”. However, he can add: “I myself was reared intellectually within this movement”. Then another “but” follows, and we are told that he gradually took a distance from neo-Calvinism (1989, 68). Wolterstorff’s interaction with Reformed philosophy has been a complex one. And his dialogue with non-Christian philosophy has been deep as well.

Today’s philosophy tends to avoid the naive certainties of the past. No more models that aim at completeness. And no more *opera magna*, for the moment, rather the essay and the article: our highest ambition is to simplify... We are more modest today. We avoid the heavy and complex theoretical “equipment”. We live in a new lightness, free from heavy duties and heavy tools. It would be illuminating, for example, to compare the original Robinson Crusoe with its postmodern equivalent, the *Cruso* re-written by J.M. Coetzee. The original hero was literally obsessed by the importance of tools: in the end, they granted his survival. The postmodern Cruso, on the contrary, has renounced every tool, and every work altogether.⁵⁰

Wolterstorff, it must be said, does not disdain the hard philosophical labors. His detailed distinctions of beliefs and commitments are a sufficient proof. He is nevertheless “lighter” than his predecessors. He tends, in some cases, to “solve” the questions by simplifying them. He tends to

⁵⁰ It is along the same line that John Fowles, the existentialist author of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, sees in the heavy equipment of Charles, the paleontologist, the mark of modernity as opposed to postmodernity. His digression about science is quite interesting.

“He would have made you smile, for he was carefully equipped for his role. He wore stout nailed boots and canvas gaiters (...) heavy flannel (...) a tight and absurdly long coat (...) hammers, wrappings, notebooks, pillboxes, adzes...

(...) It was men not unlike Charles, and as over-dressed and over-equipped as he was that day, who laid the foundations of our modern science. (...) they knew, in short, that they had things to discover, and that the discovery was of the utmost importance to the future of man. We think (...) that we have nothing to discover and the only things of the utmost importance to us concern the present of man”.

look for the simple suggestion that would relieve us, put us on the right track, and make us free from the burdensome theories that, in the past, were considered necessary.⁵¹

5.1 Bible and science: the connection

Wolterstorff was “reared intellectually” within neo-Calvinism. What made him more reluctant towards it, during the course of his career? This has everything to do with our first heading.

“I have come to feel acutely that the first- and second-generation founders of the movement did not succeed in pinpointing the connection between religion and the practice and results of scholarship” (Wolterstorff 1989, 68).

In his view, the neo-Calvinist attempts in this regard can be classified under two main chapters. “Some have argued that the link between religion and scientific inquiry lies in worldviews” says Wolterstorff (1989, 66). “The second attempt (...) takes the concepts of *faith* and *idolatry* to be central instead of worldview” (1989, 67).

In every chapter of this thesis, the first heading concerns the connection between Bible and science. I will maintain this scheme, although this means that I have to start my analysis of Wolterstorff’s model from arguments that, admittedly, are not the most accurate. The reader will have already observed that, in the light of our previous discussions on the topic, Wolterstorff’s scheme is a bit simplistic. First of all, the two poles to be connected appear to be religion and science. He does not mention Scripture and he does not define religion. Yet for many (including Dooyeweerd) religion was in fact the link between Scripture and science. Wolterstorff does not discuss the latter view, anyway, nor the connection between Bible and religion.

Secondly, the proposal of inserting a worldview as a link between Bible and science, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is rather recent and has attracted strong criticism. I cannot see it, therefore, as a main tendency within Reformed philosophy. Wolters, among others, has made clear (1989, 22 ff.) that such a view is not common among Reformed scholars. Unfortunately Wolterstorff tends, in general, not to support his claims with precise references. In this case, for example, after saying that “some have argued” for this solution, he just mentions his “former teacher, William Harry Jellema”! (1989, 66). To complicate the issue (and against Wolters’ opinion) he classifies Dooyeweerd himself as belonging to this group of thinkers. “Herman Dooyeweerd’s explication and use of the concept of *ground-motive* is best placed within the

⁵¹ See for example, Wolterstorff’s uneasiness (1981, 57 ff.) towards Dooyeweerd’s elaborated ontology and theory of society. According to Wolterstorff, we just need to make sure that each social institution “adequately serves the life of its members” (62). When sphere sovereignty tends to be neglected, we simply need to “promote pluralism” and the “simultaneous realization of norms” (62). Social institutions must simply “perform certain functions” and we must make sure that they “perform well” (63). To know which institution must perform which function, it will be enough to keep in mind the principle of “justice and shalom” (63).

context of the worldview approach” (67). But Dooyeweerd appears in the second group as well, among those who use the concepts of faith and idolatry as the link between religion and science!

According to Wolterstorff, for those who follow this second approach “idolatry manifests itself in the academic disciplines in (futile) reductionist attempts to treat some dimensions of created reality as the clue to the whole” (68). The problem is, says Wolterstorff, that it is not possible to show that “whenever scholars fail to take God as absolute, their scholarship will display the tell-tale structure of being illicitly reductionist”. There are, on the contrary, many examples of non-reductionist science outside the Christian circles. “Neither Dooyeweerd, who especially embraced and elaborated this approach, nor anyone else has ever succeeded in showing otherwise” (68).

I suspect that those who are used to (e.g.) Vollenhoven’s accurate classifications might be a bit perplexed by Wolterstorff’s ones. The other problem, of course, is that Wolterstorff tends to be caricatural in portraying the whole idea of reductionism (and others as well!). Dooyeweerd did nowhere maintain that reductionism is the only feature of apostate thinking. It is rather one of its possible results. In addition, but I should say first of all, one should even question the idea that someone proposed faith (or idolatry) as a link between religion and scholarship. Dooyeweerd proposed the idea of religious motives, not of faith.⁵² The question must be asked again: whose approach was that? I cannot recall any example and the author, once again, does not provide references...

5.2 A new proposal: the role of beliefs

However, Wolterstorff has a more positive proposal to offer, to the present discussion, by introducing especially the role of “control beliefs”. He regards Christian scholarship, it seems to me, as an attempt to select the theories that are more compatible with Christianity. This selection is especially directed by “control beliefs”. They are the link between religion and scholarship. Wolterstorff offers a few examples.

“Christians, committed as they are to human responsibility, are thereby also committed, as I see it, to human freedom; which means they will reject purely deterministic accounts in the social sciences and search for non-deterministic accounts” (1989, 76).

It should be noticed that Wolterstorff is the first one to speak of the Christian “paradigm” by using the plural (beliefs). The previous models used to speak of the Christian worldview, or religious motive and so on. This fact prompts the question about the nature of (and coherence between) these

⁵² The terms “religion” and “faith” seem to be, at least in some respects, taken for synonyms by Wolterstorff. Faith “does not cover the whole of the Christian’s appropriate response to God” (1976, 113, fn. 34) and “religion” seems to be in the same position. On the other hand “commitment” seems to constitute a “whole response” and to substitute Dooyeweerd’s “religion”.

beliefs. A worldview, intuitively, offers a more organic perspective than a set of “beliefs” (by the way never identified or listed by the author).⁵³

I am afraid that the options or theories compatible with one or another of these control beliefs will in any case be a huge plurality. As already admitted by the author himself (1976, 63) the introduction of control beliefs in one’s theorizing limits the choice of theories that otherwise would result equally acceptable. But even after the introduction of control beliefs, I am afraid that (e.g. by stressing one belief instead of another) it might be possible to adopt theories that are still quite far from a Christian point of view. The last quotation above, for example, stresses “human freedom” as a guideline for the Christian reflection in the social sciences. Christians will “search for non-deterministic accounts”. But in the Humanistic arsenal are available accounts in which the motive of Freedom plays a large role. Will Christian sociologists simply accept them?

Concerning the nature of control beliefs, not very much is said as well (the same is true for data beliefs and data-background beliefs). Are they religious beliefs? Are they something else, but still related to religion? We don’t know. Wolterstorff affirms that his distinction between beliefs does not concern their nature, but their function (1989, 65). And a belief that has one function in a certain context, can have another function in another context (81). In this respect, I find a bit confusing some of the explanations. Sometimes we are told that “the religious beliefs of the Christian should function as control beliefs” (1976, 66). But a bit later “the belief content of the Christian’s authentic commitment should be used as control beliefs” (1976, 72). I am not sure if the two are identical. However, more recently a sharper distinction seems to be introduced between Christian (religious) beliefs and control beliefs. Religious beliefs seem to function as evidence especially for theology and philosophy, not in the other sciences (1989, 76).

It is time to introduce my hypothesis about Wolterstorff’s strategy. It seems to me that the principal aim of Wolterstorff’s approach may be identified as the reduction of the formative role of religion and religious beliefs within scholarship and science. A reduction, I mean, in comparison to the neo-Calvinist view. This seems to me the key to understand his elaborate distinction of beliefs and commitments (and other ideas as well). We will try later to understand the possible reasons behind this desire.

For the moment, let us try to complete further the picture of Wolterstorff’s model. The importance of control beliefs is made evident in the practice of “weighing” (evaluating) theories. As Wolterstorff says, “this practice of weighing, though far from constituting the whole of the practice of scholarship, is certainly central to it” (73). But, concerning weighing, one should notice

⁵³ Control beliefs are not the only element in Wolterstorff’s theory of theorizing. He mentions also “data beliefs” and “data-background beliefs” (1976, 61- 63). Data beliefs are beliefs that I take as evidence, although I cannot demonstrate their truth by way of deductive logic. Data-background beliefs are taken as data as well, but their evidence seems to be less demonstrable than with data beliefs. Personal preference and values, therefore play a bigger role in data-background

a difference between his text of 1976 and the one of 1989. In the more recent one, the author says that “weighing” should be understood within the context of the scholar’s participation in the “social practice of scholarship” (1989, 73). Previously, it seems to me, the emphasis was more on the “belief-content of the Christian’s authentic commitment”⁵⁴ (1976, 66). The emphasis shifts, therefore, from belief to (social) practice.

Nevertheless, up to this point, someone could even ask whether Wolterstorff’s control beliefs are so different from what has been proposed by reformational philosophy. One might have the impression that we are more or less introduced to the idea of a worldview. In fact, every worldview has in itself this function of “control”. And religious ground motives imply this function as well (Duvenage 1985, 35). Someone will be inclined to think, probably, that Wolterstorff is not proposing something terribly new. And one would be confirmed in this feeling by the fact that the idea of “control beliefs”, as presented in 1976, has been accepted by some authors simply as one of the available versions of the Reformed view of presuppositions (e.g. Duvenage 1985, 35).

5.3 Beliefs versus religion?

But Wolterstorff’s intention, it seems to me, is not simply to improve the traditional notion of worldview or religious motive. Control beliefs function in a different way. They are not supposed to “distil” the biblical message and channel it for scholarship. This has become clearer in his later writings, I believe. Should one ask, for example, whether these “control beliefs” constitute a bridge for the production of Christian theories, one would also feel that, in this model, the question is somehow out of place. Because, in the 1989 text, Wolterstorff never mentions the production of (Christian) theories on the basis of one’s (Christian) worldview, or religion, or beliefs.

This is reflected in a telling difference between the 1976 and the 1989 texts, a difference that again concerns the weighing of theories. In the final 44 pages of the 1976 text, (those containing his positive contribution towards an understanding of Christian scholarship) the word *weighing* appears very seldom alone. It appears, almost in all cases, as linked to the phrase *devising of theories*. In these 44 pages, I have counted at least 27 instances (there could be more) in which the words *weighing* and *devising* (or their synonyms) are closely associated. In addition, *devising* appears, at least in some other 5 instances, independently from *weighing*. The evaluation of theories, in 1976, was strictly and almost constantly coupled with the *devising* of theories. In the 1989 text, *weighing* remains alone. The word *devising* is not to be found any more.

This fact seems to confirm my previous hypothesis. In Wolterstorff’s model, the formative influence of religion on scholarship tends to be increasingly reduced. Today, the picture is one in

beliefs, and probably even bigger in control beliefs. I would say that there is a hierarchy in Wolterstorff’s range of beliefs, in which shared evidence is inversely proportional to personal conviction.

which the Christian scholar evaluates different proposals and chooses what is more compatible with his beliefs. *Compatible* is one of the key terms today, it seems to me, in this model. The Christian scholar should be looking for the *tolerable*, in the vast sea of science. Is it just a chance that the title of his contribution of 1989 focuses on Christian “learning” rather than on (less passive) nouns such as scholarship, science, theory and so on?

But the reduction of the role of religious belief is not something that Wolterstorff proposed only recently. Already examining his 1976 book one was struck by a few observations. I have already said that it is not completely clear to me to what extent religious beliefs do function as control beliefs. These religious beliefs could be identical to “the belief-content of a Christian’s authentic commitment”. But then one discovers that such authentic commitment varies from person to person and from time to time. Beliefs are relative to persons and circumstances (70).

Should someone insist that there must be propositions that belong to the belief content of *all* authentic Christian commitment, Wolterstorff’s reply is that they must be “few and simple” (71). He does not imply that there are none, but it is far more important to discover what each one of us has to believe in his particular time and personal circumstances (1980, 184). Venter rightly observes in this regard that with such a fluctuating view of authentic commitment “it does not make sense to call anything “Christian” any longer” (Venter 1994, 279).

In addition, the belief content of the Christian’s authentic (and actual) commitment are not the source of the data for theory weighing. Although there are a few exceptions, normally the source of these data is observation (1976, 76). According to the author it is often insufficient, therefore, to say that one holds a certain theory because he is a Christian, i.e. that the theory is entailed by the belief content of his authentic commitment. The latter, in fact, normally allows a choice of alternative theories (76). One should then justify his preference by referring to his data beliefs. But these beliefs too will not be derived from the belief-content of one’s authentic commitment (77). Finally, not all of our control beliefs are contained within one’s actual Christian commitment. No one is simply a Christian: he might be also an American, a medical doctor and so on. One’s rejection of Chinese medicine, for example, will likely derive from Western-type medical education, which implies a certain approach to disease and therapy⁵⁴ (79).

The examples could be multiplied. The picture that emerges is one in which the formative impact of (religious) beliefs on science is reshuffled. The Christian should stop pretending that his religion can guide him in the production of (distinctive) theories. The neo-Calvinist is accused of holding an expressivist view: science is just an expression of his religion. “Expressivism” occurs (for Klapwijk, Wolters etc.), when science becomes the mere expression of a particular and relative

⁵⁴ In 1989 Wolterstorff says: “If I were writing the book today I would (...) set the Christian weighing (...) within the context of his or her participation in the social practice of scholarship” (1989, 73).

worldview. It does not occur when the Christian religion is expressed, because the latter is not regarded as relative. But for Wolterstorff (and it is quite interesting) expressivism occurs even when religion is expressed. In addition, the neo-Calvinist is accused of “religious totalism” (1989, 65). Religion plays too big a role, in his opinion, in the neo-Calvinist tradition. In fact, observes Wolterstorff, religion is supposed to create differences everywhere. “Anyone who says, “Lo, here faith makes a difference, but not there” can expect from the Calvinist an intuitive aversion” (65).

As the believer’s life is entirely rooted in religion, says Wolterstorff, so the life of the non-Christian is supposed to be encompassed by his apostate faith as well. This is why Kuyper could say that the existence of “two kinds of people” must result in “two kinds of science”. In order to combat such totalism, Wolterstorff proposes the view that “many human actions are not performed in the service of anything at all” (71). Does he support the view that we serve God only in certain activities, or professions, or in certain days of the week? According to Psalm 119, 32 not only human beings but “all things” stand in the service of God! Why does the Bible mention the possibility even of eating, drinking or doing “anything else” for the glory of God? (1Cor 10, 31). But I will discuss Wolterstorff’s criticism of Kuyper in the sections dedicated to the issue of religious antithesis (5.5 and 5.6). For the moment we should try to individuate the possible reason(s) behind Wolterstorff’s strategy. Why does he promote a relativization of the formative role of religious presuppositions in science?

It seems to me that he does so in order to relativize the impact of the (religious) antithesis on science. For some reason, the idea of a religious antithesis (as it was devised by the “fathers” of neo-Calvinism) is unacceptable to Wolterstorff. When dealing with this topic he employs every possible strategy to reduce the impact of the antithesis. Kuyper is the principal target because of his rather oppositional view of antithesis. And religion, the ultimate cause of antithesis, must be relativized as well.

The reduction of the role of religion (the pole of grace?) is coupled with the rehabilitation of the pole of *nature*. For example when he declares:

“when I say *fidelity* is the basic desideratum for the Christian in his or her practice of scholarship, I mean to avoid that radical obliteration of our habitual and dispositional nature to which the neo-Calvinist is so regularly tempted” (1989, 72).

Along the same line, he will suggest that it is not only religion (grace?) that uni-directionally influences and shapes science. It is also science (nature?) that influences our religious beliefs (77). We will come back to this idea later.

⁵⁵ Blocher however demonstrates that the acceptance of “alternative” medicines can derive from a specific Christian reflection. See *Ichthus* 1982(4):1-23.

At the basis of Wolterstorff's strategy then, it seems to me that we find a specific "control belief" (someone will say a "dogma"). The role of religious antithesis and its effects on scholarship must be relativized. In this, he comes near to Klapwijk. But this "dogma" is never discussed or justified. It is rather taken for granted and simply "preached". I would like only to suggest, in conclusion, that even control beliefs should be controlled. And the norm should remain the biblical Word.

5.4 Encyclopedia

Wolterstorff does not spend a large amount of time dealing with the issue of encyclopaedia. Yet one can find in his writings a few interesting hints. The first thing that appears quite clearly, is that the author seems to grant a privileged status to theology and philosophy. I should better start from the premise that Wolterstorff rejects a clear-cut distinction between scientific and pre-scientific knowledge (1976, 61). He cannot find an acceptable demarcation line between the two, but this fact seems to create a bit of confusion in some cases.

"That man is a free and responsible being is indeed a philosophical theory, and perhaps also a high-level psychological theory; and it is something contained within the biblical teaching. But the detailed psychological theories which fall under this high-level psychological or philosophical are not to be found in the Bible" (1976, 76).

Wolterstorff suggests that a proposition like "man is a free being" is a philosophical (therefore scientific?) theory. Actually a "high-level" theory, but it could be a psychological theory as well. It is contained in the Bible (therefore the Bible contains "high-level" scientific theories?) but the Bible does not contain the "detailed" theories that "fall under" this high-level theory. It seems to me that the missing distinction between scientific and pre-scientific creates its difficulties, and it also makes it difficult to determine the fields of study of the various sciences.

However, as I said, theology and philosophy are granted a special position among the sciences. In a more recent essay (1989) Wolterstorff observes that usually, in the (ordinary?) sciences, the weighing of theories is performed with the help of control beliefs. But in theology and philosophy it can happen "that what functions as evidence in one's weighing of theories (...) may belong to one's Christian convictions" (76). Are these two sciences then a bit "above" the others? A particular chapter is devoted to the study of theology and its "theorizing" (1976, 81- 87). There we learn that "the dogmatic theologian devises theories concerning God and his relation to us and the world" (81). Not only: he also "tries to determine what constitutes authentic Christian commitment" (82). On the other hand "the biblical theologian attempts to provide an interpretation of the biblical writings" (84).

Basically then, theology studies God and the Bible. Is that a reason for its superiority? Again, no clear distinction between scientific and pre-scientific is in view: “how can the line be drawn between biblical [i.e. theological!] scholarship and the careful, faithful reading of the Scriptures?” (86). I would say that one would expect to find a more “progressive” view of theology in the writings of this highly innovative author. When compared with the analysis of the dooyeweerdian school (especially Vander Stelt 1989) the position of Wolterstorff looks rather “outdated”.

Wolterstorff shares with Dooyeweerd the concern that theology can become a very dangerous science: “simply stated: theologians may lead people astray” (83). Yet his lack of distinction between scientific and pre-scientific prevents him from indicating the norms that should be followed in order to avoid the danger. The Bible should constitute the Norm, and confessions of faith should constitute relevant reference points. Theology (scientific) should be distinguished from (pre-scientific) faith. Yet Wolterstorff is not sure “that no part of the content of faith confession and dogmatic theorizing is not shared” (84). In the same way, “the results of the work of the biblical theologian also frequently enter into what is regarded as belonging to the authentic Christian commitment” (84).

What we have here is the “interactive view of science”. Science does modify our beliefs and it should not be prevented from doing so. Yes, science is dangerous, we are all exposed to risks. But sometimes this leads to positive developments, therefore we are asked: “why should such developments in general be prevented?” (86). But when the developments are negative? Remembering how Dooyeweerd emphasized the role of the biblical ground motive, of faith and of some disciplines as reference points for sound theology, one might even be tempted to long for the “good old times”...

Vantilians, however, shouldn’t feel too quickly flattered by Wolterstorff’s appreciation of theology. If the lack of distinction between theology and faith (or confessions of faith, or commitment) resembles a bit the arguments of Frame, for Wolterstorff (1976, 94- 96) faith is not a necessary pre-requisite for knowledge (see in addition section 5.7 below, dedicated to some “confessional weaknesses”).

Nevertheless, he concludes his 1976 book by complaining that “many of us know far too little of Christian theology and Christian philosophy. Consequently, we fail to see the *pattern* of our authentic commitment [?] and its wide ramifications” (104).

“Where Christian theology and Christian philosophy are not in a healthy and robust state, or where their results are not widely diffused among scholars, I see little hope that the rest of Christian scholarship can be solid and vigorous. Christian theology and philosophy are at the center (...) because it is in these two disciplines that the Christian scholar engages in systematic self-examination” (104).

I cannot see the reason for the last phrase, if it means “study of the self”. But for some reason it seems that Wolterstorff associates religion especially with these two disciplines, and with the self as well. For some reason, religion represents the self (not the world) and science represents the world, not the self. But theology and philosophy, although sciences, seem to represent especially the self.

However, one would like to ask whether theology and philosophy are expected to be simply faithful or also different, for example.⁵⁶ Can they reach the same conclusions as non-Christian theology and philosophy and still be faithful? If the answer is negative, as one would expect, I would like to ask why they are so different from the other sciences, what causes the difference. What is the field of study of philosophy? Are theology and philosophy supposed to be the “mediators” between the Bible and the special sciences? Do they determine or individuate the belief content of our authentic commitment? And (in part perhaps) control beliefs? What is striking, is that theology and philosophy are considered “at the center” and seem to represent the whole of Christian scholarship. The identity of Christian science seems to depend on them and all scholars should cultivate these two sciences as well. It seems to me that, on this topic, Wolterstorff’s reflections are not far from those of the vantilian school.

Yet there is a very original and innovative suggestion that concerns apologetics. It is sketched in the following few sentences.

“it seems clear that *apologetics* (defense of the faith) is not some distinct area of inquiry to be assigned to theologians. The psychologist who rejects behaviorism and works out a psychological action-theory as an option to the pervasive behavior-theories should be viewed as, in effect, engaged in apologetics” (1976, 114, fn. 45).

Something to think about, especially for those in the vantilian tradition...

5.5 Religion and antithesis: the neo-Calvinist past.

Wolterstorff’s opinions in this context, are similar to Klapwijk’s views. They agree that the neo-Calvinist idea of antithesis is too oppositional. And once again the critique concentrates on Kuyper’s doctrine of a “twofold development of science”, which is re-named by Wolterstorff, as the idea of “two distinct sciences” (61) “two kinds of science” (e. g. 59 and 66) and so on. I must repeat what I have said in the previous chapter: in my opinion Kuyper should be treated with more sensitivity⁵⁷ and more sense of history.

⁵⁶ Wolterstorff maintains that Christian scholarship should not necessarily aim at being different, but rather faithful (1989, 70).

⁵⁷ One doubts whether it is acceptable to label Kuyper’s chapter on the “twofold development of science” as “infamous”, even though the context is a pun (1989, 58).

Unless we ask of a thinker to deliver the immaculate conception, the final word on a topic, we must be prepared to take into account his historical context and background. As I have already said, Kuyper's great discovery was the possibility of Christian politics, education, of a Christian social order and so on. And he was fascinated by all this. From this starting point, perhaps he did not focus enough on the other side of the coin. Namely on the areas of agreement between scientists, on the fact that we should learn from each other, and on all the ideas that follow this line of argument. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that Kuyper totally ignored this "other side" of the coin. Concerning his view of a twofold scholarship Strauss writes:

"although we may want to formulate what is *shared* and what is *distinct* differently, it is clear that Kuyper did have a clear understanding of the distinctiveness of structure and direction. This insight indeed captures the core understanding of the biblical revelation because it entails the ultimate rejection of every approach dividing creation into two realms, one that is good and another that is evil" (Strauss 1999, 128).

Also Ratzsch's detailed study (1987) opposes Wolterstorff's conclusions. But even Wolterstorff himself recognizes that Kuyper presents the "other side of the coin" as well! Kuyper knew that there is common ground between the two approaches to science, that regeneration does not transform the senses in the human self and that there are common scientific tasks. He knew that both "kinds of people" share their humanity, of course, and both "kinds of science" are scientific, just to mention a few examples (Wolterstorff 1989, 60- 64). But, just like in Klapwijk, these nuances and admissions are once again played against Kuyper's idea of religious opposition. They are not seen as complementary ideas, necessary to complete the general picture of the doctrine of antithesis. They are not treated as ideas for tentative orientation (see the frequent use of metaphors). No, they should have been perfect from the start. And because they are not, they are shortcomings. The use of metaphors is reproached. A caricature is built up, in order to dismantle it. Kuyper is harshly condemned and his views become the *vitium originis* of the whole neo-Calvinist movement.

Yes, because Kuyper's oppositional attitude is supposed to have remained the same in "Kuyper's followers" (64- 65) especially in the "Reformational movement". Again, Wolterstorff should be less vague in his accusations, otherwise they might look arbitrary. But apart from that, why does he forget to mention Dooyeweerd or Vollenhoven in this context? The analysis of Dooyeweerd's position in particular would show that his doctrine of antithesis was more balanced. Ideas need time to be shaped. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven elaborated with more sensitivity what Kuyper offered as a still unrefined material. The fact that Wolterstorff jumps from Kuyper to the reformational movement has a very obvious purpose, but does not serve objectivity.

However, Wolterstorff has a new proposal to offer, in this context as well. Again, it is a suggestion, a modest one, which tends to “simplify” the issue. Christian scholarship, says Wolterstorff, should not try to be “different” but to be “faithful” to the gospel. In his own words:

“Why should it be thought that consensus (...) is always *merely* apparent? Why *must* this be so? Why assume that the scholarship of Christians and non-Christians must always and everywhere be different except for those thin points of commonality? Why not instead let the differences fall where they may? Why should the Christian’s project be defined primarily in terms of its *difference* from that of others? Why isn’t fidelity enough? Why isn’t it enough to urge that Christians be faithful in their scholarship? Why not be thankful for genuine agreement instead of being endlessly suspicious and querulous? (...) difference must be a consequence, not an aim” (70).

5.6 Religion and antithesis: the present

Wolterstorff’s questions constitute valuable material for reflection. Apart from the polemical spirit in which they are wrought, they can be considered helpful. Van der Walt (a scholar in the “so-called Reformational movement”) does not hesitate to consider them and (in part) to integrate them in his view of Christian scholarship (van der Walt 1994, 578- 9). To be honest, I doubt that the obsession for difference, as presented by Wolterstorff, may be proved to be real through a serious analysis of the literature produced by the neo-Calvinist movement. Dooyeweerd (see 1.7) believed that certain aspects Christian scholarship are not necessarily “different”. Yet let us suppose that a certain anxiety for difference might have afflicted some (neo-Calvinist) scholars. It might have constituted an un-resolved question, a disturbance. Wolterstorff offers an answer that provides a sense of rest. We will come back to this idea.

There is another interesting suggestion, in this regard. One that should be elaborated and explained more in detail. Wolterstorff says that Christian scholarship will surely be distinctive “as a whole” but not necessarily in every “segment” (70). A few lines below he adds:

“and if at some point the difference is scarcely large enough to justify calling this segment of scholarship a “different kind of science” (...) why should that, as such, bother us?” (70).

The Christians shouldn’t feel frustrated if his ideas are not different in every section. One should have a more global view. “Faithful scholarship will, as a whole, be *distinctive* scholarship; I have no doubt of that”, says Wolterstorff (70). And elsewhere he approves the neo-Calvinist view that, as a whole, “there is Christian learning and there is non-Christian learning” (58). But one must distinguish between the whole and its segments.

Wolterstorff's two "simplifications" provide indeed a sense of rest. But after we have relaxed a bit, we might start worrying again. For example: how "long" can these "segments" of scholarship be, without showing any distinctive Christian character? Can they include a whole academic discipline? Or even more? What about differences in each special science? This emphasis on scholarship "as a whole", seems to prepare the Christian scholar(s) for indifference concerning the possible (Christian) alternatives emerging in his particular field of study.

Keeping in mind the author's view of theology and philosophy it might seem that, as long as there is some difference in these two sciences, the other scientists should not worry. Difference might not concern their discipline, but it does not matter... Does all this not come very near to the Catholic view that it is in some supra-natural sphere of faith that the differences are *added* to the natural sphere of scholarship, which is the same for all?

There is one more difficulty. I ask the next question assuming that Wolterstorff is not prepared to affirm that Christian and non-Christian theology (and philosophy) can be faithful and yet not different. If this is the case, how is it possible that differences on the level of theology and philosophy ("at the center" of scholarship in his view) might not have at least some consequences in each special discipline? After all Wolterstorff admits that low-level theories are always linked to high-level theories (1976, 79). I mention the problem just *en passant*, but it seems to me that it deserves special attention in this model.

The other suggestion (that Christian scholarship should not be different but faithful) can result a bit vague as well. It cannot be the *panacea* that solves all the problems. Once the Christian scholar has been told not to worry about differences, he still needs to know whether he is in fact "faithful" in his work. Whether he should accept or reject certain views. Whether faithfulness might require different solutions. After all, Christian scholarship is *distinctive* scholarship. In what concrete situation is the Christian scholar left then? If he realizes that he is just sharing the convictions of his non-Christian colleagues he is invited by Wolterstorff not to worry. Yet this advice could be wrong.

Perhaps his scholarship is not different because it is not faithful! A sensitive scholar should continue to ask himself whether his scholarship is really faithful. He might doubt whether he is taking into account fully and properly the implications of Christianity. Perhaps his Christian colleagues hold a different view. Perhaps new issues and tensions might emerge in a certain discipline. The situation is never static. The invitation "not to worry", therefore, could in some cases be useless and in others even negative. It might invite to indifference in cases where one should be in the alert.

I also have to go back to a previous observation of mine. Weighing, I have said, seems to guarantee (especially in its recent version) a selection of the tolerable rather than the production of the Christian. Are we perhaps confronted with a similar problem, when we analyze Wolterstorff's

idea of *faithful* scholarship? Does it not point mainly towards the *acceptance* of theories? Does not the adjective *faithful*, as opposed to *different*, imply the acceptance of what is already available and “compatible”, “tolerable”, “not in direct conflict with”, and so on? Is Wolterstorff still promoting the idea of “inner reformation” (as he seems to imply in 1976, 77- 78) or is he rather proposing the “assimilation of the acceptable”? We are not even dealing, here, with Klapwijk’s idea of transformation. The “purification” of ideas of a non-Christian origin is never mentioned by Wolterstorff. They can be simply “weighed” by Christian scholars, and eventually considered acceptable.

To be less speculative, when I consider Wolterstorff’s concrete allegiances, I find striking how rapidly he can feel at home, for example, with synthesis theology. I am referring here to his openly declared acceptance of the main tenets of liberation theology (1981, 67). Although he has some objections here and there, it appears as if the most important tenets of neo-Marxism are accepted by Wolterstorff. In his whole essay on the comparison between liberation theology and neo-Calvinism, I miss one important theme. The fact that liberation theology sees no problem in the mixing of Christian and Marxist ideas, while neo-Calvinist philosophy tries to avoid synthetic thinking. This fundamental theme is never mentioned. Is this, in the end, the meaning of the phrase “not different but faithful”? One can reach the same conclusions as the Marxist and yet be faithful. An open minded position indeed. But could the Christian scholar embrace conservative ideas in politics and still be faithful? No: in this case the possibility is ruled out from the start! (1981, 58- 59).

5.7 Excursus: some confessional weaknesses?

To conclude the discussion on the antithesis, I would like to add that I find disputable some of the theological or confessional views expressed by Wolterstorff. They are not very far from some of Klapwijk’s arguments. I have already mentioned (see fn. 45) Klapwijk’s idea that the religious antithesis might not be absolutely radical, even at the religious level. The influence of modern and postmodern dialectical thought on this approach should be seriously considered, it seems to me.

Wolterstorff, on the other hand, proposes the following thoughts:

“[1]...it is a profound and even insulting mistake to lump all non-Christian scholars into one large group, labeling them all naturalists or humanists. The faithful Jewish scholar is not a naturalist or humanist. Neither is the faithful Muslim scholar. (...) There are many kinds of *scientia* not only two.

[2] Furthermore, we must seriously consider the possibility that, at least in the case of Jews and Muslims, the non-Christian is not worshipping a different God, not worshipping an idol, but merely worshipping differently the same god, the one and only God. Worshipping him deficiently, yes -so I as a Christian will say; but nonetheless worshipping God” (70- 71).

There are two arguments in this quotation (see parentheses). They both tend to relativize the religious antithesis. The first one is, in my opinion, not very serious and I have no particular objections against it. I would only ask the author, as usual, if and when some Reformed philosopher (and who precisely) did ever try to “lump” all non-Christian scholars in one large group. It was certainly not Vollenhoven, in his never-ending classifications, or Dooyeweerd with his plurality of religious motives. Are we not facing the creation of another caricature? But on the other hand, is it not possible to simply distinguish between Christian and non-Christian scholarship? Does not Wolterstorff himself sometimes use the phrase “Christian and non-Christian learning”? (1989, 58).

The second argument is much more serious. Wolterstorff appears to be out of line with the Reformed theological and confessional tradition. The idea that in some cases the non-Christian does not worship a different god, or that (s)he worships the Christian God “deficiently” is certainly in line with the spiritual climate of our *saeculum*. But I don’t think it reflects the biblical teaching. One should be careful: in postmodern times: many apparently “humble” ideas often contain a bit of arrogance. Let me for example ask: why speak on behalf of Jews and Muslims? Do the Jews generally agree with the view that we all worship the same God? And the Muslims? Would they both enjoy being “lumped” together into the same group... including even Christians?

I have to dedicate some space to issues like these because in Wolterstorff’s writings one finds often a certain lack of sensitivity towards confessional matters... Some of these ideas might perhaps prove to be acceptable in the end, if properly explained. But they are simply “thrown” to the reader without the necessary specifications. It must at least be said that such ideas are expressed in rather un-sensitive language.

Concerning the doctrine of Scripture, for example, he doubts that the Bible contains “only what God reveals” (1976, 56) and he thinks the history of textual transmission can support his doubt. God could have revealed something that is “strictly speaking false”, although quite “fit and proper for us as his “children” to believe” (95). “No one really believes that everything some biblical writers says, or presumes, ought to be believed” (97). The idea of revelation is questionable. Theology should concentrate on the fact that God *speaks* rather than *reveals* (1976, 112, fn. 34).

Concerning science: a lack of doctrinal orthodoxy might “serve as well” in the development of valid theories (95). True theories may emerge from the use of false control beliefs (94). Concerning the doctrine of man: in the dispute between Calvinists and Thomists of the 16th and 17th centuries on the effects of sin on human nature, “it is very difficult for us in the 20th century to put our finger on what exactly it was that the dispute was about” (1976, 108, fn. 12). In addition, Wolterstorff can speak of an “animal side of man’s nature” (96). Finally, one is obliged to ask himself whether for

Wolterstorff the theory of evolution is as proven as the heliocentric theory. Which in turn appears to be as certain as the textual-critical theories⁵⁸ (1976, 19).

All this causes, I am sure, some concern to Wolterstorff's readers, especially remembering his conviction that when our theology is not in order "our scholarship becomes eccentric" (1976, 104).

5.8 The interactive view of science

Wolterstorff offers a critique of foundationalism, which constitutes perhaps his best contribution in his book of 1976. I have already mentioned the matter in the chapter dedicated to the vantilian line (see 3.8). To summarize quickly: foundationalism is the idea that there exists a foundation of indubitable truths that are demonstrable to all by logic. From this "deposit" of truths it is possible to deduce logically true principles. The latter are regarded as valid because they are "founded" on the indubitable foundation. According to Wolterstorff, foundationalism has been operative in both Christian and non-Christian thought, for centuries.

Wolterstorff however is not a relativist. The attack on foundationalism does not prelude to some sort of skepticism in his epistemology (see his answers to Echeverria in Wolterstorff 1981). On the contrary he affirms that it is possible to have some "foundation" and to deduce truths from it. The only difference is that such a foundation will not be evident for all, and beliefs are not "demonstrable". Nor it is possible to deduce other truths from it only by logical deduction. All we can do is to posit as our foundation those data that we consider as evidences (data beliefs). With the introduction of data-background beliefs and control beliefs we will limit the number of acceptable theories. However, the presence of alternative views should not be necessarily seen as the result of some kind of failure within Christian scholarship.

The critique of foundationalism does concern perhaps some of the "fathers" of the neo-Calvinist movement. In particular Kuyper might have been exposed to the temptation of seeing the Bible in this perspective; a deposit of propositions, from which true "principles" might be derived and then applied to science (Venter 1994, 262). Wolterstorff's analysis is probably associable with a postmodern sensitivity towards foundations, but at the same time it criticizes a well established pattern of thought that Christians have utilized rather uncritically.

Wolterstorff proposes also an "interactive view of science". In the chapter dedicated to "theory and praxis" (1981, 162- 176) we find an interesting remark on neo-Calvinism. He says this movement had the courage to question one of the most fundamental beliefs of the "post-Enlightenment West".

⁵⁸ I have indicated what seems to me another confessional "weakness" towards the end of section 5.9. It concerns the idea that the Christian faith can be "lost".

“That if ever one discerns conflict between one’s religious convictions on the one hand, and the results of reputable science on the other, then one is obliged, as a rational person to resolve the conflict by revising one’s religious convictions. (...) the neo-Calvinists have had the imagination and courage to ask the provocative and deeply unsettling question of whether it is not sometimes the right and even the duty of rational individuals to restore the harmony by revising their theoretical conclusions” (1981, 170).

Yet Wolterstorff is under the impression that nowadays the neo-Calvinists have created a new unbalanced view of the relationship between science and religion. Speaking about “Kuyper and many of his followers” he says:

“Their picture of the relationship between Christian conviction and scientific practice and result is entirely one-directional, from faith to science. Kuyper’s emphasis, you will recall, is entirely on the way palingenesis influences science. (...) What lies behind this one-directional, non-interactionist view of the relationship between religion and the practice of scholarship is, it seems to me, what Charles Taylor (...) calls the *expressivist* vision of life. In this vision human activity and life are considered expressions of the self” (1989, 72).

Therefore, to re-gain the balance:

“I also insist that in cases of conflict between religion and science, people may sometimes alter not their scientific but their religious convictions, and that they may do so justifiably; sometimes they may even be obliged to do so. (...) At a certain point, for instance, it was no longer epistemically permissible for Christians to believe they were religiously obliged to hold to the geocentric theory” (Wolterstorff 1989, 77- 78).

Wolterstorff’s conception seems to be again related to the reduction of the role of religion (and re-evaluation of nature) that I have mentioned before. I would like to start my remarks from the previous quotations above.

The accusation of holding a “one-directional, non interactionist view” of the relationship between religion and science sounds a bit surprising, in the light of our previous analysis of Dooyeweerd’s thought. Again, the phrase “Kuyper and many of his followers” is indeed too vague. Dooyeweerd fought precisely the expressivist view of science, according to Klapwijk and Wolters (who fight the same battle). But surprisingly, it is Wolterstorff himself who modifies his charges against neo-Calvinism:

“Of course Kuyper and his followers believed in an objective, structured reality (...) the neo-Calvinist is most nearly akin to the *interpretive* vision of the medievals

in which the universe is treated as a text, whose meaning we are to interpret, and in which the meaning for the self is found by conforming to reality” (1989, 72- 73).

The problem, then, was not exactly expressivism. I have indulged in one more quotation, that is not strictly speaking indispensable, to show the rather unsystematic and at times arbitrary character of Wolterstorff’s statements. But whatever the problem might be (expressivism or interpretive vision) he insists that:

“the overwhelming emphasis in Kuyper’s discussion of science is that science is an expression of the self. This understanding of science was only part of Kuyper’s larger vision: he understood culture and society in general as expression, specifically as expression of religion. Not surprisingly then he scarcely noted any influence in the opposite direction: the influence of culture and society on the religion of the self” (1989, 73).

And again, if Kuyper is guilty, the whole movement must be guilty: as usual, it is not necessary to document the prolongation of the same mistake in Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and so on. It is simply “assumed”. Yet it is a pity that Wolterstorff does not analyze the developments after Kuyper. Because I believe he would have found many instances in which science and its results are said to influence other elements of our knowledge, including religion. I am aware that the main emphasis would probably be on the opposite direction. After all, this is what Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were trying to prove in a context in which the philosophy of science was dominated by positivistic views. But that was not all...

5.9 Attempting a response

Wolterstorff’s interactive view of science is proposed in rather dramatic tones, as if the author believes it to be completely new. Yet I doubt that it may sound scandalous to the neo-Calvinist. It does not look revolutionary or extraordinary. I would like to quote van der Walt again, who proposes a similar idea, by openly stating that apart from the direction from religion to science, there is another direction from the opposite side (van der Walt 1994, 44- 45). Dooyeweerd believed in the influence of special sciences on philosophy (1984, I, 565- 66) and on religion. For example, once philosophy detects antinomies in its own views, one might ask himself if the problem starts in the religious motive itself. Philosophy, in other words, could indicate that an absolutization is taking place, and that it is determined by a religious motive that should be put into question.

In addition, the idea that worldviews are influenced (not only by religion but also) by everyday experience has been one of the most popular in the neo-Calvinist movement (e.g. Olthuis 1989, 28; 32). These are just a few hints, but they show that there has certainly been an awareness of the “other direction”. Not only this, but the elements influenced by the “second” direction were not

only religion, as Wolterstorff posits in his model. There was discussion about the impact of scientific praxis on philosophy and on worldviews (Kalsbeek 1975, 170- 71). Without supposing a “second direction”, from experience to religion, it would in fact be impossible to believe that sometimes people do change their religious commitments...

Frame himself is aware of a reciprocal influence among the elements of our knowledge, and considers it obvious that our understanding of creation can sometimes modify our understanding of Scripture (1987, 314). Of course, Frame agrees also on the fact that it is not only our understanding of creation which is imperfect, but it is also our understanding of Scripture, as Wolterstorff (1989, 78) reveals as well. Although his suggestions on the topic are presented in rather dramatic tones, Wolterstorff is not the first author to discuss the topic.

Those who reflect on Christian scholarship are confronted so often with these issues, that I am not prepared to believe, for example, that they were totally unknown to Kuyper. If he simply knew nothing about the influence of science on religion, why would he have founded the Free University of Amsterdam? Did he never suppose that the spreading of academic results originating in a Christian context could have influenced the views and in some cases even the “religious” presuppositions of many? Did he not regret, on the other hand, the influence of Darwinism, Marxism and Freudian psychology on the beliefs of many? Was he unaware, as Wolterstorff suggests, even of the role that *society* and *culture* play on our beliefs? I don’t believe he was.

Wolterstorff’s suggestions about the interaction of science and religion are not scandalous, they are rather a bit vague. They simply tell us that sometimes it is right to modify our “religious” convictions. They do not tell us when it is necessary to do so, or when it is better to wait, to resist, understand more, or even to challenge the scientific results. It would have been more helpful to tell us whether there are criteria to guide us in these choices.

But I am afraid that at this point, the rather light structure of Wolterstorff’s thought does not help as it should. In fact, his distinction between beliefs concentrates on their function, not on their nature. And all beliefs can assume different functions in different circumstances. It is therefore impossible to distinguish precisely between a religious belief and other types of belief. It is difficult to distinguish religion from worldview as well.

It is difficult to distinguish between beliefs that are more important and more peripheral in our faith, in our religion or worldview. As a consequence, what does it mean that “religious” beliefs can be changed by science? Is the geocentric theory a “religious” belief, or is it simply a world picture that was imposed by the church in a certain time (and was even given religious relevance) but that, nevertheless, had no essential link with the Christian faith? Perhaps what is changed by

our scientific discoveries is simply our world picture,⁵⁹ rather than our religion. The two are often intertwined, and yet can be distinguished.

Surely there are beliefs that cannot be changed or influenced by scientific research (Ratsch 1986, 75- 106). Can science prove the existence or non-existence of God? Can it question the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of salvation? Can it prove that the Bible is or is not the Word of God? Can it convince scholars like Wolterstorff that Christians should not be committed to human freedom? Science can prove that the earth does not have four corners, as the Scriptures might say, but this will never prove to the Christian believer that his religion is false. He will adjust his geographical opinions, understanding that an ancient world picture was used, or that the text is a poetic one... It seems to me that, at least in some instances, what Wolterstorff calls “religion” is more or less what the neo-Calvinist calls world picture or worldview. This should be taken into account.

Wolterstorff however, creates a picture of the relationship between religion and science that contains another fundamental difference when compared with the ones produced within the neo-Calvinist tradition. In the latter, although a reciprocal influence between science and religion is acknowledged, although circularity is recognized, although the unity of created and written revelation is stressed, the priority of the written word on the created one is pre-supposed as well. As we have seen with Frame, “circularity” does not cancel the priority of the written Word on the created one (1987, 89). Or, to put it in the words of Wolters:

“The revelation of God’s will in creation is like a verbal explanation that an architect gives to an incompetent builder, who has forgotten how to read the blueprint. (...) The explanations cannot be fully understood without the blueprint to which they refer, just as the blueprint is in turn largely unintelligible without the explanations. But it is inconceivable that the blueprint should ever be invoked against the architect’s own verbal explanations of it. That would be insufferable arrogance...” (Wolters 1986, 33- 34).

We reach at this point the important issue of normativity. I have been sometimes questioning myself the idea of a hierarchy within revelation(s). Perhaps the idea is flawed by a dualism that separates a “natural” from a “supernatural” revelation. Perhaps we should acknowledge the unity of God’s revelation much more. In another context Frame speaks of the Word of God as an organic whole. Every form of God’s revelation can help us to understand better every other form of God’s revelation (1981, 4; 10-11). Why should we think, then, in terms of hierarchy and priority? Perhaps, the only idea we need is that the “corrections” to our understanding of the Bible or creation, should never be “dictated” (Frame 1987, 316). They should never be “automatic”, in both directions I

⁵⁹ A world picture is a pre-scientific idea about the physical universe. In this context it would also be useful to re-visit Clouser’s definition of religious belief (Clouser 1991, 22-23, see p. 10 in this study).

would say. We should not be too quick in modifying our beliefs and our theories as well (Blocher 1984, 18- 27). We should never absolutize our understanding of Scripture or our understanding of creation.

Whatever the truth might be, in Wolterstorff one misses all these specifications. There is no mention of the fact that some revelation might be more “normative” than others. There is no allusion to the fact that the modifications of our beliefs should be effectuated in all carefulness, and never “dictated”. In other words, there seems to be no real “bracket” to the influence of science on belief. No consequence seems to be excessive.

I also miss, in Wolterstorff, something on the level of the pre-suppositions. Namely the idea that both Scripture and creation constitute God’s revelation and they are not supposed, by the Christian, to be in conflict (Duvenage 1985, 14). What can be in conflict is our *understanding* of Scripture and creation. But nuances like these are luxuries that Wolterstorff’s writings do not concede. Instead, we are rather squarely told that sometimes Christians have given up their commitment, because they found it to be clashing with the scientific views of their days (1976, 22 and 92- 93). Not a single word is spent to regret such occurrences.

There is no mention of the fact that there must have been some misunderstanding at play. That either the religious or the scientific views must have been somewhat distorted. Instead, we are asked: “for all the dangers in particular cases, why should such developments in general be prevented?” (86). “In the extreme case people have given up their Christian commitment entirely (...) That, I say, is how things have gone (...) at least sometimes that is how they should have gone” (89)! And if you find that your commitment in the end is gone, this will teach you that “we are all profoundly *historical* creatures” (1976, 93). All this creates a feeling of insufficient sensitivity. In this sense, van der Walt’s account (1994, 51- 52) of worldview-crises, for example, appears to be much more sensible.

In addition, Wolterstorff’s idea that the Christian religion can be lost, or substituted, is certainly unacceptable from a Reformed point of view. It is definitely in contrast with the doctrine of the “final perseverance of the saints”. It is a non-Christian religion that can be lost, or changed, through conversion or by accepting another non-Christian religion. But according to the Bible, those who abandon the Christian faith have never really been Christians (1John 2, 19). There is no such a thing as dis-conversion! There is therefore a confessional and theological objection to the idea that science can even change our religious commitment. And it should be taken into account.

On the other hand, we shouldn’t put Christianity on a level where it is absolutely no more questionable by science. There are areas where the interaction can be critical. For example, Christianity teaches that initially creation was “good” and sin, suffering and death entered the world at a second stage. Science might say that death was a normal occurrence from the start. What would the consequences be? If the phases of Creation and Fall are no more distinguished, the

Christian religious ground motive should perhaps be modified. Could Christianity survive such a modification? What kind of Christianity could it be? I don't have a definite answer here.

But I think Christianity should remain open to such challenges. As Blocher says, faith is not automatically certain of all the answers. It does not ask science to agree immediately. It does not lose its hope if certain scientific results seem to contrast with the written Word. Faith is certain of the truth of this Word, therefore it can wait and remain peaceful (Blocher 1984, 320). What is still obscure will find explanation. Religion can be questioned by science. But in the meantime, our religious presuppositions should not be relativized. At the moment it seems to me that such presuppositions do not always play a fundamental role in Wolterstorff's thinking.

5.10 Not only critiques

It might look as if I appreciate very little in Wolterstorff's model. I have criticized many aspects of his view. But I would like to point out, in conclusion, that I find attractive, in this model, the attempt to clarify better the relationship between religion and science. I don't share the opinion that the "founders of the movement did not succeed in pinpointing the connection between religion and scholarship" (1989, 68). I think that Dooyeweerd especially, went a long way to demonstrate the concrete connections between religious motives and science. Yet Wolterstorff feels that it is possible to be more precise. As a matter of fact, terms like worldviews and religious motives, after reading Wolterstorff, appear to be a bit vague. One realizes the complexity of theories, the diversity of commitments and beliefs...

In addition I share with Wolterstorff the feeling that the reference to a single "mediator", for example a worldview, is not sufficient to explain a complex activity such as the devising and weighing of theories. Although I don't approve the atomization of the worldview (or religious motive) into many single "beliefs", I agree that the reference points available to the sciences are many. The roads from religion to scientific theories are many, sometimes passing through scientific reflection, sometimes through worldviews, sometimes through both. The same is true for the opposite direction: from science to religion. Only a detailed study of these elements (as Wolterstorff proposes) can improve our understanding of science.

There is something else that I consider positive in Wolterstorff's ideas. The emphasis shifts from theory to praxis, from nomological science to praxis-oriented theory, from goals and standards to the "social practice of scholarship", from ideas to research programs. Although one must be aware that such a shift in some cases might simply reflect the spirit of our age (Duvenage 1985, 29-31), perhaps Reformed philosophy needed to be reminded that science is not only about understanding but also about acting. Wolterstorff can be provocative in a healthy way.

His model can also account, in its own way, for the fact that Christian scholarship has not been developed in all the sciences to the same extent. Those who simply believe in the impact of religion

“in every sphere of life”, have to explain why an alternative Christian chemistry is not such an easy thing to elaborate. Wolterstorff tries to account for the fact that there are not only personal views in science, but also the real world, out there. Perhaps this is the main point of contrast with Klapwijk. In this interaction between (world)views and reality, sometimes reality changes our views. The non-Christian scientist is not only and always wrong, and in some cases we share some of his ideas. The list of interesting topics could continue. There are many stimulating insights in Wolterstorff. He has indeed tried to account for the surprising things that happen in science.

CHAPTER 6. TOWARDS A FEW CONCLUSIONS: SUMMARIZING, COMPARING AND LOOKING FOR NEW DIRECTIONS.

6.1 The relationship between Scripture and science

It is time to pull together the strings of my reasoning, and to reach some conclusion. What did we discover concerning the relationship between Bible and science? Dooyeweerd emphasized the role of religious motives, the reformational line wants a more “free” access to the Bible, while Frame insists on theology. Klapwijk proposes the necessity of the mediating role of worldviews and Wolterstorff the key role of control beliefs. The models of Dooyeweerd and of the Reformational line are quite near to each other. The model of Frame presents, as I have tried to say, some more problems. Klapwijk and Wolterstorff propose a few adjustments to the kuyperian tradition, although they are not always particularly convincing (in my opinion).

I would like to return to a premise (see 4.2) concerning the role of “mediators” between the Bible and scholarship. I have tried to show that mediators, having a “monopoly” on the Bible and representing the only possible bridge of access, usually end up by hindering, instead of promoting, the relationship between Scripture and each science. However these mediators are not all the same. We can have a scientific mediator (e.g. philosophy) or a pre-scientific one (like a worldview).

Now, it seems to me that the pre-scientific mediator is somehow less “dangerous” than the scientific one. We know the arguments that Dooyeweerd provided against the mediation of theology as a science. Such mediation would “block” the access of philosophy to the Bible thus preventing its reformation. I agree with Dooyeweerd on this point. I think he pointed to a real problem. The mediation of a particular discipline tends to exclude the direct access of other disciplines to the Bible.

But perhaps the mediation of a pre-scientific element, like a worldview or a religious motive, does not block the access to Scripture in the same way. The reason is that (e.g.) a worldview can be

considered as the pre-scientific “basis” of each discipline. It can be considered as connected to all disciplines. All sciences, in other words, have equally access to a worldview. The latter is part of the “equipment” of every scholar. The same is true for the religious motive. And via the worldview or the religious motive, then, each discipline can have access to the biblical text.

I am not saying that this solution is necessary or even wise. All I want to say is that, when mediators are prescribed by different models we can take into account, in our evaluation of these models, that the nature of the mediator makes a difference as well. It is always important, however, to take into account the complete model: the intermediaries sometimes are more than one. In Dooyeweerd, for example, we have a (pre-scientific) mediator between Scripture and philosophy. Then philosophy is the (scientific) mediator for the special sciences. I tend to believe that Klapwijk is more or less in the same position, when we consider his complete model.

There are other problems, of course. As Dooyeweerd pointed out, the mediation of a worldview tends to relativize science. In the end, mediators seem to create problems in any case. For example, the religious ground motive can be regarded as something too narrow to “vehicle” in a proper way the message of the Bible for science (Klapwijk 1987, 107). This is why I find attractive the simplicity and elegance of the reformational model. Reformed thinkers often experience a difficulty in imagining the non-theological sciences approaching the Bible without the mediation of theology (or philosophy). Yet it seems to me (see 2.1) that this needs not to be the case. It is possible to imagine more openness of the sciences towards the Bible without compromising the Reformed doctrine of Scripture. The emphasis of the Reformation on the *Perpicuitas Sacrarum Scripturarum*,⁶⁰ on *Sola Scriptura* and on the common priesthood of all believers, seems to be even enhanced by such an approach, rather than endangered. I have therefore praised this solution.

Yet is it always necessary to approach the Scriptures directly? Is it what *actually* happens? Do we have to avoid the interference of a worldview⁶¹ in any case? In 4.2 I have sketched another possibility. The problem with mediators consists especially in their exclusive monopoly on Scripture. They prevent any alternative access to the biblical text. If the “mediators” could be many, the monopoly would be broken. This is why I have suggested the idea of a “plurality of reference points” between Bible and scholarship.

They should not be considered as a hierarchy of “filters” to be consulted in a fixed order of succession. They should rather be seen as possible communication channels between the Bible and the sciences. They are not alternative to each other. They rather form a network, so to speak. At some stages one or more channels will be used. In other instances none will be used, and the access of a scholar to Scripture will be direct, on a pre-scientific or scientific level. We have seen that this

⁶⁰ The presupposition that the Holy Scriptures are understandable, sufficiently clear in their main teaching.

⁶¹ I ask these questions for argument’s sake, without implying that they reflect the conviction of most reformational thinkers (cf. also fn. 25).

is possible, in principle, for every science (see 2.2). But *all* reference points should be taken into account, and consulted. Especially those who are particularly relevant for a certain science or field of investigation. Only in this way we can hope to develop Christian sciences that *concord* between themselves. We must abandon all individualistic attitude: Christian scholarship can only be communal scholarship.

Another advantage of such an approach consists in the fact that the characteristic effects of many mediators are allowed to influence science. In this way unilateral emphases can be avoided and more balanced results can be achieved. Dooyeweerd pointed out that the worldviews tend to historicize science and to relativize its claims. This is why he preferred Christian philosophy to be based on a religious ground motive. The latter grants to science a claim to universality, which is necessary to maintain its scientific character. Yet Dooyeweerd did not maintain that philosophy is simply universal. Scientific thought is also bound to an historical period. Then, proposes Klapwijk, why not to admit that philosophy is worldview-bound? This would mean to resort to another unilateral emphasis. Why not to admit, instead, a plurality of bridges between Scripture and science? Why not to recognize a plurality of influences, even influencing each other? In this way it would be possible, for example, to safeguard both universality and relativity. Both continuity with a tradition and interaction with the present and the local.

Perhaps Wolterstorff comes near to this idea when he points out that the influence of a “religion” or a worldview cannot explain the complex phenomena of science. He then analyzes the role of a plurality of beliefs and commitments. Although his position appears to be rather “atomistic”, I believe that the reference points must be multiple: why should the presence of a religious motive exclude the influence of a worldview, or of another scientific reference point? Philosophy and theology should be considered relevant reference points as well. They are relevant for each other and for the special sciences. They are also relevant to investigate worldviews. Depending on the circumstances, the theories provided by all sciences can become reference points as well. For example, Goudzwaard’s theory concerning the “simultaneous realization of norms”, which he developed within the discipline of economics, or theories like confessional and structural pluralism, sphere sovereignty and so on.

6.2 Excursus: Duvenage’s proposal

I have sketched the idea of reference points in my own way, but perhaps it is not very far from Duvenage’s view. According to his model the Christian scholar must take into account that the levels of scientific investigation are many, but connected to each other (1985, 31- 36). He proposes the image of a spiral, in which we can distinguish three “levels” that cannot be separated from each other. The three levels are called: microfocus, mesofocus and macrofocus. The scientist can

“move” from one level to another and back again. In each level we find relevant reference points or, as Duvenage calls them, “perspectives/visions” (33).

“These visions cohere directly with the various levels which can be distinguished in the formation of science (...) the microfocus level has to do with the determination of the problem about which the study is revolving. But then also with all actions linked directly with the solution of the stated problem, for example problem formulation, collecting of data, processing of data, stating of hypotheses, construction of alternative viewpoints or theories, etc.” (Duvenage 1985, 33).

What are the relevant reference points (or visions) in each context? I will simply quote Duvenage’s sketch (1985, 34).

“Microfocus: scientific knowledge of a discipline (e.g. economics). Pre-knowledge about the field investigated. Knowledge about the status of research in the relevant field.

Mesofocus: relevant Scriptural data (e.g. stewardship). Philosophy of the particular discipline (e.g. economics). Theories about the field (e.g. behaviorism).

Macrofocus: Scriptural perspectives. Convictions of lifeview. Philosophical points of departure (e.g. ontology, anthropology, doctrine of society)”.

What is interesting in this model, in my opinion, is that in each level one finds scientific and pre-scientific knowledge interacting. Elements that are often regarded as mediators (philosophy, a particular science, worldview) are seen as interacting together at different levels. It is interesting to observe, in addition, the distinction between “relevant Scriptural data” (mesofocus) and “Scriptural perspectives” (macrofocus). Scripture becomes then available at different levels. One might observe that Scriptural data seem not to be available at the microfocus level, but then we have a “pre-knowledge about the field” and here again a pre-scientific understanding of the Scriptures can probably be operative. Although there seems to be no trace of a religious ground motive, the scheme comes very near to the idea of multiple reference points, or communication channels.

On the other hand, I must admit that in Duvenage’s system the “channels” to be followed are prescribed a bit rigidly, or according to a pre-fixed sequence. The image of the spiral tends to soften a bit this sequentiality, but probably a certain hierarchic arrangement remains. I am asking myself, in other words, if the “convictions of lifeview” for example (which are operative at macrofocus level) are directly available to the special sciences as well (microfocus) or only through the elaboration (e.g.) of the “philosophy of a particular discipline” which operates at the mesofocus level. What Duvenage says on pages 37- 38 seems to confirm a certain rigidity in the sequences to

be followed (see 6.3). Duvenage's scheme should be discussed and clarified a bit more, but I consider it, in many respects, quite interesting.

Perhaps, Frame's idea of a "circularity" of our epistemological processes can also be recalled here (although the sequence to be followed is prescribed a bit rigidly in a circle as well)! Circularity does not mean a "vicious circle", on the contrary it is normal and it should be accepted to a certain extent. In particular, Frame reminds us that we don't need to flatten our epistemological view by supposing that all the elements that are available in this circular consultation have the same importance or authority (1987, 89). Duvenage agrees with this view (1985, 18). I agree as well. Among the "reference points" some are more normative than others.

Scriptural data, in addition, should have a corrective role on our worldviews and theories. Wolterstorff would probably warn us that there are cases in which the results of scientific research in a particular field can have great authority and clash with Christian convictions. Yet, in principle, it seems to me that Christian pre-suppositions should be protected and promoted as long as possible if we want to maintain the idea of a Christian scholarship. Remembering, however, that we should be prepared to modify and re-formulate our presuppositions on the basis of a deeper understanding of the created and written revelation.

There is something else that I consider valuable in Duvenage's proposal. When he speaks of "knowledge about the status of research in a field" (microfocus) or "theories about the field (e.g. behaviorism)" at mesofocus level, he is clearly indicating that Christian scholarship must take into account non-Christian ideas, theories and conceptions. They will constitute "reference points" as well. In a different sense of course, with a different normativity, but they must be taken into account. Christian science, in this way, is put into constant dialogue with non-Christian science.

6.3 Encyclopaedia and biblical worldview

By discussing the relationship between Bible and science, we are already discussing and deciding the relationship among (at least some) sciences. For example, if we decide that theology is the necessary mediator between the Bible and the special sciences, we will have to build an encyclopaedic model that reflects this conviction. It is important, therefore, to promote from the start solutions that guarantee better than others the direct access of all sciences to the written revelation. This will be the first step of the encyclopaedic model that we are going to design.

Unfortunately, it can also occur that we create good premises and then do not take full advantage of them. Duvenage's scheme, perhaps, can constitute an example. Notwithstanding the recognition of a plurality of channels to the Bible, it tends to create a rigid encyclopaedic sequence. The Scriptural perspectives are necessarily to be elaborated first of all into a Christian Ontology. Then philosophy can be elaborated, because philosophy depends on ontology. Then special philosophy

can be developed and then the special sciences, which depend from special philosophy (Duvenage 1985, 37- 38).⁶²

It will be clear by now, that I prefer the models that do not imply a rigid sequentiality or hierarchy among sciences, because such sequentiality usually implies some kind of mediation as well. But is this the only reason? Is there some other good reason to design a model that allows the access of each science to Scripture, that avoids totalitarian mediations, that lines up all sciences on a equal level? Is there also some hidden “control belief”, behind this approach? I believe there is.

As I had the opportunity to say (see 3.6) encyclopedic models are often shaped according to our basic religious views or, if you prefer, by our worldviews. I have briefly proposed the hint that both Catholic and Humanistic proposals in the area of encyclopaedia show the formative impact of their respective worldview beliefs in their own structure. I believe a Reformational encyclopaedic model should also reflect certain basic convictions. I disagree completely, on this point, with Frame’s relativistic view that “there are many ways to cut a cake” (1987, 91). Encyclopaedic arrangements should be built to reflect the real relationship among sciences and our view of science as well. I believe the biblical worldview has something to say in this regard.

I would like therefore to briefly indicate a few important implications of a biblical worldview for this topic. I will do so by quoting Marshall’s account. Although the latter is rather related to social and political issues, one can easily relate it to science as well. For Marshall, the Christian worldview presents a few basic “motives”.

“One motif is that God is sovereign over everything in the world. The second is that, because sovereignty resides in God, no earthly institution can claim sovereignty for itself” (Marshall 1991, 7).

“Calvin stresses that all human activities are “callings” and are, as such, equal in the eyes of God. (...) Every part of life is to be lived in direct responsibility to God, and therefore no activity or institution can claim to mediate between God and man. Hence no institution has (...) a sovereignty which can override others” (p. 9).

“They are not arranged in a hierarchical order reaching up to God, but are arranged side by side, supporting one another in their specific vocations, all equally *Coram Deo*. This produces (...) the “thoroughly leveling” effect of Calvin’s emphasis on the sovereignty of God” (p. 10).

This is in fact the pre-theoretical view⁶³ that informs, I believe, the encyclopaedic model of the reformational school. The dooyeweerdian model is basically inspired by the same view, although

⁶² It is perhaps interesting to note that Duvenage, in this case, does not follow Stoker in attributing some kind of “priority” to theology (Stoker 1971, 39; 1976, 151- 2). He is rather “dooyewerdian” in choosing philosophy as the “basis” of the special sciences.

⁶³ Such a view is of course suggested by a blending of several biblical themes. Yet the text of 1Cor. 12, 12- 31 (on the unity of the body of Christ and the variety of its functions) is probably its most direct Scriptural support.

the two aspects that remain a bit disputable, in my view, are the key role attributed to philosophy and a certain “depreciation” of theology. This, I would say, concerning the final result. But the vision behind these two approaches seems to be very much the same. Concerning Frame, it seems to me that another basic view is operative in his model. But I have already explained my opinion on this point. Klapwijk and Wolterstorff, basically, do not discuss the topic sufficiently.

The sciences, according to this view, can be considered as “arranged side by side”, supporting and enriching each other. They can have direct access to both creation and Scripture, without mediators. It is not necessary to deny that certain sciences are more relevant than others for interdisciplinary purposes. Nor that some sciences are more “general”, while others focus on particular aspects. A certain *sequence* can be admitted as well, when we move from religion to science: from *pre*-scientific to scientific, from philosophy, to special philosophy, to special science. The reference points are not just “scattered” around. They have a certain nature and a certain “position”. Yet the scholar does not need to follow a pre-fixed sequence in order to consult them. We should also remember Wolterstorff’s “opposite direction”. From this point of view, pre-scientific becomes *post*-scientific! We should in other words avoid creating a hierarchy in which some science “dominate” others or “depend on” others.

In a truly Reformed model, each science is important, it constitutes a call to service, it has relevance for the Kingdom of God, it is service *Coram Deo*. Every scientist is encouraged to approach the biblical text (not just a Christian worldview). In doing so, the scientist is not confusing theology and science. He is not doing something inappropriate, as if the Bible was meant for theologians only. There are no sciences that are “peripheral” in a Christian approach. Christian commitment in each science is a necessity, not just an option. The reformation of scholarship is part of the call to Christian discipleship, and it cannot be neglected by a responsible Christian community.

There is still a question that I have promised to consider (see 2.7). It was born from the observation that Christian scholarship should avoid to establish one science studying (only/mainly) the special revelation while the others study (only/mainly) general revelation. The question brings us a step further: do all sciences need to study both revelations in the same measure? It seems obvious that chemistry, for example, will have to insist on creation more than on Scripture. If this is true, will this not introduce again some kind of hierarchy among the sciences? Does it really matter to say that all sciences have access to the Word revelation? What can physiology, for example, get from this “access”? Will we not end up in any case with one science studying (mainly) Scripture and all the others studying (mainly) creation? Will this not, finally, discourage the project of a Christian scholarship, by concentrating once again our academic efforts on theology and some few related areas?

I don't think I have a fully satisfactory answer in this respect. But I can say that perhaps we should not only think in quantitative terms: "how much" can a science "get" from Scripture or from created revelation. We should not simply try to quantify. Sometimes a few biblical perspectives, a few important themes could be sufficient to stimulate a Christian approach in a specific field. These biblical perspectives could be enough to challenge generations of scholars in this field. Of course the historian, for example, has to deal (quantitatively) much more than the theologian with extra-biblical "data": events, movements, dates, leaders etc. But the influence of the two revelations cannot be measured in such a mechanistic way. The important thing is to maintain the access to "both" revelations.

6.4 What is antithesis?

Kalsbeek points out with good examples that it is possible both to underestimate or to overestimate the impact of the religious antithesis (1975, 142- 150). Personally, I still tend to consider Dooyeweerd's view, on this topic, as rather balanced. I don't think I need to summarize anew the main tenets of his position. Let's simply say that Dooyeweerd could take into consideration both the presuppositions of the scholar(s) and the creational structures, which are the same for all. This is true, to a large extent, also for the reformational movement, especially when we consult authors like Van Riessen who has dedicated time and effort to the issue of science and knowledge. The idea of antithesis is perhaps tendentially more oppositional in other authors, as I have tried to show in chapter 2. It seems to me that some scholars, within the reformational line, emphasize more often the necessity of opposing non-Christian ideas.

Dooyeweerd on the other hand, having granted the difference between religious motives, insisted also on the necessity of dialogue, of reciprocal learning, of cooperation and emulation between scientists of different persuasions. Did he succeed? Geertsema asks the question in the context of an evaluation of his transcendental critique (1985, 16 ff). He is ready to acknowledge that Dooyeweerd did achieve, in some occasions, positive results which confirmed his intuitions. Yet, of course, more could have been achieved.

In Geertsema's opinion, it would be possible to improve Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique by removing a few potential obstacles to the dialogue with other philosophical trends. Yet Geertsema recognizes also a subtle but important issue in this discussion, when he says: "for a real dialogue both sides must be willing" (19). The observation might be considered obvious, but it is important to admit that it is very difficult to evaluate the validity of one's view of dialogue and antithesis on the basis of the practical results that he has achieved. The time, the concrete circumstances and the interlocutors play a decisive role as well.

It must be realized, with gratitude, that all the models agree on the existence of a religious antithesis, although there are sometimes attempts of relativizing such antithesis, even at the

religious level (see fn. 45). Such attempts are to be found in the more recent models, and my impression is that they are due to the pressure of the postmodern spirit upon philosophy. However, the idea of antithesis, in some way, is maintained in all models.

Furthermore, all models support the idea that religious antithesis must have some consequences, some expression, in the field of scholarship. The differences between models concern rather the nuances, the “how”, in a certain sense, although such nuances and their implications are not negligible. How far, how deeply should we expect such antithesis to be visible, tangible in scholarship? What about the interaction with non-Christian scholars, their ideas and theories? Is it possible to learn from them? And to integrate their views into our systems? Apparently, in the most recent models one can recognize a larger openness towards non-Christian thought. Perhaps an excessive openness?

One might wonder, for example, whether Klapwijk is not proposing, in practice, a new version of synthetic thinking. Yet it would be wrong to suggest that Reformed thinking is simply becoming more and more relativistic on this issue. After all, Klapwijk’s position on antithesis in the second half of the 1980s, is probably less relativistic than Wolterstorff’s position in the middle of the 1970s. As a matter of fact, Klapwijk feels that non-Christian ideas need to be “modified” in any case, before their introduction into a Christian philosophy. Wolterstorff (already from 1976) was simply speaking of weighing and eventually including into one’s system of thought.

Wolterstorff is right when saying that the aim of Christian science is not to create an antithesis but to be faithful. Yet the tendency to accommodate to Christian scholarship theories that have a non-Christian origin appears in his model as well. There is a rather dogmatic attitude in his approach, it seems to me. His view of antithesis is preached rather than analyzed, and those who don’t agree with it, apparently deserve to be opposed. As usual, non-oppositional thinking can become quite oppositional: it only changes those who are to be opposed. Wolterstorff, for example, shows quite an oppositional attitude towards the reformational movement!

However, the fact that there is a certain general “agreement” between all the models on the nature and relevance of the religious antithesis perhaps can constitute an element of hope for the future of Reformed scholarship. One crucial debate, in future, will probably focus on the idea of inner reformation. Will it be maintained, perhaps in a revised version? Or will it be substituted by some new method of synthesis? The issue is extremely important, in my opinion. Even the survival of kuyperian scholarship, it seems to me, could depend on the decisions taken in this regard.

There is a last question that I have promised to face in this context (see 2.7). In fact, while we discuss the antithesis, we must remember that Christian scholarship, at present, cannot clearly indicate its achievements in all the sciences, or to the same extent. In other words, the appearance of a distinctive Christian approach, in certain areas, is to a large extent still an ideal. Now, if the Bible has always been open to science, if Christian scholars have worked hard for the reformation

of scholarship, why are we still “behind” in the elaboration of a Christian view, in some disciplines? Is this view simply un-attainable in some sciences? Authors like Ratzsch (1986, 136) suspect that the influence of religion on science might in practice concern only or especially the “humanities”. What can our answer be?

I believe we should not lose courage too soon. I would like to make a few considerations in this regard. First of all, the discussion starts too often from what has not yet been achieved. This is tendentially negative. It should be recognized, for a start, that in some disciplines the possibility of a Christian direction is quite evident. It is difficult to deny this possibility for politics, philosophy, theology, education, history, literary studies, law, art, economics, sociology, communication and so on. It is mainly for the “natural” sciences, that the possibility looks less evident. But from this, we should not deduce too quickly that there is no possibility of a Christian approach. When we exclude, for example, this possibility even for the future, we are presenting a personal belief, not the facts.

We should remember that the development of Christian scholarship is a matter of centuries, rather than decades. Christians had to wait for centuries for the development of theology as a Christian academic discipline. Cairns (1970, 42) says we waited until the 3rd century, but others (Evans 1980) would even say until the 12th century. We had to wait for centuries, for the tentative elaboration of a Scriptural philosophy, or for the project of an inner reformation of science.

The development of a Protestant perspective in politics or education took a long time as well. Although Althusius became professor of law already in 1586, men like Van Prinsterer, Stahl, Burke, or Kuyper all belong to the 19th century. Comenius was still busy with his educational writings, in Amsterdam, 150 years after Luther had attached his 95 theses on the door of the castle’s church in Wittenberg. In all these cases, it was possible to say, sometimes for centuries, that a Christian perspective in these disciplines was not likely to exist. But today we know that it would have been a wrong conclusion. We should learn from the past... And in the present, we should acknowledge the promising signals within the disciplines.

We would then be able to appreciate the timid efforts of an author, for example, writing on Christianity and chemistry (e.g. Vander Vennen, 1989). We would then discover that a lot has already been written, from a Christian perspective, on a subject like mathematics.⁶⁴ We would follow with interest the debate on evolution that takes place among Christian biologists, geologists, etc. We would listen carefully to Clouser when he shows that religious presuppositions do play a crucial role in physics (Clouser 1991, 128- 140). After all, it is possible to study physics from the perspective of Eastern thought, as Capra currently does. Christian scholarship has a long history. For the kuyperian wing it would be really too early to quit...

⁶⁴ See Cahse & Jongsma 1983. For a recent contribution from a dooyeweerdian point of view, see Strauss 2001a (the last of a series of discussions on the philosophy of mathematics by the same author).

Personally, I wonder whether among the real reasons for a lack of a Christian direction in certain sciences there might not be some of the mechanisms and ideas that I have described in this study. As long as we will cherish a hierarchical view of the encyclopaedia, with its queens, mediators and peripheral subjects, we will tend to concentrate our efforts on what we see as crucial, and to neglect what Wolterstorff (1976, 104) calls “the rest” of Christian scholarship...

6.5 Antithesis, dialogue, faithfulness...

Unfortunately, I had to discover that sometimes Christians don't want to hear about the distinctive character of Christian scholarship unfolding even more in future. We see this attitude in Wolterstorff as well. In his view, Kuyper's idea of a new and distinctive direction for science was not properly formulated. He was expecting, therefore, that most Christian scholars would (first recognize the fact and then) simply sit back forever, waiting for a better formulation to come. Instead:

“What is striking to us (...) is the number of people who responded (...) by working industriously to show where the differences [between Christian and non-Christian scholarship] were and how exactly they came about” (1989, 64).

Ironically, one could say that he does not really “let the differences fall where they may” (to use Wolterstorff's own sentence). He has already decided that such differences must not exceed a certain limit that looks reasonable to him. The scholars who want to explore the issue further, simply irritate him!

Sometimes, behind this attitude there is a desire to promote the cooperation among scholars and to reduce the possibility of conflict. Because difference means potential conflict and in a world like ours we are tired of conflicts. I can sympathize with this feeling. Yet, we must ask ourselves: is it necessarily true that differences create conflicts? Should we not revise this idea rather than trying to limit the differences at all costs? Could we not accept our differences and interact with respect, rather than attempting an impossible blurring of all distinctive traits? If the era of globalization is not the era of difference at the same time, it will be a rather appalling period of human history.

I am not saying that the antithesis will for sure emerge to the same extent in all sciences. We must be open to see where the differences fall. Perhaps Geertsema provides a useful distinction in this regard, when he says:

“Dooyeweerd's philosophy, then, has hardly led to a different way of doing science, to different theories within the disciplines and to new scientific discoveries. But it does offer a different perspective on science, a different framework in which scientific research can be interpreted” (1995, 18).

I am not saying that this is the maximum that can be achieved. As a matter of fact, I think Geertsema underestimates the results achieved in the special sciences by scholars such as M.C. Smit (history and historiography), H.D. Diemer (biology) J. Skillen (political sciences) G.J. Spykman (theology) P.A. Verburg (linguistics) and others. It must be admitted that after the pioneering times of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, Reformational thought has definitely shown a propensity to prolong its reflection into special philosophy and the special sciences. One just needs to mention scholars like Goudzwaard, Schuurman, Marshall, Rookmaker, Stafleu, Olthuis to recognize such a tendency.

But perhaps, in some areas, we should simply be satisfied if Geertsema's "different perspective" can be achieved, even without different theories or results. We should remember Wolterstorff's warning that even when we cannot see differences in each single *segment* of Christian scholarship, this might not be the proof of an apostasy. Probably this "different perspective" would even constitute a relevant alternative within certain sciences and it could already be considered as an inner reformation. To discuss the differences within each science in terms of "segments" would then become even obsolete. We should rather make sure that we make all possible efforts to bring to light the implications of Christianity for scholarship.

Geertsema's quoted phrases, in the previous page, could be understood as implying that the reformation of the special sciences depends to a large extent on philosophy (i.e. philosophers). Dooyeweerd's philosophy, in his opinion, should (or could) have "led" to "different theories within the disciplines" or to "new scientific discoveries". But it should be reminded that, although philosophy is a relevant reference point, the establishment of a Christian direction within the special sciences cannot occur without a specific effort from those who work within these sciences. It cannot be simply caused by someone else, from outside.

And here Christian scholars must keep asking themselves whether a real effort is being done in this direction. Is there still commitment to the ideal of Christian *special* sciences? Or do we simply unload on theologians and philosophers the responsibility of providing a christianization of everything? This attitude can cause two types of problems to those who are put "in charge" or feel responsible of such an enterprise. On the one hand a sense of superiority that can only be detrimental. On the other hand enormous emotional "stress" due to the expectation that a certain group of scholars should provide everything to everybody.

Christian scholarship can only be the result of a communal endeavour. No one should delegate his responsibility to others. We cannot afford the luxury of "leaving the job" in the hands of a minority. At this point, one should also mention the problem of our lack of Christian commitment. Wolterstorff would probably object that we cannot deduce the lack of commitment from the lack of (distinctive) results. Yet he also admits that this lack of commitment is real and sometimes it explains, for example, the lack of agreement among Christian scholars (Wolterstorff 1976, 75). The

issue is relevant. Without commitment we cannot expect the results. And this commitment should concern all scholars, not just a group of “reformers”. My personal impression is that, even in Potchefstroom, we have still a lot to learn in this sense...

6.6 Ideas about science

In this area it would be good, for Christian philosophers, to work towards an analysis of the structure of science itself. Only when such a basis is available can some important elements of the discussion about science be assessed properly. In this regard, several efforts have been made. Dooyeweerd has certainly analyzed the structure of scientific thought. Van Riessen has done the same for the reformational school. More recently, only Wolterstorff seems to have attempted a similar enterprise. A few characteristics seem to me to be relevant for a Christian view of science.

First of all, the impact of pre-scientific convictions on scientific practice should be recognized. Dooyeweerd’s critique is still relevant in this sense. There is an inner connection between science and person, between scientific thinking and non-scientific presuppositions. It is in the nature of science itself to be connected to pre-scientific presuppositions. It is important to note that all the models that we have explored do recognize this connection. Some of them grant a rather direct link between science and religion (e.g. Dooyeweerd). For others, science is linked primarily to worldviews (Klapwijk) or more generally to beliefs (Wolterstorff).

In the more recent models one can observe a more in-direct link between the scientific and the religious sphere. One of the reasons why Wolterstorff would defend this view, is that religion does not contain already in itself, all the presuppositions that are necessary for the development of scientific theories. Furthermore, science is not shaped only by religious beliefs. Wolterstorff is not the only one to acknowledge this fact. A good pronouncement, in this regard, comes from the reformational school.

“It is possible to call religious belief central and other types of belief peripheral (...) it can be said that religious belief gives direction to all belief. This should not, however, be taken to mean that the content of all beliefs is exhaustively determined by religious belief” (Van Riessen 1992, 90).

Van Riessen’s statement is quite balanced. In other cases, it seems to me, we run the risk of detaching religion too much from science. This could mean, for example, the end of every transcendental critique of science, in the dooyeweerdian sense. Geertsema, for example, asks Klapwijk whether such a critique would still be possible according to his model (1987, 160- 2). The reason behind the question is that Klapwijk does not link religion and science directly, but via a worldview. The problems can become even more serious. When the distance between pre-scientific presuppositions and science becomes too wide, the idea of Christian scholarship itself is put into

question. This should always be taken into account. The link between scientific and pre-scientific can be designed in different ways. But Christian scholarship should never be disconnected from its religious presuppositions.

Another important characteristic of a Christian view of science, should be represented by the fact that Christian and non-Christian science must be recognized as *structurally* equal. This implies that the models that propose a structural difference between “two types of science” should be considered as less valuable than those which can account for the structural identity of the different types of scholarship. It seems to me that the model of Frame is the most exposed to this critique. According to this model, Christian scholarship develops via theology, but secular scholarship often develops via something else. Probably theology is regarded as functioning only in the more “religious” types of scholarship. The distinction, as I have said already, is problematic.

On the other hand the *directional* difference must be recognized as well. Although the differences between Christian and non-Christian scholarship do not always emerge at all levels (results, theories, etc.) we should not ignore the distinctive direction of Christian scholarship. We should not accept too quickly the existence of convictions that can simply be shared by all. Even Wolterstorff points out that:

“there may be less “shared ground” than one might suppose at first glance. One is inclined to think that low-level theories will especially exhibit it. But low-level theories in science often presuppose high-level theories. And it may well be, in many cases, that unnoticed features of these high-level theories (...) make them in fact unacceptable...” (1976, 79).

Duvenage points out to the same truth in his idea that the three levels of scientific investigation, although distinguishable, remain linked all the time and form the spiral-like structure of investigation.

Probably this directional distinctiveness is becoming more difficult to maintain today, for Christian scholars. In my view, this can be related to the influence of the postmodern climate of thought in which we live and philosophize. In the big pot of postmodernity the differences are so many that they become irrelevant. Everything is part of the same soup! Sometimes, as Christian scholars, we are quite ready to detect the influence of the *zeitgeist* on Christian philosophers of the past (cf. Klapwijk, 1987, 123). But often, when it comes to us, it seems that we have the right to conduct our scholarship in complete agreement with the spirit of our times. Yes, our academic thinking can only be historically situated. But if we simply feel comfortable with the prevalent spirits of our epoch, what kind of Christian scholarship can we promote?

6.7 Post Scriptum

The exploration of these models for Reformed scholarship has required a long travel. Let's say a guided tour. Like every travel, it must have been difficult and tiresome in some traits. Yet it has offered the possibility to visit several historical "sites" that are part of the heritage of Reformed scholarship. I hope that some enrichment has been enjoyed. Of course we have not visited all the possible models, because of linguistic and other limitations. Yet I believe we have visited a representative section of the country, and we have a good idea of its landscape and its resources...

May Christian scholarship prosper and continue to bear fruit! We are probably not in a very triumphant phase of its existence. The doubts and the difficulties are many. We participate in an atmosphere of general dis-orientation, loss of accountability and in some respects even decay. Yet we must keep our hope. The fruits, even the modest ones, even in our times, are never the product of the branches, but always of the Vine.

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