BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT

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Capita Selecta in the History of Christian Evaluations of Non-Christian Philosophy

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Preface

Within the Department of Philosophy of the Free University, Amsterdam, an interdisciplinary research group spent nearly a decade investigating the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought. One of the group's objectives was to offer scholars, students, clergy and interested laymen a general orientation in how leading Christian thinkers throughout the ages have assessed and put to use non-Christian ways of thinking. To this end the group has collected some of its in-depth studies of historically influential positions in the present volume.

Since the book is not meant to be read by professional theologians and philosophers only, its language and argument are as direct as possible and—we trust—readily understood. To enhance its usefulness as a student reader, brief sections at the end of each chapter contain suggestions for further study. Cross-references in the text highlight agreement or difference among the positions discussed.

We want to thank the authors for their willingness to collaborate closely with editors and translators. The contributors are prepared to assume full responsibility for the content of their essays. We gratefully acknowledge the work done by the translators: Louise Derksen (ch. 10), Fred Klunder (ch. 1, 2, 3), John Kraay (Introduction, ch. 12), Donald Morton (ch. 6, 8), Timothy Palmer (ch. 5) and Judy Peterson (ch. 7).

The Department of Philosophy and the Governing Board of the Free University have invested much time and financial support in both the project as a whole and this publication. We mention this in sincere gratefulness. Finally, we thank the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, for its ready willingness to include the book in its series with The University Press of America.

We hope that the book will find its way into the studies of informed folk and into the classrooms of those colleges and universities where the issues facing a Christian surrounded by humanistic ideologies, secularized science and modern technology are matters of prayerful concern.

The Editors

Introduction

What Clement of Alexandria, Calvin of Geneva, Gutiérrez of Peru, and all the other thinkers discussed in this book have in common is at least this: they bear witness to their struggle with *the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought*. This relation is the theme of the collection of essays presented here, explored by way of concrete, historical case studies.

From the very beginning of the Christian era people reflected on the cognitive implications and consequences of the Christian faith. Augustine entitled one of his works *De doctrina christiana*, and spoke of 'our Christian philosophy' (*Contra Julianum* IV, xiv, 72). Conversely, there is no doubt that Greco-Hellenistic and modern philosophy reveal (or hide) religious inspirations and ideological aspirations. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Immanuel Kant tried to keep *Wissen* and *Glaube* apart, but, as Herman Dooyeweerd has shown, a radical demarcation of them cannot be justified theoretically (*A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 1953).

The struggle of the early church with the philosophy of late antiquity was one of life and death. Faced with a despising Greco-Roman elite, Christians were forced to take a stand with respect to the Greek mind, not only theoretically but existentially. Justin, an itinerant Stoic philosopher who after his conversion expounded Christian doctrine for some time to large crowds in his house in Rome, had to pay for his new-found faith with martyrdom around the year 165. Insidious danger threatened the church when heresies such as Gnosticism and Manicheism began to infiltrate the community of believers. And as Christianity gained influence in the highly developed intellectual culture of the Roman Empire, the church wavered between rejection and acceptance of that culture.

Such hesitancy between 'antithesis' and 'synthesis' also marked the church in the Middle Ages. To be sure, the situation had changed greatly. The church had become the heiress and even the guardian of ancient culture, but the uneasy tension between 'the wisdom of God' and 'the wisdom of the world' was keenly felt, all along, and not only when the writings of Aristotle and his commentators were rediscovered. These

tensions left a wide track of power struggles, heated debates, prohibitions to teach and excommunications.

The problem of the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought is not superseded or outdated in the modern, 'post-Christian' era of civilization. In today's 'information society' both churches and individual Christians must seek their way in a culture which, especially since the Enlightenment, has deployed its secular markings everywhere and has steered its course by the compass of technological and scientific expertise. Nor is the struggle to relate Christian faith and secular patterns of thought and action limited to those living in the Western hemisphere; it is waged throughout the world, from India (Raymond Panniker) to Peru (Gutiérrez). Christians are seeking to make Christian sense of Hindu philosophy, Chinese wisdom, Marxist interpretations of Third World issues, and so on. Others try to avoid 'contamination,' retreating in Christian subcultures, enclaves in which they nurture contempt of the world, hostility toward culture and suspicion of the (non-theological) sciences.

To label these attitudes of acceptance of surrounding cultural goods and heritages ('synthesis') and rejection of them ('antithesis') as 'progressive' and 'conservative' respectively will get us nowhere. It so happens that ultra-conservatism can go hand in hand with thoroughgoing synthesis, that antithetical radicalism can be fashionably modern, and *vice versa*. Sir Karl Popper is surely right when he speaks of 'Plato's spell'—it has been cast over many a 'Bible-believing' Christian too. On the other hand, who will deny that antithetical withdrawal into the monastery or the conventicle often led to genuine revival and veritable renewal in the world?

One key issue in all this has always been the right understanding of Scripture. From the first book of the Bible to the last—at least from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20—a clearly antithetical line is evident. The apostle Paul puts the 'foolishness of God,' the *skandalon* of a crucified Lord, over against the 'wisdom of the world' in terms which can hardly be misread: 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy....' Down the centuries the echo of these incisive words has resounded through the church. But there are counterstatements, too, and they reverberated within its walls as well. Church Fathers, medieval masters and modern theologians have taken note of these other Pauline utterances, to the effect that the heathen show 'the work of the law written in their hearts,' or, speaking to the Athenians (with, presumably, philosophers listening in), that in their ignorance they worship the very God whom he, Paul, proclaims. Just how radical an antithesis between divine and worldly wisdom comes to expression here?

We come back to the same question: How did Christians, throughout the ages, actually find their way through the tension-fraught terrain of faith and culture? How did they remain faithful to the gospel which burst into history, unconditionally claiming authority and truth? How did these believers feel about the great philosophies and about science, both of which staked their existence on truth as well? But the question is not prompted by historical interest alone. The question of the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought has defied time. Christians are still staking their hopes and their actions on the Truth that holds them and are still confronted with and challenged by pagan or modern secular truth-claims. The issue far surpasses mere academic or historical interest: *we ourselves are involved, and unable not to choose.* How are we to understand the Pauline paradox which enjoins us both 'to destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God' and 'to take every thought captive to obey Christ' (2 Cor. 10:5)?

A note on this book

As mentioned in the Preface, this book is one of the results of the research and discussions of an interdisciplinary team at the Free University, Amsterdam. This institution, founded a little over a hundred years ago by the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, was meant to be free of state interference and true to the Christian principles of life. These principles were held to be *antithetical* to the Greek, the scholastic and the modern humanistic understanding of life and the world. Inaugurating the university, Kuyper spoke of a house built on a Christian foundation, a house of science adjacent to similar edifices, yet 'with nothing in common except the yard before the door, the view from the windows, and the printing press within, to serve, like a postmaster, the communication of thoughts.' The Free University has failed to make this exclusivist claim stick, and today no longer defends it. On the other hand, it has no desire to perpetuate, much less to promote, the present spiritual–cultural crisis by contributing to the exclusively secular pursuit of science. Hence, the institution is compelled to reflect critically on its historical beginnings and its spiritual origins.

The research group has sought to contribute to such reflection, aware of the need to travel the long route of searching and researching the whole of the Christian tradition, seeking insight into its profoundest motivations and into the wellsprings of its attitudes to culture and science. If the execution of so broad a task required careful deployment of our resources in

terms of time and specific expertise, even stricter limitations were imposed by the scope of the present volume. In the end we decided to adopt four criteria: the positions discussed should be explicit, paradigmatic, Christian and mature.

First, *investigation should concentrate on explicit views*. We did not try to tally how many non-Christian themes in fact filled the pages of a Christian's writings; at issue was the *quaestio juris*: what we looked for was how a Christian philosopher or theologian tried to justify his position regarding non-Christian thought. History teaches that Christians, too, are children of their time, as susceptible to the common views and attitudes of the age as anyone is. To take the Church Father Tertullian as an example: raising the question 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' he explicitly rejected every form of acceptance or compromise. On the other hand, he was quite unaware of his attachment to Stoic doctrine, the implications of which permeate all of his psychological views. We concentrated on the explicit argument.

Secondly, *we chose to sketch paradigmatic positions*. We focused on explications of positions by Christians whose solution was (and is) characteristically influential or, if you like, 'classic'—solutions that served others (frequently with loss of subtlety) as 'models.' An entire chapter is devoted to Thomas Aquinas, for instance, while hardly anything is said about all those Catholic (and Protestant) philosophers and theologians who adopted his 'subordination' model of grace and nature.

Thirdly, *Christian positions only are presented*. The relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought can be approached from two perspectives, depending 'which side you are on.' Non-Christian philosophers can criticize or try to 'place' the phenomenon of (Christian) faith. Those are not dealt with in this book. We discuss thinkers whose conscious engagement is within the bounds of historic Christianity and who reflected on the culture around them in terms of their commitment to the Christian religion. Given this criterion, it seemed correct to include a chapter on Hegel's philosophy of religion, while a study of the critique of religion by the leftist Hegelian Feuerbach would have been out of place.

Our fourth criterion is, perhaps, somewhat less precise and in part depended on the available expertise. *We decided to concentrate on later or mature views within the three broad historical periods*. That is to say, we present the most coherent and best-articulated expositions of the attitudes assumed by Christian thinkers within a given period. Hence, the *Patres* Justin Martyr and Tertullian are mentioned in passing only, while Clement, Origen and Augustine are dealt with at chapter length.

John the Scott (Erigena) and Bernard of Clairvaux (both of them highly original thinkers) do not represent Scholasticism in a form as 'mature' as did Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, which led us to treat the latter two and not the former. As far as the modern period is concerned: we decided to focus on contemporary thinkers and to present the views of Calvin and Hegel to provide the necessary background to discuss these contemporaries.

Perhaps we should mention two things that we did not do, one that could be used as a selection criterion (but was not), and one that could have been a possible objective (but, again, was not). One might ask whether this book should not have been limited to treatment of theologians only, or just to philosophers. The answer is No. Hegel is a philosopher who discusses the problem of synthesis and antithesis. Pannenberg is a theologian. Thomas is both at once. Calvin is, strictly speaking, neither the one nor the other. The point of view from which Calvin discusses the problem is pastoral rather than academic. What decided us to take on such heterogeneous company rather than to select in terms of profession was that the problem of the relation of Christian faith and non-Christian thought is a philosophical problem and that historically, too, it has always been couched in essentially philosophical terms no matter who approached it.

Secondly, although we looked into 'paradigmatic' positions in the sense explained above, we did not aim to construe some bloodless typology, slots to fit people in. This should be sufficiently clear from what is said in this Introduction, but the Epilogue exemplifies what we are really after: to learn from this collection of case studies (and, we might add, from patient, critical listening to countless other Christians past and present). Although each chapter concludes with an evaluation, sometimes brief, sometimes more extensive, some mild in tone and others highly critical, and although much discussion prepared the contours of the final chapter, the members of the research group were called to other duties before some grand conclusion was reached. And so Chairman Klapwijk agreed to write the Epilogue and take the blame if readers voice objections. The initiative now lies with these.

The Editors

1 / Abraham P. Bos

Clement of Alexandria (150–215)

The relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought became a vital issue as soon as educated Christians began to experience in their daily lives that philosophy was a formidable force in the culture around them. Mindful of their faith's claim to the whole of life, including all its cultural expressions, they realized that many persons and currents of thought in Hellenistic culture rejected this universal claim of Christianity and reserved the prerogative of 'the whole truth' for their own system of thought or doctrine of salvation. The conflict latent in these contradictory claims gave rise to the need for reflection: Is this conflict irreconcilable, or can an open confrontation be avoided? Are there perhaps points of contact which may serve as a basis for collaboration? In this context Clement of Alexandria stepped forward as *an Apologist for Greek philosophy against its Christian despisers*.[1]

(1) *Introduction*

The problem was perceived by the very first Christian writers. Their environment simply compelled them to take a stance; hence, remarks on the topic are scattered throughout their writings. Such passages occur especially in the works of the *Apologists*, men like Justin Martyr (d. 168) and Athenagoras (d. 175), who attempted to explain to outsiders what Christians stand for and who sought to defend their faith against false accusations. Truly systematic reflection on the subject, however, does not begin until later. It takes place for the first time in the catechetical school of Alexandria, an Egyptian port and important center of Hellenistic culture. This school flourished at the end of the second century under the renowned leadership of Clement and Origen.

Data on the life of Titus Flavius Clement are sparse. He seems to have studied in various places before coming into contact with Pantaenus in

1. The references between parentheses are to Clement's work *Stromateis*.

Alexandria. Pantaenus had been a proponent of Stoic philosophy prior to his acceptance of the Christian faith. After his conversion, he established a school where new converts were nurtured in the faith. Clement became associated with him and succeeded him as head of the school. He served in this function from around 180 to 215, when he passed his duties to Origen.

It is rather significant that this school was established in Alexandria, for in this same city the question of faith and philosophy had been dealt with from another perspective. At the beginning of the Christian era, Philo, a leading figure in the Hellenistic *Jewish* community of that city, had been active. In his interpretation of the Thora he had given an important place to Greek philosophy, and he had employed a method of exegesis which enabled him to present the insights of this philosophy as the latent wisdom of the books of Moses. His work had a profound influence upon the early Church Fathers, including Clement.

(2) *The novelty of Clement's approach*

Clement of Alexandria may be said to have effected a break-through in the conflict between Christian faith and the philosophy of his time. He is the initiator of a long tradition which invariably accorded ancient philosophy a legitimate place within Christian learning.[2] His approach is markedly different from that of his Christian contemporaries and predecessors.

We should take into account that the church gained its original following from the lower classes; well-educated persons such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras were few and far between. Eric F. Osborn describes the attitude prevalent in those days as follows:

> Religion and philosophy had gone together at various periods in the history of the Greeks, but Christians, except for Justin and Athenagoras, had little to do with philosophy. Even these two had practically nothing to contribute to the *rapprochement* of Christianity with classical philosophy. The attitude of most Christians was one of suspicion and antagonism.[3]

2. Cf. A.H. Armstrong & R.A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*, 136; H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1, 10. The question of the continuity between the first proclamation of the gospel and the patristic tradition is evaluated quite differently in the Reformation as compared to Roman Catholic assessments. With respect to this question in connection with dogmatics, see C.J. de Vogel, *Ecclesia Catholica*, 170ff and G.C. Berkouwer, *Conflict with Rome*, chapter 3.

3. E.F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, cf. Cl. Mondésert, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates*, vol. I, Introduction, 37.

Two factors especially rendered philosophy suspect to the mind of the early Christians, and made Clement's plea to come to terms with it seem like an attempt to strike a bargain with the devil: one factor was their unfamiliarity with philosophy, the other the repeated Pauline denunciations of it, as in the first letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:18ff), to the Galatians (Gal. 1:11–13) and to the Colossians (Col. 2:8). They felt that philosophy had spawned its evil progeny in the various heresies and the Gnostic sects with which the church was engaged in a life-and-death struggle. Conversely, their very suspicion of philosophy, logic, and the philosophy-related sciences prevented them from moving beyond negative prejudice. At any rate, they never criticized philosophy on the basis of thorough acquaintance with it.

Clement's first self-appointed task, then, was to remove the obstacle which most Christians took to be insurmountable: St. Paul's warnings against philosophy. This he does by contending that the apostle's statements refer to certain schools of thought only, rather than to the whole of Greek philosophy. Clement claimed that Paul was thinking of Epicurean materialism in particular. The views of the Epicurean philosophers, above all their rejection of a 'spiritual' reality and of divine providence, represented the epitome of godless and detestable philosophizing to both pagan Platonists and Christian intellectuals reared in the Platonic tradition (*Stromateis* I, xi, 50, 1–51, 3; VI, viii, 67, 2).[4]

The other factor, the general lack of familiarity with Greek and Hellenistic thought, actually tended to pave the way for Clement. It was relatively easy to demonstrate the inadequacy of the common attitude and the superiority of his own approach, as he does in the first book of the *Stromateis*.

(3) *Clement's position to be understood in terms of his new view of faith*

Clement's reappraisal of Greek philosophy takes place in the context of refuting a group of fellow Christians who had become suspicious of the way he was discharging his duties as a teacher of the catechetical school of Alexandria. It is likely that some of these Christians were deeply troubled regarding the education of their children. Before turning to the arguments which Clement brings to bear against their charges I should introduce a few general observations.

4. A similar critique of such philosophy is found in Augustine, *Contra Academicos* III, 42. Karl Marx rightly protests against this stigmatizing in his dissertation on Democritus and Epicurus, I, II. See his *Jugendschriften 1835–1841*, 136.

Clement defends not only a new view of ancient philosophy, he also takes a different attitude toward the Christian faith. There is reason to believe that these two are related. For him the Christian proclamation offered above all a doctrine of wisdom, a body of knowledge indispensable for the salvation of humanity. Thus, he considered it quite legitimate to call Christian doctrine a 'philosophy,' a striving after wisdom. Before him, Justin Martyr, whose works Clement may have read,[5] had done the same. Justin held that pre-Christian wisdom represented a partial knowledge of the truth only. All the great thinkers of antiquity, such as Socrates and Heraclitus, participated in the *logos*, the Word by which the world was made (John 1 : 3). However, they failed to see the *logos* in its full disclosure. In Christ, the incarnate *Logos*, the Word had come to earth and dwelt among us. In him was revealed the fullness of knowledge. Hence, Justin had fervently defended the notion that Christianity has the prerogative of calling itself the one true philosophy.

In the Hellenistic period in which Justin and Clement lived philosophy was commonly conceived of as a doctrine of wisdom; it served to point the way in which a person, with great effort and at much cost, could attain the highest knowledge of the truth. Moreover, it was commonly accepted that there is a fundamental difference between those who make progress on the path to true happiness and those who continue to meander down the tracks of illusion and opinion. The impressive allegory of the cave, found in the seventh book of Plato's *Republic*, was frequently used to picture this arduous upward way to the light of the knowledge of truth and served as a model for the various stages which had to be traversed to reach that blessed end. The influence of this allegory can be traced in the works of Clement as well.

The first steps on this difficult path to the light are taken when one turns away from the world of sense experience and becomes 'converted' to a new, truly philosophical or, as the case may be, truly Christian way of life. The second stage consists above all of a life of observance of the philosophical (or Christian) virtues. One aspires to achieve an austere way of life, a life of self-control and detachment, in accordance with the laws of the community. For Plato these laws are the laws of the state; for Clement they are the rules of life as passed on from Moses and Christ. Such laws and rules have a useful, pedagogical function for all those who have not (yet) achieved perfect knowledge of reality and of its divine origin. However, they lose all authority for those few who manage to pass

5. See S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 27.

beyond this stage and who are granted the blessedness of attaining true knowledge (*gnosis*) and of penetrating into the deepest grounds of reality. For Plato this knowledge is knowledge of the Idea of the good; Clement speaks in this connection of the 'mysteries of the Christian faith.'

It is quite easy to note a certain correlation between the three stages on the 'way of true philosophy' and the three most important works of Clement, namely; the *Protrepticus* (The Exhortation to the Heathen), the *Paedagogus* (The Instructor), and the *Stromateis* (The Miscellanies). This last work gives us Clement's view of the 'true Gnostic,' the person who possesses *gnosis*, the highest form of knowledge.

It is important to see that, by conceiving the way to *gnosis* in this manner, Clement distinguishes in the whole body of Christians, i.e., among all those who have given heed to the divine exhortation to conversion, between those who have achieved *gnosis* and those who have not yet attained it. The latter are the 'simple believers;' the former are those who possess spiritual knowledge of the mysteries which are communicated in a 'concealed' manner in Scripture. They are introduced to this knowledge through oral instruction by a teacher who, before he 'initiates' them into these mysteries, makes a thorough examination of the worthiness of their moral conduct and of their capacity for spiritual understanding.

Finally, this initiation into the mysteries of the Christian faith points up another element of Clement's thought which comes to expression especially in the *Stromateis*: the important place and authority which he attaches to a tradition of oral transmission, in which the words of Christ spoken to his most intimate circle of disciples were passed on and preserved among equally select successive groups. Clement's own teacher, Pantaenus, had belonged to this tradition, and Clement himself had been considered worthy of becoming acquainted with it (I, ii, 11, 1–3; 14, 1; VI, vii, 61, 3).[6] In this tradition the core of the proclamation of Christ, the *logos*, was transmitted by word of mouth, since everything which is written—Clement does not except holy Scripture—is necessarily unsuited to adapt itself to the reader's power of comprehension. The highest truths of the Christian faith, which Clement favors with the term 'mysteries,' may under no circumstances be communicated to those who are unworthy of them. That is why, according to Clement, Christ spoke to 'the multitude' in parables, that is, 'covertly!' No written text can judge whether a reader's thirst after knowledge is genuine or his intention pure.

6. Cf. R.P.C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, chapter 4: 'Clement's Doctrine of the Rule of Faith and of Secret Tradition.' Origen does not have this notion of an independent tradition next to the books of the Old and New Testaments.

That is why both the Bible and Clement's own work *Stromateis* only make 'oblique' and 'arcane' references to the concealed truths (I, i, 10, 1; 13, 2 and 14, 2; 15, 1; 18, 1; 20, 1; 20, 4). The 'dead' letter of Scripture is depreciated in favor of the 'living' word of the oral transmission of an esoteric tradition!

We may well ask whether Clement is right in appealing to Jesus' teaching for a justification of his own distinction between two kinds of believers.[7] Is the criterion for making this distinction within the realm of faith derived from faith itself? Is it not much rather based on the diversity among people in mental capacity and rational acumen?

Ever since the time of Plato, philosophers had drawn a line of demarcation between themselves and that great mass of humanity which is unable to undergird their mere opinions with anything like scientific knowledge and a view of the totality of things. The philosophical few are no longer susceptible to worldly snares and vanities. Having seen the relativity of all earthly things, they have no need of some authority from above to prescribe for them how they ought to live; they aspire after the good for the simple reason that they have contemplated the very Idea of the good. At this point we are faced with the elitist intellectualism which was the hallmark of Greek philosophy and a prominent feature of the Platonic tradition. It rested on Plato's division in human experience between that which is perceived through the bodily senses and that which is perceived by reason and the intellect. This division induced him to accept a world of eternal and immutable Ideas, above and beyond the world of sense-experience. The philosopher alone is capable of raising himself to this higher reality. This Platonism also permeated Clement's view of reality, and he did not submit it to a fundamental critique.[8] However much he may have found fault with the different philosophical schools known to him, we must keep in mind that these faults were, at least in part, suggested to him by his acceptance of this Platonic view of reality.[9]

The distinction between simple believers and Christian Gnostics enables Clement to ascribe a positive function and value to Greek philosophy as an aid in the transition from the lower level to the higher,

7. See the criticism of Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 68: (a) the traces of the 'secret tradition' manifest typically Alexandrian traits; (b) the source of this theme in Clement is to be found in Philo the Jew and in the 'Letter of Barnabas.'

8. The problems to which this attachment to Platonism gives rise in Clement's theology have been described clearly by R.P. Casey, 'Clement of Alexandria and the Beginning of Christian Platonism,' 71. The reason why one person is capable of reaching the state of *gnosis* while another is not cannot ultimately be given. 'The only way out for Clement was to avoid the difficulty.'

9. See Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 51 and 232.

spiritual realm of *gnosis*. The significance of philosophy for non-Christians is, according to his conception, that it, as a gift of God, serves to guide them in the direction of the Christian faith (cf. I, vii, 37, 1).

Discussions in the early church on the relation between Christian faith and (ancient) philosophy evince three points of view: (1) that of *identification*, (2) that of *contrast*, and (3) that of *subordination*. This distinction may be clarified as follows. In the first type, which to a certain extent may be found in Justin Martyr, Christian faith is considered to be rational and Greek philosophy at bottom Christian. Sharply opposed to this view was that of Tertullian (c. 150–223), for whom Greek philosophy contained nothing Christian and the Christian faith nothing rational. According to him, this faith is worthy of belief precisely because it makes no claim on rationality (*credo quia absurdum*—I believe because it is absurd—is the statement commonly attributed to him). Jerusalem and Athens have nothing in common. The third type, of which Clement is the first representative, may be seen as moderate, intermediate: it conceives of philosophy as propaedeutic (cf. ch. 2.1). Christian faith is rational; Greek philosophy is rational as well, but insufficiently so!

(4) *Both Clement and his opponents have a point*

Turning now to the position which Clement took in the polemic with the Alexandrian Christians on the value of Greek philosophy, we must agree that he was right to defend the legitimacy and divine origin of science and philosophy over against those who conceived of these merely as negative, as tools of the devil. The fact that he sought to establish a positive relation between Christianity and scientific pursuits is significant and needs to be acknowledged wholeheartedly. However, when Clement identifies 'philosophy' with the form given to it by the Greeks, he made it virtually impossible for himself to remain untouched by the deepest motives of this Greek philosophy.

On the other hand, one notes that his Christian opponents rightly perceived that Greek thought could be dangerous. It needs to be said, also, that their criticism contained too much bigotry and remained too external to merit endorsement. Their opposition precluded a wholesome pursuit of science and philosophy. In short, we have to acknowledge the partial correctness of both sides in the discussion;[10] in the final analysis, neither side appears to be entirely acceptable.

10. For Clement's verbatim arguments see especially *Stromateis* I, chapter ii. Actually it was more a case of a monologue and of talking at cross-purposes than of a real discussion.

(5) *Philosophy: a ladder for the Greeks*

As mentioned above, Clement ascribed to philosophy two efficacies: one for the Greeks, another for the Christians. For the Greeks prior to Christ's sojourn on earth, philosophy was necessary 'for righteousness' (I, v, 28, 1). There were those among them who were 'justified by philosophy' (I, iv, 27, 3; cf. VI, vi, 44, 4). Clement bases this contention on the difficult words of I Peter 3:19, in which is said of Christ that 'In the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits' (*NEB*). According to Clement, these words mean that Christ—and the apostles as well—had actually preached to the deceased Jews and gentiles, and that in this way it also became possible for the Greeks who had lived a life of purity (as the fruit of their philosophy) to be saved *by faith* (VI, vi, 45, 1). He can therefore say that for those who were justified by philosophy, their religiosity was stored up as a help and a treasure (I, iv, 27, 3). As the law brings the Hebrews to Christ, so also is philosophy a schoolmaster who conducts the Hellenic mind to the Lord (I, v, 28, 1). This parallelism leads him to describe the philosophy of the Greeks as a 'covenant peculiar to them' and as a 'stepping-stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ' (VI, viii, 67, 1).

Clement finds the pedagogical significance of Greek philosophy demonstrated above all in its attentive study in the area of ethics and in the importance which it attached to the pursuit of *areté* (virtue) in human conduct. Its exhortation for self-control and the call to repress all desires of the flesh give this philosophy an intrinsic value. For this reason Clement can also appreciate Stoic philosophy even though he criticizes its refusal to acknowledge an immaterial, spiritual reality. However, far more sublime is the value of that school of thought which not only possesses a pure concept of virtue, but which above and beyond that points to a pure knowledge of the divine in a correct *theology* (I, v, 30, 2). That deeper insight, Clement thinks, is present in the Platonic tradition.

(6) *Philosophy: an elevator for the Christian*

It stands to reason that philosophy cannot serve as a ground for the justification of Christians. Their justification is rooted in their faith in Christ alone. However, having distinguished between two kinds of 'citizens of God's Kingdom'—the 'simple believer' and those who have attained true *gnosis*—Clement subsequently develops the thought that philosophy is

useful and indispensable as propaedeutic for the 'advanced citizens' of that Kingdom. If a Christian would gain true insight into the doctrine of the church and desires to become competent in the defense of the faith, such a propaedeutic will be necessary (I, v, 28, 1, and I, vi, 35, 1).

Clement adduces biblical support for this view of the relation of philosophy to Christianity by appealing to the story of Hagar and Sarah (Gen. 17 and 21; Gal. 4:24ff). Actually, however, the interpretation which he gives to it already presupposes his own view: the subordination of Hagar to Sarah represents the subordination of philosophy to true wisdom. In this allegorizing of Scripture, Clement readily avails himself of the allegorical exegesis of the Mosaic writings offered by the Jewish Alexandrian Philo. This subordination of philosophy to true wisdom is quite analogous to how Plato in the *Republic* develops the relation between the various disciplines, such as geometry, astronomy, etc., and philosophy. According to Plato, the striving love of wisdom—the literal meaning of the Greek word 'philosophy'—is humankind's highest calling. Wisdom itself is reserved for the gods alone. Still, the search after wisdom brings a person nearer to the gods. Clement seizes on this recognition of its own limitation on the part of Greek philosophy in order to claim that in contrast to the Greeks, every Christian is in possession of wisdom because Christ is that wisdom and he bestows it on those who believe in him. Hence, the Greek philosophers were looking for the very truth which the Christians possess. Of course, we need hardly say that such a claim is quite intolerable to the non-Christian (cf. I, v, 30, 1 and 32, 4; see also I, xx, 97, 4).

The specific benefit which Clement expects of philosophy in the Christian life is that it trains the human mind to direct itself to those realities which it can approach and grasp by understanding alone (I, vi, 33, 1). Only by way of this abstract and spiritual reality can the soul ascend to its highest ideal, the contemplation of divine being, which transcends even spiritual reality. Clement's theology is, as we saw above, so permeated with the intellectualistic, philosophical theology of Middle Platonism that it is for him manifestly necessary that the mind and the power of understanding be trained and developed as a preliminary step to *gnosis*. While his intellectualism is tempered by various Christian notions, it is never really overcome.

Thus, the common, unschooled Christian will certainly be saved on the basis of his faith alone. Yet the superior stage of *gnosis*, which is accorded to the 'beloved children of God'—with stress on the word 'beloved'—will be quite beyond his reach. The contemplation of God 'face to face' will be possible for the simple believer only in the life hereafter. The Christian

Gnostic will be able to reach that blissful state even on earth, with the aid of Greek philosophy. That is why Clement attaches so much importance to this philosophy (see I, ix, 44, 3 and I, xiii, 58, 2).

(7) *The truth contained in Greek philosophy explained*

We noted that Clement's work is thoroughly Platonic, and that his Platonism is the crucial factor in all his conceptions. Thus, his distinction between 'faith as such' and the level of faith reached by the Christian Gnostic must be explicated and evaluated against this background. The same holds for his explicit acceptance of Greek philosophy as an entrance to that higher level.

Clement goes to great length to demonstrate the value of Greek philosophy in terms of its origin: namely, that its core was derived from the Bible or, more precisely, from the Old Testament. But in view of what has been said in the previous section, this effort must be regarded as an *ex post facto* vindication of what he himself had already put into practice; it is the grooming of a defense witness. The notion that the Greeks derived many of their views from the writers of the Old Testament occurred to him only when he felt the need to bring both worlds into harmony. One cannot escape the impression that the desire to bring both worlds together fathered the thought that they were originally one. The exegesis of Scripture to which this desire gave birth does not belie its parentage.

Clement's account of this subject is scattered throughout his entire major work, the *Stromateis*, and his remarks appear to the modern reader to be rather insufficient and even confused. To understand Clement properly we must realize that his view of what 'truth' is differs considerably from the concept of truth as it is generally accepted today. We conceive of it as something accumulative. We tend to think that by investigating reality we get to know *more of the truth*. The discoveries made in science imply for us an increase in knowledge and therefore an increase of the totality of what is true. Up until the end of the Middle Ages, the approach to truth was quite different. Truth was conceived of as a spiritual reality of an order superior to the material and visible world, for which it was something like a pattern or model. It was thought that in their present, earthly existence humans are alienated from the truth and that they differ from one another in the degree in which they have recovered something of a vision of the eternal, divine Truth.

For Clement the 'full truth' was identical with the divine Word (*logos*) by which the world was created, and which in Christ came to earth.

Nonetheless, *parts* of this truth—at times he uses the same term as did Justin Martyr: 'seeds of truth' (I, xiii, 57, 3)—can also be found outside the tradition of direct revelation, as, for example, in Greek culture. One image he likes to use is that of God as the sower, who sows not only wheat, that is, faith in Christ, but other grains as well, such as barley, which comes up and ripens earlier. Both Greek philosophy and the Jewish Law have spiritually nourished people before the ripening of the true wheat, the Christian faith (I, vii, 37, 1; VI, vi, 94, 1–3). Sometimes, however, Clement makes use of a somewhat different image: that of the wheat and the tares, kernels of truth mixed with weeds (cf. Matth. 13:24–30 and 36–43). From the perspective of this image he no longer calls philosophy a gift of God, but speaks of 'stolen goods' which have been scattered among mankind by the thief, a 'power' or angel who fell away from the truth (I, xviii, 81, 4). Analogous to his view that truth must always be learned from some teacher—a view which is so pervasive in his thought that he is led to designate Christ as the 'first teacher of the truth' (VI, vii, 57, 3)—is his declaration that the devil is the original teacher of 'truth wrenched out of its meaningful context.'

Another theme that Clement deals with extensively asserts that the Greeks derived the truth from the books of the Jewish tradition. In accepting and developing this theme, he follows without much comment Philo, Justin Martyr and others. The tenability of this claim was not questioned until the time of Augustine. Clement shows extensively that, without exception, all the Greek sages and philosophers lived after the time of Moses. This single consideration—for which he makes a strong case—justifies him, he thinks, in claiming copyright for the Jewish writers whenever there seems to exist the slightest similarity between the Old Testament and themes from the Greek tradition. Hence, he reproaches the Greeks for their unwillingness to acknowledge their sources (I, xv, 60, 1 and 64, 5).

One could, of course, take issue with Clement by pointing out that either of his two solutions is sufficient but that both together are contradictory. Either the Greeks had direct knowledge of the books of Moses and distorted the data, or they did not have such knowledge but developed their own philosophy under the inspiration of an evil power. However, it is likely that Clement did not consider these two ways of conceiving the source of Greek philosophy as being contradictory. Much more difficult is the question how Greek philosophy could possibly be of so much value when it is largely the product of degeneration and shares only slightly in the one truth. In what respect can philosophy continue to be of use

after the coming of Christ? Once broad daylight has come, is there any need to light a candle? The reason why these questions do not receive satisfactory answers probably is that Clement had already decided in favor of Greek philosophy before he gave an account of its usefulness. In fact, this usefulness seems to him to be so self-evident that any justification is superfluous.

(8) *Conclusion*

Clement's literary and spiritual legacy clearly manifests two sides. As we had occasion to observe, he is to be commended for having opened the way to science and philosophy as legitimate fields of Christian endeavor. Hence, without Clement the Church Father Augustine could not have written a work like *De doctrina christiana* (On Christian Science), and Christians would have continued to conceive of philosophy as nothing more than the product and domain of evil powers.

However, we must add that Clement too readily supposed that he could join Christianity to philosophy in its Greek form. He was not sufficiently aware of the religious motivation of this philosophy. As a result, a theology as well as a view of humanity and reality could develop which bore the distinct marks of the intellectualism and deification of reason which were characteristic of ancient philosophy. Clement's positive appreciation of Greek philosophy resulted in a coalition of that philosophy and the Christian faith. His deepest loyalty was doubtless to the latter, but in subordinating the 'simple belief' of the unschooled member of the church to the 'rational belief' of the Christian Gnostic, he introduced an unscriptural divide into the fellowship of Christ's body. In this he succumbed to the Platonic spirit of his times.

This needs to be said. At the same time we should realize that it is relatively easy to be critical in retrospect. We shall have to bear in mind that philosophizing and especially Christian philosophizing is an intention and a task. In other words, 'Christian philosophy' is not so much a reality as it is a resolution; it is more of a mandate than an achievement.

(9) *For further reading*

A selection of the writings of Clement may be found in the *Library of Christian Classics*, Volume II: *Alexandrian Christianity*, edited by J.E.L. Oulten and H. Chadwick. For a general introduction to the problem of this book with regard to the Church Fathers see A.H. Armstrong and

R.A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*. A brief statement of Clement's views by H. Chadwick is found in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited by A.H. Armstrong, chapter 10, and one by Louis Boyer: *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, chapter 11. More extensive studies are those of Eric F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* and of Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*. For those who read Dutch, the older study of Hajo U. Meijboom, *Clemens Alexandrinus* (1912), and the work of Jelle Wytzes, *Clemens Alexandrinus en zijn Griekse vroomheid*, may be recommended.

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2 / Johan F. Goud

Origen (185–254)

One way of looking at the relation between Christian faith and philosophy is to see it as an abstract problem amenable to theoretical formulation and solution. The manner in which the early Christian theologian Origen treated this problem may be dealt with in this way as well. His proposal can be tested for consistency, for example. Such will in fact be the approach in this chapter: I mean to discuss his basic theoretical position on philosophy.[1] *Are faith and philosophy continuous or discontinuous?* Meanwhile, one must keep in mind that an approach of this kind cannot do justice to the profound practical significance which this 'problem' and its 'solution' must have had for Origen. In fact, his whole life was dominated and structured by the search for a *modus vivendi* between the Christian tradition and non-Christian thinking.

(1) *Introduction*

Waves of persecution swept over the Christians in the Roman Empire. Origen's father was beheaded in one persecution; Origen himself probably died as a result of imprisonment and torture during another. The general scorn of Greek intellectuals was an additional burden to bear. These men of learning looked down at the Christian faith as barbarian nonsense. The situation was further complicated by the fact that in Origen's lifetime many fundamental doctrinal issues were yet to be resolved: the great councils of the fourth and following centuries were still to come. At these councils the church would formulate the 'right doctrine' (ortho-doxy) and set the limits within which Greek philosophy could be used legitimately, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy would become authoritative in matters of doctrine. However, during Origen's life much of the relationship between

1. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Origen:
CC = *Contra Celsum*
CommJohn = *Commentary on the Gospel of John*
PA = *Peri Archon/De principiis*.

Christian faith and philosophy was undecided; there was still room for doctrinal experimentation. Origen proposed many views and hypotheses which the church later on would condemn as heretical.

Eusebius of Caesarea, the first church historian and an important source for later historians, provides us in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* with considerable information about the life of Origen. He tells us that when Origen succeeded Clement as the instructor at the catechetical school of Alexandria—he was only eighteen years old at the time—he repudiated Greek philology and rhetoric, in which he had become well versed. He looked upon education in these subjects as useless and incompatible with Christian doctrine and sold all the scientific works in his possession. Years later, however, he reinstated Greek science and philosophy in the curriculum of his school. Eusebius quotes a letter in which Origen defends this later policy against those who censured him for devoting too much study to Greek learning:

> But as I was devoted to the word, and the fame of our proficiency was spreading abroad, there approached me sometimes heretics, sometimes those conversant with Greek learning, and especially philosophy, and I thought it right to examine both the opinions of the heretics, and also the claim that the philosophers make to speak concerning the truth. (*Historia* VI, 19, 12)

Other sources also indicate that Greek science and philosophy were to remain to the end an essential, though subordinate part of Origen's curriculum. One of his most renowned students, Gregory Thaumaturgus, gave a long valedictory upon leaving the school at Caesarea where Origen had taught since the year 230. In it he expressed his gratitude for his teacher, eloquently describing how Origen guided him and his fellow students through the labyrinth of philosophical theory and argument, how Origen led them on the path of true wisdom and piety. The aim of his teaching was to direct the student to the height of virtue, which is piety. Physics, geometry, and astronomy served to lead the student to a rational admiration of divine government in the cosmos; philosophy was to convey to him virtue, self-knowledge, and knowledge of the cause of things; finally, minute and inspired exegesis of the sacred page, the Bible, was to decipher for him its hidden treasures. Gregory portrays Origen especially as a *philosopher*, as a teacher of the truth, as a sage who knows how to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil, and who with firm hand nurtures his disciples in piety and reason.[2] As we

2. 'Gregory's Address to Origen,' 59: 'he used to declare, and that truly, that true religion was utterly impossible to one who did not philosophise.'

shall see, the conjunction of piety and reason is the hallmark of Origen's thought.

This one-sided emphasis on the philosophical aspect of his teaching may well have been the reason why Origen wrote a letter to Gregory in which he underscored that the primary aim of his teaching and the calling of the Christian scholar is the exegesis of Scripture:

> Thine ability is fit to make thee an accomplished Roman lawyer, or a Greek philosopher in some one of the schools esteemed reputable. But my desire has been that thou shouldest employ all the force of thine ability on Christianity as thine end, and to effect this I would beseech thee to draw from Greek philosophy such things as are capable of being made encyclic of preparatory studies to Christianity, and from geometry and astronomy such things as will be useful for the exposition of Holy Scripture, in order that what the sons of the philosophers say about geometry and music and grammar and rhetoric and astronomy, that they are the handmaidens of philosophy, we may say of philosophy itself in relation to Christianity. ('Letter to Gregory,' 89f)

In the preceding chapter (ch. 1.3,6) we saw that Clement, too, assigned to philosophy a propaedeutic function, making it subordinate to the Christian faith, just as Hagar was a handmaiden to Sarah (Gen. 16:1). While the Greeks conceived of their philosophy as the pre-eminent *paideusis*, the principal method of attaining culture and learning, the Christian thinkers thought of it as a preparatory phase only: a *pro-paideusis*.[3]

(2) *Origen as an orthodox theologian of the church*

These data on Origen's life should not lead one to the hasty assumption that he had given his heart to both philosophy and the Christian faith in equal measure, so that he was driven to seek a precarious, half-hearted balance between the two. The neo-Platonist Porphyry, who lived from 233 to 304, did suggest this when he supposed that Origen lived in accordance with the precepts of Christianity but that his thinking was thoroughly Greek (according to Eusebius, *Historia* VI, 19, 17). It is equally wrong to describe the reinstatement of Greek science and philosophy in Origen's school as a 'radical reversal of attitude towards profane culture.'[4] Characteristic of him is rather his refusal to compromise and his purism in matters of faith: from his youth on he consciously and consistently sought to be a Christian. Unlike Clement and Augustine, he had no

3. Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, 61–64.

4. Jean Daniélou, *Origène*, 29: 'un renversement radical d'attitude à l'égard de la culture profane.'

pagan past; he was not distressed by the doubts which often accompany a break in one's development. Yet Origen is repeatedly portrayed as a Greek philosopher and as a thinker of compromise! We cannot at this point judge to what extent such portrayals are correct, but we may well ask the question whether they do not presuppose a certain meaning of 'philosophy' and 'Christian faith' which is at odds with the meaning these words had at the time when Origen lived. The resolute and exclusive character of Origen's commitment to Christianity at the very least gives rise to the suspicion that such may be the case. Not only the biographical remarks of Eusebius, but also the whole of Origen's immense *œuvre* shows that he devoted his life and energy wholeheartedly to the ministry and the church: in textual criticism or exegesis, as a dogmatic theologian or apologist, as a teacher or preacher, or as an ascetic and martyr.

In the preface of *Peri Archon* (On the Principles of Being), Origen writes: 'That alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition' (*PA Praef.*, 2). He does not take this rule of truth to imply, however, that any further questioning and investigating of the truth is prohibited. The apostles left much unsaid which they did not consider to be directly relevant; often they merely stated the fact that things were so, without indicating their ground or essence (*PA Praef.*, 3; *CC* VI, 4). When Origen subsequently sums up those issues with regard to which the apostolic tradition does provide certainty, he adds a number of less perspicuous questions, such as the origin of the soul, what existed before this world and what will come after it, the nature of the angels and their mode of existence. In his treatment of these questions he constantly makes clear how his words must be understood: not as a reiteration of what the Bible unmistakably teaches, but as rational and methodical deductions which are mere approximations of the truth.

In Origen's works Christian doctrine remains unfinished. In this he was a child of his times.[5] The church, certainly as far as its doctrinal positions were concerned, was still experimenting: various concepts and patterns of thought were adopted from philosophical schools and Gnostic sects and were tested to see if they could be used to articulate the Christian faith.

5. Not all is said in this statement. There are more reasons why Origen formulates certain doctrinal positions with so much care and reserve. On the one hand, the distinction between the simple believer and the perfect believer—a distinction which we shall be dealing with in this chapter—plays an important role. Care must be taken in the presentation of spiritual truth because only a few are receptive to it as yet. On the other hand, the knowledge of the perfect believer is also still caught up in the limitations of everything earthly; it is still restricted in comparison with that which awaits humanity in the resurrection.

The supply was certainly enormous. The Platonic and Stoic philosophies survived in strongly religious versions which historians have subsumed under the collective name of Middle Platonism. Then there was Gnosticism, which appealed to many, including Christians. An assortment of Eastern religions was in vogue as well. Emperor Heliogabalus (218–22), for example, considered himself the priest of the Syrian sun-god, and we know that his successor, Alexander Severus (222–55), said his daily prayers before the images of Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, and Jesus.[6] The aunt of Heliogabalus and the mother of Severus, Julia Mammaea, seems to have been a very religious lady. At her request, Eusebius tells us in his *Historia*, Origen travelled to Antioch, where he stayed with her for some time and showed her 'very many things that were for the glory of the Lord and the excellence of divine teaching...' (VI, 21, 3).

In the midst of these religions, movements and schools of thought, each affecting the others in many ways, the Christian church sought to differentiate between truth and heresy. It became aware that Gnosticism posed the greatest threat and was the basic *haeresis* (heretical sect). The foremost opponent of this sect was Irenaeus of Lyon (140–202). Origen himself engaged in polemics against such Gnostic thinkers as Marcion and Herakleon (both of the second century).

(3) *Origen as a philosophical theologian*

In *Peri Archon* Origen refers to certain sectarians who developed an unusual theology on the basis of the contention that the predicates 'good' and 'just' are mutually contradictory (*PA* II, 5). They distinguished a just God from a good God. The just God is the God of this world, the Creator, the God of the Old Testament who requites evil with evil and good with good. However, the good God is good for all without exception and is known from the New Testament as the Father of Jesus Christ. We are able to gather from Origen's formulations that he had the disciples of Marcion in mind. Basic to their thought, which was inspired by both the dualistic religions of the East and certain tendencies in the Platonic tradition, is the opposition of spirit to matter, of good to evil, and of light to darkness. This basic opposition induced Marcion to reject the Old Testament along with certain parts of the New Testament which he considered too Jewish,

6. Daniélou, *Origène*, 35. Around the figure of Orpheus (a poet known from Greek mythology) and Apollonius of Tyana (an alchemist and astrologer) religious groups had formed. Origen mentions in *Contra Celsum* VI, 41 a few philosophers who had been followers of Apollonius and insists that the Christian faith makes people resistant to such sorcery.

and led him to deny the bodily nature of Christ. Although Gnostic–Marcionite thought was attacked fiercely by Tertullian (160–230) and by Irenaeus, it was to have a profound impact on Christianity for many years to come. Even Augustine fell prey to its allurements (Manicheism) for some time (see ch. 3.1).

Origen begins his offensive against the sectarians with a question intended to appeal to their sense of justice and the typically Greek penchant for thinking of God as immutable. If the Creator is just and, for example, punished the first generations of mankind because that is what they deserved, why then do such judgments not occur today as well when crimes are being committed which are equally atrocious—if not worse? Has the Creator perhaps changed? Origen goes on to contend that the Old Testament goes beyond the claim that God is justice exclusively, and that various passages in the New Testament are in conflict with the good God if such predicates are taken in the sense given to them by the sectarians.

Origen's chief objection is directed against the method of biblical exegesis which they used: they were occupied with the literal meaning of the historical narratives of the Old Testament. He does not want to suggest that this literal meaning is of no significance; his concern is rather to show that latent in the text is a higher, spiritual or pneumatic meaning. An adequate conception of God and of his attributes can be attained only if the deeper meaning of these narratives is grasped. One must understand that justice and goodness are no unrelated or contradictory attributes; goodness implies justice. Origen quotes the apostle Paul, a man 'instructed by . . . God and illumined by his Spirit,' to the effect that the law is good and the commandment holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). The justice of retribution, which the sectarians localized in the awesome, Old Testament Creator-God, is subservient to God's goodness purposing the healing and perfecting of mankind. Humanity, almost wholly destroyed in the flood, was not punished out of hate but kept alive in the expectation of Christ's saving descent into hell (I Peter 3:18–20) (ch. 1.5).

This answer of Origen to the Marcionites contains two features which are of essential significance to his thought, namely, the allegorical method of exegesis and God's pedagogical providence (*pronoia*).

The allegorical method. An important part of the fourth book of *Peri Archon* is devoted to an exposition on the correct method of expounding Scripture. Allegorizing is far more than a philological and exegetical technique; it serves rather as the primary and pre-eminent method for the whole of his theology—so much so that Origen may be called a biblicistic theologian. It is the very pathway to perfection. 'But all struggle prompts

us in penetrating to come to the depth of meaning of the gospel, and to find there the truth stripped of figures' (*CommJohn* I, 8).

The importance which Origen attaches to this method he also explains in the fourth book of *Peri Archon* in terms of apologetical motives. Not only the Gnostic–Marcionite sectarians but also the Jews and some simple believers interpret the Law and the prophets incorrectly, the reason being their failure to understand the Bible in accordance with its spiritual meaning (*kata ta pneumatika*). The bare letter (*to psilon gramma*) absorbs all their attention (*PA* IV, 2, 2). Thus, the Jews fail to see that the prophecies point to Christ; the Gnostics reject the Old Testament because it is not in keeping with the dignity of the good God; and some simple believers think they can derive from it representations of God which are wholly pagan. However, Origen's method not only applies to the Old Testament: the New Testament also contains many mysteries and obscurities which demand an understanding that penetrates beyond the surface of the literal text (*PA* IV, 2; CC III, 45; VII, 10). He is perfect who possesses such understanding. He participates in the Spirit, which also illumined the prophets and apostles. The insight given with such illumination is spiritual and mystical; it concerns the nature of God, of his Son, and of spiritual reality. Origen sums up here, among other things, the questions which we have already touched upon in the second section, i.e., those which were not answered by the ecclesiastic and apostolic tradition. However, he maintains that the meaning of the Bible as *spiritual* does belong to the certainties of this doctrinal tradition (*PA Praef.*, 8). It is not surprising that he should do so when we take into consideration that many Christians before him—the apostle Paul being the first (Gal. 4:24ff)—had applied the allegorical method.

Divine providence. Just as Origen could say with regard to the Bible: 'Read: what it says is not what the words convey,' so with regard to visible reality he could say: 'See: what is there is not what the eye beholds.' Just as the Spirit has set up 'stumbling blocks'—that is, obscure passages—in Scripture (*PA* IV, 2, 9) in order to spur the reader on to a deeper understanding, so material reality with its suffering and injustice constitutes a challenge for radical self-examination and spiritualization.

As noted, Origen is resolute in his rejection of Gnostic–Marcionite dualism. There is but one God who is both just and good, and nothing occurs outside of his providential care (*PA Praef.*, 4). Diversity and inequality are the marks of this earthly, material reality. God's original creation, however, was one with the *logos*, his Son and image. Spiritual beings existed before the world was created. By their own free and sinful will

they put an end to this original unity with the divine *logos*. In proportion to the seriousness of their fall into sin, they became either angel, human, or demon (*PA* I, 5, 1). And just as their present condition is the result of free choice, so also their return to the origin—or a further fall away from it—is dependent upon their free will. They are free to choose at all times: either in the present period of the world, or in one of the following periods (*PA* II, 3, 4). However, one thing is sure: moved by his goodness, God does everything within his power to hasten the return of spiritual beings to their origin. Thus, through the *logos* he has created the body and the visible world as a punishment for sin. This punishment is part of the comprehensive plan of divine providence, and is meant to improve the now corporeal spiritual beings. The incarnation, too, belongs to this plan: by coming in the flesh the *logos* accommodates itself to the confined and 'fleshly' level of knowledge of many people. The pedagogical providence of God will have attained its goal when *all* spiritual beings, including the demons and the devil himself, are restored to the original unity with the *logos*. This final reunion Origen calls the universal resurrection or *apokatastasis* (*PA* II, 1, 3; III, 6, 1).

> And providence will never abandon the universe. For even if some part of it becomes very bad because the rational being sins, God arranges to purify it, and after a time to turn the whole world back to Himself. Furthermore, ... He inflicts judgement and punishment upon men, seeing that they have gone against the impulses of nature. And he threatens them through prophets and through the Saviour who came to visit the whole human race, in order that by means of the threat those who hear may be converted, while those who neglect the words aimed at their conversion pay penalty according to their deserts. It is right that God should impose these according to His will to the advantage of the whole world upon people who need healing [*therapeia*] and correction of this kind and of such severity (CC IV, 99).

Our concern in this chapter is to get at the substance of Origen's thought. Specific questions dealing with the extent of Greek influence on his treatment of such dogmatic problems as the doctrine of God, his conception of freedom, his view of creation and so on can only be resolved in detailed studies. Various scholars consider—rightly, I think—the essence of Origen's thought to lie in the notion of pedagogics, the education of humankind.[7] The visible world, the incarnation, and the whole course of history serve this one end: to guide spiritual beings to true insight into divine reality. This insight implies an element of self-knowledge, a recognition of one's own spiritual origin. The soul pre-existed in the

7. Hans H. Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*; Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, 46–67.

eternal *logos* even before the world was created, and must return from whence it came. Origen accepts as self-evident that knowledge is possible on the basis of an ontological similarity between subject and object, and that the subject strives to become one with the object of its knowledge. 'Like knows like' was a dictum to which most Greek thinkers adhered, and Plato had already described knowing as a process of recollection whereby the soul rediscovers what it had contemplated before its earthly life (*Meno* 82). Platonic thought distinguishes between a world of sensory perception and a spiritual world. The soul finds itself between these two worlds, and strives to be liberated from the former in order to return to the latter, which is its true home. Platonic philosophy offers pedagogical assistance in this lofty striving.

Origen was set on proving that Christianity is such a philosophy. Over against the contention of the philosopher Celsus that Christianity is a religion of resentment, a faith for the ignorant who think they can do very well without philosophy, Origen maintains that Christianity, too, is *philo-sophical*, that it is a way of knowledge. He says:

> If every man could abandon the business of life and devote his time to philosophy, no other course ought to be followed but this alone. For in Christianity, if I make no vulgar boasting, there will be found to be no less profound study of the writings that are believed; we explain the obscure utterances of the prophets, and the parables in the gospels, and innumerable other events or laws which have a symbolical meaning. (CC I, 9)

The pedagogical motivation of Platonic thought, then, asserts itself in Origen's theology as well. It is manifest in his conception of divine providence: as noted, all of God's acts are described in pedagogical terms. The importance which he attributes to divine *pronoia* does not distinguish him from his Platonic contemporaries.[8] For the most part, their philosophy was a theology, striving after knowledge of divine reality and reflecting on the right way of life. Celsus was an important exponent of this general trend (see CC VII, 42 ff).[9]

Origen's reflections on the allegorical method are also motivated pedagogically. The divine Word accommodates itself with utmost flexibility to the level of knowledge available to humans. For simple believers—at one point Origen calls them 'child-souls' (*PA* IV, 2, 4)—there is the body of the scriptural text, its literal and obvious meaning. Advanced believers

8. Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, speaks on pages 240 ff of the *pronoia* theology of Plutarch, and on page 270 of the *pronoia* theology of Attikos.

9. Heinrich Dörrie, *Die platonische Theologie des Kelsos in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit der christlichen Theologie*, 47 f.

may penetrate to the soul and spirit of a text, they may come to know the *spiritual* law which has 'a shadow of the good things to come' (Hebr. 10:1). This orientation to the Jewish–Christian Bible is, of course, wholly absent in Platonic philosophy. Still, what Origen has in common with this philosophy is the exegetical character of his thought. Many philosophers of his day presented their message in the form of commentaries on the works of the 'divine Plato'. They were of the opinion that only this exegetical foundation could give their thinking the authority to demand a hearing and a consideration. One of Celsus's foremost objections to Christianity (and Judaism) is that it turned away from the universal tradition of truth which had received supreme expression in the works of Plato. 'There is an ancient doctrine which has existed from the beginning, which has always been maintained by the wisest nations and cities and wise men' (CC I, 14). Christianity is the manifestation of a revolt against this age-old tradition (CC III, 5; VIII, 2, 49).

The philosopher Wilhelm Weischedel has written a history of philosophical theology, *Der Gott der Philosophen* (the God of the Philosophers) in which he takes a post-nihilistic definition of 'philosophy' as his point of departure. The philosophical theologian asks the God-question, but he does so in the manner of a philosopher, that is, by way of a radical questioning which leaves no single presupposition unexamined (33–36). It is not surprising, therefore, that in his discussion of Origen, Weischedel reaches the conclusion that, while Origen's system may contain forms of philosophical reflection, it is as such not properly philosophical. It is rather 'revelational-theological' in nature and is rooted in the Christian tradition (92; for a similar view, expressed by Hegel, cf. ch. 7.4). The error in Weischedel's approach is that his notion of 'radical questioning' turns out to be an unhistorical a priori. He completely ignores the fact that philosophy at the time of Origen was theological and exegetical in character. The paragon of philosophy has ceased many years ago to be Socrates, who like a *gadfly* submitted those with whom he conversed to probing *questions*, attempting to convince them of their ignorance.[10] In Origen's time, the philosopher was expected to lead a wise and exemplary life and to deliver people from their restlessness by providing *answers* to questions concerning salvation and meaning. Such philosophers are well exemplified by the image which Gregory Thaumaturgus uses: he compares Origen to a *trainer of horses* who puts the bit into the mouth of his students so as to calm them and make them tractable.[11]

10. Plato, *Apology* 30C.
11. *Gregory's Address to Origen*, p. 63f. Gregory calls this way of doing philosophy 'Socratic'!

(4) Origen as a heretic

Our description of Origen's thought seems to be inconsistent. In the introduction and second section we showed that Origen was aware of the tensions and contradictions in the relation between Christian faith and philosophy, and that he exhibited an iron determination—he was called '*adamantios*,' the man of steel—to be an orthodox Christian and loyal ecclesiastical theologian. Yet our third section disclosed that his doctrinal system was fundamentally determined by the Greek motive of pedagogical providence.

On the dogmatic level the Christian church cut the knot of this apparent inconsistency at the sixth ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 553. There it pronounced its *anathema* on all of Origen's views which we have considered so far: the pre-existence and original equality of the souls, the creation by the *Logos*, the *apokatastasis* as a purely spiritual process and as a return to the original situation, and so on. In doing so the church followed the example of Emperor Justinian (527–65), who had condemned Origen as a heretic ten years earlier. This emperor sought to restore the Roman empire on the ideological basis of a doctrinally uniform Christendom. It was to this end that he closed the Academy in Athens—the school founded by Plato long ago—in 529 and sought to suppress heresy in the area of theology.

This display of imperial and ecclesiastical power could not, of course, solve the problem of the relation between Christianity and Greek philosophy. This problem, intensely relevant to the question concerning the essence and originality of Christianity, has continued to be a bone of contention even to our own day.[12] And as this problem kept Christians preoccupied, so Origen remained an ambivalent and controversial figure, a 'semi-heretic' as the historian of dogma, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), has called him.[13] This ambivalence can be variously illustrated when we try to answer the question: Who was Origen? Was he the first great Christian mystic, or was he an intellectualistic thinker? Must he be considered a man of the church, a priest, or rather as an independent teacher of philosophy? Was he first an expositor of Scripture and a preacher, or was he foremost a systematic theologian? Was he an ascetic and martyr, or an erudite man of culture? For each of these characterizations one can find support in the sources, but no single one of them is worth much in isolation from its opposite.

12. For those who read Dutch see, for example, Eginhard P. Meyering, *Onmodieuze theologie. Over de waarde van de theologie van de 'Grieks' denkende kerkvaders.*

13. Adolf Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* II, p. 465.

This last remark also applies to the more basic question: Was Origen a Christian or a Greek philosopher? He was as much the one as the other, and he was both in the extreme. For his Christian faith he suffered martyrdom; by reason of the largely Greek character of his dogmatics he was declared a heretic.[14] Our discussion of Origen must therefore concentrate on the following question: How could Origen give expression to his radical intention to remain faithful to the Christian faith in a doctrinal elaboration of this faith which is radically Greek? In other words, we must now no longer look for the formative circumstances that make his way of thinking understandable; we must find out what fundamental and theoretical account, if any, he himself gives of his approach. For this we need to turn to Origen's doctrine of the *logos*.

(5) *Philosophy and the logos*

The Greek concept of *logos*, Word, is criticized by many modern theologians, and is frequently rejected as useless. Some contend that with the introduction of this concept the personal and ethical character of the Christian faith was sacrificed on the altar of logic and objectivity. Others view this concept as a threat to the eschatological character of this faith. It expresses that which holds once and for all, and for that very reason it is blind to the wholly new of God's future. Be that as it may, the early Christian theologians gratefully adopted the concept and made extensive use of it. Origen was no exception. The concept helps him to explain at least two things: first, that all men have knowledge of the divine truth, and, second, that faith in Christ, the *logos* incarnate, is of universal significance.

The Word was in the beginning with God (John 1:1) and became flesh (John 1:14). It is God because it dwells 'with God,' and is his image (Col. 1:15). Moreover, it is the first-born of all creatures, the spiritual beings (*logikai ousiai*), which have been created 'after the image' (Gen. 1:26; *CommJohn* II, 1–3). All men participate in the divine *logos* to the extent that they are creatures of intellect and reason (*PA* I, 3, 6 and 8). I will elucidate the importance of Origen's *logos* doctrine for our theme in three points: (1) it serves to explain the universality of the knowledge of truth; (2) it defines the path leading to the fullness of insight and the perfection

14. A medieval historian, Otto of Freising, characterizes him as follows: '*ubi bene, nemo melius, ubi male, nemo deterius*' (he was unsurpassed in good as well as evil), *Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus* III, 27. Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, 95 and 155, footnote 1, cites similar expressions from Georgius Scholarius (1459) and Cassiodorus (585).

of being; (3) it enables Origen to measure the degree of truth which the various philosophies have attained.

The logos doctrine explains the universality of the knowledge of truth. The Word is the wisdom which is 'the beginning of God's ways' (Prov. 8:22). All God's foreknowledge dwells in the Word, and all the mysteries of creation are hidden in it (*PA* I, 2, 1–3). All the genera and species of the creation, as well as all individual beings (*singula*), exist in this wisdom from eternity. God's omnipotence over the creation is therefore represented by the Word, his Son: through the Son the Father is almighty. Hence, this power is qualified in a certain way: it is the power of the Word and of wisdom over spiritual beings. It cannot simply bear the character of 'force and necessity,' or of bare authority, for it aims at 'voluntary obedience' and operates 'by word and reason' (*PA* I, 2, 10; II, 1, 3).

These reflections of Origen lead us to conclude, first, that all spiritual beings possess traces of the Word and remnants of true *knowledge*. This view is found in many early Christian thinkers, for example, in Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria (cf. ch. 1.3). Even a Church Father as orthodox as Athanasius made use of the *logos* doctrine in order to account for the universality of the knowledge of God. Secondly, these reflections imply that Origen conceived the *logos* to be the origin of the creation. The *logos* is the life of creatures (*PA* I, 2, 4). Among the Church Fathers he was the first to conceive it so. It implies that a person's progress in knowledge of the origin and in piety is more than the mere growth of knowledge: it is at the same time the way back to the beginning, the return to the original perfection of spiritual existence in the Word. Therefore, the Word is more than source of knowledge; it is itself the way which spiritual beings must take. The end or goal of this growth of knowledge and being is, as we saw, the universal resurrection, or *apokatastasis ton panton*.

The logos doctrine points the way to the perfection of knowing and being. The ecclesiastical *anathema* pronounced on the doctrine of Origen concerned among other things his view that 'Christ' is but one of the names of the *logos*, and that the eternal *logos* must be sharply distinguished from the incarnate Word, Christ. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Origen compares the Word, the Only-begotten of God, to the stairs in the temple of the Jews whereby one entered the inner *sanctum*.

> And just as there were stairs in the temple by which one entered the Holy of Holies, so our whole stairway is the only-begotten of God. And as the first step

> of these stairs is at the bottom, the next one above it, and so from the one to the other to the highest, so also the savior is the whole stairway. His humanity is like the first, lower step, and by climbing up from there, we proceed along the things which he successively is the whole way in steps. (*CommJohn* XIX, 6)

Here and elsewhere Origen lists the names of the Word which are like so many rungs on the ladder of mystical knowledge: Life, Light, Truth, Way, Resurrection, Door, Wisdom, Power, and finally also the Word, which comes after the Father (*CommJohn* I, 9 and 10).

The believer must climb this ladder step by step, he must appropriate attribute by attribute in his striving after true knowledge and after the reunion with the Word. Being a Christian is an ongoing educational process leading to the perfect knowledge of God, to the knowledge of spiritual reality and, finally, to the *visio Dei*, the contemplation of God himself. When the *visio Dei* is attained, the soul will be transformed into that which it was originally: a pure spiritual being contemplating God without needing to resort to some mediator (*CommJohn* X, 45).

To reach this state of perfection, the believer must follow a long and difficult path of ascesis and spiritualization (cf. ch. 1.3,6), a path on which he must learn to read the gospel spiritually. The study of philosophy may serve him as a propaedeutic, but he will not gain real knowledge unless he listens to the revelation of the Word in holy Scripture. Clearly, not every Christian is equally advanced on this way: only a few have penetrated to a knowledge of the spiritual gospel and have become participants in true wisdom. Most Christians are simple folk whose faith is based on miracles and who know the Word by its 'inferior' names, such as 'Shepherd,' 'Healer,' and 'the Crucified' (CC I, 13). Origen does not mean to disqualify this simple belief, but he wants to transform it—in agreement with what he takes to be the actual intention of the word and the deeper meaning of the Bible—into a rational belief, based on 'righteous examination' (CC III, 38). Growth in the depth of insight and in the fullness of knowledge does not cease upon death. On the contrary, Origen describes how even after death spiritual beings perfect themselves.

> I think, therefore, that all the saints who depart from this life will remain in some place situated on the earth, which holy Scripture calls paradise, as in some place of instruction, and, so to speak, class-room [*auditorium*] or school of souls [*schola animarum*] . . . .' (*PA* II, 11, 6)

We have seen that Origen gives the—spiritually interpreted—Bible pride of place in his thought. Ultimately, all knowledge, including philosophy,

is drawn into the service of scriptural exegesis. Unlike Clement (cf. ch. 1.3), Origen does not recognize an esoteric tradition alongside and independent of the apostolic and ecclesiastical tradition:[15] even his own more speculative views he considers to be hypothetical deductions from the Bible (cf. sect. 2).

The logos doctrine enables Origen to measure the degree of truth which the various philosophies have attained. Remarks about philosophy are scattered throughout his work. A short, schematic summary of his view may be found in his commentary on the Gospel of John (II, 28–31). Origen distinguishes between four groups of people according to the degree in which they participate in the Word.

> Thus, some participate in the *logos* itself which was 'in the beginning' and the *logos* which was 'with God' and 'was God' such as Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and anyone else who has disposed himself in such a way that the 'Word of the Lord' or 'the Word' came to him. Others, who do not know anything 'save Jesus Christ and him crucified,' holding 'the Word having become flesh' to be the whole of the *logos*, know Christ only according to the flesh. Such is the mass of those who are held to be believers. (*CommJohn* XIX, 6)

The two groups which Origen mentions in this passage are those we have just discussed: the advanced or perfect believers and the simple believers. There is another category:

> And a third group of people are devoted to doctrines which they hold to excel all doctrine. These doctrines somehow participate in the *logos*. Do not those among the Greeks who adhere to the famous and worthwhile schools in philosophy belong to this group? (*CommJohn* XIX, 6)

Origen must have had in mind the Platonists especially. In his extensive rebuttal of the anti-Christian treatise of the Platonist Celsus, Origen on more than one occasion grants that Plato taught many true insights. This philosopher has disclosed truths about the highest good and the way in which we can come to know it (CC VI, 3ff; VII, 39ff), about the soul, spiritual reality, the creative Ideas (CC VI, 4), and so on. The *logos* doctrine was also known to the Greeks (CC VI, 9; *PA* I, 3, 1). Nevertheless, Origen will always append some such statement as:

> That is why we say that those who have grasped the truth about God, but have not in practice worshipped God in a way worthy of the truth about Him, are subject to the punishments inflicted on sinners. (CC VI, 3)

15. See Richard P.C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 83, 87.

While the philosophers possessed a true concept of God, they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). They have not been able to restrain others, nor themselves for that matter, from superstition and idolatry (CC III, 75; VI, *passim*). A second objection Origen aims at the *elitist* character of philosophy. Plato's writings are of great beauty and depth, but they are beyond the scope of most people. The Scriptures on the other hand may indeed have many stylistic faults, but upon them God has bestowed his Power and Spirit (CC I, 2). The efficacy of biblical truth is clear proof of its power and inspiration. For this truth proved to be capable of inciting many to live a good life; it in fact brought about their conversion to do so. Such cannot be said of philosophy: its effectiveness remains limited to the intellectual elite (CC VI, 2). This criticism is later voiced by Augustine as well (ch. 3.7).

For Origen these objections concerning the worship of God (*theosebeia*) and the efficacy of philosophy—he reproaches the philosophers for their lack of love for mankind (CC VII, 42)—are grave indeed. Inasmuch as philosophy teaches truth, it indubitably rests on divine revelation. Nonetheless, it fails to transcend the level of human wisdom and human self-reliance. Human wisdom is useful and requisite to nurture the soul, but true wisdom is received from God (CC III, 68; VI, 13 and 17; VII, 42 and 44). Philosophy is therefore not necessary or indispensable for a knowledge of the truth. In the final analysis it contributes nothing to that which the believer is able to draw from scriptural revelation (CC I, 62; III, 58, VI, 7). Repeatedly Origen notes that Moses and the prophets drafted their works many centuries before the inception of Greek philosophy, adding that the Greek philosophers perhaps knew these writings and derived their truths from them (CC IV, 39; VI, 7)! The previous chapter notes that Philo and Clement took a similar approach (ch. 1.7).

A fourth category is profoundly problematic:

> Opposed to this third group, there is a fourth group of people who give faith to doctrines which are wholly corrupted and godless. They suppress the distinct and all but visible providence and accept some other end than the good. (*CommJohn* XIX, 6)

Origen refers here at any rate to the Epicurean philosophers who, according to him, denied divine providence and considered pleasure to be the highest good. His criticism of this philosophy is similar to the one commonly held by Platonists of his time. But perhaps he also had the Aristotelian and Stoic philosophers in mind (CC III, 75; VI, 71). 'What must we say of them?' he asks, and he vacillates between his conviction

that the Word is truly universal and his dislike of the ungodly views of these philosophers. He characterizes them—paradoxically—as the Wordless words (*alogoi logoi*).

As noted above, Origen does not accept an esoteric doctrinal tradition separate from the written one. We are now able to conclude in addition that the continuity between philosophy and Christianity, which seemed to be assured by the *logos* doctrine, is of a hierarchical structure. In fact, this hierarchical aspect often predominates to such a degree that it is legitimate to speak of a discontinuity. Philosophy is at bottom wisdom of a mere human scope; it must be transcended in the direction of a wisdom that is divine, i.e., the knowledge of the spiritual gospel. Origen's thought manifests in all its parts the same motivation and the same movement: it has been compared to a flame which reaches out toward the mystery of the eternal *logos*, a flame 'which fills earthly reality merely to baptize it in its fire, to consume it, and to transform it into Spirit.'[16]

(6) *Conclusion*

I tried to find in Origen a fundamental and explicit theoretical account of his approach to non-Christian or, more precisely, Greek philosophy. How could he give expression to his radical Christian conviction in a radically Greek elaboration of this faith (see sect. 3)? The concept of *logos* appeared at first to provide a harmonious solution: it could possibly do justice to the value and truth of Greek philosophy while at the same time underscoring the universal importance of faith in Jesus Christ. Does Origen's *logos* doctrine indeed afford such a solution?

It seems to me that it does not. In spite of the universality of the Word, Greek philosophy ultimately remains outside of the orbit of divine wisdom, while faith in Christ as the incarnate Word proves to be a mere rung—not even the highest rung—on the ladder of mystical knowledge. Other statements which Origen makes mitigate this latter fault in some sense, not as far as christology is concerned, but with respect to the universality of the Christian faith. Thus, at times he calls the universal Word 'Christ' (*PA* I, 3, 6) without reservation, and only the Christian believer who grasps the spiritual meaning of the Bible can fully know this Word. However, convictions such as these stand in the way of the first requirement of the *logos* doctrine: that justice be done to the value and truth of Greek philosophy. That Origen recognized this value we have

16. Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Einführung,' 14.

seen from the various statements in his commentary on the Gospel of John and in *Contra Celsum*, from the composition of his curriculum, and, above all, from the contents of his dogmatics. However, he did not succeed in giving an unambiguous and systematic account of this appreciation.

(7) *For further reading*

For a survey of important early Christian theologians the two little volumes by Hans von Campenhausen may be consulted: *The Fathers of the Greek Church* and *The Fathers of the Latin Church*. A thematic introduction to the thought of these theologians may be found in A.H. Armstrong and R.A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*. Jean Daniélou has provided us with a three-volume work containing detailed information, namely, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine*. Especially Volume II, *The Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, is significant. A broadly conceived collection of passages from the writings of the Church Fathers, translated into German, dealing with the problem of Christian faith and Greek philosophy is given in Albert Warkotsch (ed.), *Antike Philosophie im Urteil der Kirchenväter—Christlicher Glaube im Widerstreit der Philosophien*. Passages from Origen's works are found on pages 227–83. A work which deals with Origen in particular is that of Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la philosophie*. A clear and brief survey on the research in Origen is given by Ulrich Berner, *Origenes*. Of special importance with regard to the theme of this chapter are the views presented in section 1.4, 'Erbe der christlichen und der griechischen Tradition,' on pages 33–47.

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3 / Abraham P. Bos

Augustine (354–430)

We turn to Aurelius Augustinus, Bishop of Hippo (North Africa) next, to study the view of non-Christian philosophy held by this great Christian thinker of the Western, Latin tradition. The aim is to understand how Augustine defended, developed and put into practice this view in the course of his life. How should we characterize his position—*as water changed into wine, or as vintage diluted?*

(1) *Introduction*

Augustine had a remarkable capacity for work. His pastoral duties as a presbyter and later as bishop must have taken much of his time. Nevertheless, his writings show that he managed to acquire a broad knowledge of ancient philosophical literature and of the writings of many early Christian authors. Moreover, he was constantly at work explicating and elaborating his own insights in treatises which together constitute an impressive *œuvre*. The three dialogues of Cassiciacum, *Contra Academicos* (Against the Academics), *De beata vita* (On the Blessed Life), and *De ordine* (On the Order), date from the earliest period of his literary activity (386), when his philosophical interests were still dominant. In this period he also wrote *De vera religione* (On True Religion) (390) and *De libero arbitrio* (On the Freedom of the Will) (388–95). Soon after the turn of the century he wrote his famous *Confessiones* (Confessions). His great dogmatic work *De trinitate* (On the Trinity) (399–419), and his major apologetic work *De civitate Dei* (On the City of God) (413–26) were written later. To complete this list of his most important works I mention *De doctrina christiana* (On Christian Doctrine) (426).[1]

1. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Augustine:

BV = *De beata vita*	*Conf* = *Confessiones*	*LA* = *De libero arbitrio*
CA = *Contra Academicos*	*DC* = *De doctrina christiana*	*VR* = *De vera religione*
CD = *De civitate Dei*	*DO* = *De ordine*	

A good deal of information for the study of our topic can be found in the *Confessiones*. In the case of this Church Father we need not derive the story of his spiritual development from secondary sources. Augustine has given us an autobiographical account of the earlier part of his life.

Still, a complication does arise. It has been pointed out that one's past is never 'finished business.' One's perspective on it changes as the distance to it becomes greater. Augustine's report of his own life ends in a moving description of the events which led to his conversion to the Christian faith in the autumn of 386. But his report was written fifteen years after these events, and there is reason to believe that Augustine's perspective changed in the interval. This is why scholars have tried to check and, where needed, to correct Augustine's 'subjective' account by means of other, preferably more 'objective' sources. To some extent this is feasible, since from the moment of his conversion Augustine has left us numerous writings which bear witness to his spiritual growth.

Augustine's development has been a turbulent one. Initially he came into contact with the ancient rhetorical tradition, in which, as a teacher, he made an impressive career for a number of years. He also became acquainted with the philosophical works of Cicero, with the Manichean sect (a current in the broad stream of Gnostic religion) (ch. 2.3), with the philosophy of neo-Platonism and, finally, with the Christian faith, in which his mother, Monica, had nurtured him. Christianity held no meaning for him until he, about thirty-three years old, began to listen regularly to the sermons of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c. 337–97). Augustine's spiritual make-up, then, included all of these elements, and in the course of his life he would express his insights in terms of them.

In view of this book's theme it is fortunate that this Church Father's first work contains an extensive confrontation with the ancient philosophical tradition. He takes issue with the so-called 'Academics,' whose skeptical philosophy flourished in the third and second century before Christ. These Academics tried to show with rational arguments that absolutely certain and reliable knowledge was beyond human attainment. Augustine entitled his work *Contra Academicos* and presented it to his readers as the first of three treatises, dealing with epistemological, ethical and ontological questions respectively. These works consist of the revised reports of discussions with a small group of relatives and friends on an estate in Cassiciacum (near Milan), where he had withdrawn in preparation of his baptism. This work, then, is particularly relevant, since around 386 Augustine's mind was entirely preoccupied with his recent discovery of neo-Platonism and his renewed contact with the Christian church.

(2) *Neo-Platonism as mainstream philosophy*

In *Contra Academicos*, especially in the final discourse, Augustine reviews a large number of intellectual currents of the ancient world. He wants to determine the place of the Academics relative to other philosophical schools. The Academics had propagated their doctrine of doubt and skepticism in the Academy of Plato, whose successors they were, at Athens. In this context, Augustine develops his own distinctive hypothesis concerning the significance and actual intention of these Skeptics.[2]

Their place, he says, is on the boundary between 'true philosophy' and the 'philosophy of the lie,' a distinction which he had just begun to make. Their public philosophy of doubt he subsumes under the philosophy of the lie. A philosophy which extends no further than the wisdom of Pontius Pilate ('What is Truth?') conceals under its aura of urbane broadmindedness a real spiritual crisis. A world in which finding truth and certainty is beyond the human scope has for Augustine the semblance of a labyrinth. Skeptic philosophy, even if it is not misused to justify murder and manslaughter, leads at least to despair. That is why there is a passionate note in Augustine's opposition to it. Equally objectionable but less dangerous he considers the materialism and pleasure ethics of the Epicureans.

He spends more time on the thought of the Stoa. An evaluation of their doctrine was more difficult, since many Christian authors praised their ethics as being entirely in keeping with the ideal of a pure, Christian life as they themselves saw it. Nonetheless, his verdict is one of outright rejection. Stoic philosophy concerns itself solely with the things of visible reality. For the Stoics, something is real only when it can produce an effect in something else, and it seemed impossible to them that anything immaterial could exert an influence on a material body. Thus, the world which is seen and experienced is the only reality about which the Stoics cared to speak or philosophize. The divine is part and parcel of this world, creative fire, of which the sun and the other heavenly bodies are composed and which by its warmth generates terrestrial life. They thought of the human soul as being of the same light material. After death it dissolves into the cosmic whole, so that personal immortality is precluded. Instead of raising their eyes to that which transcends humankind, the Stoics continued to cling to sensible reality. Hence, Augustine concludes, there can be no compatibility between their doctrine and 'true philosophy.'

2. According to this hypothesis the Academics defended a positive philosophy within the intimate circle of their disciples. I leave this issue aside; I believe this view to be untenable.

But Greek philosophy also contains a tradition of truth. If errant philosophy characteristically manifested itself in conflicting diversity, the hallmark of the tradition of truth is that it is essentially one. Naming the schools of thought which had participated in this one tradition of truth, Augustine takes great pains to show that they can in fact be traced back to a single source. The Academics were part of this tradition, because, according to Augustine, these people did not advocate a negative, skeptic philosophy when discoursing among themselves in *private* gatherings! Their popular philosophy was primarily a critique of other systems, intended to show the futility of all (non-spiritual) philosophy, and meant to awaken its adherents from their dogmatic slumbers. That is why their public debate was especially aimed at the Stoics. Augustine argued that the Academics would admit to the higher study of positive philosophy only those who had passed this purely negative program of propaedeutics. Skepticism was not intended to impart new insights to people, but to rid them of limited views. Real philosophy went 'underground' for a time, until people would be liberated from the errors of materialism. The positive doctrine which would then emerge would, of course, be that of Platonism (*CA* III, 43).

If one looks over the whole terrain of Greek philosophy it is clear that Augustine, to complete his survey of ancient thought, must make mention of at least one more main current: the Aristotelian school. Augustine does in fact do so, speaking of the Peripatetic movement with considerable respect. He is convinced that 'the experts' were right in claiming that, basically, Plato's writings and those of his student Aristotle are in harmony (*CA* III, 42).

It was Augustine's firm conviction that the Greek philosophical tradition produced one positive doctrine, one philosophy rightly called true, and that Plato gave the clearest and most consistent expression to this perfect philosophy (*CA* III, 37, 42). Plato united all the valuable elements of Greek thought into an integral whole; ethics, cosmology and dialectics complement and reinforce one another, and even non-Greek cultural traditions were taken up into it. Augustine relates with some emphasis that a number of Greek philosophers derived their wisdom from elsewhere, from Egypt or from Babylon. In this way he allows for the possibility that even elements of the Jewish tradition may have been incorporated in that old doctrine.[3] In short, Platonism is the mighty stream, the confluence of all the separate rivulets of wisdom.

3. Non-Christian authors, too, were prepared to accept external influence on Greek culture. The Platonist Numenius (second century) spoke of Plato as the 'Greek-speaking Moses.'

Although Augustine did not think this final discourse *Contra Academicos* to be the appropriate occasion for a systematic account of Platonic philosophy, his summary of its main points of doctrine is significant. Central to Platonic ontology is the conception of a twofold reality: the visible world and the world of the Ideas. Basic to epistemology is the claim that the visible world is an image of the ideal world, and that the relation between them is one of resemblance. If humans are to have proper insight into the visible world and themselves, they will need to gain knowledge of this higher reality. Fundamental in ethics is the view that knowledge of the norms for right conduct is ultimately reserved for the 'few wise:' for those who have gained a view of the Ideas.

Apparently, Augustine finds the genuine significance of Platonism to consist in the doctrine of the 'two worlds.' This doctrine is the point of the system as a whole, everything else is secondary. Augustine sees in this philosophy a fundamental refutation of every form of 'materialism.' Platonism's recognition of the reality of the material and the spiritual, of both visible and invisible things, set him free of Manicheism as well. The opposition of a good and a bad world-stuff as championed by these Gnostics now lost its appeal. Also, their objections to many biblical expressions now seemed to him untenable. As a result, Augustine became much more receptive to the message of Scripture.

All of this does raise a question: it seems likely, does it not, that the Platonists, who had opened his eyes, at the same time supplied him with a set of colored glasses? An indication that this may be the case is soon found: Augustine now felt free to posit the separation of a corruptible, earthly, visible reality and the permanent, spiritual world in the presence of God *as an essential given of Scripture*. He understands the passage in which the apostle Paul speaks of 'the wisdom of the world,' which God made foolish, such that it applies only to those forms of philosophy which concern themselves exclusively with this earthly world (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20; see ch. 1.2). What this means is that Platonism is not included in Paul's censure!

One can be appreciative of Augustine's break with Manicheistic, Epicurean and Stoic materialism. Still, the mere fact that Platonists objected to it as well seems a small footing for accepting *their* view of reality uncritically, which is what the early Augustine seems to do. He considered the Platonic ontology to be 'one in spirit' with the scriptural view of reality, so much so that he became convinced of agreement in groundmotive. It may be that minor details were to be criticized, but certainly not the heart of this philosophy. Upon his discovery of the books of the Platonists, Augustine became enthusiastic to the point that he could not believe that

the apostles would have been able to accomplish that which is said of them, able to work and live as tradition claimed they did, if their doctrine had been in contradiction with the truths of Platonism (*CA* II, 5). After his conversion he openly and emphatically confessed the authority of Christ in his life, but at the same time he expressed his confidence in the possibility of attaining true insight into what he believed by making use of the subtle reasoning of the Platonists which, as far as he could see, did not contradict Scripture (*CA* III, 43).

Various passages in *Contra Academicos* make quite clear that the Christian and the Platonic perspectives merge in Augustine's thought. I give one example. Augustine describes the real task and purpose of philosophy as that of calling souls (blinded by error and defiled by the flesh that clings to them in their present sojourn in the material world) back to their divine and purely spiritual home. Philosophy has never succeeded to move the people at large. Christ, however, did show the multitudes by his life and works the way back to that spiritual reality, and so realized what philosophy purposed. Augustine's description of Christ's life on earth seems odd: humanity could not have been called back 'if the highest God had not inclined and abased the authority of the divine mind all the way to a human body...' (*CA* III, 42). The oddity is explicable in this context. Augustine seems to express himself such that his presentation may find favor with a follower of, for example, the neo-Platonist Plotinus (c. 205–70), who taught that divine beings emanated from the absolute One.[4]

(3) *Wisdom as the saturation point of the human soul*

Contra Academicos is the only work in which Augustine presented a historical survey of the schools and currents in Greek philosophy. This is why I paid considerable attention to it. To complete the description of Augustine's stance at the beginning of his literary career I comment on the two dialogues which he produced in the same year, 386: *De beata vita* and *De ordine*.

De beata vita contains an autobiographical section (*BV* 4) in which Augustine gives a lyrical description of the impression that the reading of Plotinus's works had made on him. He was especially struck by the way out from the closed worldview that would limit reality to the merely material. Augustine relates how he began to read the Scriptures against

4. On this passage, and on its relation to the unbiblical christology of Photinus (not to be confused with the philosopher Plotinus), see Cornelia W. Wolfskeel, *De immortalitate animae of Augustine*, 19ff; and *Confessiones* VII, 25.

the background of his discoveries in the books of the neo-Platonists. *De beata vita* certainly bears the traces of this.

(*a*) The work evinces a dualistic anthropology. Ever since the *Phaedo* of Plato the dogma of an immaterial soul which, unfortunately, has become attached to a material body, was part and parcel of Platonism (cf. *BV* 7).

(*b*) God is called 'the liberator of souls' (*BV* 36), i.e., liberator from the world of matter, time and corruption.

(*c*) To Augustine the eternity and immutability of God is an axiom, a self-evident truth (*BV* 11), just as it was in the theologies of Plato and Aristotle.

(*d*) The merger is obvious in Augustine's discussion of *sapientia* (wisdom) as well. He describes its attainment as the highest good and as the very basis of the blessed life. On the one hand he refers to it as the wisdom of God by which heaven and earth were created, the eternal *logos* (cf. ch. 2.5). On the other hand he takes the wisdom of God to be the totality of all of the Ideas as original models for the visible world and, as totality, the fullness of being in which humans can participate through intellectual and contemplative activity. Augustine ranks intellection above all human activity, and holds it to be far superior to economic or cultural and social affairs. Within the area of human knowing he usually disparages the concerns of sense experience. The study of real science (in the restricted sense of the theoretical sciences of mathematics, geometry, theory of music, etc.) far surpasses knowledge of sensible reality. Unsurpassed even by these, however, is the contemplation of the origin of all things, God himself. Augustine uses terms such as '*visio Dei*' (seeing God) or '*frui Deo*' (enjoying God).

(4) *The heart of 'true philosophy'*

In *De ordine* the theme of 'true philosophy' appears again (*DO* II, 16). True philosophy liberates humans from material, corruptible reality. The task of philosophy is to teach

> that there is an Origin of all things, which itself is without origin, and how great the understanding is which abides in it or which proceeds from it without any degeneration unto our salvation. This Origin is the one, almighty God and him the revered Scriptures make known as the threefold mighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. (*DO* II, 16; cf. 26)

The content and specific wording of this formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is strongly reminiscent of Plotinus, though Augustine avoids the

idea of a hierarchical subordination of the three divine Persons. The gist of this passage is that the Platonic philosophers have arrived at insights which, on very essential points, are in concord with Scripture and with the confession of the Christian church.

(5) *The 'Christian principles' of Platonism and the imagery of 'spoliation'*

For the most part Augustine's attitude toward the ancient philosophical tradition remains the same as that expressed in his earliest writings. This is certainly true of *De civitate Dei*, a work which he began to write soon after the conquest of Rome by the Visigoths under Alaric (410)—an event that impressed him deeply. In this work he studies notions of God as they have come forward through the ages, to see which of them might be important for a Christian.

It is evident to him that neither mythical representations of God nor any kind of state religion can stand the test of comparison with the Christian faith. Philosophical theology alone—Augustine's term 'natural theology' was to become very important in the Middle Ages and later—i.e., Platonic theology, can bear the weight of comparison. In their search for the origin of reality the Platonists arrived at a God who transcends material reality. Equally important is that they came upon the same transcendent God in each of the three parts of philosophy. Inquiring into the order of reality they ultimately found the God who is Creator of heaven and earth. Asking how knowledge of the truth is possible, they noted that the human mind needs the 'illumination' from the same God, who is the highest wisdom and truth. And when they pictured the way to perfect happiness they pointed to contemplation, in which a person concentrates wholly on his origin and turns to God. Hence, the basic principles of Platonic ontology, theory of knowledge and ethics are all of them identical with the principles of Christian doctrine. These philosophers 'have recognized the true God as the author of all things, the source of the light of truth, and the bountiful bestower of all blessedness' (*CD* VIII, v). And while this recognition on the part of the Platonic philosophers does not mean that their position is in every respect the same as the Christian understanding, Augustine does indicate a degree of basic agreement.

As in the case of his predecessors, Augustine could not avoid asking how such close correspondence might be explained. He was familiar with the view that Greek philosophers had derived their true insights from the special revelation of God to his people Israel. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria had held this (cf. ch. 1.7). But he knew that Plato could

not possibly have had direct contact with the prophet Jeremiah during a supposed visit to Egypt, nor could Plato have known the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). Instead, Augustine suggests that Plato may have been in contact with the religious tradition of the Jews indirectly. It would explain how the great philosopher came to identify *true being* with God. To Augustine Plato's identification is a restatement of God's communication to Moses: 'I am who I am' (Ex. 3:14; *CD* VIII, xi).

In addition to this explanation Augustine develops the thought that wherever pagan culture achieved anything of value it was able to do so because it brought to light the treasures which divine providence had hidden in creation (*DC* II, 60). By right, however, those who are prepared to worship God in truth have the first claim to hold these treasures in trust. For Augustine this image of 'spoliation' is a crucial one. On its basis he feels justified to say that in their own philosophical pursuits Christians may, with clear conscience, make use of all true pagan knowledge and wisdom. In this way alone will knowledge take on its proper meaning. Guided by this same image, upon their exodus the Israelites took with them the Egyptian silver and gold that later on was used for the worship of God. In other words, God's mandate to take 'spoil' from the Egyptians (Ex. 12:36) implies, on a higher plane, the charge to appropriate the non-Christian riches of thought for the worship of God (*DC* II, 61 and *Conf* VII, ix, 15). In later times a slightly different analogy compares the way Christian thinkers worked with ancient philosophical sources with the labors of those who built Christian basilicas and cathedrals, making use of ancient temple materials.[5] These two images seem open to the same objection however: often the riches contained too much dross and frequently the walls of the pagan sanctuaries were not pulled down completely, old foundations left in place. This criticism applies to the works of Augustine as well.

(6) *A question of principle*

Assessment of Augustine's position presupposes clarity on a question of principle: Does Platonic thought lend itself to Christian appropriation? This question can be divided into three. (1) Are the biblical notion of the creation of heaven and earth by God and the Platonic deduction of all non-intelligible reality from the being of the Ideas and the divine spirit

5. Johannes H. Robbers, *Antieke wijsgerige opvattingen in het christelijk denkleven*, 88.

identical? (2) Can the Platonic doctrine of illumination be reconciled with the idea of God's self-revelation to humankind in Christ and in the holy Scriptures? (3) Is purely spiritual contemplation (*theoria*), with its detachment of the soul from material reality, the correct route of coming to know God in faith?

I do not mean to cast doubt on the authenticity of Augustine's conversion to the Christian faith. The suggestion put forward by some scholars, that initially Augustine was converted merely to Platonism and that he turned to Christianity much later, has turned out to be untenable. Nor can it be said that the early works reveal a fusion of Platonic and Christian views while the later writings do not.[6] On the other hand, I do not mean to claim that in Augustine's assimilation Platonism remained undisturbed, untouched by any trace of transformation. It must be kept in mind that after his conversion in 386 Augustine always accorded to Scripture the highest authority, and it was certainly not his intention to mediate between two conflicting traditions. The point to be noted is that *as a Christian* he ascribed great value to Platonism, because he was convinced of its *fundamental agreement with* the message of Scripture.[7] This is why I pose the question of principle.

In the context of this essay I restrict myself to a brief consideration of the first sub-question: the relation between the Christian idea of creation and the Platonic idea of participation and deduction.

In 1970, Cornelia de Vogel wrote that Plato's manner of describing the production of material reality by a divine artisan (the 'demiurg' in the *Timaeus*) reminds us very strongly of what Christians mean when they refer to God's work of creation.[8] It is not the case, she argues, that this demiurg had to work with formless matter as independent principle directly opposed to him. In his later works Plato arrived at a doctrine of the principle of the absolute One and the principle of the 'undetermined,' which is elusive, but not on a par with the One. While we 'must correct a little' Plato's doctrine of the ultimate principles, De Vogel is convinced

6. Of special importance for this topic were the studies by Pierre Courcelle, for example in *Recherches sur les confessions de S. Augustin*. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Logos en ratio*, 21, noted in modern interpretations of Augustine's work an 'over-estimation of his break with neo-Platonism (which he in fact never overcame).'

7. Cf. Herman Dooyeweerd, *Reformatie en Scholastiek in de wijsbegeerte*, 35, who notes in Augustine 'a good deal of *uncritical* acceptance of pagan thought.... But at least the Christian groundmotive remains in Augustinian thought generally intact. A religious standpoint of synthesis in the strict sense, which seeks consciously the union of the scriptural and the Greek groundmotives, cannot be said to take place in his thought.'

8. See chapter XII, 'De Griekse wijsbegeerte en het Christelijk scheppingsbegrip' in Cornelia de Vogel, *Theoria. Studies over de Griekse wijsbegeerte*.

that this 'philosopher of the Transcendent,'[9] who looked upon the creation of the world as the effect of immaterial principles, approximates very closely the Christian understanding of creation, so that Augustine can hardly be faulted for his preference for Platonism.

It seems to me, however, that Augustine and, following him, De Vogel did not take into account sufficiently the true implications of Platonic philosophy. When Plato identifies the reality of the Ideas and of the divine spirit with the origin of the world of sense experience he actually isolates one part of created reality from another. Or, more precisely, he splits up the human faculty of understanding and the intelligibility of reality, hypostatizes these, and lifts them out of their coherence with reality as a whole. If such hypostasis is rejected, one has no reason to prefer Plato's 'spiritualism' to the 'materialism' advocated by the Atomists or the Stoics. Plato's attempt to deduce material reality from what he conceives as the higher world of the spirit and of the Ideas in fact amounts to an over-estimation of one aspect of God's creation and an under-estimation of the reality of material and living things. Scripture's account of the creative acts of God provides no basis whatever for this separation. It is one thing to confess in the words of Scripture that God founded the earth in wisdom and set the heavens in their place by understanding (cf. Prov. 3:19), it is something else again to identify this divine wisdom and understanding with the Platonic world of Ideas. Augustine was not critical enough in his adoption of this central tenet of Platonic philosophy. Since his authority as a teacher of the Christian church became great the consequences were far-reaching. The intellectuals of the Middle Ages continued in the same path and in their Christian philosophy this Augustine-sanctioned Platonic element keeps recurring whenever Christian thinkers treat of the eternal, immutable Ideas as the divine model for creation and speak of God as the creative Intellect.

(7) *The 'added value' of the Christian religion: salvation is not for the philosopher alone*

To Augustine, then, there is substantial agreement between Platonism and Christian doctrine. Somewhere he says that comparison of the writings of the one with those of the other warrants the conclusion that the books of the Platonists, filled with the finest of insights, could readily be turned into excellent Christian works. All it takes is to modify a word or sentence

9. This is the subtitle of her book *Plato*.

here and there (*VR* iv, 7). But at the same time the Christian faith has greater worth than the way of philosophy. Wherein does this added value consist?

Origen had held that the difference lies in the fact that philosophy addresses a very small group of people who happen to be richly blessed with intelligence, while the gospel of Christ speaks to everyone (cf. ch. 2.5). Augustine concurs. Philosophy, he says, 'liberates only a few' (*DO* X, xxvii), as Plato, who understood that the number of followers of the way of philosophy is inversely proportional to its intellectual demands, admitted. Philosophy presupposes great intellectual ability, demands that it be applied strenuously, and has little patience with the masses, all of which frequently leads Augustine to ascribe to non-Christian philosophers the sin of *pride* (*superbia*). Their 'love of wisdom' conflicts with their love for humanity! But philo-sophy must never be cherished at the expense of phil-anthropy. The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, manifests true love for human beings: God became flesh for their sake. 'The more scandalous it appears, the more does it abound in mercy and is removed in length and breadth from the pride of the clever' (*DO* II, 16).

In Christ's life and work on earth salvation is spread among all mankind. This redemptive historical event plays an increasingly important role in Augustine's writings. It is at this point that a significant difference of view between him and the Platonists takes form. They were utterly unable, on account of their philosophical convictions, to accept that God would have revealed himself to all people in the stature of an ordinary person. In their view the highest divine reality was too exalted above the material world to be able to have direct contact with it. On this point Augustine and his pagan discussion partners diverge steadily, although it never came to a complete break. When Augustine modified Platonism at some point commentators are sometimes quick to see it as proof of a break with pagan philosophy. Augustine's emphasis on the coming of Christ on earth for the sake of all is a case in point. To be sure, Augustine goes beyond the schemes of Platonism here, but does not break down the Platonic basis, except perhaps in the last phase of his life. Much of the old structure is left intact, but an extension is added so that the whole may be adapted to serve its new purpose. An illustration of this is provided by a famous passage in the *Confessiones* in which Augustine presents some points of similarity and of difference between the 'books of the Platonists' and the Bible (*Conf* VII, 13ff). A doctrine of a divine trinity is found in both traditions, as is a doctrine of the *logos* through which the world is made, a *logos* which is the light of men and whose fullness is constitutive for the

soul's blessedness. But the Platonists lack something: they fail to speak of the way of humility of God's Son, of his suffering and death. Augustine does introduce central biblical themes, but he does so in a very peculiar way. Although he makes passing mention of the atonement for the sins of the world as the significance of Christ's walk on earth, he places far more emphasis on the role of the incarnated *logos* as teacher, as the example of humility, as the guide on the way of ascesis which every Christian should travel on after him. The *logos* became flesh in order that all those who have not yet reached the stage at which they are able to grasp eternal wisdom be set on the way.

Augustine recalls how he thought of Christ at the time of his conversion:

> as a man of surpassing wisdom, whom no other man could equal. Above all, because he was born in a wondrous manner of the Virgin, to give us an example of despising temporal things in order to win immortality, he seemed by the godlike care that he had for us, to have merited such great authority as a teacher. (*Conf* VII, 25)

By the time he wrote this he had come to see more clearly that the Bible makes Christ known as fully God and fully man, and he now quotes Scripture to the effect that humankind is reconciled to God through the suffering of the Lord Jesus. But that this reconciliation is the central focus of Christ's work for the sake of humans is not expressed until in later writings. For a long time he thought of Christ's work as consisting primarily in opening the way of salvation to all those unable to come to God via intellectual insight. Christ opened the way through his concrete, visible earthly appearance and through signs and miracles. This is why it was long important to Augustine to stress the incarnation (*VR* 3, 47). Christ's authority as teacher enabled the multitudes, however illiterate, to be saved by faith from earthly, corruptible existence.

In *De civitate Dei* (books IX and X), at last, Augustine does show extensively that Christ's coming to earth affects Platonic ontology in a fundamental way. In Platonism material reality was separated from the purely spiritual and perfect, from divine reality, to the degree that philosophers had introduced an intermediate level of 'demons.' This doctrine could be based on certain statements made by Plato himself, since he taught that direct contact between the gods and human beings was impossible and had actually suggested the notion of demons as mediators. Against the Platonists of his own time (Apuleius, second century; Porphyry, 233–304) Augustine insists that the way to God can be reopened only by a mediator

who is both God and man, not by some intermediate being. In this discussion it is clear that Augustine has come to understand that Christ's appearance 'in the flesh' did not purpose humanity's liberation from materiality, but from *sin* (*CD* X, xxiv). Neo-Platonism, or rather Porphyry's teaching is in this context also counted as 'the wisdom of the world' against which Paul warned (*CD* X, xxviii).

(8) *The two ways by which God leads humanity to salvation: faith and reason*

It remains that, alongside the road that can be travelled by every believer, another path, that of philosophy and understanding (*DO* II, 16), is of essential importance as well—as long as no *human* doctrine is accorded *ultimate* authority.

Augustine has spoken of the two ways of faith and reason repeatedly. He took it to be established fact that a stage of 'believing on authority' is at the basis of every conviction a person may have; moreover, many people never advance beyond this stage and remain entirely oriented to the concrete world of sense experience. Christians of this type accept the important events in the history of Israel and in the life of Christ on earth by faith rather than through insight. Such acceptance in faith, as a first step in the direction of the higher level, has become necessary 'because we dwell among temporal things, and love of them is an obstacle to our reaching eternal things' (*VR* 45). This 'divine medicine' is adapted to our existence in temporal reality, but is merely the first in the order of time. It does not have the highest value. Those who remain at this stage will not attain beatitude during their life on earth. Augustine does hold, however, that there are those who do achieve, by taking the path of insight, the beatitude which consists of the pure contemplation of the divine origin (*DO* II, 26).[10]

(9) *From faith to insight*

Augustine held that the Bible itself commends rational insight into the truth of faith as a higher level of knowledge than faith as such.[11] Its

10. My evaluation of this passage differs essentially from that of Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 131–32; cf. 138.

11. In this Isaiah 7:9 plays a crucial role, a text which Augustine reads in the *Septuagint* version (If you will not believe, surely, you shall not understand) which deviates considerably from the Hebrew which is translated in the King James Version (and RSV) (If ye will not believe, surely, ye shall not be established). Other 'prooftexts' cited by Augustine are: Matthew 7:7 (Seek and ye shall find) and John 17:3 (This is eternal life, that they know Thee).

attainment, however, presupposes the stage of believing acceptance of the church's teachings. It is only at the higher level that authority resides internally, in personal insight, rather than externally. To be sure, the understanding is in need of illumination. On this score there is no difference between the view of the Platonists and that of Augustine. Knowledge and intellectual activity cannot be without participation in divine wisdom, which enlightens human understanding. Conversely, such activity alone effectuates contact with eternal wisdom.

The special position assigned to (both philosophical and theological) knowledge is readily recognized as in the tradition of Parmenides of Elea (fifth century BC), which culminated in Plato and was based on the idea of the self-sufficiency of thought. It is true that for Augustine this self-sufficiency is not the exclusive point of departure, since he acknowledged that the human person is a *creature*, that this includes his intellectual faculty which, moreover, depends on divine illumination. Nevertheless, in a restricted sense its influence continues. In *De vera religione* and *De libero arbitrio* he demonstrates rationally the necessity of God's existence. In *De vera religione* he further states that the basis of the Christian faith, as summarized in the Apostles' Creed (including the necessity of the incarnation), may be demonstrated rationally. If this cuts off one head of the Hydra of autonomous thought (its supposed exclusiveness) another grows in its stead (insight more valuable than faith). Centuries hence, Thomas will cut off this head also: human thinking is incompetent to pronounce on the divine truths of revelation. But even this did not finish the old dragon; in Thomas's doctrine of 'natural reason' autonomous philosophy continued on, as it did in the later philosophy of rationalism, to the point that it dared compete with theology, claiming the crown of science. Christians beware! This opponent may appear overcome, decisively defeated, and yet regenerate to regroup its forces, prepared to initiate a next chapter in the on-going history of the confrontation between Christian and humanistic worldviews.

Augustine's influence on Thomas Aquinas and other medieval Christian thinkers is unmistakable. The Reformers, too, appealed to his writings and learned a great deal from him. Luther and Calvin were especially inspired by Augustine's repeated debates with Pelagius (c. 360–c. 420) and his followers, pertaining to the issues of the freedom and bondage of the human will and of humanity's dependence on divine grace for good works. The focus of these debates is less the ontological problem of the relation between visible and intelligible reality, or the epistemological problem of the relation between faith and understanding, as it is the

religious theme of human sin and the redemption from sin through the grace of God. Augustine had come to understand that human resistance to God and his grace is at work even in the intellectual sphere, in the act of philosophizing. Compared to his earlier writings, these later views on sin and grace herald more clearly a new perspective, a view in which the Platonic tradition plays a dominant role no longer.

(10) *Conclusion*

There is no doubt that, by adopting much of ancient civilization's science and thought, Augustine contributed importantly to rendering this culture fruitful in the Christianity-infused social context of subsequent centuries. He insisted on taking up this culture and philosophy into the service of faith and the Christian life. The message of his work *De doctrina christiana* is that the purpose of all intellectual labor is to serve the exposition of the Christian faith and to edify the Christian church.

With respect to his view on the relation between philosophy and the Christian faith I noted that, although Augustine's way of putting the problem is not wholly unlike that of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, his answers are considerably different. Augustine did not accept some esoteric, oral Christian tradition, as Clement did. Various themes from Platonic philosophy still propagated by Origen as in accordance with biblical teaching had become subjected to criticism, and were more or less explicitly rejected by Augustine.

Augustine does have in common with them the over-estimation of Greek philosophical theology. To me this indicates that fundamental critique of Greek philosophy was not achieved by the *patres*. Nevertheless, Augustine's polemics with Pelagius on the aversion of 'natural man' to God and on the necessity of acceptance of the grace offered in Christ provided the basis for a truly radical critique of the self-sufficiency and isolation of human reason.

(11) *For further reading*

The reading of Augustine should begin with the *Confessiones*, readily available in English translations. Peter Brown has written a fine biography of the Church Father, *Augustine of Hippo*. For those who read Dutch Alexander Sizoo's works on Augustine may be recommended: *Augustinus' leven en werken* and *Toelichting op Augustinus' Belijdenissen*. Together with D. Nauta he wrote *Augustinus*. Carl Andresen has compiled and edited

an extensive *Bibliographa Augustiniana*, which includes the literature on Augustine up to 1972. Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et Sagesse. St. Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne*, is a lengthy study on the relation of Augustine to ancient philosophy. The relation of the Church Fathers to the Reformation is treated in Eginhard P. Meyering's book *Calvin wider die Neugierde. Ein Beitrag zum Vergleich zwischen Reformatorischen und Patristischen Denken*.

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4 / Gerben Groenewoud

Bonaventure (1217–1274)

The Church Fathers discussed in the previous chapters lived and worked in an environment which was, if not downright hostile to the Christian faith, at least disdainful and thoroughly ignorant of it. They attempted to give account of their faith in the midst of a host of religious sects and philosophical schools, each of which claimed for itself the way to true felicity and wisdom and had developed outside of the orbit of the Judaic and Christian tradition. At the same time, the Fathers were compelled to formulate Christian doctrine in confrontation with Gnosticism, that outlandish but seductive syncretism of pagan and Christian elements. Thus, the relation of Christian faith to non-Christian thought was for them of great practical importance. I will attempt a sketch and evaluation of how Bonaventure, *as medieval mystic*, approached the problem in an entirely different situation.[1]

(1) *Ancient thought and medieval faith*

This problem, it would seem, had lost much of its relevance at the time of John of Fidanza, or Bonaventura, as he became known, who was born in Bagnorea in 1217, eventually became a cardinal, and died in 1274. Europe was now Christian. Even the rulers of the Roman Empire were bound to recognize the prerogatives of the Holy See. The last of the pagan philosophers was long dead. Only some works of these ancient seekers after wisdom remained, testifying to a time when the worship of the one true God was largely shrouded in ignorance. It might be of some academic interest to study these noblest among the ancients, who by the exertion of their enlightened intellect or by the merit of their virtuous lives apparently achieved some sense of true divinity; a real confrontation

1. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Bonaventure:
ChrU = *Christus unus omnium magister*
Donis = *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*
Hex = *Collationes in Hexaemeron*
Itin = *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*
SDom = *Sermo de S. Dominico*

seemed no longer urgent. Moreover, Christian dogma was by now well established. True, heresy was still rife in the Middle Ages, but the difficulty was not how to distinguish it from orthodoxy, but how to root it out. It is difficult to see how the problem of Christian faith and non-Christian thought could be anything but an academic issue. Perhaps that is why the term 'scholasticism,' used to describe the thought of the Middle Ages, is for us often synonymous with 'pedantry' or 'formalism.'

Still, it is a well-known fact that the Middle Ages were very much preoccupied with the relation between faith and understanding, between revelation and reason, between grace and nature. The very intensity of this preoccupation must put us on our guard not to disqualify the achievements of the Scholastics too hastily as irrelevant. After all, the need to reflect on the meaning of faith for life is not merely forced on Christians by the objections of despisers. Christian faith itself demands such thoroughgoing reflection. 'Faith seeking understanding' was the guiding principle of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) and of many other inhabitants of the cloister or members of the school, including Bonaventure. These monks and masters were well aware that the 'reason' with which they attempted to penetrate the hidden depths of their faith was an *organon* first forged and refined by pagan philosophers, a tool to be appropriated and christianized. They also knew that they were not the first to do so; the Fathers had paved the way for them. In awe of these authorities, philosophers as well as Fathers, they were wont to quote them frequently; ultimately, however, they were striving to know for themselves.

The medieval thinkers were in fact constantly dealing with the problem of Christian faith and non-Christian thought. If they did not always deal with it as an explicit problem, it was because for them it was no mere academic issue. It became a point of debate when they discovered a fundamental disagreement among themselves. Disparity might range from, on the one hand, the eager receptiveness to Greek philosophy of the sharp-witted Peter Abelard (1079–1142), who was convinced that Plato had more than an inkling of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, to, on the other hand, the severe aspersions on all worldly learning by the austere Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153), who thought that Abelard, by trying to prove Plato to be a Christian, only succeeded in proving himself to be a pagan.[2] The problem of Christian faith and non-Christian thought turns out to be perennial; only the context in which it was considered changed since the patristic age. It was now to be dealt

2. Taken from Ludwig Ott, 'Die platonische Weltseele in der Theologie der Frühscholastik,' 329, 330.

with not in pagan surroundings, but in an environment in which the rule of Christ was generally acknowledged.

This context is significant for the way in which the problem is formulated. A brief look at the time when Bonaventure lived is necessary for an understanding of his approach. The intellectual life of the thirteenth century was above all molded by three developments, namely, the rise of the universities, the introduction of Aristotle along with his Arab and Jewish commentators, and the rise and growth of the mendicant orders. The chapter on Thomas Aquinas will pay particular attention to the rise of the universities and the role which the introduction of Aristotle and the mendicant orders played in it (ch. 5.1–3); to contextualize Bonaventure's position it is helpful to deal briefly with controversies which arose around the reception of Aristotle in the West (sect. 2) and around the growth of the mendicant movement, especially the Franciscan order (sect. 3).

(2) *Bonaventure's reaffirmation of Augustine*

The previous chapters have made clear that many Church Fathers showed a distinct preference for Platonic philosophy. At this point it is important to note that their understanding of the Christian message, colored by Platonism, became the dominant tradition of the medieval world. In other words, what was once a matter of preference had in the Middle Ages become the common, accepted framework within which Christians believed and thought. On account of the authority accorded to the Fathers as well as due to the lack of informed knowledge of Greek philosophy, the medieval Christian was unable to assess just how much Platonism was assimilated in this patristic tradition.

This lack of clarity does not imply that the Middle Ages merely ruminated on the material once ingested by the Fathers. The urge to draw from the sources of ancient culture was recurrently present and was prompted by the need for answers in new situations. Especially in the period which historians have come to call 'the Renaissance of the twelfth century'[3] there was an increasing appreciation for the nature of things, along with a new interest in the capacity of human thought to discover in nature an inherent lawfulness. This new consciousness instigated renewed study of the classical sources, and led to attempts to get beyond them.[4]

3. Cf. Marie Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, chapter 1.

4. Bernard of Chartres (d. 1126) gave expression to this consciousness when he said: 'We are the dwarves perched on the shoulders of giants. Thus we see more and farther than they, not because our sight is sharper or our stature higher, but because they carry us on high and raise us the whole of their gigantic height.' Cited by Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen âge*, 17.

It is no exaggeration to say that with the introduction of Aristotle in the West in the thirteenth century, the Schoolmen got more than they had bargained for in the twelfth century. The appearance of Aristotle's physical and metaphysical works confronted them with a system of thought which to their mind was so thoroughly natural and empirical in outlook, and of such high standard in scientific approach, that they experienced it as a direct challenge to the Platonically-tinted Christian tradition to which they were heir. The impact of this discovery initially gave rise to a number of ecclesiastical decrees forbidding the public teaching of Aristotle (cf. ch. 5.2). These attempts to evade confrontation soon proved futile. The mendicant theologians were the first to take up the challenge. They began to study Aristotle with a view to bringing him in line with the Christian faith. This confrontation soon proved to involve a fundamental revaluation of the basic positions developed by the Fathers, and especially by Augustine.

At the time that Bonaventure enrolled at the University of Paris in the Faculty of Arts, in 1236, the study of important works of Aristotle was a basic requirement (cf. ch. 5.2). In 1243 he entered the Franciscan order and began his study of theology under masters who had already started to adapt Aristotelian doctrines to the demands of a Christian theology. In the years 1250–52 he lectured on the *Sententiae* of Peter of Lombard (c. 1100–60), a book which in the thirteenth century began its long career as the standard textbook of theology. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, the reworked report of his lectures, may be regarded as the culmination of this first attempt of the school of the Minors to come to clarity with respect to Aristotelianism. In the area of cosmology Bonaventure defends on rational grounds that the world is not eternal as Aristotle—or, at any rate, his commentator Averroes—had taught. In the field of epistemology he maintains the Augustinian doctrine of illumination, although he accepts Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction with regard to corporeal reality. In the field of ethics he, in agreement with Augustine, stresses the priority of the will over against the intellect. Thus, even though the influence of Aristotle can be read on almost every page of this first major work of Bonaventure, his encounter with Peripatetic philosophy led him to a reaffirmation of Augustinian positions.

This reaffirmation was strengthened when in the 1260s a number of philosophers in the faculty of arts, among whom Siger of Brabant (c. 1240–84) was the most outstanding, began to teach a 'radical Aristotelianism' and 'inaugurated a manner of philosophizing that took no account of the

exigencies of theology or of the Christian faith.'[5] They did not deny the truth of the Christian faith; they simply refused to bring that which they conceived to be rational in line with that which they confessed as Christians. They must have felt that the theologians, zealous to accommodate Aristotle to theology, failed to do justice to his thought. Bonaventure, on the other hand, saw in their philosophizing the malicious exploitation of all those elements in Aristotle which were contrary to the Christian faith, a tendency to bring out the worst in the Philosopher. The root of their error he considered to lie in the denial of exemplarism and of divine enlightenment. These (Augustinian) doctrines defended by Bonaventure we shall develop in a later section (sect. 6). His reaffirmation of them led many scholars to designate Bonaventure as an Augustinian thinker.

In 1277, Bonaventure no longer alive, the Bishop of Paris, Etienne Tempier (one of Bonaventure's students), condemned 219 propositions and put an end to the radical Aristotelianism of Siger and his fellow *artistae*. Some condemned propositions were drawn from the works of Thomas Aquinas. Augustinianism, it seems, carried the day.

(3) *Bonaventure's Franciscan vocation*

It has been pointed out that Bonaventure should not be designated as an Augustinian thinker *pur sang*. His intention was less to remain faithful to the Church Father, but rather to St. Francis, the 'little poor man' from Assissi. In 1257 Bonaventure left his teaching post at Paris in order to become Minister-General of the Franciscan order. On mount Alverno, the place where St. Francis in a mystical experience had met the crucified Lord in the appearance of a six-winged seraph and received the stigmata of the Lord, he conceived his best-known work, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (Journey of the mind into God). This little work demonstrates his mystical bent and Franciscan spirituality, which also comes to expression in the name which tradition has given him: 'Seraphic Doctor.'

St. Francis had aspired to the evangelical perfection which Jesus indicated in his answer to the rich young man's question, 'Master, what good must I do to gain eternal life?' (Matt. 19:16): 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and then you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me' (v. 20). Poverty, chastity, and obedience were incumbent upon anyone in the Middle Ages who entered a religious order. However, St. Francis did not only want his followers to

5. Ferdinand van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*, 219.

make the vow of poverty; he sought to realize a brotherhood of wandering beggars doing penance and witnessing to evangelical simplicity. There was definitely something 'anti-establishment' about his movement. In an age when the contrast between rich and poor was extreme, and when the church had become ensconced in worldly affairs, this movement showed an alternative way of life, a life of following Jesus by ridding oneself of filthy lucre, by wandering from place to place as Christ had done, and by bearing one's cross—the contempt of self and of the world—joyfully.

It was quite inevitable that as the mendicant movement attracted more followers, the secular clergy, whose task it was to serve the laity, would become disturbed. These seculars knew very well that the popularity which the mendicants enjoyed implied a direct criticism of their way of life, if not an outright threat to their livelihood. Blessed by the Holy See, the mendicants began to minister to the needs of the laity. In response, the seculars openly challenged the claim that the consequences of following Jesus were as extreme as the mendicants made them out to be. Did not Christ and his disciples carry a purse with them? They saw in this striving after evangelical perfection a heretical excess and a spiritual arrogance which needed to be denounced. Bonaventure wrote a brilliant defense of the mendicants, his *Apologia pauperum*.

This conflict between mendicants and seculars also broke out at the University of Paris, once the Dominicans and Franciscans began to teach there. One might well ask: What were Franciscans doing at the University? Was their teaching and studying there in accordance with the original idea of St. Francis? Many 'grey friars,' as the Franciscans were called, were asking the same question. They became increasingly alarmed as the movement was moving ever farther away from the original ideal as they saw it. These disturbed friars, or 'Spirituals,' became enamored by the speculations of Joachim of Fiora (1142–1202). This abbot of Calabria had predicted the coming of a contemplative age. Many of his avid readers in the Franciscan order concluded that St. Francis had been the great initiator of the monastic age to come and that their order was therefore its inauguration.[6]

Bonaventure's view of the Franciscan order can best be explained in his own words:

> I confess before God that the reason which made me love most of all the life of blessed Francis is the fact that it resembles the beginning and the growth of the church. The church, indeed, began with the simple fishermen, and was enriched later with the most illustrious and learned doctors. Thus you

6. Umberto Eco gives a good portrait of these Spirituals in his novel *The Name of the Rose*.

> may understand that the religion of blessed Francis was established, not by the prudence of men, but by Christ, as shown by God himself. And because the works of Christ do not fail but ceaselessly grow, it is God who has accomplished this work, since scholars have not been reluctant to join the company of simple men, heeding the word of the Apostle (I Cor. 3:18) 'If any one of you thinks himself wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise.'[7]

The Franciscan order is not, according to Bonaventure, some heretical sect that strives to supersede the church, as the seculars suspected. It is the work of Christ that serves to renew the church. Its present state is not a degeneration of its original ideals as the Spirituals supposed. Its progress and growth reflect the development of the early church. While Bonaventure holds the simplicity of the founder of the order in high regard, he at the same time justifies a more speculative and intellectual interpretation of Franciscan spirituality. His own mysticism is sustained by a striving after wisdom. However, the way to true wisdom is the way of humility. That is how the Seraphic Doctor translates the message of *El Poverello* of Assisi.

(4) *Wisdom of God and wisdom of the world*

'If any one of you thinks himself wise in this world....' Surely, the notion of wisdom is as complex as it is important in the history of Western thought. Were it possible to unravel all the strands of meaning that are knit together in Bonaventure's use of this notion, we would gain a deep insight into the way in which Greek thought and biblical faith are intertwined in his theology. However, our focus is his explicit evaluation of Greek philosophy and, hence, I look only at what he himself says of wisdom.

Bonaventure is aware of the complexity of this notion because he distinguishes various senses in which the word 'wisdom' may be used. Usually, according to him, wisdom stands for a general knowledge of things. Someone who happens to be knowledgeable may be said to be wise. In a more specific sense wisdom is the knowledge of higher or deeper things. It is, as Augustine says, knowledge of eternal things, or, as Aristotle states, knowledge of the highest causes. As such it is distinguished from science, which pertains to temporal reality. This distinction between wisdom and science is, as we shall see, important for Bonaventure especially in his discussion of philosophy. Properly, however, wisdom is 'the name for the knowledge of God according to piety.' It concerns the worship which we render unto God through the virtues of faith, hope and love. In this sense every

7. *Epistola de tribus questionibus*, 336.

Christian who takes his religion seriously may be called wise. Bonaventure considers this description of wisdom to be typical of Augustine.

Wisdom has a deeper dimension still. In the final analysis it is not mere knowledge but *experiential* knowledge. The Franciscan points out that the Latin word for wisdom, *sapientia*, is derived from the verb *sapere*, to discern, as well as from the noun *sapor*, taste. In its deepest sense wisdom is the taste of divine sweetness. All intellectual activity is transcended when this state of wisdom is reached. This wisdom is not the mere outcome of this activity: it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure appeals above all to the *theologia mystica* of the mysterious neo-Platonic Christian of the sixth century who called himself Dionysius the Areopagite to describe wisdom in this profoundest sense. Above all rational activity and beyond the life of faith there is a wisdom which is the true end of that activity and life.[8]

Ultimately, then, wisdom stands for everything that all humans in their innermost nature seek, and that the Christian shall in the end receive: a life of loving contemplation of God. But not all know that it is this 'wisdom of God' which they seek. Often they stop short of the real thing and think to have found wisdom, though in fact it is but 'wisdom of the world.' The question to which we want to find an answer reads: Is philosophy for Bonaventure wisdom of the world? Before we can do so we must find out what he understands by 'wisdom of the world.'

The Pauline contrast between the two kinds of wisdom plays a central role in the Franciscan's thought. An indication of its importance is that he by no means restricts either of them to the field of science and philosophy; all humans, be they scholars or peasants, are prone to worldly wisdom. The rich farmer in the parable of Jesus is a case in point (cf. Luke 12: 16–21). When he had harvested his plentiful crop and rebuilt his barns to store it, he said to himself, 'Man, you have plenty of good things laid by, enough for many years: take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself' (v. 19). The self-assured presumption that one has found the happy life, or at least the way to it, this self-complacency, is the mark of worldly wisdom that God brings to nought, for God said to the rich farmer: 'You fool, this night you must surrender your life...' (v. 20). In commenting on this passage Bonaventure quotes the apostle Paul to the effect that God destroys the wisdom of the wise (I Cor. 1: 19). Like Paul he sees this destruction above all manifested in the cross of Jesus.[9]

8. III *Sent.* d.35, a.1, q.1; *Opera omnia* III, 774.

9. *Commentarius in evangelium S. Lucae*, cap. 12, 29–30. The cross of Jesus plays an important role in Bonaventure's thought. Cf. Werner Hülsbusch, *Elemente einer Kreuzestheologie in den Spätschriften Bonaventuras*.

Bonaventure connects this notion of worldly wisdom with the 'wisdom which is not from above' of which the apostle James says that it is 'earthly, sensual, and devilish' (James 3:15). He takes these three qualifications to refer to three different forms of worldly wisdom. Wisdom is earthly when people seek their happiness in the affluence of material goods; it is sensual when they seek happiness in the lust of the flesh, be it in sexual intercourse or in gluttony; it is devilish when they seek happiness in the excellence and display of worldly pomp (*Donis* 9,2). These three forms of worldly wisdom resemble the three things of this world of which the apostle John speaks: 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' (I John 2:16), which constitute the three basic incentives to sin: concupiscence, avarice, and pride. Worldly wisdom is therefore not a mere shortcoming: there is something terribly wrong about it. When one turns either to the inferior things of the flesh, or to the exterior things of this earth, or to the inner life of the spirit, and expects to find ultimate happiness there, one is actually turning away from the superior good, God, in which alone true happiness can be found. This turning away (*aversio*) and turning to (*conversio*) constitute the very dynamism of sin. They imply that the creature is worshipped rather than God.

Thus, there is a veritable antithesis between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. The former is God-directed and implies a contempt of the world; the latter is world-directed and implies a contempt of God. While this antithesis cuts through the whole of life, our concern in this chapter is to see whether and in which way worldly wisdom is found among the philosophers. Can one find pride, avarice, or concupiscence in their thought?

(5) *Philosophy and wisdom of the world*

According to Bonaventure, the philosophers were above all susceptible to the sin of pride. He says:

> The philosophers have given the nine sciences and have promised to give a tenth: contemplation. But many philosophers, while they wanted to separate themselves from the darkness of error, have become enmeshed in great errors; for saying that they were wise, they were made foolish (Rom. 1:22); priding themselves in their science, they were made Luciferians. (*Hex* 4,1)

Bonaventure recognizes the genuine achievement of the philosophers: they have given us the nine sciences. But he also knows that they were striving for more. Their very title of philosopher—lover of wisdom—

bound them to the promise of a tenth science: contemplation. The transition from the nine sciences dealing with created reality, to the tenth, gaining insight and vision of the Creator, will demand our attention below; here it is important to notice that for Bonaventure those philosophers who thought themselves capable of fulfilling their promise of attaining wisdom ended up in grave errors. If indeed true wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit, quite beyond the reach of the human mind enfeebled by the debilitating effects of sin, then the very claim of wisdom is the mark of folly.

Such philosophers possess the arrogance of Lucifer who said in his heart: 'I will scale the heavens; I will set my throne high above the stars of God . . . and make myself like the Most High' (Is. 14:12, 13). But their fall, like Lucifer's, is great. Bonaventure likes to quote Jeremiah 10:14 in this connection which, translated from the *Vulgate*, reads: 'A fool is made every man by his science.' The great variety of conflicting opinions among the philosophers is a clear indication of their pride. Dissenting opinions arise from presumption. According to Proverbs 13:10, 'among the proud there is always discord;' and 'it begets confusion,' according to I Timothy 6:3–5 (*ChrU* 27).

In a figurative sense avarice, too, may be found among the philosophers, for just as the rich are never satisfied with their riches, so there are philosophers who seek to acquire ever more knowledge. This lust for knowledge is called curiosity. Since wisdom, the true end of humankind, is consummated in love, knowledge can never be an end in itself. Of all the things that can be known, there are a great many things that are not worth knowing. Bonaventure discovered this vice of curiosity even in the eminent Old Testament philosopher Solomon, who 'discoursed on trees, from the cedar of Lebanon down to the marjoram that grows out of the wall . . .' (I Kings 4:33; *Hex* 19, 3). Curiosity springs from the sin of pride. Once philosophers lay claim to the title of wisdom on the basis of the knowledge which they have acquired of the creature, they become involved in endless subtleties.[10] They are doomed to an unending quest for ever more knowledge because the creature, being mutable, cannot give them the rest and peace which God, who alone is immutable, affords. This obsession with the creature is indicative of a fleshly lust. Bonaventure says:

> The greatest abomination is that the fairest daughter of the king has been offered us as a bride, and we prefer to be coupled and to fornicate with the ugliest servant girl; and we want to return into Egypt to the vilest food, and we do not want to be revived by heavenly food. (*Hex* 2, 7; cf. 19, 19)

10. II *Sent. proemium*; *Opera omnia* II, 5.

The antithesis between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world comes out sharpest when Bonaventure uses the language of love and taste. The baseness of worldly wisdom becomes apparent among the philosophers in their obstinate refusal to look up to the Creator of all things. They prostitute themselves to the *ratio* by which they think they have come to know the creature. Such obstinacy is the result not merely of impotence or ignorance but of malice. Bonaventure sees this malice especially among the philosophers of his own day, who should know better. Of the philosophical sciences of his time he says that reason (*ratio*) in them has become 'lecherous' (*luxuriata*). Thus, in metaphysics some teach that the world is eternal—proving how little sense they have of the Creator. In mathematics some try to uncover the secrets of the heart on the basis of astrological calculations—as if the stars, rather than God, are the source of providence. In the natural sciences the alchemists try to imitate nature by producing gold and silver—as if the human person were a creator. And so on in the other sciences (*Hex* 5, 21). This vice of *luxuria*, lecherousness, which Bonaventure uses here in a figurative sense, is the very opposite of true wisdom (*Donis* 2, 3).[11]

This appraisal of the philosophers puts Bonaventure solidly in the tradition of monastic theology which held all worldly learning in contempt. Peter Damian (1007–72) and Bernard of Clairvaux were two outstanding representatives of this tradition in which the virtue of holy simplicity was held in high esteem. Nonetheless, like most proponents of this tradition, Bonaventure does not mean to depreciate the possession of knowledge in the name of simplicity. His criticism of the philosophers does not touch their development of the sciences but relates to the claims which they attached to their achievements. 'Philosophical science is the way to other sciences; but he who wants to remain there, falls into darkness' (*Donis* 4, 12).

This statement shows that Bonaventure is not about to degrade philosophy *as such* to wisdom of the world. Philosophers may fall into darkness, but their fall is not the way of philosophy: it leads to other sciences. His last, incomplete work, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, a series of university sermons on the six days of creation, makes perfectly clear that philosophy is a legitimate, though hazardous enterprise. According to the Seraphic Doctor, the six days of creation do not refer to the days in which God brought the order of the world to completion in a literal sense only; they

11. Martin Luther's description of reason as 'the Devil's whore' finds its historical source in the medieval monastic tradition of which Bonaventure, too, was a part, as is apparent from his critique of the philosophers. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *The theology of history in St. Bonaventure*, 154.

also have spiritual meanings. In an allegorical sense they refer to the six periods of redemptive history, and in an anagogical or mystical sense they refer to the illuminations that befall humans during their pilgrimage on earth. The *Collationes in Hexaemeron* deal with the story of creation in this last sense. Corresponding to the six days there is a sixfold vision:

> There is a vision of the understanding given through nature; a vision of the understanding lifted up through faith; a vision of the understanding taught through Scripture; a vision of the understanding suspended through contemplation; enlightened through prophecy; absorbed into God through rapture. Following these there is a seventh vision of the glorified soul.... (*Hex* 3, 24)

Inasmuch as philosophy is the exercise of humankind's natural capacity to reason and, hence, depends on the bestowal of divine light, it must be subsumed under this first vision. We may conclude that philosophy has for Bonaventure a commitment to the wisdom of God. It is precisely because of this commitment of philosophy that Bonaventure finds fault with the philosophers. They are, as the apostle Paul has said, 'without excuse' (Rom. 1:20).

(6) *Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life*

These six visions show a certain progression, so that the ulterior gives a clearer vision of God than the prior. They must be distinguished from the seventh, for, as Paul wrote: 'Now we see through a mirror, darkly, but then face to face' (I Cor. 13:12). A mirror is the means by which we gain a vision of God during our pilgrimage on earth. It is this means which differs according to each vision. A vision of God may be achieved either through nature, or through faith, or through Scripture, etc.

We must not conceive of these visions as so many rungs of a mystical ladder by which we can climb up to God in order to reach the final vision of the glorified soul. The believer need not first have been a philosopher in order to be a believer. Bonaventure's point is rather that as each day of creation consisted of a certain work of the Creator, so each vision requires a certain illumination from above. Philosophers can come to a vision of God only because God has first said: 'Let there be light' (Gen. 1:3). This light is none other than the Word, divinely spoken. It is 'the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world' (John 1:9).[12]

12. Bonaventure reads the phrase 'coming into the world' in agreement with the *Vulgate* translation, i.e., as qualifying 'every man,' and took this text for biblical proof of the doctrine of divine illumination. In this he followed Augustine and many other Church Fathers. The correct reading is, I think, that the phrase qualifies the subject of the sentence: 'the true light.'

Although one need not first qualify as a philosopher in order to believe, it is true that without this light given with nature 'man has nothing, neither faith nor grace, nor the illumination of wisdom' (*Hex* 3, 25).

Like every mystic, Bonaventure does teach that there is a certain way or order that must be followed if the vision of God is to be attained. When he develops the first vision in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, his purpose is to show that the Greek philosophers failed to come to a true vision of God because they did not begin in faith. Elsewhere he describes the proper sequence as follows:

> The order is this: that we begin with the firmness of faith and proceed through the serenity of reason so as to arrive at the sweetness of contemplation. This is the order implied by Christ when he said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life' (John 14:6). (*ChrU* 15)

Bonaventure's close adherence to the guiding principle of Anselm—faith seeking understanding (sect. 1)—is quite conspicuous. In this section we want to take a brief look at this order so that in the following section we may see clearly why, according to Bonaventure, the philosophers failed to come to a vision of God.

Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ preached; the Way. Its content consists, in its simplest expression, of the teaching of the church as summarized in the Apostles' Creed. Every Christian is bound to believe, explicitly or implicitly, the twelve articles of faith. He must believe them on authority inasmuch as they surpass human reason. This authority is derived from Christ's incarnation, from the Word that came in the flesh. All Scripture as well as all doctrine of the church turns upon this central redemptive event. However, the knowledge of faith could not have been authoritatively written and cannot be taught or assented to if there were not at the same time an inward inspiration. Christ also came in the mind of the writer, the teacher, and the believer in order to induce him to write, to teach, or to assent: through faith Christ dwells in their hearts (cf. Eph. 3:17). Faith is therefore a virtue that cleanses us from error by telling us what we must know in order to gain eternal life, and that unites us with Christ, the Truth. Christ is the Way in that he came in the flesh and comes into the mind, and in these two ways—by authority and by inspiration—he is the principle of faith (*ChrU* 1–5; *SDom* 2–7).

Christ is also the Truth. A definition of truth that became common in the Middle Ages, and has since become classic, reads: 'truth is the correspondence between the intellect and a thing.' Bonaventure also uses this

definition, but he gives a peculiar twist to it by adding that the intellect in question is not 'my intellect,' but that of God. By giving it this twist, Bonaventure wants to make clear that not the thing alone determines the truth of our knowledge, since God's intellect first of all determines the truth of a thing. He is the Creator of all things, and a thing is true only insofar as it corresponds with or is similar to its conception in the mind of God. Since this similarity never amounts to equality, Bonaventure can say with Augustine that every creature is a lie (*Hex* 3, 8). The relation between God and the world is that between an exemplar and its image or copy.

This exemplarity pertains above all to the second person of the Trinity, the Son. He is the Word, eternally conceived, in which is expressed all that God is and all that he can do (*Hex* 1, 13). Through the Word all things were made (John 1:3). Thus, Christ as the uncreated Word is the Truth of things.

When man acquires scientific knowledge of the world around him, this knowledge cannot derive its certainty from the things themselves. Having been created out of nothing, they are mutable. However, neither can man derive the certainty of his knowledge from his own power of understanding, for he is fallible and prone to error. Yet Bonaventure states:

> Scientific knowledge necessarily requires immutable truth on the part of the thing known and infallible certitude on the part of the knower. Whatever is known, indeed, is necessary in itself and certain to the knower. For we know (Aristotle, I *Posterior Analytics* c. 2), 'when we judge the reason why a thing is, and we know that it is impossible for it to be otherwise.' (*ChrU* 6)

Since the creature is mutable and the knower fallible, scientific knowledge necessarily presupposes a third factor: namely, the light of truth itself. The Word, being the exemplaric cause of all things, is also the principle of all knowing. Just as our eyes require the light of the sun in order to observe anything, so the mind requires the light of truth in order to know or understand anything.

Illumination is needed not only in the philosophical sciences but also in theology. Bonaventure distinguishes theology from philosophy by associating the latter with the divine work of creation; the former with the divine work of re-creation (*SDom* 4). He follows the common medieval view of correlating theology with holy Scripture. It is the understanding of the written text. Thus, the certainty of theological science rests not in the evidence of axioms or principles as in philosophical science, evidence

which is common to all humans by virtue of the light which shines on them all, but in the firmness of a faith which has been infused in some through grace. Theology enhances the certainty of this faith by adding understanding.

This understanding of Scripture reaches *beyond* the literal meaning of the text. It seeks to know the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical or mystical meaning of Scripture. These meanings cannot be attained by mere human means. They must be revealed. This revelation is, in turn, an on-going process; there is a whole tradition of revelation, since the great Fathers of the church especially were made privy to the hidden meanings of the text. This is why the student of Scripture must apply himself not only to the text of the Bible but also to the reading of the Fathers. Since their writings contain many difficulties, he must have recourse to the *summae* of the masters who explain these difficulties. These masters make use of philosophical conceptions, so that the student is also required to stoop down to the field of philosophy in order to read the masters intelligently. Even philosophy makes a modest contribution to the understanding of Scripture, but Bonaventure warns the student not to abide too long on this lowest level, for by doing so he will change the wholesome wine of Scripture into the tepid water of philosophy, quite the reverse of the miracle which Jesus performed at Cana (John 2:7ff; *Hex* 19, 10–13).

Notwithstanding the student's zeal and discipline, this understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit through which he is illumined by the light of Truth, which is Christ. This gift is the key to contemplation inasmuch as it gives us understanding of the uncreated Word through which all things are made, of the incarnated Word through which all things are restored, and of the inspired Word through which all things are revealed (*Hex* 3, 22). It is precisely through the inspired Word that we can come to contemplate the uncreated Word as expression of the triune Creator as well as the incarnated Word as the expression of the triune Restorer.

The Life; contemplation is a turning to God; it is to see God—not only face to face as in the life hereafter, but also to see him shine forth in his work of creation and in his work of restoration. The mode of contemplation is twofold: a going in and a going out (*ChrU* 11). By 'going in' Bonaventure means a movement of interiorization in which man is raised to a contemplation of the uncreated Word and of the Trinity. By 'going out' he means a movement of exteriorization in which man contemplates the incarnated Word, the humanity of God. Thus, contemplation is not merely a matter

of the higher part, but of the whole person. Christ is the Life and as such the principle of contemplative knowledge. In his divinity and humanity he is the ladder in Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:12) which links heaven and earth and on which men ascend and descend like angels. Contemplation is a beatitude by which man is perfected. It is a beatitude because Christ himself has said: 'How blest are those whose heart is pure; they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8).

However, the perfection of this blessed state is not fully reached in the intellectual contemplation whose key is understanding. There is not only an intellectual contemplation but also one of wisdom, and wisdom is experiential: it is the taste of divine sweetness. Only the 'man of desires' (cf. Dan. 9:23), aflame with passion for God, can enter this ecstatic state in which all intellectual activity ceases. Only the Crucified One, who in his passion demonstrated his love for man, gives access to this 'peace of God, which is beyond our understanding' (Phil. 4:7). A shining example of such contemplation is given us in St. Francis when he had his vision on Mt. Alverno (sect. 3).

The wisdom of God, manifest in the cross of Christ, shall destroy the worldly wisdom (I Cor. 1:18ff) of the secular clergy who attack the life of Christ in their way of life, or of the philosophers of the faculty of arts who attack the doctrine of Christ in their false teachings (*Hex* 1, 9). The followers of St. Francis, on the other hand, see in the father of their order the advent of a new stage in the on-going process of inspiration. In him was revealed seraphic wisdom.[13] By following him they will devote themselves to a life of obedience, poverty, and chastity. In obedience they will rid themselves of pride and live a life of humility; in poverty they will desist from the greedy pursuit after riches and knowledge; in chastity they will avoid all fleshly lust, and pernicious error in their love for the true wisdom of God.

The right order for arriving at this wisdom is therefore: to be cleansed by the virtue of faith, to be illumined by the gift of understanding, and to be perfected by the beatitude of contemplation. This scheme of purgation, illumination, and perfection, neo-Platonic in origin, was very common in the mystical writings of the Middle Ages.

13. The angels play an important role in Bonaventure's doctrine of illumination. They accommodate the divine light to the capacity of the human mind to receive it. There are ten orders of angels and there is a correlation between the level of illumination of which the human mind is capable and the order of angelic mediation. The highest-ranking is the Seraphic Order.

(7) *From science to wisdom: the predicament of the philosophers*

Although scientific knowledge presupposes the light of truth, we must not assume, according to Bonaventure, that this light is the total or only principle or source of knowledge. If it were, we would not see God through a mirror, darkly, but always face to face. Neither would there be a difference between science and wisdom, or between rational and revealed knowledge. Sense experience is not by any means made superfluous by this light (*ChrU* 18). In order to know the world around us, we must have recourse to the senses; we cannot believe if we do not hear the gospel preached; the theologian cannot come to an understanding of the Scriptures if he does not study the text in its literal sense. Even contemplation is a going-out and a going-in. In other words, Bonaventure wants to do justice to the empiricism of Aristotle as well as to the idealism of Plato, and he wants to do so out of Christian concern. Referring to I Corinthians 12:8, he concludes a discussion of these two philosophers as follows:

> It seems, therefore, that among the philosophers, the word of wisdom is to be granted to Plato and the word of science to Aristotle. For the former looked above all at the higher realities, while the latter looked principally to the lower things. (*ChrU* 18)

In this section I mean to do two things. First I comment on the distinction between science and wisdom, and especially the transition from the one to the other; secondly I want to find out why, according to Bonaventure, the philosophers were unable to achieve this transition. The above quotation suggests that the reason for failure will be somewhat different for the two main streams of ancient thought initiated by these two philosophers.

The distinction between science and wisdom has to do with humankind's place in the order of created reality. This order consists not only of corporeal beings and spiritual beings, but also of beings which are at once corporeal and spiritual: human beings. The medial position of humankind is very important for Bonaventure because two extremes—the corporeal and the spiritual—do not as such constitute order but merely an opposition. There must be in every order a medium which brings the two extremes together.

Humanity's medial position is important not only because it is the constitutive factor in the created order; it is even more important with regard to the end unto which the created world has been ordered. God does not only stand at the beginning of the world as its Creator; he also stands at its end as its Goal. Just as God has brought forth (*producere*) all things,

things, so also all things are to be led back (*reducere*) to him, and just as the 'production' was first eternally and intelligibly expressed in the uncreated Word, so the 'reduction' is finally achieved when all things are raised to an intelligible expression of praise and adoration of the Creator. Through their medial position human beings are able to draw up within themselves the sum total of created reality, and by turning to their Maker they are able to praise and enjoy him forever.[14]

Both science and wisdom are necessary, Bonaventure insists, because the human person can 'mediate' this return to God only when, standing in the midst of the created order, he or she knows both the creature and the Creator. Hence human reason is, as it were, 'two-faced:' there is an inferior part of reason which looks to the temporal, and a superior part of reason which looks to the eternal. While the inferior part cannot come to indubitable knowledge of the creature without the help of the superior part, on which the light of truth shines, this superior part cannot fix its gaze on that transcendent light directly, without first becoming accustomed to it by its reflections in the creature. The return of all things to God takes on the form of a 'journey of the mind into God.'

This journey may be described as leading from the exterior to the interior and from the inferior to the superior. As we have seen (sect. 4), to stop short of the superior and to claim that one has found wisdom is to fall into one of the three forms of worldly wisdom. These two sets of terms represent but one ascending movement, for the movement of interiorization is at the same time one toward the superior. The divine light is more intimate to me than I am to myself. This ascent therefore begins with the things outside of us (*extra nos*) and moves by way of that which is within us (*intra nos*) to that which is above us (*supra nos*).

The ascent takes its point of departure in a consideration of the world around us. The philosophers have achieved much at this initial stage through their extensive scientific investigation of all the aspects of created reality. They have given us the nine sciences. This division of the sciences is in itself evidence of the fact that in their investigation they were enlightened by the light of truth, for they did not simply contrive this division: it was revealed to them (cf. Rom. 1:19; *Hex* 5, 22). The natural, rational, and moral parts of philosophy, each of which is divided into three sciences, is—at least for the Christian who knows of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a manifestation of the triune God, who is 'the cause of being, the ground for knowing, and the order of living' (*Hex* 4, 3).

14. Cf. the excellent study by Alexander Schaeffer O. F. M., 'The Position and Function of Man in the Created World According to St. Bonaventure.'

If this initial stage is to serve as a point of departure for the ascent to God, the world around us must be understood as created. For Bonaventure, this world bears the character of a footprint (*vestigium*).[15] Just as a footprint allows another person to track its maker down, so the world allows humans to rise to the Creator—on condition, of course, that they interpret correctly. But that is precisely the crux: the philosophers never came to a proper understanding of creation. The most eminent among them in the field of science, Aristotle, seems to have taught that the world is eternal.

In the thirteenth century the question of the eternity of the world was a touchstone by which to establish the attitude which the Schoolmen harbored with regard to Peripatetic philosophy. Bonaventure had an outspoken dislike for this Aristotelian doctrine, even as a student.[16] He took it as perverting the redemptive, historical perspective of the Christian religion. The root of this error was not, according to him, Aristotle's empirical approach as such but his rejection of the Platonic Ideas. Aristotle showed a distinct lack of understanding of the exemplaric cause of all things. Had he but come to an understanding of the uncreated Word, in which God expressed eternally all that he is capable of making, Aristotle would have avoided the error that the eternal Maker had to make this world 'from eternity.' Had he been able to believe the first article of faith as taught by the Christian church—'I believe in God the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth'—he would have realized that this almighty God is quite capable of bringing something forth out of nothing, and that this bringing forth had to take place in time. But Aristotle did not believe; consequently, he did not understand. Thus, he was cut off from the way of true wisdom.

Even so, Bonaventure nowhere explicitly concludes—as one might expect him to do—that Aristotle's philosophy is a worldly wisdom. He does not accuse Aristotle of pride, curiosity, or concupiscence. In fact, he tends to defend him. Bonaventure's argument is not with this eminent scholar of ancient science but with his medieval epigones. He allows for the possibility, for instance, that Aristotle may simply have meant by his teaching of the eternity of the world that its beginning cannot be

15. Bonaventure's symbolism is typical for much of medieval thought on the creation. He often speaks of the creation as a book. Cf. Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, chapter 16; Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, 47–85.

16. In *Collationes in decem praeceptis* (*Opera omnia* V) Bonaventure says: 'When I was a student, I heard of Aristotle that he taught that the world is eternal; and when I heard the reasons and arguments which led him to this view, my heart began to agitate and it began to think: how can this be?' (515).

explained in terms of a natural philosophy (*Hex* 7, 2). In other words, Aristotle may simply have presented as a postulate of science what his witless followers proclaim as the height of wisdom. But he did neglect the way of wisdom (*ChrU* 18), so his philosophy is only of restricted value to the Christian.

While we may gain some vague notion of God at this first stage, we can only encounter the triune God in a vision via an inward turn to ourselves. God cannot be known except through self-knowledge. There is no vision without personal involvement. That is why the ascent is not a purely rational activity. A scientific preoccupation with the world around us may be quite possible; leading all things back to their origin requires a holy walk of life. Bonaventure states: 'It is the part of reason to distinguish, the part of the will to unite.'[17]

The soul is capable of returning to itself because in a sense it always knows itself and is always present to itself. Still, true self-knowledge is hard to come by, for the soul is only present to itself to the extent that its powers are operative. The soul experiences itself through the activity of its powers. Hence there is something of a vicious circle involved in self-knowledge. For example, they who in lust after the flesh only make use of the lower part of reason to gratify this lust will know themselves merely as pleasure-seeking creatures. Through concupiscence the higher powers become blinded so that a person is not even aware of them any longer, unable to realize that in the highest part of the mind a human being is nothing less than an image of the triune God.

For Bonaventure the *imago Dei* means that humans are 'motivated' by God in such a way that God is the final 'object' of all striving, cognitive and affective. In the words of Augustine, 'the soul is an image of God in that it is capable of God and of participation' (*ChrU* 17).[18] These words describe not so much what humans actually are as what they can become: they can become the likeness (*similitudo*) of God. They become like God when united with him in love and contemplating him 'face to face.' These words also indicate that when people in their concupiscence become blind to their real capacity, they resist the divine motivation and hold down 'the truth in unrighteousness' (Rom. 1:18). This blindness is the result of sin (*Itin* 1, 1). Humans can gain the likeness of God only when they enter into the inner chamber of their mind and begin with contemplating the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the mirror of the three powers which constitute their being images of God: memory, intellect and will. To reflect on

17. II *Sent.* d. 38, *dubium* 3; *Opera omnia* II, 895.
18. Augustine's definition is found in *De trinitate* XIV, viii, 11.

scientific activity is to move toward this true self-knowledge, since the certainty of our knowledge can only be accounted for, according to Bonaventure, in terms of the inner light of truth which shines upon the higher part of reason. By inquiring into the conditions of our certain knowledge, we are led back to the higher part of reason and to the light of truth.

While Aristotle was so preoccupied with his scientific investigations that he neglected the way of wisdom, Plato and his followers turned away from the world of sense experience and looked to the eternal world of the ideas for understanding and wisdom. Bonaventure disapproves of the Platonic contempt for sense experience (*ChrU* 18). By looking for certain knowledge of the truth exclusively in the world of the ideas, the Platonists apparently thought the mind capable of raising its gaze directly to the transcendent light. It is therefore not really surprising that later students of the Academy, the school of Plato in Athens, became skeptical and denied every possibility of attaining certain knowledge.[19] To see 'face to face' is reserved only for those who have arrived in the eternal house of God.

On the other hand, just as Bonaventure prefers wisdom above science, so he prefers the Platonists above the Aristotelians. They at least turned to the way of wisdom. They were the worshippers of the one true God to whom they ascribed all good things (*Hex* 7, 3). Moreover, they knew that to approach the divine, one must lead a virtuous life. They strove to become cleansed through virtue and to rid themselves of all concupiscence. To be sure, the Platonists' striving was in vain. Bonaventure believed that they, too, failed to come to a true understanding of the blessed life, for they, too, lacked faith. Their piteous view of this life is apparent in their teaching of the transmigration of souls. The soul, once blessed, must return to a lamentable life in the body. If they had believed, they would have known that eternal life and perfect peace consists in the resurrection of the body and the new creation. But they did not believe and, hence, could not know. Instead, they underestimated the sickness that afflicts humankind, attributing it to the soul's contamination with the body, while believing that the better part of the soul, its power of reasoning, is in principle free from this contamination. Faith teaches, Bonaventure states explicitly, that *the whole person* is infected, the affective as well as the rational, 'to the very marrow' (*Hex* 7, 8). This statement manifests the Franciscan's awareness of what the Reformer Calvin later termed 'total depravity' (cf. ch. 6.5). The Platonists did not know the cause of this

19. *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi*, q. 4; *Opera omnia* V, 23.

sickness, Adam's fall, because this cause is known only through faith. Neither did they know the great Physician who alone is capable of raising man up from his bent stature (*Hex* 7, 5ff).

While Aristotle did not reach an understanding of the uncreated Word, Plato and his followers did not possess an understanding of the incarnate Word. Their philosophies are eloquent witnesses to the fact that

> no matter how enlightened one may be by the light of natural and acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight within himself in the Lord (Ps. 36:4) unless Christ be his mediator, who says: 'I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved; and he will go in and out and will find pasture.' (*Itin* 4, 2)

The creation is a book that we can no longer decipher. That is why a new book has been given us, the Scriptures (*Hex* 13, 12). By becoming a student of this book, a believer may gain the understanding which the student of creation, the philosopher, cannot attain.

(8) *Conclusion*

In this chapter I highlighted the Christian character of Bonaventure's mysticism. After all, it is the fellowship with God which he sought with all his heart. However, in section 6, in which I developed a basic scheme of his mysticism, namely, that of purgation, illumination and perfection, I mentioned at the end the neo-Platonic origin of that scheme. The question now calling for an answer is: How does this scheme color Bonaventure's evaluation of the ancient philosophers? In my appraisal I will follow the three stages of this scheme.

The Christian character of Bonaventure's mysticism is evident, for example, in his insistence that faith alone cleanses people and sets them on the right way to fellowship with God. That is why his final judgment on the ancient philosophers is basically negative: they did not come to the wisdom and contemplation which they had promised (sect. 5) because they did not have faith. If nothing but Christ's coming in the flesh and his suffering on the cross can lead us to wisdom—the taste of divine sweetness—then any other way leads astray. Bonaventure is therefore entirely in line with the apostle Paul who stated that those philosophers who claimed to be wise only proved how foolish they were (cf. Rom. 1:22). He rightly senses a religious antithesis between 'wisdom of the world,' manifest in the proud but empty claims of the philosophers, and 'wisdom of God,' manifest in the humility of the cross.

However, let us take note of the view of philosophy implied in this evaluation. Bonaventure not only rightly perceives the religious motivation of the ancient philosophers, he also admires them for their efforts on this score. That is why he praises the Platonists, who—in contrast to Aristotle, he believes—strove mightily after wisdom. Their object was to point out the way to ultimate happiness. But by supposing human reason to be in principle free from the contamination of the flesh, the Platonists failed to sense the need for a savior. They were wrong, according to Bonaventure, because human reason, too, is fallen into sin and therefore cannot climb up to God. Bonaventure is *not* saying that human reason is incapable as such; the Platonists were not wrong because they aimed too high. If that had been his critique, one would have expected him to show a preference for the apparently more down-to-earth philosophy of Aristotle.

We must conclude that Bonaventure's view of philosophy is such that it leaves ancient philosophy in a limbo: on the one hand, it was bound to strive after wisdom; on the other hand, it would forever fail to attain it. At any rate, he does not simply teach that there is within the grasp of philosophy a limited, natural goal, such as the philosophical sciences, above and beyond which another goal, a super-natural one, is added through faith, which leads to the vision of God. This position was defended by Thomas Aquinas (ch. 5.10,11). Bonaventure deals with the philosophers in the context of the first vision of God, which is that of the understanding given through nature (sect. 5). This vision is followed by the vision of faith, Scripture, and so on, until the final vision of the life hereafter—a vision of God sought by the ancient philosophers rightly, though in vain.

Bonaventure's perception of a religious antithesis, then, goes hand in hand with an attachment to the intellectualism of the Greeks. The failure of the philosophers to come to a vision of God does not at all mean that the light by which they would have been able to climb up to God, had humanity remained upright, has stopped shining. On the contrary, their gift of the nine sciences is proof enough that this light continues to shine. In fact, Bonaventure insists that without this light 'man has nothing, neither faith, nor grace, nor the illumination of wisdom' (*Hex* 3, 15; cf. sect. 5). That is why, in spite of his negative judgment on the philosophers, he can still cite them as authorities—even in the most intricate exposition of Christian doctrine. His guiding principle was no doubt the exhortation of the apostle Paul to bring 'every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' (II Cor. 10:5), a text which he quotes repeatedly and which he interprets in such a way that the old theme of spoliation (ch. 3.5) still echoes through it. His whole approach to ancient

science manifests a continuity with the patristic tradition. In a sense, his position may be regarded as the culmination of a development of dealing with non-Christian thought which began with the Church Fathers.

For the Franciscan there is a connection between the eternal peace to which faith directs us and the universality and certainty of scientific knowledge. His doctrine of illumination serves to explain this connection: the certainty of science is derived from the light of the uncreated Word who, having become flesh, leads us to his eternal peace. Thus, in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, people become illumined and it is through illumination that they can attain perfection.

This intellectualism of Bonaventure is one of the reasons, in my opinion, why he was not able to give a really adequate answer to the intellectual challenge of his age: the rise of Aristotelianism. His conception of divine illumination leads him to the view that, in spite of all the errors in which the philosophers became involved, ancient thought somehow contains a single tradition of truth (ch. 3.3). Beyond the conflict between Platonism and Aristotelianism—expressed in Aristotle's rejection of the Platonic Ideas and Plato's neglect of sense experience—he saw above all the mutual complement of their respective philosophies: 'the word of wisdom is to be granted to Plato and the word of science to Aristotle' (*ChrU* 18). As a result, Bonaventure's perception of a religious antithesis does not lead to a penetrating analysis of Aristotle's philosophy. He rightly senses that such an antithesis would manifest itself in the actual claim of the philosopher with regard to wisdom. But when did any of the philosophers make such a claim? Bonaventure's evaluation of Aristotle is on the whole remarkably mild: Aristotle neglected the way of wisdom. Anyone who neglects the way of wisdom can, of course, hardly be accused of claiming to have it. But is it true? Is Aristotle's philosophy more down-to-earth than Plato's? Would not a careful study of his works have shown Bonaventure that the Philosopher strove after wisdom as much as Plato did—only differently?

My criticism seems unfair. Bonaventure's appreciation for the empiricism of Aristotle stems from his Christian belief that God also created sensible reality and that Christ himself took on human flesh. Does not his benign attitude toward the Philosopher rather bear the mark of Christian charity? Can he really be accused of intellectualism when he teaches that wisdom is, in the final analysis, not intellectual but affective?

Indeed, we must carefully observe the limits which Bonaventure himself imposes on scientific pursuits. For him science is a way of climbing up to wisdom. But he says nowhere that it is a necessary way. How could he?

The father of his order, St. Francis, was not a man of science; yet he attained seraphic wisdom! God is powerful enough to give anyone understanding to whom he wants to give it. The arduous way of science has, therefore, for Bonaventure always the character of a detour, a roundabout way of approximating what others have received through direct revelation. Moreover, it is not philosophical science, but the science of Scripture which can make us wise; even then, it is not in the possession of science that we become wise, but in the love of God. Science of whatever kind easily leads astray and gives rise to pride, curiosity and error. Through it the intellect may be enlightened, but perfection is something higher; it concerns not only human understanding, but above all our affective powers.

Precisely this view of evangelical perfection constitutes another reason why Bonaventure did not rise to the intellectual challenge of his age. According to this view, the study of philosophy and the pursuit of scientific knowledge cannot be regarded as something worthwhile or even necessary in its own right; they are legitimate only to the extent that they can help in the understanding of Scripture—and even then Bonaventure warns his students not to abide too long on this level lest the vintage of Scripture be too much diluted. Thus, given his view of evangelical perfection, Bonaventure could not recognize in the work of the radical Aristotelians of his own day a serious—although misguided—attempt to develop on the basis of Aristotle a consistent philosophy; he could see in it only a malicious assault on Christian doctrine and life, a worldly wisdom of apocalyptic proportions. It seems to me that the ecclesiastical condemnation of the views of these philosophers in 1277 was entirely in the spirit of Bonaventure's antithetical position.

The two reasons I suggested in explanation of Bonaventure's failure to give an adequate philosophical answer to the rise of Aristotelianism are complementary. His limited legitimation of the use of the ancient philosophers is complemented by his critique of the unbounded philosophical interest of the radical Aristotelians of his day. Yet neither rests on in-depth analysis of philosophical positions. In fact, such an analysis is precluded by the scheme of purgation, illumination and perfection.

Thus, Augustinianism may have carried the day in the latter part of the thirteenth century; it was in the long run the more profound position of Thomas Aquinas which gained the upper hand in the Christian thought of Western culture. With this development, however, Christian thought has also lost some important moments which it can regain by studying the works of the Seraphic Doctor. His symbolism—seeing the creation

as a sign or footprint of the Creator—and the broad perspective of his spirituality—all the creation is to be led back to the Creator—are strong antidotes to the present-day hegemony of science and technology over all of life.

(9) *For further reading*

The work of Jean Leclercq O.S.B., *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, is an excellent introduction to the spirituality of medieval monasticism. A first reading in Bonaventure may well begin with Ewert Cousins' translation of *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. A clear exposition with regard to the relation between philosophy and the Christian faith may be found in the little volume *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure*, translated, with an introduction and commentary by Zachery Hayes O.F.M. In the reading of Bonaventure, Jacques Guy Bourgerol O.F.M., *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* is very helpful.

Works of Bonaventure

Doctor Seraphici S. Bonaventura opera omnia. Edita studio et cura pp. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, ad plurimos codices mss, emendata, anecdotis aucta, prolegomenis scholiis notisque illustrata. X volumina. Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902.

The first four volumes consist of Bonaventura's commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

Volume V contains all but one of the works cited between brackets in this chapter: *Christus unus omnium magister* (567–74); *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* (455–503); *Collationes in Hexaemeron* (327–45); *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (293–325). Also cited in the text between brackets is: *Sermo de S. Dominico*, found in volume IX (562–65). Volume V further contains *Collationes in decem praeceptis* (505–32); *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi* (1–43).

Volume VI consists of the *Commentarius in evangelium S. Lucae.*

Volume VIII includes the *Apologia pauperum* (233–330); *Epistola de tribus quaestionibus* (331–36).

Bonaventure. The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of St. Francis. Translation and introduction by Ewert Cousins. London: S.P.C.K. (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1978.

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5 / Jan A. Aertsen

Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–1274)

The Christian faith was constitutive for the medieval world of thought and life. In the early Middle Ages, this faith was the achievement of a practically illiterate Christendom. The period differs significantly in this respect from the patristic era. The invasion of the Roman Empire by the Germanic peoples certainly involved a break in the cultural development of the West. There is a sense in which one can truly speak of 'the dark ages.'

Renewal was sought in many areas as early as the Carolingian period (end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth). A major contributor to this was Alcuin (730–804), who gave to the cultural politics of Charlemagne a theoretical foundation in which the principle of rationality was legitimated within the Christian life.[1]

But if the development of this principle conferred on medieval Christianity a tension-filled dynamism, the thirteenth century witnessed a new accentuation and intensification of it. At this time the West was challenged by ancient philosophical reason in a way that had no precedent. Thomas Aquinas lived through this problem of his age, taking up the challenge and imprinting the Christian world of thought up to the present day. This is why we discuss him here.[2] However, in order to get insight into the position he developed it is important first to sketch the way the intellectual world of the thirteenth century was institutionalized and organized (sections 1–3).

1. Alcuinus, *Disputatio de vera philosophia*; J.P. Migne, vol. 101, 849ff. Cf. also the articles of Franz Brunhölzl and Gandolf Schrimpf mentioned in the list of cited literature.

2. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Thomas:
ScG = *Summa contra Gentiles*
STh = *Summa theologiae*
In Methaph = *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*
The prepositions 'In' or 'Super' followed by the name of an author and work indicate Thomas's commentary on that work. If that work is divided in books, then the number of the book is indicated by the Roman numeral before the title of the work: for example, *In III De anima* means Thomas's commentary on the third book of Aristotle's *De anima*.

(1) *The university and Scholasticism*

As a boy Thomas was entrusted to the care of the famous Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino. He studied at the university of Naples and, contrary to his family's wishes, entered the new order of the Dominicans. For further study his superiors sent him to Cologne and finally to Paris, in those days the intellectual capital of the Christian world. Thomas began his university career there, remaining a teacher to the end of his life. From 1259–68 he taught at various places in Italy; in 1269 he became professor in Paris again. He was then called back to Italy, where he died in 1274 at the age of forty-nine. This brief *curriculum vitae* suffices to show how extensively Thomas's life was marked by one of the most important medieval creations, the *university*.[3]

From around 1200 'universities' came into existence in various places in Europe, the first ones in Bologna, Paris and Oxford. Their origin was part of a broader development, for the university was really merely a configuration like the corporations and guilds which appeared everywhere in the cities. Just as those who were active in the same industry or trade united to form a guild, so also the intellectuals joined to form a *universitas* of masters and students (*magistrorum et scholarium*). The fact that they organized indicates that science had become a profession. The term *universitas* originally did not refer exclusively to an academic community, but was a common name for a corporation of whatever sort. With the formation of the universities, higher education was institutionalized. These centers of learning became a dominant factor in the intellectual and cultural life of the West. We find a reflection of this in an interesting statement of Alexander of Roës (c. 1280). The Christian commonwealth, he said, is governed by three powers: the *sacerdotium*, *imperium*, and *studium*. The *studium*, represented by the university, is placed next to the two traditional universal powers, the spiritual and worldly authorities.[4]

The university statutes gave the magister a twofold task of educating: to read (*legere*) and to dispute (*disputare*). The basis of medieval education was the *lectio*, the reading and explanation of a text, also prescribed by the statutes. This form of education prompted the frequent use of the literary genre of 'commentaries;' a large part of Thomas's work consists of such commentaries. In the following section some of the authoritative texts (*auctoritates*) that were read will be mentioned.

3. The studies of Alan B. Cobban, Herbert Grundmann and Gordon Leff, dealing especially with the medieval university, are mentioned in the list of cited literature.

4. Herbert Grundmann, 'Sacerdotium, regnum, studium. Zur Wertung der Wissenschaft im 13. Jahrhundert,' 6 ff.

The reading of the text could give rise to many different problems. Dealing with a problem or question (*quaestio*) developed into an exercise quite distinct from the reading of the *auctoritas*, namely the *disputatio*. The dispute about a certain 'question'—the tournament of the intellectuals—was a regular form of education. We possess texts of many of these disputes by Thomas in the *Quaestiones disputatae*, for example, *De veritate* (On Truth), *De potentia Dei* (On the Power of God), and *De malo* (On Evil).

Writings which were not the product of the university disputes were frequently constructed in a similar way, for example, the main work of Thomas, the *Summa theologiae*. They were structured according to the 'scholastic method.'[5] *Scholasticism* (*scholasticus* means 'schoolmaster' or 'of the school') is often used as a synonym for medieval philosophy, which indicates its close connection with the educational framework. The significance of Scholasticism is especially found in its pervasive methodology. The dialectic of 'pro' and 'contra,' adducing arguments and counter-arguments often culled from the great 'authorities,' required both fundamental openness in the weighing of every conceivable rational option and rigorous application of reason, stretched to its limits in the attempt to arrive at a systematic solution.

(2) *The faculty of arts: Aristotle, the Philosopher*

There were, at least in principle, four faculties in the medieval university. One of these was the *facultas artium* (faculty of arts),[6] which was propaedeutic to the study in the faculties of theology, law and medicine. In this section we will deal with the curriculum of the arts faculty; in section 3 we turn to the theological faculty.

The name 'faculty of arts' refers to the *artes liberales* (the seven liberal arts), the traditional framework for the whole of secular knowledge. Their place in the order of knowing was determined by Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, which greatly influenced the objectives of medieval education up to the thirteenth century. The central idea of this work is that the *artes liberales* must be subservient to 'Christian scholarschip,' which concentrates on the study of Scripture. Scientific knowledge is not an end in

5. When a question has been raised, first a number of objections are stated (*videtur quod non*), next (*sed contra*) a number of arguments *ad oppositum* are added. Only after this the magister begins with his own doctrinal exposition (*respondeo dicendum quod*), following which he will formulate his answer to the objections stated.

6. The degrees B. A. and M. A. in English-speaking countries are reminiscent of this medieval faculty.

itself; its meaning and coherence is achieved in relation to the knowledge of God alone.

In the course of time the name 'faculty of arts' became a misleading term. In the thirteenth century instruction in the *artes liberales* was no longer central. Instead, the curriculum of this faculty received a different content on account of a most important development, generally referred to as 'the introduction of the complete Aristotle in the West.' Until this time only the logical writings of Aristotle had been available. Since the middle of the twelfth century, the West could study the *Physica, De anima* (Concerning the Soul), *Metaphysica* and *Ethica* in translation. Actually, the phrase 'introduction of the complete Aristotle' is too restricted, since a comprehensive Greek–Arabian body of literature was in fact introduced. Not only the works of Aristotle but also the great Greek commentaries on the Stagirite were translated. Besides these, various neo-Platonic writings, among which the *Liber de causis* (The Book of Causes),[7] and finally, the works of Arabian (Avicenna and Averroes) and Jewish (Maimonides) thinkers were put into Latin.

The circumstances which led to the reception of Aristotle were part of a more general movement in the Middle Ages. During this entire period there was much borrowing from ancient culture in many different areas. At the same time many were aware of the antithesis between the medieval and the ancient world which, after all, was non-Christian. This awareness was clearly expressed in a statement by Absalo of St. Victor: 'The spirit of Christ does not rule where the spirit of Aristotle reigns.'[8] These two positions—acceptance and rejection of ancient culture—were never completely harmonized: there remained a polarity in the medieval attitude toward 'Athens.'[9]

The same polarity marked the thirteenth-century response to Aristotle. Initially, there was strong ecclesiastical resistance to the introduction of the Stagirite. In 1210 a synod forbade the 'reading' (*lectio*) of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy at the newly founded university of Paris 'on pain of excommunication.'[10] In spite of this injunction, the study of Aristotle rapidly penetrated university life—a development which remains somewhat of an enigma. It was officially legitimated in Paris in 1255. The university decreed that the curriculum of the faculty of arts must

7. This book is of Arabic origin. In the Latin West it was first ascribed to Aristotle. Thomas in his commentary on it, *In librum De causis expositio*, recognizes it correctly as a compilation of the *Elementatio theologica*, a work of the neo-Platonic Proclus (c. 410–85).

8. Absalo of St. Victor, in: J. P. Migne, vol. 211, 37.

9. Cf. Michael Seidlmayer, *Das Mittelalter*, 31.

10. Heinrich Denifle & August Chatelain, *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. I, 70.

consist of the reading of the works of Aristotle.[11] Hence, the *facultas artium* became in fact a faculty of philosophy, and the study of arts (which was a propaedeutic course of study for every student) became a thorough immersion in pagan philosophy.

Aristotle had become the authority, 'the Philosopher,' as Thomas usually referred to him. His thought meant a radical challenge to the traditional approach to reality (cf. ch. 4.2). As Ferdinand Sassen writes, 'in Aristotelian philosophy medievals became conscious of themselves and of their natural powers.'[12]

(3) *The theological faculty: biblical sciences and mendicant orders*

The task of a master in theology was similar to that of his colleagues in the other faculties: *legere* and *disputare*. Which authoritative texts were read here? The primary task of the instructor was the *lectio* of the Bible. He was literally a *magister in sacra pagina* (a teacher of the sacred page). Such instruction led to the production of numerous Bible commentaries; in the case of Thomas, for example, we have commentaries to the book of Job, to the gospels of Matthew and John, and to Paul's letter to the Romans. The thirteenth century is not only the age of the introduction of Aristotle; it is just as much a period of deeper interest in the Bible.[13] The scholastic method of the university (cf. sect. 1) also extended to the study of the Bible. As a result, this study became a scientific endeavor; for the first time a theo-*logy* developed, systematized in *Summae*. Thomas, for instance, developed his theology in the *Summa theologiae* and in the *Summa contra gentiles*.

It is noteworthy that the theological faculties were increasingly dominated by members of the mendicant orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans. Almost all important theologians after 1250 were friars. These orders, which arose at the beginning of the thirteenth century, signify a new development in Western monasticism.[14] Unlike the earlier orders, they gravitated more to the urban milieu and they put a heavy emphasis on preaching and mission. In view of these activities, much value was placed on intensive study. The Dominicans formed the first order in which learning was an essential characteristic of monastic life; this order is an *ordo studentium*. Throughout Europe study halls were erected in every

11. Denifle & Chatelain, *Chartularium*, vol. I, 277–79.
12. Ferdinand Sassen, 'De geest der middeleeuwen,' 142.
13. Marie Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 199 ff.
14. See, for example, Karl S. Frank, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums*, 86 ff.

university city. Dominican professors managed to obtain teaching posts at universities everywhere.

Thomas's conscious, personal choice for the Dominican order made him very much 'at home' in the thirteenth-century academic world. Determinative for this entire structure was the university (sect. 1)—Thomas spoke of a *collegium scholasticum*[15]—as center of study and higher education. Aristotle became the Philosopher within the propaedeutic faculty of arts (sect. 2), and the study of the Bible became a science within the theological faculty (sect. 3).

This university context was bound to give rise to the fundamental question of the relation of Greek philosophical rationality to the Christian approach of faith. Although Thomas Aquinas seldom addressed himself explicitly to the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thinking, it is possible to make his position explicit by following his reflections on the system and meaning of human knowledge (sect. 4ff).

(4) *Aristotle: 'All men by nature desire to know'*

In conformity with the basic form of university education, the *lectio*, I begin by reading an authoritative text. This text would have commanded a responsive audience in the university milieu—it is the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysica* (A 1, 980a 21).

> All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight.

An indication of the natural desire to know is for Aristotle the disinterested appreciation of seeing. For of all the senses, sight best enables us to know reality. This priority of seeing is also evident from the connection between the classical words for 'to know' on the one hand and 'to see' on the other hand. It becomes transparent in terms like *theoria*, 'Idea,' and *visio*.[16] (We will come across this last term more frequently in the following pages.)

15. In his work *Contra Impugnantes* cap. 2, 60.

16. Cf. what Martin Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, 215: 'Being is that which shows itself in the pure perception which belongs to beholding, and only by such seeing does Being get discovered. Primordial and genuine truth lies in pure beholding. *This thesis has remained the foundation of western philosophy ever since*' [emphasis added]. This Greek priority for 'seeing' is today often brought into connection with the theme of the 'Hellenization of Christianity' and is then opposed to the decisive experience of reality in the Old Testament. See, for example, A. J. van der Aalst, *Aantekeningen bij de Hellenisering van het Christendom*, 92: 'Among the Greeks one finds more of a visual approach or attitude than an auditive one; among the Semites more of an auditive than a visual one.'

Desire is formally a tendency, an inclination toward that which one does not yet have, a standing out toward future fulfillment. The process set in motion by this desire is goal-directed. The end or goal in which desire is fulfilled and comes to rest is *scientia* (knowledge). In the tradition of ancient and medieval thought, this knowing is defined as knowledge of the causes of a thing. We are satisfied that we know something only when we grasp its *causa*. The desire to know is *by nature*; in this way an intrinsic connection is established between the 'subject' of desire, a human being, and the intended goal.

If desire is the tendency toward a good which one does not yet possess, then the experience of privation is thereby implied. Negatively, it is a not-knowing (*ignorantia*), but at the same time, positively, it is an awareness of being deficient. The impulse toward a desire for knowledge lies in the (specifically human) *wonder* about what is seen: the causes of what we see are hidden to us. Wonderment rather than some universal, methodically executed doubt is the origin of philosophy, that is, the 'motive' that sets a person on the path of philosophy (cf. *Metaphysica* A 2, 982b 11ff).

The first form of activity that the desire to know assumes is to *question*. According to Aristotle (*Analytica Posteriora* II, 1), every philosophical question, that is, a question aimed at knowing, can in the end be reduced to two 'questions:' first, '*whether* something is;' and secondly, '*what* something is,' the decisive question of the essence (cf. sect. 8).

In contrast to Aristotle, Thomas's commentary presents three arguments *a priori* for the natural desire to know in which the 'by nature' is thematized. In this section we concentrate on the first two reasons, in which the dynamism is explained in terms of the perfection which perfects 'man as man' and 'man's specific operation' respectively (*In I Metaph* 1, 2–3):

> Accordingly, Aristotle says, first, that the desire to know belongs by nature to all men. Three reasons can be given for this.
>
> The first is that each thing naturally desires its own *perfection*. Hence matter is also said to desire form as any imperfect thing desires its perfection. Therefore, since the intellect, by which man is what he is, considered in itself is all things potentially, and becomes them actually only through knowledge, because the intellect is none of the things that exists before it understands them, as is stated in book III of *De anima*; so each man naturally desires knowledge just as matter desires form.
>
> The second reason is that each thing has a natural inclination to perform its proper operation, as something hot is naturally inclined to heat, and something heavy to move downward. Now the proper operation of man is to understand, for by reason of this he differs from all other animals. Hence the desire of man is naturally inclined to understand, and therefore to possess scientific knowledge.

Both arguments rest upon the same ontological foundation. Everything strives after the good (*bonum*). Characteristic of the good is that it is something worth striving after. Now something is worth striving after insofar as it is perfect, for all things strive after their perfection. Something is perfect insofar as it has been actualized (in act); a potency which has not been actualized is therefore imperfect (*STh* I, 5, 1).

What does this mean for the human being, whose intellect is what makes him human? Humans are open to (the knowledge of) all of reality, though only potentially. The human soul, according to Aristotle's expression, is a *tabula rasa*. In itself human reason is knowing in potency; it must still gain a grasp of reality by actually knowing. For this reason, the human intellect (undetermined as matter) naturally strives for the possession of knowledge as its perfection. Therefore also man's natural operation is to understand (*intellegere*), for thereby man does that which he essentially is.

From this the conclusion follows: '*omnis scientia bona est*' (every science is good). For science (knowledge) is the perfection of 'man as man' and the fulfillment of his natural desire (*In I De anima* 1, 3). The consequences of having established the desire to know in this way will prove to be far-reaching.

(5) *Augustine on curiosity: the unvirtuous desire to know*

'All men by nature desire to know.' But Thomas's age was not just confronted with this authoritative statement of Aristotle, the influential Augustinian tradition commanded equal status. Augustine made frequent and emphatic mention of '*curiositas*,' the 'unvirtuous' desire to know.[17] That which ought to move a person should also fix the direction in which human questioning proceeds.

Curiositas is dealt with extensively in book X of the *Confessiones*. In this book Augustine discusses various sorts of vice according to a pattern borrowed from I John 2:16: 'For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and a proud life, is not of the Father but is of the world.' Chapter 35 is devoted to the desire of the eyes, which is identified as *curiositas*. Curiosity is a vain thirst for knowledge, cloaked with the great name of science. Why is it called a 'desire of the eyes?' It is because seeing has priority in the quest for knowledge.[18] While for

17. See Henri I. Marrou, *Saint Augustine et la fin de la culture*, 148–55, 278–79, 350–52, 683–86. See also the articles of Randolf Lorenz and Hans Blumenberg in the list of cited literature. Blumenberg's work, *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde*, gives a broad history of the concept of curiosity; specifically dealing with the concept in Augustine are the pages 103 ff.

18. Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 214.

Aristotle the pleasure experienced in seeing is an indication of the natural desire to know, for Augustine it is rather a sign of having succumbed to the world. The insatiable lust to add to one's experience and to amass knowledge induces one to put all things to the test. The 'temptation' of curiosity is that humans seek knowledge for knowledge's sake. It is a perversion when '*rücksichtslose Neugierde*' (Nietzsche) becomes an end in itself.

Curiositas must be understood in terms of Augustine's fundamental distinction between using (*uti*) and enjoying (*frui*). This distinction also determines his concept of science in *De doctrina christiana* (I, 3, 3). Knowledge of things must be serviceable to (*uti*) the salvation of humankind. In God alone, the final goal of all our striving, may we find rest and enjoyment (cf. ch. 3.3). People pervert this relation by reversing it; they want to use that which may be enjoyed only and enjoy that which must be used.

Conceiving of *curiositas* in these terms, Augustine obviously means to attach to worldly knowledge the ancient ideal of the disinterested *theoria* no longer. In Christian scholarship knowledge has an instrumental meaning: it is focused upon knowledge of God and it is defined by its utility for this religious goal (*De trinitate* XIV, 1, 3; cf. sect. 2) or, to repeat: that which ought to move one should also determine the direction of one's questions.

'It would be hard to imagine any expression more naturally apt to occur to the mind of the historian of medieval philosophy than *Christian philosophy*.' With these words Etienne Gilson begins his classic work, *The Spirit of Mediæval Philosophy*. The most striking characteristic of the attitude of the Christian philosopher, according to him, is that he makes a choice among philosophical problems (37ff). Thus Augustine concentrated on two problems: 'I desire to know God and the soul. Anything else? Absolutely nothing else' (*Soliloquia* I, 2, 7; cf. *De ordine* II, 18, 47). Self-knowledge in relation to the knowledge of the Origin—such knowledge is worth having.

From this perspective, then, Augustine places in his *Confessiones* (X, 35) the natural sciences, for example, within the scope of the *curiositas*. 'Because of this men proceed to search out the secrets of nature which is outside of us, the knowledge of which profits us nothing, and *man desires nothing else than to know for the sake of knowing*.' This last phrase reminds us of the opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysica*. But the phrase 'by nature,' which would legitimate this desire, is missing here. On the contrary, the desire to know is stigmatized as the *curiositas* of someone like Goethe's Dr. Faust.

(6) *The legitimacy of philosophy*

How then does Thomas try to harmonize these two authorities, Aristotle (the natural desire to know) and Augustine (*curiositas* as a perverted desire)? Thomas deals with *curiositas* directly after a consideration of original sin in his *Summa theologiae* (II-II, 166ff). He proceeds as follows: 'One must judge differently about the *knowledge* of truth as such and the *striving* and *study* to know truth' (167, 1). This very distinction evidences the distance from Augustine. Gilson too, admits that Thomas did not adopt Augustine's formulation. For what is the purport of this distinction? It is that in 'knowledge as such' there is no place for *curiositas*: 'for the very knowledge of the truth is taken as good as such.'

In order to understand this judgment we must return to Thomas's explanation of the opening sentence of the *Metaphysica* (cf. sect. 4). This led us to the conclusion that *every* knowledge is good; for this is the perfection of humans as such or the fulfillment of natural desire. The same point is reiterated here (*STh* II-II, 167, 1 ad 1). A few lines down he therefore states: 'The study of philosophy is in itself legitimate and praiseworthy' (ad 3). If science is the perfection of humans as such, then it is in principle impossible to discriminate against a certain domain of knowledge, and equally impossible to repudiate the Greek *theoria*.

Things may go wrong, however, in the *quest* for knowledge. To clarify how this striving can be wrongly directed, Thomas puts the Aristotelian statement in the context of an unexpected tension.

> Now just as in respect of his corporeal nature man naturally desires the pleasures of food and sex, so, in respect of his soul, he naturally desires to know something; thus the Philosopher observes at the beginning of his *Metaphysica*: 'All men have a natural desire for knowledge.' (*STh* II-II, 166, 2)

As the result of sin a disharmony arose within human nature between the soul and the body.

> But as regards knowledge, man has contrary inclinations. For on the part of the soul, he is inclined to desire knowledge of things . . . whereas on the part of his bodily nature, man is inclined to avoid the trouble of seeking knowledge. (*STh* II-II, 166, 2, ad 3)

Hence, a person ought to regulate his quest. To arrive at this Thomas adopts a central concept of Aristotle's ethics: *mesotes*—virtue as the 'right mean' between two extremes. In view of this scheme the 'contrary inclination' mentioned above enables Thomas to interpret *curiositas* as a vice. For it is one of the two extremes which can occur in the desire to know (cf. *De malo* 8, 2). This desire ought to be steered into reasonable channels

by the virtue of *studiositas* (zeal for learning), which is a potential part of *temperantia* (temperance).

In this way *curiositas* is brought under the rule of the Aristotelian *virtuosus*. It is an 'excessive' form of a *desiderium sciendi* (a desire for knowing) which is legitimate in itself. This disorder consists, among other things, in the fact that 'man strives to know the truth about creatures without relating this to the rightful goal, namely, the knowledge of God' (*STh* II-II, 167, 1). Augustine's *religious* motivation of the *curiositas* is transposed into the hierarchy of the *theoretical* consideration. For Thomas such striving manifests itself as a vice in a science which does not inquire radically into the cause of things.

(7) *The circulation motif and human happiness*

This transposition becomes evident in the third argument of the *lectio* in support of the Aristotelian statement that all men by nature desire to know. This argument, derived from the highest intelligible object, must now be considered.

> The third reason is that it is desirable for each thing *to be united with its principle*, since it is in this that the perfection of each thing consists. This is also the reason why circular motion is the most perfect motion, as is proved in book VIII of the Physics, because its terminus is united to its starting point. Now it is only by means of his intellect that man is united to the separate substances, which are the principle of the human intellect and that to which the human intellect is related as something imperfect to something perfect. It is for this reason, too, that the ultimate happiness of man consists in this union. Therefore man naturally desires to know. (*In I Metaph* 1, 4)

The remarkable thing in this reasoning is that the Aristotelian desire to know is joined to a motif from another philosophical tradition. The circulation doctrine is of neo-Platonic origin, and Thomas was acquainted with it through sources such as Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius.[19] Neo-Platonism viewed all of reality as a dynamics of two opposed, simultaneous movements. There is an *emanation* from the first principle, which Plotinus called 'the One' or 'the Good,' which must necessarily impart of itself, 'spill over,' as it were. One could characterize this emanation as a step-by-step

19. Proclus, *Elementatio theologica*, propositions 31–33 and 146. Cf. what Thomas writes in his commentary on the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinus nominibus*, cap. 1 (lect. 3, 94): 'It must, furthermore, be considered that every effect *is turned* to the cause from which it proceeded, as the *Platonists* say. The reason for this is that every thing is turned to its good by desiring it; however, the good of the effect is from its cause; hence, every effect is turned to its cause by desiring it. And therefore, after having said that from the Godhead all things are deduced, he adds that *all things are turned to Him through desire*' [emphasis added].

descent, which manifests itself in a constantly greater divergence from the One. But at the same time, there is a return (or better, a turning around, a *conversio*) back to the source. Everything that has emanated strives (in accordance with its nature) to return to the Origin. Therein lies its perfection. For humans this *conversio* means that they desire to detach themselves from the material–sensible, through which they are estranged from their true selves. Their *eros* is 'to convert' themselves to the purely spiritual and thus to become divine-like.

Thomas now introduces in his *lectio* this neo-Platonic circulation doctrine, based on the correspondence of the final cause and the efficient cause (*STh* I, 6, 1). Everything has as the goal of its desire: to be joined with its principle (its origin); its very perfection consists in this union.

The text goes on to state that the principle or origin of the human intellect is the incorporeal substances (*substantiae separatae*). This is a generic term for immaterial beings, including the human soul, pure spirits (the *intelligentiae*, which in the Christian tradition were identified with the angels), and God (*De ente et essentia* 5). In virtue of being human, a person can be directly connected with these incorporeal substances through the intellect. Knowing is nothing other than the assimilation of the knower with the known (cf. e.g. *De veritate* 10, 7). The highest perfection of man, namely, happiness, consists in this 'unification' with the principle. This is the fulfillment of the natural desire to know. The leading goal of life consists in exercising one's highest power (intellect) in relation to the most intelligible object,[20] whereby the thinking person is united with his principle.

Various places in his works indicate that Thomas integrated the circulation doctrine into his own view of reality. One such place is *Summa contra Gentiles* II, 46.

> An effect is most perfect when it returns to its principle; thus, the circle is the most perfect of all figures, and circular motion the most perfect of all motions, because . . . a return is made to the starting point. It is therefore necessary that creatures return to their principle in order that the universe of creatures may attain its ultimate perfection.[21]

20. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* X, 7; Cornelia J. de Vogel, 'Plato, Aristoteles en het ideaal van het beschouwende leven,' in: *Theoria*, 154–71; Thomas Aquinas, *In librum De causis expositio*, prooemium 1: 'As the Philosopher says in the tenth book of his *Ethics*, the ultimate happiness of man consists in man's optimal operation which is of his highest power, namely, the intellect, with respect to the most intelligible object.'

21. For the circulation motif in Thomas see also his commentary on the Sentences of Peter of Lombard (c. 1100–64): *In IV Sent.* dist. 49, q. 1, art. 3. qua 1; and book I, dist. 14, q. 2, art. 2; and the *Summa theologiae* I, q. 63, art. 4. Max Seckler in his work *Das Heil in der Geschichte. Geschichtstheologische Denken bei Thomas von Aquin*, 29, rightly points out that it is surprising that hardly any attention has been paid to this conception. Mention can be made of the article of Brocardus Meyer, O.Carm., 'Het participatiebegrip in de thomistische circulatieleer.'

At the same time, this neo-Platonic motif is transformed in the direction of the Christian faith, both in respect to the procession (*exitus*) and to the return (*reditus*) of things. Thomas, too, viewed this double process 'from God' and 'toward God' as fundamental for reality. Things come to existence not because they emanate from the One, but because they are created by God. Creation versus emanation!

Thomas rejects a step-by-step procession necessitated by nature, in which a higher substance (*hypostasis*) is each time the direct principle of the lower substance. Created reality stands in an immediate relation to its origin, God. Since this origin is identical with the final goal, this goal also will have to be reinterpreted. In the *lectio* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Thomas spoke in a generic sense of *substantiae separatae*, posited as the principles of the human intellect. He doubtlessly chose a general formulation intentionally, for in this way the conceptions of the Arabian philosophers could be taken into account. Averroes, for example, taught that the highest which humans can attain is that they be united with the lowest of the *substantiae separatae*, which is the direct (cosmic) principle of humankind.

It is now necessary, therefore, to specify these *substantiae separatae*. For Thomas only God, the creating Origin of everything, can be the final goal.

> But we must consider what that separated intellect is, upon which the human soul's understanding depends. For some have said that this intellect is the lowest of the separated substances, which is connected with our souls by its own light. But this is contrary to the truth of faith in many respects. First of all because, since this intellectual light pertains to the nature of the soul, it comes from Him alone by Whom the nature of the soul is *created*. Now God alone is the creator of the soul, and not some separated substance which we call an angel.... Secondly, because the ultimate perfection of each individual agent is that it can attain to its own *principle*. Now the ultimate perfection or beatitude of man is based on intellectual activity, as the Philosopher also says in *Ethica* X. If, then, the principle and cause of the intellectuality of men were some other separated substance, it would have to be the case that the ultimate beatitude of man would be situated in that created substance; and those who hold this view clearly assert this: for they assert that the ultimate felicity of man is to be connected with the agent intelligence. Now the true faith asserts that the ultimate beatitude of man is in God alone.... (*De spiritualibus creaturis* 1, 10; see also *STh* I-II, 3, 7, obj. 2 and its answer)

If the highest perfection of each thing consists in its being united with its principle, then human beatitude consists in union with God. But even in this transformation of the leading goal of life, there remains an important moment of continuity in the final orientation: the natural

desire of the human soul, which is directed to God, is a desire to know or, in Aristotelian terminology, a knowledge of the causes. This thought is expressed very clearly in the *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 25.

> Besides, there is naturally present in all men the desire to know the causes of whatever things are observed. Hence, because of wondering about things that were seen but whose causes were hidden, men first began to philosophize; when they found the cause, they were satisfied. But the search did not stop until it reached the first cause, for 'then do we think that we know perfectly, when we know the *first* cause.' Therefore, man naturally desires, as his ultimate end, to know the first cause. But the first cause of all things is God. Therefore, the ultimate end of man is to know God.... Now, the ultimate end of man, and of every intellectual substance, is called felicity or happiness, because this is what every intellectual substance desires as an ultimate end, and for its own sake alone. Therefore, the ultimate happiness and felicity of every intellectual substance is to know God.

Characteristic of humankind is coming to rest in the knowledge of God alone. That reminds us of the beginning of Augustine's *Confessions* (I, 1): 'Our heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee.' In Thomas, however, it is the restlessness of the intellect that desires to know the causes of that which is seen. After all, a person is human by his intellect.

(8) *The distress of philosophy and human happiness*

Can human life actually attain happiness, that is, can it really come to its highest completion through union with the Origin? For philosophers this question means: can the immaterial substances (*substantiae separatae*) be attained by the human desire to know? In Thomas's transformation of the circulation motif the question reaches even further: can the natural desire be fulfilled in the knowledge of God, who transcends all immaterial substances (*ScG* III, 4)? Thomas himself observes in this context that both philosophers and theologians are faced with the problem of 'distance:' 'the distance between our intellect and the divine essence or the other immaterial substances.'[22]

In *De veritate* (18, 5 ad 8) Thomas writes that Aristotle left unsolved the question whether the human intellect can know the immaterial substances. Thomas is convinced that the question must be answered negatively in view of the status of human knowledge. Man, being a spirit within

22. *In IV Sent.* dist. 49, q. 2, art. 1. Note the ambiguous relation between God and the generic concept of '*substantiae separatae*.' In this text Thomas says, 'the divine essence or the other *substantiae separatae*;' in *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 47, however, he says that God transcends all *substantiae separatae*.

a body, depends upon sensible experience for his knowledge; science simply extends as far as sensible knowledge can lead. Even though the senses are not the total cause of science, they are the sole providers of the material for analysis. From this it follows that the immaterial substances—immaterial and therefore not knowable by the senses—cannot really be known. All that can be known of these on the basis of the visible effects is *that* they exist, but the question as to *what* they are remains unanswered. The knowledge of their nature remains hidden (*In Boethii De trinitate* 6, 4). This stature of human knowing is the reason why Thomas states (*STh* I-II, 3, 6): human happiness cannot in essence consist in the consideration of the speculative sciences, in philosophical theory. The text raises an objection which severely affects the desire to know.

> Further, that which all desire for its own sake, seems to be man's final happiness. Now such is the consideration of speculative sciences; because, as stated in *Metaphysics* i, 1, all men naturally desire to know; and, a little further on, it is stated that speculative sciences are sought for their own sakes. Therefore happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences.

The answer follows: 'Not only is perfect happiness naturally desired, but also any likeness or participation thereof.' The horizon of the desire to know expands. The natural desire to know is extended beyond the Aristotelian final goal; it no longer corresponds with the fulfillment in speculative science. Philosophy does not achieve perfect happiness but only a semblance of it, that is, an incomplete happiness.

The highest knowledge of God which philosophers can attain is the knowledge *that* he is, not *what* he is (ScG III, 49). But the natural desire to know cannot come to rest in such knowledge. Its goal is a knowledge of God which leaves nothing more to be desired (ScG III, 39).

According to Thomas (*STh* I-II, 3, 8), perfect human happiness is associated exclusively with the contemplation of God's essence, the *visio Dei*. The terminology itself reveals the degree to which ancient *theoria* is present here. Moreover, the argumentation for the blessed contemplation of God as final goal in no way contradicts the order of philosophical investigation (cf. sect. 4).

> Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence. To make this clear, two points must be observed. First, that man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek; secondly, that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is *what a thing is*, i.e., the essence of a thing, according to *De Anima* III, 6. Wherefore the intellect attains perfection insofar as it knows the essence of a thing. If therefore an

> intellect know the essence of some effect, whereby it is not possible to know essence of the cause *what it is*, that intellect cannot be said to reach that cause simply, although it may be able to gather from the effect the knowledge that the cause is. Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in man the desire to know about that cause, *what it is*. And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, consider that it must be due to some cause, and know not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease, until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause.
>
> If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than *that He is*; the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object in which alone man's happiness consists.... (*STh* I-II, 3, 8)

This conclusion means that philosophy is caught up in a serious crisis. There seems to be an insurmountable discrepancy between the final goal of the desire to know and the means to reach this goal. Philosophy offers no prospect of a transcendent fulfillment of human life. The solution of Aristotle is telling for the distress and despair of philosophy. His solution is that of resignation. Human happiness is limited; it remains incomplete and imperfect.

> But as Aristotle realized that man has no knowledge in this life other than that which he obtains through the speculative sciences, he maintained that man attains to a happiness which is not perfect but human. Hence it becomes sufficiently clear how these great minds suffered from being so straitened on every side. (*ScG* III, 48; cf. IV, 54)

Human life cannot really 'succeed.' Can we 'be freed from these straits?' (*ScG* III, 48).

(9) *The (reasonable) liberation through faith*

If the natural desire to know cannot be fulfilled, perfect happiness would forever remain out of reach. But that is un-reasonable. Human existence cannot be meaningless and without purpose. In the text cited above (*ScG* III, 48), Thomas turns Aristotle's own principles against him: 'Natural desire cannot be empty since "nature does nothing in vain." But nature's desire would be empty if it could never be fulfilled. Therefore man's natural desire can be fulfilled....' On the basis of this consideration Thomas

states repeatedly: 'One must say that it is *possible* to see God's essence with the intellect' (*ScG* III, 51).

Inherent in the natural desire to know is a strange dialectics. Even though its fulfillment in the *visio* is philosophically impossible, the very presence of this desire nevertheless is the promise of fulfillment. It seems that this fundamental conviction can only be understood in terms of the circulation motif. Because things have come from the origin through creation, their conversion to the final goal, their *eros*, cannot be without meaning.

The impossibility of the *visio Dei* is, moreover, in conflict with faith. The possibility of the immediate contemplation of God is promised to us in Scripture, which is the foundation of the Christian faith (*ScG* III, 51; *STh* III, 55, 5; *In symbolum apostolorum* 1). Through the authority of the Bible we are freed from the distress of philosophy (cf. sect. 3): 'We are liberated from this anxiety [if we grant] that men come to their true happiness after this life' (*ScG* III, 48). The Christian 'knows' of a future fulfillment which transcends the earthly possibilities of humankind. The beginning of Thomas's *Summa theologiae* (I, 1, 1) completely fits in with this perspective: in view of the salvation of man it is necessary, he writes, that next to the philosophical disciplines there also be a doctrine divinely revealed.

Various passages in Thomas's Bible-commentaries show how 'reasonable' this liberation through faith is. With reference to Matthew 5:8 ('Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God'), he remarks:

> Some have claimed that 'God is never seen in His essence....' This is first of all contrary to the authority of Holy Scripture. I John 3:2: 'We shall see Him as He is.' Likewise, I Cor. 13:12: 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' Furthermore, it is contrary to reason because the happiness of man is the ultimate good of man in which his desire comes to rest. Now the natural desire consists in this: when man sees an effect, he inquires into its cause. That is why the wonder of the philosophers is the origin of philosophy, because, seeing the effect they wondered and sought the cause. That desire therefore does not come to rest until it attains to the first cause which is God: namely, the divine essence itself. Therefore he will be seen through his essence. (*In Evangelium Matthaei* 5; cf. *Super Ioannem* 11, dealing with John 1:18).

The striking thing in this commentary is that the *eschatology of the Christian faith* is harmonized (synthesized) with the *finality of the natural desire to know*. The portent of this is that divine revelation transcends reason but does not deny it; on the contrary, revelation 'perfects' reason. Through the Word of God, the truth is revealed which is indispensable for a human

being to come to his destination as an intellectual being. In his commentary on Matthew 5:8 Thomas writes: 'The text shows us that God is seen by the heart, *that is, by the intellect*.' That is consistent with his view of what the human person essentially is. But in this way the biblical teaching of radical sanctification, which the fellowship with God demands, is in danger of being reduced to a *knowledge* of salvation which perfects the intellect.

A second remark should be added. Within the perspective of the natural desire to know, the biblical witness concerning the *visio Dei* is interpreted as a contemplation in which God is seen in his essence (*visio per essentiam*).[23] At issue is a knowledge of the first cause so that insight is gained into the answer to the question of *what* he is. Once again it is clear that the horizon of the natural desire to know is supposed to transcend the horizon of philosophical speculation, but in this transcendence it still remains essentially determined by the ideal of *theoria*.

(10) *Elevated above nature to the supernatural goal*

In *De virtutibus in communi* (On the virtues in general) (1, 10), Thomas states: 'It must be kept in mind that there is a twofold good of man: one which is proportionate to his nature, another, however, which exceeds the faculty of his nature.'

Significantly, Thomas does not speak of only one blessedness. His concern to do justice to the goodness of the human intellect *as such* and to the legitimacy of the philosophical life is so great that he speaks of a *twofold* perfection which man naturally strives to attain (*STh* I-II, 62, 1; I, 62, 1; *De veritate* 14, 2). The one goal is proportionate to human nature: the natural powers are sufficient to obtain this good. It is the happiness of which the philosophers spoke, but it cannot possibly be perfect happiness (cf. sect. 8). Beyond that is another good, which the Bible promises and the Christian hopes for, a future in which we shall see God as he is (I John 3:2). This perfect happiness is indeed a goal of nature, but it is not something *in* nature (*STh* I, 62, 1). While humans are inclined toward the ultimate goal, by nature they cannot achieve it on their own (*In Boethii De trinitate* 6,4 ad 5).

The contemplation of God's essence is quite literally *super*-natural (that is, above the natural); it is not attainable through a person's natural capacities. Since the *visio* transcends the boundaries of all created nature,

23. Cf. Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *De wederkomst van Christus*, vol. II, 175 ff.

the question of true happiness ultimately turns on the conditions that make the crossing of this ontic disproportion possible. If humans are to attain happiness, their intellectual power must be fortified with a new disposition (*ScG* III, 53; *STh* I, 12, 5). Man cannot reach the supernatural goal unless some principles are 'superadded' by divine intervention, so that he is elevated above his own nature and is made capable of the contemplation of God (*STh* I-II, 62, 1).

> And since any thing is ordered with respect to its end through some operation, and things which are for an end must be proportioned to that end, it is necessary that there be some perfections of man by which he is ordered with respect to the *supernatural* end, perfections which exceed the faculty of man's natural principles. However, this can only be if above his natural principles some *supernatural* principles of operations are infused in man by God. (*De virtutibus in communi* 1, 10)

This gift from God is absolutely gratuitous; it is pure grace (*gratia*). In view of the natural human desire to know as developed in the previous sections it is evident, however, that grace is not to be understood as the forgiveness of sins through which fellowship with God is restored. Grace in Thomas's view is the supernatural perfection of humanity for the final goal. His whole analysis of human nature leads to this. Grace is the fulfillment of humankind's ontic inability to close the circle. For grace '. . . is a perfection which elevates the soul to some supernatural being' (*De veritate* 27, 3).

> There is therefore infused in man from God for the performing of acts which are directed towards the end of eternal life first grace, through which the soul has a certain spiritual being, and then faith, hope, and charity, so that through faith the intellect is illuminated concerning the knowledge of certain supernatural things. . . . (*De virtutibus in communi* 1, 10)[24]

God's work of grace is also interpreted in terms of the circulation doctrine, that is, in terms of the identity of origin and final goal.

> Just as the first action through which things have come into being, namely, the creation, is only from God Who is the first principle of creatures as well as their ultimate end, so also the granting of grace through which the rational mind is immediately joined with its ultimate end is only from God. (*De veritate* 27, 3)

The natural desire to know God is instilled in humans by the Creator and can only be fulfilled when the Final Goal himself draws the rational creature to himself and lets him participate in the divine nature.

24. Only through the supernatural gift of the light of glory the human intellect will be permanently elevated to the vision of God. We cannot discuss here Thomas's theological elaboration of this point.

(11) *The natural and supernatural*

The problem as posed in terms of the thirtheenth-century configuration of knowing reads: What is the relation between Greek rationality and Christian faith in man's orientation in reality? The analysis of the order of human knowing shows that the distinction of 'natural' and 'supernatural' is decisive in Thomas's solution of this question. In the following text, Thomas's perspective is summarized most clearly:

> I answer that it must be said that gifts of grace are added to those of nature in such a way that they do not destroy the latter, but rather perfect them; wherefore also the light of faith, which is gratuitously infused into our minds, does not destroy the natural light of cognition, which is in us by nature. For although the natural light of the human mind is insufficient to reveal those truths revealed by faith, yet it is impossible that those things which God has manifested to us by faith should be contrary to those which are evident to us by natural knowledge. In this case one would necessarily be false: and since both kinds of truth are from God, God would be the author of error, a thing which is impossible. Rather, since in imperfect things there is found some imitation of the perfect, though the image is deficient, in those things known by natural reason there are certain similitudes of the truths revealed by faith. Now, as sacred doctrine is founded upon the light of faith, so philosophy depends upon the light of natural reason; wherefore it is impossible that philosophical truths are contrary to those that are of faith; but they are deficient as compared to them. Nevertheless they incorporate some similitudes of those higher truths, and some things that are preparatory for them, just as nature is the preamble to grace. (*In Boethii De trinitate* 2, 3)

Three distinctive traits in this text mark the relation between the natural and the supernatural.

First of all, there is harmony. A contradiction between what a human being may understand by reason and what God reveals, between the light of natural reason and the light of faith, is excluded.

But have not the ancient philosophers defended positions, a doctrine of human destiny, for instance, utterly irreconcilable to the Christian faith? To be sure. Hence Thomas continues: 'If, however, anything is found in the teachings of the philosophers contrary to faith, this error does not properly belong to philosophy, but is due to an abuse of philosophy owing to the insufficiency of reason.' This quotation does not contain an essential critique of the self-sufficiency of reason; after all, the misuse of philosophy can be demonstrated by reason itself. Rather, this passage confirms that truth cannot be divided. A 'double truth'—a philosophical truth next to and over against a truth of faith—such as some of the

professors of the arts faculty were wont to practice is, as far as Thomas is concerned, fundamentally excluded.

This implicit belief in the harmony between the light of faith and the light of natural reason rests, once again, on the circulation motif. God is its guarantee, for both faith and reason have their source in him. A contradiction between the truth of faith and the truth of reason is excluded since God would have to be the cause if either one of them should turn out to be untrue. But to think of God as a deceiver, as some 'evil genius,' is absurd.

Time and again we see that at crucial moments in Thomas's train of thought the circulation motif appears. The circular movement is a redemptive event and it is an ontological dynamism of egression and regression. In continuity with Greek philosophy the movement of mankind to God is described as a natural desire to know (sect. 4). The *conversio* renders problematic only the ability (or inability) of the rational nature to *satisfy* the desire to know.

Hence, there is a second characteristic thesis: *gratia perficit naturam* (grace perfects nature) (*STh* I, 1, 8).[25] Grace does not eliminate nature but perfects it. The circle cannot be completed by philosophical reflection. To attain true happiness humankind must be freed from the distress inherent in this inability. The *visio Dei* is not possible unless the human person is elevated above nature, unless a gift of grace is added to his reasonable nature. The Christian life is the fulfillment of the natural order. Christian faith is a super-natural completion of the natural desire for knowledge. The illumination by faith does not destroy reason, but it is its fulfillment (*De veritate* 14, 10, ad 9).

A third thesis is directly connected with this: *gratia prae-supponit naturam* (grace presupposes nature) (*STh* I, 2, 2, ad 1; *De veritate* 27, 6, ad 3). This thesis is, as it were, a theoretical translation of the order of knowledge at the medieval university. Nature is *prae-ambula* to grace. 'Now it is clear that nature is to bliss as that which comes first in a thing, and is fundamental, is to something additional; for bliss adds to nature. But what comes first and is fundamental is never destroyed by anything added' (*STh* I, 62, 7). For this reason, Thomas can speak of a twofold goal of humanity, a natural and a super-natural one (sect. 9).

25. Cf. *In III Sent.* dist. 13, q. 11, ad 2: 'Grace is the perfection of nature.'

(12) *Concluding observations*

The fundamental difference between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation is even today often considered to be the divergent views on the relation between nature and grace.[26] As we have seen above, grace, according to Thomas, is a perfection elevating a human being above his own nature to a supernatural state. Human nature is such that a person cannot of his own accord complete the *conversion* to the origin. The infusion of divine grace is required. According to the Reformation, grace must first and foremost be related to sin, that is, to *aversion* to God. Grace is to be understood as the remission of sins by which people are restored into fellowship with God. To the Reformers, grace is not the elevation of human nature but its restoration and liberation.

However fundamental this difference may appear, it will not do to leave matters at that. My concluding observations are motivated by a concern not to reaffirm the confrontation.

The traditional statement of the Reformation that humans have a natural inclination to evil and that human nature is totally corrupt (cf. ch. 6.3) is unintelligible for the Thomist. In his terminology 'corruption' of nature entails the destruction of nature. But how can a person continue to be human when his or her nature—that is to say, essence—has been corrupted? There is a truly Christian concern involved here. The Christian notion of creation implies, after all, that the creature has a 'nature' of its own, quite distinct from the divine nature. The Reformers held that to be human is to be directed to God; human nature is essentially *relational*. For Thomas the concept of nature gives expression to the ontological consistency of *things in themselves*. This concept of nature does not imply that Thomas denies the relation of created reality to God. On the contrary, he claims that 'creation is nothing other in reality than a certain relation to God with newness of being' (*De potentia* 3, 3).

However, from a philosophical point of view, Thomas's elaboration of this is disappointing. He applies the Aristotelian concept of 'relation' to this relationship between God and the world. Now, according to Aristotle, a real relation is one of the (accidental) *categories*. It is an accident of a substance and an accident is always, both logically and ontologically, posterior to the substance. This view of relation leads to the unsatisfactory conclusion that the relation of the creation to God must be posterior to the substance of the creature itself. It is obvious that another concept of

26. For example, Benjamin Wentzel, *Natuur en genade*, 3.

relation is required, one which is not categorical, but which is *transcendental*.

A second significant point to make with regard to the relationship between nature and grace is that it constitutes one of the most controversial topics within Thomistic thought itself. Within Thomism, too, the question is raised: Does not the thesis that there is a twofold end for humankind—a natural and a supernatural one—imply two orders in human existence? The Thomists of the seventeenth century conceived of human existence as a *pure nature*, directed to a natural perfection. To this order of life, which is enclosed in itself, a supernatural end is added. Hence, in this view the Christian life becomes indeed a domain 'above' natural life.

In the course of the present century a great deal of opposition to this extrinsic relationship between the natural and the supernatural has arisen. For example, the Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeekx argued in 1974: 'Thomas did not know of a dualism of a natural and supernatural final goal; he knew of only one destination for man: to come to God.'[27] While one may acknowledge that this statement reflects the deepest intention of Thomas, the texts themselves clearly show that he speaks of a twofold goal. Nevertheless, I believe that the quest for a more intrinsic relationship can find support in Thomas's thought, especially in his theological works.

As we have seen, the circulation motif is a central feature of Thomas's thought. At this juncture it is necessary to point out that, according to Thomas, there is also a circulation within God himself: the eternal procession of the three Persons of the Trinity. The God of the Christian faith is not merely some unmoved mover. He is active and productive. This activity Thomas interprets, like Augustine, by means of the analogy with the two immanent operations which are found in every spiritual creature: 'intellection' and 'volition.' Out of both of these activities something comes forth within the divine: the Son comes forth as Word (*logos*), the Spirit comes forth as Love, binding the Father and the Son together. However, in addition to interpreting the Trinity in terms of intellection and volition, Thomas understands these processions as a 'circulation.' This is a new idea of his.

The circle is the perfect figure because nothing can be added to it. That which is subsequent to these immanent processions—the bringing

27. Edward Schillebeekx, 'Arabisch-Neoplatoonse achtergronden van Thomas' opvatting over de ontvankelijkheid van de mens voor de genade,' *Bijdragen* 35(1974): 298–308, 307.

forth of the creature—is therefore exterior to the divine nature. Now, Thomas states that this divine circular motion is the 'reason' (*ratio*) for every subsequent procession: the circulation of created reality. Thomas's exposition of the originating order within the Trinity opens up fruitful perspectives for further reflection on his thought.

Thus, in his exposition on the doctrine of the Trinity, Thomas gives a new elaboration to the concept of relation. In the divine 'circulation' there are primordial relations which are subsistent and which constitute the Persons of the Trinity. He says: 'In God relation and essence do not differ in being from each other, but are one and the same' (*STh* I, 28, 2). Relation in the divine is not an accident of a substance; being and relation belong 'originally' together.

Thomas has not applied this concept of relation to his metaphysics of creation. But this model of relation is philosophically important for a renewed reflection on created being. The relation of the creature to God is not accidental to the creature, as Thomas claimed in accordance with Aristotle's concept of relation. Rather, to be is to be-in-relation.

This relational character holds especially for humankind. A person is the 'image' of the Trinity, for in him the Trinity is represented in a distinctive way, namely, 'according to the same character of operation' (*secundum eamdem rationem operationis*, *De potentia* 9, 9), that of intellection and volition. (It is also 'according to the same character of operation,' it seems, that humans cannot be defined merely in terms of their intellect.)

However, even though Thomas did not work out a non-Aristotelian concept of relation in his metaphysics of creation, it is his deep intuition of the circulation—that all things come from God and that all things tend to him as their final goal—that gives his metaphysics its unifying dynamism. When in later Thomism this intuition receded to the background, the distinction between nature and grace was bound to become more pronounced. The notion of a twofold end does not really agree with a doctrine that all things come from God and tend toward him. In this respect Schillebeekx is right: Thomas's deepest intention is to show that humans live, move and exist in relation to the origin, destined to one final goal: to live in fellowship with God.

The very structure of Thomas's main work, the *Summa theologiae*, manifests this unity. In the prologue of book I, question 2, he sets forth this design. The first part deals with God and with the 'processions of all creatures from him.' The second part deals with the movement of the rational creature toward him. The third part concerns Christ, who as man is the way of our tending toward God. This structure is evidently

dominated by the circulation motif. It also shows that the movement toward God takes place in a concrete history of salvation: the Word has become flesh in order to show mankind the way (back) to its origin. True human existence is possible only 'by the grace of God.' 'The way for all men to come to happiness is the mystery of Christ's incarnation and passion' (*STh* II-II, 2, 7). This, too, is Thomas.

(13) *For further reading*

For a study of the general background of Thomas's thought the classic work of Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediæval Philosophy*, is to be recommended. James A. Weisheipl has given an extensive description of the life and work of Thomas in his book *Friar Thomas d'Aquino. His Life, Thought and Works*. A brief introduction to Thomas's thought is Anthony Kenny's *Aquinas*. A selection of the writings of Thomas may be found in *An Aquinas Reader*, edited by Mary T. Clark. A more advanced study of the themes dealt with in this chapter may be found in my book *Nature and Creature. Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought*.

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6 / Jacob Klapwijk

John Calvin (1509–1564)

In this essay we turn to the beginning of Modern Times. There is a world of difference between the cultural climate of the Middle Ages, dominated by thinkers like Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, and the intellectual development from the sixteenth century up to the present. To clarify the scope of the transition which took place as Europe entered a turbulent new era, one could mention any number of far-reaching changes. In the first place, there was the unprecedented broadening of intellectual horizons that resulted from the invention of printing (Laurens Janszoon Coster and Johann Gutenberg) and the application of an old Chinese invention, the compass. Society was being revolutionized by the rise of the urban middle classes; maritime trade expanded; the early-capitalist commercial economy was coming into its own, most notably in northern Italy, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and London. Finally, one can think of the great changes in the area of culture: the scientific revolution initiated by 'classical' natural science (Copernicus and Galileo), the renewal of art and learning engendered by the Renaissance and humanism (Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus), and, last but not least, the religious and ecclesiastical changes brought about by the Reformation (Luther and Calvin).

(1) *Renaissance and Reformation*

An analysis of the forces that ushered in the modern period must do justice to their spiritual depth. The changes involved reached to the bedrock of the consciousness of the people of that age. Renaissance and Reformation in particular were not just forces of renewal touching specific sectors of human existence, the arts or the church respectively. Rather, they both represented an all-encompassing movement of renewal, a breakdown and reconstruction of all things medieval. At stake in each of them was a new experience of reality, a new type of freedom, the genesis of a new human personality. Even in Renaissance circles this was discussed in terminology

that was fundamentally religious in character—'renaissance' meaning no less than a *rebirth* of humanity.

Next to noting their comprehensive intensity, I have to mention that the fields of interest of the Renaissance and the Reformation were vastly different. The Renaissance expressed its ideals primarily in the area of literature and art in styles that testified to individuality, vitality, classical beauty and mystical devotion; it gained acceptance mainly in the southern-European urban aristocracy (the Medici in Florence), well-to-do burghers (the banking house of the Fuggers at Augsburg) and Roman Prelates (Pope Julius II and Leo X). The Reformation, however, focused on the life and the doctrine of the institutional church, called for repentance and elicited response mainly among the common people in northern Europe.

While the religious forces of renewal took effect in largely distinct fields of activity and in different social and national groups and while these forces were very dissimilar, Renaissance and Reformation had at least one point in common or, to put it in other words, had the same negative effect: both contributed to the breakdown of the religious worldview of the Middle Ages and its ecclesiastically guided monoculture. The growth of technical skills, economic opportunities, political power, scientific knowledge and creative art, together with the felt need for new ways of involvement in church life, appealed to the sense of human dignity, national pride, individual freedom, and personal responsibility. Hence these forces of renewal shook to its foundations the complex hierarchical structure of medieval Christian society, in which the German emperor was, in theory at least, considered to be the highest authority in the natural domain of the state and the pope in Rome claimed the highest office in the supernatural realm of the church.

(2) *In league against supernaturalism*

I introduce the distinction between the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' purposely. In the Middle Ages 'supernaturalism' became increasingly the key to the theological arrangement of the entire field of learning such that it determined the relation between faith and reason, between theology and philosophy, and, hence, between Christian faith and ancient non-Christian thought. Supernaturalism was likewise decisive for the prevalent view of the relation between church and state. Since Thomas, the state was known as the perfect natural society and the church as the perfect society on supernatural terrain. These two social structures were,

like faith and reason, supposed to be attuned to each other; however, in the final analysis the state turned out to be subject to the church under the leadership of Rome. In other words, the Christian distinction and synthesis of a natural and a supernatural realm had not only theoretical and cultural significance (in the relation of theology to philosophy and of Christian belief to the treasures of the Greco-Roman cultural heritage); it had sociological significance as well: it marked the hierarchical order of society as divinely ordained. In short, supernaturalism rendered legitimate the view of an ecclesiastically guided monoculture.

Hence the alterations that now took place in society inevitably also touched this spiritual core: the groundmotive of supernaturalism. In the course of the latter Middle Ages the mutual attunement of nature and the supernatural began to be questioned (William of Ockham, c. 1285–1349/50). Gradually, a distaste developed for the distinction between a higher spiritual and a lower profane world. In a word, the two-realm theory was losing credibility. Everywhere the quest was underway for a more integral experience of reality that would render superfluous the laborious attempts to find a synthesis between faith and reason, church and state, the supernatural being of God and the natural being of humans, and so on. In Renaissance philosophy and in the Western rationalism stemming from it, the idea of a supernatural reality quickly became dead capital, if it was not cast aside altogether.

To be sure, faith and religion continued to be respected in matters of private interest; in the eighteenth century rationalism and pietism flourished side by side and until the nineteenth century Western philosophy developed no radical critique of religion. Nevertheless, the supernatural character of divine reality was a topic of philosophical discussion from the outset. The idea of God had changed. Now God was viewed as the ground and guarantee of human reason (Descartes, 1596–1650) or as the creative force of nature itself (Spinoza, 1632–77; *natura naturans*). As early as the Italian Renaissance God and man were put on the same, natural level; however infinite the macrocosmic world-soul, God, might be, the human person as microcosmos with infinite potential was mystically akin to him (Nicolaus Cusanus, 1401–64; Giordano Bruno, c. 1548–1600).

An anti-supernaturalistic standpoint also arose in the broad circle of the Reformation. I should, however, qualify this statement. While Renaissance and Reformation were equally committed to profoundly religious renewal, the two movements developed in essentially opposite directions. The habit, introduced by Hegel and current since Dilthey, of representing Renaissance and Reformation as parallel movements—the one a renewal

in worldly, the other in spiritual affairs, yet inspired by the one, broadly Christian–humanist tradition—is open to serious doubt. To be sure, many a humanist meant to remain loyal to the Christian church, especially in the earlier phases of the Renaissance; in the course of time, however, the spiritual incompatibility of the two movements became increasingly evident. Qua spirit and starting point Renaissance and Reformation were antagonists. Was Greco-Roman antiquity not the main source of inspiration for the artists of the Renaissance, while the Reformers drew from the fountain of holy Writ?

(3) *The Reformation's own way*

The Renaissance adoration of nature and of natural life found expression in the ideal of the *uomo universale*, the self-sufficient, creative, cultured person, the image of an apotheosized, creating, self-deploying universe. An accomplished artist like Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) would be an example. This picture would soon be given a one-sided, radical concentration in the rationalistic ideal of the *cogito*, i.e., of the human person as self-sufficient, creative and reconstructive reason (Descartes).

In the Reformation an entirely different persuasion prevailed. In the monastery at Wittenberg, Martin Luther (1483–1546) had struggled his way through the depths of anxieties of sin and guilt, and in faith he had moored himself to the mercy of God. This God of grace became so central in his life and thought that no room at all remained for Renaissance naturalism; I mean, for revering uncorrupted, self-sufficient, autocratic human nature. *Sola gratia* meant that life was regarded as lived before God, *coram Deo*, entirely dependent on God's sovereign grace. In this relationship to God alone a person will come to full fruition and integration.

In the consciousness of the Reformers there was therefore no room for Renaissance naturalism. But scholastic supernaturalism was likewise devalued in greater or lesser measure. This should not be surprising when it is considered that, notwithstanding the difference sketched above, a historical line can be drawn between Renaissance thought and medieval thought. The seeds of the Renaissance ideal of self-sufficiency and its implied rationalism were sown in the Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas, for example, had defended the position that even after the fall, nature remained intact (*naturalia manent integra*). This integrity implies a certain self-sufficiency of human reason. For when Thomas taught that the natural light of reason participates in the divine light of Truth, he placed reason in a relation of dependence upon God for its operation, its supernatural ful-

fillment and perfection, but simultaneously affirmed the dynamism of reason. Even though he regarded the human rational capacities as weakened and restricted by sin, reason's dynamism remains in principle untouched. To the degree that in later medieval thinking the distinction between nature and the supernatural became more conspicuous (ch. 5.12), the self-sufficient character of reason became more and more pronounced. It is this qualified self-sufficiency, this relative autonomy which, since the time of Thomas, gained the upper hand in medieval thought and which helped prepare the way for a broader, unqualified ideal of human autonomy, universality and integrity. Meanwhile, the Reformers set out on a new path. At least in principle! In practice they found it extremely difficult to divest themselves of the prevalent supernaturalistic pattern of thought.

In short, insofar as the deepest sources of their inspiration are concerned, Renaissance and Reformation went separate ways. The one movement seized upon the creative spark of the poetic imagination or relied on the guidance provided by the light of natural (sometimes even deified) reason; the other movement built on faith (*sola fide*) and sought to walk by the light of the biblical Word-revelation (*sola scriptura*).

Leaving aside the process of development from Renaissance thinking to seventeenth-century rationalism and eighteenth-century Enlightenment, I turn to the Reformation and pose the question: How, on the reformational view, can justice be done to non-Christian thought? Is it possible, from the standpoint of *sola fide, sola scriptura*, to speak of non-Christian thought in anything but negative and entirely antithetical terms? Did Luther not call reason a harlot and claim that faith slays reason (ch. 4.5)?[1] In the 'Age of Reformation' this problem seems to me to come to expression most pungently in the thought of John Calvin. I restrict my analysis to his views.

In interpreting Calvin's views one is faced with a vexing problem, which compels me to comment, however briefly, on the selective approach I have chosen. Calvin's engagement with the spiritual and intellectual issues of his time was profound and incisive; moreover, he was well acquainted with ancient culture and medieval thought. But he was not a philosopher in the professional sense of the word, and even as a theologian he did not write for academic purposes. Consequently, he never offers a rigorously systematic treatise that would deal directly with our topic: the relationship between Christian faith and current philosophical culture. Calvin was a reformer first, a teacher of the *ecclesia*. His activities were not primarily

1. See Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*, 3:6.

scholarly but practical and pastoral. His aim was to interpret Scripture and to formulate and defend church doctrine anew, in terms of such exegesis. The issues of scholarship and culture are certainly commented upon, though usually in passing or by way of brief incidental excursions, and always with reference to building the faith of the community of Christ-believers.

Secondly, Calvin lived and worked in the sixteenth century. While prepared to fulminate against the vacuity of the ancient philosophies and to vent dire warnings against the futility of the scholastic penchant for distinctions, he nevertheless displays many a trace of their influence. In his commentaries on the Bible, for instance, and in his exposition of the Christian teachings he rejects late-scholastic supernaturalism; yet in support of other arguments he suddenly reverts to the natural–supernatural dichotomy. In other words, it almost looks as if adherents and opponents can appeal to Calvin with equal justification!

What, then, is the hermeneutic key that would unlock for us Calvin's world of thought? Given that in various places in Calvin's works one finds dissimilarities and inconsistencies, I proceed on the assumption that the 'real' Calvin is not met with in reiterations he made for convenience of views current among his contemporaries, but rather in the new and non-conformist insights by which he on crucial points turned against the prevalent notions of the day. This makes my analysis a selective one, picturing Calvin as striking out on a new path. It would be impossible to paint the whole of Calvin in just a brief essay anyway. In sum: I analyze selectively and in the framewrok of the present volume there are good reasons for doing so.

(4) *Calvin and 'philosophia christiana'*

I would emphasize that 'reformation' always was more than a strictly ecclesiastical or theological program, especially for Calvin. Given the Reformation's point of departure, *sola scriptura*, Calvin championed submission to the word of God, not only in the life of the church but also in political, moral and social relations. This fact helps one to understand the social upheavals Calvinism produced in Strasbourg, Geneva, France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and elsewhere. To Calvin, Reformation was a world-transforming force. It is in this light also that one must understand his desire to have the Reformation permeate even the world of scholarship. Calvin proclaimed the necessity of a uniquely Christian view of life: a *philosophia christiana* which would make a change for the better even

in the sciences. Remarkably, however, Calvin was able at the same time to give unstinted praise to those pagan writers in whose works shines an 'admirable light of truth' (II, 2, 15).[2] How was he able to reconcile these matters?

Calvin's first use of the expression '*philosophia christiana*' most likely occurs in the well-known rectorial address of Nicolas Cop, *Beati pauperes spiritu* (blessed are the poor in spirit), which was delivered at the university of Paris in 1533. This address propagated views typical of the Reformation. One may surmise that Calvin had a hand in writing it since he had to flee Paris as a result of it.[3] In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his main work, Calvin also refers to '*la Philosophie Chrestienne*.'[4] Still, one must not read too much into such references, as if they always entailed an argument for Christian philosophy in a twentieth-century sense of the word. In the two places here alluded to he meant the teachings of Christ or, more broadly speaking, the content of Christian faith.[5]

The situation is different in the third book of the *Institutes*; here Calvin criticizes all philosophy known to him, calling it the philosophy of reason, and asserting the need for 'the Christian philosophy' in its stead:[6]

> O, how much has that man profited who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken away dominion and rule from his own reason that he may yield it to God....
>
> Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord. I call 'service' not only what lies in obedience to God's Word but what turns the mind of man, empty of its own carnal sense, wholly to the bidding of God's Spirit. While it is the first entrance to life, all philosophers were ignorant of this transformation, which Paul calls 'renewal of the mind' (Eph. 4:23). For

2. The references in the text between parentheses are to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford L. Battles.

3. Calvin seems to have had access to both the introductory pieces written by Erasmus for his 1516 edition of the New Testament. One was entitled 'Paraclesis, id est exhortatio ad Christianae Philosophiae studium' (Summons, that is, exhortation to the study of Christian Philosophy). The sense in which these words were meant is clear from the other one: 'Ratio seu methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram Theologiam' (Reason or method; compendium for arriving at true Theology), in which Erasmus ventures to speak of the teaching of Christ as 'that pure and genuine philosophy of Christ.' Cf. Frederick J. M. Potgieter, *Die verhouding tussen die teologie en die filosofie bij Calvijn*, 30.

4. Foreword to the French edition of 1541. In earlier editions of his *Institutes* and in his *Commentary* on Psalm 49:2 Calvin speaks of the 'heavenly philosophy.' In the *Institutes* he also speaks of 'the secret and hidden philosophy' (III, 20, 1), meaning apparently the hidden knowledge of God's Kingdom.

5. Likewise, when Calvin uses the expression 'our philosophy' (II, 2, 11), he means the content of Christian faith. Cf. Potgieter, *Die verhouding tussen die teologie en filosofie bij Calvijn*, 195–99.

6. On the concept of a 'Christian philosophy' in the Greek and Latin Church Fathers, in Erasmus, and also in Calvin, see Calvin, *Institutes*, 6–7, note 8.

> they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they entrust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit.... (III, 7, 1)

First, then, Christian philosophy must be obedient philosophy. It ought not proclaim itself the fountain of wisdom, but must follow God's command and know itself to depend upon his will; for reason as such lacks the capacity to guide truly. Calvin repudiates the philosophy of his time at this point because and to the extent that it ascribes self-sufficiency to reason, in the sense that reason would be 'the ruling principle in man.'[7] From this passage it is clear that Calvin realized that with his concept of obedient philosophy he was calling for a new course in the history of philosophy.

Calvin goes on to explain more closely what he means by this concept of obedience to the Lord. Christian philosophy must acknowledge that God has expressed his will in the biblical revelation and that philosophical reflection on humanity and reality in general must therefore be guided by the Word of God. In short, obedient philosophy must be taken to mean Scriptural philosophy.

Philosophy must also evince God's Spirit; in other words, beyond being biblical it should be renewed or converted, the philosophy of those who have undergone that thoroughgoing conversion of the heart which leaves untouched no human act, including the act of thought.

Note that Calvin, founder of a university at Geneva, does not disparage or ignore rational thought irrationalistically. He asserts only that the mind, touched by sin, is 'given over to blindness' (II, 1, 9). Calvin likes to refer to Ephesians 4:23, 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;' and to Romans 12:2, 'be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind' (II, 1, 9). Christian philosophy is something more profound than mere biblicism, more than external adjustment or accommodation of philosophical assertions to the biblical message (the shortcoming of so much of medieval Scholasticism!); *philosophia christiana* is living spirituality and inner renewal by the Spirit of God. Calvin held that no philosopher had achieved this.

It seems to me that this idea of a 'self-insufficient' philosophy attuned to God's Word and moved by God's Spirit is summarized elsewhere in the *Institutes*, namely, where Calvin expresses agreement with the Church Father Chrysostom's contention that the foundation of Christian philosophy is humility. For Calvin *humilitas* covers everything that should characterize

7. The Latin text says *moderatricem*. In his *Commentary* on Romans 12:2, Calvin speaks in a similar connection of *hegemonikon*, the leading power.

reason: dependence, openness, receptivity; that is, union with God's will, God's Word, and God's Spirit.

> A saying of Chrysostom's has always pleased me very much, that the foundation of our philosophy is humility. But that of Augustine pleases me even more: 'When a certain rhetorician was asked what was the chief rule of eloquence, he replied, "Delivery;" what was the second rule, "Delivery;" what was the third rule, "Delivery;" so if you ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, first, second, third, and always I would answer, "Humility."' (II, 2, 11)

Clearly, Calvin is speaking here about humility 'before God' or, further, as 'unfeigned submission of our heart' (III, 12, 6). Calvin sets humility over against human pride and self-conceit: humility relinquishes all presumption and vainglory; it is far more radical than ordinary human humbleness, which can often go hand in hand with self-conceit.

Calvin, then, was convinced that a Christian philosophy was needed and he defended the idea that its starting point should be humility in the sense described above. In addition, given this idea of the humility of reason, Calvin took issue with the ruling philosophy of his times, which, as I said above, chose its starting point ever more confidently in the idea of the self-sufficiency or—as Kant would later put it—the 'autonomy' of reason.

(5) *Total depravity*

It seems to me that the deepest motive behind this evidently antithetical stance was the reformational idea of *curruptio totalis*, the total depravity of human nature.[8] Through original sin, Calvin teaches, human nature has been corrupted throughout: 'All parts of the soul were possessed by sin after Adam deserted the fountain of righteousness' (II, 1, 9). The human mind is no exception. This is why restoration is not enough; total renewal is required. The human spirit needs the Spirit of God. All trust in the merit of one's own mind is accordingly misplaced (II, 1, 2, 3); to assert 'self-power' (Greek: *autexousios*) is to Calvin a shameless philosophers' presumption (II, 2, 4).

Such criticism was the result of an immense spiritual struggle in the course of which Calvin largely freed himself from the tradition of his age, the prevalent medieval scholastic dualism of nature and supernatural grace. According to this tradition (to summarize it again briefly) humankind lost the supernatural life of grace through the fall into sin.

8. See Thomas H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 45–47.

The natural capacities, the ability to reason in particular, damaged and wounded, cut off from supernatural perfection, nevertheless remained competent on the natural level.

The Reformers, Calvin especially, proceeded to take issue with this scholastic point of view.[9] Calvin rediscovered in the Bible the totalitarian character of sin and the pernicious power and dynamics of evil. The Bible taught him that sin is much more than a human shortcoming or acquired damage: evil issues from the human heart and reveals itself in rebellion against God in the whole of life. It manifests itself in unholy living, religious infatuation, moral corruption, and injustice terrible enough to destroy an entire society. Hence the doctrine of total depravity. To Calvin it is unthinkable that the human mind should have escaped such pervasive ruin. Against the Scholastics he asserts, referring explicitly to the human mind, 'that the part in which the excellence and nobility of the soul especially shine has not only been wounded, but so corrupted that it needs to be healed and to put on a new nature as well' (II, 1, 9).

The *corruptio totalis* doctrine has invited misunderstanding ever since. Calvin has often been taken to mean that all human behavior is equally sinful and pernicious. But the doctrine of sin as a total corruption of human nature does not mean that all sin is equally bad. The Bible speaks of lesser and greater sins and even of mortal sins. Calvin himself does not hesitate, in conformity with everyday language, 'to call this man well-born, that one depraved in nature,' while at the same time emphasizing 'the universal condition of human depravity,' by which he means to say that, notwithstanding the degrees of heinousness of sin, there is no area of life which escapes the grip of sin and which, as a result, is not in need of the restoring grace through Jesus Christ.

Even less, therefore, is the doctrine of total depravity a specimen of Calvinistic 'sin pessimism,' as it has sometimes been called. The Reformers believed that the pervasive power of sin was broken by Christ and that, having arisen to new life himself, he drew people with him from the grave

9. Cf. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. I, 516. Certainly the scholastic terminology of nature and grace, or nature and the supernatural, occurs in Calvin. In such instances it sometimes represents a questionable accommodation to the language of the scholastic anthropology current in Calvin's day. See Barend J. Vander Walt, *Heartbeat*, 229–52. At other times, however, Calvin has something else in mind: not the scholastic distinction between nature and grace but the reformational opposition between *sin* and grace; that is, the distinction between the creation (nature fallen into sin) and the re-creation (realized and to be realized through God's grace in Christ); or, to put it differently, the distinction between the natural life that issues from birth to earthly parents, and the new, spiritual life that flows from being born to God, from being born again. Everything turns on the *use* of the words. The distinction between nature and the supernatural is in any case not consciously applied by Calvin to the force of sin on the one hand and the universal purport of Christ's saving work on the other.

of sin, through conversion and faith, to give them new life in grace. That is 'faith optimism' rather than 'sin pessimism.' The power of *sola gratia* overcomes the force of *corruptio totalis*.

Furthermore, the doctrine of total depravity may not be taken ontologically, as if sin had altered the essential being of humans so that Christ's salvation would have to be construed as a metaphysical operation. The renewal of human nature is, as Calvin sees it, not an alteration of being but a change of direction. In turning again to God, people receive a renewed existence. They receive, strictly speaking, not a new but a renewed nature.[10]

The doctrine of total depravity may be regarded as the counterpart of the reformational *sola gratia*, understood as exclusive dependence on God's grace. Grace may not be taken ontologically either; it is a direction and a relation. As the Reformer sees it, grace is not, as the Schoolmen claimed, a *donum superadditum*, a supernatural addition made by God to human nature, something lost in the fall and supposedly poured in again with baptism (*gratia infusa*). The Pauline epistles describe grace as the 'favorable disposition' and guilt-forgiving love through which God turns again in Christ to those who repent to reconcile and renew their natural, that is, creational existence.

(6) *Sparks of light*

Calvin repudiates the scholastic notion, prevalent in the thirteenth century and thereafter, that the human mind retained a certain degree of self-sufficiency together with its capacity to discern truth even after the fall. It should be noted, though, that in so doing he 'goes for the jugular' of main-stream modern thought as well.[11] By and large, modern thought is characterized even more radically than medieval Scholasticism by the idea of the self-sufficiency of reason. Since the Renaissance this self-sufficiency is no longer restricted in some way or in need of completion by supernatural reality and truth. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment (Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804) and, since then, almost all of Western philosophy stressed the modern autonomy idea and adopted it as its axiomatic

10. In II, 1, 9, Calvin actually writes, with juridical exactness, that the mind 'needs ... to put on all but a new nature as well' ('novam prope naturam induere opus habeat'). This distinction is lost in the Battles translation, which merely states: 'needs ... to put on a new nature as well.'

11. Cf. John P. Le Coq, who from this modern standpoint of the self-sufficiency of reason answers with an emphatic negative the question 'Was Calvin a philosopher?' in *The Calvin Forum* 14, 155–58. See also, however, the critical reactions of Carl F. H. Henry, 'Was Calvin a philosopher? A reply,' 158–60, and Hendrik G. Stoker, 'Was Calvin a philosopher? A symposium,' 212–14.

starting point. Even today, when many lament the consequences of this pretended autonomy and others regard the rationalistic and technocratic aspirations of the Enlightenment with reservations—I am thinking of certain existentialists and neo-Marxists—there is still great reluctance, if not downright inability, to find the way back to the roots of modern times and to question anew the hidden assumptions of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment means: humanity has come of age by virtue of the light of reason. Calvin, however, sees the human person as self-insufficient, and he calls the natural light of reason 'blind' (I, pref., 13). In doing so, he makes matters anything but easy for himself. For in this way a twofold task is formulated: not only to develop a philosophy of humility and dependence in the reformational sense but also to deal in a new way with the problem of non-Christian thought. Here we find ourselves confronted again by the problem outlined above. How can Calvin still show any appreciation at all for non-Christian thought, which rejects the light of God's truth? Should he not simply have taken his stand on the antithesis and rejected every synthesis, that is, every attempt to harmonize Christian belief and philosophy?

It bears repeating that Calvin does reject such synthesis. For example, he complains of the patristic writers that 'many of them have come far too close to the philosophers,' and he expresses indignation that some of them have even done their utmost—in vain, to be sure—'to harmonize the doctrine of Scripture halfway with the beliefs of the philosophers' (II, 2, 4). The Fathers did so, he thinks, only because they were insufficiently perceptive of the fact that human reason was not merely wounded by sin but entirely corrupted and blinded by it, so that it is in utter need of the guidance of God's Spirit. Thus Calvin rejects a scholastic accommodation.

Remarkably, Calvin does not confine himself to this rejection. He goes on to assert that 'in man's perverted and degenerate nature some sparks still gleam,' especially in human reason (II, 12, 12; cf. I, 5, 14 and II, 2, 19). He points out that the human mind, though fallen, 'is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts' (II, 2, 15). He considers it contrary to Scripture and common sense to condemn human understanding to perpetual blindness (II, 2, 12).[12] Where the Kingdom of God is concerned, the greatest human minds are doubtless 'blinder than moles' (II, 2, 18), but in various earthly matters such as art, science and law, the power of human perception is able to achieve something nonetheless (II, 2, 14).

12. I do not follow the Battles translation of 'perpetua coecitatis ita cum damnare' by 'to condemn it [i.e., the human understanding] for its perpetual blindness.'

Calvin does not acknowledge this grudgingly, as if it were a concession. On the contrary, he holds that a Christian should be the first to recognize the excellence of the classical pagan scholars and scientists, be it with the following qualification: supposing one encounters such excellence, one should value it not as an accomplishment or gift of human nature but as a gift of the Spirit of God (II, 3, 4). It is exactly this reservation that leads Calvin to warn us to be careful with our criticism. Should we presume to criticize the Spirit of God? Thus Calvin says:

> If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit himself. What then? Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observations and artful description of nature? Shall we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the ravings of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration. We marvel at them because we are compelled to recognize how preeminent they are. (II, 2, 15)

(7) *General grace*

The necessity of honoring the biblical doctrine of human depravity without underrating God's good gifts to those outside the orbit of faith sometimes leads Calvin to speak of 'God's general grace' (*generalis Dei gratia*, II, 2, 17). This grace is 'general' insofar as the Lord God has left human nature in general in possession of many good things, although not of the true or highest good. It is general also in that it is the Lord's means of curbing the power of sin in all people, so that none is able to pursue evil lusts unchecked.

I note that Calvin nowhere attempts to provide a systematic account of God's active efforts on behalf of an apostate humanity in terms of 'general grace' (or 'common grace' as it came to be called later by such neo-Calvinists as Abraham Kuyper),[13] nor does he maintain a rigorous distinction between it and 'particular or saving grace.' Calvin is equally prepared to use terms like God's 'kindness' (II, 2, 17; I, 5, 14), his 'mercy' and 'gentleness' (III, 3, 25), his 'peculiar' or 'special grace' to all (II, 2, 14)

13. See Abraham Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie*.

or to some (II, 2, 17);[14] or simply God's 'providence' whereby he blesses humanity or individuals with gifts and restrains the effects of sin (II, 3, 3).

Calvin's use of the phrase 'general grace' did not initially lead to its inclusion as a specific point of Christian doctrine. It does not appear in the great confessional writings of the Reformed tradition: the most one can say is that it is at times presupposed in them.[15] It came to be accepted in later Calvinist theology, however, where it was defended in various forms and with subtle distinctions. There is something disturbing about this development, for a distinction between God's common grace (the kindness he displays towards the entire world) and God's particular grace (to believers) all too easily provided an opening for the appearance of a dualism disconcertingly similar to that of the scholastic nature–grace scheme.[16] In this light, the opposition that has arisen to the doctrine of common grace in the twentieth century is quite understandable. The most noteworthy instances involved Herman Hoeksema, whose opposition to common grace resulted in the founding of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America in 1924; and Klaas Schilder, whose name came to be associated after 1944 with the *Vrijgemaakte Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands.[17]

Collection of certain of Calvin's ideas under the heading 'common grace' has not always benefited a proper understanding of his view. In fact, it proved detrimental; when we examine Calvin's view of God's purpose in restraining sin and bestowing the gifts of grace, we find that he suggests a number of rather *disparate* motives. God is concerned to maintain his creation (II, 2, 16) and to look after humankind and human society (II, 3, 4; III, 14, 3). He is also concerned to preserve his church in this world (I, 17, 7 and 11). But also: God intends through his blessings to bring unbelievers to penitence and contrition (III, 3, 25; I, 5, 14). God means to show his goodness anew every day, even to those who reject it (III, 24,

14. In the last section Calvin asserts that one person excels above another on account of God's special grace so that it can be seen that God's grace is in bondage to no one. In other words, God bestows his gifts on everyone, but not in the same way or in the same measure (II, 3, 4). Cf. Josef Bohatec, *Das Naturrecht und die innerweltlichen Ordnungen nach Calvin*, 4, 8.

15. See the *Belgic Confession*, articles 13, 14, 36; *Canons of Dordt* II, 5, 6; III and IV, 4, 8, 9; *Westminster Confession* V, 6.

16. Here I would mention the following theologians: Johannes à Marck (1686); Wilhelmus à Brakel (1700); Bernard de Moor (1780); Jonathan Edwards (c. 1750); Charles Hodge and Archibald Alexander Hodge (nineteenth century); Herman Bavinck (*De algemene genade*, 1894); Abraham Kuyper (*De gemeene gratie*, 1902–5). See further the appendix in Herman Kuiper, *Calvin on common grace* (1928).

17. The resistance (as it may be called) alluded to here is traceable to the Kalamazoo Synod of 1924, where the Protestant Reformed Churches, led by Hoeksema, separated from the Christian Reformed Church.

2; III, 20, 15). God's mercies may even be meant to sear the conscience of the ungodly, imprinting their ingratitude, rebellion and guilt, so that they are without excuse (I, 3, 1; III, 3, 25; I, 5, 14; III, 25, 9).[18] In his dealings with the world, Calvin emphasizes, God reveals himself not only as the merciful Father but also as the sovereign Judge.

It is clear that in connection with the earthly existence of mankind and relative to the life of the nations, Calvin *sometimes* speaks of a general grace, that is, of a grace in which people participate in a general way. Still, whenever Calvin speaks of general grace he refers to God's merciful disposition towards fallen humanity. He certainly does not mean to demarcate a realm of being in the scholastic fashion: the realm of nature over against the supernatural realm of (particular) grace. Even when presenting a genuine appreciation of the non-Christian world, Calvin has no recourse to ontological categories (two realms of being); he continues to think in relational, religious categories (two relationships between God and humankind). Calvin juxtaposes not nature and grace (as realms of being), but sin (as a broken relationship) and grace (as a restored relationship). With his gifts and, for that matter, with his chastisement God does not override the powers and possibilities of nature; rather, he is engaged in breaking through the power of sin, with the all-conquering power of his gracious acts in order to restore nature, that is, the whole of created reality. On account of the fall, Calvin can find no security at all in the supposed potential of human nature as such. His trust is in the gracious faithfulness of God on which Christians and unbelievers alike depend for life and all its possibilities.

Calvin emphasizes therefore that it is God who is dealing with all persons, not only in their physical existence (Acts 14:17) but also in their admirable cultural achievements and the insights of science and philosophy which they have brought about:

> But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God? Let us be ashamed of such ingratitude, into which not even the pagan poets fell, for they confessed that the gods had invented philosophy, laws, and all useful arts. Those men whom Scripture (I Cor. 2:14) calls 'natural men' were indeed sharp and penetrating in their investigation of inferior things. Let us, accordingly, learn by their example

18. Calvin frequently cites Romans 1:20: God reveals himself in his works of creation so that fallen man may be deprived of every excuse. On the purpose of 'common grace' in Calvin, see further Herman Kuiper, *Calvin on Common Grace*, 206–12; for a writer with a great feeling for nuance, see also Jochem Douma, *Algemene genade*, 234–57. On the connection between Calvin's view of 'common grace' and the theme of natural law, see Jacob Klapwijk, 'Calvijn over de filosofie.'

> how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good. (II, 2, 15)

(8) *The insidiousness of sin*

If this be so, how perilous it is to criticize non-Christian thought! Calvin's criticism is never an automatic procedure of unraveling good and bad ideas in order to attribute the one to human sinfulness and the other to the benevolence of God. Calvin would penetrate behind the various thoughts of the thinker to the person who thinks, who wrestles with the truth and fails to find God, who perceives something of the truth but who uses it to set out again in ways of his or her own choosing. For Calvin the question is not whether fallen human nature is still furnished with God's gifts, including the gift of insight and understanding. The question is rather: How do these gifts of God function in the unbeliever's life? Is it to the honor and glory of God? Or is it to enhance one's possessions, power and esteem? If the latter is the case they can never serve as proofs of a natural goodness (II, 3, 4).

Romans 1 guides Calvin's reflections on this point. He emphasizes that, according to the apostle Paul, unbelievers certainly do possess knowledge, including even knowledge of God. Yet this perception in no way leads Calvin to advocate a natural (philosophical) theology. Calvin understands that the knowledge of God mentioned in Romans 1 is not an allusion to a residual truth-discerning capacity but that, on the contrary, it attests to God's wrath and is operative in the context of human self-deception, blindness, and guilt: 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened' (Romans 1:21). In strictly logical terms Paul's linking knowledge of God and misapprehension of God together may seem contradictory, but to Calvin (in Paul's footsteps), this passage speaks rather of the unfathomable depths of guilt: a person knows, and *simultaneously* desires not to know the true God.[19]

In Calvinism, the idea of total depravity sometimes led directly to the conclusion of total human inability, and then to utter passivity as the approved attitude of religious piety. In the *Nadere Reformatie* (Further Reformation or Dutch Puritanism), the notion came to prevail that a human person is just a submissive, resigned being. Think of the 'five precious nots' of Wilhelmus Schortinghuis (1700–50): 'I will not, can not,

19. See Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, 145 ff, especially 151–54. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, chapters 11 and 12.

know not, have not, and am not worthy.'[20] Calvin has warned against such misconception, arguing that it would lead to inertia and ... self-exoneration. If human corruption is a built-in rational–moral incapacity, then the excuse cannot be far behind that 'I am, after all, blind, bad, and in bondage.' Calvin protested this kind of thing vigorously; in fact, he did not hesitate to counter such reasoning by proclaiming the insight, excellence, even the 'freedom' of every human being (II, 2, 7). That the Bible refers to humans as 'in bondage' and 'servants of sin' (John 8:33–34) might seem contradictory to this, but for Calvin it is profoundly true. To Calvin's perception, bondage to sin is actually confirmed by what a person does on his or her own free initiative with the gifts and possibilities which God bestows.

(9) *Beyond antithesis and synthesis, humility*

Calvin's position on philosophy features radical criticism in concert with sincere admiration. I have tried to show why. To summarize in my own words, I would say that in Calvin's view non-Christian philosophy is neither a house in which a Christian can live and breathe nor a house that needs to be razed to the ground. Yet, it is even less a combination of the two, that is, a structure some parts of which need to be torn down and other sections of which need restoration only, as if truth and falsehood consist of so many separable propositions which can be added and removed as circumstance requires.

Every philosophy, one could say, is a personal philosophy and therefore a philosophy *coram Deo*, pursued before the face of God. Every ideological construction is authored by a living person who has his or her own experience with God and the world and who tells the story of it in philosophy. It is a story in which the truth is not absent but—to use the language of the Bible—held in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), a story in which the light shines in darkness and is not comprehended (John 1:5). Calvin puts it this way: 'God's burning lamps ... strike some sparks, but before their fuller light shines forth, these are smothered' (I, 5, 14). Certainly the light of reason shines, but it is 'choked with dense ignorance, so that it cannot come forth effectively' (II, 2, 12).

It seems to me that it is this tension between light and darkness, insight and incomprehension, truth and lies, present in one and the same system, which makes Calvin so cautious in his evaluation of non-Christian

20. Wilhelmus Schortinghuis, *Het innige Christendom* (1740); 1858 edition, 349.

thought. He does not accept it gratuitously, as if the depths of sin should somehow have left philosophy untouched, at least in its noblest representatives. Nor does he contemn it, as if one had the right to write off people and cultural developments God himself has not abandoned. Still less, however, does one find in Calvin a rudimentary synthesis (a 'half-harmonization,' see II, 2, 4) between Scripture and philosophy along the lines of 'As a Christian I feel myself claimed equally by the Bible and by the extra-biblical message of this or that philosopher.' As if a Christian could live by the sum of (Christian and unchristian) component truths. As if he could abide in some chambers of another's dwelling-place.

What, then, is the alternative? The foundation of our philosophy is humility, says Calvin. *I believe this humility may also be considered determinative for Calvin's attitude towards non-Christian thought.* Non-Christian thought lacks the foundation of humility, of openness to God. It has the tendency to base itself on the idea of the self-sufficiency of human reason. This is why Calvin subjects it to sharp criticism. But in doing so he shows this self-sufficiency to be self-conceited, a disguised insufficiency. Self-sufficient thought, closed as it is to the truth of God, receives that truth anyway; yes, it derives its life and dynamism from its wrestling with and against that truth. God's truth is the precondition—one could even say: the transcendental presupposition—of the very possibility of Christian and non-Christian philosophy alike! Humility, Calvin's motive, becomes operative once again. The Christian must open his mind to God's truth wherever it manifests itself—even in the vague and repressed notions of that truth in the works of non-Christian philosophers. And what can this mean other than an appeal to listen, open-mindedly and critically?

It is as if Calvin would challenge us, twentieth-century folk, to listen attentively to the ideological paganism of our age. We must listen until we are able to hear—behind the experiences of the wrestling personality—the voice of God, who makes an appeal to the one so engaged and in and through him or her speaks to us. Perhaps in this way a *philosophia christiana* can still learn a great deal from modern thought, without surrendering to it.

(10) *For further reading*

The study of Calvin's position must at least include a reading of his *Institutes*, book I, chapters 1–5, dealing with the knowledge of God which has been by nature implanted in humans and book II, chapters 2 and 3, dealing with the corruption of human nature and the blindness of reason

as well as with God's general grace. See also my paper 'Calvin and Neo-Calvinism on Non-Christian Philosophy' and the contributions by Charles Partee, 'Calvin, Calvinism and Rationality;' Dewey Hoitenga, 'Faith and Reason in Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God;' and Jacob Klapwijk, 'Rationality in the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Tradition.' Herman Kuiper has given an extensive analysis in his book *Calvin on Common Grace* on the many places and the different ways in which God's general grace is treated in Calvin.

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7 / Sander Griffioen

G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831)

After Calvin ... Hegel! Following the chapter on the pious student of holy Writ, one on a highly speculative philosopher whose ambition it was to develop an intrinsically Christian system of thought which ultimately would not be dependent on biblical revelation! Are they not worlds apart? They are indeed. We enter here into a very different climate of thought. The question even seems warranted as to whether Hegel deserves any place at all in this book. There are, however, important reasons for including a study on him, one being that the way in which he built the principles of Enlightenment thought[1] into his own philosophy has clearly been an inspiration to many modern Christian thinkers, men like Paul Tillich (see ch. 9), Paul Ricœur, and Wolfhart Pannenberg (see ch. 10). This essay will be a fairly detailed study of how the inclusion of non-Christian thought takes place, what it entails, its underlying assumptions, and so forth. I do not think the case is overstated when I speak of *the triumph of inclusiveness in Hegel's philosophy of the Christian religion*. By way of introduction I would like to begin with some biographical details of Hegel's life and mention some of his most important publications.[2]

(1) *Reconnaissance*

Who was Hegel? Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born on August 27, 1770, in Stuttgart and died in 1831 in Berlin. He grew up in a Lutheran milieu and from 1788 to 1793 attended a Lutheran college in Tübingen,

1. The Enlightenment is the era in which, for the first time, unbelief attained a respectable position among the leading intelligentsia. Roughly speaking, this epoch coincides with the eighteenth century, although its roots reach far back into the seventeenth century. Paul Hazard's celebrated work *La crise de la conscience européenne* (trans. *The European Mind 1680–1715*) takes 1680 as the starting point, but that, of course, is largely a matter of personal preference.

2. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Hegel:

Einl = *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*
HPh = *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*
Phen = *Phenomenology of Spirit*
PhH = *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*
PhR = *Philosophy of Right*
Werke = *Sämtliche Werke*

the Tübinger *Stift*, where he majored in theology. Here he made friends with two young men who were to become hardly less famous than he: Friedrich Hölderlin, the poet (1770–1843), and Friedrich Schelling, the philosopher (1775–1854). Education at the *Stift* seems to have been solid but not very inspiring. Hegel and his friends found their stimulation chiefly outside the college walls. In the first place they fully participated in the idealization of Greek culture which was popular at that time. One of its chief instigators was Johann Winckelmann (1717–68), whose research into classical art had made him famous throughout Europe. This interest in ancient culture in turn greatly contributed to a re-awakening of humanism; for, as Raymond Plant recently reminded us in his book *Hegel* (p. 17), it was from the picture they had of life in ancient Greece that leading philosophers and poets like Johann G. Herder (1744–1803) and Johann C.F. Schiller (1759–1805) derived their model of humanity, *Humanität*, epitomized in the ideal of the harmoniously developed individual, at peace with himself, the community, the polis, and its gods. In the second place, Hegel and his friends became enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution from its first days on. The two concerns were related: the German humanists generally welcomed the Revolution as a much needed re-vindication of *Humanität*; it was, as Plant puts it, 'widely regarded at the time as an attempt to restore a closely knit community on the Greek model' (p. 51). The 'free republic' of which the radical *Stift* students felt themselves to be citizens was as much indebted to Winckelmann's Greece as to revolutionary Paris.

Upon graduation in 1793 Hegel left for Bern to become a tutor. Three years later he moved on to Frankfurt where he was to stay until 1801, again as a tutor. The years following were in Jena, where he made his living as a university lecturer. Here his philosophical system began to take shape. It was in this city, too, that he wrote his first major work, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) 'brought to completion amidst the thunder of the Battle of Jena.'[3]

Comparing it to other classic texts such as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of the salient features of the *Phenomenology* is that the author's approach is not only systematic, but also historical (at least in a certain sense). Systematically, *Geist* ('Spirit' or, in some translations, 'Mind') stands for the organizing principle of the system, namely, that in which the

3. Franz Wiedman, *Hegel: An Illustrated Biography*, 39. This statement is not entirely devoid of exaggeration, for one thing, because the *Phenomenology* was not completed in Jena but in Bamberg. In other respects, too, Wiedman's biography might not be wholly reliable. For instance, he repeats the story that Hegel and his friends put up a liberty tree, which is, to the best of our knowledge, not supported by historical evidence.

inner coherence of the various parts such as logic, philosophy of culture, aesthetics, and so forth, is found; historically, 'Spirit' also stands for the basic integrating force of reality, something not unlike the *logos* tradition we met before in patristic thought (cf. ch. 1.3,7; 2.5). It expresses itself not only in nature, in the customs and the political history of the nations, but also—and even more explicitly—in the great works of art, in the history of the world religions and, last but not least, in the history of philosophy.

With these introductory remarks we have begun to shed some light on Hegel's 'solution' to the major problem posed in this volume. To Hegel, Spirit *is* (self-)development. Hence, truth can never be a static quality; truth, taken as Spirit, is the integrating, totalizing process. Accordingly (as will be demonstrated below), the 'inclusiveness' referred to earlier should be conceived of as a moment in the progress of truth itself.

Although the *Phenomenology* is now considered one of the great classics of philosophy, it failed to bring Hegel any immediate fame. To his chagrin, he was not offered a full professorship—at the University of Heidelberg—until 1816. The intermediate years were spent, for the greater part, as Principal of the Royal Bavarian Gymnasium at Nürnberg. During these years the three volumes of *Wissenschaft der Logik* (*The Science of Logic*) appeared (1812, 1813, 1816). These were soon followed, in Heidelberg, by the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*); first published in 1817, revised editions in 1827 and 1830.

In 1818 Hegel was called to the chair of philosophy which was the most prestigious one of that time in all Germany and perhaps all of continental Europe. At the University of Berlin he succeeded Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814)—the chair had been vacant since the latter's death—whom he admired as the great initiator of a truly speculative philosophy in Germany. Hegel was to stay in Berlin until his death. It was here that he published his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* in 1821 (*Philosophy of Right*), a work which still ranks as one of the classics of legal and political philosophy. Of all his works the *Phenomenology* alone attracted a wider audience. Apart from the subject matter there is one major difference between the two works. While the *Phenomenology* has been praised by many people (e.g., Karl Marx, 1818–83) on many occasions as an essentially 'progressive' work, the *Philosophy of Right*, in contrast, has been denounced just as often as the epitome of Hegel's later conservatism. One of the most criticized phrases is undoubtedly the famous statement in the Preface: '*What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.*' This statement, according to critics, is a downright glorification of the

status quo. We shall bypass the question as to whether or not the above interpretation is correct—I believe it is not. Suffice it to admit at this point that with the *Philosophy of Right* a marked change occurs in the 'climate' of Hegel's thought. Far less mention is made of the future. The central theme becomes that of reconciliation with the present. In the earlier works the Spirit is depicted as progressing with great strides toward the coming era of science and freedom. As noted, these expectations were initially linked to the French Revolution. But later, too, after Napoleon's downfall, when in Hegel's system the Reformation began to take the place of the (French) Revolution, militant humanism was to stay for a long time. An excellent example of this humanism is found in his inaugural address (1818). Speaking of a 'new substantial spirit,' our philosopher proclaims: 'I appeal to this new spirit and salute its dawn. Withall, I appeal to the spirit of the young generation....' The philosophical rebirth of Germany is at hand. All will depend on the new order. The older generation has succumbed to a blind adherence to tradition and authority, or to subjectivism and skepticism. Hegel calls on his audience 'to trust in science, to believe in comprehension and to have confidence and faith in yourselves.' These words are followed by a Promethean doxology:

> Man ought to honour himself and deem himself worthy of the highest. He cannot think too much of the greatness and power of the spirit. The essence of the universe, closed though it is for itself, has no barrier to defend itself against the courage to know it. It must disclose its treasures; its depth is there for us to behold, to know and to enjoy.[4]

But how different the tone has become in 1821! The Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* ends with the imagery of the owl waiting until twilight to spread its wings:

> When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk. (*PhR* 13)

To explain this change interpreters have pointed to the political circumstances of the time. The manuscript was completed in a time of great unrest due to the repression of the *Burschenschaften*, the nationalistic student clubs. Among the leaders one faction was made up of Hegel's students, so he had some reason to fear that the ensuing political repression would touch him as well. Besides, his reputation as *the* German philosopher was at stake. These circumstances made him eager to avoid stirring up the

4. From the translated introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 60 ff. The German text is to be found in the first chapter of the *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*.

utopian sentiments of his students and, instead, to put all the stress on understanding the actual. I do not think, however, that this is an adequate explanation. Reconciliation with the present (or 'actual') is a religious theme. Its coming to the fore may well have been stimulated by political circumstances, but it cannot be fully explained in these terms.

With the publication of the *Philosophy of Right* the system was complete. During the last ten years of his life, apart from some introductions, book reviews (some of them of considerable length), and essays (the most memorable the one on the English Reform Bill), Hegel prepared only one new text for publication: a work on the proofs of the existence of God, based on lectures on the same subject (*Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*, held in 1829). Those who are familiar with the history of modern thought will be able to understand the provocative implications of its title. For it was generally accepted that the great Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) had destroyed the metaphysical proofs for the existence of God once and for all. What we have here, then, is a deliberate attempt to re-establish classical metaphysics in a modern fashion. For Hegel, the sole subject of philosophy is God. Properly speaking, philosophy is *Gottesdienst*, the worship of God; reason, as the 'divine element in man,' is authoritative only to the extent that it participates in divine reason.[5]

For the full elaboration of this and related themes we are primarily dependent not on Hegel's own publications but on what has been saved from lectures not meant for publication. After the appearance of the *Philosophy of Right* he tended to invest more and more time in his lectures (I am not quite sure why). In the several volumes of the *Vorlesungen* (lectures) that were published in the first decade after his death by the committee of 'friends of the deceased,' the philosopher's own notes (as available) were lumped together with notes taken by students during various years. Work on a critical edition was not started until our century and is still far from complete (cf. sect. 4). The *Vorlesungen*, then, have a somewhat uncertain status; nevertheless, they are indispensable for the study of Hegel's Berlin years.

One outstanding feature of these *Vorlesungen* is the central place accorded to history: political history ('world history' in Hegel's vernacular), the history of aesthetics, the history of religion, and the history of philosophy. This emphasis is modern; it is definitely foreign to pre-Kantian

5. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* I, 29, 43. The English translation of E. B. Speirs reads: 'Philosophy is itself, in fact, worship; it is religion....' (*Philosophy of Religion*, vol. I, 20). Cf. Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*, 146: 'Individual reason could be autonomous and, therefore, authoritative only to the extent that it participated in a Reason which validated all reasoning.'

metaphysics. Hegelian speculation claims to proceed from experience, rather than from eternal truths immediately accessible to illuminated reason. Compared to classical metaphysics, action and history gain enormous prominence; reason is conceived of as an activity, a conceptual shaping of experience, not as a reservoir of concepts abstracted from reality. I take this to be a typically modern trait. For our present topic it means that philosophizing is viewed as an interpretive activity; philosophy cannot theorize about God directly, but always has to take the detour of an interpretation of historical religions. Since Christianity is pictured as the completion of religious evolution and the embodiment of the essence of all other religions, philosophy can be said to come into its own by interpreting the Christian religion. In this respect, then, (if we accept its claim for the sake of argument), Hegel's philosophy may rightly be termed a philosophy of the Christian religion.

(2) *A philosophy of the Christian religion*

Having the benefit of hindsight, we are not surprised to find that the reconciliation with the actual is made contingent upon a reconciliation of philosophy with historical Christianity. For many of his contemporaries, however, Hegel's proclamation of peace was highly puzzling. Let us not forget that the heyday of the Enlightenment was still recent history then. One may assume that many people remembered very well the historical role philosophy had played in the battle between Orthodoxy and Modernism, how it had served as a weapon in the hands of Unbelief and Revolution, et cetera. (In fact, the eighteenth century was still so recent that the English language in Hegel's time had not yet developed a standard translation for '*Siècle des lumières*' and '*Aufklärung*.'[6]) Further, suspicion may have been aroused by Hegel's known sympathies for Fichte, a person who in the final years of the eighteenth century had been at the center of an explosive *Atheismusstreit* (the accusation of atheism, which Fichte had fervently tried to refute, cost him his chair at the University of Jena in 1799). Finally, Hegel himself had come under suspicion of teaching pantheism. His angry rejection of the accusation—a striking instance of which is to be found in the Preface of the third edition of the *Encyclopedia*—never convinced his opponents. (Ironically, Fichte's son,

6. According to Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, 151, the first known occurrence of the English term 'Enlightenment' dates from the year 1865 (curiously enough this was in J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*). That Chadwick might be right is indicated by the fact that J. Sibree's translation of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which dates from 1857, renders '*Aufklärung*' by '*Eclaircissement*.'

Immanuel H. Fichte, was later to defend a system of Concrete Theism that was partly intended to refute Hegel's 'all-absorbing pantheism ... which swallows up the human and the divine in its own inapprehensible totality.'[7]

The *crux interpretandi* of the new philosophy of Christianity is the question concerning how one assesses what Hegel teaches about the proper task of philosophy. As noted above, he emphatically wants to break with a certain kind of philosophical imperialism, that is to say, the notion of self-sufficient reason constructing a world on the basis of inner evidence and logical inferences. In contradistinction to this, Hegel's emphasis shifts toward interpretation and history. But what does this 'modesty,' this 'humility' mean? Would Hegel have accepted Wittgenstein's adage: Philosophy 'leaves everything as it is' (*Philosophical Investigations* par. 124)? Certainly not! Thought implies transformation. Philosophy—the highest embodiment of thought—cannot be at peace with conditions and circumstances accepted without reflection. An example may help to clarify this. In his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel gives ample attention to the role of thought in the ancient *polis*, the Greek city-state. In his opinion the emergence of self-conscious thought could not but result in the shattering of the cultural–religious unity of the *polis*, since in the wake of thought the principle of subjective freedom emerged: people no longer obeyed their leaders without questioning. Socrates and his colleagues assigned the determination of men's actions to the inner conviction of the individual; herewith they 'posited the Individual as capable of a final moral decision, in contraposition to Country and to Customary Morality' (*PhH* 269f). Consequently, philosophy could not but manifest itself as 'a destructive element' (*PhH* 252).[8]

The destructive moment pertains to every philosophy that deserves the name. However, one important qualification is added to this thesis. While popular religions succumb sooner or later to critical thought, the Christian religion—and it alone—can stand the test. In Emil L. Fackenheim's words: 'Christianity is not destroyed by the philosophy to which it gives rise.'[9] A demythologizing type of criticism, Hegel trusts, in the end will only bring out Christianity's true universality.

7. These are not I. H. Fichte's words but those of *Chamber's Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, 315.

8. Cf. 254: 'But contemporaneously with this were introduced corruption, disorder, and an unintermitted process of change in the constitution,' and 267: 'Thought as the principle of decay.' This theme, of course, returns in a modified form as that of the owl of Minerva spreading its wings only with the falling of dusk: destruction and decay correspond to philosophy's grey in grey (see above).

9. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 186.

The point is not that the positive moment would be lacking elsewhere. In general, the process of thought is presented as something like a refining process in which the dross is eliminated and the pure metal is being preserved in ever purer form. Elimination and preservation go together. Hegel skillfully exploits the German verb '*aufheben*' which can be rendered as 'to cancel' but also as 'to preserve,' as well as 'to raise to a higher level.'[10] The difference is, however, that while elsewhere refining takes the shape of a transcending movement, leaving nations, cultures and religions behind as so many empty shells, Christianity as the 'infinite' or 'absolute' religion cannot be surpassed by a new religion or *Weltanschauung*.

(3) *Interpretation and influence*

There can be little doubt as to what serves as the steering factor in and behind the process: thought itself. It inflicts the wounds and heals them. While most interpreters would easily be in agreement on the significance of thought, they would disagree on whether the accent should be laid on the wounding aspect or on the healing aspect. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that, ultimately, the critical, negative moment carries the greater weight; on the other hand, there are those who hold to the primacy of 'preservation,' the 'raising,' etc.[11] The split in the Hegelian school soon after Hegel's death appears to have been to some extent a consequence of conflicting interpretations of this kind, with the Young Hegelians—including Bruno Bauer (1809–82), Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72) and the young Marx—stressing the destructive, negative implications of the *Aufhebung* process, and the Old Hegelians—for example, Karl Rosenkranz (1805–79) and Carl F. Göschel (1781–1861)—emphasizing the positive, preservative elements. The same debate is still going on. Links with the Young Hegelians are apparent, for instance, in the atheistic interpretation of Alexandre Kojève (1902–68) and his school (for a striking example see Roger Garaudy's *Dieu est mort*). The same holds true for the interpretations of Marxists such as Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), who are always looking for 'progressive' and 'conservative'

10. Cf. the observation of Theodore Plantinga, 'Dilthey's Philosophy of the History of Philosophy,' 212, note 6: 'I have used the characteristic Hegelian verb "*aufheben*" without translating it because no English verb combines the meanings which Hegel packs into this word. That which is "*aufgehoben*" is cancelled, preserved, and raised to a higher level.'

11. Cf. the famous line from the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 470: 'Die Wunden des Geistes heilen, ohne daß Narben bleiben.' In the English translation (407): 'The wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind.'

trends. The emergence of the reconciliation theme is explained in terms of Hegel's growing conservatism. But, they would maintain, even in the Berlin years he basically remained true to his original inspiration, for example in the way he once defined the essence of the dialectic to Goethe (the conversation dates from 1827) as: 'the methodically disciplined spirit of contradiction.'[12] In the last few decades, however, a number of scholars have come to the fore with an interpretation which in many respects is reminiscent of views propagated by the Old Hegelians: Günther Rohrmoser, Michael Theunissen, Albert Chapelle, and Emil L. Fackenheim, to mention the most important names. For Rohrmoser there is no Christian theologian or philosopher who has taken the Resurrection more seriously than Hegel. Theunissen is hardly less outspoken: in his opinion, Hegel's philosophy is christological to its very core. Fackenheim's phrasing is a little more cautious; he speaks of a 'unique philosophical confrontation with historical Christianity.' He would not call it 'Christian philosophy,' but he thinks that Hegel's position is as Christian as philosophy can ever hope to become, and that it is in this sense truly insurpassable: if the Hegelian enterprise fails, 'no similar effort can hope to succeed.'[13]

I do not think we should side with either one of these interpretations. The first one fails to do justice to the 'religious dimension' in Hegel's thought, while the second systematically underrates the extent to which his philosophy remains dependent on non-Christian patterns of thought. The reconciliation theme, far from being peripheral or the result of a compromise—as Young Hegelians would have it—is at the very center of Hegel's concern. The method of *rapprochement*, however, is one of radicalizing the long tradition, which, to borrow Quentin Lauer's formulation, 'from Francis Bacon and Descartes to his own day, sought to secularize philosophical thought and to make it autonomous, as the self-activity of supremely rational consciousness.'[14] We are at a point of fundamental ambivalence here. Hegel attempts to redirect philosophy, not by calling for a philosophical conversion or by pleading for an inner reformation, but by radicalizing the tradition of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (see sect. 5).

In this spirit I would also answer Karl Barth's intriguing question as to why Hegel has not become for the Protestant world something akin

12. *Goethe im Gespräch: Eine Auswahl von Ernst Grumach*, 111. In this paragraph I had in mind particularly Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*. Cf. my review of this work in *Philosophia Reformata* 34(1969) : 101–21.

13. Rohrmoser, *Die Krise der Institutionen*, 83; Theunissen, *Hegel's Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 13, 58; Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 228, 224.

14. Lauer, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*, 143.

to what Thomas Aquinas has meant for the Roman Catholic world.[15] The answer is that—apart from ignorance and bias—orthodox Christians, both then and now, have rightly been suspicious of the proposed 'synthesis.' Aquinas tried to transform pagan thought into a useful instrument for defending the Christian faith. Whether he succeeded or not need not concern us here (see ch. 5). The point is, however, that in Hegel's case an important change of direction has taken place. The emphasis has shifted from Christian apologetics to a justification of the Christian religion launched *from within philosophy*. Thomas's starting point is the Christian religion; Hegel, on the contrary, always seems to put the thematics of philosophical tradition first.

We will conclude this section with some remarks on Hegel's influence. His reconciliation with the actual clearly has soteriological overtones. It was his intention to call back to a full 'enjoyment' of the present a generation torn between scientistic criticism and utopian daydreaming. Christian orthodoxy in itself, he contends, is impotent with respect to both. It has left the Christian community in a state of decay. At the end of his lectures on the philosophy of religion he even goes so far as to declare that religion has to take refuge in philosophy since that is the only place where the gates of hell will not prevail against it. What this 'invulnerability' would mean in a concrete sense may be surmised from the way in which biblical criticism is dealt with. A striking instance is to be found in the lectures on the philosophy of history:

> Make of Christ what you will, exegetically, critically, historically,—demonstrate as you please, how the doctrines of the Church were established by Councils, attained currency as the result of this or that episcopal interest or passion, or originated in this or that quarter;—let all such circumstances have been what they might,—the only concerning question is: What is the Idea or the Truth in and for itself? (*PhH* 338)[16]

It does not take much imagination to picture how these teachings won the hearts and minds of young people whose faith had been battered and broken by the onslaught of 'science.' Hegel himself provides a striking illustration, quoting a letter he received from H. Fr. W. Hinrichs, his friend and one-time pupil:

15. Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 384.

16. Cf. the comment of Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, 732: 'We will agree with Hegel, then, that possessed of the notion, we feel ourselves lifted high above the *historical*, the *external*, the *contingent*, and we shall only smile at the necessarily futile efforts of a Strauss and a Renan to paw the horizon.'

> From my youth up, religion (not an affected piety) had always been for me the highest and most sacred thing.... Science, however, deprived me of the element of picture-thinking in which I had been accustomed to see the Truth, and what was more natural than that I should strive to overcome the extreme disharmony and extreme despair produced in me by science and so win a reconciliation in the element of knowledge.[17]

It is true that this enthusiasm remained limited to a small ingroup consisting mostly of students. It seems that the number of genuine followers was never very great, not even when Hegel's popularity reached its height. After his death the flock soon desintegrated into opposing groups—Young versus Old Hegelians—and later all but vanished. Karl Barth, after drawing the comparison between Aquinas and Hegel, adds that as early as the 1860s genuine Hegelians had become as rare in Berlin as billy-goats.

Yet it would be misleading if we did not add that, in a more concealed way, the influence of Hegel's philosophy has remained momentous, throughout the nineteenth century, and especially in our age. A number of the great spiritual movements and ideologies cannot be understood unless placed against the backdrop of this philosophy. Marxism inherited Hegel's anti-utopianism, and remained true to his conviction that the new (socialism) can be attained by way of a radicalization of the existing alone (capitalism). Modern historicism, as shaped by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), may rightly be seen (be it with an inevitable simplification) as a renewal of Hegel's concept of history with the doctrine of the absolute spirit left out. Finally, and closer to our subject, much of modern Christian theology and philosophy, either directly or at a distance, has followed Hegel's justification of non-Christian thought along the line that non-Christian philosophies, rather than being opposed and rejected, tend to be placed in a position of preliminary expressions of the truth, if not as the penultimate truth.[18]

Having reconnoitered the lay of the land we will now study in some detail the concrete way in which the inclusion of non-Christian thought

17. As quoted by Hegel in his preface to Hinrich, *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*. The translation is of A.V. Miller, in: F.G. Weiss, *Beyond Epistemology. New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, 244. The 'element of picture-thinking' to which the text refers is that of the historical representations (*Vorstellungen*) characteristic of popular Christianity. At that level, Hegel contends, there is no defense against secularism.

18. The expression 'penultimate truth' is borrowed from S.U. Zuidema, 'Original Affirmation and Theological Eschatology in Paul Ricœur's Thought, Especially in his *Histoire et Vérité*,' 280. Speaking about the existentialistic themes of ambiguity, anxiety, meaninglessness, and negativity, Zuidema remarks: 'Existentialism, Ricœur agrees, is quite right in stressing these concepts. But it is characteristic of Ricœur's thought to consider them as revealing only the *penultimate* truth concerning the history and existence of man and mankind, whereas the ultimate, definitive ... rank must be conceded to the ontological affirmation....'

takes place. After a short introduction, some cursory remarks will be made regarding patristic and medieval philosophy; subsequently, we will turn to the Reformation and modern philosophy, and finally, Hegel's relation to Fichte will be briefly investigated. As indicated above, our main source will be the Berlin lectures on the history of philosophy.

(4) *Two main periods in the history of philosophy*

Anyone setting out to study Hegel's history of philosophy is handicapped by the fact that only the Introduction (*Einleitung*) is available in a critical edition. For the rest, one must depend on the three volumes edited by K.L. Michelet, who combined the notes taken by several students on different occasions (between 1823 and 1831 Hegel taught this course four times), thereby obscuring both the development in Hegel's own thought and the difference between the manuscripts. These deficiencies notwithstanding, the *Vorlesungen* form an impressive work, bearing ample witness to Hegel's astounding grasp of the material. In fact, he may rightly be called the great pioneer of the history of philosophy. Before him this subject was either neglected or it was used as an illustration of something else. It was not until Hegel that the history of philosophy came into its own as a subject worthy of study.

Three periods are distinguished: (1) the Greek period running from Thales to the closing of the Academy in 529; (2) the Middle Ages; and (3) the modern period, starting with the Reformation.

Greek philosophy is non-Christian for Hegel because it lacks the idea of the free, infinite personality. In this regard, the Church Fathers are no exception. Insofar as they philosophized, they continued to depend on Greek thought, and insofar as they brought something new, they did so as theologians rather than as philosophers, in the sense that they built on presuppositions accepted as true on the authority of the church.

And what about the Middle Ages? Does this era constitute the first period of authentically Christian philosophy? No, for 'scholastic Philosophy really was Theology' (*HPh* I, 64).[19] The entire period 'of something over 1000 years' duration' is considered as a mere interlude between Proclus, the last of the great Greek philosophers, and modern philosophy, 'beginning with the distinction contained in *cogito ergo sum*' (Descartes' dictum: 'I think, therefore I am') (*HPh* I, 110). For Hegel, in between Proclus

19. Cf. *History of Philosophy*, vol. I, 91 f on the Church Fathers: they did produce 'thoughts of a highly speculative nature,' but 'the ultimate justification of these was not found in Thought as such, but in the teachings of the church.'

and Descartes there is hardly a thing worthy of the name of philosophy: 'it was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the genuine Philosophy re-appeared,' he remarks (*HPh* III, 161).

We are left then with a distinction between two main periods, the one 'Greek' and the other Western or 'Teutonic.' Such a division may seem rather amateurish. Yet it is prompted by weighty considerations. We will concentrate on two motives, and will be especially concerned about their mutual relations.

Behind this division there is, in the first place, a specific idea of philosophy. Only free, self-determining and self-occupied thought deserves the name of philosophy. This excludes, as we have seen, patristic and medieval thought, and thus leads to a simple bifurcation of Greek and modern philosophy. In the second place, the distinction coincides with the one between 'pagan' and 'Christian.' Descartes and those who followed him are placed against the backdrop of the Reformation, which itself is viewed as the great breakthrough in the world-historical project of realizing a world built on the Christian principle. With the Reformation the 'world-spirit' has become Christian, and hence philosophy, as its paramount expression, has become Christian with respect to its content: 'This must be the standpoint of the Philosophy of the present time; it has begun within Christianity and can have no other content than the world-spirit' (*HPh* I, 79), or, more succinctly: 'The Teutonic philosophy is the Philosophy within Christendom' (*HPh* I, 101).

The question which comes to mind is whether the two motives work in the same direction. I do not think they do. On the one hand, the Christian principle is given a centrality reminiscent of the philosophy of history where it is called 'the axis on which the History of the World turns' and 'the goal and the starting point of History' (*PhH* 331). In this respect, the antithesis between pagan and Christian takes on a significance without parallel in the mainstream of Western thought. However, the results are immediately relativized by the insistence on the autonomy of philosophy. In the matter of philosophy, the great commandment is: Thou shalt rid thyself as much as possible of any dependence on that which is not thought. Such is Hegel's ideal of the objectivity of thought. Now the emphasis shifts toward the continuity between the two main periods, and it appears that the predicate 'pagan' is meant without any disparagement. Not only do the Greek philosophers occupy two thirds of all the space in Michelet's edition of the *Vorlesungen*, but occasionally one even gets the impression that modern philosophers can only add marginalia to what their predecessors have already said.

There is still another way to demonstrate the similarity between the two main periods. In Hegel's view, the relation of Greek philosophy to popular religion has taken on three basic shapes: immediate unity, separation, and reconciliation. Noteworthy is that the use of this scheme proves not to be restricted to the Greek era. It is also applied to medieval and modern philosophy *vis-à-vis* the Christian religion. With Xenophanes and Socrates the search started for rational certainty. As a result, the unproblematic, 'immediate' unity of philosophy and religion was shattered—with severe consequences; since, as we noted above, the emergence of self-conscious thought was bound to loosen, and eventually sever, the bonds by which the community was held together. No matter how destructive the Greek enlightenment might have been, Hegel holds that it was a necessary phase on the way to a higher stage. That stage is represented by neo-Platonic thought, which is credited with having laid bare (through its allegorical method) the rational core hidden under the mythical veil of religious representation. Similarly, in the picture drawn by Hegel, medieval philosophy is characterized by an immediate unity with religion. The modern period manifests rising tension, leading to the breaking up of the Constantinian synthesis of faith, science and politics—but in it, without intending to do so, critical thought clears the ground for the final reconciliation.

This short sketch, I believe, gives in a nutshell Hegel's solution to the problem posed in the present volume. The severence of the religious ties has a distinct meaning, even where it leads to explicitly atheistic options. It is the way in which philosophy emancipates itself from all kinds of dependencies, in preparation of a free reunion of philosophy and religion. According to the underlying scheme, criticism is legitimate as a particular stage in an ongoing process. As such it acquires a normative status. Hegel's historicism does not leave room for the objections against the spirit of the age by conservatives and anti-revolutionaries, nor for the permanent contestation by anarchists. There is no way *around* modernity and its discontent. One can only get *beyond* modernism by first having gone *through* it.

Strictly speaking, the *through-and-beyond* is not peculiar to the modern era. It can be applied to the ancient philosophers Xenophanes (6th cent. BC), Socrates (c. 470–399 BC), Democritus (b. c. 460 BC), and Lucretius (c. 96–55 BC) with as much justification as to such thinkers of the Enlightenment as David Hume (1711–76), Paul d'Holbach (1723–89), Julien de la Mettrie (1709–51), François-Marie Voltaire (1694–1778), and others. Still, an important dissimilarity remains. The allegorical method (of neo-Platonism) could only bring out the rational core by destroying the

religious forms in which it was enveloped (for the allegorical method see also ch. 1.6 and ch. 2.3). Christianity, on the other hand, 'is not destroyed by the philosophy to which it gives rise,' as we quoted above from Fackenheim. The Christian principle, that is, the recognition of God as self-realizing Spirit, is itself a speculative truth. Hence the final reconciliation takes on the character of an explication of what was latently present from the onset of the Christian era. The Enlightenment, though it opposes positive religion with might and main, will not be able to destroy that foundation (*Einl* 192f). This trust is the mainspring of Hegel's optimism. In his own words:

> *La vérité, en la repoussant, on l'embrace*. Europe comes to the truth while, and to the degree in which, she has repulsed it. It is in the agitation thus occasioned, that Providence especially exercises its sovereignty.... (*PhH* 369; used in a different context)

(5) *Through and beyond the Enlightenment*

Great nineteenth-century opponents of the Enlightenment like Joseph de Maistre (1754–1821), Friedrich Stahl (1802–55), and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801–76) invariably found the sting of modernism to lie in its rejection of divine revelation. For them the pretended autonomy of thought was to be condemned first of all as a sinful derailment of the human intellectual faculties from the service of God. Hegel, however, developed an altogether different perspective on the same matter. In my opinion, he is the originator of an approach that has become widely accepted among both Christian philosophers and theologians.

The point is definitely not that Hegel would accept everything the *philosophes* stood for. Not at all. For their worship of the Supreme Being he has nothing but biting sarcasm: 'It bears the empty name of God.... He is, like X, the altogether unknown quantity' (*HPh* III, 382). Or, in one word, *l'etre suprème* is *the void* (*Phen* 343). Elsewhere he lashes out: 'It has made heaven empty—reduced the divine to a *caput mortuum* [literally: the head of the dead, but Hegel probably means colcothar, a kind of red paint], and everything else to mere finite entities in space and time' (*Einl* 191). To conclude this brief anthology, a quotation from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

> Enlightenment, that conceit, that vanity of the Understanding is the most violent opponent of philosophy, and is displeased when the latter points to the element of reason in the Christian religion, when it shows that the witness of the Spirit, of truth, is lodged in religion. (IV, 148)

What then is the crux of the issue? Hegel's point is that the Enlightenment has been insufficiently radical. It has rightly vindicated the freedom of thought, but it stopped half-way, only getting as far as *Verstand*, understanding—that is, analytical-instrumental thought—halting well before the gates of *Vernunft*, speculative reason.

This construction pivots on the assumption that the autonomy ideal is entirely in line with the reformational insistence on the freedom of conscience. With the Reformation, Hegel contends, man has become *unmittelbar zu Gott*: that is, has entered into an immediate relation to God, requiring no mediation of priests (*Werke* 20, 49). In the believer, thus 'having attained to confidence in himself and in his thought [sic], the reconciliation with the present is implicitly accomplished' (*HPh* III, 158). From here it is only one step to the claim—outrageous as it may appear—that reason, as the supreme judge in all matters of truth and falsehood, is the correct philosophical translation of the justification by faith alone. That this is no exaggeration on my part is borne out by the eulogy in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* on the obstinacy of refusing to recognize in conviction anything not ratified by thought, which ends with the words: 'This obstinacy is the characteristic of our epoch, besides being the principle peculiar to Protestantism' (*PhR* 12). In keeping with this, Hegel is keen on pointing out that the religion rejected by the *philosophes* (Voltaire, d'Holbach, and others) was 'not the religion that Luther purified,' but one characterized by 'wretched superstition, priestly domination, stupidity, degradation of mind' (*HPh* III, 389), typical of nations that have not had their Reformation and hence need a Revolution (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* 925). At another place Hegel resumes this theme:

> Thought was raised like a standard among the nations, liberty of conviction and of conscience in man. They said to mankind, 'In this sign thou shalt conquer,' for they had before their eyes what had been done in the name of the cross alone, what had been made a matter of faith and law and religion—they saw how the sign of the cross had been degraded. For in the sign of the cross lying and deceit had been victorious, under this seal institutions had become fossilized, and had sunk into all manner of degradation, so that this sign came to be represented as the epitome and root of all evil. Thus in another form they completed the Reformation that Luther began. (*HPh* III, 397 f)

Another focus of Hegel's interest is the battle between Protestant Pietism and rationalistic Enlightenment. He refuses to take sides. Seen from his point of view, both parties have their own limited truth. Faith may justly condemn rationalism's critique of religion as an 'abomination,' and

reject its worldview as an 'undiluted platitude.' The Enlightenment, on the other hand, has the 'right of self-consciousness' on its side and rightly refuses to accept any truth that bears no relation to human subjectivity (*Phen* 341f).

The analysis of the battle, especially of the version found in the *Phenomenology*, is a masterpiece of sustained irony, brilliantly subtle, and it makes for fascinating reading. Nevertheless, it leaves me dissatisfied. The question that comes to mind is whether Hegel is able to do justice to the real issues. Could he have analyzed it otherwise than as a mock battle, given the assumption that Pietism and its adversary stem from one and the same root, the Reformation?

Let us take the matter one step further. The aforesaid analysis is a characteristic instance of dialectical reasoning. This method aims at detecting the deeper unity of, and the hidden interaction between, seemingly polar opposites. Occasionally it does yield illuminating insights into interdependencies indiscernible to the inexperienced eye. As such it has added considerably to the acumen of philosophical critique. But in the hands of a *virtuoso* like Hegel it becomes a dangerous instrument, transforming all real distinctions, differences and oppositions into moments of an all-embracing totality. As a result, the sting is taken out of history's drama. Faith and criticism may be involved in a breathtaking struggle, the speculative philosopher knows the outcome. Ultimately, unbelief cannot do anything against the truth. *La vérité, en la repoussant, on l'embrace.* Therefore, J.H. Stirling's ironical exaggeration is not too far off the mark: We, speculative philosophers, 'shall smile at the necessarily futile efforts of a Strauss and Renan [two of the best-known nineteenth-century protagonists of biblical criticism] to paw the horizon' (see note 16). Or, as J.N. Findlay more appropriately puts it, 'For Hegel, the higher critics of the Enlightenment are the purifiers rather than the subverters of religion; in the deepest mysticism there should always be a Voltairean tinge.'[20] For all the richness of the analyses, the solutions are too facile and one cannot but feel sympathy for the vehemence with which Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) turned against the triumphalism of the Hegelian dialectic. Of course, the integration of agnosticism and atheism into the process of the Christian truth could not please unbelievers either. I venture to say that this was the main reason why the Young Hegelians turned their backs on those grand schemes of reconciliation. Feuerbach's comment on Hegel's solution is a striking case in point: 'Hegel's philosophy was

20. Findlay, 'Hegel,' 329.

the last great attempt to restore a lost and ruined Christianity by means of philosophy—whereby, as is general in recent times, the *negation* of Christianity *is identified with Christianity itself.*'[21]

At this point we must ask what becomes of the Enlightenment. This brings us back to the intricacies of the *Aufhebung* (cf. sect. 2). Stirling is correct in asserting that the Enlightenment is superseded in the sense of being absorbed, rather than of being destroyed:

> The *Aufklärung* is not superseded, however, in the sense of being destroyed; it is superseded only in that, as it were, it has been absorbed, used as food, and assimilated into a higher form. The Right of Private Judgement, the Right of Intelligence—these, the interests of the *Aufklärung*, are not by any means lost, or pushed out of the way: they are only carried forward into their truth.[22]

Its 'principle'—or 'central interest' in the sense meant by Stirling—lives on as a moment of what Stanley Rosen has called 'the inner modality of the human spirit.'[23] In the autonomy of reason the autonomy of understanding (*Verstand*) is preserved, freed from its earlier self-sufficiency, and so forth.

Yet there is a destructive side to this process of 'truth,' Stirling notwithstanding. 'For the Spirit has gained its certainty of itself from the crushing of gods and men' (*Phen* 455). Civilizations are left behind like empty shells on the shores of time. This holds for philosophy as well. There is no return to previous 'embodiments of the spirit.' Therefore, 'one cannot now be a Platonist' (*Werke* 20, 461; cf. *Einl* 72f), or an *Aufklärer*, for that matter. Hegel is a declared enemy of the 'warmed-up' philosophies (*Einl* 73). This, of course, is reasonable enough. But there is more to it than just a justifiable denouncement of '-isms' and epigones. We must attend to the underlying historicism. Resorting to past stages of the history of philosophy is equal to rejecting the Spirit progressing through history. In parallel texts on church history, Hegel makes unambiguously clear that those who cling to the historical Jesus are guilty of the sin against the Spirit.[24]

We touch here on the limits of the inclusiveness of which I spoke initially. The inclusion concerns the works of the immortal philosophers.

21. Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, par. 21. The translation of this passage is taken from Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 171.

22. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, lv–lvi.

23. Cf. Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel. An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*, 221, on the *Aufhebung* of classical art: 'Greek art is now seen as an inner modality of the human spirit.'

24. *History of Philosophy*, vol. I, 74: 'To remain fixed in this . . . dead far-away historic distance, is to reject the Spirit. The sin of him who lies against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven.' Cf. also the *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 181.

They have provided the building stones of the temple of Reason. This imagery, which is Hegel's, reminds one of the theories propounded in Freemason circles; as one of the leaders puts it in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, 'No one can attain to truth by himself; only by laying stone upon stone, with the cooperation of all, through millions of generations, from our forefather Adam down to our day, is that temple raised which is to be a worthy dwelling place for the Almighty God' (427). The distinction between pagan and Christian ranks considerably lower than the all-important question of what is and what is not to be deemed a part of the temple. There can be little doubt that in this respect Plato carries much more weight than Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther (let alone Calvin). There is also an important difference between, say, Plato and Platonism: Plato had a historical mission to fulfill, Platonism did not.

These matters have an immediate bearing on the subject of this section. Hegel's assessment of the Enlightenment is not always the same, but varies with circumstances. To regard the Enlightenment as the expression of the spirit of a new age, or as a set of established doctrines to which people have recourse in later times are two different things altogether. In the first case, Hegel's judgment is in general positive; 'onesided' and 'superficial' are about the most negative verdicts he renders. In the second case, however, where the *Aufhebung* of the Enlightenment is at stake, we are to expect strong indictments rather than mild corrections: 'that conceit,' 'that vanity,' 'the most violent opponent of philosophy' (cf. the beginning of this section), and other charges have their place here.

(6) *The reality of reason*

To introduce the theme of the reality of reason, I start with some remarks on the relation of Hegel to Fichte. As stated above, Hegel takes the position that the Enlightenment lacked radicalness. The transition from *Verstand* (understanding) to *Vernunft* (reason) did not begin until Kant, Fichte and Schelling arrived on the scene. Kant, who was 'so near and yet so far,' laid the basis only. It was left to his two great successors to advance to one all-encompassing system of thought in which the ultimate concerns of mankind would find their place. Especially Fichte moved a long way in the right direction, without, however, reaching the promised land.

Hegel is highly appreciative of the systematic form of Fichte's philosophy. Here the world is understood as a flower eternally developing out of a single seed (*Werke* 20, 390). However, Fichte's choice of a principle

from which everything else is deduced, that is, the Ego, or 'I,' lacked the universality required for the job. At the object's pole the 'I' has over against it the 'non-I.' Fichte assigned to the 'non-I' the function of providing the material for realizing the ego's moral duties. But he did not set limits to this process, since the 'non-I' would always retain elements not yet turned into material. Thus, by inner necessity the unity of subject and object obtained the character of an ideal, a utopia, to be realized in an indeterminate future, whereas, concomitantly, human self-activity came to be viewed exclusively as longing and striving.

The quintessence of Hegel's criticism is that Fichte failed to grasp the *reality of reason*. Contrary to the 'I,' which has only reality as subject, reason is (allegedly) present as both the subjective and the objective side of reality, for it is identified not only with the faculty of thinking, but also with the innermost structure of the processes shaping objective reality. Over against the essential restlessness of the Fichtean subject, Hegel propounds the thesis that to be free means to be at home in the world: a person cannot be truly free as long as he experiences and understands the world in terms of mere material for self-realization. That standpoint, he contends, betrays a fundamental homelessness, issuing from a lack of ability to enjoy freedom in the actual world—a homelessness itself rooted in an inadequate understanding of reality. Hence the Fichtean-Romanticist *Weltschmerz* cannot be remedied other than by the gift of insight into the rational character of the actual world.

This is the very heartbeat of Hegel's philosophy. As said above, Hegel dedicated his life to a mission of recalling the European intelligentsia from their fascination with anemic ideals and utopias to the enjoyment of the actual. Significantly, some of the relevant texts are couched in religious imagery. The presence of reason amidst the irrationality of appearances is depicted as a rose adorning a cross. The inexperienced eye perceives only the 'cross of reality,' that is to say, a confusing spectacle of passions, strife, and suffering, without apparent sense, whereas philosophical reason pierces through that veil and grasps the full meaning of life. Here the dictum applies from the *Philosophy of Right*: 'To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present, this is the rational insight which reconciles us to the actual' (*PhR* 12).

We have come full circle. Why was the Enlightenment wanting in radicalism? Why did Fichte's concept of reality fail to transcend fully the level of *Verstand*? Hegel answers: because both the Enlightenment and Fichte were unable to come to terms with the Christian religion, and consequently remained blind to the presence of Spirit. As far as that goes,

they were akin to the Arians about whom he remarks that they 'did away with the Idea of the Trinity, and consequently with the principle of all speculative philosophy' (*HPh* III, 20).

(7) *Characterization of Hegel's solution*

A simple, straightforward solution to the problem of this volume is not to be obtained from Hegel. In a strict sense, the term 'non-Christian' can be applied to the Greek era alone, and even in this sense it is relativized because ultimately the continuity between the Greek and the modern epochs receives more weight than their differences. On the other hand, Hegel would not use the term 'Christian philosophy' for the modern period either. It is true that the modern era is Christian in substance, but even in Fichte's (and Schelling's) philosophy, the appropriation of this substance is lacking. The proper description is 'philosophy within Christendom.'

Implicitly, however, Hegel certainly does give an answer to our problem. I have focused on his justification of Enlightenment thought. The underlying scheme I characterized as 'through-and-beyond.' It is a typically modern scheme in that truth is presented as a process rather than as an eternal essence. The *Aufklärung*—and this applies every bit as much to its atheistic expressions as to its religious expressions—is an indispensable stage in the *process* of the 'Spirit.' It represents the phase of 'separation' while Fichte's philosophy, for instance, pertains to the phase of reunion.

(8) *Attraction*

The attraction that Hegel's solution has historically exerted was, in the first place, the stress on 'history' and 'process.' For instance, the Enlightenment is put in a context of purification of the Reformation. We have seen that this entails a justification: the *philosophes* have accomplished a historical mission. In my opinion, it is here that the deepest attraction of Hegel's contribution resides. It answers to the 'need' of the modern Christian mind to attach a positive meaning to the non-Christian world, especially to non-Christian thought. Modern secularization has a providential place in the course of history. I think that Charles Taylor is right in contending that Hegel is the forerunner of much of twentieth-century theology:

> Thus while Hegel is not in the main line of descent of liberal Protestantism [remember his rejection of the Arians and unitarians, see sect. 6], he is the point of origin of another important movement towards a demythologized,

> one might say, 'de-theologized' Christianity. Contemporary theologies of 'the death of God' are his spiritual grandchildren. The filiation is either direct, as with Paul Tillich who very much influenced the theologians of this school, or through the Young Hegelian Ludwig Feuerbach.[25]

According to this scheme, secularization is a much needed process of purification, destroying in its wake dogmatic philosophies and theologies, as well as inadequate religious representations, thus clearing the ground for the final *kairos*, that is, the fullness of time announcing the advent of the speculative concept of God (ch. 9.5).

In his *Theology of Hope* Jürgen Moltmann has adapted this theme to his own theological interests. Commenting on the final pages of Hegel's essay *Glauben und Wissen* (1802–03), which contains some abstruse passages on the 'speculative Good Friday,' Moltmann writes:

> Hegel meant that modern atheism and nihilism, which causes the disappearance of all dogmatic philosophies and all nature religions, can be understood as a universalizing of the historic Good Friday of the god-forsakenness of Jesus, so that it becomes a speculative Good Friday of the forsakenness of all that is.

The crux of the matter is in the following passage:

> If the modern a-theistic world thus comes to stand in the shadow of Good Friday, and Good Friday is conceived by it as the abyss of nothingness that engulfs all being, then there arises on the other hand the possibility of conceiving this foundering world in theological terms as an element in the process of the now all-embracing and universal revelation of God in the cross and the resurrection of reality.

A little further on Moltmann proceeds in a typically Hegelian vein:

> The romanticist nihilism of the 'death of God' like the methodical atheism of science (*etsi Deus non daretur*), is an element that has been isolated from the dialectical process. (169)

By way of another illustration I would refer to Paul Ricœur's essay 'Religion, Atheism, Faith.' Religion provides the legitimations that serve to justify and sanctify the social order. Faith, on the other hand, is open and prophetic; it is honest to God, without need of ideological support. Atheism serves as the mediating term: by destroying religion, it clears the ground for the coming of faith. Although the distinction between 'religion' and 'faith' is anything but Hegelian, the mediating function ascribed to atheism undeniably bears a striking resemblance to Hegel's justification of Enlightenment thought.

25. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, 495.

(9) *Problems*

In a certain sense, we are all post-Hegelian, having gone 'through' and 'beyond' this philosophy. No one would wish to return to the ahistorical thinking of earlier ages. This also applies to the Calvinist-reformational tradition. As Albert Wolters once put it:

> The return to a good creation does not mean a return to the garden of Eden, but rather a return to creation as it should be in its present stage of historical development. It honours the unfolding of creation through culture, and is therefore not reactionary with respect to such phenomena as art, technology and urbanization.[26]

Yet, in other respects we will have to go *around* and *against* Hegelian speculation. Moltmann, Ricœur, and others are far too uncritical of the dialectical justification of non-Christian thought and its consequences. On this point Feuerbach has been much more perceptive. Indeed, in Hegel's system, 'God is defined as a process, and atheism as an element in this process.' I also concur with the thrust of Feuerbach's conclusion, although with reservations as to its terminology:

> But just as the faith that is reconstructed on the basis of unbelief is no true faith, because it is constantly entrammelled with its opposite, so the God who reconstructs himself on the basis of his own negation is no true God, but on the contrary a self-contradictory, atheistic God.[27]

With regard to the history of philosophy, my conclusion is similar to that expressed in this quotation. Near the end of his lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel proclaimed that this history is nothing less than 'revelation of God as he knows himself'. On the one hand this process entails a justification of all major philosophies (they have provided the building stones of the divine temple); on the other hand, as we have seen, the same process also entails judgment: 'For the Spirit [that is, God] has gained its certainty of itself from the crushing of gods and men' (*Phen* 455)—and from the destruction of philosophies, we might add. The justification takes place on the basis of an *Aufhebung*. To withstand it means to reject the Spirit.

All philosophy that aspires 'to see the totality of reality as God sees it'[28] places itself on the throne of God, taking justification and rejection

26. Wolters, 'What Is in a Name?' 2.

27. Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, par. 21; quoted from Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 171. Incidentally, Moltmann calls this argument a '*reductio ad absurdum*,' which, nevertheless, gives 'much food for theological thought.'

28. Cf. Lauer, 'Hegel as Historian of Philosophy,' 29.

into its own hands. Christian philosophy, on the other hand, which is always under the suspicion of 'knowing too much,' on this point really knows less and is careful not to insert philosophies into a 'process of the truth.' In assessing non-Christian thought it wil have to maintain a fundamental ambivalence. It will always have to honor the fact that non-Christian thinking 'is not only driven by the power of sin but also continually influenced by God's revelation in creation.' On this basis one may readily agree that 'much good can be observed ... even where Christ is not served'—Groen van Prinsterer, for instance, repeatedly pointed out that even Enlightenment thinkers taught morality, immortality, freedom and equality—yet all this cannot obscure the fact that whatever is good and true in these philosophies has 'been broken away from its original Christian life-principle.'[29]

(10) *For further reading*

The first chapters of Raymond Plant's *Hegel* form excellent material for getting acquainted with the cultural-religious setting of Hegel's earlier writings. Emil L. Fackenheim's *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* is one of the finest works on Hegel in the English language. Thomas M. Knox has left us not only with a good translation of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* but also with eighty pages of valuable translator's notes. Merold Westphal of Hope College, Holland (Mich.) has written a worthwhile introduction to Hegel's preface to H. Fr. W. Hinrichs' *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft* (1822). See 'Appendix' to *Beyond Epistemology. New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. by Frederick G. Weiss. Charles Taylor's *Hegel* provides a fine and readable introduction to the system in its entirety. This book has especially become popular with people who take an interest in Hegel but lack the time to plough through detailed scholarly works. The final chapter, 'Hegel Today', is of special interest since it discusses the question of why the Hegelian synthesis was bound to dissolve.

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8 / Jacob Klapwijk

Antithesis and Common Grace

In chapter 6 we examined Calvin's views on philosophy. Calvin urged openness to the Word and Spirit of God. The basis of such philosophy ought to be 'humility.' True to this view of philosophizing Christianly, Calvin reflected on non-Christian thought, openly and critically. Open in the sense that he understood non-Christian thought as possible only by God's sovereign and gracious involvement in the lives and reflections of people; critical, because in Calvin's judgment non-Christian thought was based on what moderns would call self-sufficiency or autonomy. In this chapter I present an account of the *on-going discussion of 'antithesis' in Dutch neo-Calvinism since Abraham Kuyper* (1837–1920).[1]

(1) *Introduction*

The question of how to assess non-Christian philosophy arose again in the reformational tradition, be it in a much broader framework of reference, when in the second half of the nineteenth century there was a revival of Calvinism, both in the Netherlands and abroad. One of the most inspiring leaders of this neo-Calvinism was Abraham Kuyper. Following his conversion, Kuyper sought to reassess the importance of the Calvinist Reformation for modern times and modern culture. Kuyper established the Anti-Revolutionary Party, a Christian political party, in 1879. In 1880 he founded the Free University in Amsterdam, based on 'the Reformed principles,' and became Professor of Systematic Theology at that institution. From 1901 to 1905 Kuyper was Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

Kuyper challenged adherents of the Reformed tradition not only to reflect on the need for Christian statecraft but also to develop a Christian or, more precisely, a Calvinist view of culture and science. He pondered

1. The following abbreviations are used:
GG = Abraham Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie*
LC = Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*
GD = Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*
RB = Johan H. Bavinck, *Religieus besef en Christelijk geloof*
PR = *Philosophia Reformata*

what might be the value of present-day, secularized science for Christians. Must it be accepted gratefully as a gift from God's hand, its apostate features notwithstanding? Or should its apostate direction be unmasked and opposed in the light of the Christian cultural mandate? Is it a sign of God's common grace? Or is it sooner an expression of a universal antithesis between belief and unbelief?

The plan of this study is as follows. First, I devote several sections to a sketch of Kuyper's position on the topic, noting the tensions inherent in his thought. Next, I compare Kuyper's views with those of two other Free University theologians, Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) and Johan H. Bavinck (1895–1964). After that, I discuss the more recent contributions of two philosophers at the Free University, Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977) and Cornelis A. van Peursen (1920–). In the closing remarks I evaluate the ideas of these thinkers and add some personal conclusions.

(2) *Abraham Kuyper*

Between 1902 and 1905 Abraham Kuyper published one of his most characteristic standard works, *De gemeene gratie*, in three volumes. The title itself indicates the framework within which Kuyper sought to answer the question concerning the value of non-Christian culture, science, and philosophy: the doctrine of general or common grace. In the systematic section of this work (vol. II), Kuyper introduces the problem by observing that the church often disappoints one's expectations and the world often exceeds them:

> One is struck by ... the remarkable fact that, weighed against the doctrine of our depravity through sin, the unconverted world exceeds our expectations; and the church, weighed against the doctrine of the re-birth, disappoints our expectations. (GG II, 29)

Evidently, Kuyper would expect more from the church and less from 'the world.' This inclination can be understood to a certain extent as a product of his Calvinist background. On the one side, Kuyper starts from the Reformed doctrine of the total corruption of human nature by sin. This doctrine is expressed in the *Heidelberg Catechism* (the confession of faith which so strongly influenced the preaching, faith life, and theology of Dutch Calvinism and Kuyper's thinking): the natural man is 'wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil.'[2] On the other side, Kuyper adheres to the Reformed confession of all-encompassing salvation

2. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day III, 8.

through Jesus Christ, through whom the believer is freed from sin and reborn to new life. It is this deep-rooted twofold conviction of humankind's total depravity and of Christ's universal salvation that explains Kuyper's saying that the church turns out to be worse and the world better than one would expect.

To demonstrate that the 'unconverted world' exceeds our expectations, Kuyper likes to point to the fruits of philosophy and science which that world has brought forth in such abundance. In view of the seriousness of sin, the explanation for this phenomenon, according to Kuyper, cannot be found in some residue of (partial) goodness in human nature. Kuyper can offer only one explanation for it: the goodness of God. God's goodness toward all people, i.e., God's common grace, explains why persons such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Darwin (!) have shone as 'stars of the first magnitude' (GG III, 498). Not humanity's excellence but God's grace is the cause. Again I quote Kuyper:

> The doctrine of 'common grace' . . . did not arise from philosophical speculation but from the confession of the deadly nature of sin. . . . Apparently, this [confession] did not accord with reality. There was so much that was beautiful, respectable, so much to be envied in that sinful world, also outside the church. This placed one before the choice either to reject all this good against one's better judgment and to go astray with the Anabaptists, or to present fallen man as not so deeply fallen after all and thus to go astray in the Arminian heresy. . . . The solution of this apparent contradiction, however, is . . . that grace is operative outside the church, too, among the heathen, in the midst of the world, not eternal or saving grace, but temporal grace, which restrains the depravity inherent in sin. (GG I, 11; cf. *LC* 121 ff)

(3) *Particular and common grace*

In support of this doctrine of common grace, Kuyper appeals to Calvin. Rightly so, insofar as Calvin, too, had set non-Christian philosophy against the background of the depravity and powerlessness of sinners and God's gracious dealing with the world. Yet, Kuyper's position is not identical to Calvin's. Kuyper is the one who systematized the doctrine of common grace by making a sharp distinction between God's common grace to all people and his 'particular grace' to believers. Common grace has a different content, scope, purpose, and ground than can be ascribed to particular grace.

1. *Common grace has a different content.* The content of particular grace is deliverance from sin and the gift of eternal salvation. Common grace,

in contrast, 'contains of itself not a single grain of saving grace and is, consequently, of a totally different nature' (GG I, 9). The content of common grace is temporal blessing for humanity and creation. Kuyper explains this as follows. God has said in paradise that if man sinned, he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). Now, grace is sometimes extended to people who are under sentence of death. Similarly, according to Kuyper, God has extended grace to fallen humanity: grace in the sense that punishment (eternal death) has been postponed until the last day; that room has been made for the prolonged history of mankind; that the deadly poison of sin has been restrained—indeed, restrained not only in humans but in the whole of creation (GG II, 243ff, 265ff).

2. It follows that *common grace is also broader in scope than particular grace*. Common grace is universal, applying to the whole world and the whole of humanity. Everyone, not just believers, benefits from God's maintaining the order of creation. That art and culture, philosophy and science, and so on, remain possible in this world in spite of sin is to the advantage of all people everywhere.

3. *The purpose of common grace differs from that of particular grace*. To Kuyper, particular grace is the mysterious reality of God's intervention in the human heart whereby a person receives new life and becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. Rebirth is of a supernatural order: not simply given with the creation, it is in fact an eschatological reality, inasmuch as the believer is enabled here on earth to have a foretaste of the powers of the world to come (Hebr. 6:15). In comparison with the original creation the re-creation is not something totally new; still, it cannot be explained in terms of the old. Particular grace and its fruits (new life and, finally, the new heaven and the new earth) transcend the natural creation-order upheld by common grace (GG I, 243ff; II, 613ff). Particular grace means, therefore, that God makes a new beginning. The purpose of particular grace is to anticipate the new heaven and the new earth. Common grace, in contrast, means that God perpetuates the old. The purpose of common grace is to restrain sin and preserve the creature, or, put more positively, to make possible the disclosure of the potentialities inherent in the creation through the actualization, in the course of world history, of all the splendidly diverse fruits of culture (GG II, 616–23).

4. *Even the ground of common grace is different from that of particular grace*. Kuyper teaches that salvation history and the church, in short, the terrain of particular grace, is borne by Jesus Christ, the crucified Lord: he is the mediator of *salvation*. The creation-order, however, unfolding in the broad stream of history and culture, is the area of God's common grace,

founded in the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the divine Being: he is the Mediator of *creation* (GG II, 635, 647; III, 123).

How is one to assess this position? It appears to me that serious difficulties attend Kuyper's contrast between common grace and particular grace, between earth and heaven, creation and re-creation, between cultural activity and salvation of the soul, as if God had different grounds for being merciful to humans. In all of this lurks the threat of a spiritualizing dualism, a kind of mysticism that expresses itself in a bifurcated orientation to the hereafter and to the present. Only rarely does Kuyper manage to integrate the two spheres from a central point of view. Yet, at times he senses that the purpose of particular grace converges with the purpose of common grace: God wants the salvation of the soul to be included in the redemption of the created world. And this full salvation is attributable to the reconciling sacrifice of Christ. In other words, the ground for personal grace is the same as the ground for common grace: namely, the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus bears the future but also the present; it bears the church but also the world. To Jesus Christ is given all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). At such moments Kuyper honors Christ as the king also in the sphere of common grace. It is then that he proclaims: 'There is not a square inch in the whole of our human existence of which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not say: Mine!'[3]

Mostly, however, the tensions in Kuyper's theology of culture remain, as they do in his personal life. In part, his work echoes the mystery of the born-again heart, the sigh of the weary pilgrim who yearns for his eternal home. In part, he is driven to work with extraordinary vigor at the unfolding of God's creation in state, society, and science. And even here his ideas seem sometimes at odds with each other. At times he regards the creation mandate as a common human task in which Christians and non-Christians struggle side by side. At such times it seems as if the terrain of common grace is equivalent to the realm of nature in medieval Scholasticism. At other times Kuyper is sure that the great cultural mandate leaves no room for cooperation with the non-Christian; he is sure that this mandate proclaims the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the whole world and that it must therefore be translated into a program

3. *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, 32. See also Sytse U. Zuidema, 'Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper,' 95. Kuyper encountered great difficulties in seeking to articulate a radically christocentric view of culture, for while he was whole-heartedly devoted to emancipating culture (regarded as the fruit of common grace) from the control of the church (regarded as the institution of particular grace), he feared that an exclusively christocentric view of culture might lead to renewed domination of political and social life by the church.

of organized Christian action in all areas of life, including science and philosophy.[4]

(4) *Common grace and the antithesis*

This brings me back again to my main theme. Like everything else in creation, according to Kuyper, thought, science, and philosophy depend upon divine ordinances; they are grounded in 'God's own creation' (GG III, 495). Hence, science, too, is to be regarded as a fruit of common grace. Because sin has darkened the understanding, it follows that all science would end in deceit and self-deception if there were no common grace. Common grace makes science possible. Kuyper is also convinced that science is seriously affected by sin. In fact, Kuyper's opposition to non-Christian science is much stronger than his appreciation of it, despite his theory of common grace.[5]

In *De gemeene gratie* Kuyper is inconclusive. He finds that there are differences between the sciences. In the natural sciences, he thinks, general validity and common acceptance are possible to a large extent, because in these sciences a great deal depends on exact, objective observation. In history, philosophy, and the other human sciences, however, the subjectivity of the researcher often is a decisive factor, because here questions arise concerning the origin, coherence and purpose of things—questions that cannot be answered through observation alone (GG III, 508, 512). With respect to the natural sciences Kuyper seeks to avoid positing an opposition between what is Christian and what is not. Matters are different, however, where theology and the other human sciences (including philosophy of nature) are concerned. Two kinds of science are possible here, regenerate and unregenerate, so that a truly Christian science is obviously required. The distinctive character of such science would entail the consideration of scriptural data, but most importantly it would require the mind of a born-again Christian (GG III 514, 521).[6]

4. One can find a condensation of this program in the three volumes of Kuyper's work *Pro Rege* (1911–12).

5. Kuyper states his grounds for maintaining that science is affected by sin. What does it mean, he asks, to say that our knowledge is darkened by sin? Certainly it does not mean that we can no longer observe with our senses or think logically with our minds. No, it means that we no longer see things in their coherence and divine origin. The human mind can still perceive various parts of creation, but it is no longer capable of understanding the unity, origin, and purpose of things. Thus, to Kuyper the darkening of the understanding means not only the end of natural theology and its philosophical ascent to God but also the impossibility of attaining true knowledge of creation. Cf. *De gemeene gratie* III, 499 ff.

6. That the born-again person would take Scripture, too, into account is to Kuyper an indispensable yet incidental difference, distinguishing regenerate from unregenerate science. It is

Thus Kuyper's position on non-Christian thought is ambivalent. Sometimes he stresses the gifts which God in his goodness grants humanity. At such times he can speak with admiration of Plato, Kant, and others. More often, however, he stresses the theme that only the regenerate can compare 'spiritual things with spiritual' (I Cor. 2:13). That is, he stresses the necessity of specifically Christian human sciences and philosophy. Then he takes sides and pits 'the science of the new birth' against the 'science outside the influence of the new birth' (GG III, 515). The idea of common grace now ceases to function as the basis for appreciating non-Christian conceptions and instead becomes the basis for antithetical action; Kuyper uses it to justify taking Christian initiatives and attacking non-Christian endeavors in science. He advocates an 'organizational antithesis' in the sciences—the building of a separate Christian scholarly movement within the world of learning.

Kuyper emphasizes the antithesis even more strongly in his renowned *Lectures on Calvinism*, which were presented as the Stone Lectures at Princeton University in 1898. In the chapter 'Calvinism and Science' a few words of admiration are devoted to the 'treasures of philosophic light' found in ancient Greece and Rome; for those treasures we are indebted to common grace (*LC* 121, 125). But Kuyper goes on straightway to present a program of Christian scientific activity that is even more universal and radical than the one articulated in *De gemeene gratie*. It is more universal because Christian and non-Christian activity 'both claim the whole domain of human knowledge.... [They dispute] with one another the whole domain of life.' Kuyper no longer acknowledges a common task even with respect to the 'lower,' natural sciences. This program is also more radical because, throughout, he speaks in terms of two types of people. Involved are 'two kinds of human consciousness: that of the regenerate and the unregenerate.' They are not the same, nor can they be made to 'agree' (*LC* 133, 137–38).[7]

To Kuyper the difference is striking. The unregenerate mind believes the cosmos to be 'normal' as it is. The regenerate mind knows that because

an indispensable difference because the Bible sheds a bright light on the great questions of the origin, government, and purpose of things. Yet it is incidental, first because a person must be reborn to understand the Scriptures, and secondly because Scripture is primarily concerned with particular grace and with effecting the salvation of the elect. When the Scriptures shed light on creation too, then this is a welcome and indispensable reinforcement of the dim light of common grace. Cf. *De gemeene gratie* III, 515.

7. It should perhaps be said that these terms need to be understood in the context of Kuyper's conviction that regeneration—together with the means to regeneration, namely, the incarnate Christ and the holy Scriptures—is 'abnormal.' See *Lectures on Calvinism*, 134. They connote a supernatural order and anticipate the new creation.

of the intrusion of sin, the world is 'abnormal' and unable to reach its goal except through regeneration. Thus the antithesis in science is between the 'Normalists' and the 'Abnormalists;' there are 'two absolutely differing starting points, which have nothing in common in their origin.' The Normalists and the Abnormalists 'cannot desist from the constant endeavor to pull down to the ground the entire edifice of their respective controverted assertions, all the supports included, upon which their assertions rest' (*LC* 130–34).[8]

(5) *Three diverging lines*

It can be said that there are a good many ambiguities, tensions and contradictions in Kuyper's position. More precisely, one can distinguish at least three lines in Kuyper's doctrine of common grace. In the first place, there is a more or less mystical line, when Kuyper relegates common grace and particular grace to two separate areas in such a way that the regenerate heart, saved by God's particular grace, transcends the natural order of existence, the terrain of common grace. Kuyper suggests that in virtue of rebirth (*palingenesis*) a new principle of life is implanted, a principle that is never fully explicable in terms of the natural order of creation. It puts humanity on the way of a higher, spiritual world, to the eternal house of the Father, where all will see God face to face.

It is clear that in this context 'common' and 'particular' grace are little more than different names for what Kuyper himself sometimes calls the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' (GG II, 243). This line of thought, which testifies to a moderate mysticism, has a long tradition in the history of the Christian church—one encounters it in Bonaventure, for example. And wherever this line is found, the value of philosophy and culture, be they of Christian or non-Christian provenance, is relativized in a large measure,

8. Remarkably, Kuyper stresses common grace again in his lecture on art, which is placed after the one on science. It is common grace that makes it possible for Christians to enjoy the art of unbelievers, he says; and (appealing to Calvin) he goes on to reject any linking of art and regeneration. He does so, he says, because art does not belong to believers alone and because art must be more than ecclesiastical art. In short, art is not a product of particular grace but one of the natural gifts (cf. *Lectures on Calvinism*, 161). Kuyper argues that Calvinism could not develop its own Christian art style and at the same time be true to its principle and its calling (149). Yet he is rather unconvincing. Kuyper does not succeed in making clear why regenerate aesthetic consciousness and regenerate scientific thought must part company and go their separate ways. One cannot escape the impression that Kuyper was advancing *ad hoc* apologetic arguments here; and we recall that his movement in the Netherlands produced a free Christian university but not a Christian academy of art. Nevertheless, Kuyper had touched upon this problem years before in *De gemeene gratie*. There he speaks of artistic expressions 'inspired by the spirit of the abyss' and of others 'inspired by the spirit of rebirth.' In connection with the latter he alludes, significantly, to a 'gap in the life of Christianity' (vol. III, 570f)

as in Kuyper, if not disesteemed altogether. For after all, the heart of the Christian is elsewhere, in the pilgrimage toward the kingdom of glory and in the participation in the eschatological reality of that kingdom where God will be all in all. This first, semi-mystical line is not to be regarded as Kuyper's most original contribution.[9]

In a second train of thought Kuyper elaborates the doctrine of common and particular grace in terms of a theory of two realms as well, but in such a way that a Christian fully accepts his calling in both. The first terrain is now viewed as a common human area where the Christian is called to far-reaching cooperation with those of other persuasions; an example would be the cooperation in the field of the ('lower') natural sciences where the standpoint of faith supposedly plays a negligible role only. Matters are entirely different on the second terrain. On the level of theology, philosophy, and the ('higher') human sciences in general, believers are assigned their own, exclusively Christian task.

This way of thinking may also be called 'supernaturalistic,' although oriented less to the tradition of mysticism than reminiscent of the synthesizing approach of Thomistic philosophy.[10] This second line in Kuyper's thought can also be said to be not particularly original. Under the names of common and particular grace, a supernaturalistic dualism is reintroduced without the question being answered whether this dualism is in harmony with the exclusivity of the reformational *sola gratia*.

The third line in Kuyper's thought is one in which the distinction between God's common grace to all and his particular grace to believers is not worked out dualistically into a doctrine of two separate terrains of life; the attempt is made, rather, to view all of created reality as an undivided whole, as such damaged by sin but at the same time placed in the light of

9. Cf. John C. Vander Stelt, 'Kuyper's Semi-Mystical Conception.' In Kuyper's case one must, indeed, speak of a semi- or moderated mysticism, as Vander Stelt, following Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven, does. In the '*palingenesis*,' on Kuyper's view, the germ of supernatural life is implanted in the natural life of the believer; and that supernatural life transcends the natural order of creation in principle—and with Christ's second coming transcends it altogether. 'Then the re-creating power of Particular grace demands even the terrain of Common grace for itself, including both our bodies and the whole of the world' (*De gemeene gratie* II, 685). Certainly there is an impulse in the direction of a higher, supernatural life, but 'supernatural' does not mean 'divine' in the scholastic vein.

10. Sytse U. Zuidema has noted that one can speak of 'Thomism' in Kuyper to a certain degree only. It must be remembered that in Kuyper (a) the distinction between nature and the supernatural is not given with the creation but first appears in connection with God's saving work after the fall; (b) the supernatural transcends the natural forces of creation, yet not in such a way that man participates in the divine being (see preceding note); (c) the dualism of nature and the supernatural is only temporary, because in the rebirth of heaven and earth the whole of created reality will be transformed into a supernatural creation. Cf. S. U. Zuidema, 'Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper,' 63–64.

God's gracious acts in Jesus Christ. Throughout human society, in church, state, and community, the believer is called *pro Rege*, that is, he is called to follow King Jesus. *Pro Rege* means mobilizing Christian forces for the battle against idolatrous and anti-Christian powers at work in culture. To build science on Christian principles is part of that calling. The other side of the coin is that every form of science based on, say, humanistic principles is to be opposed; demanded is a thoroughgoing antithetical attitude toward non-Christian thought.[11]

It is here, I think, that we find Kuyper's most characteristic understanding. Following Calvin and the later Augustine, he takes the blinding power of sin seriously. His view here mirrors the suspicions harbored by believers of the first centuries toward all 'wisdom of the world.' Since the days of the ancient Church Father Tertullian, no one, perhaps, has placed such emphasis on the contradiction between Christian belief and non-Christian thought. In the final analysis, according to Kuyper, the conflict is not between belief and science but between two beliefs (Christian and non-Christian), demanding two sciences (Christian and non-Christian):

> Not faith and science, therefore, but two scientific systems or, if you choose, two scientific elaborations, are opposed to each other, each having its own faith. Nor may it be said that it is here science which opposes theology, for we have to do with two absolute forms of science, both of which claim the whole domain of human knowledge.... [They dispute] with one another the whole domain of life. (*LC* 133)

Kuyper advanced this third, antithetical line as a Calvinistic view. And so it is, as we have seen, at least to a certain degree. Remarkably though, it seems a Calvinism set to a different key. Kuyper adapts Calvin's criticism of non-Christian thought, but less so his openness toward it. The background of this divergence is probably a difference in starting point. Perhaps one could say that 'the foundation of humility' on which Calvin sought to take his stand inclined him to seek out traces of God's presence even in non-Christian thought. This position of humility seems at times to have been supplanted by a position of self-confidence in Kuyper. I mean: a position in which the inclination exists to monopolize God's presence for Christian communities and Christian organizations and to interpret the world of culture and science, to the extent that it is estranged from God, exclusively in terms of human apostasy and unbelief. The doctrine of God's general grace is still defended, but mainly in this sense, that the world of philosophy and culture as such is infused with it and the faithful

11. For the tendencies and tensions in Kuyper's view, see again the important article of S. U. Zuidema. See also J. Klapwijk, 'Abraham Kuyper, over wetenschap en universiteit.'

thus relieved of the obligation of world-avoidance, since 'not only *the church* but also *the world* belongs to God' (*LC* 125). Given this perspective, Christians may enter the world without feeling uneasy about doing so, as long as the objective is nothing other than to claim the world for the Lord and, as a mobilized force, to capture it from the powers of unbelief. The doctrine of common grace legitimizes in this way the doctrine of organizational antithesis, an antithesis that assumes visible form in this world. It leads not to a critical appreciation but to a complete depreciation of non-Christian thought.[12]

On this point Kuyper seems more readily comparable with the Church Father Augustine than with the Reformer Calvin. In *De civitate Dei*, Augustine, too, proceeded on the basis of a fundamental spiritual opposition in this world, i.e., between the 'city of God' and 'the earthly city.' Augustine, too, sought to visualize this antithesis in the course of world history by relating it to two 'groups' or two 'communities' within the human race (XV, 1). To concretize these still further, he identifies the two communities with the Assyrian and Roman empires on the one hand (XVIII, 2) and Israel and the church on the other (XVIII, 47; XX, 20). It needs to be kept in mind, however, that Augustine often also emphasized that these two kingdoms are always commingled in world history and that—like wheat and tares at harvest—they will not be separated before the Last Judgment (XVIII, 47; *Enarratio in Psalmum* 52, 6) (cf. ch. 1.7). Also, evaluating the goods of the Roman Empire, Augustine sometimes relinquished the religious contradiction between the two kingdoms and followed the principle of an ontological hierarchy of higher and lower goods in keeping with neo-Platonic emanation theory. In that context, at least where various worldly matters are concerned, he no longer proceeded on the basis of a contradiction but of a 'harmony' between the two states, whereupon it was possible for him, too, to arrive at a more positive appreciation of worldly cultural goods, including the philosophy and science of his time.[13]

(6) *Herman and Johan H. Bavinck*

Kuyper's view did not go unopposed. Herman Bavinck, Professor of Dogmatics at the Free University, was as staunch a supporter of a Christian

12. For my objections to this 'organizational antithesis,' see my article 'Dooyeweerd's Christian Philosophy: Antithesis and Critique.' I believe Kuyper had other, compelling motives for establishing Christian organizations, as I argued in 'Christelijke organisaties in verlegenheid.'

13. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XIX, 17: '*Inter civitatem utramque concordia*' (between both cities there is harmony). See also Jelle Wytzes, 'Eenige gedachten van Augustinus over den staat.'

approach to science and philosophy as Kuyper was. Bavinck, too, put aside scholastic dualism, which denied the total corruption of human nature, including human reason. Yet Bavinck arrived at a much more moderate judgment of non-Christian thought than Kuyper did.

In the first place, Bavinck notes that the antithesis is a conflict of principles, not of persons or of organizations. He therefore cannot follow Kuyper in concluding from two kinds of principles to two kinds of people and two kinds of science. Bavinck calls that a *metabasis eis allo genos*, a shift to another category. For Bavinck, the kingdom of the Truth can no more be equated with those who are born again than the kingdom of Satan can be identified with those who are not born again; there is in fact much error present in the one, much truth in the other.[14]

Assuming that there is a radical opposition of principle between belief and unbelief, the wellsprings of Christianity and paganism respectively, Bavinck asserts in the second place that this opposition is not exclusively antithetical. In *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, his major work, he writes that in the heathen religions 'elements of truth' must be acknowledged. In fact, Christianity may be called the 'fulfillment' of the heathen quest on the ground of God's general revelation (*GD* I, 290–92).[15]

A different view of the antithesis brings with it a different view of contemporary philosophy! Bavinck, as I see it, somewhat more consistently than Kuyper, sees common grace as a source of light and truth, because to him God's general revelation continues to shine, despite everything, in a world estranged from him. For this reason Bavinck, like Calvin, can look upon current philosophy as a *praeclarum donum Dei*, an excellent gift of God (*GD* I, 509).[16]

Bavinck adds something to this. He notes that Christianity did not destroy ancient civilization and philosophy but rather 'Christianized' and 'sanctified' them (*GD* I, 577). The Church Fathers themselves, according to Bavinck, came to the view that the existing science 'was neither to be utterly rejected nor wholly accepted.'[17] It is clear that compared to a consistent Kuyperian view of the antithesis this line of thought must make new and different demands of a Christian philosophy. Specifically, given such openness to non-Christian thought, it requires that Christian

14. On this '*metabasis*' see one of Herman Bavinck's lecture notebooks for 1896–97 as cited in Rolf H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 40. Here Bremmer deals extensively with Bavinck's assessment of Kuyper's *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid* (37–45).

15. In connection with the tensions in Kuyper's position, compare the *Encyclopedie* III, 444, with the *Lectures on Calvinism*, 134, where the antithesis is described as 'two absolutely differing starting-points, which have nothing in common in their origin.'

16. See also Herman Bavinck, *Verzamelde opstellen*, 53.

17. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap*, 14.

philosophy never fall back into Scholasticism. Bavinck wanted to avoid such a relapse.

Herman Bavinck's standpoint was subsequently worked out in greater detail by Johan H. Bavinck, who was Professor of Christian Missions at the Free University after World War II. In *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* and other publications, J.H. Bavinck shows how ambiguous both non-Christian religions and non-Christian philosophies really are. On the basis of an extensive exegesis of biblical passages, especially Romans 1, Bavinck holds that two things are revealed in the non-Christian religions. First, one finds in them the self-manifestation and self-presentation of God (*RB* 113, 123). Paul states in Romans 1:20 that God has made known 'his eternal power and Godhead;' thus, there is knowledge of God among the peoples of the earth. Secondly however, there is also in these religions something that might be called the human suppression-mechanism. Knowledge of God is constantly suppressed and replaced (*RB* 128, 172). Paul writes of those 'who hold the truth in unrighteousness' (Romans 1:25). In other words, it cannot be said that the thought of non-Christians is unmitigated apostasy or pure and unmixed idolatry; rather it is evident that in their very apostasy and idolatry there is a struggle going on in them with respect to the truth; they bear witness to both the influence of and the resistance to the God who makes himself known to all people. Writes Bavinck:

> Perhaps people will say to me, 'There is that most authentic "point of contact" after all, the "suppressed truth!"' Or perhaps the charge made against me will be, 'Here we go then, driven into psychology under full sail.' To both objections I answer with a great round 'No!' For this suppressed truth is not something of man's; it is there despite and against man's will. It is there because powerless man in his abominable immorality is capable of pushing God's truth aside, of banishing it, of putting it away from him, but he is never capable of destroying it without remnant. It is always there in his life as a threat, and it never lets go of him. (*RB* 175)

(7) *The Van Peursen–Dooyeweerd discussion*

Against the background of this sketch of Kuyper and the Bavincks, I add a comment on the discussions between the two Free University philosophers Cornelis A. van Peursen and Herman Dooyeweerd, portions of which were published in *Philosophia Reformata*.[18] Their arguments are of

18. See *Philosophia Reformata*, vols. 24 (160–68), 25 (97–150), 26 (189–200). See also Cornelis A. van Peursen, 'Culture and Christian Faith.'

importance for us because one of the main points of difference between them is their evaluation of non-Christian philosophy. And, as far as I can see, this difference arises from the fact that where the principle of antithesis is concerned, Dooyeweerd is in the line primarily of Kuyper while Van Peursen's position is more like that of J.H. Bavinck.

Dooyeweerd and Van Peursen both want to give a positive evaluation of non-biblical thought. However, both the degree and the grounds of their appreciation differs considerably. Dooyeweerd holds that human thought and, hence, all rational and philosophical systems are subject to the principle of religious antithesis. Most theories are driven by an apostate religious motivation, a motivation which stands in 'radical antithesis' (a term of Kuyper's) to the biblical groundmotive, that is to say, the all-embracing power of God's word as it is incarnated in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord (*PR* 25, 144ff). Non-Christian philosophies can and ought to be appreciated only insofar as they appear to be confronted with undeniable 'states of affairs which conform to the law-structures of creation.' That is to say, in spite of conflicting religious starting points, Christian and non-Christian philosophers alike have to face the states of affairs which impinge upon every person within the structures of God's creation order (*PR* 25, 105ff, 150).

Van Peursen does not recognize such a divine creation order nor does he recognize anything like 'states of affairs' based on it. According to him the 'affairs' are never 'static;' to the contrary, they are related to the meaning-giving human subject and therefore move within patterns of human interpretation (*PR* 24, 162ff, 168). Where, then, does Van Peursen find a ground for this appreciation of and communication with non-Christian thinkers? In separating faith and reason? That would be impossible, because both Dooyeweerd and Van Peursen are convinced of the impact of religion on human rationality. But for Van Peursen the religious antithesis is not as absolute as it is for Dooyeweerd. To Van Peursen the religious antithesis, God's No to sin, is preceded by a religious thesis, God's Yes to the whole of creation. In the line of the Bavincks, Van Peursen emphasizes the presence of God in our created world on the ground that God reveals himself to humans even within false religions and humanistic ideologies (*PR* 24, 168). Not in the general structures of a supposed creation order but in this general appeal of God to every human being can the real basis be found for a mutual appreciation and a rational communication between Christian and non-Christian scholars, as Van Peursen sees it (*PR* 24, 168).

(8) *Questions and considerations*

The controversy about 'states of affairs' and 'God's presence' raised many questions, the most crucial of which for the Reformed tradition would be whether an inevitable dilemma confronts us here.

Consider Dooyeweerd's point. Does he not deserve support when he speaks of incontrovertible states of affairs? Granted that humans are able to give a new meaning to certain matters and to re-interpret familiar events, it remains the case that the possibilities for doing so are always limited and never arbitrary. Human meaning-giving is always effected within the framework of divine meaning-stipulation. If God is the Creator, is he not likewise the final law-giver and meaning-giver of creation? 'Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth' (Is. 40:26).

It is precisely at this point, I believe, that the great value of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace is to be found, too. With this doctrine Kuyper wanted to express the fact that in spite of human sin and self-will, God does not forsake the work of his hands. He upholds the world by his 'creation ordinances' (GG I, 243, 259). In his grace he is and he remains the sovereign law-giver and meaning-giver. Yet, as we have seen, Kuyper did not adequately stress that God does all this for the sake of Christ. Kuyper stated that the earth (common grace) bears the Cross (particular grace); he often did not see that in a deeper sense the reverse is true: the Cross bears the earth. Now, Dooyeweerd's contribution has been to re-formulate Kuyper's view of common grace on such a christocentric basis.[19] The doctrine of common grace can be kept unsoiled by the stubborn tradition of the two-realms theory on condition that it be anchored christocentrically alone. Only then, furthermore, is it able to offer the possibility of evaluating non-Christian thought correctly.[20]

19. See also J. Klapwijk, 'The Struggle for a Christian Philosophy: Another Look at Dooyeweerd.' Dooyeweerd solves Kuyper's problem (a christocentric, yet non-ecclesiastically oriented view of culture) by making a sharp distinction between religion and faith. His view of culture and science, while religiously rooted in Christ, does not imply any direct tie with ecclesiastical articles of faith.

20. Any two-realm theory has to be rejected here. As I see it, it is necessary to realize that Christ and his redemptive grace are both present in the heart of man and revealed as the ground of culture. The same holds for common grace. Common grace is revealed not only in the world of culture and science (for example, in the moments of truth when pagan and secularized thought is able to give a convincing interpretation of incontrovertible 'states of affairs') but also, and even in the first place, in the religion and heart of man. Calvin has already pointed to the awareness of divinity (*divinitatis sensus*) and sparks (*scintillae*) of the knowledge of God in the hearts of all

Granted the truth of all this, the question still arises whether something else should not be taken into consideration as well. By that 'something else' I mean the point urged by the Bavincks and Van Peursen: God's presence. The theme of God's presence is, as I see it, closely related to the question of the nature of all religion, including Christianity. No religion is comprehensible apart from the presence of God. Every religion has an 'answer-structure.' That is, religion is religion because and to the extent that it responds to an appeal from God, be it to God's revelation in his Word (special revelation) or to God's revelation in his works (general revelation). The answer that people give in religion is always one of either surrender or rebellion. Whatever the human response, there echoes in it always something of the original call of God.

> And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? (Gen. 3:8, 9)

I think one has to grant Dooyeweerd that an apostate groundmotive is at work in non-Christian thought. It must be added, however, that this apostate motive also affects the mind of the Christian, who is likewise a sinner; and that the presence of this motive in no way contradicts the presence of God. Conversely, the apostate motive, too, is always religiously directed toward God in the sense that it is a self-willed cry against heaven, a suppressing and distorting of the Truth that confronts humans continually, rebellion notwithstanding.[21]

men. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I, 3, 3; 4, 1; 4, 4; 5, 1; 5, 14; and II, 2, 12. Kuyper himself has said that God's common grace has checked the corruption of sin even in the heart of man. Cf. *De gemeene gratie* I, 250.

21. As a consequence of this, non-Christian thought cannot simply be understood as Dooyeweerd would understand it, that is, in terms of apostate religious groundmotives such as form–matter, nature–freedom, and so forth. Similarly, there should be no talk, at least in the absence of further qualification, of a 'radical antithesis' between religious groundmotives, as if there were a perfect parallelism involved in which non-Christian thought would flow from the apostate motives in a way strictly analogous to that in which Christian thought would flow from the 'biblical groundmotive' of creation, fall, and redemption. The biblical witness to the enmity between 'the seed of the woman' and 'the seed of the serpent' (Gen. 3:15), between Christ and Satan, must in no way be diluted; yet the religious attitude of the non-believer can only be understood in terms of both. In other words, one can say that non-Christian thought is ruled by an apostate groundmotive (and one has to add that the Christian mind, too, never frees itself entirely of its influence), but this does not alter the fact that non-Christian thought ought to be examined precisely in its apostate groundmotives, in the overpowering light of the Christian groundmotive. Dooyeweerd touched on this problem himself when he said, 'The biblical groundmotive in the revelation of the fall embraces and discloses them [i.e. the non-Christian groundmotives] in their true nature' (*Philosophia Reformata* 25(1960):146). I agree with this, but I think the Christian groundmotive (I would rather say 'the biblical Word-revelation') is much more sweeping and

We must acknowledge that the Christian life is a mixed existence: Christian thought does not escape the blight of sin. We must likewise recognize that, thanks to God's grace, non-Christian existence is also a *mixtum*: on the plane of human rationality remarkable insights have been achieved, even though ultimately the full Truth always has been suppressed. This is why all pagan religions and every apostate ideology and theoretical system proves to be ambiguous and ambivalent. It would be incorrect to conclude from this that they turn out to be better than could have been expected (as Kuyper did); for the fact that the human lie is mixed with the divine Truth does not tend to weaken the lie, it just discloses its guilty, parasitic power. Even the lie feeds on the Truth. In its own way, it confirms the superior power of the Truth: 'For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth' (II Cor. 13:8).[22]

In summary it can be said that to render the ambivalent character of non-Christian thought comprehensible it is not enough to appeal only to the personal presence of God, nor does it suffice to appeal exclusively to the structural order of creation. An exclusive appeal to the presence of God detached from recognition of the creation order will not do, if for no other reason than that God's personal self-revelation already presupposes a created order. That man is made for God—'Thou has made us for Thyself,' said Augustine—is, after all, one of the creation ordinances (Gen. 1:26). Consciousness of the Godhead is written (*inscriptus*), yes, engraved (*insculptus*) in the hearts of all people, says Calvin.[23] Yet, the reverse one-sidedness must be rejected as well. An exclusive appeal to universal states of affairs in God's creation order does not work either, because it does not make clear why humans in their sinful nature should not consciously disregard or deny the facts or values of life, turning philosophy into a grandiose lie devoid of all truth.

Since the issue here is one of a controversy within the Calvinist tradition, it is relevant to cite Calvin's *Institutes* at this point:

> The final goal of the blessed life, moreover, rests in the knowledge of God. Lest anyone, then, be excluded from access to happiness, he not only sowed in men's mind that seed of religion (*religionis semen*) of which we have spoken

penetrating than Dooyeweerd suggests. The Word-revelation 'discloses' not only through the revelation of the fall but also through the revelation of creation and the revelation of redemption: it makes clear that non-Christian thought is driven both by the power of sin and by God's revelation in creation (so that sayings of pagan sages and philosophers even appear in the Old and New Testaments), and that influence of God's revelation in creation is in its turn an expression of God's overpowering redeeming grace in Jesus Christ.

22. See also J. Klapwijk, 'Dooyeweerd's Christian Philosophy: Antithesis and Critique.'

23. Calvin, *Institutes* I, 3, 1; 4, 4.

> but revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him. (I, 5, 1)

In a broader context Calvin makes clear that the possibility of philosophy, and of the sciences, too, depends in part on the unavoidable sense of 'God's created order.'[24]

It seems that it would be impossible to overemphasize the close coherence between God's action upon the human heart (general revelation) and his upholding of creation structures (common grace).[25] We cannot separate revelation and creation, because the Bible teaches that God reveals himself to us in and through the created works of his hands. God's voice and the voice of the facts are indivisible. If the voice of God were no longer to be heard throughout the length and breadth of the world, the human mind would disintegrate and the facts, too, would fall still.[26]

(9) *Critical transformation*

At this point one might ask: Granted that the Christian has good reasons for paying close attention to non-Christian thought and for appreciating positively greater or lesser parts of its contributions in science and philosophy, how can he avail himself of them in his own thought?

Any attempt to bring Christian faith and pagan or secularized ideas together in an all-embracing synthesis is misguided and leads astray, I believe. It cannot be correct to judge by the standard of Christian faith some concepts of modern or ancient philosophers to be true and therefore suitable for such a synthesis and to lay aside some others as untrue. Any such eclecticism, however often Christians may have applied it, proceeds on the basis of the false assumption that truth is divisible. When we proceed eclectically, we cannot do justice to the philosophers we use. We detach the conceptions from the person who advanced them. We divorce from the thinkers ideas that they have forged into a unity and that they experience or once experienced as a result of their personal struggle, as the way to deeper insight, as a window through which the

24. Calvin, *Institutes* I, 3, 3: '*creationis lex*;' 5, 5: '*ordo a Deo prescriptus*.'

25. The relation between general revelation and common grace is continually discussed in the history of Reformed theology. However, its elaboration was often quite unsatisfactory, e.g., a falling back into the scholastic idea of a '*lumen naturale*,' etc. The *Canons of Dordt* III/IV are curious in this connection with their rejection of the Remonstrant doctrine of 'common grace (through which they understand the light of nature)' in article 5. This is the only place in the Reformed confessions where the term 'common grace' is mentioned *expressis verbis*.

26. Calvin, *Institutes* I, 3, 3.

light of the Truth might fall. Most importantly, eclecticism ignores what Kuyper rediscovered: the biblical antithesis between the 'wisdom of this world' and the 'wisdom of God' (I Cor. 1:18–25).

In other words, the value of non-Christian thought for the Christian cannot be done justice through a procedure of synthesizing and eclecticism. It can be done justice, as I see it, only in a process of critical *appropriation through transformation*. Let me try to be as concrete as possible by referring to a favorite theme of Augustine and other Church Fathers, Origen for example, namely, the theme of 'despoliation,' or plundering. The Church Fathers recalled how the children of Israel were asked to despoil the Egyptians of their cultural treasures, their silver and gold, when they left the land (Ex. 12:35, 36: '... and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.... And they spoiled the Egyptians'). As the Israelites made use of the treasures of Egypt, so, the Church Fathers believed, were they justified in making use of the cultural treasures of the classical world, including its philosophy.[27]

I think that in principle this despoliation theme yields a useful analogy to what can be done with non-Christian ideas and insights. Yet the Church Fathers did not always have sharply in view (a) that the Israelites were called to take the gold and the silver of Egypt and to use these valuables for the 'work of the tabernacle' and the 'service of the sanctuary' (Ex. 35:21; 36:1); and (b) that these treasures had to be smelted and refined before they could be used as vessels in the service of God. What I mean to say is that, thanks to God's universal creation order and to his universal self-presentation within it, the philosophies—not to mention the sciences—of the day can be viewed in certain respects as excellent gifts of the Spirit of God, and that to that extent they can be used by Christians. On two conditions:

(1) *Critical appropriation or integration.* Knowledge and wisdom, wherever we may find it, will have to be taken up into the service of the Lord. In other words, the purpose can never be simply to adopt the valuable insights of non-Christian thinkers or to accommodate them in some way to the content of the Christian faith. That would amount to either eclecticism or Scholasticism. No, if we think it possible to make use of the chattels of non-Christian thought—the Egyptians' silver and gold, much of it useful, some of it excrescent—then this is only permissible, I think, to the extent that we are in a position to really integrate it into a Christian, God-directed view of life.

27. See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II, 40, 60; cf. *Confessiones* VII, ix, 15.

(2) *Transformation.* The integration of non-Christian thought into the Christian view of life can never take place in the absence of far-reaching changes. The insights of philosophy and even, I think, of science in general, function in the framework of a total view of life, in a *Weltanschauung* that is religiously charged and that I would call an ideology to the extent that it is in conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is therefore necessary for the Christian thinker to take the ideas he borrows from others and smelt and refine them. At the very least, he must pry them loose from their ideological context. The Christian philosopher should engage in communication and discussion with non-Christian thinkers, and yet must always disentangle their insights from the ideological connections present in their minds and perhaps present in his or her own mind as well—the connections which lead people to resist and suppress the truth of God. Christian philosophers must take these insights and critically transform them. In short, they must take the gold that comes *from God* and consecrate it again *to God.*

When the apostle Paul spoke of non-Christian thought he had in view, I suggest, a similar process of rejection and appropriation, of criticism and transformation: 'We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ' (II Cor. 10:15). On the basis of the Christian faith it is simply not possible to accept in part and to reject in part either ancient, pagan philosophy or modern, secularized thought. From the Reformed perspective it is appropriate to plead for the reformation of philosophy itself. But the reformation of philosophy is never possible without communication with dissenters. Such a communication means transformation after the model of the Israelites. Thus, a program for a reformation of philosophy is at the same time a call for an on-going transformation of philosophy.

(10) *For further reading*

For further study in Kuyper and Dutch Neo-Calvinism read: Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, especially chapter 4, which deals with Calvinism and science. Sytse U. Zuidema has given an important presentation of Kuyper's conception in his article 'Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper.' For Dooyeweerd read from his main work, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, volume I, part III, 1, on antithesis and synthesis in philosophical thought. A more popular exposition of his thought may be found in his *Roots of Western Culture. Pagan, Secular and Christian Options*. Those who read Dutch may consult my essay 'Honderd

jaar filosofie aan de Vrije Universiteit,' in the volume commemorating the first centenary of the Free University, *Wetenschap en rekenschap 1880–1980*, for a more extensive introduction into the development of philosophy at this university. For a further study in the broader Calvinian tradition see the volume *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, edited by Hendrik Hart, Johan van der Hoeven and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

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9 / Graham E. Morbey

Paul Tillich (1886–1965)

Paul Tillich, the son of a Lutheran minister, was born in Starzeddel, East Germany. He received a classical education at humanistic 'gymnasia' in Königsberg and Berlin. He was awarded a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Breslau in 1911 for a dissertation on Schelling's philosophy of religion. In 1912 he was ordained into the Evangelical Lutheran Church and served as a chaplain in the German Army during World War I. After the war, his academic career took him to the German universities of Berlin, Marburg, Dresden, and Leipzig. In 1929 he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the newly established University of Frankfurt.

In 1933 Tillich was forced to leave Germany because of his public stance against National Socialism and he accepted the invitation of Reinhold Niebuhr to come to Union Theological Seminary in New York. Upon his retirement from Union, he occupied important academic chairs at Harvard and Chicago. When he died of a stroke at the age of 79, he had long been acknowledged as America's foremost theologian.

My discussion will concentrate on two basic themes in Tillich's thought: *the idea of* kairos, and *the method of correlation*.[1]

(1) *The need for a new synthesis*

The question of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian thought is still a live issue in our day. New complexities have arisen, however. No longer do traditional solutions, especially those couched either in terms of an apparently simple synthesis or in terms of a rigorous, dogmatic antithesis satisfy the majority of inquiring minds. But even more important: the very notions of faith and reason have undergone severe critical revision. Partly because of this the discussion of their interrelationship has lost direction in a labyrinth of tenuous argumentation.

1. The following abbreviations are used for references to the works of Paul Tillich:

BR = *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*
HC = *A History of Christian Thought*
OB = *On the Boundary*
P = *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*
ST = *Systematic Theology*

Tillich understands the problem of synthesis in the modern period of thought as an attempt to bring together Christianity and the modern mind, or, as he puts it, to unite the seemingly opposite ways of philosophy and biblical religion. The most important attempts at this were, he thinks, those of Schleiermacher and Hegel. They both tried to frame their answers in terms which went beyond those used in either Orthodoxy or Enlightenment. He calls their efforts the great or universal synthesis (*HC* 292). However, by 1840, says Tillich, this universal synthesis broke down as a result of historical criticism of the Bible and the philosophical reaction to Hegel's thought. The development of an extreme naturalism and materialism followed. There were, of course, new and less ambitious attempts to work out a synthesis such as the neo-Kantian solution of Ritschl. But, argues Tillich, these attempts could not withstand the onslaught of the World Wars which brought an end to centuries of European culture, with the result that 'again the diastasis against the synthesis of Christianity and the modern mind became real under Karl Barth' (*HC* 293).

In spite of these failures, however, Tillich thinks that the search for a new synthesis is paramount. He clearly stands on the side of those who attempt to solve the relationship of Christianity and the modern mind through synthesis. Even when Tillich is critical of the solutions given, such attempts, he believes, are signs of greatness. He cannot accept a position which either withdraws into the protective shelter of religion or else rejects religion in favor of a heretical or pagan philosophy. Neither of these ways serves truth or God (*BR* 57). The question of synthesis remains with us, he is confident, even when there are signs of weariness with continual failure. We have, in fact, no other choice (*BR* 57)! Tillich asks:

> Can we be schizophrenic forever, living with a split consciousness? Can we be split between the Christian tradition, on the one hand, and the creative concepts and symbols of the modern mind, on the other hand? If that is impossible, how is a genuine synthesis possible? (*P* 136)

Tillich is of the opinion that we do not have to choose for a particular philosophy. The task of correlating religion and philosophy or the attempt at synthesis is infinite (*BR* 85). Hence, for Tillich the only approach to the problem of the relationship between Christian faith and non-Christian thought is to find a new way beyond the former ways of synthesis. A new synthesis was, in fact, the point of departure for all his thinking, historically and systematically. It purports to be a critical way of regarding non-Christian thought while at the same time never losing sight of the necessity for self-criticism.

I will discuss Tillich's solution from the perspective of his *kairos* idea. This central idea in his system functions as a principle of criticism and is also employed by him to make clear the relationship between Christian faith and non-Christian thought. Before we discuss the problem of *kairos* I examine briefly three traditions that Tillich critically weaves into the framework of his system: the tradition of Romanticism, of philosophical autonomy and of Augustinianism. This background will make it possible to determine whether or not the *kairos* principle can do the job Tillich wants it to do.

(2) *From Romanticism to ultimate concern*

If Romanticism is defined as a general reaction against one-sided rationalism, as the reliance upon intuition, faith, etc., and perhaps including strong feelings for nature and the mystery of creation, then it can be safely affirmed that Tillich was romantically inclined from his early years and that these years left a deep imprint on all his later work.

It is in just this type of context that we can understand Tillich's reference to an early experience of what he calls the *Holy*. This experience is certainly to be understood as a part of a youthful emotional contact with nature, strengthened, no doubt, by the reading of various nature poets. Tillich interpreted his experience of the Holy as a concrete verification of his Lutheran training, where, he says, 'the vision of the presence of the infinite in everything finite was theologically affirmed.'[2] This uniting of his emotional sensitivity to nature with church doctrine at a young and impressionable age had a lasting influence on his thinking. Looking back on these years, Tillich concludes that his experience of the Holy had become the foundation for all his religious and theological work.

I regard the qualitative distinction Tillich makes between the infinite and the finite as a romantic inclination, supported by a particular view of Lutheranism. In defending this distinction Tillich is consciously giving a more general and universal interpretation of Luther's statement about God's relation to the world.

> [God is] at the same time in every little seed, whole and entire, and yet also in all and above all and outside all created things.... Nothing is so small but God is still smaller, nothing so large but God is still larger.... He is an inexpressible being above and beyond all that can be described or imagined.[3]

2. Tillich, 'Autobiographical Reflections,' 5.
3. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 37, 22. Cf. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 248.

In its more universal form Tillich takes this Lutheran sentiment as a clear expression of the fact that nothing which is conditioned, i.e., no created reality (thing or thought), can be of ultimate concern for us and that ultimate concern must itself be directed to the unconditioned. These three concepts, conditioned, unconditioned and ultimate concern, are basic to Tillich's vocabulary and are used in his attempt to communicate the Christian message in language more suited, he feels, to the modern mind.

This affirmation of the presence of the infinite in the finite and this reference to the Holy reflects the strong mystical element in Tillich's thinking. It also paves the way for his great appreciation of twentieth-century existentialism (Heidegger) and, looking back in history, his sympathy with what he calls the Augustinian tradition.

(3) *From autonomy to theonomy*

Another important influence in Tillich's development is his breakthrough to a position of autonomy. How did it come about? Tillich was brought up in a rather strict orthodox Christian home. His father, a prime example of the hierarchical Prussian mentality, demanded respect by virtue of his high position in the offices of the church. The sensitive and creative young Tillich chafed under his authority. After many long debates about philosophy with his father, Tillich reports that he finally came to choose an autonomous position for himself, which, he says, 'made me immune against any system of thought or life which demands the surrender of this autonomy.'[4]

Tillich regards these personal experiences resulting in his breakthrough to autonomy as comparable to those which led Renaissance and Enlightenment to expressions of human autonomy, in fact confirming their validity. Hence, it is easy for him to adopt Kant's distinction between the autonomy and the heteronomy of practical reason. Autonomy, in this instance, means that humans make their own laws, whereas heteronomy means that a human being places himself under a strange law, not of his own making. Tillich illustrates heteronomy by pointing to the sort of authority exercised through papal infallibility. Although Tillich could agree with the Enlightenment's view of reason and its vigorous protest against all heteronomy, he would be prepared to chide its tendency to forget its religious depth. If this is overlooked, he argues, autonomy itself will

4. Tillich, 'Autobiographical Reflections,' 8.

necessarily become a new heteronomy. This is so, because people again deliver themselves over to an impersonal, all-powerful Reason. Secular humanism is the best illustration of an autonomy which disregards its own religious depth-dimension. To make this point clear, Tillich introduces the concept of theonomy as a reminder of the fundamental, religious basis of autonomy. In other words, philosophy ought to be aware that all reasoning has a divine depth in which the philosopher personally participates and which must not be regarded as a strange power controlling him from without. In this way Tillich hopes to preserve what he considers to be the deepest intention and real meaning of autonomy.

This idea of theonomous autonomy cuts so deeply into Tillich's understanding of the Bible and of Christ that the authoritative character of the gospels is questioned and that, according to him, the historical existence of Jesus can even be doubted. Our relationship with God through faith, he contends, must be preserved from all external authority. I should add that some of the radical conclusions he reached in his early period are either dropped or modified in later years. However, as I mean to show in the conclusion, a certain gnostic and ahistorical tendency continues to haunt his solution to the problem of faith and reason.

(4) *From Augustine to existential faith*

Tillich's mysticism and striving for autonomy are part and parcel of his philosophical and religious outlook. It is not surprising, therefore, to see him siding with a more or less mystical tradition in philosophy and theology. He identifies this tradition with the historical line running from Plato, Paul and Augustine, through the classical medieval mystics (for example, Bonaventure) to present-day existentialism. The tradition he opposes, in the main, is the rational–empirical line of Aristotle, Thomas, and their followers. It must be mentioned, however, that even though Tillich tends to side with the mystical types of philosophy, he recognizes the validity of both lines and sees them as *unavoidably* conflicting.

The Augustinian type of philosophy embraced by Tillich is implicitly religious because it starts with the divine or God, recognizing that God is not a conclusion from certain premises; rather, it is he who makes any premise possible. Tillich also considers this philosophy to be closely allied to modern existentialism. It gives the best opportunity to grasp the deepest aspects of historical existence such as the utterly ambiguous character of all reality including the intellect, the demonic depth of divine nature, and it is also a responsible protest against the excesses of Cartesian

rationalism. It helps one to understand religion in terms of an existential faith.

Tillich's general definition of religion, too, stems from his early experiences. Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern which contains the answer to the question of the meaning of life.[5] This definition leads Tillich to two interesting claims. In the first place, he says, the name for the reception of revelation is religion. Accordingly, every passage of the Bible is both revelation and religion. In the second place, he argues, religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion.

Tillich concludes that Christianity's encounter with secular culture is an encounter of faith with faith. This is true, he adds, because secularism is never without an ultimate concern.

(5) *The* kairos

Against the background of these personal experiences and historical influences, Tillich forges his idea of the *kairos*. This idea involves primarily the melding of the finest insights of Greek thought with the central message of Christianity. In Tillich's system the analysis of the ontological structure of reality is the legacy of Greek philosophy, but the existential questions which the analysis of being raises can only be answered, he thinks, in terms of the Christian symbols. One might say that Tillich's system is one grand demonstration of his confrontation with and evaluation of non-Christian thought.

Tillich contrasts the Greek words *kairos* and *chronos*. *Kairos* means 'the right time' or 'filled time' and is a qualitative designation. *Chronos* means 'measured time,' the time of the clock, and is quantitative, amenable to rational analysis and scientific application. Tillich gives three meanings or senses to *kairos*. In its *unique* sense it refers to the appearing of Jesus as the Christ in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). In its *general* sense it means every turning point in which the Eternal judges and transforms the temporal. The Old Testament prophets, for example, were agents of the Eternal whose work initiated judgment upon old, hardened ways, and set history on a new course. In its *special* sense it means the coming of a new theonomy in our present historical situation. The rise of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-capitalistic movement and an allied religious socialism was at one time a clear signal to Tillich of the breaking through of a special theonomy. From a new perspective (North American) and

5. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 2.

after the ravages of two devastating wars, Tillich has called our time an empty, autonomous culture.

Originally, Tillich meant the idea of *kairos* to express the essence of his philosophy of history. The term was introduced into the discussions of religious socialism which took place in Germany after World War I. The word was chosen to make clear that history is self-transcendent, that is, it points beyond itself, and that no part of it may be absolutized. He wanted to warn against the danger of considering as 'ultimate' any historical form, least of all a political structure. In time, however, the *kairos* came to mean much more to him. It is a dynamic idea. I will examine three strands in this idea which are inseparably intertwined: the *logos*, the Christ, and the dialectics of theonomy.

(6) Logos

Tillich interprets the end of the Greek period of philosophy and the beginning of Christianity as a time of *kairos*. The time of Greek–Roman culture and philosophy was a time of preparation in which a providential confluence of factors made possible the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. Tillich demonstrates here a strongly positive appreciation for non-Christian thinking. In fact, he believes that there is a universal, revelatory power pulsing through the history of thought, in this instance preparing that which Christianity considers to be the ultimate revelation (*HC* 2).

Among the positive elements deriving from this time of *kairos*, Tillich lists Platonist ideas such as transcendence, *telos* (final goal), soul and providence. Tillich does not think that these elements either weakened or changed the character of the Christian faith:

> The spiritual power of the New Testament was great enough to take all these concepts into Christianity, with all their pagan and Jewish connotations, without losing the basic reality, namely, the event of Jesus as the Christ which these concepts were supposed to interpret. (*HC* 16)

It is interesting to note how Tillich in this connection goes back to the attempt of the Church Fathers (Clement and Origen) to incorporate the Stoic doctrine of the *logos* (word, reason) into their thinking (ch. 1.7; 2.5). Tillich agrees with this approach and indeed claims that the *logos* is one of the fundamental ideas Christianity has adopted from the Greeks. The Stoics believed that everyone participates in the universal *logos*. Tillich concurs, insofar as it expresses the manifestation of God in all forms of reality. But the Stoic doctrine was inadequate, since it lacked concreteness,

or the element of the 'personal.' Without concreteness, says Tillich, the existential needs of humans cannot be met, and hence the Stoic *logos* was unable the grasp the meaning of life.

It is Tillich's contention, however, that all the great thinkers recognized the universal *logos*, and he cites their awareness of it as an example of common grace or even as the beginning of a work of special grace. The Christian view of the *logos* transforms the Greek notion of it, through its recognition that Jesus was the *Logos-become-flesh* (John 1:14). In this way the *logos* becomes personal and concrete.

> Here we have a perfect example of how the meaning of a term, with all the connotations it had from the past, can be transformed in expressing the Christian message. The idea that the *logos* became flesh could never have been derived from Greek thought. (*HC* 15, 16)

Tillich calls the *logos* 'universal reason.' It is the principle of order and structure in the world. Through this principle God created the world. Both the world and the human mind share in this *logos*-structure. Hence, Tillich can say, although reality precedes thought, thought can and does shape reality. Tillich evinces here an idealistic epistemology, i.e., a view that the identity of thought and being is the principle of truth (*OB* 82). Neither thought nor reality can be true in abstraction. This *logos*-type of reason is common to both theology and philosophy (*P* 30). It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that the human mind and the eternal *logos* are identical (*P* 44).

(7) *The Christ*

I noted that at an early stage in Tillich's development he had come to grips with the problem of 'the historical Jesus.' It remains his conviction that the foundation of Christian belief is 'the biblical picture of Christ,' rather than the historical Jesus (*OB* 18).

The appearance of Jesus as the Christ at a particular point in history is the meaning of *kairos* in its unique and its universal sense. Tillich discerns in Jesus the fulfillment of certain requirements for final revelation. A revelation is final, he says, 'if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself' (*ST* I, 148). In the picture of Jesus as the Christ, a man is presented who completely surrenders his finitude while at the same time he completely possesses himself, showing that he is united to the ground of his being without disruption. *Kairos* is fulfilled time rather than *chronos* (measurable or analyzable time). This truth of Christ as final

revelation, then, is unlike the truth of science or history or philosophy. Faith interprets the meaning of facts from the point of view of 'ultimate concern.' It is through this faith that Jesus is recognized as the *Logos*-become-flesh and as the unique and universal *Kairos*.

At this point Tillich refers to the mutually complementary nature of Greek and Hebrew thought. The Greek *logos* had universality but lacked concreteness. The message of the Old Testament prophets had concreteness but lacked universality. In the fullness of time, in the *kairos*, these ideas came together in Jesus, who was simultaneously concrete (fully human) and universal (his message was for all people in all cultures). Hence, as the medium of final revelation Jesus is the criterion for all human thought and action, and the measure for assessing non-Christian thinking. 'The universal synthesis between Christianity and the modern mind stands and falls with the christological problem' (*P* 134).

(8) *Theonomous philosophy*

As has become clear, Tillich does not want to judge non-Christian thought in terms of truth and error. This is how he characterizes Reinhold Niebuhr's method of dealing with Western thinkers. Tillich calls it 'the critical comparing method.' It involves, he says, quoting from the Bible and saying 'Here you have the biblical truth and there you have the philosophical error.'[6] Tillich proposes an alternative approach. First, one shows how the great philosophers, past and present, have written *en kairoi*, i.e., in their specific historical situations. Next one demonstrates how the dialectics of history refuted them in part and affirmed them in part. A brief sample of this was given above relative to the *logos* idea; the method is dialectical, with the *kairoi* at its core.

Tillich does not think that his method involves a mixture of pagan and Christian thought, nor does he consider it to be eclectic. The concepts and ideas from outside of the Christian tradition are not taken up lock, stock, and barrel. The process always occurs as reception and transformation (*HC* 14). The concepts adopted are put to work within a Christian framework; it is a process involving the dialectics of acceptance and rejection, continuing to this day.

The great insistence with which Tillich refers to Christ as the criterion for human thinking, and his constant appeal to the religious depths of reason and culture might lead one to suspect that he is prepared to support

6. Tillich, 'Sin and Grace in the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr,' 33.

wholeheartedly a Christian philosophy. This is in fact not the case at all. In the first place, if Christian philosophy means a philosophy whose existential basis is historic Christianity, then all modern philosophy is Christian whether it be humanistic, atheistic or intentionally anti-Christian. Tillich's argument for this remarkable view is that modern philosophy can be 'anti-Christian' philosophy in Christian terms alone. The Christian tradition, he believes, has a *character indelebilis* (*ST* I, 32). Secondly, Christian philosophy may also denote a philosophy which does not look to the universal *logos* but to an assumed or actual demand of a Christian theology. This happens when either church authorities or interpreters nominate a historical philosopher to be their saint, or by demanding that contemporary philosophers develop a system under special conditions and with special objectives; either way effectively strangles philosophical disinterestedness. Given these two considerations, Tillich concludes, an intentionally Christian philosophy must be rejected.

> Christianity does not need a 'Christian philosophy' in the narrower sense of the word. The Christian claim that the *logos* who has become concrete in Jesus as the Christ is at the same time the universal *logos*, includes the claim that wherever the *logos* is at work it agrees with the Christian message. No philosophy which is obedient to the universal *logos* can contradict the concrete *logos*, the *Logos* 'Who became flesh.' (*ST* I, 32)

In sum, Tillich rejects both autonomous philosophy and Christian philosophy; instead, he advocates an open, 'theonomous philosophy' characterized by a dialectics of acceptance and rejection.

(9) *The openness of dialectical theonomy*

Roughly, dialectical thinking is a process of reasoning such that the conceptualization or grasp of truth is sought through-and-beyond contradictions (ch. 7.2). The dialectical form of Tillich's thought goes back to the original form of all dialectics—an actual dialogue of question and answer, of yes and no. A similar dialectics, he contends, takes place in reality, which does not merely remain identical with itself but alters or changes. The basic scheme of dialectics is the 'movement of life from self-identity to self-alteration and back to self-identity' (*ST* III, 350). Life processes in general, the structure of historical events, the symbolic descriptions of the divine life—all are dialectical. Dialectical thinking does not reflect on reality from the outside but enters into reality itself and participates in its actual tensions.

What is the dialectics of theonomy? Theonomy arose in the perpetual conflict between autonomous and heteronomous cultures. The terms of this dialectical movement are the names which Tillich gives to the three possible ways of answering to 'the law of life' (*nomos*). In 'autonomous culture' humanity is its own law-giver and universal reason is the measure of culture and religion. 'Heteronomous culture' means that humans seek a strange law, superior to and outside of themselves, necessitated on account of their inability to act according to universal reason. In Tillich's concept of 'theonomy as a synthesis of autonomy and heteronomy' the superior law is at the same time the law innermost to the human person. Thus, the concept of theonomy opens a way for Tillich to comprehend the unity of the absolute and the relative in history.

To understand Tillich fully it is essential to recognize that the type of synthesis of autonomy and heteronomy advocated by him does not imply that dialectics ceases once theonomy has arrived; the dialectics never ends. Even the most thoroughgoing expression of theonomy carries within itself the seeds of contradiction. This remarkable, though consistent ambiguity in Tillich's thought recurs time and time again. In space and time, he says, no synthesis can ever be final; theonomy, just like autonomy and heteronomy, can never be other than fragmentary; it is constantly on the move to surpass itself. This is why he is critical of Hegel and of Marx who, he believes, failed to keep their dialectics open.

Underlying Tillich's solution is an involved argument concerning the relationship between philosophy and religion. Tillich holds that there is an ultimate unity and profound interdependence between philosophy and the Christian religion. At first glance this seems reminiscent of Hegel's view (ch. 7.3). Hegel stressed the substantial unity of both, though formally he places philosophy above religion. Tillich does just the opposite. He emphasizes that philosophy needs religion as its permanent presupposition. Moreover, partly on account of Schelling's influence, Tillich lets the concept of freedom intrude on his view of identity: witness his emphasis on the 'open-ended' character of dialectics and the ongoing self-transcendence of history. The presence of the religious structure of truth in the depths of the human mind becomes his final principle of identity.

Tillich's answer to the problem of Christianity and the modern mind in terms of religion and philosophy finds expression in the recognition of a new, theonomous synthesis *en kairoi*, based on the ongoing participation of religion and philosophy in the power of Being-itself (God), in which both remain interdependent. A new synthesis of this sort may be considered achieved on the level of thought when both philosophy and

theology are demonstrably related to each other by means of the 'method of correlation.'

(10) *Theology and the method of correlation*

Tillich argues for an essential unity of philosophy and theology. This unity, however, can be realized in a fragmented way only, so that in practice one can point to an actual, qualitative difference between them. Tillich does so by assigning to philosophy the task of analyzing the structures of being, and by giving theology the task of formulating the answers to the existential questions raised by being, relative to ultimate concern. Moreover, theological answers unavoidably make use of philosophical concepts, while philosophical analysis cannot do without a theological ground and power. It is along these lines that Tillich attempts to 'correlate' philosophy and theology. Admitting that he has not always explained his views as carefully as he might, he accepts gratefully the formulation of his method by one of his interpreters:

> Religious assertions are symbolic (referring to the depth of being), ontological assertions are literal (referring to the structure of being), and theological assertions are literal descriptions of the correlation between the religious symbols and the ontological concepts.[7]

Consequently, for Tillich the need to reinterpret traditional religious symbols and theological concepts never ceases. Take the term 'sin:' it can be said that this concept has lost none of its inner truth today; but the concept has lost its ability to convey or communicate its truth. It should therefore be filled with new meaning drawn from insights gained in existentialism and twentieth-century psychology. If the fall is properly understood as expressing the transition of humanity from essence to existence, then sin refers to the separation, the estrangement from the Ground of being (God), from the origin and goal of life and, hence, as self-estrangement and alienation from others.

The Christian message is, as Tillich pictures it, a necessary counterpart of the endeavor of a self-critical humanism. Such humanism is not sufficient in itself. It may have insight into the right questions (as existentialism, according to Tillich, certainly does); nevertheless, it cannot achieve satisfactory answers. Nor can hope and expectation be grounded in the propositions of a revealed supernatural theology. Reconciliation, meaning and hope are possible (even if remaining partial) only if reality is exposed

7. Robert P. Scharlemann, 'Tillich's Method of Correlation: Two Proposed Revisions,' 93.

in its depth-dimension. Ultimate-concern 'answers' for the individual and for society, expressed in Christian symbols centered in the Christ, are the Christian theologian's indispensable contribution to humanism's quest. The correlation is an ongoing attempt to show that, ultimately, the Christian message is the answer to modern self-critical humanism (*HC* 293).

(11) *Summary and conclusion*

Reflecting on the historical development of the encounter between Christianity and secular belief convinced Tillich that a new type of synthesis is needed in modern times, since the problems faced today are no less acute than they were at the time of the struggle between Roman paganism and early Christianity. Tillich's seriousness regarding this conflict in its modern form is praiseworthy.

The tension between Christianity and modern secular humanism cannot be solved, Tillich felt, by an appeal to a supernatural authority, since this leads to an intolerable heteronomy, nor could it be solved by an appeal to a humanistic autonomy which rejects the divine depth in reason itself and hence paves the way for a new heteronomy. According to Tillich the polar tensions within the realm of our experience are impossible to overcome and yet there must be some final unity. We cannot, however, achieve an ultimate *rational* unity. Tillich is able to offer a clear exposition of the difficulties inherent in immanence philosophy. The awareness that no rational unity can be attained drives one to a source of meaning beyond the immanent—to a transcendent source. Although Tillich struggled with this problem, in the end his concept of the transcendent still seems to be included in the immanent and, despite his protests, the specter of pantheism looms large.

Tillich's answer to the problem is based on a consistent dialectics which makes use of the *logos* structure of mind and reality. He believed that, by interpreting the dialectical structure of reason and culture in terms of the Christian message of the *kairos*, a new theonomous position could be developed. Theonomy is the concrete historical awareness that the solution to the existential conflicts within the structure of reason arise *from* revelation *in the depth* of reason.

Tillich's solution is not quite as innocent as his seemingly sympathetic method of approaching non-Christian thought might suggest. On the surface it seems akin to that of reformational thinkers who appeal to a basic religious *a priori* and to indubitably given structures of creation.

In this sense, perhaps, his solution seems to parallel Klapwijk's attempt to show that Dooyeweerd's 'states of affairs' and Van Peursen's idea of 'the presence of God' do not really exclude each other but constitute an intrinsic unity (ch. 8.7,8). A more penetrating examination of Tillich's views, however, reveals a basically different allegiance. It is evident that his dialectical position cannot treat the Bible in any sense as authoritative revelation. In this Tillich differs radically with the reformational tradition. We see, then, that the historical claims of the Christian message lose their importance for our ultimate concern and we are left hanging, so to speak, with a *logos* speculation that never comes down to earth and therefore stops short of giving the promised concreteness.

Even Tillich's *kairos* idea in the end proves without critical force and creative content. The picture of Jesus as the Christ is too readily identified with an Absolute (needed to tie his system together and at the same time hold it open to new possibilities). Consequently, the *kairos* doctrine, which was to guarantee harmony and balance between universality and concreteness, turns out to tend to extreme abstraction, as is evident in Tillich's statement to the effect that 'no date foretold in the experience of a *kairos* was ever correct; no situation envisaged as the result of a *kairos* ever came into being' (*ST* III, 396). A markedly gnostic and ahistorical tendency comes to expression here.

Tillich's doctrine of the *logos* as universal reason common to all mankind reduces the radicality of the Christian view of sin, such that the seriousness of a Christian confrontation with non-Christian thought seems, in the long run, of less than vital importance. In fact, Tillich's universalism invites 'dialogue,' but does not demand 'conversion.'

His ultimate-concern solution, finally, owes a major debt to existentialism and presents a new twist to Hegel and Schelling. It is based on a rather complex idealist philosophy and a drastically revised view of traditional Christian faith. It is a solution which looks forward to a new religion of the Spirit.[8]

(12) *For further reading*

Suitable for the student who begins to read Tillich are his works *On the Boundary* and *The Courage to Be*. The most complete statement of his thought is, of course, *Systematic Theology*. *A History of Christian Thought* is important with regard to Tillich's appraisal of the problem with which this

8. Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, *passim*.

volume deals. Other works of Tillich worth studying in this connection are: *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*; *The Future of Religions*; and *Theology of Culture*. The literature on Tillich is extensive. *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, offers a good introduction to his thought. It contains important essays by various interpreters of Tillich, along with Tillich's replies to them. The book also includes Tillich's important 'Autobiographical Reflections.' For those who read Dutch, the work of R. Hensen, *Paul Tillich wijsgeer, theoloog*, may be recommended.

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10 / Hendrik M. Vroom

*Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–)**

Wolfhart Pannenberg has attracted much interest. Apparently he has touched on a sensitive chord. It seems to me that his thinking has appeal, not so much because of his theological program or his way of working it out, but because of his efforts to justify faith. At a time that many people are unsure about their beliefs, many are fascinated by this theologian who tries to explain the meaning of Christian faith and the grounds on which it rests. However, Pannenberg not only elicits much approval; his ideas are also often attacked. He is accused of bowing before modern Western thought. He is said to test faith by what the average contemporary philosopher would accept as reasonable. I do not believe that such judgments do justice to Pannenberg at all, and prefer to see him as continuing the tradition of Christian thinkers who are conscious of the unique nature of the Christian faith, but also consider certain philosophical insights to be of striking importance. Like them, he is prepared to engage in a discussion with philosophers and, since he is very much aware of the fact that Christian faith is no longer as self-evident as it was during so many centuries for most people in Western culture, he attempts to give an account of faith in this discussion. In this chapter special attention is given to *Pannenberg's anticipation of the eschaton.*[1]

(1) *Introduction*

In German theology subsequent to World War I, the attempt to account for faith made for a new approach. A group of theologians who worked together in the 1930s, of whom Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Rudolph

* This chapter was published earlier in Dutch as an article entitled 'Pannenberg's benadering van de ongelovige denker' in *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 79(1979): 1–23.

1. The following abbreviations are used for reference to the works of Pannenberg:

BQ = *Basic Questions in Theology*, 3 vols.
EE = *Ethik und Ekklesiologie*
TK = *Theology and the Kingdom of God*
TPS = *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*
WM = *What is Man?*

Bultmann (1884–1976) were the most prominent, began to more or less dominate the field. They were united in their emphasis on the fact that faith is a gift of God to humankind. Barth's view (in the well-known *Church Dogmatics*) on how the believer and the theologian can speak about faith was highly influential not only in theological faculties, but perhaps even more so in the many parsonages where his work was read. I will refer briefly to his views below. Bultmann linked the common aim of 'dialectical theology' to a certain solution of the hermeneutical problem, that is, the question of how one must 'understand' the gospel, a message from a given culture, in the context of thought of another culture. To this end Bultmann studied Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). He described the message of the Bible in terms of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity.' Even though, to a certain extent, he gave these terms a special content, the gospel was thus linked to 'authentic' existence, the personal life-history of the individual believer. As a result of this, the meaning of the gospel for the broader area of social and political life was no longer of direct concern.

The developments in German Protestant theology since the 1960s must be understood against this background. Political theology underscored the political meaning of the gospel. In a collection of articles, entitled *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (*Revelation as History*), a number of younger theologians, including Pannenberg, drew attention to the broad historical context in which the Christian faith stands. The book was a result of a collaboration of former students at the theological faculty in Heidelberg, and includes contributions from various disciplines. Pannenberg, as a systematic theologian, performed a certain integrating function.

Pannenberg's contribution deserves attention not only because of the insistence on the historical character of revelation, but also because of his claim that revelation can, in principle, be seen by anyone prepared to look.[2] This thesis is the key to understanding Pannenberg's attempt to give a rational account of faith. Precisely in this attempt the contrast appears between Pannenberg and Barth (and the theology influenced by Barth), who tended to link revelation with concealment. Pannenberg's program of theology can therefore also be regarded as an alternative to the revelation theology of Barth. It is important to realize that in this program Pannenberg takes up a number of questions which had been more or less neglected ever since the rise of dialectical theology. These questions were, according to Pannenberg, formulated in an exemplary manner by Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923).

2. Pannenberg ed., *Revelation as History*, 135 ff.

Pannenberg's theological program can perhaps be understood most easily by looking at his attitude toward Troeltsch and Barth. For this reason I will first sketch several central ideas of these two theologians (sect. 2) and describe Pannenberg's evaluation of them next (sect. 3).

(2) *Troeltsch and Barth*

In his article 'Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie' (On historical and dogmatic method in theology) (1898), Troeltsch argued for a consistent use of the 'historical method' in theology. In our culture, which is decisively determined by scientific thought, reflection on the Christian faith cannot be disregarded. According to Troeltsch, it is unacceptable to say that historical–critical research into the Bible is limited to relatively unimportant details, meanwhile referring the fundamental questions concerning the basis of Christian faith to dogmatics. As he expresses it, in this kind of theology one is constantly referred from Pontius to Pilate.[3] Troeltsch believed that it is the task of the Christian historian to develop a view of the totality of the history of religions. Troeltsch presented an approach of this kind in *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* (The absoluteness of Christianity and the history of religion) (1902). Looking at the history of mankind, Troeltsch develops a set of criteria by which to judge religions. The scope and freedom presented by Jesus and the amazing naivete 'in which he says the highest and deepest things in the simplest way' wins out. In this book, Troeltsch argues that Christianity is the highest religion ever produced.[4] Thus, on the basis of his position as a Christian, Troeltsch reflects rationally on the motives and reasons which make it clear that Christianity is justified. In this thought, which, incidentally, bears a certain tentative character, he wishes (1) as a Christian, to serve others who have not yet come to the certainty of faith and (2) as a child of his science-dominated time, to furnish his religious convictions with arguments, both for himself and for other believers.[5]

In sum, Troeltsch sees an important task for the science of history within theology, on condition that this science pose the proper questions. He defends his approach to theology against 'supernaturalistic theology,'

3. Ernst Troeltsch, 'Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,' in: Gerhard Sauter ed., *Theologie als Wissenschaft. Aufsätzen und These*, 107.

4. Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit*, 64ff, 126ff, 146ff. See Jacob Klapwijk, *Tussen historisme en relativisme*, especially 89–147. See also Klapwijk, 'Geloof en rede in de theologie van Troeltsch en Pannenberg,' in: *Vrede met de rede?*, 77ff.

5. Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit*, x, 111ff.

which simply refers to the authority of the Bible or to that of the church for the justification of faith.

Over against this 'liberalism,' Karl Barth has given theology a new vitality. He has pointed out in an impressive way that God gives faith to humans. As a human being, one can only receive this gift in humility and with great thankfulness. Imprisoned in sin and ignorance, mankind is not capable of justifying faith before the tribunal of science. However regrettable it may be, scientific thought is the thought of the children of darkness. Especially at the beginning of his theological development, Barth was very disparaging in his estimate of the importance of history for theology (and consequently of historical research in Troeltsch's sense): 'He who says history, says non-revelation. History in theology means exactly what Pontius Pilate means in the Apostles' Creed.'[6] Pontius Pilate passes away; history is darkness, that darkness which did not understand the light that shone.

Even though it can be acknowledged that Barth was right in his resistance to the liberal critique of Scripture in his day, the way in which he bound the understanding of the Word of God to the letter of Scripture leaves a certain amount of clarity to be desired. When the Bible is read, the Word of God is heard when the texts being read are used by God as an instrument for speaking to us.[7] The believer to whom he speaks can merely say: 'Speak Lord, for your servant hears' (I Sam. 3:9). He cannot start reasoning and arguing in order to decide whether what God says is really what God is saying to him. The evidence is too great for such reasoning. The God who speaks and the person who hears—that is the situation in terms of which Barth wants to think.

Since World War II, the problems pertaining to a view such as the one Barth puts forth in the first parts of the *Church Dogmatics* have become increasingly apparent. How can anyone know for sure that what he takes to be the Word of God is indeed the Word of God? How can anyone know what he or she must do in his or her life? What relation is there between the letter of the gospel and the Word of God that can speak to us through it? Why can faith not be justified by all sorts of experiences that people have in their everyday lives? These are questions which can and must be raised with regard to Barth's theology. In all these questions the role of human *thought* is at issue. In Barth's view it is no longer clear what role the human acts of weighing and considering have in matters of faith.

6. Karl Barth, 'Kirche und Theologie,' in: Sauter, *Theologie als Wissenschaft*, 159.

7. Barth, *Curch Dogmatics* I, 2, 532 ff. For a more extensive treatment of Barth's view in this period, see: Hendrik M. Vroom, *De Schrift alleen?*, 87–108.

Pannenberg's theology may be seen as an attempt to fill this gap and to clarify how thought plays a role in faith and how faith and thought go together. I will summarize in what respect Pannenberg agrees with Troeltsch and Barth and in what respect he disagrees with them. It can be argued that he seeks to steer a course between their two positions. While he considers the way in which Troeltsch poses the question to be correct, he attempts to solve the problem without falling into the errors that Barth pointed out so emphatically.

(3) *A way between Troeltsch and Barth*

Pannenberg agrees with Troeltsch (1) that Christian faith must be justified before the tribunal of 'reason,' (2) that the theologian must investigate the grounds on which faith rests, and (3) that the reasonableness of the Christian faith must be shown by means of a comparative study as to the value of various religions. Pannenberg takes the formulation of the problem from Troeltsch who, he asserts, formulated the really fundamental questions and tasks of theology in the twentieth century (*BQ* II, 66; *TPS* 316ff).

Pannenberg corrects Troeltsch on several important points.

(1) The historical method may not, according to Pannenberg, assume a 'similarity in principle' between things that happened. The historian must be aware, even more so than Troeltsch was, of the particular events and the new things that constantly appear in history (*BQ* I, 45f).

(2) The theology of the history of religion must take seriously the fact that the final revelation of God at the end of history is, by anticipation, already present in Jesus Christ. In the perspective that is given with Christ, one can obtain a decisive insight into the meaning of events that occur in history (*BQ* II, 68; *TPS* 110).

(3) The theological justification of faith is not to be limited to a comparative study of the history of religion. In the analysis of human existence, it must be shown that interpreting religious experience as an experience of meeting God is a justifiable approach (cf. *BQ* II, 192).[8] In this way, Pannenberg greatly expands the task of theology. In fact, it includes what is often called 'Christian philosophy.'

In agreement with Barth, Pannenberg maintains that (1) faith is a gift of God, (2) God is the subject spoken of in theology, and (3) man and his religion can only be seen in their proper light given the experience

8. Pannenberg goes further than Troeltsch does in *Die Absolutheit*. He states that Troeltsch eventually asked himself similar questions.

of the reality of God.[9] Pannenberg acknowledges that Barth and his followers were right in reacting against the liberal theology of their day. They correctly pointed to the special nature of revelation in Christ (*BQ* II, 68). If it were possible to practice theology in Barth's way, it would be the only way. It is, however, impossible (*TPS* 266)!

Over against Barth, Pannenberg posits that the appeal to the hearing of the Word of God actually amounts to boasting of the revelation that one claims to have received. Pannenberg has a number of serious objections to Barth's presentation. I mention five of these.

(1) This presentation is deficient because it does not help people who do not know what Christians mean by the word 'God.' Pannenberg argues that Christians must show in an appropriate way why their faith is not unreasonable. To be sure, they must not let themselves be guided simply by what is considered 'rational' in areas outside of faith. On the contrary, it is precisely in an analysis of what is meant by 'rational' that a view of reason and knowledge must be developed which alone makes possible a 'rational' justification of faith! The development of this sort of view of reason and knowledge is even by itself a step toward such a justification (*BQ* II, 54).

(2) Faith conceived as without grounds, as an irrational attempt to give credibility to 'God's Word,' takes on, according to Pannenberg, the character of a laudable achievement. After all, the believer is taking a risk by saying that God exists and that he reveals himself![10]

(3) Faith, according to Pannenberg, is sure knowledge, in the sense that it rests on a state of affairs which is in principle apparent to everyone. Faith is not a gift that is given alongside or above normal human knowledge. On the contrary, it is the proper way to view reality, made possible through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Through this enlightenment of our darkened understanding, we learn to see reality as it is. The unique character of faith is not that one person sees more in created reality than another, but that he sees it at all! In principle everyone can perceive it. Faith is, of course, not *only* certain knowledge; it is a firm trust as well. This trust in God (faith in the narrower sense) rests on the knowledge of faith (faith in a broader sense also includes this knowledge) (*BQ* II, 28ff).[11]

9. For (1) see Pannenberg, *Basic Questions* II, 34; for (2) see *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 297ff; for (3) see 'Het christologische fundament van christelijke antropologie,' *Concilium* 9(1973): 97; cf. *Basic Questions* II, 226. The position defended by Troeltsch is not discussed here.

10. Pannenberg, 'Chistlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit,' *Kerugma und Dogma* 4(1958): 269; also *Basic Questions* II, 52.

11. Faith also contains an element of 'venturing:' 'Faith and hope open our lives to the venture of love,' *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 89. Cf. on faith: *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* II, 236ff.

(4) An appeal to a Word of God supposedly heard by someone cannot be made at the exclusion of a historical–exegetical study of the Bible and of philosophical reflection on the reality that is spoken of in this Word. Strictly speaking, in the framework of Barth's views, it cannot even be explained how a discussion of theological issues is possible (*TPS* 274).

(5) Because of the strict separation of faith and other knowledge, the all-encompassing meaning of faith is not fully considered. Faith may not remain in the private sector of existence—described by Pannenberg as a 'national conservation area.' Faith has a fundamental meaning for the whole of human existence, including the domain of thought. In principle, everything which in whatever sense is held to be true must be investigated on its own merits. Only that which is compatible with the Christian faith can be maintained. When theories conflict with faith, it must be shown why they are incorrect. In this way, the fences that have been raised up against faith, every argument and stronghold set up against the knowledge of God, is demolished, so that all of thought is compelled to surrender to Christ (*BQ* I, 13f; cf. II Cor. 10:5).

Pannenberg's primary thesis on the relationship between faith and reason is, then, that Christian faith makes possible a justifiable, indeed the only justifiable, view of reality, and that for this reason faith can be justified by pointing to all the facts that people know, especially in discussions in the fields of science, religion, history and anthropology. The justification of faith is directed not only toward the unbeliever; it is equally important for the believer, whom it brings to a full awareness of the extent of faith and of its profound reality. Moreover, in his justification of faith Pannenberg does not want to accommodate himself uncritically to what counts as reasonable outside of faith. He develops his own concept of reason, which I shall consider in the following section. His description of thought implies a certain view of 'non-Christian thought' which I deal with in section 5. After looking at his basic view of thought I consider how Pannenberg wants to approach non-Christian thought (sections 6 and 7).

(4) *Reason as the anticipation of the eschaton*

In his analysis of what reason is, Pannenberg begins with the experience of sense and meaning. The category of meaning was elaborated by Wilhelm Dilthey (*BQ* I, 162). According to Dilthey (1833–1911), every event has a meaning in relationship to the whole of life and can therefore be understood only in terms of the whole. 'Like the words in a sentence, individual events possess significance in the context of the situation of

life' (*BQ* III, 200). In order to judge the true value of an event, one must have recourse to a perspective on the relationships in which it stands, and ultimately on the whole of which this event forms a part. In this, Dilthey was faced by an insoluble problem. He sought to show that historiography could be regarded as a legitimate science. But his idea of the relationship of the whole and its parts compels the historian to have a view of all of history in order to determine the meaning of the separate events. But the historian is not a seer—he does not have a view of history as a whole; it hasn't ended yet! Awareness of the inaccessibility of the whole of history, Pannenberg writes, leads to the impasse of relativism (*BQ* I, 164).

Pannenberg agrees with Dilthey's insight into the relationship of parts and whole. But once he has shown how this places Dilthey before insoluble problems, he turns to Heidegger. In view of Dilthey's dilemma one can understand that Heidegger no longer posed the question of the totality of history. For Heidegger the question arises as to how a person can gain insight into the meaning of his own life-history. Heidegger believes that one should learn to see one's life as a whole. But is such a comprehensive knowledge possible before that life is over? According to Heidegger, life can indeed be experienced as a whole when the last possibility that each person is, i.e., death, is thought of *in anticipation*.

But Heidegger does not tell us how the meaning of particular events in life can be determined. The experience of death by anticipation brings a person to real, 'authentic' existence, but does not provide insight into the concrete content of the events experienced. Be that as it may, the idea that Pannenberg wishes to take over from Heidegger is the idea of anticipation, which gains great prominence in his philosophy. He links it to the question of the whole of history. By means of a *projection* of the far, and especially the 'furthest' future, the meaning of events can be established (*BQ* III, 201). Even the meaning of ordinary occurrences is constantly evaluated in (usually unexpressed) *anticipation of the end of history*. Pannenberg writes:

> Thus, when someone names a thing and says 'This is a rose,' or 'This is a dog,' he always does so from the standpoint of an implicit foreconception of the final future, and of the totality of reality that will first be constituted by the final future. For every individual has its definitive meaning only within this whole. (*BQ* II, 62; cf. *TK* 127ff)

In every ordinary experience, the future plays a decisive role, even though we may not be conscious of it.

The question concerning the ultimate significance of events and (especially) the question concerning the meaning of life as such, point explicitly to the last future of the world, to the resurrection and the last judgment (*BQ* III, 202; cf. *WM* 41ff, 80f). To determine the meaning of events a reliable insight into this last future would have to be obtained, even though knowledge of the *eschaton* must, of course, remain preliminary. If reliable anticipation were impossible, then the definitive meaning of things could not be determined. Pannenberg believes that decisive insight into reality as a whole is in fact possible. It is the 'experience of something that has not yet been surpassed and is not inherently subject to being surpassed, and is even an inherently exclusive pre-appearance of the ultimate' (*BQ* I, 173f). Pannenberg here points to the experience of the future of God's reign made public in the actions and fate of Jesus of Nazareth. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ gives solid ground to projective thought. This knowledge of the *eschaton* makes real knowledge of the meaning of things possible.

Pannenberg adds something to this. He says that our knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ is tentative. Like all our knowledge, it is essentially historical. It changes in the course of time, just as everything else in the world undergoes development. Knowledge of God cannot be had apart from history, it is in history that God reveals himself time and time again. People have reported about these encounters, and got to know God better all the time, until he definitively revealed himself in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The revelation in Jesus took place long before the end of time. Nevertheless, it is the definitive revelation of God. Because it was given in advance, Pannenberg also calls this event an 'anticipation' of the *eschaton*. He uses the term 'anticipation' in two (closely related) ways: for thought that projects the future and for the definitive revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, which has already been given. Our insight into what happened in Jesus is historical, and therefore has a limited and preliminary character. But because it is the knowledge of Jesus as anticipation of the final human destination, of the resurrection of the dead, of the beginning of the new history of the Kingdom of God, it is still a decisive (*endgültig*) insight.

Because our knowledge of God's definitive revelation in Christ is tentative and historical, it is open to discussion. The reality of God is 'debatable' (*strittig*, *BQ* II, 111, 117ff). Whether God exists or not, and what he is like, is not something all people agree on. Although Pannenberg is personally convinced of the truth of the Christian faith, he exploits this preliminary nature of faith in order to present faith in God as a hypothesis and in this

way to create a foundation for theology as a science (*TPS* 296).[12] He uses the concept of hypothesis in the broad sense that this term has for someone like Popper, who regards even the most well-founded theories of the natural sciences as hypotheses. At the same time, Pannenberg is saying something else. The existence of God is debatable among us, not only in the sense that not everyone believes in God, but also in the sense that our faith must be won over by God himself, who appears and gives us a certainty that we cannot derive from our theories and arguments (cf. *BQ* II, 104). This is the 'Barthian' element in Pannenberg's thought. Although he emphasizes the necessity of supporting the truth of the Christian faith with arguments, ultimately it is not these arguments but the appearance of God himself that renders our faith certain.

Pannenberg, then, stresses the preliminary nature of our knowledge of God as well as the acknowledgment of the definitive nature of God's revelation in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Sometimes we can see that Pannenberg is trying to find the right words to express the tension in his view between 'steadfastly believing' and 'not yet having laid hold of it.' Thus, he remarks somewhere that in Jesus the 'debatableness' (*Strittigkeit*) of faith in God is overcome, even though it has not been totally put aside (*BQ* II, 116, note 62). Constantly the two aspects are present in tension with each other. Indeed, it could be said that Pannenberg gives a theoretical description of an utterance that any upright Christian could very well make: 'It is almost unthinkable for me that God does not exist.' Pannenberg works out this 'almost' and thus opens a door to dialogue between the believer and the unbeliever, and to debate *within* the believer!

(5) *Non-Christian thought*

As we have seen, according to Pannenberg the Christian faith is not just a private view of reality, a perspective in which the observer places things, but a view of things in their true nature—that, at least, is what the Christian claims. From this it follows that non-Christian thought does not know things according to their true nature. Pannenberg demands of theology that it demonstrate the truth of this view. In addition, he goes beyond saying that non-Christian thought does not know the entire truth: philosophical reflection always presupposes a religious basis. This assertion relates to Pannenberg's conviction that the perception of an all-inclusive coherence in existence is essentially religious. According to

12. Cf. *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* II, 12.

Pannenberg, not only theology rests on such an experience, but philosophy as well (*BQ* I, 174; III, 143). Philosophy looks for interrelationships in reality. These interrelationships, the unity of reality, are present in human existence as the comprehensive context of the many experiences that people have, and receive their meaning in terms of this context (*TPS* 433). Even though this comprehensive whole is not consciously known, its existence is constantly and tacitly assumed in the perception of things. Philosophy seeks insight into this totality of reality that structures all our experiences. In doing so, it proceeds from the many experiences that people have, but presupposes that reality forms a totality and is meaningful (*TPS* 224). This presupposition, which according to Pannenberg is implicit in all our experiences and is explicitly present in philosophy, is essentially religious in kind. It originates in a religious perception of the totality of reality. All thought, including philosophical thought, depends on a religious perception (*BQ* III, 203ff). This explains why Pannenberg treats philosophy and religion alike. A religious experience lies at the basis of both. In both, the aim is knowledge of reality as a whole.

When religion is experienced consciously, the experience of reality as a whole does not stand in the foreground. 'One's attention then is directed to the deity which is the basis and guarantee of this totality of meaning,' Pannenberg writes. 'When we are experiencing an acting power, it is not the totality of meaning of the universe, but the unity of a divine reality which constitutes and unites this totality of meaning,' he adds by way of clarification (*BQ* III, 205; cf. II, 104ff). In the religious life of the believer, the encounter with God is foremost. Nevertheless, religious experience lies at the basis of every personal experience of meaning, of freedom and happiness (*BQ* II, 107). It is possible to be gravely mistaken as to the interpretation of this experience, but 'a man cannot simply remain unaware of what constitutes his being as a man' (*BQ* III, 104). Thus, according to Pannenberg, non-Christian thought rests on the experience of the reality of God in religion as well as in philosophy, even though God is not known in philosophy, or not known in the proper way.

In the different religions such experiences are acknowledged to be experiences of the reality of God. The religious propensity of humankind is documented in the history of religions. In this history we read the story of human reactions to the appearance of God. It turns out to be a long history of people who do not open themselves to the God on whom they are dependent, a history of truth held in unrighteousness.

Typical of this human attitude is myth. Myth does not direct itself to the future, but to a primal event. In seeking to be humanly self-sufficient,

it looks in the wrong direction, to the past instead of to the future (*BQ* II, 107; cf. III, 4ff; *WM* 54ff). Caught up in egocentrism, humans cut themselves off from the experiences of the new as continually presented in history. They unceasingly relate their experiences to a primal event, to technical control of the world, or to an inclusive worldview that leaves no room for the new things that come to humankind from out of the future given by God. Pannenberg notes also that people cut themselves off from the future because they want to be self-sufficient in areas other than those of the religions. He mentions this phenomenon in connection with Marxism, for instance, which thrives on making secular promises of a good future. Despite the fact that it is becoming increasingly apparent that these promises are not about to be fulfilled, people hold on to them. In this case as well, a dogmatic fixation on certain expectations for the future stands in the way of a full view of reality (*WM* 133). Generally speaking: in non-Christian thought the perception of reality is deformed because people refuse to see reality as a history that reaches its goal when God will establish his Kingdom (cf. *BQ* III, 192ff).

In sum, to Pannenberg non-Christian thought is as an opaque mixture of (1) experience of reality, including the reality of God, (2) a refusal to take all sorts of aspects of reality into account, and (3) ignorance about the decisive revelation of God in Jesus concerning the final goal of humankind and world.

(6) *The fight for truth*

The above three constituents of non-Christian thought determine the way in which Christian thought (i.e., theology) must approach non-Christian thought (i.e., philosophy). The Christian can learn from what is seen of reality in other religions and in philosophy, on condition that these experiences are assimilated and interpreted in terms of his own all-encompassing view of reality.

In an article called 'Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology' (1959, *BQ* II, 119–85), Pannenberg makes several remarks that are of fundamental importance in this context. He describes how early theology tied in with philosophy. The Church Fathers failed to see how deep the differences were between these two traditions. Hence, they all too easily introduced a number of extant philosophical notions of God into their theology. The most important of these is the method of reasoning they adopted: the '*philosophische Rückschlußverfahren*,' the philosophical method of causal

inference. This method of reasoning, back from the effect to the cause, was applied to the world as creation and to God as creator. The procedure of proving the existence of God in this way (wrongly) received a place in theology. Along with this method of reasoning, the concomitant philosophical ideas as to the nature of God were also accepted. For example, the biblical notion of the everlasting God was identified with the idea of immutability. The Platonic idea that God must be 'simple' (not composed of parts), undivided and one, was also taken over. On this basis, it became a problem of how one could speak of the attributes of God. Every specification of the nature of God would infringe upon the 'simplicity' of God since it would distinguish aspects from the whole. As a result of this philosophical approach to the nature of God, Pannenberg writes, the biblical idea of God was narrowed down, his transcendent freedom and omnipotence were constricted. Precisely because these characteristics are so essential to the history of which the Bible speaks, Pannenberg rejects the synthesis of philosophy and theology that took place in patristic theology. Taking this further: every synthesis between theology and philosophy is wrong if by synthesis is meant the bringing together of ideas from different backgrounds.

As an alternative to the synthesis between philosophy and theology, it has been argued that there is an *antithesis* between them in the sense of a *total separation*. In contemporary thought, theology has often dismissed philosophical criticism of religion by characterizing philosophy as an 'anti-faith.' Theologians have recourse to the authority of revelation. On this basis they imagine themselves secure (*BQ* III, 138). Pannenberg dismisses this approach as well: this is not the way in which 'faith' relates to the 'world.' In various contexts he speaks about such antithesis, and every time again his point is that revelation discloses something that concerns our entire reality, including the reality in which others live and work and think.[13] The task of the church is therefore as wide as the world. There is an element of truth in the idea that there is an opposition between church and world, but theologians fail to do justice to the world-wide task of the church if they merely abide by this antithesis (*TK* 73ff).

Theology may not retreat into a certain area of life and leave the rest of reality to philosophy. The one universal truth is of concern to theology and philosophy both, although the two disciplines do not always deal with

13. Thus, he remarks that if revelation were totally discontinuous with respect to the history of humankind, it would not be able to shed light on human nature. See 'Het christologisch fundament van christelijke antropologie,' 89. If the promise of God were diametrically opposed to the world in which we live, then it would have no positive meaning for our earthly existence; Pannenberg, 'Response to a Discussion,' in: *Theology as History*, 262, note 72.

the totality of reality with the same purpose in mind (*BQ* III, 116ff; *TPS* 339ff). Every definition of the subject-matter of theology which is less universal, every restriction to that which is conceived as the revelation of God and its attestation in Holy Scripture, distorts theological discourse on God as the sole origin of all that exists (*BQ* III, 128). The knowledge of God from his revelation leaves no part of reality untouched. Theology must describe the whole of reality as it is seen in the light of revelation. Philosophy also attempts to describe all of reality. Because the Christian and the non-Christian views are incompatible, they are engaged in a *struggle for truth*. According to Pannenberg, this struggle will continue unless (non-Christian) philosophy were to become theological and could persuade theology that it is the 'true philosophy' (*BQ* III, 129).

(7) *Assimilation: between synthesis and antithesis*

The above allows me to specify the way in which, according to Pannenberg, the believer must approach the ideas of the unbeliever, that is, how theology should approach philosophy. For Pannenberg the struggle for truth has three elements: (1) the correctness of the other theory is disputed; (2) in certain respects, something is learned from the other; (3) an attempt is made to show that one's theory is better than that of the other.

First, theology must show that philosophical views distort reality. In his article on the task of Christian anthropology, Pannenberg expresses this idea very clearly. Theology claims that humankind can only reach its destination through the work of one man, Jesus Christ. In order to demonstrate the truth of this, there must be concrete evidence to show how current views concerning the human destination fall short.[14] In this sense, the struggle for truth is an expression of the opposition between Christian and non-Christian thought. But this opposition is not the end of the matter.

Theology can, secondly, learn from non-Christian thought. An appreciation must be developed by the theologian for insight into reality that is present everywhere outside of Christianity. These insights may be taken up into one's own view, on condition that they are newly interpreted within the Christian view as a whole. They must, as Pannenberg says, be *assimilated* into one's own view. The assimilation is not a superficial synthesis. Theology must, as Pannenberg remarks in his article on the encounter between early Christian theology and the philosophical

14. Pannenberg, 'Het christologisch fundament van christelijke antropologie,' 97; cf. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 94.

doctrine of God, be open to the 'elements' present in the philosophical view of God and transform these 'elements' in the critical light of biblical belief in God (*BQ* II, 139). Apparently, it is possible to integrate these 'elements' that come from other origins into the Christian view. I think that by 'elements' Pannenberg means the following. Outside of Christianity, people have obtained deep insights into reality in numerous ways. Every person looking around him sees that new, unexpected events are always occurring. Even though the comprehensive context in which others explain their insights cannot be affirmed from a Christian view of the world, it must nevertheless be admitted that these insights are derived from the experience of a part of reality as it really is. It is possible to learn from these experiences. They can be fitted into the Christian view of reality. This inclusion, however, must be an adjustment, otherwise it would be superficial and the more encompassing theory that emerges would be inconsistent. From out of the heart of the Christian view of reality—the revelation of the eschatological destiny of the world through Jesus of Nazareth—the other insights are transformed. They are thus assimilated by means of the 'integrating principle' of Christian faith (*BQ* II, 85ff). In the course of this process of assimilation of all kinds of philosophical, religious and scientific knowledge in history, the Christian tradition itself is being developed; it does not remain unchanged. In a sense, one could say that there is an interaction between theology and philosophy.[15] The unchangeable heart of Christian thought, however, is and will be the integrating principle in the process of assimilation: the anticipatory knowledge of the coming Kingdom of God.

If Christian theology succeeds in giving the elements of non-Christian thought which are worth integrating a place in the whole of its thought, then this is, in the third place, an argument for the truth of Christianity. The 'assimilation process' is not only a chronicle in which the insight into reality—including the reality of God—increases, but it is at the same time a history in which the truth of the faith in the God of Jesus of Nazareth becomes ever more apparent.

What value does Pannenberg attribute to the 'proof' of the Christian faith? Does he wish to give a conclusive proof? He is often misunderstood on this issue; in fact, he has frequently been taken to task for it. But in one of his first publications he asserts that in the analysis that he presents no rational or theoretical proof of the existence of God is given (*WM* 11). The experience of the reality of God who lays claim to our trust

15. Cf. *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* II, 10.

alone can convince us of the existence of God and of the truth of religious experience.[16]

According to Pannenberg, Christian thought does not present a proof for the existence of God. Still, theological–philosophical reflection does provide the Christian thinker with arguments in support of the fact that the experience of faith does not rest on imagination. Pannenberg hopes at the same time that the non-Christian thinker will see that faith is not nonsense or incredible (cf. *BQ* III, 114). In 'the struggle for truth' the theologian challenges philosophers to recognize the difficulties in their own view.

Pannenberg's theological method may be summarized thus: the Christian thinkers must investigate human existence as they have learned to see it in the Christian tradition. They must show the depth of this existence as it points to the God of the Bible as its true fulfillment (*BQ* II, 233). In this way Pannenberg's apologetics includes, next to philosophical arguments and references to the history of religion, an appeal to the anticipatory revelation of the end of history in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

While this last element is already present in Pannenberg's views on the history of religion, epistemology and anthropology, it has a place of its own in the whole of his thought. For this event alone makes real rational knowledge possible. Thus, Pannenberg attempts to express the special meaning of revelation and, at the same time, to enter into a serious dialogue with non-Christians.[17] One might say that he takes a stance mid-way between Troeltsch and Barth! In his argument for the truth of the Christian faith he wishes to do justice to both the authority of revelation and the value of non-Christian thought. He is convinced that in the discussion with philosophy the tremendous meaning of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ becomes manifest: the elements of truth in other religions and in philosophy can be assimilated into the heart of Christian belief! Pannenberg's ideas do not endanger the special nature of revelation but bring it to expression!

(8) *The self-evident nature of facts and the self-evident nature of the good*

To return to the question I posed at the beginning: Why is Pannenberg's theology so popular? Anyone who tries to answer this question will, of course, reveal his own attitude to theology. A person who regularly meets

16. 'Response to a Discussion,' 225, note 2; *Basic Questions* II, 104 ff.

17. For an analysis of several themes in the thought of Pannenberg that are related to the present discussion, see Hendrik M. Vroom, *De Schrift alleen?*, 221 and especially 202 ff.

people who have become estranged from the church, unbelievers or people subscribing to other faiths will perhaps react as I do: appreciative of the open attitude with which Pannenberg engages those who think differently. Pannenberg does not regard such a one as proceeding from false presuppositions, but as someone who has strong and weak points, as someone who knows some things while unaware of other matters. The person one is confronted with has had his or her own experiences and these have a value that ought to be respected. At the same time, Pannenberg's attitude is that of a believer: he is not just a thinker who proceeds from certain principles, but someone who is continually motivated by the grace bestowed on him. People respond to Pannenberg's thinking because of the confidence with which he seeks an open encounter, an open dialogue which invites one to consider: let us see who is right; after all, the Christian faith has proved true before, and its truth does not depend on us but on him who has revealed himself to us in Christ; so, let the dialogue run its course and we shall see what comes of it. In the dialogue the truth of faith will unavoidably become manifest, always in new, surprising, enlightening and renewing ways, and will not leave the believer unaffected: it may mean a broadening of view (as in assimilation). It is, perhaps more than any other aspect of Pannenberg's thought, this confident openness of his that appeals to many.

Appreciation for many aspects of Pannenberg's thinking should not, however, preclude critique. I will limit myself to an issue on which, I think, Pannenberg has come to unacceptable conclusions.

As noted, Pannenberg holds that the definitive meaning of things can be determined only against the background of insight into the whole of history. This would hold also for understanding the situation in which people live and must act, that is to say, in the ethical context. Ethical judgments, according to Pannenberg, depend on an analysis of the situation and, consequently, presuppose a comprehensive view of history. The truth of history must be known before ethical conclusions can be drawn. He explicitly says: 'Only when the truth of God and his revelation stands firm on its own can a life be lived in accordance with it' (*EE*, 54; cf. 59ff, 63ff). The context of this statement is his resistance to the view that 'goodness' and 'badness' are essentially evident (*EE*, 48ff). That these are not self-evident is indicated by the fact that some philosophies explain moral phenomena in terms of non-moral factors (*EE*, 47ff).[18]

18. For a discussion of the evident nature of the ethical see also articles by Gerhard Ebeling, against whom Pannenberg directs himself: 'Die Evidenze des Ethischen und die Theologie,' and 'Die Krise des Ethischen und die Theologie. Erwiderung auf W. Pannenbergs Kritik,' in: *Wort*

Pursuing Pannenberg's train of thought in a more concrete vein one might indeed ask whether certain utterly *inhuman* actions, such as the atrocities committed in the course of World War II, should not lead us to believe that it is quite impossible to base morality on 'the self-evidently good.' The thing that seems evident is that such self-evidence simply does not exist! Pannenberg denies that the good is self-evident; he believes that a judgment concerning good and evil can be founded only on insight into the totality of history. Yet, and this seems remarkable, while Pannenberg rejects moral self-evidence, he defends self-evidence when speaking about historical facts. There are facts which in principle can be seen by anyone, even though not everyone actually perceives them.

It looks as if Pannenberg's notion of 'evidence' should be considered a little more closely. The argument that bears scrutiny goes like this: How does a person (according to Pannenberg) come to know the totality of history? Through a knowledge of its end. How does one know the end, i.e., the *eschaton*? Through the anticipation of it in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. How do we know about the resurrection of Jesus? From the historical sources, the gospels and the letters of the apostles. Why do we accept the historical account of the resurrection as true? Because it is a historically reliable account; *in principle* every person can see that it is (*BQ* I, 61).[19]

It seems to me that Pannenberg introduces here the very concept of evidence which he rejects with respect to morality. In point of fact, he appeals to the 'self-evidence' provided by the biblical accounts (even though he does not use the term as such).[20] After all, he argues that the facts are such and such, and they have a certain meaning, even though people may fail to see them so. Let us say that the appeal is to the 'evident nature' of the facts; that is, Pannenberg *does* appeal to the clarity, or evident nature, of *facts*, but not to the self-evidence of *what is good* in a given situation. But this is inconsistent. With respect to historical facts he argues that many fail to see them, although they are clear (evident);

und Glaube II, 1–14; 42–55 respectively. See also 'Eine Briefwechsel' (between Pannenberg and Ebeling), *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 70(1973): 448–73; and H.M. Kuitert, 'Evidenz oder Krise des Ethischen?' in: *Septuagesimo Anno*, 128–51.

19. In *principle*, historical research can discover that God reveals himself in certain events, but this does not imply that historical research will *actually* see the history of Jesus of Nazareth as the revelation of God. See Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 87, 95, 103; 'Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesu,' *Kerugma und Dogma* 14(1968): 112 ff. See *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* II, 167 ff: the historian can say that an event has taken place after the death of Jesus in which Jesus was involved, even though he cannot describe it further.

20. Pannenberg does explicitly relate what he writes about facts with the confession of the *claritas* of the Bible. *Basic Questions* I, 61, 64 note 129.

with respect to ethics he claims that many fail to see the good, hence it is not evident.

Does not the philosophical thesis that knowledge of the whole is a necessary condition for determining the meaning of the parts play a dubious role here, since it leads Pannenberg to require knowledge of the end of history before the meaning of events can be determined? Is it plausible to say that a person only gains insight into the true nature of reality in the light of knowledge of the end of history? Can the heart of existence be gotten at in no other way? Does all understanding of meaning really demand the detour of a projection of universal history?

To avoid an appeal to self-evidence of the good, Pannenberg appeals to the self-evidence of the facts of revelation. But with respect to this evidence the same question can be posed as in the case of ethical evidence.

Furthermore, is the outright denial of the self-evidence of the good warranted? Is it not true that in many cases it may be right to say: somehow (by reason of this or that) people do not see what is good even though it 'stares them in the face;' they must be blind! When we speak of 'inhuman acts,' 'atrocities,' surely we know (at least to some extent) how to distinguish this from the humane and the benevolent. In such cases we normally do not say that someone has a wrong view of history, and hence does not have the right morality; rather, we normally say that what this person does is wrong, and that, regardless of his or her view of history, this person should have known better. It is a horrible thing to argue that 'in Auschwitz' it was not evident that people were committing heinous crimes. To retain our sanity we shall simply have to maintain that utterly evident, basic principles of human society and human morality were trampled underfoot in indescribable ways. The word 'evident' is used here in the very same way that Pannenberg himself uses it when speaking of historical facts; what is good is often evident, even though not everyone sees it.[21]

The conclusion must be that Pannenberg, because of his questionable rejection of the self-evident nature of the ethical, is forced to make a complicated and artificial detour in order to give morality a firm foundation. His reasoning takes him, by way of a projection of universal history, to the 'evident nature' of the resurrection. But this makes things more complicated than they are, since in both cases it is equally possible to speak of an insight which, for one reason or another, is not recognized. Where the self-evidence of revelation is not seen there is blindness and unbelief;

21. See Kuitert, 'Evidenz oder Krise des Ethischen?' 146, 150. See Romans 2 : 15.

where the self-evidence of the good is not seen there is sin. It should be insisted that in some cases the meaning of occurrences is evident, and that what is good is often evident. To insist on this is to avoid Pannenberg's artifice of detouring via the comprehensive view of universal history, and is the precondition for doing justice to the fact that some things are clear—even if not everyone will admit that they are.

This, however, is not quite the note on which I would end this chapter. Although I part company with Pannenberg on the idea of the totality, I trust that the portent of the above is not forgotten: I remain highly appreciative of various very attractive elements in his thinking, including the serious and open approach to those who think otherwise.

(9) *For further reading*

For an introduction to the works of Pannenberg, I would recommend starting with his book *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions* and the anthropological study *What Is Man?* Reliable secondary sources on Pannenberg's thought are: E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* and, for those who read Dutch: Martien E. Brinkman, *Het gods- en mensbegrip in de theologie van Wolfhart Pannenberg. Een schets van de ontwikkeling van zijn theologie van 1953–1979.*

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11 / Albert M. Wolters

Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928 –)

The tradition of synthesis as a self-conscious adaptation of pagan or humanistic thinking into a comprehensive Christian framework is deeply ingrained in Roman Catholicism, readily accounted for by the classic distinction between nature and grace. According to Gutiérrez *'nature' and 'grace' are mediated by 'utopian ideas.'*

(1) *Introduction*

It is perhaps because of the long tradition of synthesis that the contemporary movement of liberation-theology, for the most part Latin American and Catholic in inspiration, can incorporate so many of the prime categories of Marxism into its thinking. These categories are seen as simply the product of a religiously neutral 'science of society,' which must be accepted with minimal corrections, much as classical Thomism accepted the categorial distinctions of Aristotle as products of 'natural reason.' In fact, liberation-theology can be characterized, in a rough and ready way, as a replacement of Aristotle by Marx in Catholic thinking, with very little felt need for justifying the phenomenon of synthesis as such. Certainly this is true in the case of Gustavo Gutiérrez, the Peruvian theologian and sociologist who has emerged as one of the leading spokespersons of liberation-theology.

Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino was born in Lima, Peru. He began his studies in the field of medicine at Lima, but halfway through he quit and went to Europe to study philosophy and psychology at the University of Louvain in Belgium, where he wrote a thesis on *The Psychic Conflict in Freud.* Upon completion of his studies at Louvain he went to Lyon, France, to devote himself to theological studies. Even though his dissertation on religious liberty was never completed, the course of his studies was extensive and his orientation a broad one. In 1959, aged 31, he was ordained to the priesthood and in 1960 he returned to his homeland,

where he was appointed Professor of Theology and the Social Sciences at the Catholic San Marco University of Lima.

In 1968 the first episcopal conference in South America was held at Medellin, Columbia. Gutiérrez was very much involved in the preparation and proceedings of this conference. Many people were shocked to see that this first Latin American episcopal conference focused so sharply on the socio-economic situation of most countries in South America. Still, this focus is quite consistent with the Second Vatican Council, and certainly with what has been called 'the intuition of Pope John XXIII.' A few years earlier (1962) this pope had declared that the church in developing countries was, and meant to be, a church for everyone and especially for the poor.

Gutiérrez also participated in the 'First Latin American Encounter of Christians for Socialism' and played an important role in drafting its final statement. Moreover, he is an adviser of the Catholic episcopate of his native country.

(2) *Faith, structural change and intervening ideas*

Gutiérrez is taken here as a leading representative of liberation-theology on an important point. He is concerned with a fundamental question which faces Christians everywhere, although perhaps with greater insistence in the Third World countries: how do we relate *faith* to the necessity of *structural change* in modern society?

Implicit in this formulation of the problem are a number of what I take to be correct assumptions: (1) The social involvement and witness of the Christian church must not be limited to relief work—to binding up the wounds of the disadvantaged in society—but must also extend to genuine historical involvement in changing unrighteous 'structures' (chiefly the institutions and patterns of political and economic power) which play such a large role in creating situations of oppression. (2) Christians must live by their faith and must undertake everything in the light of the gospel. (3) Consequently, Christians must examine the *relation* between faith and structural change, especially since a large segment of Christianity has denied the necessity or propriety of the latter, or denied (in various kinds of two-realm theories) any link between structural change and biblical faith. It seems to me that on these three counts liberation-theologians in general and Gutiérrez in particular are fundamentally and importantly *right*. This implies a serious indictment of a major portion of traditional Christian thinking, both Catholic and Protestant, which has only too often branded

the struggle for structural reform as 'secular,' implying that it is either of low priority for Christian action or should be avoided altogether.

There is a further point which the liberation-theologians make—a point which I propose to examine more closely in connection with Gutiérrez. Liberation-theologians are agreed that faith can be related to structural change only if *a set of intervening ideas* be accepted, a set of ideas which is both compatible with faith and of decisive importance for the realization of structural change. Here again, I think, an important insight is presented, at least in the sense that any movement for structural change necessarily presupposes some normative view of history and of the social order, a view which a Christian will insist must accord with God's revelation. There is indeed a sense in which such normative understanding stands in between faith and political action for structural change, since it is not explicitly given with faith itself and yet must precede political action if faith is to come to expression in it.

There are two remarkable features about this view of Christian social praxis as propounded by the liberation-theologians. The first noteworthy feature is that these theologians tend to rely heavily on a *Marxist* conception of history and society to give content to the 'intervening ideas.' The problem here is the *prima facie* incompatibility of Christian faith and the Marxist dismissal of religion as 'ideology.' The second feature is the crucial role which this view of Christian social praxis ascribes to *ideas*. It is a socio-historical conception or theory which plays the key role of mediating faith and political praxis. In light of their sympathies for a 'materialist' (as opposed to an 'idealist') theory of history and the liberationist insistence that theology and Christian reflection must arise *out of* historical praxis, this view appears to be contradictory. Liberationists must defend the thesis that ideas are crucial to their program, and that largely Marxist ideas play this pivotal role.

(3) *Utopia as mediation*

My objective is to examine the position of Gutiérrez regarding these 'intervening ideas' as outlined in *A Theology of Liberation*.[1]

Gutiérrez devotes a separate section, entitled 'Faith, utopia, and political action' (232–39), to an explicit discussion of these issues. For him 'utopia' represents what I have called the 'intervening ideas' which connect faith with political action or social praxis (i.e., the struggle for

1. The references in the text are to Gutiérrez's work *A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics and Salvation*. Occasionally I refer to the Spanish original, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas*.

structural change). In the tradition of sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim, and more particularly relying on a number of articles by French theologian Paul Blanquart, Gutiérrez defines utopia as 'a historical plan [*proyecto*] for a qualitatively different society' (232).[2] It is 'the forecast of a different order of things' (233), 'the creation of a new social consciousness' (237). Unlike ideology, which merely justifies the *status quo* and leaves it unaffected, utopia is a force for revolutionary change, a 'denunciation' in its complete rejection of the existing order, and an 'annunciation' in its proposal of alternative values (233). As such, it is nothing less than 'the driving force of history' (234).

Before going further, we should note a few things about Gutiérrez's language in describing utopia. The word *proyecto* ('project' or 'plan') figures prominently, occurring a dozen times in this seven-page section as an explanatory equivalent of 'utopia.' The fact that it is once written with a hyphen is a clue that we should not simply take the word in its ordinary sense, but in the more technical, philosophical sense made popular by Heidegger (*Entwurf*) and Sartre (*projet*). For them the word denotes autonomous human creation of future possibilities, unfettered by some constant 'human nature.'[3] The elements of autonomy, creation, future and unrestrictedness all seem to be present in Gutiérrez's use of the term.

Secondly, it is evident from words such as 'forecast,' 'consciousness' and 'proposing alternative values,' as well as 'project' itself, that utopia has to do with the world of ideas. Utopia is a conscious vision of an alternative society. This is a point which Gutiérrez quite pointedly avoids making; in fact, he is at great pains to insist that utopia is 'verified in praxis' (232, 234). However, the cognitive nature of his utopia is inescapable, emerging most clearly when he equates it with imagination (234) and makes it a part of science (235). One of the marks of utopia is precisely that it 'belongs to the *rational* order' (234).

To return to my central theme, the crucial question is: Just how does utopia relate to faith and political action? Gutiérrez is quite clear on this:

> Faith and political action will not enter into a correct and fruitful relationship except through (*a través de*) the [project of creating] a new type of person in a different society, that is, except through (*a través de*) utopia.... (236)[4]

2. The key Spanish term *proyecto* is variously and misleadingly rendered into English as 'plan' (here and *passim*), 'effort' (236), 'projections' (235), 'pro-jection' (233) and 'task' (238).

3. Cf. J. Ferrator Mora, *Diccionario de filosofia* s.v. '*proyecto*;' A. Alande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* s.v. 'project.'

4. The words in square brackets translate *proyecto de creación de*. The published English translation has 'effort to create.'

Utopia is the link which makes for the correct relationship between biblical faith and social praxis. This is an *indirect* relationship (250, note 125), requiring utopia as 'mediation' (238) *via* which faith relates to political action. Gutiérrez opposes this to the view that there is a direct link between faith and political action which, he says, only leads to 'a dangerous political–religious messianism,' and to the view that there is no link at all (236). The acceptance of utopia as an intervening link is crucial if we are to avoid these two unacceptable alternatives.

To understand the pivotal role of utopia in the faith–praxis relationship one should consider more closely the two sub-relationships which it includes: between faith and utopia, and between utopia and political action. These sub-relationships correspond to the connecting links between three 'planes' or 'levels' distinguished by Gutiérrez within the single process of liberation:

> [These are] economic, social and political liberation; liberation which leads to the creation of a new man in a new society of solidarity; and liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all men. The first corresponds to the level of scientific rationality which supports real and effective transforming of political action; the second stands at the level of utopia, of historical projections [*proyecto* (sing.)], with the characteristics we have just considered; the third is the level of faith. (235)

It is evident, then, that utopia is central to the whole process of liberation (which, for Gutiérrez, constitutes history), and that its relations to the levels flanking it are of the greatest importance.

(4) *Utopia, social praxis and the role of science*

It is instructive to note in the quotation just given that 'political action' is classed together with 'scientific rationality' on the first level. This is reflected in the fact that utopia is said to relate to the first level of liberation in a double way. On the one hand, 'authentic utopian thought postulates, enriches, and supplies new goals for political action' (234). The 'project' of utopia 'provides the basis for the struggle for better living conditions' (i.e., the basis for political action) (236). 'Utopia humanizes economic, social and political liberation' (238). In our social praxis we are 'motivated by a liberating utopia' (238). Clearly, utopia has a powerful and apparently direct effect on political action.

On the other hand, utopia is said to relate to first-level liberation on the role it plays in *science*. At this point the influence of Blanquart becomes particularly marked. There seems to be a basic ambiguity about

the relationship between utopia and science—an ambiguity summed up in the statement: 'Utopia is different from science but does not thereby stop being its dynamic, internal element' (235). Because it is different from science, Gutiérrez can speak of the two as being on distinct levels of history, so that utopia is the 'prelude' and 'annunciation' of science (234), which '*leads to* an authentic and scientific enterprise itself' (249, note 115, quoting Blanquart), at the same time it is 'neither opposed to nor outside of science' (234). Utopia 'constitutes the essence of its creativity and dynamism' (234). More specifically, utopia represents 'the intervention of the imagination' in science, the 'jump' or 'break' which is presupposed in 'the transition from the empirical to the theoretical' (234). It is on the strength of its intimate presence in science that Gutiérrez can stress that utopia 'belongs to the *rational* order' (234).

It seems that there is really a double ambiguity in Gutiérrez's account of the relationship between utopia and political action. Since the level of political action (the 'first level of liberation') includes both science and social praxis, utopia has a double relationship to this level. Within this doubleness we have now found that the relationship to science is itself ambiguous: utopia is both an essential element of science and yet different from it. The latter point need detain us no longer; it seems to represent a dialectical blurring of the distinction between Gutiérrez's first and second levels of liberation. It is perhaps more fruitful to explore the duality science–social practice on the first level, in the hope of discovering a clearer view of that level's relationship to utopia. This, after all, is one of the two crucial sub-relationships I was trying to get at.

It is in itself striking that science and social praxis should be classed as belonging to the same level of liberation. This is because the two are very closely bound up with each other in Gutiérrez's thought. We commit ourselves to social praxis 'with *the means* which the scientific analysis of reality provides for us' (238). It is 'the level of scientific rationality which *supports* real and effective transforming political action' (235), 'which allows us to know social reality and which *makes* political action *efficacious*' (234). It appears from these statements (to which I added emphasis) that science (Gutiérrez is thinking especially of the science of society) is the instrument, the foundation and the guarantee of effective political action. It would seem fair to conclude that political action is *applied science* for Gutiérrez, a species of social engineering.

If this be indeed the case, then utopia seems to relate to political action in the first place via science. No doubt it also serves to give a general inspiration to those involved in this struggle for social and political

liberation, but nothing will come of it unless utopia is translated into the strictly scientific terms which must undergird political action if it is to be really effective. I conclude that in Gutiérrez's thinking utopia relates to social practice largely by way of its (ambiguous) presence in social science. Utopia shapes science, and science shapes the praxis of structural change.

(5) *Utopia, faith and the content of intervening ideas*

What is the relationship of utopia to faith and to the third level of liberation generally? Briefly put, the answer is as follows: faith reveals the religious meaning of the aspirations of utopia. 'Faith reveals to us the deep meaning of the history which we fashion with our own hands' (237). 'If utopia humanizes economic, social and political liberation, this humanness—in the light of the gospel—reveals God' (238). Utopia, as 'the creation of a new social consciousness,' is the 'place of encounter between political liberation [the first level] and the communion of all men with God [the third level]' (237). Therefore the gospel 'is not alien to the historical plan (*proyecto*),' i.e., to utopia: 'the human plan (*proyecto*) and the gift of God imply each other' (238).

This last statement emphatically does not mean that there is a utopia implicit in faith. Gutiérrez is careful to claim that 'the gospel does not provide a utopia for us; *this is a human work*' (238, my emphasis). The last phrase is particularly important: utopia is something created by humans, without input from the gospel. We are reminded how often words like 'creation,' 'creativity' and 'imagination' are used by Gutiérrez in conjunction with utopia, quite apart from the telling and frequent use of *proyecto* as its equivalent. In 'projecting' their own utopia people are truly free, not bound by the constraints of the past and the present. While utopia shapes science and political action, it is not itself shaped by the gospel. What the gospel does is provide a 'framework of interpretation' (35) for a freely chosen human project.

Biblical revelation does not itself affect the 'intervening ideas' between faith and political action. It simply recognizes that what utopia-inspired liberation movements are after is really, in its deepest meaning, liberation from sin and communion with God through Christ. If this is so, then the *content* of the 'intervening ideas' (Gutiérrez's utopia) does not derive from faith or from the gospel but from some other source.

That other source is indicated quite clearly in an earlier section of *A Theology of Liberation*. In his initial outlining of the three levels of liberation, in chapter 2, Gutiérrez is most explicit in his discussion of level

two (27–33), later identified as 'the level of utopia' (235). He traces the roots and development of the utopian vision of 'dynamic liberty' and of 'history as conquest' (28). Beginning with the Renaissance, Gutiérrez gives a brief summary of some of the high-points of the ever-deepening awareness of this vision. He devotes a paragraph or two each to the thought of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud and Marcuse (28–32), every one of whom is seen as building further on the insights of his predecessors. Together they constitute a single 'development of ideas'[5] (32), which consists of 'attempts to express a deeply-rooted sentiment,' now gradually beginning to dawn on today's masses, namely, 'the aspiration to liberation' (32). It seems that this aspiration, at bottom, is the source of genuine utopia for Gutiérrez, finding its intellectual articulation in a certain line of the history of modern philosophy.

(6) *Humanistic or biblical source?*

At this point it may be appropriate to take a critical look at Gutiérrez's line of thought so far, since the essential features of his notion of utopia have now been sketched.

To begin with my last point, it is particularly significant that Gutiérrez links the source of what he considers genuine utopia so intimately with the history of modern philosophy since the Renaissance. Clearly, there is a close affinity between utopia in Gutiérrez's revolutionary sense and the line which leads from Descartes to Marcuse, with its ever more sophisticated and radical views of humankind's rightful autonomy and freedom. It does not seem necessary to postulate a 'deeply-rooted sentiment' or a wide-spread 'aspiration of liberation' to explain the connection between the course of humanistic philosophy and the utopias of contemporary liberation movements. That connection is widely recognized as one of direct intellectual affiliation. It is no secret that the rhetoric of modern revolutionaries draws directly on the freedom-ideal which has dominated so much of intellectual history in modern times. For the most part, the source of Gutiérrez's utopia would seem to be neither the gospel nor revolutionary praxis, nor some postulated cosmic yearning, but the modern freedom philosophies which have issued from the Renaissance.

Meanwhile, Gutiérrez's entire program of revolutionary historical involvement (and indeed that of liberation-theology in general) hinges on this. If we do not accept uncritically the humanistic freedom-ideal of

5. *Movimento de ideas*, also referred to on the same page as *el proceso de ideas cuyos grandes hitos hemos recordado*, literally, 'the process of ideas whose great milestones we have called to mind.'

the Renaissance and its philosophical heritage, it is impossible to endorse without serious reservation the political praxis urged by Gutiérrez and his theological allies.

The basic flaw in Gutiérrez's scheme lies in that one sentence: 'The gospel does not provide a utopia for us; this is a human work' (238). For him, the people must create their own utopia, which is to be *interpreted* in the light of the gospel. The gospel cannot be religiously *critical* of utopia, or give it shape or content or direction. After all, it belongs to a different 'plane' of history. In this way the gospel is effectively neutralized with respect to one's utopia. Utopia's content is derived from uncritically accepted themes of modern philosophy.

(7) *Christian* Weltanschauung, *its cosmic and transformational implications*

It would be incorrect to conclude from my criticism that there is no place for something like 'utopia,' or some normative conception of history and society, in relating faith to societal reform. Nor does it follow that the insights of modern philosophy may or should be ignored in this. The crucial point for the Christian is that faith must be determinative in the elaboration of 'intervening ideas' and in the assessment of the contributions of philosophy—I would speak of *Weltanschauung* or worldview rather than utopia.

Biblical faith, if it is understood as being correlative with God's revelation in the Bible, is not without cognitive content. It is somewhat ironic that a Protestant should need to point this out to a Catholic; after all, one of the great debates of the Reformation was whether *fides* reduces to *assensus* or *cognitio* (as Rome claimed), or should be more essentially characterized as *fiducia* and *certitudo* (as the Reformers insisted).[6] After Kant and existentialism, however, the roles are reversed, and the heirs of the Reformation must insist that faith does have a cognitive content of its own, the *didaskalia* or *doctrina* which is so central to the apostolic tradition. A justified reaction to 'idealism,' 'rationalism' or 'scientism' ('theologism') must not blind one to this major fact.

Biblical faith in fact involves a worldview, at least implicitly and in principle. The central notions of creation (a *given* order of reality), fall (human mutiny at the root of all perversion of the given order) and redemption (unearned restoration of the order in Christ) are cosmic and transformational in their implications. Together with other basic elements

6. See, for example, the little classic on the nature of faith by Herman Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*.

of the biblical *doctrina* (Christ's universal kingship, for example; the eschatological labor pangs of the groaning creation, and 'world' as the perverted and enslaved creation), these central ideas (not *just* ideas, but ideas all the same) give believers the fundamental outline of a completely anti-pagan *Weltanschauung*, a worldview which provides the interpretive framework for history, society, culture, politics, and everything else that enters human experience. They provide, if you like, the rudiments of a 'utopia,' an imaginative vision of humanity, the world and a changed future which transcends the *status quo* and drives on to concrete historical praxis, to *reformation* of the structures of an oppressive society.

(8) *Biblical faith, humanistic faith and the dangers of political messianism*

Gutiérrez is right in stressing the necessity for a utopia of this kind. People cannot live without utopias of some sort. He is also right in saying that our utopia (let me call it our worldview) must serve as the shaping force undergirding our historical practice, not only as an inspiring vision giving courage for the struggle, but also as a factor *which enters intimately into the very theorizing of science*. Science is not neutral, certainly not the sciences of society; it is thoroughly and integrally perspectival or *weltanschaulich* in character. On both these points I would agree (forgetting for the moment the conceptual ambiguities noted earlier and the problematic science–practice matrix) with his account of the utopia–praxis relationship generally.

But he is quite wrong, I think, on a crucial point. The worldview underlying science and praxis is not religiously neutral; it is itself always the expression of a *faith*, biblical or otherwise. Since Gutiérrez, as a matter of principle, refuses to let biblical faith inform his utopia (preferring to let faith 'interpret' utopia instead), it is in fact an unbiblical faith which informs it. This is the faith of post-Renaissance modernity, whose witnesses are Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Marcuse. Theirs is a faith which does not merely *interpret* a vision, but *gives* it. Faith by its nature gives a vision of life, it urges a worldview on human beings. For Gutiérrez biblical faith is a weak thing; it interprets and ultimately justifies the utopia that people create out of their own needs and struggle. The word *proyecto*, again, is very telling in this context, for it is representative of the humanistic denial of a God-given order which all must respect and honor. The faith of the Bible teaches an understanding of creation, also in societal reality; this is a divine work; the faith of humanism teaches a utopian *proyecto*, and 'this is human work.' The one teaches people to

seeks the Lord's way in society; the other urges them to make their own way. Biblical religion makes creation central in the believer's thinking; humanistic religion turns creation into a dead letter or, more precisely, makes the human being the creator rather than God.

But biblical faith is not a dead letter. It teaches us to see the whole world, including society and culture, in the categories of creation, fall and redemption, as the arena of struggle between the evil *cosmos* and Christ's kingship. More particularly, it teaches us to appreciate two cardinal realities which the tradition leading from Descartes to Marcuse and Gutiérrez has sought to marginalize, if not to deny altogether: the lawful order and structure of an unfolding creation which imposes itself also in human society, and the totalitarian warfare between the Lamb and the dragon, who dispute between themselves the entire range of creation. A 'utopia' which takes these central tenets of the biblical faith seriously, and which provides inspiration for action as well as the categorial foundations of a renewed scientific enterprise, offers greater promise of a *biblical* way to go in the agonizing straits of our demonized societies than a theology which looks for its solutions in a humanistic tradition which is in many ways at the root of the societal problem.

This is not to say that we must opt for the 'dangerous politico-religious messianism' against which Gutiérrez warns (236). There is indeed a kind of 'mediation' between faith and action for structural change. This mediation involves both reflection on a biblical worldview and the scientific task of coming to terms with the phenomena of the social sciences in the light of such a 'thought-through' worldview. In a sense it can be said that 'this is a human work,' but only 'in a sense.' It is a human work that is *normed* by biblical revelation. This does not make for easy or cut-and-dried answers to the theoretical and practical problems posed by a distorted social order, but it does provide principled guidance in finding our way through the tangled thicket. Here too, God's Word is a *light* on the path we are called to tread.

(9) *For further reading*

In addition to *A Theology of Liberation*, discussed in this chapter, Gutiérrez has written *The Power of the Poor in History* and other works mentioned below. Other representatives of liberation-theology are: Orlando E. Costas, who wrote *The Church and Its Mission; A Shattering Critique from the Third World* and *Christ Outside the Gate. Mission Beyond Christendom*; Leonardo Boff, the author of *Jesus Christ Liberator. A Critical Christology*

for Our Time; and José Míguez Bonino, a Protestant, who wrote *Christians and Marxists; The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* and *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*. A survey and critical evaluation of liberation-theology is given by C. René Padillo, 'Liberation Theology,' and the book of Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*.

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12 / Jacob Klapwijk

Epilogue: The Idea of Transformational Philosophy

My reading of the preceding chapters left me much impressed with how laboriously people toiled to retain their identity as Christian thinkers in the spiritual battles of their age. Their two-pronged commitment—to hold on to the unique truth of the gospel and to do justice to the meaning of contemporary philosophical insights—drove them to exert themselves relentlessly. Their frequent reward was insinuation and contumely. To them may be applied Norman Fiering's recent observation regarding Malebranche and Jonathan Edwards: they 'confused and irritated opponents because they loved God more than philosophy.'[1]

The unevenness and the tensions in the results of their efforts tend to evoke my sympathy rather than leave me irritated. After all, they make palpable the tenacity with which existentially believing folk bit into the issue which concerns us here, the questions of 'synthesis' and 'antithesis.' More to the point is that, as I see it, such tensions are highly relevant *caveats* for our own attempts at systematic articulation and correct insight. So, I propose to sketch the contours of this tension-filled terrain in the light of the material presented above; after that I will try to indicate the systematic relevance of these data.

(1) *Christian faith and ancient philosophy*

One notes evident tensions in the thought of the second- and third-century Apologists. Origen, for instance, who would be wholly Christian and wholly Greek philosopher, ended a Christian martyr and ecclesiastical heretic (ch. 2.4). Caught between two fires, he sought to make perspicuous the continuity between ancient philosophy and the Christian faith by way of the idea of the universal *logos*. He did not succeed, at least not entirely, since in the last analysis the looked-for continuity retained traces of discord (ch. 2.6).

1. Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context*, 51.

The Church Father Augustine, living some centuries later, left us with similar discrepancies. After his conversion Augustine took it upon himself to defend the faith. To do so he pressed into service a type of philosophy that in fact derived from neo-Platonism, only to find that neo-Platonism is not readily amenable to Christian doctrine and the reverse more difficult still. The religious antithesis—the battle between the Kingdom of God and a world that rejects its Maker—weighed heavily upon him. It took him the rest of his life to reach a break-through and to eradicate the last vestiges of the Platonic framework still lurking in his thought (ch. 3.6,7).

When we turn to the Middle Ages and pick out as representative Bonaventure, we find that the tensions have not lessened. Working within the Augustinian tradition and especially inspired by Francis of Assisi's poverty-ideal, Bonaventure understood the wisdom of God to be based in humility and thus truly opposed to the wisdom of the world to which the ancient philosophers had succumbed. Meanwhile, speaking of 'the journey of the mind into God' Bonaventure looked for support in a mysticism the origin of which was (in his case) Greco-Platonic rather than Christian. He supposed that the Christian's soul, on its way to perfect illumination and loving repose in God, was to traverse various stages—including that of the philosophical sciences whose radiance comes to us through the Greeks (ch. 4.7).[2] It seems as if Bonaventure would both shed and embrace the Greek world of thought.

I find it highly arresting that even in the most meticulously balanced systems ever produced in the history of Christian thought, those of Thomas Aquinas and Hegel, the tensions are but thinly veiled. As to Thomas, the author of the relevant chapter draws on Thomas's own texts to demonstrate how the Angelic Doctor linked the relation between philosophical knowledge and Christian faith to the distinction between the natural and the supernatural human destiny. This allowed Thomas to grant space to (the Aristotelian idea of) the natural desire to know proper to all, and constitutive also of Greek philosophy. Aertsen shows, however, that the distinction between the two levels of nature and supernature cannot really be harmonized with another of Thomas's views: the circulation motif which, though couched in neo-Platonic terms, expresses the basic biblical principle that in existential faith the human person, the creature of God, is immediately and undividedly related to the one Origin (ch. 5.10).

2. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 3, 6.

(2) *Tensions in modern and contemporary thinking*

In modern times latent tensions still abound in Christian reflection, even in the case of Hegel's great system. For instance, Hegel first posits an 'antithesis' in the history of thought between paganism and Christianity; next this antithesis is said to coincide with the 'distinction' between Greek and modern philosophy; ultimately the two are called 'continuous,' supposedly in virtue of the autonomous and freely self-determinative Idea (ch. 7.5).

It is well to be alert to such frictions in Hegel's system since, obviously, they tend to cast doubt on the remainder of his tale. I might, for example, refer to his assertion that Luther's insistence on personal faith and freedom of conscience sired the eighteenth-century penchant for rational emancipation (but compare my observations in ch. 6.3). Doubt also arises in connection with Hegel's thesis that Christian faith and the secularized ideal of freedom are ultimately reconciled and unified in the advent of the speculative concept of God: recognition of the Spirit in the present (but see my critique in ch. 6.9).

It can be said, then, that even Hegel's 'reconciliation with the present' falls short of seamless synthesis; evidently, the exclusive truth of Christianity resists integration into Hegel's inclusivistic and, hence, relativizing philosophy of religion. We are not really surprised to see his difficulties reflected in those Christians whose thinking is influenced by him, such as Ricœur, Moltmann, Tillich and Pannenberg.

With Tillich, Pannenberg and many others we are placed squarely before the staggering problems of our own century. In a world torn by war and violence we keep hearing the painful lament: reality around us is not reconciled at all, is not in the least infused with Christian spirit—what are we to do? Christian thinking, long dissatisfied with Hegel (Kierkegaard!), is in for radical reorientation. To this end, the question of how belief in God relates to the given (which the Church Fathers and the Scholastics were wont to formulate as a philosophic–theological problem) tends to be transposed among post-Hegelians into a historical or dialectical task (cf. Gutiérrez): it is up to us to interpret and shape this broken, unreconciled world in terms of Christ. All in all it cannot be said that in our time the tensions are abating!

Tillich's 'dialectics of theonomy,' for instance, testifies to such frictions. According to Tillich, the great *kairos*, i.e., the incarnation, marked the insertion into world history of theonomy as a synthesis of autonomy and heteronomy. But Tillich cannot deny that the most thoroughgoing realizations of this theonomy still harbor 'the seeds of contradiction' (ch. 9.9),

in view of which he pleads for historical openness; no Hegelian reconciliation with the present is possible; there will always be need of 'a new synthesis' (ch. 9.1).

Pannenberg's construction of history, though expressly meant as Christian apologetic, cannot overcome the controversial nature of reality either (ch. 10.6). Following Hegel, Pannenberg is prepared to attribute 'Christian motivation' to modernity's emancipatory philosophies and secularization urge, but all this is 'ambiguous' as well.[3] Is it possible to effectuate a synthesis? Unlike Tillich, Pannenberg no longer takes for granted that philosophy and theology can cooperate and be in correlation; they have become competitors. Nevertheless, he retains a 'Barthian moment,' that is, he is confident that its eschatological anticipation equips theology to interpret reality more comprehensively, and to take up into the heart of Christianity whatever insight may derive from other sources more adequately than any philosophy or ideology ever could (ch. 10.7).

Chapter 11 deals with Gutiérrez, whose theologically tinged theory of society is oriented to Marx rather than Hegel. In his work the tension between faith and reality as given is greater than any hitherto encountered. Compassion with a humanity oppressed forbids Gutiérrez to rest content with reconciliation with the present; it drives him to press for revolutionary liberation *in* the present, brandishing a utopian blueprint. Strangely, as soon as the relation of faith to modern philosophy—our theme—is at stake the tension suddenly subsides. It seems as if the vision of a new humanity and a new society, free of political and social oppression, can be grafted straightway onto Marxist or neo-Marxist philosophies of emancipation and simultaneously be understood, with equal ease, in terms of the growth of the Kingdom of God (ch. 11.5).

Perhaps some will object that Gutiérrez does not advocate 'identification' of the process of political liberation with the coming of the Kingdom of God, and that he realizes that the human, all too human work of political liberation cannot be free of ambiguity.[4] I would gladly concede the point; nevertheless it remains that, as Wolters says, Gutiérrez is far too prone to gloss over the tension between the Christian faith and the humanistic bent of modern philosophy ever since Descartes. This tendency is not instigated by a wish to legitimate contemporary thought as Christian—Hegel's influence is not as direct as that. Rather, the reason why Gutiérrez displays little sensitivity to this tension is that utopia, as modern product of rational analysis, belongs at a level other than that of

3. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* III, 191.
4. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 175–78.

the Christian hope to which it is said to relate. It seems to me that Wolters is quite right in saying that liberation-theology (I would restrict this to 'as elaborated by Gutiérrez') cannot be understood apart from 'classical Thomism.' Wolters is 'dead-on' when a little later it becomes clear that this version of the Thomistic synthesis is a modern one, gravitating toward Marxist philosophy of history rather than toward the ancient metaphysics of being (ch. 11.2). One should take note of this philosophical shift on the part of Gutiérrez, who is known to have reservations regarding traditional Thomism and its supernatural values and two-layered order of reality, meanwhile retaining much of Thomas in his theory.

Personally, I would want to take into account another aspect as well: it seems to me that Gutiérrez, in affinity with Maurice Blondel, Karl Rahner and other neo-Thomists, displays a kind of Christian-existential counterpoint in the idea that it is the whole person, including all the disrupted social relationships, who is in faith oriented to God's salvation (cf. my earlier remark of similar import regarding Thomas, ch. 12.1). Gutiérrez formulates this counterpoint in the maxim: 'but one call to salvation.'[5] All things considered, then, it turns out that this thinker of the Latin American basic communities, who *prima facie* seemed to let Christian faith and neo-Marxist philosophy coalesce without a hitch, has not really solved the problem of synthesis.

So far it seems as if our conclusion must be negative. Two thousand years of church history witness to recurrent efforts to unite Christian faith and non-Christian thought in a synthesis; attempts at harmonization or accommodation—at least those investigated in this book—were never wholly successful.

At cross-purposes to these there have been many markedly antithetical approaches as well. I have in mind the early Christian Apologists Irenaeus, Tatianus, Tertullian, the contempt of all worldly learning expressed in the writings of Medievals such as Peter Damiani and Bernard of Clairvaux, the sturdy repudiations voiced by the reformers Luther and Calvin, the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd. The path here trod is a thorny one; the antithetical tradition contains many a trace of synthesis (Scholasticism in Calvin, ch. 6.5; Kuyper influenced by Thomas and Bonaventure, ch. 8.5; and so on). Even Dooyeweerd, emphatic in taking the religious antithesis as starting point for philosophy and decidedly averse to synthesis, does not hesitate to acknowledge 'elements of truth' in

5. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 69–72.

non-Christian thought,[6] and he formulated his transcendental philosophy in the context of a commitment to sustained communication with dissenters (ch. 8.7). When reading Tertullian, who denied every kind of contact between 'Jerusalem' and 'Athens' (ch. 1.3), one is bound to wonder whether he in fact did sever all lines of communication. At times Tertullian frankly admits that the philosophers' assertions were not always wrong.[7]

Clearly, more needs to be said below about the antithetical approaches found in the Christian philosophical tradition. For now I merely mean to make room for the possibility that antithetical thought is not immune to the tensions noted earlier. Could some form of synthesis be present under cover of antithesis? Conversely, might not antithetical traits sometimes be observable in philosophies of synthesis? Let us assume for now that on the philosophical level a Christian approach can be neither exclusively antithetical nor completely synthetic.

(3) *Probing the motives*

The repeated attempts at synthesis in the philosophical tradition of Christianity were crossed time after time by antithetical approaches; in fact, elements of synthesis and of antithesis are frequently, if not always, found in one and the same thinker. It is understandable that this should be the case, since both the synthetic and the antithetic approach surely serve authentically Christian interests.

Those who emphasize the antithesis mean to do justice to the biblical testimony regarding the enmity between the Kingdom of God and the realm of darkness as constituting two opposed principles inscribed in all of human life including culture, society, science. This opposition is not between two levels, a 'higher' and 'lower;' consequently, in spite of all such attempts it cannot be made to fit in a hierarchical order of being as the Scholastics tried, or in a Lutheran doctrine of two realms. Nor is the contrast one of 'earlier' and 'later,' of logical or historical contradiction, so that neither idealism nor materialism can encompass it in their dialectical philosophies of history. Antithesis at bottom refers to the all-encompassing, directional divergence between life as oriented to and on the way toward God, and apostasy which estranges the whole of life and society from the covenant with God. In a renowned passage in *De civitate Dei* Augustine expressed this universal antithesis thus: 'Accordingly, two

6. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique* II, 311.
7. Tertullian, *De anima*, 2.

cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the Love of God, even to the contempt of self.'[8] It took a work comprising twenty-two books to demonstrate the biblical roots of this religious antithesis, and to chart its effects throughout culture and in the life of nations up to the end of world history.

Recognition of the religious antithesis is a feature of the antithetical approach in philosophy. It may well be, however, that this recognition is inspired by negative motivations, as church history frequently shows. I would mention three such motives which, I suspect, are psychological and sociological bedfellows. First, antithesis may mean flight from the world and refuge in illusionary, cherished isolation. But isolation courts complacency. Secondly, antithesis may amount to privatization of the Christian faith, such that the rule and coming Kingdom of God is reduced to a dialogue between God and the individual soul alone. Obviously, this attitude surrenders all of culture to secularization or, rather, to de-Christianization. Thirdly, antithesis may represent the refusal to render account, *apologian* (as 1 Peter 3:15 demands), to anyone who inquires after the reason, *logon*, of the hope that is in us. It is not hard to see that such fideistic irrationalism invites all manner of obscurantism. What we have here, then, are three veritable derailments of antithesis: isolationism, privatism and obscurantism are so many blind alleys blocking the path to Christian reflection on the crucial questions raised in this book.

It is the lasting merit of the Church Fathers since the days of Justin Martyr, the 'Christian in philosopher's garb,' that they took up the challenge of Greek culture and indeed, true to St. Peter's word, transposed their hope into a Christian apologetic. Theirs was a synthesizing philosophy, a balancing act on the tightrope of rational argumentation. And while those who wrote the various chapters in this book felt that Clement, Origen, Hegel, Pannenberg, should be criticized, they do not hesitate to express their high regard for these pioneers of the spirit, gratefully acknowledging that these men, casting their profoundest convictions in the mold of contemporary categories, truly sought to defend the faith.

On the other hand it remains that the synthesis approach, too, may go astray. Once again I would mention three types of error, each of which is met with in this book: (1) *intellectualism*—the problems of *gnosis*; belief as intellectual assent; (2) *elitism*—two kinds of Christians; theology as the queen of the sciences; deification of reason; (3) *inadequate criticism*—lack

8. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 28.

of radical critique; are ancient metaphysics and modern humanism really assessed in terms of their apostate roots?

Above, I concluded that the Christian philosophies of antiquity, of the Middle Ages and of modernity all *de facto* feature tensions between exclusivism or inclusivism, or between a relatively synthetic and a relatively antithetic attitude regarding the prevalent systems of thought. When next one turns to the authentically Christian motives that evidently play a part in all of them—leaving aside the harmful extremes of both antithesis and synthesis—a *de jure* choice is difficult. Should we say that translation of the Christian message into the categorial context of contemporary thinking and recognition of the religious antithesis as universal incision and divergence are as such mutually exclusive? This is what we want to know.

And so I asked myself what to make of a phrase like 'between antithesis and synthesis' (which was the working title of this volume). Does it designate a recurrent historical or structural dilemma in the face of which the Christian tradition, twisting and turning as it may, is forever forced to choose? Or could it, perhaps, refer to a sea channel whose narrow fairway demands meticulous navigation since Christian reflection, if orienting itself to the beacons on one side only, will surely run aground?

Toward the end of chapter 8, above, I attempted to steer a course that would take full cognizance of the most basic motives in both the synthetic and the antithetic attitude. In that context I spoke of an 'on-going transformation of philosophy' (ch. 8.9), in which the ideas of criticism and transformation would honor the antithetical principle while the notions of appropriation and integration would do justice to the synthetic tendency in Christian thought. At this point we can generalize the problem to embrace the scope of this book as a whole: can the idea of transformational philosophy be made fruitful for Christian believers seeking their way in non-Christian thought?

(4) *The idea of transformational philosophy; Augustine and Thomas*

Before starting out, I should stipulate that transformational philosophy cannot rest content with a smoothed-out compromise, cannot be satisfied with a formula designed to conceal the tensions and contradictions that beset the Christian tradition of thought. Much rather, transformational philosophy means to pierce through the contradictions, to explore them systematically, to seek a new way of posing questions which, I think, ought to be followed up with comprehensive research on the part of Christians.

Transformational philosophy assumes that every Christian philosophy arises in the context of a broader tradition and hence simply cannot avoid dealing with 'non-Christian thought' in some way; that by reason of this something invariably happens in the relation of the one to the other; that a process of thoroughgoing hermeneutics is in fact in progress. Essentially, this process comes down to this: invoking the Christian faith one either embraces current philosophical wisdom uncritically or—and this, I think, is the normative sense of transformational philosophy—one seeks to make sense of these insights in terms of the Christian point of view. The former would be ideological legitimation; the latter might be called critical or discerning transformation. (I grant that a third way exists: there are those who disregard certain views completely; given philosophy's claim to truth, however, this reaction exhibits mere philosophical incompetence.)

The new question may now be formulated: Given a philosophy which, with initial justification, may be characterized as either synthetic or antithetic—to what extent does it reveal attempts at ideological legitimation, or, as the case may be, Christian transformation of the consciously or unconsciously appropriated body of thought? Succinctly put: What transformational quality does a given Christian philosophy prove to possess?

While I believe that this approach alone can do justice to the real significance of past and present Christian views, I am equally sure that the task is far from easy. Obviously, to assess ideological legitimation or critical transformation one cannot simply take declarations of intent at face value; needed is in-depth analysis of content. Also, conformation and transformation often appear side by side, which means that in such cases evaluations must be in terms of degree—the evidence has to be weighed with meticulous care. Still another complication is that nobody can inquire into a philosophy's transformational quality without putting personal convictions on the line.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that scientific integrity and Christian solidarity compel one to investigate to what extent transformational elements do occur in such synthetically or antithetically oriented philosophies. In retrospect one notes that in this volume a measure of sensitivity to this kind of approach is certainly present. In his study on Augustine, for example, Bos raises as a 'question of principle' whether Platonism is amenable to Christian appropriation. With evident approval he mentions that traces of transformation are present in Augustine's work (ch. 3.6). Indeed, at the outset of the essay the matter is very well put: should we look upon Augustine's Christian philosophy 'as water changed into wine or as vintage diluted?' It reminds me of something Thomas wrote in his work on

Boethius: 'Those who make use of philosophical proofs in sacred doctrine by drawing them into the service of faith do not mix water and wine but *convert* water *into* wine' (italics mine).[9]

Naturally, such words caution us to be circumspect in dealing with Thomas as well. For instance: how right is Michael Marlet in saying that in the final analysis Thomas's is not a philosophy of synthesis but—like Herman Dooyeweerd's—a Christian 'transcendental philosophy,' 'a philosophy (believingly) conscious of its concrete, Christian *a priori*?'[10] This question is of immediate relevance, since in chapter 5 Aertsen calls attention to Schillebeekx (whose views are akin to those of Marlet) and agrees that such a concrete *a priori* of faith corresponds to Thomas's deepest intention (ch. 5.12); above, I referred to this concrete *a priori* as 'Christian–existential counterpoint.'

Aertsen does append some much-needed reservations, as I do more explicitly in my attempt to sketch the break between late-medieval thought and the Reformation which a comparison of Calvin and then current Thomism reveals (ch. 6.2,3). To be sure, both Aertsen and I differentiate between Thomas and Thomism. In Calvin's days Cajetan c.s. were distorting Thomas's intentions and heading for a clear-cut dualistic supernaturalism. This goes to show how vulnerable the Christian transformational intention can be: I fear that detailed comparison of Luther with Lutheranism (Melanchthon, Johann Gerhard) or of Calvin with Calvinism (Beza) would tell a similar tale.

(5) *Hegel: inverse transformation*

Turning to nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy we find the question returning with increasing urgency. In what way have Hegel and more recent thinkers in the Christian tradition—such as Tillich and Pannenberg—given form to Christian thinking as transformational philosophy? The question arises almost spontaneously as it were, since the writers in this book keep telling us that, certainly in the case of these modern and contemporary thinkers, it will not do to label their dealings with the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought as instances of unqualified 'synthesis' or 'antithesis' (ch. 7.7; 8.4; 10.7). With respect to Hegel, Griffioen goes as far as to say that 'thought implies transformation' (ch. 7.2). Like Hegel, Paul Tillich calls for a new, christologically founded synthesis. Morbey refers to Tillich's characterization of

9. Thomas Aquinas, *In Boethii de trinitate*, 2, 3, ad 5.
10. Michael Fr. J. Marlet S. J., *Grundlinien der kalvinistischen 'Philosophie der Gesetzesidee'*, 107.

this process as one of 'reception and transformation' (ch. 8.8).[11] Vroom says of Pannenberg that 'from out of the heart of the Christian view of reality ... the other insights are transformed' (ch. 10.7). Pannenberg's own arresting formulation refers to the task 'to transform ... in the critical light of the biblical idea of God.'[12] Can we doubt that this is a plea, in terms similar to mine, for the very thing which I described as a critical transformation of non-Christian thought?

Let us consider Hegel. It is certainly true that one will encounter no antithesis or synthesis in the sense of outright rejection or complete acceptance of ancient or modern philosophy. On the contrary, Hegel is convinced that the Christian spirit is to manifest itself in every direction and hence must infuse philosophy as well. This is the point of the central role accorded to synthesis or reconciliation with the present. It seems to me, though, that actual transformation of the philosophical tradition from the perspective of the Christian faith is something else. Hegel himself adds serious impediments to such transformation since, unlike his predecessors, he does not approach philosophy in terms of faith but prefers to think of faith philosophically (ch. 7.3). Moreover, he is wont to describe the relation of faith to ancient and modern thought dialectically, under the aegis of *Aufhebung*, i.e., 'destruction' *and* 'preservation.' For the most part then, especially in relation to modern philosophy, Hegel's 'reconciliation' amounts to ideological legitimation: 'Modern philosophy is, as such, united with religion, since it originated within the world of Christendom.'[13] This is why Griffioen finds Hegel's position to reduce to a 'dialectical justification' of the philosophical tradition (ch. 7.9), such that one cannot speak of its 'philosophical conversion' or 'inner reformation' (ch. 7.3).

Well, did not Hegel, possibly more than anyone, revolutionize the history of philosophy (ancient and modern) by including it in the sweep of his reflection? Will we not be hard put to find greater transformational intentionality and potential than in precisely his dynamic dialectics? To be sure. But, as I see it, Hegel's dynamics is heading somewhere else; following in its wake is an 'inverse transformation.' We should bear in mind that confrontation between Christian faith and non-Christian thought properly implies interaction, in which each influences the other. It is not only the case that faith can transform an intellectual tradition; such traditions, too, are able to reinterpret the implications of the Christian

11. Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 14.
12. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions* II, 139.
13. G.W.F. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 192.

convictions. And if current patterns of thought are not brought under the rule of the gospel, chances are that eventually they will gloss the biblical view on reality and the coming Kingdom of God. The next stage would be that Christian faith becomes system-corroborative, handmaiden to ideology. At that point we would have before us an instance of 'Christian' transformational philosophy in the anti-normative sense.

Here is an example of what I would call inverse transformation: this book contains recurrent mention of Christians who have come to understand 'faith' intellectualistically. Influenced by prevailing ancient or modern philosophies and their perennial rationality cults, they have adjusted their conceptualizing accordingly. I am thinking of Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr, both of whom defended the Christian faith as system of (higher, superior) 'wisdom,' and of Thomas, who pictured faith as the perfection of 'natural reason.' In these instances we meet with different forms of intellectualization of faith under the transforming pressure of Greek philosophy.

Something like this happened in the case of Hegel. In connection with Hegel's philosophy of religion Griffioen remarks that 'reason, as the supreme judge in all matters of truth and falsehood, is the correct philosophical translation of the justification by faith alone' (ch. 7.5). If this was Hegel's understanding, can we avoid the conclusion that he intellectualized faith—in a new style? Hegel's subjectivistic and activistic concept of reason is marked by modern Western thought, by Renaissance, Cartesianism, Kant and Fichte, rather than by the Greeks. His inverse transformation is unequalled: no longer is faith the perfection of reason (as it was for the Greek-inspired Medievals); in modern speculative idealism reason is the perfection of faith!

Space is lacking here to consider Tillich and Pannenberg extensively in terms of the idea of transformation and the danger of inversion. In the case of Tillich one suspects that the 'method of correlation' obstructs the transformation of philosophy. The method assumes that the symbols used in Christian proclamation need to be interpreted such that they 'relate' to human 'self-understanding' (which in turn is expressed in modern art, literature, science and contemporary philosophy). On this point Pannenberg's program is the more radical one, since it urges critical transformation of philosophy and the sciences rather than mere dialogue with them. But on this score, too, I would emphasize that patient analysis of its content alone can clarify the actual scope of this critical transformation. Considering Pannenberg's emphasis on the Christian motivation of the modern age (ch. 12.2), his understanding of Christian philosophy as

theology (ch. 10.6), and his view of the autonomy of reason,[14] one may well ask whether these impulses hinder rather than encourage the kind of critical penetration and reformation of philosophical thinking which we need.

(6) *The inadequacy of synthesis terminology. The dialectic of transformation and its inversion*

Discovery of the hidden conjunction of transformation and inverse transformation puts a different aspect on the problem of synthesis. I fully agree with Douwe Runia who, in connection with Philo, known as the first great proponent of synthesis (in his case of Jewish belief and Greek philosophy), recently remarked that 'the notion of "synthesis" or "reconciliation" presupposes a division into distinct blocks much clearer to us than it was to Philo, on whom we should not foist a pagan–Christian antithesis *avant la lettre*.'[15] Evidently, Runia means to say that a New Testament view of the religious antithesis between (Judaeo-)Christian faith and pagan religion may lead one to designate Philo's use of Greek philosophy as an attempt to fuse the incompatible, but that Philo himself felt no such contradiction or experienced it less keenly.

I believe that Runia is right; in fact, I would say that this volume shows that his observation need not be restricted to Philo and is applicable also to a number of early Christian thinkers. In the case of Clement, much influenced by Philo, the term 'synthesis' is not the most felicitous characterization. It is even less appropriate to Justin Martyr's quest for 'identification' of Christian faith and Greek philosophy. Again, to the extent that Origen meant to bring out the 'continuity' of faith and pagan philosophy, 'synthesis' seems an inadequate designation as well.

Above, it appeared that the terms 'antithesis' and 'synthesis' do not really fit Hegel, Tillich and Pannenberg either. It seems, then, that the question may be raised generally: Is this synthesis terminology satisfactory? Are 'synthesis' and 'antithesis,' as characterizations of specific philosophical approaches (note that at this point I am not talking about the *religious* antithesis, for which see ch. 8.6,7; 12.3), the right terms to get a hold on the problem of Christian faith and non-Christian philosophy? If it be granted that the concepts forged in Christian philosophy cannot be expressed other than by way of critical examination and transformation

14. See Jacob Klapwijk, 'Geloof en rede in de theologie van Troeltsch en Pannenberg.' In: *Vrede met de rede?*, 63 ff.

15. Douwe T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria* I, 440.

of the historical materials at hand, then it is immediately obvious that 'antithesis' between philosophical systems will not do. What about—philosophical—'synthesis?'

A first consideration is that this term presupposes an *opposition of principle* (e.g., between Christian doctrine and non-Christian thought). Synthesis thinkers supposedly attempt to close the gap between principles. But this is not how these people experience it, or, if they do note such opposedness, they would surround it with reservations (see Runia's argument). To them the term 'synthesis' seems misleading. On the other hand, from the standpoint of those who reject synthesis the term is questionable as well. The opponents of synthesis-philosophy accept that two principles are at issue but deny that these can possibly be brought together. Dooyeweerd was quite aware of this, which is why at times he correctly speaks of 'apparent' synthesis, appearance in the sense of semblance.[16] I would add a third consideration, derived from the train of thought developed in this chapter. 'Synthesis' is a static term containing not a hint of the field of tension surrounding Christian thinkers open to the questions of their times, a field of tension stretched out between the poles of transformation and inverse transformation.

I suggest, then, that future research should focus on problems engendered by this tension rather than on the traditional problems of synthesis. Let me give an example. H. Robbers S.J. wrote: 'Clement of Alexandria ... worked with a wholly original Christian metaphysics towards a *thorough reform* of Greek philosophy' (italics mine).[17] In this arresting final sentence of his essay, Robbers in effect makes a claim—adequately argued or not—regarding the transformational quality of Clement's philosophy. To tell the truth, a claim of this sort seems to me more significant than the traditional question whether or how extensively Clement has incorporated elements lifted from Philo, the Stoics or Middle Platonism. The focus should be on the manner not measure of incorporation.

For the most part this volume is aimed at *models* of incorporation. This is a first step, a necessary preliminary. If we want to know whether Clement can rightly be called a reformer of philosophy we must first find out what instruments he meant to apply. Specifically, we shall have to determine whether the model of subordination can be considered a suitable medium of reform or, alternatively, an open door for inverse transformation, starting point of the 'Hellenization' of the Christian faith (as

16. Dooyeweerd, *Reformatie en Scholastiek* I, 19.

17. J.H. Robbers, 'Christian Philosophy in Clement of Alexandria.' In: *Philosophy and Christianity*, 211.

Porphyry, neo-Platonist adversary of Christianity, said in connection with Clement's pupil Origen).

But even if the negative judgment were to prevail, the case of Clement would not yet be settled. A human being is a bundle of contradictions; consequently, it may well be true that Clement intellectualized faith (as I suggested) and simultaneously reformed Greek thought (as Robbers claims). In other words, transformation and its inverse can clash in the mind of a single person. Is this what Bos was thinking of when he noted Clement's reappraisal of both Greek philosophy and Christian faith and added: 'There is reason to believe that these two are related' (ch. 1.3)? That connection could prove to be outstandingly dialectical!

(7) *Religious antithesis. The spell of contemporary thought*

We return to the point at which my argument began. The situation of a Christian scholar who seeks solidarity with the surrounding world of learning and wants to be loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ soon proves rife with tension. Such tensions are not mere logical inconsistencies, although *non sequiturs* and ambiguities are the first things accurate analysis reveals. These tensions outstrip historical dialectics as well, although history does play its cunning games with our sagacious schemes of synthesis and antithesis. Deep down, all of these tensions are bound up with the religious conflict, are linked to the urges toward sanctification and secularization. A philosophical description of this conflict must needs resort to abstract terms such as 'the dialectics of transformation and its inversion.' *In concreto* it reduces to the brokenness of Christian existence, the struggle of faith, the effects of the religious antithesis in the personal and communal consciousness of Christians on-the-way.

In regard to the religious antithesis and its impact on philosophy neo-Calvinists, as we saw in chapter 8, frequently distinguish two main streams in the Christian tradition. Kuyper contrasted Calvinist and 'Romanist' (Roman Catholic) philosophy; Dooyeweerd spoke of reformational versus scholastic philosophy; Vollenhoven distinguished antithetic and synthetic philosophy. In view of the analysis above, each of these oppositions, whose scope is practically identical, lacks subtlety and in fact misses the heart of the matter.

I would say that these distinctions are significant only insofar as they refer to a basic difference in *acknowledgment* of the kind of impact the religious antithesis has on philosophy. If taken to suggest a basic difference in *operation* of the religious antithesis these distinctions soon become

mere caricatures. Certainly, acknowledgment of the significance of the religious antithesis for philosophy enables one to recognize more readily its operation in the history of thought and to choose one's position in it critically. But even those who fail to acknowledge or perhaps expressly deny, may nevertheless surrender unconsciously to the operation of the religious antithesis and share its blessings (just as there may be unconscious resistance). Thank God, the battle between the Spirit of God and the spirit of apostasy does not depend on express acknowledgment of it in Christian philosophizing!

Any Christian philosophy worthy of the name is exposed to the dialectics of transformation and inverse transformation. Sad to say, we often find it very difficult to apply this insight to our own efforts. Accustomed to relying on the self-evidence of our own (Christian) tradition, under the spell of contemporary thought, or both, we tend to be more astutely aware of the shortcomings of others, especially of those of former days, than we are of our own failings. History's shifting images delude us time and again.

What I mean to say here is that humanity participates in a hermeneutic process of understanding, and that in consequence of this a later generation is apt to paint a picture of Clement's or Augustine's place in the history of Christian reflection different from how they or their contemporaries saw it. When people look back on the past the models of transformation there encountered almost always appear to be of the inverse kind—justly called 'models of syn-thesis' when objectified. Meanwhile, we may be sure that in those days these models were appreciated differently, that people welcomed them as tools of transformation, as God-given instruments to subjugate exogenous notions to the rule of the gospel. It is not surprising that later generations no longer experience things this way. Having become insensitive to the spiritual liberation offered by Augustine's Christian Platonism as compared to the neo-Platonism of Plotinus, they lament the heavy load thus laid upon the church. The shifting image invites suspicions of synthesis.

This is the sort of thing that happened in the case of the redoubtable Tertullian, whose uncompromisingly antithetic rejection of Greek philosophy is usually rendered as '*credo quia absurdum*' (I believe because it is absurd). Actually he expressed himself more sweepingly: '*credibile est quia ineptum est*' ([Christianity] is worthy of belief because it is foolish).[18] Vollenhoven, Professor of Calvinist Philosophy at the Free University, Amsterdam, used to speak of Tertullian as an example of . . . synthesis.[19]

18. Tertullian, *De carne Christi* V, 4.
19. In: *The Idea of a Christian Philosophy*, 200 ff.

I am sure he was quite right—looking back from half-way the twentieth century. In spite of all his good intentions, Tertullian in effect staked the credibility of the gospel on its *foolishness as defined in Greek philosophy*. Why did the astute Church Father not think of this critical insight himself? Well, let us just ask how we fare in transcending ourselves and in distancing ourselves from today's climate of thought in anticipation, as it were, of future imagery. Adherents of Dooyeweerd's Christian transcendental philosophy, for instance, should try to picture a philosophical world, say a hundred years from now, as 'post-critical' (in the vein of Heidegger, Gadamer, Polanyi), as a world in which transcendental criticism is wholly out of fashion, *passé*. Looking back from that hypothetical world into ours we would (*mirabile dictu*) be struck by the synthesizing potential of Dooyeweerd's antithetic and anti-synthetic thinking. We would also be able, I should add, to assess the transformational quality inherent in this synthesizing philosophy.

(8) *General philosophy and the dynamism of Christian philosophizing*

The above leads us to consider another aspect of our topic: the historical dynamism of Christian thinking. The contributions in this book are like photographic stills, segments of Christian philosophy lifted away from the backdrop of a much wider philosophical landscape. But to get a proper view of how Christian faith and non-Christian thinking interact we must re-insert them, so to speak, into these more general relationships.

The moment we do so, we note that the various Christian philosophical views dealt with were developed in greatly different ecclesiastical, political and social–cultural circumstances. These views bear evident marks of this and hence require to be understood in terms of these contexts which comprise both church and society. To the extent that this was feasible, the authors rightly did pay attention to the history of the church and theology, and to culture and society. Griffioen's essay, for instance, shows rather well, I think, how profoundly Hegel's thought was marked by societal developments such as the tortuous path of the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon and the subsequent Restoration—precisely in connection with the sort of synthesis he came to advocate, i.e., reconciliation with the present. In view of the theme, however, it was agreed that such excursions remain incidental to the design of the book as a whole. After all, to ask how transformational models originate and to ask whether they are valid are two different matters.

A second point to note is that within such social–cultural contexts the Christian philosophical tradition displays its own internal dynamism as well, a vigorousness evinced by repeated rethinking of Christian doctrine and of the philosophical problems implicit in it. We see the Greek and Latin Church Fathers reaching back to (Philo and) Clement; the medieval Scholastics find inspiration in Augustine; the Roman Catholic and Protestant neo-Scholastics have recourse to Thomas; many modern theologians turn to Hegel; all of them busily incorporating and reworking the pioneering efforts of their predecessors.

With respect to the transformational models examined above we see that, once adopted (more about this below), they are not only continually reconsidered but frequently retained and reinterpreted when a new model becomes available. Clement's subordination model, for instance, returns afresh in Origen's doctrine of the *logos*. Rather than ending there, it gains new momentum in Thomas Aquinas's subordination of the *ratio naturalis* to the supernatural truth of Scripture and, it seems to me, is traceable even in Hegel's notion of '*Aufheben*' which, relative to non-Christian thought, means 'to raise to a higher level' (ch. 7.2).

Origen's *logos* doctrine provides another example of this. Its contours were foreshadowed in the teachings of Justin Martyr. But the truly remarkable thing is that ever since Origen one finds almost no Christian thinkers who do not, in one way or another, include speculation about the universal *logos* in their reflections on the philosophy of their times. That Hegel's *Geist* is related to the *logos* tradition is mentioned by Griffioen (ch. 7.1), and Graham Morbey shows how important the *logos* is to Paul Tillich (ch. 9.6).

What we have here is a thought-provoking hermeneutic configuration: on the one hand, every great figure in the tradition of Christian understanding exhibits a profile characteristically his own and, on the other hand, unites within himself the traits of many predecessors. Gerben Groenewoud puts this well when he describes Bonaventure as both 'the culmination of the development of dealing with non-Christian thought' and a Christian scholar who, in his own unique way, gave shape to his affinity with Francis of Assisi's spiritualistic mysticism (ch. 4.8). This is why this book is more than a series of unrelated monographs—I mean, it goes beyond a collage of synthesis thinkers and an appendix listing separate synthesis models. If it had failed to do so it would mean that the authors overlooked the internal dynamism of Christian philosophizing.

Christian thinking, then, displays an internal dynamism because faithful reflection kept returning to its own past, to the patristic, scholastic

and reformational heritage of the church. Names like neo-Thomism, neo-Calvinism etc., indicate how deeply the old inspires the new.

There is still another way in which Christian philosophy is embedded in the broad context of thought and culture. Its internal dynamism is linked to the development of philosophy around it. One might say that Christian reflection looks backwards and sideways, that it reflects on the itinerary of thought beyond the pale of the *Catholica* from the pre-Socratics to this day—which brings us right back to the core of this book's theme.

It should be clear by now that the linkage of internal dynamism and external dynamics is of a piece with the transformational character of Christian philosophy, since such philosophy expressly relates to *and* enters into the questions raised in philosophy generally—questions urged upon Christians and non-Christians alike because all must come to terms somehow with the daily business of existing. But more needs to be said about this. Put in the form of a question: Does the linkage meant here consist in this, that in processes of transformation (or inverse transformation) Christian reflection struggles with the *concepts* and the *questions* that reach it from the outside? Or is the linkage more intimate still, involving even the *transformational models* themselves?

To prepare the answer I would pay attention to another question first, one that will have occurred to most readers anyway: Why use so many models, why so diverse? How come that Christianity did not gradually move toward a consensus on the schematism with which the believing thinker might confront current thought? I suggest that, initially, Christian reflection receives both the concepts-to-be-transformed and the models-in-terms-of-which they are to be transformed from the history of philosophy in general. If this hypothesis should prove correct—additional research is required here—we would know why even a limited inquiry (cf. Introduction) uncovers so many different models of thought.

In this connection I recall a well-known passage from Origen: 'When with respect to geometry, music, grammar, rhetoric and astronomy the sons of the world's sages assert that these are the handmaidens of philosophy, then, surely, we may claim similarly regarding the relation between philosophy and theology.'[20] Evidently, Origen felt that Greek philosophy (the then current encyclopedia of the sciences) provided a scheme that allowed him to determine the relationship of the Christian faith ('theology') to philosophy. One may well wonder how many other cases there must be of Christians who, purposing to fuse pagan- or secular-produced

20. Origen, *Philocalia* XIII, 1.

insights and Christian belief, elevated exogenous philosophical constructs to models of transformation or inverse transformation. Shall we conclude, for example, that the *logos* doctrine as synthesis model used by Origen is an endogenous product of Christian reflection based on the prologue to the gospel according to St. John, which speaks of the eternal Son of God? Or should we say, rather, that it represents a specific elaboration of the speculative *logos* as encountered in Stoic and neo-Platonist thought, from which Origen also borrowed the related notion of 'providence?' How about the model of paradox, by way of which the great orator Tertullian expressed the antithesis between Christianity and paganism?[21] Is this not a model culled from a fashionable style (the Stoics loved it), the rhetoric of paradox?[22]

What shall we say of the mysticism of Bonaventure and his order? Is this medieval model of synthesis rooted in Assisi's inspiration alone, or does it go back, via Dionysus the pseudo-Areopagite and others, all the way to Proclus and Plotinus? Again, when Thomas conceptualizes the relation of created reality to divine grace in terms of nature and supernature, is he not making use of an extra-biblical scheme of thought, a *philosophoumenon* taken from the neo-Platonic doctrine of the hierarchy of being? And all these lesser models of synthesis that play their part in patristic and medieval thought (the idea of an oral tradition of revelation, allegorical exegesis, etc.)—are they not in every case older than Christianity and borrowed from the ancients?

It seems to me that comparable questions may well be asked regarding modernity. The pedigree of many of the key words figuring in attempts to link the biblical message and modern philosophy is philosophical rather than biblical. Terms and concepts like synthesis, correlation, transcendental criticism, anticipation, utopia and so on, are not just neutral instruments entirely at the disposal of the Christian thinker (and often presented as 'theology'). To me they seem to represent philosophical constructs within the scope of which contemporary thought, including Christian reflection, is seeking to express itself.

(9) *The paradigmatic character of transformational models*

To avoid misunderstanding: taken up into a Christian perspective such key terms undoubtedly acquire a new meaning, if only because they function as models of synthesis. Pannenberg's notion of 'anticipation' is influenced

21. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 7.
22. Klaas Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des 'Paradoxon,'* 3–18.

by, if not derived from Heidegger's *Vorlaufen in die Möglichkeit*.[23] But this anticipation is simultaneously oriented christologically and hence restructured. Putting two and two together it seems that Vroom has ample cause to make mention of ambiguity in Pannenberg's concept of anticipation (ch. 10.4).

Let me add one more example: Gutiérrez. Utopia as an ideal of freedom, as a project of a non-repressive society of the future, is a philosophical model borrowed from Herbert Marcuse.[24] Admitting this, Gutiérrez interprets this utopia as corresponding to the Christian expectation of the Kingdom of God. Despite his disclaimers it remains that this is reinterpretation, infusion of a meaning which Marcuse certainly did not intend. Consequently, Wolters is right in noting friction on this point (ch. 11.5).

Above, I stated generally that whenever alien philosophical insights and concepts are taken up into a Christian view a transformational process is initiated, and that this process may be either beneficial or detrimental. At this point I ask: Should the train of thought suggested here not lead us to conclude that when alien philosophical constructs are turned into synthesizing *models* the same kind of thing is bound to happen? Is it correct to say that whenever exogenous constructs and frameworks are made into transformational models either detrimental or beneficial processes of transformation will come into play?

I believe this to be so. I grant that it makes of analysis a circular affair. But this circularity may tell us something; it may well tell us that commitment to a given model of transformation virtually precludes justification, and turns a deaf ear to criticism, just because the model is *foundational* and because its user will interpret every objection brought against it on its terms. On account of this circularity the models described in this book have, to some degree at least, the status of paradigms or axioms.

It is true that, frequently, people offer what they sincerely take to be biblical support. Justin Martyr believed that the (Stoic) *logos spermatikos* in which the entire human race participates is the very *Logos* of which John 1:14 says: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' In Thomism the supernatural, i.e., divine destiny of humankind was often supported with an appeal to 2 Peter 1:4: '[You] . . . become partakers of the divine nature.' Hegel himself interpreted the dialectics of antithesis and synthesis theologically as a 'speculative Good Friday.' But if we consider the philosophical provenance and numerical diversification of the models

23. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 262; cf. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions* III, 165.
24. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 31.

applied this kind of undergirding and interpreting seems spurious, an act of *eisegesis* rather than of biblical *exegesis*. However that may be, it is certain that many are not prepared to agree that the integration of faith and philosophical ideas or philosophical ideology is an operation basic to philosophy and involves the use of non-Christian conceptualizations. Pannenberg, who interprets the 'process of assimilation' as a 'theological (!) appropriation' (ch. 10.7), is one who would not agree. Further research into the historical background of such models continues to be a *desideratum*.

(10) *Reciprocity of transformation; communication as transformational calling*

If one does not look beyond the one-way influence of ancient and modern themes and schemes on Christian reflection, one's re-evaluation of its place in the broad history of philosophy remains incomplete. The influence went both ways. By far the most evident (and possibly for that reason neglected) demonstration of this is medieval–scholastic thought as it stretched across the centuries. Christianity has put its ineradicable imprint on Western philosophy, not only during the Middle Ages but in earlier and especially in later periods as well.

This two-way influence may now be designated as *reciprocity of transformation*. What the expression refers to, then, is this: (a) in virtue of the religious principle inherent in the Christian faith it is possible to develop Christian philosophical perspectives and insights, an activity in which insights (originating in philosophy generally) are appropriated, critically reinterpreted, and integrated into the Christian view; (b) the philosophical tradition at large, in turn, also harbors the potential to detach concepts from the Christian philosophical heritage, to reinterpret them, and to put them to use in an opposed religious (or ideological) way of thinking. A very clear example of the latter kind of reinterpretation and reintegration is the linear view of history, which Augustine had anchored in God's creation and the work of Christ, and which now in secularized guise ferments most of modern thought.

Given such reciprocity of transformation I offer two propositions. The first is that it is inconceivable that the tradition of Christian thinking could span some twenty centuries without a process of 'Christianization' in which much could be learned or borrowed from Greco-Roman civilization and from the tremendous efforts of modern thought. On this point it would become every Christian to be grateful and modest. The corollary of this, secondly, is that the modern world of thought is inconceivable without a process of persistent secularization in which much of the Christian

tradition is appropriated. It seems to me that just this (and no more) is the element of truth in Hegel's characterization of modern philosophy as 'philosophy within Christianity' (ch. 7.7). Tillich's reference to the Christian tradition as *character indelebilis* of modern thought contains the same moment of truth (ch. 9.8).

Once more, then, we must return to the observation that philosophical views, including transformational models, are habitually taken over from non-Christian thought. The parameter to be added now is that non-Christian thinking has been immersed in Christianity and is thoroughly post-Christian rather than a-Christian ever since. And so the entwinement is far more intimate than pictured above. While Pannenberg's theology of anticipation structurally depends on Heidegger, and while Gutiérrez borrows much of his sociology from Marcuse, it is equally true that Heidegger's *Vorlaufen* and Marcuse's *Utopia* remain historically opaque apart from Augustine's view of history and its lasting impact on modernity. Augustine's argument regarding the spoils of Egypt[25] gains an extra dimension, as it were, in the question: How did the imperious Egyptians come to possess these treasures in the first place?

Let us summarize. There is much talk nowadays about hermeneutic and philosophical dialogue. The recurrent question is: How is mutual understanding, in particular between Christians and those of another mind, to be attained and is such dialogue worthwhile? I believe that the idea of the reciprocity of transformation can clarify the communicative potential of hermeneutic understanding, and in fact underscores the necessity of philosophical dialogue—on condition that the religious antithesis and its consequent radical diversity of religious–ideological starting points in philosophy be recognized and respected. Given the enormously intricate intertwinement of Christian thinking with the ancient metaphysical and modern humanistic traditions, philosophical reflection will always be in need of communication. It is certainly vital to Christian reflection.

An important implication of the intimate interlinkage of Christian and non-Christian thought is that Christian philosophy is situational, contextually dependent. Those who postulate an antithesis in philosophy have not always been sufficiently conscious of this. There is a solidarity, a bond with general philosophy and its development. This is how I can make sense of a remark in an earlier chapter: 'No one would wish to return to the ahistorical thinking of earlier ages [i.e., before Hegel]. This also holds for the Calvinist-reformational tradition' (ch. 7.9).

25. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II, 40, 60. See ch. 8.9.

The contextuality of Christian philosophy implies that it is bound to time and place. In terms of time this means that, notwithstanding its orientation to Scripture as the Word of God, it must be formulated anew by successive generations, always interacting with general philosophical questions. To be time-bound means that it should never elevate its philosophical pronouncements to absolutes. Its local contextuality means that, as long as it makes sense to speak of, say, French philosophy (or continental, or Anglo-Saxon or Indian), Christian philosophy will resemble a chameleon. Christian philosophy, aware of its transformational calling, may well (in fact must) articulate itself differently in Korea or Latin America as compared to Europe or North America. To many the Hellenistic *couleur locale* of early Christian thought is a stumbling block; I do not see it that way. I think there is an urgent need of a Christian philosophy of social liberation, responding relevantly to processes of emancipation as they are currently taking hold in Latin America, and so on.

Christian philosophy needs communication in all sorts of directions. The twentieth century presents new opportunities for such communication. *Nolens volens*, the churches in the West, especially the Protestant ones, have relinquished their hegemony. On every continent Christian faith communities participate in the dialogue. These communities are confronted with non-Western mores, national ideologies, indigenous cultures and subcultures. The church, moreover, has rediscovered its Jewish roots. To what extent and how well will Christian philosophical reflection prove capable of integrating all of this? Thus it is that the ideas of transformation, critique and reciprocity acquire an extra dimension; they imply entry into a world-wide community of reflection.

I know very well that in consequence of this Christianity is faced with enormous risks. In many ways our situation resembles that of the Christian Apologists at the beginning of our era, although today we tend to be confronted with Oriental wisdom rather than Greek thought. The evils of 'synthesis' or, as I prefer to say, of 'inverse transformation' lie in wait: loss of identity, polarization, apostasy. Vollenhoven used to say that philosophical synthesis was the cause of the heresies, of the rents and the tears that divide the churches, 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Ephesians 4:14). Shall we say that this is a one-sided view? Vollenhoven only repeated something said long ago, by Irenaeus and Tertullian. In any case, let us reflect on it! This much is sure: it is only when the risks of communication are recognized that the challenge can be accepted responsibly. Aware of the risks we can, open to others and respecting them, truly render account of the Christian hope.

(11) *For further reading*

In two essays of mine in *Philosophia Reformata* I elaborate on major points dealt with in this chapter: 'Antithesis, Synthesis and the Idea of Transformational Philosophy,' *Philosophia Reformata* 51(1986) : 138–54; 'Reformational Philosophy on the Boundary of the Past and the Future,' *Philosophia Reformata* 52(1987) : 101–34.

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