

Philosophy and Theology—I

It may seem a dangerous enterprise for a non-theologian to speak concerning the relation between philosophy and theology. Nevertheless, as representative of a philosophical trend which claims to have a radical Christian starting-point, I have been obliged to do so; especially since I am of the opinion that this Christian philosophy does not derive its fundamentals from theology in its scientific sense, and, therefore, should be sharply distinguished from the latter.

It is not surprising that many theologians are non-plussed by this point of view. And this initial doubt may easily change into suspicion when this new philosophy subjects the traditional philosophical fundamentals of dogmatic theological thought to a radical criticism and requires an inner reformation of these fundamentals from the biblical viewpoint.

Such suspicion is understandable, since philosophy has been a dangerous rival to Christian theology from the very outset. Ever since the Greek thinker, Parmenides, the founder of Western metaphysics, philosophical theory has been opposed to popular belief. It presented itself as the pathway of truth over against that of *doxa* (deceitful opinion), bound by

sensory representations and emotions. In Plato's famous dialogue, *Phaedo*, Socrates says that it is only destined to the philosophers to approach to the race of the gods. It was the common conviction of all Greek thinkers, who held to the possibility of theological knowledge, that true theology can only be of philosophical character and cannot be founded on faith, but on theoretic thought only. It is true that Plato did not reject the possibility of a divine revelation, received in a state of holy enthusiasm. But he denied that such revelations could be in any sense the source of real theological knowledge.

It is, therefore, completely understandable that the Church Fathers in their treatises on Christian doctrine emphasized that Christian theology has its own principle of knowledge, namely, the Word-revelation. And, because it possesses this principle, which contains the absolute truth, Christian theology surpasses, in their opinion, all pagan philosophy in its certainty of knowledge. Theoretic thought cannot achieve truth, except it be enlightened by this principle. Therefore, pagan philosophy is full of errors and cannot be accepted as an autonomous science. Christian theology is itself the supreme science, it is the true Christian philosophy. Greek and Graeco-Roman philosophy, at their very best, can render some services to the *sacra doctrina*, provided, however, that they remain servants, subject to the control of theology.

It was especially Augustine who defended this view of the relation between philosophy and Christian theology. His rejection of the autonomy of philo-

sophical thought is quite in accordance with the position of the new Christian philosophy which I had in mind at the outset of this lecture. But his view of the relation between Christian theology and philosophy suffers from an ambiguous use of the term theology. On the one hand, this word is used in the sense of the true knowledge of God and ourselves, and it refers to the holy doctrine of the Church. As such it cannot have a theoretical, scientific meaning, as will become evident presently. But on the other hand, Christian theology refers to a theoretical explanation of the articles of faith in their scientific confrontation with the texts of Holy Writ and with heretical views. In this sense, Christian theology is bound to theoretical human thought which cannot claim the infallibility of God's Word.

It was the influence of Greek philosophy which led to the fatal step of confusing theoretical Christian theology with the true knowledge of God and true self-knowledge (*Deum et animam scire*). The theological *gnosis*, permeated by Greek philosophical ideas, was elevated above the simple belief of the congregation. The whole conception of the so-called sacred theology as the *regina scientiarum* was of Greek origin. In the third book of his *Metaphysics*, chapter two, Aristotle says that the metaphysical doctrine of the ultimate goal and of the good, has the control and guidance over all other sciences, which, as its slaves, are not even allowed to contradict its truths. This statement clearly refers to the metaphysical knowledge of God, which in the second chapter of the first

book was called the "guiding and most estimable science." Consequently philosophical theology was considered the Queen of all sciences.

This thesis of Aristotle was now applied to Christian theology in its theoretical, dogmatical sense. And this theology in turn was denominated as Christian philosophy. This meant that philosophical problems were merely discussed in a theological context.

In the 9th Century, John Scotus Erigena defended the thesis that true philosophy is identical with true religion. In his treatise on predestination he appealed to Augustine's treatise on true religion to corroborate this view. And in line with Augustine he identified Christian philosophy with dogmatical theology as the theoretical explanation of the canons of the Christian religion. "What else is true philosophy, than the explanation of the rules of true religion?"

This identification of dogmatical theology with Christian philosophy on the one hand, and, with the Christian religion as expressed in the holy doctrine of the Church, on the other, remained characteristic of the Augustinian tradition in Scholasticism.

The *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, which introduced a new view, displays the same fundamental ambiguity in the use of the terms, "theology" and "*sacra doctrina*." This prodigious work starts with a discussion of the question as to whether *sacra doctrina* is necessary *ad humanam salutem* and whether it is a science. These questions are answered in the affirmative.

It is necessary *ad humanam salutem* that there be a

doctrine according to the divine revelation in addition to the philosophical sciences, which are studied by the light of the natural human reason alone. And it is science of a higher rank than philosophy since its principle of knowledge is of a supra-natural character. As such it does not need the necessary aid of the philosophical sciences, though it can use them as its slaves to facilitate the understanding of its supra-natural truths. This is justified by the insufficiency of the human intellect which cannot understand the supra-natural truths of the holy doctrine without the basis of the natural truths which are known by reason alone.

These explanations have puzzled the commentators of the *Summa* not a little. What was meant by "*sacra doctrina*"? Thomas even identified it with Holy Scripture. "*Sacra Scriptura seu doctrina*," so he wrote in his discussions on the scientific character of the holy doctrine.

Some commentators were of the opinion that by *sacra doctrina* the Christian faith was meant. Others interpreted it as theology in its proper, scientific sense. Again others ascribed to it the sense of the holy doctrine of the church viewed apart from theology and faith. Pope Leo XIII put an end to this uncertainty in his Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in which he emphatically established that theology needs philosophy to give it the character and spirit of a science.

In any case, Thomas' view of the relation between Christian theology and philosophy differs in principle from that of Augustine. Thomas no longer identifies

dogmatical theology and Christian philosophy. The question of a Christian philosophy no longer exists. Philosophy is accepted as an autonomous science including a philosophical or natural theology which refers to the natural light of reason alone. The Thomistic philosophy is the Aristotelian system at some points elaborated in an original way and mixed with Augustinian, Neo-platonic and Stoic ideas. Christian theology, on the other hand, is elevated to the rank of a supra-natural science surpassing philosophy both in dignity and in certainty of knowledge, due to its infallible, supra-natural principles originating in divine revelation. Since the natural truths of philosophy cannot contradict the supra-natural verities of holy Christian doctrine, the Aristotelian philosophy is accommodated to the latter, as far as appearances are concerned. Nevertheless, philosophy itself is withdrawn from the internal control of the Word of God. And the supra-natural character of Christian theology is justified by the fact that it must take its knowledge from divine revelation. But the very problem concerning the scientific character of this knowledge is masked by the ambiguous use of the term *sacra doctrina*. This led Thomas to a fatal identification of theology with the Holy Scriptures, on the one hand, and with the doctrine of the Church, on the other.

The lack of a sharp distinction between the Word revelation as the central principle of knowledge and the proper scientific object of dogmatic theology has maintained itself in the later discussions concerning

the relation between dogmatic theology and philosophy, both in Roman Catholic and in Protestant circles. For the moment I shall restrict myself to the view developed by Karl Barth in the first volume of his *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, since it is representative of an influential trend in contemporary Reformed theology.

On the one hand, Barth opposes dogmatic theology to philosophy in a radical way. The former is instrumental to the true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. The principle of theological knowledge is the Word of God, and this Word is a consuming fire for all philosophy. For the latter can only originate from autonomous human thought which is corrupted by sin. A Christian philosophy is a *contradictio in terminis*. This is why Barth, in sharp opposition to the view of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, even denies that the epistemology of theology is of a philosophical character. Dogmatic theology, as an instrument of God's Word, must elaborate its own epistemology without interference from philosophy.

On the other hand, Barth is obliged to admit that dogmatical theology, as a science, does not have another intellectual organ at its disposal than that of which philosophy also avails itself, namely, theoretical thought, which is thoroughly inadequate to true theological thought. This is the reason that the theologian cannot escape from philosophical notions. He may take them from all kinds of systems, provided that he does not bind himself to any one of them and employs these notions only in a purely formal sense by detaching them from their material philosophical contents.

Ignoring for the moment this very problematical distinction between a formal and a material use of philosophical concepts, we observe that Barth, too, employs the term "theology" in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, he understands by it the true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ; on the other, dogmatic science of the truths of the Christian faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures. But he does not distinguish these two meanings in a sufficient manner.

If we wish to succeed in positing the problem concerning a Christian philosophy and its relation to dogmatic theology in a clear way, we must in the first place avoid any ambiguity in the use of the terms and define what we understand by them.

We wish to establish at the outset that the true knowledge of God and of ourselves (*Deum et animam scire* in the Augustinian sense) surpasses all theoretical thought. This knowledge cannot be the theoretical object either of a dogmatical theology or of a Christian philosophy. It can only be acquired by the operation of God's Word and the Holy Spirit in the heart, that is to say, in the religious center and root of our entire human existence and experience. True knowledge of God and self-knowledge are the central presuppositions both of a biblical theology (in its scientific, theoretical sense) and, of a Christian philosophy insofar as the latter has a really biblical starting-point. This implies that the central principle of knowledge of dogmatic theology and that of Christian philosophy ought to be the same.

From the radical and integral biblical standpoint it

is impossible to accept the scholastic Thomistic distinction between a natural sphere of knowledge wherein the natural light of reason is sufficient, and a supra-natural sphere, wherein our knowledge is dependent on the divine Word-revelation. This distinction testifies to a lack of real self-knowledge, caused by a departure from the biblical viewpoint. Theoretical thought is not an independent substance, as Aristotle supposed. It is always related to the I, the human self; and this ego, as the center and radical unity of our whole existence and experience, is of a religious nature. Therefore real self-knowledge is dependent on the knowledge of God, since the ego is the central seat of the *imago Dei*.

Without true self-knowledge it is impossible to acquire an insight into the real relation between dogmatic theology and philosophy. For both, theological and philosophical thought, have their center in the same human ego. This I is the central reference point of the whole temporal order of our experience. *I* experience, and not an abstract sensory or intellectual function of my consciousness. Within the horizon and order of time, however, our experience displays a great diversity of fundamental aspects or experiential modes, which, as such, do not refer to a concrete *what*, i. e., to concrete things or events of our empirical world, but only to the *how*, i.e., a special *manner* of experiencing them.

In order to avoid the multivocality of the term "aspect" in common speech, I shall call these fundamental modes of our temporal experience, its *modal*

aspects. A brief enumeration may suffice, for the present, to get a general view of the modal diversity of our experience within the order of time.

Within this temporal order our experience displays a numerical aspect, a spatial aspect, an aspect of extensive movement, an aspect of energy in which we experience the physico-chemical mode of change, a biotic aspect or that of organic life, a sensitive aspect or that of feeling and sensory perception, a logical aspect, *i. e.*, the analytical mode of distinction in our experience lying at the foundation of our logical concepts and judgments. Further, our temporal horizon of experience displays an historical aspect, or, that of the cultural mode of development of social life, an aspect of symbolical signification lying at the foundation of all linguistic phenomena; and finally an aspect of social intercourse, an economic, an aesthetical, a juridical, a moral and a faith aspect.

All these fundamental and irreducible modalities of our experience have their common foundation in the order of time, established by the creative will of God. This order of time has arranged them in an irreversible succession and keeps them in an unbreakable mutual coherence. This is why the modal aspects of our experience are essentially modes of time, which in each of these expresses itself in a specific modal sense. Beyond the temporal horizon of our experience this diversity of modal aspects loses its sense and foundation. Neither the human I, as the religious center and radical unity of human existence, nor

God, whose image, according to the order of creation, finds its central expression in the human ego, are to be found within this modal diversity of our temporal horizon.

In the human ego, as the central seat of the *imago Dei*, God had concentrated the entire meaning of the temporal world into a radical religious unity. Man, created in the image of God, should direct all the temporal functions and powers of his existence and those of his whole temporal world unto the service of God. This he was to accomplish in the central unity of his ego by loving God above all. And because, in the order of creation, every human ego in this central religious sense was united with every other human ego in a central communion of the service of God, the love for the neighbor was included in the love of God. We cannot love God without loving His image, expressed in the ego of ourselves and that of our fellow-men. Therefore, the entire divine Law for God's creation displays its radical unity in the central commandment of love, addressed to the heart, i. e., religious center of human life.

We cannot understand the radical and central sense of this commandment as long as we relate it only to the moral aspect of our temporal existence. Just as in the human ego *all* the aspects of our temporal experience and existence find their central reference point, so the commandment of love is the central unity of all God's different ordinances for the temporal world. For, it is not only the individual temporal existence of man which is centered in a radical unity. Much

rather it is our whole temporal world, the "earth" as it is called in the initial words of the book of Genesis, which, according to the order of creation, finds its center in the religious root of mankind, i. e., in the spiritual community of the hearts of men in their central communion with God, the Creator.

This is the radical and integral sense of creation, according to the Word of God. It is at the same time the self-revelation of God as Creator and the revelation of man to himself as being created in God's image. It reveals to us that even in his central position with respect to the temporal world, man is nothing in himself but that the fullness of meaning of his existence was only to reflect the divine image of his Creator.

This also determines the radical and central sense of the fall into sin. This apostasy concerns the root, the religious center of human existence. The spiritual life of man depended upon his listening to the Word of God with all his heart. As soon as man closed his heart and turned away from the Word of God by giving ear to the false illusion of being something in himself, i. e., of being like God, the *imago Dei* was radically darkened in him and he fell a prey to spiritual death.

This apostasy implied the apostasy of the whole temporal world which was concentrated in man's ego. Therefore the earth was cursed, because it had no religious root of its own, but was related to the religious root or center of human existence.

For the same reason the redemption by Jesus Christ

and the communion of the Holy Spirit, which makes us into members of His body, has a central and radical sense. In Christ mankind and the whole temporal world have received a new religious root in which the *imago Dei* is revealed in the fullness of its meaning.

Thus the central theme of the Holy Scriptures, namely, that of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, has a radical unity of meaning, which is related to the central unity of our human existence. It effects the true knowledge of God and ourselves, if our heart is really opened by the Holy Spirit so that it finds itself in the grip of God's Word and has become the prisoner of Jesus Christ. So long as this central meaning of the Word-revelation is at issue we are beyond the scientific problems both of theology and philosophy. Its acceptance or rejection is a matter of life or death to us, and not a question of theoretical reflection. In this sense the central motive of the Holy Scripture is the common supra-scientific starting point of a really biblical theology and of a really Christian philosophy. It is the key of knowledge of which Jesus spoke in his discussion with the Scribes and lawyers. It is the religious presupposition of any theoretical thought, which may rightly claim a biblical foundation. But, as such, it can never become the theoretical object of theology; no more than God and the human I can become such an object.

Both theological and philosophical theoretical thought move within the boundaries of the temporal

order of our experience with its diversity of modal aspects. Within this temporal order the central and radical unity of the meaning of creation is as it were refracted into a rich diversity of modalities, just as sunlight is refracted by a prism into a rich diversity of colors.

The different modal aspects of our temporal horizon of experience which we have briefly enumerated, determine in principle the different viewpoints under which empirical reality is considered and investigated by the special sciences. This analytical dissociation of our experience in its different modal aspects, which in the pre-scientific experiential attitude is in principle lacking, is characteristic of the theoretical attitude of thought. The theoretical attitude arises as soon as we begin to oppose the logical aspect of our thought to the non-logical modes of experience in order to gain a theoretical logical insight into the latter by dissociating the elements of their modal structure in an analytical way.

But these non-logical aspects offer resistance to the attempt at conceiving them in a logical manner, as the theoretical objects of our logical thought. This theoretical resistance of the object gives rise to fundamental theoretical problems of the different special sciences.

The mathematical sciences, for instance, give rise to the fundamental problems: What is number? What is space? What is extensive movement? Physics and chemistry give rise to the problem: What is energy? Biology gives rise to the problem: What is organic life? Jurisprudence implies the problem: What is the

juridical mode of experience? And thus one could continue.

But none of these fundamental theoretical problems can be solved by these special sciences taken by themselves. They are in principle of a philosophical character. The reason is that the special sciences do not reflect on their special viewpoint as such. They concentrate entirely upon the variable, actual phenomena which present themselves within the experiential aspects relating to their fields of study, at least insofar as these sciences are not of a purely mathematical character. In other words, they do not make the modal aspects of our experience as such into their object of research, but only the real phenomena so far as they function in that special aspect which delimits their field of investigation. Real phenomena, however, such as concrete things, events, human acts, or communal and interpersonal relationships between men in a certain society, function in principle in all of the modal aspects of our experience. Plants and animals, for instance, present, as real perishable beings, not only a biotic aspect. They function equally in the numerical aspect, the spatial aspect, the physico-chemical aspect of energy-effect, the sensitive aspect of feeling and sensory perception, etc. They present themselves to our pre-scientific experience in the typical structure of an individual whole. This whole functions in the unbreakable coherence of all the modal aspects of our experience; nevertheless it is typically qualified by one of these aspects. Water, for instance, in case of adequate temperature condi-

tions presents itself to our experience as a colorless liquid matter, qualified by its physico-chemical properties. Nevertheless, it functions also in the biotic aspect or that of organic life, as a necessary means to life; it functions equally in our sensory aspect of perception, in the cultural aspect, in the economic and the juridical aspects, etc., and even in the aspect of faith. Remember, for instance, what is said in the Bible about God's dominion over the waters, which can only be experienced by faith.

When a biologist considers water, he is only concerned with its biotic aspect, i. e., its function in organic life. Nevertheless, he cannot investigate its biotical function without taking into account its physico-chemical properties. This gives rise to the fundamental theoretical problem: What is the mutual relation between the physico-chemical and the biotic aspect of the typical total-structure of a living organism? A living organism, as a real individual whole, is doubtless qualified by its biotic aspect; nevertheless, it presents equally all the other aspects of our experiential world. But this fundamental problem concerning the mutual relation between the different modal aspects of an individual whole exceeds the boundaries of the special sciences. It is of a philosophical nature.

Let us consider another example which is of direct concern for theological science. When the theologian directs his theoretical attention to the church as an institutional organized community in our temporal world, he is confronted with a real societal whole; this whole is doubtless qualified by its faith-aspect as an institutional congregation of believers in Jesus

Christ. As such the church points beyond our temporal horizon to the central religious community between Christ and the members of his body of which it should be a temporal expression. But the organized institution is not identical with this so-called invisible church. It functions as a societal whole in all the modal aspects of our temporal experiential horizon. Thus the theologian is confronted with the unbreakable coherence of the faith-aspect of this church-institution with its other aspects, wherein it functions as a moral, a juridical, an economic, a linguistic, an historical, a psychological, a biotic, a spatial community, etc. What is the relation between these different aspects of the church-institution and how does this temporal communal whole relate to other communities such as the state, the family, the school, industrial organizations, trade unions, etc.?

These fundamental theoretical problems exceed the boundaries of all special sciences. They are of a philosophical character, since their solution requires a theoretical total view of our temporal horizon of experience. Can Christian dogmatic theology as such provide us with this philosophical total view? If so, then it cannot be a special science, but must — in line with the Augustinian conception — be considered to be identical with Christian philosophy.

But this solution of the age-old problem concerning the relation between theology and philosophy is unacceptable both from the philosophical and from the theological point of view. It is true that theology in its scientific activity comes again and again in contact

with other sciences, such as philology, jurisprudence, ethics, historiography, archaeology, logic, psychology, the natural sciences, etc. But this is also the case with the other special sciences. It certainly does not imply that theology as such would be philosophy. The latter has the indispensable task of giving us an insight into the inner nature and structure of the different modal aspects of our temporal horizon of experience and to give us a theoretical view of their mutual relation and inner coherence.

But theology can no more give us such a theoretical total-view than biology can. Therefore, the Thomistic distinction between philosophy and dogmatic theology, as such, constituted progress when compared with the Augustinian view which identified this theology with Christian philosophy. From the philosophical viewpoint this identification was equally unacceptable since it implies a misunderstanding of the real nature of the philosophical problems.

The criterion, however, which Thomas Aquinas used to delimit the field of philosophy from that of dogmatic theology, was unserviceable in a scientific sense, and must be entirely rejected from the central biblical point of view. From the scientific viewpoint, it furnished no single insight into the true theoretical object of theology and of philosophy. Instead, it introduced the false distinction between an autonomous natural sphere of knowledge having no other source than the natural light of theoretical thought, and a supra-natural sphere dependent on divine revelation and on the supra-natural gift of faith. In this way

philosophy was abandoned to the influence of central religious motives, which have been unmasked by the Word of God as motives originating from the spirit of apostasy and idolatry.

As soon as we, on the basis of the central biblical standpoint, arrive with Augustine at the insight that philosophical thought cannot be self-sufficient, since it is always dependent on a religious starting-point, the entire Thomistic criterion for the distinction between philosophy and theology breaks down. Nevertheless, its influence on Reformed theology has been so strong, that even Dr. Kuyper in his *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, was unable to extricate himself from it, although he himself contradicted the Thomistic interpretation by calling his Encyclopedia a Christian philosophy.

It is impossible to acquire a clear insight into the relation between philosophy and theology from the biblical standpoint, before we have arrived at a clear delimitation of the special scientific viewpoint of dogmatic theology. For it is exactly to dogmatic theology that both the Augustinian and the Thomistic tradition ascribe the exclusive right to be qualified as a Christian science.

What is the proper scientific object of this theology? We shall try to find a satisfactory answer to this critical question in our second lecture.

Philosophy and Theology—II

We concluded our first lecture by asking the question: What is the proper scientific viewpoint of dogmatic theology? What is its proper theoretical object?

We have seen that this question cannot be answered by referring to the revelation of God in his Word as the only true source of theological knowledge. For, as the central principle of knowledge, this Word-revelation must become the foundation of the whole of Christian life, both in its practical and its scientific activity. In this central sense it cannot be the theoretical object of any science, but functions only as its central starting-point, or religious basic motive.

To find a satisfactory answer to the question at issue, we should consider that, as a science, dogmatic theology is bound to the theoretical attitude of thought. In our first lecture we have established that this theoretical attitude arises as soon as we begin to oppose the logical aspect of our thought to the *non-logical* aspects of our experience. This is necessary to gain a logico-theoretical insight into them, or, as in the case of the special sciences, into a special aspect of the real facts presenting themselves within the various modes of experience. Through this opposition of our

logical thought-function to the non-logical aspect of our experience which delimits our scientific field of research, the latter becomes the scientific object of our thought. Because of the resistance which this object offers to our attempt to gain a systematic logico-theoretical insight into it, it gives rise to theoretical problems.

Now it has appeared that theology cannot give us a philosophical total view of the mutual relation and coherence between the different aspects of our experience within the temporal order. Consequently, it must be a special science. In other words, the proper scientific object of dogmatic theology can only be delimited through a special modal aspect of our temporal horizon of experience. As such it must be capable of being opposed to the logical aspect of our thought as a field of theoretical problems. Nevertheless, we can only gain theoretical insight into this field by joining our logical thought-function with that special aspect of our temporal experience which delimits our scientific theological viewpoint. This modal experiential aspect that delimits the specific theological point of view can be no other than the aspect of faith.

I am well aware that this thesis may raise a complex of misunderstandings. Those who hold to the traditional confusion of the central principle of theological knowledge with the scientific object of dogmatic theological thought will doubtless make the following objections: By speaking of faith in the sense of a special aspect of our temporal horizon of experience

which delimits the particular scientific viewpoint of theology, you give evidence of a fundamental disregard for the supra-natural character of the Christian faith. This latter can never originate from human experience but is exclusively the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of God's Word. In addition, dogmatic theology can have no other object than the divine Word-revelation, which contains the complete doctrine of the Church. Holy Scripture cannot be understood without exegesis of its texts. This exegesis requires theological knowledge of the original texts. Consequently, Thomas Aquinas was not wrong when he said that a theological science of the divine revelation is necessary *ad humanam salutem*. We do not understand your distinction between the central basic motive of the Holy Scripture which would be of a supra-theological character, and the theoretical object of dogmatic theology as a science, which would be delimited by the faith-aspect of our temporal horizon of experience. How can you say that the divine revelation of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, is withdrawn from the scientific field of research in dogmatic theology? These subjects have always been the very basic materials of any theological dogmatics. Withdrawing them from the latter would amount to a complete destruction of theology.

What shall be our answer to these serious objections? I am sorry if my explanation concerning the scientific field of research of dogmatic theology seems not clear at first sight. The difficulties and questions to which it gives rise do not concern the divine Word-

revelation, but exclusively the scientific character and bounds of a theological dogmatics and exegesis. And it is necessary *ad humanam salutem* to go into these difficulties in a serious way. For dogmatic theology is a very dangerous science. Its elevation to a necessary mediator between God's Word and the believer amounts to idolatry and testifies to a fundamental misconception concerning its real character and position. If our salvation be dependent on theological dogmatics and exegesis, we are lost. For both of them are a human work, liable to all kinds of error, disagreement in opinion, and heresy. We can even say that all heresies are of a theological origin. Therefore, the traditional confusion between God's Word as the central principle of knowledge and the scientific object of theological dogmatics and exegesis must be wrong in its fundamentals. For it is this very confusion which has given rise to the false identification of dogmatic theology with the doctrine of Holy Scripture, and to the false conception of theology as the necessary mediator between God's Word and the believers.

The theoretical object of scientific thought can never be the full or integral reality. The reason is that the object of theoretical thought, as such, can only result from a theoretical abstraction. It originates from the theoretical dissociation of the different aspects of experience and empirical reality, which in the temporal order of the divine creation are only given in an unbreakable continuous coherence. As soon as we oppose a non-logical aspect of our experience to the theoretical logical function of our

thought, in order to make it into a theoretical problem this aspect becomes the scientific object of our thought. And even if our theoretical attention is not directed upon this aspect as such, but only upon the concrete facts presenting themselves within this aspect, the latter are never our theoretical object *in their full reality*, but only under the abstract scientific viewpoint which delimits our field of research.

As to theology this means that the divine Word-revelation can never become the theoretical object of theological research in the full reality wherein it presents itself to us. In its central religious sense it addresses itself to the heart, to the religious center of our existence, as a divine spiritual power, and not as an object of theological reflection. Therefore, the basic theme of Holy Scripture, namely that of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, can never become the scientific object of theology, in this central religious sense. As such it is much rather the supra-theological starting-point of all really biblical Christian thought, the key to the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But within the temporal order of our experience this Word-revelation manifests itself in the same modal diversity of aspects, which we find in our own temporal human existence. God's Word has entered our temporal horizon, just as it has become flesh in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. And it is only within the temporal diversity of experiential aspects that the divine revelation can become an object of theological thought.

It cannot be doubted that the temporal order of our experience, according to the divine order of creation, has a limiting aspect of faith, which in this sense is a fundamental mode of experience, clearly distinct from all other modes. The modal structure of this aspect, which determines its irreducible meaning, belongs to the order of creation, and could, as such, not be affected by sin. Sin cannot destroy anything of God's creation, it can only give to it a false, apostatic *direction*. Both, genuine Christian faith and apostatic faith, and even unbelief, can only function within the same modal aspect of faith which is inherent in the created temporal order of our experience. They all have a fundamental faith character, just as both the legal and illegal manner of behavior are of a juridical character and both a logical and an illogical manner of reasoning can only occur within the logical aspect of thought.

But the modal faith-aspect may not be identified with the real act of believing which in its full reality comes out of the heart, and, though *qualified* by its faith-aspect, presents also other aspects in the temporal order of experience. It is beyond discussion that the actual Christian faith in its true sense can only originate from the operation of God's Word, as a central spiritual power, in the heart, i. e., the religious center of our existence. But this does not detract from the fact that it functions within the modal faith-aspect of our temporal experience which belongs to the temporal order of creation.

Now it should be considered that this aspect occu-

pies an entirely exceptional place in this order; it is the limiting aspect that even in the kernel of its modal sense refers beyond the temporal order to the religious center of our existence and to the divine Origin of all that has been created. This modal kernel of the faith-aspect may be circumscribed as *that ultimate mode of certitude within the temporal order of experience which refers to an indubitable revelation of God touching us in the religious center of our existence.*

Now the living God has revealed himself in the whole of his creation, in all the works of his hands. But this revelation, which in the temporal order displays a rich diversity of aspects, finds its center of operation in the heart, the center and root of human existence, wherein God has expressed the central meaning of his image. And it is the faith-aspect in its modal meaning by means of which the divine revelation within the temporal order of our experience is related to this religious center of our consciousness and existence.

We should, however, consider that from the very beginning this revelation of God in all the works of his hands was not accessible to a would-be autonomous human understanding. This *phanerosis*, as it is called in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, was elucidated and interpreted by the Word of God that addressed itself to the heart of man by mediation of the temporal function of faith. So long as the human heart was open to the Word of God, man was capable of understanding the sense of God's general *phanerosis* by means of his innate function of

faith. But as soon as this heart closed itself and turned away from the Word of God, as a result of its apostasy, the faith-aspect of the temporal human experience was also closed. It was no longer the window of our temporal experience, open to the light of eternity, but it became the instrument of the spirit of apostasy. Likewise the innate religious impulsion of the human heart to transcend itself in order to find rest in its divine origin, began to unfold itself in an idolatrous direction. It is exclusively by the operation of the Holy Spirit which regenerates the heart, that the faith-aspect of our temporal experience can be reopened to the Word of God, so that its negative direction is changed into a positive one. Thus it is completely true that the living Christian faith can in no way originate from the temporal experience of man, who because of his apostasy is fallen prey to spiritual death.

Nevertheless, its modal structure and general faith-character belong to the temporal order of human experience as it is founded in the divine creation. Consequently, even Christian faith does not result from a completely new creative act of God, as Barth thinks. Therefore the scholastic Roman Catholic view of faith as a supra-natural gift of God to the human intellect, manifesting itself beyond the natural order of creation, should also be rejected from the biblical standpoint. It is only under the influence of the dualistic religious motive of nature and grace that scholastic theology has introduced this conception. But this motive which has continued to rule both Roman Catholic theology and Protestant scholasticism, is of

an unbiblical origin. It is a dialectical basic motive aiming at an accommodation of the central motive of Holy Scripture to religious motives of an apostate character, either to that of Greek philosophy or to that of modern Humanism.

This dualistic basic motive has deprived scholastic theology of the insight into the radical and integral character of the Word-revelation. It has led to a theological conception of human nature which has no room for the heart as the religious center and radical unity of human existence. By ascribing to the so-called natural reason an autonomy over against faith and the divine revelation, traditional scholastic theology merely gave expression to the false Greek view of reason as the center of human nature. Within the framework of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastic doctrine this caused no inner difficulties, since this doctrine did not accept the radical character of the fall into sin.

In Reformed theology, on the contrary, this unbiblical view of human nature could not fail to cause an inner contradiction with the biblical doctrine of sin and redemption. For, if human nature does not have a religious center or radix, how can the fall be of a radical character, i. e., touch the root of our nature? Sin cannot originate from man's intellect. If the latter would be the center of our human nature, independent from our central religious life, it would not be affected by sin. Therefore, Roman Catholic doctrine was consistent when it denied the inner corruption of human nature. And it is this very view of human nature which caused the problem of the rela-

tion between theology and philosophy to be posed on a fundamentally erroneous basis. The whole distinction between a so-called sacred theology and the so-called profane sciences issued from the unbiblical dualism inherent in the scholastic basic motive of nature and supra-natural grace.

It is a gladdening symptom of a re-awakening biblical consciousness, that under the influence of Augustinianism an increasing number of Roman Catholic thinkers, belonging to the movement of the so-called *nouvelle théologie*, have begun to oppose this dualistic view. They agree with the Reformed philosophical movement in the Netherlands in advocating the necessity of a Christian philosophy. On the other hand, we must observe that the Barthian view of theology as the exclusive Christian science and of its negative relation to philosophy, is still entirely penetrated by this dualism. This is a baffling fact, since, in sharp opposition to Roman Catholicism, Barth claims for his theology a radical biblical character. How is this to be explained? The reason is that Barth, though sharply opposing the synthetical Thomistic view of nature and grace, did not abandon this dualistic theme as such, which in the Augustinian view was still unknown. He merely replaced its synthetical conception, according to which nature is the autonomous basis of the supra-natural sphere of grace, by an antithetical one which denies any point of contact between the corrupted autonomous nature and the divine work of grace. Thus philosophy was excommunicated as such, because by nature it would be

an autonomous product of natural thought which is corrupted by sin. Among all sciences only dogmatic theology was supposed to be capable of being permeated by the Word-revelation. In my opinion, this dualistic view betrays the after effects of the Occamistic Nominalism, which has especially influenced the Lutheran view concerning the impossibility of a Christian philosophy.

However, if the possibility of a Christian philosophy is denied, one should also deny the possibility of a Christian theology in the sense of a science of the biblical doctrine. Barth, however, emphatically maintains this scientific character of theology, though, in complete accordance with Thomas Aquinas, he places all stress on its supra-natural principle of knowledge. But he admits that this theology is obliged to avail itself of the same theoretical thought as philosophy does. How then can this theological thought claim a Christian character? Luther called natural reason a harlot which is blind, deaf, and dumb with respect to the truths revealed in the Word of God. But, if this prostitute can become a saint by its subjection to the Word of God, it is hardly to be understood why this wonder would only occur within the sphere of theological dogmatics. Why may not philosophical thought as well be ruled by the central motive of Holy Scripture? It is certainly not the biblical basic motive in its radical and integral sense which led many theologians to the conclusion that philosophy has nothing to do with the Kingdom of God. It is only the non-biblical dualistic motive of nature and grace that led

them astray and that inspired Barth's view that man may expect that, at least in general, God has bound the operation of his Word to a "theological space" in which the Bible, ecclesiastical preaching, and theology, as to their instrumental function, are placed on the same level. It is this scholastic basic-motive which has also impeded the necessary transcendental critique of theological thought, both as to its scientific object and as to its starting point.

We have remarked that the object of dogmatic theological thought can only be found within the temporal order of experience. We have established that it can be nothing but the Divine Word-revelation as it presents itself within the modal aspect of faith. This latter is made into a theological problem in the theoretical attitude of thought by being placed over against the logical function of theological thinking. We must now try to realize the significance of the distinction between the Word of God in its full and actual reality and in its restricted sense as the object of theological thought. This is necessary in order to answer the question as to whether it is true that this distinction would withdraw from theological dogmatics its chief subject-matter, which would amount to a complete destruction of dogmatic theology in its traditional sense.

Let us first consider how the Word of God presents itself to us in its full and actual reality. The divine Word-revelation has entered our temporal horizon. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This was the *skandalon* which was equally raised by the

incarnation of the Word-revelation in the Holy Scriptures, a collection of books written by different men in the course of ages, be it through divine inspiration, yet related to all the modal aspects of our temporal horizon of experience. It is, however, only under the modal aspect of faith that we can experience that this Word-revelation in the Scriptures has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. And the actual belief through which we know with an ultimate certainty that it is so, cannot be realized in the heart, that religious center of our consciousness, except by the operation of the Word itself, as a spiritual power. What makes the diversity of books of the Old and New Testament into a radical spiritual unity? Their principle of unity can only be the central theme of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, since it is the key to true knowledge of God and self-knowledge.

We have established that, in its central spiritual sense, as divine motive power addressing itself to our heart, this theme cannot become the theoretical object of theological thought, since it is the very starting point of the latter, insofar as theology is really biblical.

But dogmatic theology can doubtless engage in a theoretical reflection on creation, fall into sin, and redemption, insofar as their revelation is related to the faith aspect of our temporal experience, and forms the contents of articles of Christian belief. It is even possible that a theologian does so from a non-biblical starting point, such as the traditional scho-

lastic basic-motive of nature and grace. Starting from this unbiblical motive, Thomas Aquinas considered creation as a partly natural philosophical, partly supra-natural truth. The fall was taken as merely the loss of the supra-natural gift of grace, which did not corrupt the rational nature of man, but only wounded it. This theological view of creation and fall was sanctioned as orthodox doctrine by the Roman Catholic Church.

From this it may appear that there must be a difference in principle between creation, fall and redemption in their central sense as the key to knowledge, and in their sense as articles of faith, which may be made into the object of theological thought. Insofar as Reformed theology, too, was influenced by the scholastic basic motive of nature and grace, it also developed dogmatic views which must be considered unbiblical. The Jewish Scribes and lawyers had a perfect theological knowledge of the books of the Old Testament. They wished, doubtless, to hold to the creation, the fall and the promise of the coming Messiah as articles of the orthodox Jewish faith which are also articles of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, Jesus said to them: "Woe unto you, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge!"

This key of knowledge in its radical and integral sense cannot be made into a theological problem. The theologian can only direct his theological thought to it as to its necessary supra-theoretical presupposition, if he is really in the grip of it, and bear witness of its radical meaning which transcends all theological

concepts. But when he does so, he is in no other position than the Christian philosopher, who accounts for his biblical starting-point, or the simple believer, who testifies to the radical sense of God's Word as the central motive power of his life in Jesus Christ. In other words, the true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ and true self-knowledge are neither of a dogmatic-theological, nor of a philosophical nature, but have an absolutely central religious significance. This knowledge is a question of spiritual life or death. Even an orthodox theological dogmatics, however splendidly elaborated, cannot guarantee this central spiritual knowledge. Therefore, the scholastic term *sacra theologia* testifies to an unbiblical over-estimation of theology. All such theological problems as the significance of the *imago Dei* before and after the fall, the relation between creation and sin and that of particular grace to common grace, that of the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, etc., can only arise in the theoretical opposition of the faith-aspect to the logical aspect of our thought. They are certainly legitimate problems of theological dogmatics, but exactly as theological problems they do not concern the central basic motive of the Holy Scriptures as it is operative in the religious center of our consciousness and existence. This spiritual basic motive is elevated above all theological controversies and is not in need of theological exegesis, since its radical meaning is exclusively explained by the Holy Spirit operating in our opened hearts, in the communion of this Spirit. This is the only really ecumenical basis of the Church of Christ, which in its institutional temporal appear-

ance is hopelessly divided, and it is the ultimate divine judge both of all dogmatic theology and of all philosophy. This does not mean that this spiritual basic motive would be the basis of a Christendom above all dissensions of faith, as if it would have nothing to do with an ecclesiastical confession. On the contrary, it is the judge also of every ecclesiastical doctrine and will always remain the central basic principle of a continual reformation of the Church's doctrine. Every view which makes this central and radical sense of God's Word dependent on a theological dogmatics and exegesis, is unbiblical in its very fundamentals.

This radical biblical standpoint lies at the foundation of the reformed philosophy which during the last decennaries has been developed at the Free University of Amsterdam. It has inspired its radical critique of theoretical thought which applies both to philosophy itself and to theology. This critique, which is the key to an understanding of its philosophical intention and significance, has uncovered the inner point of connection between theoretical thought, in all of its manifestations, and the central religious basic motives which are its real, but often masked, starting-points. It has done so by showing from the inner structure and nature of theoretical thought itself its necessary presuppositions which are necessarily related to the central religious sphere of human consciousness. This means that the traditional dogma concerning the autonomy of theoretical reason as to the natural truths turns out to be untenable.

It is the central religious motive of theoretical

thought which, as its real starting-point, rules any philosophical view of the mutual relation and inner coherence between the different aspects of our temporal horizon of experience. This is why the biblical basic-motive cannot fail to bring about a salutary inner revolution in our entire philosophical view of temporal experience and of empirical reality. Neither philosophy, nor dogmatic theology, can be withdrawn from the radical and integral grip of this central basic-motive without their being abandoned to the influence of non-biblical motives.

However, Christian philosophy does not have the task and competence to go into the dogmatic and exegetical problems of theology except insofar as the philosophical and central religious fundamentals of theology as a theoretical science are at issue. For as soon as the fatal confusion between the central starting-point and the theoretical object of theology has been overcome, it must be evident that theology in its scientific sense is bound to philosophical fundamentals which are in turn dependent on the central religious motive of theoretical thought. The reason is that the faith-aspect of our temporal horizon of experience which delimits the theoretical object of theology *in its modal sense*, displays an intrinsic coherence with all the other experiential modes. This inner coherence between the different aspects finds expression in the modal structure of each of them, so that this structure reflects the integral temporal order of all the aspects in their established succession. This implies that the modal structure of the faith-aspect,

just like that of all other experiential modes, displays an intricate character. On the one hand, it presents a central moment of its sense, which is its irreducible kernel. On the other, it displays a series of analogical moments, whose meaning is in itself multivocal and is only determined by the modal kernel of the faith-aspect. The analogical moments give expression to the inner coherence between this aspect and all the other modes of experience within the temporal order.

It is this analogical structure of the faith-aspect which obliges theology to avail itself of fundamental concepts of an analogical character. That is to say, these concepts are also used by the other special sciences, but in a different modal sense; nevertheless, there is an inner coherence between these different modal meanings. Such theological concepts of an analogical character are, for instance, that of time, number, space, movement, force and causality, life, emotion, distinction, power, symbol, signification and interpretation, justice, guilt, imputation and punishment, love, etc. It is of primordial concern that the theologian realizes the proper faith-sense of these analogical concepts in their theological use and does not confound this particular signification with that ascribed to them in other sciences. For such a confusion cannot fail to give rise to erroneous manners of posing theological problems. I refer, for example, to the question concerning the sense of the six days of creation. By disregarding the faith-aspect of the temporal order and by utilizing astronomical and geological concepts of time, theology was entangled

in the following dilemma: if these days are not to be understood in the sense of astronomical days of twenty-four hours, they are to be interpreted as geological periods. A curious dilemma, indeed. For it has not occurred to any theologian to apply this alternative to the seventh day, the day on which God rested from all his work which he had made. This would be rightly considered blasphemy. But why was it overlooked that the same blasphemy presents itself if God's creative deeds are conceived in natural scientific time-concepts? The reason is that the theologians who posed the dilemma mentioned did not realize the fundamental difference between the divine creative deeds and the genetical process occurring within the created temporal order as a result of God's work of creation. Here the influence of Greek philosophy clearly manifested itself. For because of its pagan religious basic motive this philosophy excluded any idea of creation. It merely accepted a temporal genesis, at the utmost conceived of as the result of a formative activity of a divine mind which presupposes a given material. The scholastic accommodation of the biblical revelation of creation to this Greek idea of becoming gave rise to the false view that creation itself was a temporal process.

God's creative deeds surpass the temporal order because they are not subjected to it. But as a truth of faith God has revealed these creative deeds in the faith-aspect of this temporal order which points beyond itself to what is supra-temporal. It was God's will that the believing Jew should refer his six work

days to the six divine creative works and the sabbath day to the eternal sabbathic rest of God, the Creator. This is the biblical exegesis given by the Decalogue. And it eliminates the scholastic dilemma concerning the exegesis of the six days of creation, which originated from a fundamental disregard of the faith-aspect of the temporal order. This disregard is also to be observed in the Augustinian interpretation of the six days as a literary form or framework of representation which lacks any temporal sense, though this conception is, no doubt, preferable by far to the astronomical or geological interpretation.

Theological pseudo-problems always arise when the analogical basic theological concepts are used in a non-theological sense. Remember, for instance, the Occamistic conception of God's omnipotence as an absolute power apart from God's justice, love, holiness, etc. In this way the analogical concept of power was conceived in the sense of a tyrannical arbitrariness, and certainly not in the sense of the Christian faith. Power in its original modal sense is the nuclear moment of the historico-cultural mode of experience; for culture is nothing but a controlling mode of formation, which exactly by its qualification as dominion over the material is fundamentally distinct from all modes of formation found in nature. But even in this original and nuclear modal sense power is only to be conceived in unbreakable coherence with the whole series of analogical experiential moments in the historico-cultural aspect in which the context with the other aspects finds expression. Similarly the analogy

of power which we meet with in the modal structure of the faith-aspect cannot unfold its analogical meaning within this aspect apart from its unbreakable coherence with all the other analogies in this mode of experience. Any attempt to isolate such an analogy and to relate it in this isolation to God as a predicate of his self-revelation, amounts to an absolutizing of a temporal moment of our experience. It leads to the formation of idols which result in a meaningless nothingness. In the same way the theological meaning of the analogical concept of causality is misunderstood by conceiving predestination in a mechanical sense. The true theological meaning of all such analogical concepts can only reveal itself in the unbreakable coherence of the faith-aspect with all the other aspects of the temporal order of experience.

This is the reason why theology in its scientific sense needs a philosophical foundation. For it is philosophy alone which can provide us with a theoretical insight into the inner structure and the mutual coherence of the different aspects or modes of human experience. The only question is whether these philosophical fundamentals will be subject to the biblical religious basic motive, or to some non-biblical religious basic motive, originating from a complete or partial apostasy. It is only the radical and integral biblical starting-point which can free philosophy from prejudices implying a distortion of the structural order of the experiential aspects. The apostatical basic motives cannot fail to entangle philosophical thought in absolutizing special aspects, whereby an

insight into their real structure and real coherence with the others is precluded in principle. It is a vain illusion to imagine that such philosophical views might be made harmless by accommodating them in an external way to the ecclesiastical doctrine to which the theologian holds.

By a perennial tradition, originating in the canonization of the Thomistic view, but already prepared by pre-Thomistic scholasticism, dogmatic theology has been bound to a scholastic philosophy, ruled by the unbiblical basic motive of nature and grace. In fact, it was an Aristotelian philosophy accommodated to the doctrine of the Church. The analogical character of the theological basic concepts was conceived from the viewpoint of the Aristotelian metaphysics, which started from the analogical concept of being, the so-called *analogia entis*. But this metaphysics, howsoever accommodated to the Church's doctrine, could not fail to turn away theological thought from the radical biblical standpoint, since its basic motive was incompatible with that of the Holy Scripture. I shall revert to this point in my next lecture.

By means of the metaphysical doctrine of the *analogia entis* dogmatic theology tried to account for the fact that Holy Scripture speaks about God in terms related to the modal diversity of our temporal order of experience. But this doctrine of the *analogia entis* had nothing to do with the Christian faith. Rather, it was supposed to be founded on natural reason alone in its pretended autonomy. Karl Barth rightly rejected this metaphysics of the *analogia entis*.

He called it an invention of the antichrist and replaced it by the *analogia fidei*, the analogy of faith. But, as we have seen, it is exactly the analogical structure of faith which confronts theology with a basic problem of philosophical character that cannot be put aside.

If, as Barth thinks, Christian belief would really have no single point of contact with human nature, how can it display that analogical structure by which it is bound even to the sensory aspect of our experience? How could we believe without having heard the Word with the ear of sense, or without having perceived the written words of the Bible with the eye of sense, and having understood the lingual meaning of the words? It is this very coherence of the faith-aspect with all the other fundamental modes of temporal experience which is not explicable from the theological viewpoint alone.

If the theologians deny the possibility of a biblically-founded philosophy, they are bound to take their philosophical presuppositions from a so-called autonomous philosophy. It is a vain illusion to imagine that the notions borrowed from such a philosophy could be utilized by the theologian in a purely formal sense. They imply a material content which is insolubly bound to the total theoretical view of experience and of reality. It has been pretended, for instance, that the philosophical concept of substance could be utilized by theology in a formal sense to give expression to the essential unity of soul and body in human nature. Nevertheless, this metaphysical con-

cept implied a Greek view of human nature excluding in principle the insight into the religious center of human existence. How could theology, on such a philosophical basis, do justice to the revelation of the creation in its radical biblical sense? How could it do justice to the pregnant biblical utterances concerning the heart as the inner center of human life? And the situation does not become better if theology turns away from the scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy in order to have recourse to modern philosophical views rooted in the basic motive of Humanism. In Europe there are many theologians who consider the contemporary humanist existentialism more biblical than Aristotelianism. I do not understand this opinion. The qualification "more biblical" is characteristic of the neo-scholastical attitude in theological and philosophical thought which only aims at an accommodation of this uprooted humanist existentialism to the biblical view without having realized the radical and integral character of the biblical basic motive. Genuine Humanistic basic views concerning man and his world of more or less biblical character do not exist. The biblical basic motive can only be accepted or rejected as a whole. And the same applies to the Humanist religious position.

Naturally this does not mean, that there are not to be found important elements of truth in humanist existentialism. But the philosophical total view from which they are interpreted does not allow of a partial acceptance from the biblical standpoint. It is an inte-

gral whole, ruled by the religious basic motive of Humanism.

Theology is above all in need of a radical critique of theoretical thought which, because of its biblical starting-point, is able to show the intrinsic influence of the religious basic motives both upon philosophy and theology. This is the first service which the new reformed philosophy can render its theological sister. In my next lecture I shall explain the necessity of this service a little more in detail.

Philosophy and Theology—III

In the last lecture I have shown why theology as a science of the dogmata of the Christian faith is in need of a philosophical foundation. The Christian life of faith as such, doubtless, does not need philosophy, nor does the divine Word-revelation need it. Neither of them is of a theoretical character. Dogmatical theology, on the contrary, is in its scientific character bound to the theoretical attitude of thought. It is continually confronted with the problem concerning the relation between its analogical basic concepts to those of the other sciences. This problem appeared to have an inner connection with the place which the faith aspect of our experience occupies in the temporal order of the experiential aspects. And this problem is of an intrinsically philosophical nature.

For theology the question is not, whether or not it should be philosophically founded. The only question is whether it is to seek its philosophical foundations in a Christian philosophy, ruled and reformed by the central biblical basic motive or if it should take them from the traditional scholastic or modern Humanist philosophy.

The influence of the scholastically-adapted Greek philosophy on dogmatic theology was the more dangerous, as the theologians, led astray by the traditional belief in the autonomy of natural reason, did not realize the anti-biblical presuppositions of this philosophy.

We should not forget that the process of decay of Reformation theology had begun since the restoration of this scholastic philosophy at the Protestant universities. This restoration effectuated by Melanchton and Beza, meant (unintentionally of course) a denial of the integral principle of the Reformation, which implied an inner reformation of the whole Christian life by its subjection to the radical and central authority of God's Word-revelation. It testified to the fact that the un-biblical religious basic motive of nature and grace had begun to regain an increasing influence on the theological and philosophical views of Protestantism. The Roman Catholic view in its Thomistic conception, according to which philosophy can have no other principle of knowledge than the natural light of reason, whereas theology has a supernatural source of knowledge in revelation, was completely taken over. But the return to this view implied a return to the scholastic foundation of dogmatic theology on the metaphysical fundamentals of the Aristotelian philosophy in its external accommodation to the doctrine of the Church. This meant that any attack upon the Aristotelian metaphysics was rightly felt as an attack upon the scholastic trend in Reformed theology itself. And inasfar as the influence

of the Thomistic-Aristotelian metaphysics had even revealed itself in some formulations of the Reformed Confessions, especially in the Westminster Confession, this attack could be easily interpreted as a deviation from the Church's doctrine. But thereby an inescapable difficulty arose.

The Thomistic-Aristotelian view of human nature, which excluded the biblical revelation of the heart as the religious center of human life, was supposed to give expression both to a philosophical and to a theological truth. As a philosophical conception it was supposed to be provable by the natural light of reason alone; as a theological conception it sought support from different texts of Holy Scripture, which were supposed to corroborate it. This implied that a philosophical anthropology was ascribed to the Holy Scriptures; an anthropology, which was incompatible with the radical sense of the biblical revelation concerning creation, fall and redemption. But by so doing the only criterion at the disposal of Scholasticism for delimiting the field of research of theology from that of philosophy, appeared to fail. The only means to escape from effacing the bounds between them was to forbid the philosophers any independent consultation of the Holy Scriptures and to bind them to the Thomistic-Aristotelian view of human nature.

This solution of the difficulty was quite Roman Catholic, and it presupposed the Roman Catholic view of the infallible doctrinal authority of the Church. The Reformation, however, had rejected this authority in principle and had opened the Bible to

all believers. In consequence, until the separation of church and state, there seemed to remain no other escape than that the church apply for help to the secular government in case of disagreement between philosophers and theologians about anthropological questions.

This road was followed in the Netherlands in the 17th century, when the contest between the adherents of the Cartesian philosophy and the theologians at the universities had led to serious troubles. The Cartesians defended the thesis that the material body and the rational soul are only accidentally united in human nature. The theologians held to the Thomistic-Aristotelian view of a substantial union between these two components. In the year 1656 the Estates of Holland and West-Friesland issued their famous resolution concerning the relation between philosophy and theology in consequence of a complaint lodged by the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches against the propagation of the Cartesian views with respect to subjects belonging to theology. This resolution began by applying the traditional scholastic criterion in order to delimit the bounds of philosophy and theology. Philosophy should restrict itself to questions which may be investigated by the natural light of reason alone; theology, on the other hand, should treat such subjects which are to be known only from the Word-revelation.

It was evident that a consistent application of this criterion could not fail to lead to the conclusion that the theological professors should abstain from teach-

ing any philosophical theory of man. But this would have been unacceptable from the theological viewpoint, since the Thomistic-Aristotelian view of human nature was considered to be in accordance with the doctrine of Holy Scripture and thus was made into an article of faith. On the other hand the question at issue could not be withdrawn from philosophy and assigned to the exclusive competence of theology. For, both the scholastic philosophy, defended by the theologians, and the Cartesian philosophy, considered it as belonging to the essential problems of metaphysics. Consequently, the resolution of the Estates was obliged to take these difficulties into account. It established that theology has borrowed many terms, distinctions, and rules from other sciences, which in many respects can help to clarify the theological problems. On the other hand, it admitted that there are subjects which, though belonging also to the realm of faith, nevertheless may be examined and known by the natural light of reason alone. Therefore, the resolution recommended to the philosophers to treat such subjects less amply than the theologians who used arguments taken from the Holy Scriptures, the exegesis of texts, the refutation of older and contemporary heresies, etc.

Besides, according to the resolution, such matters can be understood much better and more securely from the Holy Scripture than from natural reason. Consequently, when the natural light of human reason would seem to lead us to other results, one should have more confidence in the divine authority alone

than in human reasoning. On these grounds the resolution prohibited a further propagation of the Cartesian theses which had given offense to the theologians. In this way the secular government tried to put an end to the debate between the Cartesian philosophers and the theologians. But the resolution which satisfied the wishes of the ecclesiastics, and followed, in the main, the advice of the theological faculty of the University of Leyden, showed at the same time to what degree the spirit of Scholasticism had supplanted the biblical spirit of the Reformation. The Thomistic view of human nature as a composite of an immortal, rational soul and a perishable material body united as form and matter of one substance, had no more in common with the biblical revelation about man than the Cartesian conception. Both of them were metaphysical theories ruled by un-biblical religious basic motives.

The whole idea that a philosophical knowledge of human nature would be possible by the natural light of human reason alone, i. e., independent of religious presuppositions, testified to a fundamental apostasy from the biblical starting-point. And the very fact that scholastic theology sought to corroborate the Thomistic-Aristotelian view by texts of the Scripture showed how much theological exegesis itself had come into the grip of un-biblical basic motives.

Let us consider this situation a little more in detail. The nature-grace motive did not enter Christian thought before the end of the 12th century, during the renaissance of the Aristotelian philosophy. It

aimed originally at a religious compromise between the Aristotelian view of nature and the ecclesiastical doctrine of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Jesus Christ.

The Aristotelian view of nature was no more independent of religious presuppositions than any other philosophical view. It was completely ruled by the dualistic religious basic motive of Greek thought, namely, that of form and matter. Though this terminological denomination is of Aristotelian origin, the central motive designed by it was by no means of Aristotelian invention.

It originated from the meeting between two antagonistic Greek religions, namely, the older nature religion of life and death, and the younger cultural religion of the Olympian gods. Nietzsche and his friend, Rhode, were the first to discover the conflict between these religions in the Greek tragedies. Nietzsche spoke of the contest between the Dionysian and the Apollinian spirit in these tragedies. But in fact here was at issue a conflict in the religious basic motive of the whole Greek life and thought.

The pre-Olympian religion of life and death deified the ever-flowing stream of organic life which originates from mother earth and cannot be fixed or restricted by any corporeal form. It is from this formless stream of life that, in the order of time, the generations of beings separate themselves and appear in an individual bodily shape. This corporeal form can only be maintained at the cost of other living beings, so that the life of the one is the death of the other.

So there is an injustice in any fixed form of life which for this reason must be repaid to the horrible fate of death, designated by the Greek terms *anangkè* and *heimarmenè tuché*. This is the meaning of the mysterious words of the Ionian philosopher of nature, Anaximander: "The divine origin of all things is the *apeiron* (i. e., that which lacks a restricting form). The things return to that from which they originate in conformity to the law of justice. For they pay to each other penalty and retribution for their injustice in the order of time."

Here the central motive of the archaic religion of life and death has found a clear expression in Anaximander's philosophical view of *physis*, or nature. It is the motive of the formless stream of life, ever-flowing throughout the process of becoming and passing away, and pertaining to all perishable things which are born in a corporeal form, and subjected to *anangké*. This is the original sense of the Greek matter-motive. It originated from a deification of the biotic aspect of our temporal horizon of experience and found its most spectacular expression in the cult of Dionysius, imported from Thrace.

The religious form-motive, on the other hand, is the central motive of the younger Olympian religion, the religion of form, measure and harmony, wherein the cultural aspect of the Greek *polis* was deified. It found its most pregnant expression in the Delphian Apollo, the legislator. The Olympian gods are personified cultural powers. They have left mother earth with its everflowing stream of life and its ever-

threatening fate of death, and have acquired the Olympus as their residence. They have a divine and immortal, personal form, invisible to the eye of sense, an ideal form of a splendid beauty, the genuine prototype of the Platonic notion of the metaphysical *eidos*, or *idea*. But these immortal gods had no power over the *anangké*, the fate of death of mortals. This is why the new religion was only accepted as the public religion of the Greek *polis*. But in their private life the Greek people held to the old formless deities of life and death, doubtless more crude and incalculable than the Olympians, but more efficient as to the existential needs of man.

Thus the Greek form-matter motive gave expression to a fundamental dualism in the Greek religious consciousness. As the central starting-point of Greek philosophy, it was not dependent upon the mythical forms and representations of the popular belief. By claiming autonomy over against the latter, Greek philosophy certainly did not mean to break with the dualistic basic motive of the Greek religious consciousness. Much rather this motive was the common starting-point of the different philosophical tendencies and schools. But because of its intrinsically dualistic character, it drove Greek philosophical thought into polarly opposed directions. Since a real synthesis between the opposite motives of form and matter was not possible, there remained no other recourse than that of attributing the religious primacy to one of them with the result that the other was depreciated. Whereas in the Ionian nature-philosophy

the formless and ever-flowing stream of life was deified, the Aristotelian god is conceived as pure form and the matter-principle is depreciated in the Aristotelian metaphysics as the principle of imperfection.

In the state of apostasy the religious impulse, innate in the human heart, turns away from the living God and is directed towards the temporal horizon of human experience with its diversity of modal aspects. This gives rise to the formation of idols originating in the deification of one of these aspects, i. e., in absolutizing what is only relative. But what is relative can only reveal its meaning in coherence with its correlates. This means that the absolutization of one aspect of our temporal world calls forth, with an inner necessity, correlates of this aspect which now, in the religious consciousness, claim an opposite absoluteness. In other words, every idol gives rise to a counter-idol.

Thus in the Greek religious consciousness the form-motive was bound to the matter-motive as its counterpart. The inner dualism caused in the central starting-point of Greek thought by these two opposite motives gave rise to the dichotomistic view of human nature as a composite of a perishable material body and an immortal, rational soul. It should be noticed that this view originated in the Orphic religious movement. This movement had made the Dionysian religion of life and death into the infra-structure of a higher religion of the celestial sphere, i.e., the starry sky, and interpreted the Olympian religion in this

naturalistic sense. In consequence the central motive of form, measure, and harmony was now transferred to the supra-terrestrial sphere of the starry sky. Man was supposed to have a double origin. His rational soul corresponding to the perfect form and harmony of the starry sphere originates in the latter, but his material body originates from the dark and imperfect sphere of mother earth, with its everflowing stream of life and its *anangkē*, its inescapable fate of death. As long as the immortal rational soul is bound to the terrestrial sphere it is obliged to accept a material body as its prison and grave and it must transmigrate from body to body in the everlasting process of becoming, decline, and re-birth.

It is only by means of an ascetic life that the rational soul can purify itself from the contamination with the material body, so that at the end of a long period it may return to its proper home, the celestial sphere of form, measure and harmony.

The great influence of this dualistic Orphic view of human nature upon the Pythagorean school, Empedocles, Parmenides, and Plato, is generally known. Since Parmenides, the founder of Greek metaphysics, this dichotomistic view was combined with the metaphysical opposition between the realm of eternal being, presenting itself in the ideal spherical form of the heaven, and the phenomenal terrestrial world of coming to be and passing away, subjected to the *anangkē*. Plato purified his metaphysics from Parmenides' naturalistic conception of form, and he conceived the eternal forms of being as *eide*, or *ideas*, re-

spectively. In Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*, the proof of the immortality of the rational soul is consequently unbreakably bound to the metaphysical doctrine of the eternal ideas as the ideal forms of being. The latter are sharply opposed to the visible world subjected as it is to the matter-principle of becoming and decay. It was supposed that the metaphysical forms of being are only accessible to logico-theoretical thought, viewed as the center of the immortal soul. The logical function of theoretical thought was considered to be completely independent of the material body since it is directed upon the eternal forms of being and must consequently be of the same nature as these imperishable forms. Henceforth the thesis that the logical function of the theoretical act of thought is independent of the material body became a steady argument in the metaphysical proof of the immortality of the rational soul.

But this argument originated in an absolutization of the antithetical relation which is characteristic of the theoretical attitude of thought. We have seen that in this theoretical attitude the logical aspect of our thought is opposed to the non-logical aspects of experience in order to make the latter accessible to a conceptual analysis. In this way we can make the non-logical aspects of our body into the object of our logico-theoretical inquiry. But we have also established that this anti-thetical relation between the logical and the non-logical aspects of our temporal experiential horizon does not correspond to reality. It is only the result of a theoretical abstraction of our logical aspect of thought from its unbreakable bond

of coherence with all the other aspects of our experience.

Under the influence of the dualistic religious form-matter motive, however, Greek metaphysics ascribed to this merely theoretical opposition a metaphysical significance, to the effect that the logico-theoretical function of thought was viewed as an independent substance. In this way there arose the idol of the immortal and rational human soul which was identified with the logical function of our act of theoretical thought. In Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*, this identification is clearly proclaimed. But it should be noticed that it dated from the first appearance in Greek philosophy of the metaphysical opposition between the eternal form of being and the material world of coming into being and passing away. It was the founder of Greek metaphysics, Parmenides, who was the first to identify theoretical thought with eternal being. In a later phase of his thought, Plato replaced his original view of the simplicity of the human soul by the conception that this soul is composed of two mortal material parts and an immortal spiritual one; nevertheless, he maintained the identification of the latter with the logico-theoretical function of thought. According to him, the latter is the pure form of the soul, viewed apart from its incarnation in the impure material body.

Aristotle, who initially completely accepted both Plato's doctrine of ideas and his dualistic view of soul and body, tried later on to overcome this dualism. He abandoned the Platonic separation between the

world of the ideal forms and the visible world of perishable material things. He made the ideal forms into the immanent principles of being in the perishable substances, which are according to him composed of matter and form. He sought to overcome the central conflict between the matter-motive and the form-motive in the Greek religious consciousness, by reducing it to the complementary relation of a material and a form given to it, in the sense in which this relation is found in the cultural aspect of experience. As the principle of coming into being and passing away, matter has, according to him, no actual but only potential being. It is only by a substantial form that it can have actual existence. Form and matter are united in the natural things to one natural substance, and this natural substance would be the absolute reference point of all properties we ascribe to the thing.

This metaphysical view was also applied to man as a natural substance. Thus the rational soul was conceived as the substantial form of the perishable material body. Since, however, the soul is only the substantial form of the body without being itself a substance, it cannot exist apart from the material body and lacks, in consequence, immortality. What, according to Aristotle, is really an immortal substance is only the active theoretical intellect which, in his opinion, does not stem from human nature, but comes from the outside into the soul. This active theoretical thought, however, lacks any individuality, since individuality stems from matter, and active theoretical

thought remains completely separated from the material body. It is the pure and actual form of thinking, and, as such, it has a general character.

Here the fundamental dualism in the form-matter motive, which at first sight seemed to be overcome by Aristotle, clearly reappears. In fact, it could not be overcome since it ruled the central starting-point of Greek philosophical thought.

Thomas Aquinas tried to accommodate the Aristotelian view of human nature to the doctrine of the Church. First he adapted it to the doctrine of divine creation, which, as such, was incompatible with the Greek form-matter motive. According to Thomas, God created man as a natural substance composed of matter and form. Second, he interpreted the Aristotelian view in such a way that the rational soul was conceived of both as the form of the material body and as an immortal substance which can exist apart from the body. He accepted the Aristotelian view that matter is the principle of individuation and that form as such lacks individuality. The Aristotelian view that the active theoretical intellect does not originate from the natural process of development, but comes from the outside, was interpreted in a so-called psycho-creationist sense. God creates every immortal rational soul apart. But the result of this scholastic accommodation was a complex of insoluble contradictions.

In the first place, the psycho-creationist doctrine contradicts the emphatic biblical statement (Genesis 2:2), that God had finished all his works of creation.

Thus a whole complex of theological pseudo-problems was introduced. If God continues to create rational souls after the fall of man, does he create sinful souls, or should we assume that sin does only originate from the material body? The traditional solution of this problem to the effect that God creates souls deprived of the original state of communion with him, but not sinful in themselves, is unbiblical to such a degree that it does not need any further argumentation. For what else is the fall into sin than breaking the communion with God, i. e., what else than the state of apostasy from him? Secondly, if the immortal soul is individualized only by the material body, how can it retain its individuality after its separation from the body?

I shall not go into a more detailed discussion of these scholastic problems. The *vitium originis* of this psycho-creationist theory is its un-biblical starting-point, which cannot be made innocuous by any scholastic accommodation to the Church's doctrine and by an appeal to texts of Scripture. For the theological exegesis of these texts is in this case itself infected by this un-biblical starting-point. It lacks the *key* of knowledge which alone can open to us the radical sense of the divine Word-revelation. For, let me end with words of Calvin in the beginning of the first chapter of his *Institutio Religionis Christianae*, "The true knowledge of ourselves is dependent upon the true knowledge of God."