

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON WOLTERSTORFF'S
REASON WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF RELIGION

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Critical Reflections on Wolterstorff's Reason Within The Bounds of Religion

1. Context for this paper¹

In Reason within the bounds of Religion (Grand Rapids, 1976) Nicholas P. Wolterstorff presents a discussion of the formation and evaluation of theories in the context of Christian commitment. It is noteworthy that the author's philosophical background is in the mainstream of Anglo-Saxon thought of the twentieth century and is oriented to the analytic tradition.² In this tradition there has been a marked tendency to discourage any search for a relation between matters analytic and matters religious. It is noteworthy as well that Wolterstorff himself tended to think in the past that epistemological concerns of the kind he pursues in his book were for the most part not very worthy of a Christian's attention and time. However, in 1974 he accepted an invitation to present two lectures on the relation between faith and scholarship--an invitation extended by the Consortium of Colleges in the Reformed and Presbyterian Tradition. A study of literature in the area of contemporary reflections on the nature of theory then convinced him that the topic assigned to him was of real importance. His resulting essay of almost one hundred pages is a powerful stimulus for our reflection in this field.

One of the provocative features of the book is that its style and language are in line with the author's background. The traditional "faith/reason" problem is introduced in the analytic context in a manner which must appeal to those who are at home in contemporary American philosophy. The discussion is crisp, specific and concrete. It is concentrated on manageable issues. The author rejects the view that theories are neutral with respect to basic human commitments, as well as the view that all actual theorizing shares one common basis. The book has many specific contributions to make. The one I find the most outstanding is the suggestion that certain of our beliefs (and among those some beliefs especially related to our Christian commitment) have control over our theorizing. I believe, in fact, that this book raises a number of important issues which merit public discussion. So I offer this article as a contribution to such a discussion.

The point of view from which I will discuss these issues is my perception of the main resources for Wolterstorff's approach. Some of these resources I share in a way that leads me to fundamentally appreciate his approach. But other resources of his differ so markedly from the background to which I am oriented that they occasion discussion. In his views on the relation between faith and scholarship (religion and theory, revelation and science, commitment and analysis) Wolterstorff takes an approach which can be characterized as neo-Kuyperian.³ This approach also characterizes his writings in the field of Christian education, as well as many of his other writings of general cultural interest. In this approach he religiously identifies himself with a certain Reformed trend in Calvinism that has also shaped the thinking of Christian scholars at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. My own background is in that school and I am therefore instantly aware of a fundamental kinship with the position taken by Wolterstorff. This neo-Kuyperian kinship comes to expression most clearly in what he means by reason as seen within the bounds of religion. Wolterstorff stresses the centrality and comprehensiveness of religion and the integral involvement of the whole human person in

a religious commitment. For theory this implies the view that there is no structural incompatibility between religious faith and logical analysis. More positively speaking, the relation between reason and religion implies for Wolterstorff that the field of theorizing in fact stands in an active relationship to the fundamental and ultimate choices and commitments which persons make in the face of basic questions. His acknowledgement of this positive relationship leads him to two strategies in the book. The one strategy is to begin work on the notion that a theory of theory must include an account of the relation between faith and analysis. Such an account must in turn be characterized by its genuine analysis of the empirical evidence of the relation in question. The other strategy is to explain why the most traditional and influential theory of theory in our culture is to be rejected as an anti-faith and pro-neutrality theory.

Wolterstorff recognizes that the positive relation between theoretical inquiry and Christian commitment is not necessarily widely practised. He sees it as a possible relationship which has been neglected and which must receive more attention. But the neglect has not left him without any empirical evidence. He opens his book with an overview of how historically there always have been important occasions on which it became evident that science does not have a perfect track record of free and autonomous progress. After that the author argues for his conviction that the influential view of science as free and autonomous is based on an untenable theory of theory. That theory he calls foundationalism. The classical doctrine of foundationalism he characterizes as the belief that all science is founded on a few simple and self-evidently rational propositions and on them alone. Foundationalism is a specification of the view, one might say, that reason is entirely founded only on what is rational. The specification of foundationalism is that a theory, as a rational product of reason, is founded on reason and on what it is rational for reason to believe.

Wolterstorff's positive view of the reason-religion relation and his rejection of foundationalism are the two sides of one orientation in Reason within the bounds of Religion (henceforth RwR) which I fully share. But other orientations in the book imply a difference in approaches. First of all there is the difference between his background in the American or Anglo-Saxon philosophical climate and mine in the continental European traditions. Analytical philosophers have helped shape a style of philosophizing which is traditionally anti-metaphysical and consequently weary of exploring the ontological commitments behind logical concepts. Today there are indications, however, of significant shifts in this respect. Nevertheless, that style differs markedly from the heavily ontological approaches of European philosophy. The almost exclusively logical orientation of the American approach makes for crisp and rigorous analyses, while the European style by comparison tends to come off as heavy handed if not simply vague. This difference in background also entails a difference in approach to contemporary trends in theory of theory. Those trends almost all center on the weaknesses in the legacy of Positivism. In evaluating these trends I rely much on a critique of Positivism coming from anti-Positivist circles. Thus, I am indebted to my Dooyeweerdian

background with its own neo-Kantian and Phenomenological roots, to Pragmatism, and to European traditions such as Gestalt thinking, structuralism, cybernetics, systems theory, existentialism, neo-Marxism and perhaps others. Wolterstorff, however, appears to be especially interested in the literature surrounding the Kuhn-Lakatos-Popper debate. That literature is itself more closely related to the history of Positivism, in as much as it can be characterized as a contemporary critique of Positivism by thinkers who themselves were raised in the tradition they now criticize.

Now, it is my point of view that the issues I will raise in this paper come to the surface both because of shared approaches and because of differences in approach. Our differences in epistemological orientation, and also the ontological differences implied in them when applied to the same tradition in religious commitment are the occasion for some of the questions I would like to discuss. At this point I am undecided as to what these questions may imply for the nature of the disagreements between us. It may be that basically there is no other significant difference than one in style. In that case the basic approach to the faith/reason discussion would be the same. But it may also be that disagreement is due to important differences in conceptual visions. In that case rival approaches may in fact underlie the differences. Whatever the case, this paper assumes that the nature of the differences is at this time an undecided issue.

2. Introduction to the discussion

A Christian philosopher who is interested in the relation between commitment and theory will, I take it, be especially interested in the relation between his own commitment and his own theory, between his own commitment and the theoretical tradition to which he is indebted, and between his own commitment and the commitment implied in the tradition to which he is indebted. What concepts of the tradition are directly dependent on the commitment of that tradition? If I use these concepts, what is their relation to my own commitment? It will often not be possible to establish a direct and one-to-one correspondence between the commitment of some tradition and the concepts of that tradition. For example, one expects to meet the concepts of value or of nature in many traditions with mutually incompatible commitments. Further, rival theories may share a same commitment. And commitment is itself a complex reality involving a multiplicity of beliefs, some of which are more essential to the commitment than others. However, some concepts of a tradition will depend very strongly on the commitment of that tradition. The concept of freedom found in a tradition committed to human autonomy will not easily be reconciled to a concept of freedom which is linked to human obedience.

The theoretic tradition rejected by Wolterstorff in RwR is one in which the matter of commitment is peculiarly unusual. In my view foundationalism, as remarked earlier, is a version of rationalism, i.e. a version of a view in which the commitment is to reason. Reason constructs theories on a foundation which is rational or at least on one which is self-evident to reason. The rational construct has a rational foundation. And since commitment is not rationally

tolerable, the commitment to reason in this view is not acknowledged as commitment. Rather, loyalty to reason is itself viewed as rational. Reason is committed to its own constructs and those constructs are founded in reason. In this sense one might say that foundationalism is not a mere theory of theory, but a commitment to theory or a rational acceptance of a rational construct. In this theory of theory, the theorist is committed to his theory of theory. But this commitment goes unrecognized, i.e. the foundations for rational constructs being themselves rational are not understood as commitments to what is rational. A commitment in theory to theory is probably the only sort of commitment that cannot be recognized as commitment by those who are so committed.⁴

In RWR these issues are not discussed. This leaves me wondering whether Wolterstorff's background in the analytic tradition may have given him a rather different perspective on foundationalism. He rejects it as a theory of theory. I take it that he thus views foundationalism primarily as a theory and not significantly as a kind of commitment. If that is so, what consequences could this possibly have? It might mean that if foundationalism's view of what a theory is has significant dependence relations on its commitment, Wolterstorff might take that view of theory as less commitment-laden than in fact it is. It may mean that Wolterstorff's rejection of foundationalism would be limited to that view's strategies of theory formation or to its notion of what constitutes a good theory, or to its methods for justifying a theory.⁵ But his rejection could leave the concept of what a theory is undisturbed in that case. His rejection would not as such necessarily lead him to a critical examination of the concept of a theory.

These possible consequences may even become probable if one recalls that in the analytic tradition the commitment to reason has in the past led to a rejection of metaphysics, i.e. to a notion of philosophy as analysis without the articulation of ontological foundations. Thus the analytic approach is traditionally not keen on the detection of problems other than analytic problems, though awareness of this is increasing. Should Wolterstorff have followed his background in this respect to a considerable degree, that would throw light on his apparently unproblematic acceptance of strategies and concepts of the analytic tradition in certain instances. As I aim to show, Wolterstorff tends to use concepts such as belief, observation, knowledge and others in ways that are not apparently different from the way they are generally used in the analytic tradition. But the question arises whether his own Christian commitment has not in fact basically altered his appreciation of those concepts. It might be, for example, that his own Christian commitment requires a much more fundamental departure from the foundationalist tradition that is proposed by the critics of foundationalism followed by Wolterstorff.

The questions I am asking here all come down to one fundamental issue: how integral is a tradition in philosophy? Many modern versions of rationalism, such as analytic philosophy, positivism, or logical empiricism, have developed philosophy primarily from a logical point of view. In such a trend the conclusions arrived at are generally founded on logical foundations and the systematic

coherence of the beliefs of that sort of approach will tend to be a logical coherence. In addition, the key concepts of any tradition have been molded to allow such an approach to be justified. Most modern rationalist positions, though they tend to avoid the building of ontological systems, may still have an inner self-consistency once the fundamental commitments and foundational concepts are granted. Now, should one begin to undermine some of the very foundations of such an approach, then it would seem legitimate to ask what consequences this has for most significant dimensions of such an approach. To put it differently: if the Popper-Kuhn-Lakatos debate in theory of theory affects the very foundations of the modern rationalist traditions, should not the validity of most of the basic concepts of such traditions become dubitable?

The problem can be put in yet another way. When Wolterstorff puts reason within the bounds of religion in the way that he does, I would take that to be so incisive (and devastating) a rejection of the very basis of the tradition he attacks that it could surely not be interpreted as an adjustment within a tradition. However, the critical approaches to that tradition by Popper and Lakatos, on the other hand, are primarily adjustments. They do criticize foundationalism in its technical sense, by showing that there do not exist any observation reports, propositions, protocol sentences or whatever else may have served as the rational justification of a rational system in the past, such that they can in fact function as foundation. But there is no indication at all that these thinkers in any way reject the commitment underlying foundationalism, viz. that rationality has only rational foundations. So when Wolterstorff orients his rejection of a tradition to critical adherents of that tradition, might that not leave untouched certain concepts of that tradition which in fact now also miss their original foundation?

I have raised these issues mostly in a questioning way. The reason I have raised them at all is that these issues were uppermost in my mind in trying to come to terms with Wolterstorff's contribution to the faith/reason discussion. The reason I raised them in a questioning way is that I am not prepared to give definite answers to these questions. For the moment I believe that a neo-Kuyperian approach to them would differ from Wolterstorff's, but I am well prepared for the discovery that we are on the same track, which is temporarily hidden from view by the difference in background in our philosophic style. At any rate, I now intend to explore three problem areas against the background of the concerns raised in these introductory comments, and from the point of view set forth in the previous section. So I will assume in a tentative way that raising these issues about Wolterstorff's use of his philosophic background is relatively justified from the point of view of my own philosophic background. But I am well aware of the fact that Wolterstorff could of course reverse this process with equal justification. Two things are never in question in this exploration. One is our common religious commitment. This commitment is not only Christian, but more precisely identifiable as a neo-Kuyperian emphasis in the Reformed tradition. The other is that the questions raised here are not raised from the point of view of that commitment, but from the point of view of our different philosophic orientations. The three

problem areas to be discussed are as follows. First I will look at the conceptual way in which Wolterstorff takes the relation between theory and commitment. More specifically, I will explore whether certain claims that are made for the relationship (such as that reason is within the bounds of religion and that theory is integrally related to commitment) are compatible with the way in which the relationship is formulated; and if not, whether such incompatibility implies conceptual lack of clarity. In the second place I intend to look at the concept of a theory used by Wolterstorff, in order to determine whether it is sufficiently well defined for use in establishing a theory of theory. Finally, I will examine Wolterstorff's relation to certain crucial elements in the philosophical background of his position. In all three cases I will argue that from the point of view of my own philosophic background there appear to be certain theoretical inadequacies in Wolterstorff's approach. No solutions for these suggested inadequacies will be proposed except to offer the hope that continued common reflection on these problems may bring various approaches by contemporary Christian philosophers closer to a point of convergence.

3. Commitment and theory

It may seem that the first point to be raised is a terminological one, a mere matter of formulation. Wolterstorff insists that the relationship between faith-commitment and theory-formation be characterized by "coherence in life" and "self-understanding" (17).⁶ For him this implies that "one's authentic Christian commitment ought to function internally to scholarship..." (77). In that way he intends to develop an integrally Christian theory of theories. These expressions make it clear that Wolterstorff indeed has the utmost of integrality in mind. Not only does "reason" function within the bounds of religion, but the consequences of this must be noticed within theory. Further, the Christian person who is a scholar must come to terms with this in no less a fundamental fashion than in an understanding of the very self who this person is. There occur, however, other ways of stating the relationship in RwR. Wolterstorff also talks about the problem in terms of one's being "in two communities," of being "a scholar as well as a Christian," and of not being "just a Christian" but in all cases "also" something more (17, 79). These expressions are not necessarily incompatible with the earlier ones. But they are clearly of a different kind. Could it be that the former set expresses what Wolterstorff wants to assert about the problem from the point of view of his Christian commitment, while the latter set is more indicative of the conceptual framework derived from his philosophical approach in terms of which he elaborates that commitment theoretically? And is it possible that the two sets of articulation are at least in tension with one another?

Suppose for a moment that there is at least a degree of tension present between the two kinds of articulation, what are we to make of the assertion that "the rest of life" should be "brought into harmony" with our commitment (72)? It is certainly not possible, without further evidence, to conclude that such an assertion is

incompatible with the assertion of an integral relation. One could, for instance, be aware of the fact that in the life of the Christian there is always the tension between the new person in Christ and the old person in subjection to one of the elemental spirits of the universe. If one understands rationalism as such a spirit and if one is aware of the secularizing power of that spirit in the life of the Christian scholar, one might well say: the Christian scholar should always see to it that his scholarship is in harmony with his commitment to Christ. What is meant then is that scholarship influenced by the elemental spirits is in conflict with Christian commitment and this ought to be corrected. However, the expression "bringing into harmony" need not mean that. It can also refer to a concept of the relation between commitment and scholarship in which the two are seen as two separate and in principle unrelated dimensions of life. Such a concept would not be compatible with a concept which takes the relation between scholarship and commitment as integral. When Wolterstorff suggests that a Christian scholar is called to be "fully serious both as scholar and as Christian" (73) then in that sort of context the call for harmony would seem to fit the latter interpretation better than the former; even though the former could then still be made to fit the latter.

Let me state the problem that I see here somewhat differently. It is clear, both to Wolterstorff and myself, that there is a difference between being a scholar and being a Christian. The two are not identical. In either case, one could be the one without being the other. One could also be both. One can be a Christian without being a scholar. One can be a scholar without being a Christian. One could be neither a scholar nor a Christian. Finally, one could also be both a Christian and a scholar. In the context in which I was just now writing it is, in fact, quite legitimate to speak of a person's being both a Christian and a scholar. But is it also a felicitous way of articulating the relation between Christian commitment and scholarship? Is it clear that the presence of both in the life of one person should be stated in terms of a "not only, but also" or of a "both...and" relation? Admittedly this is a legitimate form of statement in certain cases. A person can be both a scholar and a father. He is then not only a scholar, but also a father. To be the one, one need not be the other. And neither one is similar in kind to the other. A scholar is not some type of father, nor is a father some sort of scholar. Being a father and being a scholar are functions of persons, though not closely related functions. Of course, since both are functions of persons, they are in that sense comparable and coordinate. Thus, since they are both functions, but very different functions, the expressions: both a father and a scholar, and not only a father, but also a scholar, are very fitting in this case. Each is a function, each has its own and unrelated characteristics. While scholars are not fathers qua scholars, they can as scholars be mathematicians or theologians. And while fathers are not scholars qua fathers, they can as fathers be strict or lenient, be natural fathers or step-fathers.

So a person can be both a scholar and a father. A person can be both or either or neither. But whenever we meet fathers or scholars, we meet persons--though not in addition to meeting fathers and scholars. Whereas we could meet scholars in addition to fathers, we could not meet persons in addition to scholars. I think it is because of this fact that we would be surprised if we were told of someone that he is both a person and a scholar. The traditional compliment that one is both a gentleman and a scholar is already injurious enough to scholars. We need not add the insult that some scholars also manage to be persons. In fact, the kind of thing that a person is makes for the impossibility of being anything both other than, and in addition to, being a person. Persons can be all sorts of things as persons. But I cannot think of anything that one could be other than and in addition to or besides being a person. And this, it seems to me, may be of significance for the relation of scholarship to Christian commitment. For if perchance being a Christian is something similar in kind to being a person, then the relation between being a person and being a scholar may be similar to the relation between being a Christian and being a scholar. And indeed, also on Wolterstorff's view, it would seem that the matter of one's religious commitment concerns the whole of one's being a person. On his view religious commitment must be integral and total. And this implies that commitment is exclusive in the sense that it cannot tolerate a rival commitment in the same person: Christian rationalism would be a matter of religious promiscuity. Such a view of commitment also implies that it is inclusive in the sense that no dimension of being a person can legitimately lie outside of such a commitment. One's scholarship must lie within that commitment. So a Christian would not also be a scholar, but would be a Christian as a scholar. As a scholar he would function within the bounds of religion, not in addition to (be it in harmony with) being religious.

Wolterstorff himself views commitment in terms of following Christ (67-71). The Biblical teaching on the meaning of this relationship is quite clear. One can find this teaching, for instance, in the stories about those who wish to be followers "but" who must "first" do other things. However, "first" is always the Kingdom of God. For those who seek the Kingdom "first" there will be the experience of finding their whole lives coming together in that seeking. In seeking the Kingdom one can be a scholar. In Biblical terms it would be quite confusing to express this as both seeking the Kingdom and being a scholar. Especially in our civilization it is necessary to express this relation clearly, since being a scholar has in certain traditions been conceived as a rival commitment to being a Christian. Ever since the Greeks, "following reason" or "following science" has been one of our culture's religious traditions. Some people have tried to follow science as well as follow Christ. They were both a scholar and a Christian. And being a scholar mostly won out over being a Christian in those cases. That this is so is because commitment demands integrity and wholehearted acceptance.

It is, of course, precisely the existence of rival commitments and the attempt at having another commitment besides that of following Christ which empirically makes for a confusing situation. The actual occurrence of such confusion has given certain people the idea that religion is one compartment of life next to a number of others. That is most emphatically not Wolterstorff's view. And indeed, it is not really a valid option for Christians, who are called to serve God with heart, mind and soul, i.e. with all that they are, totally. Genuine religion is monolithic or "totalitarian" in character. Religion that is not total is in Biblical terms called promiscuous religion or adultery. Biblically speaking, what one is religiously is not something one is in addition to a good many other things. Rather, what one is religiously one ought totally and always to be in all that one is. Of course, both religious promiscuity and religious plurality are actual facts in our civilization, with the result that there are scholars who are not Christians and that there are scholars who are Christians; with the result that there are Christians who are scholars but not Christian scholars. In fact, to be a Christian scholar is somewhat unusual. Because of the unusual character of such a combination one may wish to stress that a person is both a Christian and a scholar. But then it should be made clear that this emphatic expression does not mean that the person intended is a Christian in addition to being a scholar. A Christian scholar is a Christian in being a scholar. And this makes it clear that in the expression "being a Christian" much more is intended than being a member of an empirical ecclesiastical organization. If that were all there were to being a Christian, one might indeed be both a scholar and a Christian. In that case it would indeed be valid to say that one is a member of two communities in case one belongs to both the scholarly community and one belongs to some church. But that is not what should be meant by Christian commitment. And indeed, it is not what Wolterstorff means by it.

One might get the impression from the way in which I have introduced the matter of how we ought to conceptually articulate the scholarship-to-commitment relationship that I view Wolterstorff as a possible dualist. In fact, in the core chapter on commitment Wolterstorff on a number of occasions uses expressions such as "thought and life" or "action and belief" (67-68). These expressions; so frequently used by religious dualists to indicate the relation of fundamentals of the Christian faith (such as the Bible) to the life of the Christian, might lead one to suspect that Wolterstorff leans toward traditionally dualistic tendencies. But that seems decidedly not to be the case in certain crucial instances. A good counter example is his suggestion that the "belief content" of our commitment must "function as central within" (emphasis mine, 72) our theorizing. When on the same page he talks of commitment in such a way that the "rest of life ought to be brought in harmony with it" then he is not talking about the objectionable sense of harmonizing. Wolterstorff also rejects this (cf. 23 and 77). Rather, what he means is: working at full integrity (cf. 78).

So the problem I am discussing here is not one of dualism, but of clarity of conceptual expression. And on that score I detect the need for refinement. I believe that some of Wolterstorff's present ways of expressing the relation between scholarship and Christian commitment can lead to confusion. Lack of clarity about the nature of commitment, especially about its scope and about the way in which specific dimensions of human life relate to commitment is one of the factors in the difficulty Christians experience when they want to concretize their commitment into empirically recognizable action. Some of this lack of clarity comes out in the relation between two claims made by Wolterstorff, viz. that on the one hand commitment "is not to be identified with the believing of propositions" (69), while on the other hand commitment "does in fact have a belief-content" (70). I recognize the state of affairs Wolterstorff is getting at with this distinction. I think he intends to clarify the difference between holding the confessional fact that Jesus is Lord and holding the scientific fact that there is a correlation between the phases of the moon and the tides of the oceans. Commitment is more than having beliefs, though it includes having beliefs. But the beliefs of one's commitment differ from other beliefs one might have. I agree that these ought to be distinguished. But I also believe that the conceptual apparatus now at Wolterstorff's disposal make it difficult for him to defend the notion that our theories do not usually belong to the belief content of our commitment (73).

The difficulty in making that assertion about our theories not belonging to commitment is not my denying that commitment beliefs often differ from theory beliefs. I do believe this is the case. But the concepts now present in RwR seem to me not to be able to sustain the assertion for two reasons. One reason is that there appears to be no criterion whereby it is possible to distinguish when a theory does and when it does not belong to commitment. The geocentric theory of the heavenly bodies did belong to the commitment of some Christians according to Wolterstorff (74). So what allows us to determine whether or not a specific theory does belong to commitment in the sense that it is part of the belief content of commitment? This is a crucial point since, as will become clear, some commitment beliefs sometimes must function as control over theoretic beliefs. It is crucial to be able to determine this, also with a view to the second reason I see for the conceptual unclarity here. If commitment is as Wolterstorff sees it--and I, for one, see it that way--then it comes to expression in the entire "complex of action and belief" (68) that is called our day-to-day life. Two questions arise. One is whether the belief content of my commitment is or is not part of the "complex of belief and action"; the other is whether our theoretic beliefs (as part of the "complex of belief and action") are not also part of our commitment. These questions arise because Wolterstorff does not dualistically want to separate as two different and distinct things our commitment and our life. This is evident from many places in RwR, as for instance in the assertion that among "the propositions included in the belief-content" of our commitment are propositions "about the world and its inhabitants..." (70). (Cf. also 92.)

Wolterstorff's concept of commitment appears to commit him to saying that Christian commitment consists in being Christ followers. Though his own language might allow for the possibility of distinguishing between being committed to being a Christ follower and just being a Christ follower (cf. 67), I do not believe that Wolterstorff actually wants to make that an important distinction. And the distinction between one's fundamental or authentic commitment and one's actual commitment (cf. 68) would not help out here either, for in any case the one is the realization of the other and thus Wolterstorff speaks of commitment in either case. In fact, authentic commitment is not actually commitment at all, such as actual commitment is, for it is really the criterion or condition for actual commitment (cf. 92 and 68). (There is lack of clarity on this point as well.) But now it appears that if the belief content of one's theories does not belong to one's commitment, one would not be talking of "reason within religion"; whereas if one said that the believed propositions of one's theories were to be part of our commitment, they would seem to be part of the belief content of commitment. And surely Wolterstorff holds that one's theorizing is part of, or ought to be part of, our following Christ. That is what RwR is all about. What I am suggesting here is not that Wolterstorff does not accept this, but that the present conceptual apparatus of RwR makes it difficult to come to a consistent explanation of this. One cannot hold both that the belief content of commitment is less than the total beliefs of a Christian, and that all of the Christian's beliefs are in some sense included in his being committed. But it appears that RwR includes both these beliefs.

Once again, I quite agree that it makes sense to distinguish between one's confessional beliefs and one's theoretic beliefs. But it does not seem helpful to make this distinction in such a way that the former do and the latter do not belong to the belief content of our commitment. For that drives people to the conclusion that therefore theoretic beliefs do not really and integrally belong within our religion. There is a perplexity here, which Dooyeweerd tried to solve by introducing the distinction between faith as a human function and religion as the total state of the human being before his God.⁷ What Dooyeweerd means by religion is what Wolterstorff appears to be getting at when he talks about commitment. Such a distinction allows one to differentiate between confessional beliefs and theoretic beliefs, while maintaining that both are within commitment.

I will, though briefly, give two more examples of the apparent lack of conceptual clarity I have been discussing. One of these is that the term "harmonizing" is used in both a positive and a negative way to get at the relation between commitment and theory (cf. 72 and 77, 78). In one context we are told that the Christian must harmonize and in the other that he ought never to harmonize. And the second example deals with a similar difficulty, viz. that commitment is presented as having to function within theory and that theory is presented as having to occur within religion. (Compare the title of the book with what is said, e.g., on pp. 77 and 78.) For the sake of understanding precisely how the relationship between

commitment and theory is to be conceived, it is crucial to know whether it is "within" or "flowing from" or "next to" or perhaps several other possible relations that best characterize what it is we are after.

That the lack of clarity which I believe to be present in RwR can indeed lead to problems may be shown in an examination of Wolterstorff's view of the relation between theory and both the communality and certainty of commitment. The Biblical data on commitment very much suggest that it is shared with others, that it is communal in nature. Commitment makes for unity and community among people. There is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith. They are one and in us their unity is experienced as integrity. It may be expected that the importance of community will be of significance in the enterprise of theoretical inquiry as well. Wolterstorff does in fact raise the issue of "common commitment" (75) in the context of theory formation. And I would like to look at that in the light of his assertion that "we lack a shared foundation" (62) in our theoretical labors. By "foundation" Wolterstorff here means exclusively what the foundationalist means by it, viz. a rationalistically conceived common proposition or common observation or common self evident-notion. So I realize that his rejection of its commonness to all inquirers need not necessarily imply that he rejects the possibility of Christian commitment providing some sort of shared basis for Christian theory formation. But in fact it seems that such is the case after all. It seems that in his rejection of foundationalism there is implied a rejection of any possible common basis, thought I will presently point to an alternative approach by Wolterstorff.⁸

What I am saying is this. Wolterstorff accepts the notion of community as proper to following Christ (67). I agree with him that following Christ does not as such give us a simple body of theoretical propositions such that the whole edifice of science can properly be erected on its basis. But that still leaves us with the need to state more clearly how in theorizing we share being followers of Christ. Just how serious does he intend to be when he says that in making our theoretical decisions "each of us has no choice but 'to one's own self be true'" (62)? The question is significant, because Wolterstorff explicitly rejects what he calls "preconditionalism," which is the view that the rootedness of theory in following Christ is a precondition (ground or foundation?) for theory (94). The suggestion that some of the belief content of our commitment should serve as control in our theory evaluation (in addition to other control beliefs that do not belong to our commitment) is a help in establishing a real link between commitment and theoretical inquiry. But in the matter of the communality of commitment in relation to the communality (inter-subjectivity?) of science it does not provide clear enough help.

I am at this point not indirectly trying to present the idea that for Christians theoretic inquiry should result in a body of theory to which all Christian theorists subscribe and to which all other theorists refuse to give assent. Wolterstorff rejects such

notions (72-80) and so do I. But does this sort of rejection imply that one ought to reject all notions of common bases and of minimal unity as objectionable in principle or as unattainable in principle? Can there be no theoretic evidence whatsoever of the fact that there is in principle a call for a common (authentic) commitment? And if following Christ is the "source" of the very life of the Christian, is there no sense in which following Christ can even be considered as the "one foundation" of theory "in the Church"? If "theory in the Church" can serve as a variant of "reason within the bounds of religion" these questions at the very minimum seem to deserve a hearing. Is it not possible, for instance, that what is wrong with the foundationalist position is not that there are "foundations of certitude" in his view, but that these foundations should be characterized as rational rather than as the result of commitment? Is it not commitment to reason that makes certain propositions an indubitable foundation for the foundationalist? And would it be altogether wrong to be so committed to Christ that this commitment held out for the Christian certain indubitables? They would not, of course, be indubitable outside of the commitment, as indeed the rationalist's indubitables are not. But within Christian commitment they would be basic to our theoretic inquiry. They would be basic in the sense that no "more basic" beliefs or observations or convictions or, indeed, commitments would unsettle them.

Alvin Plantinga's paper "Is Belief In God Rational?" seems to suggest that the above questions are worth exploring.⁹ What in RwR stands in the way of being open to these possibilities? One possible reason may be that the notion of indubitability is itself taken from the rationalist tradition and consequently has built in rationalist meanings. Indubitable could then mean: indubitable to reason if one is committed to reason. In that case whatever is not necessarily contradictory is possibly open to rational doubt. But it is questionable whether this sort of doubt remains justifiably possible if one is not committed to reason. If one is committed to belief in God, such belief is not open to rational doubt just because not doubting is what a consequence of true and ultimate commitment ought to be. Plantinga concludes his paper (above mentioned) as follows: "The mature theist commits himself to belief in God; this means that he accepts belief in God as basic. Our present inquiry suggests that there is nothing contrary to reason or irrational in so doing."¹⁰ It seems possible that Wolterstorff's rejection of foundationalism in RwR is not quite as open to the possibility of a different sort of foundation as is held out by Plantinga's final sentence. However, in an unpublished paper "Christian Philosophy And The Heritage of Descartes" (1979) Wolterstorff finds that Plantinga's suggestions "open up fascinating...perspectives... [which] fall within...the Calvinist tradition." Perhaps in RwR itself Wolterstorff had already opened up those perspectives but had not arrived at such a clear statement of them.

But even if Wolterstorff would be inclined to work out his views in a manner somewhat more appreciative of the need for foundations than RwR now suggests, that still leaves open the question

as to whether or not the theoretic enterprise must necessarily be rooted in Christ in order to be in the truth. He states that it "is not clear" that Christian commitment is a condition for "arriving at a fully comprehensive, coherent, consistent, and true body of theories in the sciences" (94). This statement strongly suggests that the author is here talking about science in a full or whole or integral sense; not just about some particular theory. And the reason he gives for commitment not being such a condition does not seem to be a good ground for the conclusion he comes to. The reason is that "a theory" (94) which fits the scheme of Christian commitment may also fit some other scheme. This is indeed the case. But it is hard to see how that is of conclusive relevance for the body of science as a whole. The fact that aspirins will tend to benefit sufferers from headaches whether or not they are in Christ does not, I believe, permit the conclusion that being made whole in Christ is not a condition for true life. Details as details may, if considered in isolation, well seem to fit more than one context. But that does not really address the question of the whole endeavor sufficiently. Indeed, Wolterstorff himself had first written that the state of affairs to which he here points (shared particular theories) would not invalidate the idea of a specifically Christian approach to science. (Cf. especially pp. 72-80).

It seems to me that the entire matter of the relation of commitment to science which I have been discussing comes to a head in the discussion of faith as a condition for knowing. To me the crux of the matter would appear to be that a Christian approach to theory shares in the task "of being witness, agent, and evidence of the coming of the kingdom" (60) and that this task can only be done in commitment to Christ (John 3). How does this accord with Wolterstorff's conclusion that a shift from foundationalism to commitment to Christ excludes "preconditionalism" as a possible approach? It is likely that he considers "preconditionalism" to be a species of foundationalism. From that point of view it is understandable that he shifts from certitudes (indubitable knows) to beliefs as the grounds for warranting a theory (98). At this point there is need for clarity as to what is meant by knowing and believing. If one contrasts beliefs with certitudes, one may get into difficulty with the meaning of belief in its religious sense. The Heidelberg Catechism uses 'belief' as meaning certain knowledge, at least if one takes belief in the sense of a faith-belief. If belief is taken out of that area and placed in the area of cognitive belief, it is hard to see how believing a proposition and knowing a proposition would differ. But in the tradition in which knowledge claims are the genuinely cognitive entities, knowing is always knowing for sure and that would again turn out to be a certitude. And it is unlikely that if Wolterstorff talks of accepting some theory relative to a body of beliefs, he means by belief mere opinion.

What is clearly needed here is a careful designation of the conceptual meaning of certain key terms. And that meaning should be so designed as to accommodate a theory of theory which is committed to the following of Christ. Thus, it should be open to the cognitive certitude of Job's claim (I know that my Redeemer lives), as well

as to the Biblical characterization of faith as being a source of ultimate certitude. When it is considered that such a view of certitude may well belong to the "belief content" of Christian commitment, then an ultimate certitude would surely have to be fundamental to the Christian's participation in the enterprise of theory formation. That such is the case would not necessarily have to be demonstrated directly and in the case of some specific theory. It would be sufficient to show that or how theory formation as a species of following Christ "rests secure" in Christ. In any case, the revealed core of the belief content of authentic Christian commitment can surely be regarded as nothing else but a body of certitudes. Though by certitudes I would in this case not mean what is rationally indubitable for one committed to reason. But they would surely be indubitable (in the sense of: we are commanded not to doubt them) for the Christian.

Colossians 1:15-20 proclaims that Christ is at the root or foundation of all of creaturely reality. The formation of theories is such a reality. To conclude that this would be true only if the law of gravity could be deduced from that text is overly simplistic in its understanding of what that text says and of what theory is about; and in understanding the relation of the scientific enterprise in its wide cultural and historical sense to the religious foundations of the scientific community. Wolterstorff, of course, does not suggest that this oversimplistic conclusion is true. But at the same time it does not appear that RwR's present conceptual apparatus is sufficiently refined to do justice to the relationship in question. It is my view that many of the elements needed for such a conceptual apparatus are present in RwR, but that several implications have not been worked out in their mutual coherence. And I do believe that RwR itself foreshadows that some form of preconditionalism and some form of foundationalism may emerge from its present positive assertions.

4. Theory of theory and the control of theory

The problems I have discussed so far concerning the relation between theory and commitment, continue to surface when one looks at what Wolterstorff means by a theory and how he concretely views the role of commitment in the formation and evaluation of theories. In this section I will argue both that Wolterstorff's views of the nature of a theory are inadequately stated for the purpose he intends and that his outline of the theoretical relation between commitment and theory is unclear when carefully analyzed. In the case of the latter I will be specifically looking at Wolterstorff's view of belief, of standards of evaluation and of the control which commitment has over theory.

What the nature of a theory is need not be an issue in all theoretical discussions. A theory about quasars need not contain an account of what theories are. Even an account of theories of quasars can probably do without it. But an investigation of the relationship between the Christian faith and scholarship or the development of theories needs at least a preliminary theoretical

statement of what a theory is taken to be. It is true that Wolterstorff intends to do no more in RwR than to offer a "sketch of some elements" of a theory of theories (18). But it is also true that he wants to improve on those who at crucial junctures in their investigation "substitute rhetoric and metaphor for the close analysis that is required" (18). And in that case we may expect a provisional definition of a theory.¹¹ I think that such an expectation is especially warranted when in an earlier publication of his Wolterstorff appears to hold a fairly precise view of what a theory is, viz. a description of the (general?) structure of whatever the theory is about.¹² If that indeed is his view, then RwR might be expected to operate with a theory of theories somewhat as follows: a theory of theories states what the general structure of theories is taken to be. And had he presented such a preliminary statement in RwR, then we might have been able to test its correctness. We might, e.g., have been able to take whatever specific statements are contained in RwR concerning the nature of a theory, in order to see how they fit the general statement. Or we could have tested Wolterstorff's views about theories of God or his views about the presence of theories in Scripture.¹³ However, as it is, RwR offers us no single statement which could be taken as a provisional definition of what a theory is taken to be. Neither does it offer a number of statements, which, if taken together, would constitute a satisfactory preliminary description.

But let me take a closer look at some of the statements that are offered in RwR. The ones to be examined are all found on pp. 59-61. In the opening paragraph of Wolterstorff's analysis of the nature of theorizing he distinguishes between normative theories (they "specify what ought to be done") and descriptive theories (they "claim that the entities within its scope fit the generalization made" [59]). The way in which this distinction is presented leaves us in the dark about whether or not all theories are generalizations. It may be that they are. It may also be that just descriptive theories are. On p. 60 Wolterstorff appears to use "generalization" as a synonym for his description of a descriptive theory. And he also states there that he leaves open the question as to whether all generalizations are theories. So in distinguishing between descriptive and normative theories Wolterstorff does not give us a clear indication of what constitutes both of them as theories. Further, the distinction that is made uses language which implies that a descriptive theory is a kind of normative theory. For if by generalization Wolterstorff means not only a statement that has the form of a generalization (a so-called empirical statement of general form which claims, e.g. that all the apples in this basket are red), but one that truly generalizes (mountains are elevations over x feet tall), then such a generalization will always be law-like or will have the character of a rule.¹⁴

Perhaps the connection between normativity and generalization needs to be more explicitly stated. Wolterstorff speaks of entities fitting a generalization, as well as of stating in general that entities are of some kind (59). If these are synonymous expressions, he probably does not intend claims that specified entities are in fact of some kind. The claim that both persons in some car, where

there are no more than two persons in that car, are male, is not a generalization and is not, I would think, a theory. A genuine generalization claims that any entities fitting a certain description, even some that have not yet been discovered, or even some that have not yet come into being, will be of a certain kind. In that sense a generalization is a statement that "rules" whether or not a given entity can be counted as belonging to some kind. But perhaps Wolterstorff does have in mind a more empirical statement. He himself gives as example of a descriptive theory the statement that all the chairs in his office have a certain origin. Let it be granted that in fact he knows that all of those chairs do have that origin. Even in that case, the theory, if true, "rules out" (at least for the actual situation given at present) that any entity in his office could possibly be a chair and have a different origin. If the theory does not rule it out the description is not truly general. If in fact there are chairs in his office with a different origin, the theory is false. Necessarily, of course, if in fact all chairs in his office do have a singular origin, then any inclusive ("general") statement to that effect is true. And in that sense a general statement is normative also when it is descriptive. The intention of the generalization is to state that any entity of the kind described, at least any well formed entity of that kind, "ought to" fit the generalization. So it is not clear what the distinction between normative and descriptive theories comes to, nor is it clear whether or not theories are at least generalizations.

But let me assume that RWR does intend to teach us that a theory is a generalization of some kind. Then I am left to wonder what Wolterstorff has in mind when he states that not all theories are either predictive or explanatory (59-60). It is trivially true that not all theoretic statements have the semantic form of explaining something or predicting something. If someone states: horses are mammals, then that statement, general though it may be, need not be intended to state either an explanation or a prediction. But, of course, no one who calls theories explanatory or predictive thereby means to say that theories are always used to predict or explain. Rather, such a theory of theories intends to convey the notion that a theory or general statement has the potential of being an explanatory or predictive device. And that, it would seem, is hard to deny. Thus, "horses are mammals" will allow us always to explain why female horses suck their young and to predict that female horses will suck their young. Indeed, Hempel has argued that all theories are in fact explanatory and are for that reason also predictive.¹⁵ Even Wolterstorff's theory about the chairs in his office will allow us to predict that all people removing chairs from his office will be removing chairs with that particular origin. The theory will also allow us to explain (given we know the general properties of chairs having that origin) why all the chairs in his office have a given characteristic.

There remains one statement which may be intended by Wolterstorff as providing a characteristic of all theories. It is not certain that this is the case, since prior to making the statement he has perhaps placed all so-called normative theories outside of his discussion (59). But RWR may possibly have resumed a general

discussion of all theories in the next paragraph (59). In that case Wolterstorff states that all theories "specify that some pattern is present within the theory's scope" (60). I still do not know what it is in whose scope a pattern is present, but since the theory specifies that this pattern is present, let me assume again that the theory is a statement and that it is a general statement. The theory's scope is the "set of entities" concerning which the statement is made (59). Thus Wolterstorff here seems to say that theories state that some entities display some pattern. But that this is so is not clear. How, e.g., does his sample theory concerning the chairs in his office (viz. that they have a common origin) specify a "pattern" among those chairs? What is meant by pattern? But perhaps "pattern" means structure in a broadly logical sense of structure. In that case I may still assume that RwR takes a theory to be a general statement about the structure of whatever the theory is about.

The three pages in which the discussion concerning the nature of a theory occurs are completed with more disclaimers about what is not characteristic of theories as such. Neither their relation to science nor their relation to abstraction is seen as especially illuminating (60-61). After that RwR begins the discussion of the evaluation ("weighing") of theories (61). Evaluation of theories is difficult if one has no concept of what a theory is. But perhaps Wolterstorff does have such a concept. Perhaps he has just not carefully described it on the pages of RwR. At any rate, I will now proceed to look into RwR's statements on theory evaluation. I will first present a brief summary of what is involved, and after that I will discuss a number of problems.

The weighing of a theory is discussed in terms of the beliefs we have. Some of these beliefs are directly about the entities that are claimed to be within the scope of the theory. And of some of these latter beliefs we can take as one class those functioning as data. These are the data beliefs (61-62). These data or data beliefs will always be found in the context of other beliefs which, on a given occasion, will be unproblematic and will be functioning as the support for our data. These will be data-background beliefs (63). If the entities within the scope of my theory are chairs, then one of the data or data beliefs may be that these chairs are brown. And one of the data-background beliefs will be that we can trust the information concerning color which we get by looking. That background belief supports our data, but it is not itself in question. Finally, besides the data beliefs and the data-background beliefs, there are also the control beliefs. They, together with the data-background beliefs, will generally be among the assumed and unproblematic beliefs which, together with other beliefs, surround and support our data beliefs. These control beliefs have the function both of ruling out certain theories and of recommending certain others. We accept theories that are consistent with and comport well with our control beliefs (63-64).

A few more things can be said about these three sorts of belief, viz. data belief, data-background belief and control belief. Concerning data beliefs the element of decision is important. "At the center of all weighing of theory with respect to the presence or

absence of the pattern claimed is a decision to take certain of one's beliefs about the entities within the theory's scope as data for one's weighing of the theory" (62). How do I make the decision? Little is said about this. I take "as data that which I find myself believing to be true" (62). In so doing we can but be true to ourselves (62). For the data-background beliefs (with reference to any given theory) it is important that in the weighing of a particular theory with reference to which they are data-background beliefs they "are taken as unproblematic...not subject to weighing" (63). And concerning all three kinds of belief it is important to know that just what kind of belief any particular belief will be in any specific context is not a matter of the essential nature of any belief to be a control belief or some other belief. Rather, it is a matter of distinguishing among one's beliefs according to "how they function relative to a given person's weighing of a given theory on a given occasion" (65). Depending on the context in which it functioned, any particular belief could function either as datum belief, datum-background belief, or control belief with respect to a given theory.

Now, Wolterstorff holds that the relation between one's commitment as a Christian and one's theoretic work is such that some of the beliefs that belong to the belief content of our commitment must function as control beliefs in our theorizing. His views on this matter are rather complex, but the following appears to be a fair summary. He holds that commitment is more than having beliefs, while at the same time there is a belief component to one's commitment (69-70). The belief content of commitment can function in various ways. One way is that it functions as control in the weighing of theories (66). Some of our commitment beliefs must be control beliefs, next to other control beliefs that do not belong to our commitment (78). More than one theory may be compatible with the same commitment, and one theory may be compatible with more than one commitment (74, 79). Theory and commitment do and should mutually influence one another (81-93). This brief account of what is involved in the weighing of theories and of how our commitment functions in that weighing must suffice. I will now proceed with the discussion of problems in three areas, viz. concerning the nature of belief, concerning the role of supra-personal standards and concerning the workings of control beliefs.

As far as I have been able to determine, Wolterstorff does not offer a definition of belief anywhere in RwR. This is unfortunate. Not only does his own theory of weighing theories depend heavily upon the concept of belief, but the tradition to which he is oriented harbors views of belief which places them (beliefs) as uncertain and unfounded over against knowledge as certain and founded. To believe a proposition and to know one are two different things altogether according to some empiricists and according to some from the analytic tradition. To know a proposition is to be certain of its truth.¹⁶ But in believing a proposition one certainly does not thereby know it. What are Wolterstorff's views of belief and knowledge? Does one only believe propositions? If not, is belief as belief different in the case that it is not belief of propositions? Is belief as belief different when it is religious belief? Is belief when he talks about it the same as what the Heidelberg Catechism means by faith

(a sure knowledge)? Wolterstorff reports that according to Aquinas some things cannot be known, though they can be believed (27). Does he himself believe that too (49,52)? He does seem to distinguish between knowing and believing. Is that the same distinction as between conceiving and believing? Is true belief the same as knowledge? Can what one conceives be wrong (52, 53)? What is meant by certain? Can one ever be certain of propositions? If one is, are these propositions then indubitable? Why does he claim that in his own view warrantability is "relative to a body of beliefs... [and not to] a body of certitudes" (98)?

Since the foundationalism which Wolterstorff rejects is very intimately related to these issues, it is important to know just what consequences the rejection of foundationalism has had for his views on knowledge, belief and related items. If there is no knowledge founded on indubitables, is knowledge any longer to be distinguished from true belief? Is whatever one believes or knows always subject to doubt? How can one be certain of anything, if at all? If one believes a proposition and calls that a belief, what is the difference between the proposition-element and the belief-element in such a belief? Do grounds for belief also constitute grounds for knowing? Are there beliefs which, rather than having grounds, are grounds? The very few remarks that Wolterstorff does make concerning such questions as the ones raised here are primarily in terms of disclaimers in a very short chapter called "What has not been claimed" and covering barely more than one page (52, 53). I have no doubt that these disclaimers are seriously intended and that Wolterstorff views his disclaimers as well founded. But what is written in RwR is not sufficient to warrant the disclaimers for the reader. Take, e.g., his view that control is a function of belief and potentially the function of any belief in a given context, together with his view that no belief is a control belief essentially. This could possibly lead to the conclusion that any religious belief that in some context is a control belief may in some other context be subject to the control of a quite different belief, perhaps a belief not at all belonging to commitment. Which of our commitment beliefs are to be control beliefs and under what circumstances? Are all of our religious control beliefs always potentially subject to the correcting influence of other kinds of beliefs?

The problems that come to the surface in considering the nature of belief can be placed in sharper focus when we consider the nature of supra-personal standards for warrantability. The lack of clarity about the nature of belief, about the nature of the distinction between kinds of belief, and about the distinction between belief functions in their mutual relation, reinforces the problems detected earlier with respect to the analysis of the relation between commitment and science. Are all beliefs always personal and are they just personal (75)? Would this not be the case if "authentic commitment differs from person to person"? Is there a truly supra-personal standard to which one can be true in addition to being true to one's self. (62)? How would Wolterstorff's views in fact lead him beyond personalism, individualism or relativism? What views of his would lead him there? I accept his claims in that direction, but have so far failed to detect the grounds for these claims in RwR itself. Does the Bible play any

role in this? How is belief in Scripture to be raised beyond the subjectivity of belief? If no belief is essentially a control belief, if all belief is only and essentially personal and historical, one needs a resource for warrantability that lies beyond belief, though it must at the same time be believed. Could the nature of commitment in its core be such that the heart of what is accepted becomes itself the ground for such acceptance as well as ultimately for the acceptance of anything else? All Wolterstorff has said about the relation between faith and science holds for the non-Christian believer as well. All people will presumably have a commitment with a belief content. And for all people some of the belief content will have a control function. This is so for all faith and all science. Now consider the complications if one compares scientism as a religion with Christianity. In scientism the believer is committed to science and for that reason is committed to view commitment as unscientific. Commitment to science therefore implies blindness to commitment. But the Christian is committed to revelation, the truth of which is functional only if believed, and if believed then as believed. In such a situation the nature of belief becomes a crucial problem.

I can perhaps best illustrate the significance of these problems by pointing to the fact that without more clarity about the nature of belief and commitment it becomes unclear how any commitment belief can truly function as a control belief. It must be remembered that, according to Wolterstorff, beliefs of a theory which do not belong to the belief content of commitment, can nevertheless be "within" commitment, viz. through being "controlled by" commitment. And commitment controls theoretic beliefs through commitment beliefs. It is doubtful whether Wolterstorff wants to assert that no part of authentic commitment is in principle safe from all scientific belief. But he does say that science can and does modify even authentic commitment. He even says this: "The scholar never fully knows in advance where his line of thought will lead him" (92). Perhaps so. But can or should it ever lead him beyond commitment? And how is that to be achieved or even understood? What comes to the surface here is the need for clarifying what commitment does to the nature of beliefs that belong to commitment; especially to the beliefs that involve believing propositions. In believing that the canons of inference warrant my believing that the product of 7 (4+3) comes to the same thing as multiplying the square root of 49 by itself, is the nature of my belief different from the belief with which I say that I am warranted to believe Jesus or to believe in Him; not just in case He is God's Son, but because He is? My own view of the matter is that the nature of all belief is such that it owes its existence to its being founded in an ultimate commitment. If that is so, then there is a sense in which commitment is foundational to all belief, including the believing of propositions of any kind. If commitment has no fundamental priority over theory, if religion is not in some fundamental sense prior to reason, the figure of speech that allows us to talk of reason within the bounds of religion ultimately comes to nought.

I come to the conclusion that Wolterstorff owes us a description of his views as to how the nature of commitment fundamentally determines the nature of the beliefs that belong to the belief content

of authentic commitment. Furthermore, he owes us at least a proposal about which beliefs that are part of the belief content of authentic commitment play the role of being incorrigible to science so long as one remains committed as one is. And when one is committed as one is, then scientific proposals to the effect that one is mistaken will, from the point of view of that commitment, appear to be unbelievable, i.e. indubitable from the point of view of faith. In the light of this, what is needed is a view as to what the difference might be between conceiving, believing and commitment. And what is also needed is a view as to whether or not propositions are equally important for conceiving as they are for believing. And if belief in the context of commitment is found to differ from belief in the context of propositions another problem arises: since rules of inference are applicable primarily to relations between propositions or concepts, what might be the "logic" of commitment? Would, in that case, beliefs of commitment be subject to the rules for inference?

5. Remnants of a tradition?

In various stages of the discussion there have been hints that perhaps certain of Wolterstorff's views are not sufficiently critical toward the tradition which has played a role in shaping his views next to his Kuyperian orientation. Is there any evidence for this? I believe there may be, if we take a critical look at the three more technical philosophical chapters in the book, viz. chapters 4, 5 and 6. These three engage in defining foundationalism, finding how it might work and examining whether there is enough of an empirical basis to working with it. The main issue at stake here is whether or not in chapter four foundationalism has been interpreted broadly enough by Wolterstorff. He is convinced that up to about 25 years ago (29), the theory of theorizing he calls foundationalism has been the classical (24) or reigning (26) theory. He uses, by and large, two approaches to identifying this theory. The one is a brief description which in simple fashion (24) states what is basically characteristic. At heart we have to do with the formation of "a body of theories from which all prejudice, bias, and unjustified conjecture have been eliminated" (24). One aspect of this endeavor is that such a theory must originate in "a firm foundation of certitude" and must proceed from there with "methods of whose reliability we are equally certain" (24). After this simple characterization Wolterstorff proceeds to deal with foundationalism more technically, in terms of what he takes to be its "heart," viz. a rule for whether or not we are warranted in accepting some theory (24). He then goes on to state that rule and to formulate two basic concepts of the rule. I will give these in full (24-25).

A person is warranted in accepting a theory at a certain time if and only if he is then warranted in believing that that theory belongs to genuine science (scientia).

A theory belongs to genuine science if and only if it is justified by some foundational proposition and some human being could know with certitude that it is thus justified.

A proposition is foundational if and only if it is true and some human being could know non-inferentially and with certitude that it is true.

In what follows Wolterstorff primarily takes foundationalism to be what is described in these three statements. Just how satisfactory is this procedure? Does it satisfactorily describe or fundamentally characterize the main tradition on the nature of theory in Western culture? Wolterstorff deals critically with foundationalism in terms of two problems. The one is that the relation between the foundation and the theory is problematic, the other is that there are too few significant empirical propositions to form a sufficient foundation. Will these two criticisms suffice to show that the whole classical tradition on the nature of theorizing has been wrong? (Cf. chapters 5 and 6.)

It is quite possible for Wolterstorff to argue that what he has presented is not, after all, the whole classical tradition, but just the heart of it. And if he has demonstrated that the heart is really out of it, what is left can reasonably be said to be dead. However, if what he has presented is not the heart of it, the classical tradition may well live on without the part that does not stand up well. The latter is what I believe in fact to be the case. The classical tradition is not sufficiently characterized by saying that it strives for unprejudiced theories by means of building them on true propositions that are indubitably known to be true.¹⁷ If in fact the tradition is underdefined by Wolterstorff, he may actually himself have retained parts of the classical tradition even when he thinks that he has completely rejected it. And I also believe this to be the case. I believe that the core of the classical tradition is different than what Wolterstorff describes it to be. I also believe that what he takes to be the core has indeed been rejected by many. But for all that, the classical tradition is still very much alive. That tradition is more accurately characterized as commitment to rationality, i.e. a belief in the ultimacy of rational methods, rational canons, rational concepts, rational propositions and rational foundations. I refer to this belief as a commitment simply because it does not depend on the holding of other beliefs that are themselves rationally established or founded. Such other beliefs are held to be rational from the point of view of a prior commitment to rationality. It is this commitment, and whatever particular beliefs it is held to imply, which will establish the foundation for the rationality of other things.¹⁸

It is crucial to understand that the commitment and its beliefs are quite independent of a particular version of their being explained. Foundationalism as Wolterstorff describes it is a particular mechanism for making commitment to rationality appear rational. The success of that mechanism, however, depends on the prior commitment and not vice versa. In that sense belief in reason is self-validating,

self-founding, self-originating. And because commitment to reason results in the rejection of commitment as irrational, it is a commitment that prevents its self-recognition as commitment. Commitment to reason, from its own point of view, originates in rational intuition or self-evidence. It is self-founding through its belief in propositions which are themselves rational entities. And it is self-validating through the use of rational argument, whether deductive, inductive, probabilistic or falsificatory. For a prime defector of foundationalism like Lakatos, commitment is treason to reason. For Popper, faith in reason is itself eminently rational because it is subject to rational critique.

An interesting illustration of commitment to reason is found in that version of the classical tradition, itself occurring in various guises, which insists on the presence of empirical factors in rational truth. It is true that in almost all variations of this version the empirical elements would need to be validated by rationality, but in any case this version at least taught the need for extrarational factors. What has happened to this version? Because of the prior commitment to reason, the empirical factors were more and more demanded to be rationalized. But how is observation to be justified rationally? If rationality itself has become divorced from all experience, how is it to become rationally indubitable, for example, that I am seeing a desk? Indeed, empiricism being a version of rationalism, it could not possibly hold its own if the empirical elements had to be justified rationally. However, as the history of extreme logical positivism has shown, even a completely rational, i.e. formal (or empty, contentless) rationalism can also not be justified. Nothing could have demonstrated better than the history of empiricism and logical positivism that belief in the ultimacy of rationality is not rational. The limits of rational argument, of rational validity or of rational acceptability cannot themselves be established by rational argument or on the basis of what is rationally acceptable. For whomever this is not acceptable there seems to be no avoiding the conclusion of his having an irrational commitment to rationality.

Now, what if Wolterstorff has failed to notice these features of the classical tradition, or what if he disagrees with the above analysis of that tradition? What might be the consequences of his insisting that his view of the classical tradition, as foundationalism narrowly conceived, is the right view? In that case it is conceivable that Wolterstorff might retain the non-foundationalist dimensions of the tradition as being legitimate insights into the nature of rational argument and theory formation. What are some of these dimensions? One is that certitude is to be understood in terms of rational indubitability. Another is that knowledge is taken to be such certitude with respect to the truth. A third is that truth is understood as propositional in nature. If one takes these elements together they are held to add up to the belief that for whatever can be stated, it is valid to apply rules of inference to what is so stated. Only propositions whose negation is self-contradictory are held to be certainly true. The rest are held to be uncertain or unnecessary or contingent. If one further adds to this the belief that all that is real can be stated in propositions, then we can be certain of nothing that is real except of that which is inherently and necessarily rational.

Modern attempts to save rationalism from emptiness by adding a notion of natural necessity to that of logical necessity will not really help so long as the notion of natural necessity must itself be legitimized once again before the canons of rationality.

What is at stake here is the belief that canons and methods of rationality can legitimately settle the validity of all knowledge claims. They alone determine what is knowledge, they alone determine that what appears to be rational is known. But how is this belief itself to be validated? I am of the opinion that on this problematic hinges much of the difference I detect between Wolterstorff and the approach I use. Wolterstorff, I believe, rejects that classical tradition, but retains a number of its tenets.¹⁹ And he also appears to reject the foundationalist dimensions of the tradition in terms of the retained tenets of that same tradition. Ultimately that cannot be satisfactory for himself, since he certainly does not have a commitment to rationality. And it cannot be convincing to the foundationalist, who does have such a commitment and thus fails to see the validity of Wolterstorff's arguments, since the arguments assume such commitment to be valid.

I must back up these tersely stated claims and move at a somewhat slower pace at this point. In the first part of this article, I argued that Wolterstorff is unclear about the nature of the relation between commitment and theory and that he did not perceive that foundationalism is more than just a theory of theory, viz. a commitment to rationality in theory. It could have been just a theory, but in fact our history knows it only in the context of such a commitment. In the next part I argued that Wolterstorff is not sufficiently clear about what constitutes a theory and what the nature of various elements of a theory is. What I am claiming now is that these two unsatisfactory aspects of his book have contributed to his allowing elements of rationalism via the analytic tradition to enter into his theorizing. That such is contrary to his intent is clear from what is said at the end of the book in the last three chapters (chaps. 15-17, pp. 97-104). There he more or less outlines those parts of his program to which he could not pay sufficient attention in this book. They include the following. First, a view as to how the Bible determines what our commitment beliefs will be (97). Further, an expanded statement as to how our beliefs function in warranting a theory (98). In that context he speaks of the requirement that a theory should not merely be ad hoc, but should fit in with a "comprehensive body" of theory (99). He foresees that we might make more progress in all of this when, thirdly, we devise theories of theory that suggest research programs, so that their theoretical efficacy can actually be tested in practice (101). But all of this not yet having been done, his own theory appears too much ad hoc at this stage. Its elements have not yet had the chance to be tested out with respect to certain fundamental beliefs Scripture might recommend or indeed with respect to how they fit a comprehensive body of theory. That being the case, the present state of the theory of reason within the bounds of religion suggested in RwR may suffer from two problems identified by Wolterstorff himself, viz. influence by "patterns of thought...induced by the scientific worldview... and failure to see the pattern of our authentic commitment and its wide ramifications" (104).

For this I will now present some evidence. I believe that Wolterstorff's background in the analytic tradition is not compatible with his announced program and that his background will always subject this program to the dangers he himself identifies. The analytic tradition depends on the a-contextual dissection of propositions which are themselves isolated. This aspect of that tradition makes it unfit for the comprehensive approach favored by Wolterstorff.

The fifth chapter concentrates on looking at the relation between theories and foundations such that the latter justify the former. The various relationships looked at are deduction, probabilification, induction and falsification. All are found wanting. The conclusion is: "we are without a general logic of the sciences, and hence without a general rule for warranted theory acceptance and rejection" (41). What this conclusion implies is that the tradition has no theory of theory. I would like to look specifically at two phases of the argument, one concerning the concept of warrantability, the other concerning induction. Concerning the concept of warrantability Wolterstorff argues that we need not demand of the foundationalist that he explain his version of that concept (31). We all know it. And concerning the criterion of warrantability he similarly finds that we need not require it of the foundationalist, for two reasons: a person can be warranted without having such a general criterion, and a person can use someone else's criterion if there is one (31-32). All of this seems odd. The concept of and the criterion for warrantability are crucial matters for the classical tradition. It is probably the case that the tradition has worked out neither as well developed concepts. Instead, these are likely to belong to the beliefs of the tradition's commitment. That whatever is scientific is warranted and that nothing can be warranted if it is not scientific is an article of faith in the tradition. Neither the history of science nor the application of science to society generally warrant this sort of belief. The belief itself is certainly not scientific. By not demanding of the foundationalist that he explain his concept of warrantability and his criterion for it, too much is granted him.

I had momentarily assumed that there is a difference between the concept and the criterion for warranted belief. But is there such a difference? The concept of warranted belief is, I take it, our grasp of the general structure of warranted belief. The criterion for whether or not anything is a warranted belief will be the determination whether or not that matter in question does or does not exhibit that structure, i.e. whether or not that matter in fact exemplifies being a warranted belief. A statement of **the general** criterion, it seems to me, would mention one or more essential features of the concept. So if we all know the concept, we in fact, in knowing the concept, know the general criterion. So if we all know the concept we cannot be excused from knowing the general criterion. I would think that this is especially so if we are dealing with a theory of theory to which the concept of warranted belief is essential. True, one may be warranted in believing something without being able to explain what is involved. But to have a theory concerning the matter without knowing this seems odd. By being so easy on the classical tradition Wolterstorff leaves himself too

widely open for the admission of elements of the tradition into his view without having critically examined them.

Wolterstorff's examination of induction more or less centers around the question of the uniformity of nature (35-36). According to him: "None of us knows, let alone knows with certitude, that those segments of the world that have been observed are uniform with those that have not been" (36). And he concludes: "We lack a justification for induction" (36). If these two views were anywhere near being correct there would not be science. The practice of science depends on an implicit confidence that nature is uniform and that induction (and deduction too, for that matter) is valid, justified, well grounded. This has nothing to do with the fact that philosophers have not been able to come up with a satisfactory explanation of these phenomena within the classical tradition of theorizing about science. This important empirical given is usually ignored in discussions of these matters. In the actual practice of science people work with genuinely universal propositions. These universal propositions have reference to universally valid conditions of possibility. The genuine universal proposition is not: "All swans have wings" (33). Rather, it is: "If anything is to be a swan, it must have wings if it is to be a well-formed swan." The former is a singular proposition purported to refer to all individual members of a given class. The universal proposition deals with no individual entities at all, but with structural relations that indicate certain possibilities. Analysis can uncover such structures of possibility. But analysis cannot justify such structures analytically; nor can it justify the procedures for its own uncovering of those structures. Science simply assumes that it is valid to work with such propositions. Such an assumption is one of the necessary beliefs of the scientific community. But as a belief it is not to be proven in science by science. As basic to science its origin lies at the same time outside of science. If the practice of science counts for anything, there certainly appears to be a general logic of science. So much so that the practice of science can in a perfectly rational way also put up with swans that have no wings, these being poorly formed examples rather than counter examples. But a logic of science is not the same as a logical justification of science. The latter is impossible.

But what I have just asserted is not to count as an argument for induction if that is taken to mean an argument for the tradition of commitment to rationality and in the sense of that tradition. If one is committed to rationality one is committed to proving rationally that induction is valid. But induction moves from an examination of an empirical given to a universal structure. And no argument can bridge the gap between empirical individuality and structural universality, since these two are ontologically irreducible. That we can deal with universal structures in terms of the individual instances they cover (e.g. through quantification) is no argument against this irreducibility. So in one way Wolterstorff is correct: the classical tradition does not have the resources to justify induction. But that is not the same as saying that we lack justification for induction. Belief in creation, for example, might be a belief belonging

to authentic commitment and might well justify induction. Creation might imply the sort of uniformity of order on which the practice of science builds. Such an order might even serve as a foundation for scientific verification, even when empirical verification technically speaking depends on the confirmation of the consequent of a hypothetical proposition and is thus, logically speaking, a fallacy. But that only proves that rationality locked within itself and within the supremacy of the rules of inference cannot get us anywhere. Further, if one believes in the reality of natural kinds and its implications for natural necessity, one also has a valid basis for deduction.

It is possible to think that in *RwR* Wolterstorff has shown the defender of the classical tradition that little can be achieved on the terms of that tradition. Induction and deduction are not rationally justifiable procedures for justifying a theory, if by rational justification is meant that whatever lies outside of the area of self-contradiction is fair game for doubt. One can indeed turn the classical tradition against itself. However, Wolterstorff appears to argue in a manner that he himself takes to be convincing, whence he concludes that we do not have a general logic of science and that we have no justification for induction and that we lack a general criterion for warrantability. Those conclusions, it seems, are according too much honor to the commitment to rationality.

In the sixth chapter Wolterstorff assails the indubitability of singular propositions about physical objects and asserts that even if there were indubitable propositions in this class they would be too few and too insignificant to serve as foundation of certitude for theory (50-51). Here, too, I have some problems. One problem is that though his own formulation of the rule requires that "some human being could know" (25), Wolterstorff continually argues about some other human being, viz. someone who has all sort of reasons for not being certain. That "not every human being" is in a position to have that sort of knowledge (45), certainly does not make it impossible that some human being could be in such a position. More importantly, Wolterstorff makes "discrepancy between appearing and being" no less than a "fundamental" feature of our existence (46). But how valid is that? Does not this discrepancy-belief assume a commitment to the rational certification of perception? How often does a person who sees a brown desk have genuine reasons to believe that he might be mistaken? How realistic is it to be on our guard for foggy nights when the weather is in fact clear and bright? Who in fact must beware of drink or drugs when he is in fact sober? It may be a fundamental feature of our existence that such appearances belong to the possibilities. But they are usually remote possibilities. It would appear that so long as we are dealing with observations that are fairly straightforward, we can be reasonably sure of the dependability of our observations. For it is as fundamental a feature of our existence that about most of our observations we are right. In any real case of perception or observation, the question is not whether it is theoretically possible that under certain circumstances that particular observation might be false. The real question is whether I have any actual ground at all to believe that the unusual circumstances prevail. If the arguments

against observation adduced by Wolterstorff were at all valid in any material and not merely formal sense of valid, then no one could ever be sure about anything at all. But the empirical given is, once again, that many people are sure of many things many times. And they have good grounds for being thus sure. In fact, I am sure that Wolterstorff is sure in that way about many things, since he is not an agnostic (52). A theoretical argument about a theoretical person who may under theoretical circumstances be theoretically mistaken about some theoretical observation surely differs from a real argument against the actual observations of some actual human being. That section of the argument (45-49) appears artificial.

Such artificiality also clings to the characterization of perception in terms of the appearances of colors and shapes. The sense data theory of perception is now so far out of favor that one will need to defend it elaborately in order to allow it to have another hearing. Contemporary perception research shows that people have integral experiences of coherent wholes. The sort of problems discussed in the empiricist tradition are, once again, about theoretical constructs and not about actual observation. Here again, the problem is not so much that we might not make a parody of the arguments of the foundationalists. If that were what Wolterstorff had intended I could not agree more. But it appears that he takes this argumentation seriously. I conclude that when Wolterstorff suggests that one might always come up with some reason which could warrant our disbelieving what God revealed, that then he is seriously suggesting this (56-57). And that in turn gives me reason to think that had he in this book worked through some of the questions he suggests at the end, he would not have made these sort of suggestions. For I am certain that Wolterstorff's position entails the belief that some control beliefs belonging to the authentic commitment of the Christian are such that any evidence contrary to the belief that what God reveals is true will be taken to be false evidence.

It seems to me that what may well emerge from further reflection by Wolterstorff on the material in chapters 5 and 6 of RwR is that its argumentation is at best an exercise in turning the classical tradition against itself. Beyond that, it has little validity. Thus, if we believe, i.e. accept as certainly true on the basis of trust in God, that God is Creator of all that is, then there will be some theories that do and some that do not fit this belief. That "fitting" will not be logically derived by rules of inference primarily, because the belief will itself be the support for the use of such rules. On the other hand, the employment of rules of inference even in understanding such a belief will certainly not be incompatible with it either. If one believes in God, the world will appear to be rational still. If, on the other hand, one believes in rationality, that commitment will destroy all that reason itself has not created; which is almost all of what is real. Commitment to rationality will turn out to be, that is, an irrational position.

Notes

1. Some of the problems discussed in this paper are of a more or less technical nature, though the significance of discussing them has a considerably broader scope than these problems might initially indicate. I believe, therefore, that this discussion will benefit from being somewhat extensively related to underlying issues and background matters. For that reason I present this sketch of the context for the discussion even before I introduce the discussion proper.
2. Cf. the introductory pages to Wolterstorff's On Universals, Chicago, 1970.
3. A neo-Kuyperian approach can be described as follows. It takes its departure in the Calvinist views of the late 19th and early 20th century scholar Abraham Kuyper, who strongly believed in the universal significance of the Christian faith. Consequently he started a Christian university, a Christian political party and a Christian daily newspaper. The elaboration of his views on the sovereignty of Christ and their application in the life of the Christian community in the post Second World War period in Europe and North America may be called a neo-Kuyperian movement.
4. A commitment to rationality should not necessarily have to be taken as evidence of rationalism. I believe that rationalism is a modern movement which did not arise till around the time of Descartes. But a commitment to rationality has probably been an approach to life that dates back to the early Greeks. It does not coincide with any precise propositional definition or description of this commitment. The commitment is there in faith and will remain strong even in the face of successful attacks on any propositional version of stating what it means. The belief in the ultimacy of rationality precedes any rational view of that belief. Every faith and every commitment, also faith in and commitment to rationality, is basic to any proposition formulating the belief content of that faith or commitment. I take "basic" here in the sense in which Alvin Plantinga presents it in his (unpublished) paper, "Reformed Objections To Natural Theology."
5. If Wolterstorff is unaware of the commitment to rationality as a commitment, and especially if he is aware of it but denies that it has anything to do with the reduction of thought to analytically formulated propositions and to the isolated inferential approach to analysis of such propositions, then he may well be sympathetic to dimensions of the analytic tradition that I believe to be incompatible with a neo-Kuyperian interpretation of one's authentic Christian commitment.
6. Bracketed numbers refer to page numbers in RwR.
7. A brief discussion of this distinction can be found in Dooyeweerd's In The Twilight of Western Thought, Philadelphia, 1960, chapters 5-7.

8. Cf. the end of the third paragraph following this one.
9. Cf. Rationality and Religious Belief, Notre Dame, 1979, pp. 7-27.
10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. It could, of course, very well be true that whatever Wolterstorff has to say from chapter nine on does not depend very heavily on whatever explicit statement he provides of what a theory is or is not. As he writes four times over in that ninth chapter, what he has said will be sufficient for his purpose. (Cf. pp. 59, 60, 61, 63.) However, I do not believe that in fact this is so. I believe that, e.g., Wolterstorff's willingness to work in the analytic tradition without much internal critique of its methodology is in part related to its and his view of what a theory is. I also believe that the last chapter of RwR is in conflict with Wolterstorff's low-key notion of the importance of defining what a theory is for the purposes of his book. If seeing only pieces and snatches is to blame for our failure to see the connection between theory and faith, as he contends in that chapter, his providing only pieces and snatches of what a theory is will open him to the risk of not seeing the full implications of his faith for his theory. In the rest of this paper I aim to argue that this may indeed well be the case.
12. Cf. On Universals, p. xii.
13. Ibid., the last chapter and the "Epilogue." Cf. also RwR, note 44, p. 114.
14. Wolterstorff himself appears to subscribe to this view in On Universals, or at least this is how I interpret the following passage: "a sentence of the form k's are f, when interchangeable with one of the form The K is f, seems not to bear a reference to what is true of the majority of k's, but, rather, to what is true of normal, properly formed k's. The whole sentence has a normative rather than a statistical force" (245).
15. Cf. Aspects of Scientific Exploration, New York, 1965, pp. 331ff.
16. I may be said to know x if x is true, if I believe x and if I am justified in believing x. In knowing a proposition I must at any rate believe it, i.e. accept it to be true. But even though the knowing of which I speak here is a knowing of propositions, it may still be doubted whether knowing a proposition can be reduced to being justified in having taken it to be true, if true.
17. The classical tradition stands or falls with its underlying commitment to rationality as basic to its theory of theory. Cf. note 4, above.

18. Suppose one were to describe commitment to rationality as the belief that only those beliefs could be held to be true that were rationally justified. Further suppose that such rational justification would have to be inferentially valid and that some initial belief(s) would be self-evidently true. One problem would be: evidently true to whom? Commitment to rationality would require that such a belief would be evidently true for reason. What might that come to? Presumably it would mean that the belief "that is a tree over there" is to be acceptable to reason. But there is not, as such, anything "rational" about a thing's being a tree. If a thing is a tree, then it is rational to believe the proposition: That is a tree. But to arrive at the proposition one needs to go outside of reason in ways not subject to the authority of reason. This state of affairs, however, is not taken to be a deterrent for belief in reason in the view of people committed to reason, for the simple reason that commitment, rather than requiring any justification, is itself the origin of all justification.
19. Cf. H. Hart, "On the Distinction Between Creator and Creature," Philosophia Reformata, 1979, pp. 183-193.