

Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd

G. Puchinger<sup>1</sup>

*"Calvinism is not an obstacle to thinking."*<sup>2</sup>

## I

Herman Dooyeweerd was born on October 7, 1894, in Amsterdam.

His father was a Kuyperian and participated in the church struggles of Abraham Kuyper. His mother was brought up a Kohlbruggian<sup>3</sup> and was well acquainted with the spirit of the old conventicles. At home, his father read Kuyper's articles in *De Heraut*<sup>4</sup> to his family, as, indeed, did many Reformed fathers in those days.

However, in those same days, the student from that tradition had to learn for himself to appropriate in his own life the convictions he received at home. Originally, when he first arrived at the Free University in Amsterdam, popularly known by its Dutch acronym as "the VU," fiction and music appeared to fascinate Herman more than the development of Calvinist thought to which Kuyper kept calling during his final years. The lectures of Fabius, Anema and Herman Bavinck fascinated him as well, but when Fabius tried to convince the young Dooyeweerd to do a study of Groen Guillaume van Prinsterer, he reacted with a critical hesitation based on his philosophical interest. He found van Prinsterer lacked an adequate philosophical background.

Dooyeweerd defended his doctoral dissertation at the VU, written under the guidance of Prof. Fabius, on July 2, 1917, titled *De Ministerraad in het*

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<sup>1</sup>Editors, W. K. Van Dijk, *et al*, Trans. Jan H. Boer. *Perspectief: Feestbundel van de jongeren bij het vijftienvintig jarig bestaan van de vereniging voor Calvinistische wijsbegeerte*. Translation of title: *Perspective: Festschrift of the Younger Generation of Students for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy*, since then renamed "*Stichting voor Christelijke Filosofie*" or "Foundation for Christian Philosophy." Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1961 (pp. 43-70).

<sup>2</sup>H. Dooyeweerd, *Calvinisme contra Neo-Kantianisme*, 1926.

<sup>3</sup>Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrugge—see Wikipeida and other websites.

<sup>4</sup>One of Kuyper's newspapers. See the Kuyperiana page of this website.

*Nederlandse Staatsrecht*,<sup>5</sup> a work that subsequently was frequently quoted with appreciation by other scholars.

A few of his propositions<sup>6</sup> of general interest draw attention:

IV: The establishment of the position of Premier in the Cabinet is desirable for The Netherlands.

XVII: With a view to the national foundation of the VU, it is desirable to drop the declaration of agreement with her principles at the doctoral examination.

XIX: The philosophy of Richard Wagner's musical drama does not have a sufficient basis in Schopenhauer's philosophy of music.

## II

Dooyeweerd's civil service career started in Harlingen (1916), moved on to Leiden and then continued at the Department of Labour that was newly established on September 25, 1918. Here he was called to help with the preparation of diverse legal documents.

During that same period the young doctor also worked further on problems he had run into during the research for his dissertation. He stumbled across the theory of the sources of law.<sup>7</sup> Later, he was to deliver a lecture on this subject to the *Vereniging voor Wijsbegeerte des Rechts*,<sup>8</sup> at its annual meeting of December 17, 1932: "*De Theorie van de Bronnen van het Stellig Recht in het Licht der Wetsidee.*"<sup>9</sup> What previously was merely a point of interest, he now began to experience as necessary for his own philosophical development.

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<sup>5</sup>Translation: *The Cabinet in Dutch Constitutional Law*.

<sup>6</sup>Translator: A VU and, perhaps, a general Dutch tradition is that defence of one's dissertation would include some twenty propositions that indicate general knowledge of the wider reaches of one's discipline beyond that of the dissertation.

<sup>7</sup>Rechtsbronnen.

<sup>8</sup>Society for the Philosophy of Justice.

<sup>9</sup>"The Theory of the Sources of Positive Law in the Light of the Cosmological Philosophy," which is an earlier name for Reformational Philosophy.

Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, J. Woltjer and Geesink had led the Kuyperian *Gereformeerde*<sup>10</sup> constituency in dealing with philosophy, each in his own discipline, but Dooyeweerd demanded more: their *own* Reformational way, which would eventually result in a personal confrontation with various philosophical schools of thought.

During his time with the Department of Labour he published only one document and it appeared in a 1920 issue of *Themis*: "The Problem of the Monopolies of Local Governments with Respect to Public Health, Mainly Seen in the Light of New Insights into Free Enterprise."<sup>11</sup> True, a few major philosophers receive mention, but the main focus is on practical politics and on the opinions of the prominent politicians of the day.

Of greater interest for his future was probably the meeting of the same Society of April 8, 1922 in the *Hoge Raad* Building in The Hague, where Dr. Gerbert Scholten lectured about "State Interference and Individual Freedom."<sup>12</sup> The 27-year old Dooyeweerd participated in the debate as fourth speaker and offered critique that took up seven page in the Reports.

These were the years during which Neo-Kantianism largely set the tone in Germany and The Netherlands, but nevertheless this echoed in the old building: "I for one do not share in any way the idealistic starting point of the Marburger school...that the teleological viewpoint contributes anything epistemologically at all to the determination of the law idea." The youthful opponent ended with these words: "If I must as an individual, as a person, determine which norms in either system I need to obey in any given conflict, then this is only possible on basis of a norm that stands above law as well as morals. For me, this is the divine revelation that states, "You shall obey God more than man."

Though Scholten did not agree with Dooyeweerd at any point, his response appeared to acknowledge "his elaborate and very important argument." He ended his response to Dooyeweerd with these words, "I do not wish to go

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<sup>10</sup>Editor: The Netherlands is replete with Reformed denominations, which can be confusing to the outsider. In this document there is reference to the two major ones. I will use "Reformed" for either the former state church from which Kuyper and his cohorts seceded or when referring to all of them. I will use "Gereformeerde(e)" for the denomination that Kuyper spawned, to which Dooyeweerd belonged and which was originally the most closely associated with the Kuyperian or Reformational movement.

<sup>11</sup>"Het vraagstuk der gemeentemonopolies in het belang der volksgezondheid, hoofdzakkelijk beschouwd in the licht van de nieuwe opvattingen in zake de bedrijvsvrijheid."

<sup>12</sup>"Staatsbemoeiing en individueele vrijheid."

into this deeply, but I only make these comments because, among the many critical negative debates I have heard this afternoon, it was only Dooyeweerd who stood out in his concluding remarks by offering a positive argument that shed any light on his point of view.”

### III

Thus when Dooyeweerd lectured candidly, expertly and constructively outside of the Reformed constituency at age 27, apart from the circle of his teachers and colleagues, of whom Professor Fabius especially followed him with warm interest, he was hardly known among his own kindred spirits. This would develop somewhat when Hendrik Colijn<sup>13</sup> c.s. were searching for a suitable adjunct director for the recently established Abraham Kuyper Foundation.

Colijn was determined that this Foundation would have a stimulating influence on the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) and for this reason had accepted the directorship himself temporarily, but it proved difficult to find a suitable Adjunct or Assistant Director who would provide daily leadership.

After Th. G. Donner had refused the position twice to the great regret of the leaders who had wanted to appoint him, he wrote them a letter with a list of five potential candidates, at the end of which he drew attention to Dooyeweerd, “who is currently an officer in the Department of Labour. I don’t know him personally at all. I only know that he wrote a tome of a dissertation under Professor Fabius about the Cabinet. I heard many good things about him.”

Colijn c.s. sought advice on the matter from V. H. Rutgers, who announced that there was little he could say about those potential candidates, seeing that all of them were VU graduates. But with respect to Dooyeweerd, he added that he held a leadership position in the department, in the division of Public Health, and, again, that he heard many good things about him. He wrote a dissertation that was highly praised by an expert in the field and was official editor at the local government secretariat of Leiden, after which he was transferred to the Department of Labour.

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<sup>13</sup>Colijn was to become Prime Minister under the aegis of the ARP.

Colijn c.s. had no academic training and were therefore careful in their choice, for they were well aware of their responsibility. They eventually decided to contact Dooyeweerd via Cabinet Minister van Dijk.

The reader must not be kept in the dark about the letter plus an attachment Dooyeweerd wrote to Minister van Dijk about whether he would eventually be prepared to accept the position, for two reasons. The first is that it showed how already then he had a clear ideal that he was able to express with great clarity. The second reason was, as we now can ascertain some forty years later, that there were few who were so capable of devising a life programme.

The correspondence demonstrates that the young Dooyeweerd was so convinced of his calling, that he had the courage—and that's what it was within ARP circles those days—to confront government leaders like Colijn c.s. with that calling and on basis of that to spell out his demands with respect to his future work environment.

The lengthy letter to the Minister of War, J. J. C. van Dijk, who was as well Secretary to the Kuyper Foundation, along with its attachment, and dated May 15, 1922, went as follows:

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*In follow-up of the telephone discussion I was allowed to conduct with Your Excellency (Y.E.) on May 9, am I forwarding to Y.E. a memorandum as per agreement, in which I spell out on which points I consider it necessary to agree before I can find the courage to accept the offer you so graciously extend. To begin with, I must apologize to Y.E. for the somewhat aggressive tone reflected in the memorandum. I sincerely hope that I will not arouse the impression of overestimating myself. Nothing is further from me than to have confidence in my own strength. The reason I have expressed myself so positively in the memorandum is solely my firm conviction that this is the only way in which I can be useful to the Foundation. Should any other agenda be decided upon, whereby giving political advice would become the sole purpose, then Y.E. would undoubtedly be able to find more suitable staff to carry it out. It appears to me that predisposition is a weighty issue here.*

*As for me, I have no reason to leave my current position, for it offers me a great future financially, while I work in very pleasant surroundings, unless I am myself fully convinced that I can perform work of more*

*enduring value at the Foundation. I do not hesitate to use the weighty term "calling." I have no political aspirations, at least, not now. My interest is totally in a scholarly direction. Since my graduation in 1917, I have devoted all my free time completely to methodological and political science studies. I know that the foundation I have thus obtained will be of great use in the realization of the work programme I have proposed. Y.E. can be assured that this work will have the love of my heart.*

*On the other hand, you would become disappointed in me if I would have to concentrate fully on giving advice that, as I have tried to explain in my memorandum, would, in my opinion, have no lasting value if they are not based on systematic-scientific work. It would be impossible for me to accept such work if I could not tell my clients the honest conviction that we are not yet ready; at this point we can only provide tentative advices, but we're working at it and, in God's power, we will become ready.*

*Should I have given the impression somewhat in the memorandum of taking my appointment for granted by speaking about organization, I hope to have gotten rid of that impression by explaining the reasons I simply **had** to raise this point. Acceptance of an eventual appointment or otherwise for me depends on all this. That is the reason I entertained the opinion that it would be important for you to learn of my thoughts in this matter ahead of time. In this light I would expect Y.E. also to be interested in my negotiations with Minister Colijn.*

*To avoid all misunderstanding may I add that I do not regard the main lines of the organization that I have sketched as something that can be achieved headlong. During the course of my relatively short official career I have learned that established practice will not allow itself to be turned around just like that by any theory. Especially the matter of three departments is, of course, not on the immediate table. The division of labour can only be accomplished after a gradual growth spell. However, the long-term lines should, in my opinion, be clear from the start.*

*Finally, there is still one point that I did not wish to raise in my memorandum, because it is of a more personal nature, namely the compensation package. I trust that, once I have made my services **fully** available, that the Foundation will guarantee me such a salary that I will not be forced by financial problems to look for additional part time jobs.*

*Should this become the case, it would have a sharply negative influence on my accomplishments. Luxury is the least of my concerns, but since I am not a rich man and thus need to live off my salary, I do not believe it to be indiscreet when I request a salary that allows for an eventual marriage in a city like The Hague. I see it daily in the world of higher officials who receive a salary between four to five thousand guilders and who have no capital of their own, that their salary is insufficient. Officials accept part time jobs in order to support their households, something that has a disheartening and depressive effect. I am currently at an age to form my own family and see no way other than to begin with a salary not less than 5,000 guilders. If the Foundation can afford such an expenditure I would highly appreciate it if you were to take this salary level into consideration. Similarly, I would also appreciate some assurance with respect to subsequent raises. This is, however, a point we can discuss later.*

*The letter sent to Minister Colijn along with the attached memorandum are herewith sent to Y.E. simultaneously.*

*Y.E., once more many thanks for the confidence placed in me. Upon my attestation of my highest respect, I have the honour to be of*

*Y.E.'s service,*

*H. Dooyeweerd*

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### *Attachment*

#### *The Work Programme*

*It is my firm conviction that the Kuyper House will only fulfill its task at an acceptable level when its advisory function is fed by **systematic** scientific labour. It cannot suffice for questions to simply be looked at scientifically. An advisory about a principal issue that belongs to the so-called "derived questions," if it is to be mature and of enduring value, needs and assumes a clear insight into the foundations of the so-called "Neo-Calvinistic life and world view" as it applies to law, economics and politics. At this stage, it appears to me, this insight is mostly lacking at some of the most important points. The cause for this is, in my opinion,*

*the fact that the work is not conducted methodically. Till now, we have mere piece work in the area of Calvinistic legal and social perspectives. That is why the first task will be to determine the method that must guide us in all our research. This method cannot be neutral, but must be guided by the principles of the epistemology created by Abraham Kuyper. In addition, critical use must be made of more recent methodological research projects in so far as they can contribute to clarifying our concepts.*

*Once the method has been determined, the next step is to subject the basic foundation of the entire Calvinistic law-and-social perspective, the sovereignty problem, to a deep-going research. Lines must be drawn out of the Calvinistic concept of sovereignty for the relationship of church and state, state and society, government and subject and, finally, the subjects with each other. Constitutional law and the law of nations, criminal or penal law as well as civil law and the economy—all must be built on new foundations in the light of the Calvinist sovereignty concept. Of course, along with this the work of the great modern anti-revolutionary thinkers like Stahl, Groen, Kuyper et al must also be subjected to research, in order for us to continue to build on their work for our own time, while in addition deep-going source study of the great thinkers that are closest to us in this field like Augustine and Calvin, can also not be left behind.*

### *Working It All Out*

*It hardly needs saying that the enormous work required for the realization of the above programme cannot be completed by one single individual. This would, mind you, create the danger of subjectivism. The only way to begin this work is in close organic contact with the juridical faculty of the VU.*

*I was thinking of establishing such contact along the lines of the German seminar system. A selection is to be made from among the jurists studying at the VU who are prepared to devote their strengths to this work. They will place themselves under the supervision of one or more professors of law and the Adjunct Director of the Kuyper Foundation. They will not be capable of doing this foundational work. The determination of the method and establishing the foundation of the sovereignty principle must be reserved for those law professors and to the Adjunct Director of the Kuyper House, who will pin down the results*

*through continuing dialogue and after painstaking study. Once the foundations have been laid, then the working out will be left up to selected students under the leadership of the above professors.*

*Eventually, in order to succeed in this programme, in due time the Kuyper House will have to be split into three sections:*

*First, a **juridical** section for the ordinary questions of legal advice.*

*Second, a **political** section for practical political issues.*

*Thirdly, a **scientific** section for scientific work.*

*The scientific section will in the long run have to publish a continuing series of publications written in jargon-free language as much as possible. The first publication will have to deal with questions of methods and the problem of sovereignty at the foundational level. After that, the publications should take the form of monographs. We are already assured of the cooperation of Professor Anema for this plan. He has given me permission to inform you that in principle he is prepared to participate in the above scheme.*

*I must state that your approval of the above highly-summarized schematically expressed working programme is a condition for accepting an eventual appointment as Adjunct Director. However, that does not mean that I conceive the information service of the Kuyper House to be restricted till the scientific section has completed laying the foundations. I am very aware that practice in such situations cannot wait for theory to catch up. This whole process must develop calmly and quietly. All haste will come from the evil one and only produce unripe fruit.*

*For the time being nothing can be achieved except to continue in the direction already taken, except we should strive to expand the advisory function as widely as possible. However, were I to accept the position of Adjunct Director, after an initial period of exploring the terrain and orienting myself towards the entire organization, I would move into the direction I have herewith outlined as soon as possible. And the nature of the case being what it is, the main focus of the Kuyper House must then be placed on the scientific section, which must feed into the depth of the advisory function. Even during part of official working hours, I will need*

*time for deep-going scientific work, to which I will be happy also to devote my evening free time and, in fact, all my free time.*

*This assumes that I will have to concern myself with matters of detail as little as possible. Of course, I will take control and give direction with respect to the main course of events, but I will not also handle the working out of details. For that matter, I consider it a definite advantage that the practical sides will remain tied to the theoretical. One-sided theoretical work will petrify into arid abstraction if it lacks contact with life.*

*Where the lines along which the work of the Kuyper House needs to develop, as I envision them, and I were to regard the realization of these concepts as a calling for life, I would seriously object if a substantive director were appointed. Quite apart from the fact that such an arrangement would deprive me of material perspectives, which is a factor that, though it is not a predominant consideration with me, nevertheless does have some weight with me were I to fear especially a permanent restriction on my independence, that would have a destructive effect on the development of my vision.*

*Should the Board of the Kuyper House decide to appoint me as Adjunct Director of the Foundation on basis of the aforesaid conditions, I will consider it a special privilege to be allowed to devote my life to this ambitious project. Since I only foresee permanent results from the work of the Kuyper House along these lines, I would not be able to muster the courage to accept this friendly offer if there is no agreement on the above points.*

*H. Dooyeweerd*

Did Colijn, himself a man of character who seldom made a public appearance ill prepared, appreciate this courageous and frank letter? Absolutely! It gave Colijn and Idenburg the confidence that they had found the right man, for they considered highly important what they themselves lacked in their leadership, namely, someone prepared to develop a direction for the ARP that was truly built on original research *that connected to the past but also had an eye for modern development!* They granted

Dooyeweerd the independence he had requested and appointed him Adjunct Director of the Dr. Abraham Kuyper Foundation.

Since then, Dooyeweerd indicated the main lines of research, assisted by J. W. Noteboom, and under the daily supervision of Colijn and OIdenburg. The latter two would spend some time at the House almost daily to exchange ideas with Dooyeweerd. They would not have done so if they had no keen interest in these discussions, given their lack of time. Their questions and confidential exchanges of ideas increased the value of Dooyeweerd's directorship. They could stimulate the theoretical development which they desired, but nevertheless Dooyeweerd had to largely find his *own* way in this regard.

In 1925, Idenburg requested Dooyeweerd to compose an advisory document about the differences between the ARP and the *Christelijk-Historische Unie (CHU)*, another Christian party. There were good reasons for this: Kuyper had passed on, while Colijn and Idenburg were on friendly footing with the aging Lohman, a CHU pioneer. The detailed memorandum that Dooyeweerd wrote on this subject has been deposited in the Kuyper House. It was for him a stimulant to deeply delve into the spiritual background of the direction of their own ARP.

But there was not only a need for research; there was also a need for publications, for especially after Kuyper's death, the ARP was waiting for enlightenment! In October, 1923, Dooyeweerd became member of the editorial directors of "*Nederland and Oranje*,"<sup>14</sup> a popular organ of the ARP, in which he would take responsibility for the column of the Kuyper Foundation. "Conciseness and general intelligibility" would become the motto of his style, but even more important "clear expression of the problem," for, as it was put in his first article, "Falsely approaching a problem and wrongly expanding the area of concern brings confusion and, often, carelessness of expression."

The title of his first article was "The Calvinistic Principle of 'Sphere Sovereignty' as a Political Principle." It was purposefully kept simple, even though famous philosophers like Hegel, Stahl, Stammler, Kelsen, Locke and Kant were referred to as well as the Dutch Buys, Krabbe, Struycken and

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<sup>14</sup> Translation: "The Netherlands and the House of Orange," House of Orange being the name of the Dutch royal dynasty.

Heering. In August, 1924, he published "Further Explication of the Calvinist Idea of Law."

For even deeper foundational concerns, in October, 1924, Dooyeweerd referred to the new journal "*Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde*,"<sup>15</sup> established at his initiative and introduced by Colijn. In line with Dooyeweerd's proposed work programme, this journal was soon split into a scientific quarterly and a more practical monthly to deal with political questions.

Colijn foresaw two dangers that already in those years seriously threatened the Anti-Revolutionary direction. He openly referred to them: stuffy conservatism and "the slackening of the boundaries, against which in the past we were warned against with deep seriousness, *is present among us.*"

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It is useful for us to remember those names, so that we can determine the climate of the years Dooyeweerd served the Foundation. He must have drawn special attention to his first series, that directly followed Colijn's opening article, "In the Struggle for a Christian Political Science: Test of a Foundation of the Calvinistic World-and-life view in Her Law Idea."

#### IV

There were plans at the VU to establish a special chair in Anti-Revolutionary Political Science from a philosophical perspective. There is a provision in the statutes of the Foundation along this line. Before long, both Colijn and Idenburg concluded that Dooyeweerd was destined for this position. However, the chair was not established due to the fact that the juridical faculty of the VU were divided on the issue. But when Professor Zevensberg died, Dooyeweerd was appointed as his successor at the VU as Professor of the Philosophy of Law, Encyclopedia of Law, and Historical Dutch Law.

He began his appointment on 15 October, 1926, with his inaugural lecture, "The Significance of the Idea of Law for the Science of Law and the Philosophy of Law," to which he later added another thirty-five pages of notes. It was with a heavy heart that he left the Foundation, where he had

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<sup>15</sup> Translation: "Anti-Revolutionary Political Science."

<sup>16</sup>This paragraph contains a long list of the writers in this magazine, most of whom had already passed away by the time this article was written.

enjoyed so much time for independent study, but he addressed his future students with great idealism:

*I come to you in the confidence that you will not disappoint me. For the ideal that fills my entire soul, lives also in you: To thoroughly permeate our science with the spirit of our holy principles! Who is there among you who would be able to waver and stay behind when the King of our science calls him into the battle on the spiritual front? Right now I am asking especially for your interest in the philosophy of law, even though it is not a required course.*

*For it is here that the foundations of our life-and-world-view are for the first time to become public. Here, in the first place, we must systematically develop these foundations further. Especially here I must constantly remind you of the scientific requirement not to easily accept what others have already thought before you, or to spare yourself the exertion of independent thinking, but through stringent sifting and examination to differentiate the wheat from the tares, the valuable from the invaluable. I do not wish to force upon you my own subjective opinions, but I want to provide you with a stable and accurate touchstone, or to attempt to give you a more clear consciousness of the unwavering foundations of your world-and-life view.*

It is this calling that Dooyeweerd has held and reverberated before his students ever since during every lecture and in every paper. It was that calling that also echoed that afternoon for the first time in the hearing of the students, before he concluded his inaugural with the prayer:

*To You, then, my Lord God, I direct my prayer this hour. To thank You for every ordeal, for every chastisement; to thank You for having finally called me to serve You in this University.*

*Inspire my work at this University. May my weakness be fulfilled in Your strength and give, oh Father of all mercies, so that love for You and for the expansion of Your Kingdom may continue to burn in my heart, so that my steps may never deviate from the way of truth that You have revealed to us in Your holy Son.*

*And where our weak powers fall short, where our heart is always inclined to sin, to worldliness and to lack of courage, may You Yourself, oh Father,*

*affirm Your Kingdom in our scholarship and upset the kingdom of the lie, in order that through Your Spirit the work of humans be sanctified.*

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That Dooyeweerd neither intended to lock himself up within the ARP nor to raise his voice of scholarship exclusively within the world of the VU, is proven by an article that he published in January, 1926, in the journal *Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte*: "Calvinisme contra Neo-Kantianisme,"<sup>17</sup> in which he emphatically contrasted the Calvinist idea of law with that of Kantianism, and took position *vis a vis* two opposite sides.

On the one side he warned against those who thought at the time of Neo-Kantianism as the definitive and undisputed climax of the development of cultured thought. On the other side, he battled those *within* Calvinist circles who were of the opinion they could simply adopt this common viewpoint and fit it into a Christian life-and-world view.

It is truly remarkable that in the Netherlands of the year 1926 Dooyeweerd alerted his own cohorts in this general journal, "It is striking that even in Calvinistic circles there are those who consider the Neo-Kantian perspective compatible with the Calvinist life-and-world view." He stated further, "A Calvinism that is satisfied to evaluate Neo-Kantianism without developing a better method on basis of our own life-and-world view in accordance with God's revealed truth, stands very unstable over against the apparently closed logical system of Neo-Kantianism." To this he added the comment, "If indeed there are no objections to Neo-Kantianism from a logical-scientific viewpoint, then it is not legitimate to judge its method on basis of 'theological' arguments.... We therefore cannot rest on our laurels before we have exposed the consequences of this exceptionally dangerous heresy.

V

It was necessary to clearly follow Dooyeweerd's journey till this point, in order for us to understand his relationship to Kuyper from all this. Some there are who try to make it appear that Dooyeweerd can best be understood out of ecclesiastical or theological streams, as if his work

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<sup>17</sup>Translation: Journal of Philosophy: Calvinism contra Neo-Kantianism.

emerged out of theological assumptions and was directed to or against certain specific ecclesiastical phenomena. His career proves this to be incorrect. Whoever wants to relate Dooyeweerd's work primarily to certain theological developments and ecclesiastical events, will have a distorted view of his work.

During his student years he may have entertained a light anti-Kuyperian impulse, but this can have been nothing but a reaction to an atmosphere in which almost everything Kuyperian met with approval. During his time as Adjunct Director of the Kuyper House that called to deeper research, he was definitely grabbed by Kuyper's *religious* or *spiritual* voice, something he probably had in common with Colijn, but it was not the strictly *theological* Kuyper who fascinated him, but the Kuyper of the meditations, of the Stone Lectures and the Kuyper of the Opening Lecture of the VU. He never was engaged in the specific field of dogmatic theology and never wanted to! *The religious or spiritual grip that Kuyper had over Dooyeweerd may never be identified with Kuyper's theology.*

In order to be understood by his Reformed readers, Dooyeweerd did adopt much of Kuyper's terminology in the development of his philosophy, but it was not the *theological* Kuyper who fascinated him, nor the Kuyper of the *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* or of the *Gemene Gratie*. Kuyper was and remained a theologian and he used the philosophy current in his days as critically as possible to develop his own *theological system*. And why did Kuyper write his *Encyclopaedie* with so much diligence? He explains clearly in a letter to his friend Dr. A. Brummelkamp: "...because I cannot neglect my undertaking to give theology, which is the foundation of everything else, once again a firm basis." Kuyper believed in theology as the basis of all scholarship and science, and has indeed in a brilliant way tried to bring unity, via a theological system he put together, in the Reformed confessions<sup>18</sup> which he brought once again up to scholarly standards.

However, no matter how respectable these motives and developments, Dooyeweerd never put faith in this attempt as a sufficient foundation for a truly Christian science, because he regarded theology only as a strictly *theoretical* reflection on the faith, the *theoretical* result of which cannot offer

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<sup>18</sup>Translator: I have long struggled with this sentence till it occurred to me that the term "belijders" (confessors) is a misprint and should be "belijdenis" (confession).

a single guarantee that those who adopt these *theoretical* results are truly driven by the power of God's Word as the principle of life!

Of course, the above means neither avoiding theology as such nor denying its significance for science, for the theological faculty also has her important contribution to deliver, but Dooyeweerd was a jurist and a professional philosopher. He recognized that as philosopher he had his own unique journey to follow.

In preparation for this task he studied classic, medieval and modern philosophy anew. Among the most recent philosophical schools of thought at the time, it was especially the Neo-Kantians who attracted his interest as well as the phenomenological school founded by Edmund Husserl, of whom he initially had such high expectation, but who at the end thoroughly disappointed him. At this time Existentialism was only just coming on the horizon. It is a well-known fact that he was strongly supported in his philosophical struggles by his brother-in-law, Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven, who was appointed simultaneously with him at the VU as Professor of Philosophy.

Gradually his own perspective developed, sometimes as the result of months-long studies, sometimes intuitively. It was as with the famous historian Johan Huizinga, who, during a walk in the vicinity of Groningen, suddenly had an inspiration that, as he once wrote, showed him not to regard the late middle ages as an announcement about the future so much as the dying off of the vanishing. So Dooyeweerd, during a walk through the dunes, received the inspiration of the fundamental significance of the modal structures of naïve or ordinary experience.

This philosophical conception had already received more or less fixed form in his Inaugural lecture, even though his *transcendental critique* of philosophical thought that would become so important in his later reflection, received no reference as yet anymore than did the idea of cosmic time, the theory of individuality structures and their encaptic interlocking, nor the distinction between naïve and theoretical experience, etc.

It was only after the thematics of his reflections about these conceptions had broadened and deepened, that there could be any thought of casting the initial version of the "philosophy of the cosmomic idea"<sup>19</sup> or "the critique

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<sup>19</sup>Translator: For the history and meaning of this term I encourage you to google it. Nowadays the term "Reformational philosophy" is more popular.

of theoretical thought" into a three-volume work. The development of this philosophy can be traced in his various publications during the period between 1926 and 1935

## VI

Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were convinced that during the development of their philosophy they would initially find themselves in total isolation, but they hoped for support within their own circle. Of their colleagues outside of this circle, the two asked that they would no longer be disqualified for what they brought forward from the terrain of Calvinistic philosophy as illegitimate mixing of faith and scholarship. Dooyeweerd did not hesitate to signal his protest with clear words wherever he thought to detect symptoms of such disqualification. For example, he protested against the address of Prof. Leo Polak at the convention of the Society of the Philosophy of Law on May 5, 1928:

*My second point is of a more serious nature. I need to raise a serious word of protest against the way colleague Polak intended in his lecture as well as earlier in his dissertation—and let me say it bluntly-- to marginalize the life-and-world view that is dear to me and to many others with me. If this meeting should share Prof. Polak's opinion, then I must honestly but regretfully say that I will be forced to resign my membership in this Association. If there is no room for my life-and-world view in this Association, then I am convinced that there is no place for me either. Thus I fully expect that an emphatic denial will come forth from the head table against the opinion that I think to distill from Prof. Polak's words.*

Similarly, Dooyeweerd protested against those who regarded specific schools of philosophical thought as the one and only scholarly form of philosophy. This is the reason he offered a very critical discussion of the new organization *Annalen der critische filosofie*,<sup>20</sup> because this organ announced its critical orientation with such an unmistakably obsolete allure as "the scholarship." That is an echo from the Enlightenment period that we should by now have overcome.

With respect to Dr. T. Goedewaagen, Dooyeweerd said,

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<sup>20</sup>Translation: "Annals of Critical Philosophy."

*If the writer thinks he can get away with such a style of argument as an example of critical philosophical thinking, though I am principally opposed to such criticism, I would still protect this school of thought against the caricature to which it has just fallen victim here.*

Within Reformed circles, Dooyeweerd asked for the acknowledgement that the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea does nothing but what Kuyper wanted: a continuous development of Calvinistic reflection on science and scholarship.

That this reflection became popular fairly quickly among the Calvinistic youth movement is apparent from what Dooyeweerd was able to proclaim in his speech on September 21, 1932, at the handing over of the rectorate to Professor Vollenhoven:

*In this context I neither can nor may keep silent about the increasingly clear symptoms of a gripping spiritual movement among our graduates as well as our current students. This is a movement that was generated by the annual congresses of the Calvinistic Student Union in Lunteren and that is beginning to spread out evenly over all the faculties, that is crystallizing into spontaneously formed study groups of students and alumni and that no longer wastes its energies in fruitless rhetorical skirmishes, but that wants to develop and propagate the idea of Calvinistic scholarship in constant and serious efforts.*

*At the close of the latest congress that I had the privilege to fully attend, one is justified to speak of a Calvinistic spring revival among the youth. Anyone who has seen the enthusiastic crowd here and heard their utterances can no longer doubt the genuineness of this revival movement. May the future teach us what this shall mean for the development of the Calvinistic idea of culture. But this is already certain: We will be able to count on it for the completion of the task that Calvinism has to fulfill during the current phase of world history.<sup>21</sup>*

It was indeed a remarkable climate in which the nineteen thirties introduced the Calvinistic culture into the Netherlands. These were the years in which Colijn wielded undisputed authority in the political arena within Reformed

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<sup>21</sup>Translator: That Dooyeweerd had good reason for his optimism is demonstrated by the publication of the book in which this biography is found almost three decades later. See footnote 1.

circles, but these were also the years in which Kuyper, his great predecessor, underwent criticism in the circle of his<sup>22</sup> closest followers.

It is much too early to subject the way the above development happened to a definitive assessment, but already now we can recognize something of the necessity for fronts to emerge. On the one side, within the church press of the *Gereformeerde*<sup>23</sup> church, Kuyper was freely criticized, while on the other side he was stoutly defended with respect to his theological doctrines.

The struggle of those days actually requires its own description, but in hindsight one gets the impression that *both* sides misjudged Dooyeweerd's position, because they did not sufficiently take into account that he *was* prepared to delve into the scientific issues associated with Kuyper, but decisively rejected to delve definitively into his specific *theological* formulations.

Naturally, the suspicion in those days harboured by the member of the Theological Faculty of the VU were most unpleasant for Dooyeweerd. He could hardly be expected to be appreciate that his work was treated with suspicion in Professor V. Hepp's series of brochures, *Dreigende Deformatie*,<sup>24</sup> even though his name was not mentioned. Neither was he encouraged by the objections to his work and that of his closest colleague, Vollenhoven, by the Curators of the VU and the General Synod of the *Gereformeerde* churches in Amsterdam in 1936. He did not wish to go into these issues in order to avoid endless public discussions about the differences of opinion.<sup>25</sup> It was and is his judgement that these questions about Kuyper, however actual and relevant they may have been, could not be solved by hasty decisions or journalistic intimidation, but only by ongoing reflection in a work community that wished to devote itself to *study* without being troubled by emotions.

This situation was similar for Dooyeweerd to what he had written ten years earlier about the differences of opinion within the ARP with respect to the issue of participation:

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<sup>22</sup>Translator: The precedent of "his" is not immediately clear.

<sup>23</sup>The *Gereformeerde Church* was the one established by Kuyper and his cohorts.

<sup>24</sup>Translation of title: *Threatening Deformation*.

<sup>25</sup>It was not until the publication of volume II of his *Reformatie en Scholastiek in de Wijsbegeerte* that he subjected the opinion of the theological faculty against his and Vollenhoven's views about the relationship between body and soul to a sharp fundamental anti-critique.

*The incidental side is the least important. The fact that in our circle two apparently divergent viewpoints collide with each other about this relevant issue is in itself not of great significance. In almost every political party, social politics is a controversial terrain, where it is difficult to avoid certain nuances in opinions and viewpoints. It can even be said that such nuances are a healthy tension to the extent that they prevent a party from soothing itself to sleep in the comfortable bed of tradition.*

Nevertheless, Dooyeweerd expressed himself completely in a style all of his own about the issues around Kuyper in so far as they touched upon his own specialty. He did this in a popular article in the magazine *De Reformatie* of September 29, 1937, an issue devoted to Kuyper. He gave it a title very characteristic of that circle: "What Reformational Philosophy Owes Dr. Kuyper."<sup>26</sup>

He did this much more thoroughly in an article under the title "*Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer*"<sup>27</sup> in the scientific journal *Philosophia Reformata*, established in 1936 by the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. No one should fail to read and study this 1939 article, because it reflects something of the situation of those years and the manner in which Dooyeweerd chose the position he took in the matter.

In this contribution, originally a lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the above society on January 2, 1939 in Amsterdam..., Dooyeweerd delves deeply in both the pro and con of Kuyper's conception of science, after he had already clearly stated at the beginning his major thesis about the Kuyper controversies:

*The critique I offer below on this particular opinion does not imply a reproach against a thinker who stood up as a pioneer for the right of Reformed science. It would simply be gross ingratitude to accuse a thinker who stood, according to the testimony of Kuyper himself, in a period during which Reformed science still was in its infancy, that he did not forthwith hand us a theory of science, in which the religious ground motive of Calvinism that he so stoutly defended, was already totally interwoven. Reproach may more appropriate when people cling*

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<sup>26</sup>"Wat de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee aan Dr. Kuyper te danken heeft."

<sup>27</sup> Translation: "Kuyper's Conception of Science."

*to such concepts during the succeeding years after their uselessness has been demonstrated from the Reformed perspective.*

The struggle within the Gereformeerde churches that in the meantime was pushed to the highest level,<sup>28</sup> *concentrated more and more on Professor Klaas Schilder, who was at the time member of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy*, and in the following years it seemed as if the storm around him placed the work of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd in the shadows.

In 1944, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven... directed an appeal to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde churches not to suspend Prof. Schilder, an appeal that was accompanied by a statement of support from tens of members of the Association. After the suspension, the two professors send in a clearly expressed protest in which they indicated resistance to the disciplinary measures applied to Schilder.

However, after the war, when the Association started meeting again, Schilder resigned from his membership because of his disappointment that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven had not followed him in his complete withdrawal from the old Gereformeerde denomination. Many of his theological students at the time followed his example.

Though fully acknowledging that those who resigned the Association together with Schilder did not in the least do so out of defeatist motives, Dooyeweerd did not fail to give them a response he felt he owed them. In the magazine *Mededeelingen* of July, 1950, he published an article titled, "*De strijd om het Schriftuurlijk karakter van de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*"<sup>29</sup> that began with the words:

*It is not helpful to rationalize around it. From its very beginning Reformational Philosophy has generated deep annoyance with certain groups among Gereformeerde professionals because of its pretence to intrinsically be a Christian philosophy that is driven by the Scriptural ground motive of Word-Revelation.*

Of importance in this context is the argument with which Dooyeweerd ended this article, because the opinion expressed in it has for a long time

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<sup>28</sup>Trans: I am not sure what the writer means by "the highest level" or "*het hoogst niveau*," for the Reformed churches generally have no such thing, unless it be the local church.

<sup>29</sup>Translation: "The Struggle about the Scriptural character of Reformational Philosophy."

constituted the burning focus in the discussions both for them who resigned and those who stayed:

*While the Scriptural ground motive of the Christian religion validates the Church only in the sense of supra-temporal Body of Christ as the total community of the Christian life, the scholastic ground motive of nature and grace, as Roman Catholicism understands this, led to the **identification** of the temporal church institute with the Body of Christ.*

*It is well known how this Roman Catholic ecclesiology has also worked its way into Reformational circles, especially in the so-called "High Church movement." It is necessary to note that this High Church idea can only get a footing among the Reformed in so far as the scholastic ground motive of nature and grace has been taken over from Rome, be it in a modified manner. And in this light it is understandable that some would now reproach Reformational Philosophy that it now began to apply the principle of sphere sovereignty to the church institute. This objection was aired against her by many in the Hervormde and Liberated churches.<sup>30</sup>*

*Of course, everyone denies in the strongest of terms from both sides that they adhere to a Catholic-type view of the church by giving the temporal church institute a central and monopolizing position in human society. For this is precisely the tragedy in this view, namely that no one is aware of the unscriptural influences to which they are subject.*

*It does indeed sound really scriptural to say that the church's confession must form the foundation for the entire Christian life. And who would deny that it won't do to renounce a confession that has been accepted as a part of the church as soon as one moves over into other areas of life. Indeed, there is no one who will deny this. Therefore such an argumentation has no meaning in the context of the acceptance of sphere sovereignty in our own scholarly circle over against the temporal church institute.*

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<sup>30</sup>Translator: The Netherlands is replete with Reformed denominations. Hence using the term "Reformed" is not always helpful. So, where the distinction is important, I use the term "*Gereformeerde*" for the church associated with Kuyper, while "*Hervormd*" refers to the historic state church from which Kuyper seceded. The "Liberated" church is the one that was created with Schilder's secession from the *Gereformeerde* Church. Good luck!

*But it is a totally different question whether it is legitimate to make an ecclesiastical confession the foundation of scholarly cooperation in the Reformational-Christian spirit. Those who advocate this must indeed principally renounce sphere sovereignty. They should begin by directing their opposition to the VU, for this university is indeed established on the principle they deny. Kuyper has very consciously and for highly principal reasons rejected the notion that the non-theological faculties be subject to an ecclesiastical confession. Why?*

*In the first place, because an ecclesiastical confession may not be identified with God's Word. In such confessions it is possible for mistakes to creep in that only can be corrected through ecclesiastical channels. That way is not the only immediate demarcation of objectors, as long as these errors do not have the weight of a fundamental character.*

*In the second place, because an ecclesiastical confession as such does not intrinsically focus on the practice of science. Experience has taught that many who have, e.g., accepted the confessions of the Gereformeerde churches, are skeptical with respect to the idea of a Gereformeerde or Reformational type of science that does not restrict itself to the terrain of theology.*

*In the third place, because the proclamation of an ecclesiastical confession as foundation of every form of Christian cooperation in the field of scholarship leads irrevocably to the consequence that every scientific project conducted along Scriptural lines must be subject to the authority and control of a church institution. Not a single agency outside the church has the competence to judge any deviation from her confession with binding authority. But then the question arises as to which denomination should be chosen to make that decision.*

*Above all, how and with what authority could a church institution ever judge the intrinsic Scriptural character of a scientific theory that cannot be located in the lack of explicit statements that are contrary to the confession?*

*What is said above about the relationship of church and science is equally valid for the relationship of church and state, church and*

*professional organization, church and school, church and political party, etc., etc.*

*A tree is recognized by its fruit! Whoever denies sphere sovereignty of the various social structures vis a vis the church institute, degenerates into sectarianism that knows of no boundaries, in so far as he does not accept the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church.*

## VII

Though Dooyeweerd struggled to maintain contact and fellowship within Reformational circles, it would be doing an injustice to end the discussion of his work with this facet. In addition to this appeal to his nearest spiritual kindred, we must as well describe his attempts to come to deep-going dialogue in the field of philosophical reflection in other circles. This forced him to a clear definition of his perspective on historically developed Calvinism and, beyond that, to Abraham Kuyper and his work.

We have already made it clear that in his younger years Dooyeweerd was not so much impressed by the *theological* Kuyper, but, rather, in Kuyper as the advocate for a religious revival. Through the years this had its consequences, even though these consequences were originally formed by certain theories that became more prominent in his later years, rather than that these were added as principally new developments in his work. Anyone familiar with the later Dooyeweerd, knows that he found it imperative to increasingly accentuate certain theories that were already expressed in his earlier writings.

Initially, till around 1940, Dooyeweerd wished to be a *Calvinistic* philosopher, even kind of in the *Kuyperian* sense, but after 1940, he began to feel increasingly uncomfortable with this qualification until he finally rejected it openly.

Of great interest for understanding the development of his insight at this point is what he himself wrote in volume one of the handbook *Scientia*, published in 1956, as introduction to his chapter "*Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte*."<sup>31</sup> This introduction is so important for clarification of insight and the prevention of misunderstandings that it needs to be cited fully here:

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<sup>31</sup>Translation: "Calvinistic Philosophy."

*The use of the name "Calvinistic Philosophy" to refer to the philosophical movement that has been developing around the Idea of Cosmonomic Philosophy since the nineteen thirties, can generate misunderstanding in various ways.*

*This title can only be explained historically from the fact that it originated in the Calvinist Revival, that in the last decades of the nineteenth century led to a renewed reflection on the relationship between the Christian religion to science, to culture and to society under the inspirational leadership of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper pointed out that the reformational movement could not remain restricted to church revival and to theology. Her Biblical starting point touched the religious root of all temporal life and had to validate itself from there in all sectors of this life. Kuyper found the insight to these consequences for the Reformed Christian perspective expressed the clearest by Calvin, which, lacking better terminology, was the reason he started talking about "Calvinism" as a comprehensive life and world view that would clearly distinguish itself over against both Catholicism and Humanism.*

*Kuyper was very well aware of the objections that such terminology would generate. It could easily generate the misunderstanding that a specific theological position was elevated as its starting point, whereby the conceptions of Calvin were attributed an authority that, from the Biblical-Reformational standpoint, may never be attributed to a human being. This would furthermore imply a dubious reduction of the basis, that would harm the universal, indeed ecumenical significance of this standpoint and would necessarily lead to Christian sect formation. Kuyper rejected this misconception with all his might. However, in practice it has been proven that the term "Calvinism", an sich already a dangerous term, is regarded mostly as a label for a specific social group, a label that hides rather than clarifies the true intention of the Reformational movement herewith indicated. What did Kuyper intend when he once again highlighted the Reformational principle that motivated Calvin, as a principle that comprehends all of life, and that over against every dualistic separation of a "Christian" and a "worldly" sphere, again demanded recognition of the universal kingship of Christ over all sectors of life?*

*The deepest issue for him was a life and theory to emerge from the central unity of the Holy Scriptures that would elevate itself above the divergence of human opinions and interpretations, because this does not arise out of humanity, but which, as the spiritual dynamis or power of the divine Word, takes possession of a person and demands unconditional self-surrender. From that spiritual dynamis a central working goes out to the human heart, whether in an attractive sense or repulsive, but before all theoretical considerations of human thought.*

*The grip that takes possession of the heart of human existence is to spread itself out from the centre to all of life and thought.*

*The issue here, however, is not merely about individuals, but about the entire community of the new humanity rooted in Christ. It is about the Kingdom of God that has to wage a restless battle in this fallen world against the kingdom of darkness. The entire world in all its regions is the front for this battle that reproduces itself in temporal life out of the religious root. God has not surrendered His creation to the spirit of the fall. It belongs to Him. It exists under His absolute sovereignty. That is why the central grip of God's Word affects not only the personal life of the Christian or the church as an institutional community, but all human social relations, politics, culture, science and scholarship, philosophy.*

*The recognition of this radical and integral significance of the Christian religion may not be presented as a specifically Calvinistic perspective. Out of the central ground motive of Holy Scripture, namely creation, fall and redemption through Christ Jesus in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, it forces itself irresistibly and it is only thanks to the influence of unbiblical motives, when this acknowledgement is replaced by the adoption of the autonomy natural or worldly life.*

*Kuyper penetrated behind the theological and philosophical controversies into the deepest and absolute spiritual forces that drive and move all of human life and thought and that can thus not be reduced to the level of theoretical or scientific problematics, because all theoretical reflection already finds itself in its grip from the very beginning. These central spiritual driving powers are disclosed in their true sense to people only when they are touched in their soul by the*

*Word in which God reveals Himself to us and wherein He helps us to discover Him.*

*In the offensiveness or skandalon of this disclosure that reaches its climax in the cross of Golgotha, a crisis develops of an unavoidable battle between the spirit of the fall and the spiritual dynamis of God's Word that deprives him of every masque. Here, in the absolute central sphere of religion, the ultimate antithesis is revealed, that from here on forces an unavoidable choice on us in all of our life and thought.*

*Reformational Philosophy, as long as it follows Kuyper's accurate Biblical thought, assumes that the central radical and integral motif of Holy Scripture, namely that of creation, fall and redemption through Christ Jesus as the Word incarnate, is not dependent for its key to knowledge on human theological interpretation. It is not at the disposal of humans, but to the contrary, it has humans at its disposal. Its radical spiritual meaning is revealed directly to us through the operation of the Holy Spirit and not through the mediation of a fallible theological exegesis of various Bible texts or of a dogmatic theology.*

*Familiarity with this radical meaning is a confession, not a conclusion arrived at from theological consideration. That is why this central motif can indeed serve as the ecumenical point of unison for all, regardless of their denominational orientation, who, living out of the Biblical spirit of the Reformation, take seriously the radical and integral grip of God's Word on all of our temporal life. For this reason Kuyper started the battle against the sectarian tendencies of "churchism" in the great cultural struggle of his days. And though he was in principle against "Romanism," he remained faithful to the Catholic Christian point of departure, namely that no one would be excluded from the "militia Christi," the church militant, simply because of his denominational membership.*

*This short introduction was necessary in order to place the spiritual background of Reformational Philosophy in its proper light and to protect her from misconceptions to which its less fortunate description as "Calvinistic philosophy" exposed her. The fact that its adherents in the various countries belong to very different denominations and that even among Roman Catholic thinkers who are influenced by the so-called "nouvelle theologie," increasing sympathy can be detected,*

*proves that its ecumenical Christian foundation is not just an empty phrase. Neither is it a closed system that pretends to possess monopoly on the truth within the field of philosophy nor that the provisional results of her philosophical research, that has its orientation controlled and moved by the central Biblical ground motif, should be considered untouchable. It in no way demands a privileged position as philosophy, but, to the contrary, it seeks to create a realistic basis for philosophical dialogue between the different schools of thought, who often isolate themselves spiritually from one another, that can only lead to over-estimating themselves and to stagnation.*

*This is the purpose of the "transcendental critique of theoretical thought," which is the key to understanding Reformational Philosophy, within which the latter attempts to approach the philosophical schools so often diametrically opposed to each other, out of her own deepest spiritual background.*

It is in this broad sense that does not wish to remove anything of the penetrating antithetical power of the Evangel, that Dooyeweerd is prepared to participate in ecumenical dialogue, including the ongoing philosophical questions on the table. In this sense, it cannot be denied that Dooyeweerd has developed himself from a Calvinistic to an ecumenical Christian philosopher.

The fruits of this openness to dialogue soon became apparent, even with colleagues who initially stridently disagreed with him. The foremost example is Prof. Ph. Kohnstamm, who, towards the end of his life, felt himself strongly attracted to Reformational Philosophy and even testified openly to his sympathy. Perhaps we can also name Prof. A. J. de Sopper in this context. In December 1955, he wrote this observation to one of Dooyeweerd's students who had congratulated him, Sopper, on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday:

*How I would love to teach again, but that time is past. I am not even capable of answering your important questions extensively as you deserve. What I can tell you is that in principle I agree with Reformational Philosophy, even though I use different terminology as well as mostly other concepts. That is why it is very difficult to transpose and dialogue becomes very laborious. In any case, it pleases*

*me that Reformational Philosophy is taught not only at the VU, but is also heard at other universities.*

And certainly we must name in this context Prof. Michael Fr. J. Marlet S. J., who defended his dissertation *Grundlinien der Calvinistischen Philosophie der Gesetzesidee als Christlicher Transzendentalphilosophie*<sup>32</sup> at the Gregorian University in Rome and emphatically characterized Reformational Philosophy as belonging to the "*philosophia in Ecclesia recepta ac agnita.*"<sup>33</sup>

And finally, we may also point to a thinker of official Liberal<sup>34</sup> Christian orientation, Dr. Joh. P. van Mullem, who initially was a New-Kantian philosopher and sharply disqualified Dooyeweerd's train of thought in the *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte*,<sup>35</sup> but who later radically reviewed his judgement and testified openly to the influence this philosophy had on his more mature thought.

## VIII

Certain it is that the significance of Dooyeweerd developed into one that rose far above the interest he had for his specifically Gereformeerde circle from which he emerged. This received recognition in his 1948 appointment to membership in the *Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*<sup>36</sup> wherein he was soon elected into its board. At the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Academy he was requested to deliver a lecture of a more general scholarly nature.

During the course of this development, Dooyeweerd became a partner in dialogue in the way both Kuyper and Bavinck had in view, but for which they never had the opportunity to the same degree. He also had the opportunity to lecture at various important foreign universities about his convictions about a philosophy built on a Biblical foundation. He lectured at the Universities of Aix, Provence and Marseille, at the Sorbonne in Paris, the Universities of Leuven, of Philadelphia, and at McGill in Montreal, Princeton University and Harvard, while even before all those, he had already lectured at almost all South African universities.

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<sup>32</sup>Karl Zink Verlage, Munchen, 1954.

<sup>33</sup> "philosophy in the Church accepted and acknowledged."

<sup>34</sup>Translation of "vrijzinnig."

<sup>35</sup>Translation: "*Netherlands Journal of Philosophy.*"

<sup>36</sup> Translation: "Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences."

His international contact benefited greatly from the publication of the revised and expanded English edition of his *magnum opus*, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (4 volumes).

In addition to maintaining his own profound convictions, Dooyeweerd also was in close contact with those of different schools of thought. He rejected all rigidity of thought and action along with isolation that would sacrifice the opportunity for the Christian Gospel to exert influence, for what would it benefit even the most beautiful arsenal of weapons if it did not serve to penetrate the sciences with the Evangel? In his razor sharp logic we are given the power needed to achieve the most.

Even more than in Kuyper and Bavinck, the tension between the religious antithesis and fellowship with all who confess Christ showed up in Dooyeweerd. He knew how to bring the sharpness of the antithesis and the bond of Christian fellowship to a close balance in his life in a unique and inspiring synthesis.

Dooyeweerd devoted his life to this task at the highest scientific level. Only those who are willing to join him in *this* pursuit may and can consider themselves to belong to the inner circle of his students.

In the life of Dooyeweerd the *Soli Deo Gloria* received a new level that responds to the Biblical message and to the requirements that challenge all who want to participate in Christian scholarship and science in the twentieth century.

