

# The Foundations of Calvinist Thought

**D. H. Th. Vollenhoven**

## **Preface**

More or less the following the Düsseldorf Evangelical Pastoral Seminary got to hear on March 8 1934 in Amsterdam as part of a Dutch study tour. This last practical theological "exercise" - the Düsseldorf Seminary has, like all ex-Prussian Seminaries been closed in April - took place under the leadership of the study leader, D. Dusse, from 1-10 March in a variety of Dutch cities. As guests of the Reformed Churches the German proponents got a lively impression of a Church denomination.

In The Hague we came to know especially the church, and in Amsterdam the scientific aspect of reformed life, formed by A. Kuyper. Unforgettable will remain for us the reception of the Prime Minister, Dr. Colijn, in the Kuyper House in The Hague. Dr. Colijn is a well-known member of the Reformed Churches and a consciously reformed (anti-revolutionary) politician.

In Amsterdam the Free University stood in the centre of interest - that Kuyper-founded, consciously reformed educational institution, which is only sustained by the sacrificial attitude of the reformed people, and which is in the service of the claim of the Word of God to governance in all areas - including natural science.

Especially friendly Dr. Vollenhoven, ordinary professor of Philosophy, made himself available on that day, which was mainly given to the visiting of that small but exemplary institution, for a lecture on his newest work: "Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy". On the paper followed a lively debate, in which that which was presented, was also tested against a sketch of the philosophical foundations of the individual reformers. The publisher of *Theologische Blätter* was friendly enough to fulfil the wish of the Seminary and its leadership to make the exposition of the exceptional Dutch philosopher accessible to a wider group of German speaking people. For the presently widely spread members of the Seminary the printed lecture will be a friendly remembrance of the rich days in Holland.

Vollenhoven, who published in 1933 apart from the above work also a rector's inaugural entitled "The necessity of a Christian logic", has been trained primarily as a theologian and was from 1918 tot 1926 a minister of the Reformed Churches, with is last congregation in The Hague. It appears to us that, as professor of Philosophy, he remained a theologian. Although the word "theology" does not appear in the essay below, yet under the name of "philosophy" pure theology is practiced in a thoroughgoing way. We also do not find a delineation of, or a determining of the relationship between these two areas in this work: it establishes in the short systematic part a totally original scientific program and in the broader historical part surprising new perspectives for the understanding and clarification of the history of the Western spirit.

For the German publication the long lecture had to be reworked and shortened. Maybe in this way something of the impressive imagery of the oral presentation went missing. What the writer means by "Calvinistic", he explains himself at the beginning of the exposition - the Dutch word has according to this the same meaning as the German. For the rest our German word "calvinian" does not have an analogue in the Dutch language. That Vollenhoven, who in his total work attempts to reformulate the great attempt of Kuijper in a new way, and represents it freely and independently, is well-acquainted with the of the problematic of the neo-Calvinist talk of "common grace", the discussion showed to great joy.

The Prime Minister showed himself in his speech before the Seminary as adherent of the reformed understanding of politics in these words: "With us in the Netherlands the statesmen come only in the second and third place": The sovereignty of God! In the lectures and with the families we heard about the decades long struggle of church and schools: Sovereignty in its own sphere! And for this reason free church, free state, free university! All this was echoed in the lecture of Vollenhoven again in a systematic way, and this was a valuable aid to understand the Dutch relationships better, from which we also have something to learn for the present church situation in Germany. In connection with the centenary celebrations of the "separation" of 1834 these relationships in the interior and abroad has been illuminated time and again and in quite different ways. While some see the fragmentation of the reformed church community which is associated with the "separation" (H. de Cock) and the following "*Doleantie*", 1886 (A. Kuyper), as a main cause of the horrific church drop out (14,42%), for others - like Dr. Colijn in his important speech on the commemoration celebrations - the existence of a small but steadfast confessional church provides an incomparably strong bulwark against secularism and thus as a blessing for the whole nation. And in truth although the free reformed churches shelter only 8% of the population, its influence on the totality of Dutch life is clearly very definitive. That the Netherlands in spite of its three quarters of Catholic population and in spite of the large number of non-members, has remained and became a reformed country, is in the first place the consequence of the firm actions of the Reformed Churches for the sake of an original reformed essence; for the rest this inspiring influence did not stay out of certain sections of the "*Hervormde*" State church.

My the sketch of the foundations of a philosophy measured against Scripture which is now available in the German language serve as a motion of thanks of the Seminary to the hospitable Dutch "*Gereformeerdes*" and even better as a sign of the church and theological bond in a time when it becomes visible that the questions which the Word of the sovereign God poses to the churches, are everywhere closely related.

*Mülheim and Wilhelm Rott.*

# The Idea of a Philosophy Measured Against Scripture

**D. H. Th. Vollenhoven**

The lack of clarity which presently dominates theology is to a large extent reducible to certain circumstances in the area of philosophy. Of course theology as a special science will still have enough problems to solve if the confusion in philosophy is diminished. But in that case the remaining questions will be formulated much clearer and will therefore be easier to answer. I therefore believe that also theology has a large interest in principial thinking in philosophy. But from this we can only expect something when philosophy understands the meaning of the reformation and searches for its salvation in a return to the Holy Scriptures. Serious striving for a such a return to the Holy Scriptures is already found in the philosophy in earlier centuries: think of the church fathers, especially Augustine, Bradwardine; think of the reformers and among them by name: Calvin! Calvin has, like Bradwardine, been called a “revived Augustine”. But this fits the Genevan reformer even less than Bradwardine: deeper than all others, even deeper than Augustine, he penetrated into Holy Scriptures world of thought, and therefore it is even today profitable to link up with him.

What is Calvinism? Must we understand by Calvinism something like an uncritical glorification of Calvin’s life work or a literal repetition of what he thought? And does one, according to this, have a right to refuse everyone who thinks differently from the great reformer about the first or the last point the name of “Calvinist”? Of course not. We must, on the contrary, distinguish between that which in Calvin follows immediately from his principles, and that which only coheres with the emergencies of his time and his life. Let us look only to the first: the principles of Calvin. By this we mean such thoughts as are not in contradiction with one another, but which carry the whole building of his life work. Under this we must mention in the first place the recognition of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. In his *Institutions* and in the *Church Order*, in polemics and commentaries, in his sermons and correspondence: everywhere the end of all objections is the invocation of the highest judiciary: the Holy Scriptures. And today this “formal principle” of the Reformation is still unlimitedly valid for each which wants itself to be named after Calvin. This is also of the greatest importance for the reformation of philosophy. This means that we do not, with current philosophy, take a critical stance towards the Word of God and take a soft line against traditional philosophy, but in the contrary, while we unconditionally kneel before the

authority of the Holy Scriptures, we freely have to investigate everything which remains - also our own work - in terms of its quality of truth. If we would take this seriously, then almost everywhere the problem statement changes and therefore also the answer.

But the formal recognition of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God does only obtain its content by answering the question: “What does Holy Scripture say?” The Calvinist response to this question can briefly be summarised as follows:

1. Holy Scripture teaches the immediate sovereignty of that God who revealed himself in his Word, over all things in every relationship and in every area, and distinguish in accordance with this clearly between God as the sovereign and that which has been created by him.
2. It views religion as *unio foederalis* (a unity of covenant) which is known to the human family by Word revelation also already before the fall into sin.
3. It proclaims with regard to the circumstances after the fall:
  - a. the total depravity of humankind
  - b. death as punishment of sin
  - c. the revelation of the grace of the sovereign God in the Mediator.

Let us now note the ground motives of the Philosophy measured against Scripture, i.e. those basic conceptions that take into account the Holy Scriptures in the study of all topics. In the development of her ground motives it can peacefully depart from Calvinist answer about the main contents of the Holy Scriptures.

Philosophy measured against Scripture thus teaches firstly the immediate sovereignty of that God who revealed himself in his Word, over all things - in every relationship and in every area - and distinguishes in accordance with that clearly between God as the sovereign and that which has been created by him.

1. At first I would like to draw the attention to the sub-clause: “who revealed himself in his Word”: This is not superfluous, for with no word philosophy has been playing around more than with the word “God”. Sometimes it indicated an archetypal unity; then again God was equated with the form of the world, etceteras. In particular the Middle Ages sinned heavily here, when many Christians made it their task to combine pagan thought with

Philosophy measured against Scripture. Therefore it must be explicitly declared: when somebody believes that he ought to have another conception of God in philosophy than the one which Holy Scripture teaches us, then this “God” is another than the God of the Holy Scriptures and his philosophy is not Calvinist.

2. By virtue of this Word revelation the Philosophy measured against Scripture accepts that God has created heaven and earth and sustained it in the mean time through the Word of his power. Therefore it believes in him as the fixed ground (“Hypostasis”) of all things and distinguishes him sharply from the invisible and visible things which in heaven and on earth are standing on this “ground”.
3. What is sovereignty? This question is clarified at best by a reference to the relationship between an absolute monarch and his subjects. This relationship must, as far as it occurs under human beings, be rejected and seen as impermissible, and exactly for this reason that it is rooted in a conception which deifies the monarch as creator of the state or as son of the god of the land. Such a human sovereign formulates a law and believes himself to be above it. But only God is the creator of all things and of every reality. Only he can give real laws to the cosmos. Only he is the true sovereign. Between him and the cosmos there is a real “boundary”.

The boundary between God and the cosmos can of course not be spatial, for spatiality belongs itself to the created, and a spatial border can only separate something in the cosmos from something else in the same cosmos, and then such that the latter is situated outside the former. But those that believe that God is outside of the cosmos in such a manner, would not be able to do justice to the confession of his immanence. Yet the word “boundary” is still useful here. For it has yet another meaning: it means here something which makes a clear distinction possible without thinking of something spatial. This happens when we say: “The boundary between God and cosmos is the law”. All that is above the law of the cosmos is sovereign over the cosmos. This predicate only applies to the God of Scripture. All that belongs to the cosmos is under the law of God and is subject to him, in other words subject to the Lord.

4. The expression “over all things” barely needs an explanation. Whoever uses this allows space for the recognition of differences among things and the configurations in the cosmos. Simultaneously it is nevertheless contradicted that somebody may invoke these differences in order to say:

“Here is something which is not subject to the Lord”. For example when the Calvinists among those who honour the monarchy disputed the Monarchianist “*princeps legibus solutus est*” - it means: “the prince is above the law” - it happened according to its confession “*Deus legibus solutus est*” (that is: “God is above the law”). That Calvinism would by this absolutely not deny the authority of the monarch, everybody knows who knows history and who remembers that especially Calvin distinguishes sharply between reformation and revolution. The power of the sovereign is really not divinely sovereign, but nothing prevents that the world’s powerful, who have been appointed over the Christians, be recognised, as long as they do not prohibit the Christians to serve God in obedience to his Word.

5. I must expand a little bit more on the addition: “on every terrain”. The cosmos knows yet other differences than the just-mentioned individual differences between “the one” and “the other” thing. One of these varieties is that of areas on which one and the same thing act. The paganistic philosophy often tried to force this rich diversity into the scheme of just a few distinctions. Calvin thought totally differently. The world is the work of God. Therefore the created is much richer than our perception. With this point of departure Calvin has already defeated all constructions, which only lead to skewed representations. In this way he rejects not only the Roman-Catholic distinction between the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace, but he also recognises - and with that he transcends the too narrow Lutheran doctrine of societal structures (“family”, “state”, “church”) - economic life in its uniqueness.

The recognition of the varied multiplicity of the created and the knowledge that they, without exception, are under the law of God, is the fountain of the Calvinist conception of freedom, which renounces every striving for a revolution, and exactly through sustains the rich contents of the concept in purity. Firstly the Christian freedom. This is the being-free from sin, which hinders us in every area to serve God according to his Word. Related to this but yet distinguished from it, is the other freedom which we have in mind when we speak of free churches, free community and free university. The sustaining of the second freedom is rooted in the insight that also the life which is liberated by Christ from the power of sin, may not negligently move over the rich diversity in the creation of God. Even in a state of which the population only consists of Christians, the power of the officials must be distinguished from the power of the officers in the constituted church. If one does not take this distinction into account, then

an official from one area intervenes regulatively in the area of another, and then his regulating always involves a distortion. And since exactly this variety is the work of God, one understands thus that the Calvinist experiences his liberation in Christ also in the recognition of this richness and in his struggle against the short-sightedness which ends up in the tyrannising of one area of life by officials from another. This is the struggle of Dr. A. Kuyper for sovereignty in its own sphere.

The correlate of the sovereignty of God over all things and with that “sovereignty in own sphere” is the “*principium exclusae antinomiae*” (the principle of excluded antinomy). Practice and science will run into trouble again and again if they do not depart from the principle that antinomies are excluded in the cosmos. For if every area is subject to that law of God which is particularly valid for it, then it is clear that none of them is subject to another law, and that every human attempt to subject them nevertheless to a law which is not adapted to the relevant area, is doomed to be shipwrecked. The struggle, which has been fought during the recent years at the Free University against the acceptance of antinomies, is basically only the continuation of the age-old struggle against the pseudo-sovereignty of reason, which has been fought so courageously in other areas in the Netherlands. The struggle will not be less difficult here than in other areas. Paganistic thought has always accepted antinomies. It could not be otherwise, for it was responsible for calling them into being. For since it did see the cosmos as the ordained work of God, thought opinionated that he it was faced with a chaos which waited for an ordering - the easier the better. Did not Hans Driesch (in his work “*Wissen und Denken*”, 1919) recently totally honestly fore-grounded the monistic ideal of ordering, then to - yet not too eagerly - acknowledge that it does not hold. But even where a variety of functions are acknowledged, it again boils down to the old conception: one does not expect any surprises anymore, but one tries, as soon as you find a new distinction of a specific function, to divide it all again into the already found classes. Thus the materialist distinguishes the spatial surfaces and the movement; thus a vitalist swears by the distinction between the “mechanical” and the “organic”; thus it finally becomes conspicuous to others that the emotional life is something totally different from the organic. Therefore it must also have the consequence that the functions are not separated sharply from one another - just think of the fusion of the arithmetic and the spatial. But it is also known how in the Greek conception of the “Logos” the analytical and the lingual functions, the thought and the statement, was conceived of confusedly as one - analytics or logic and linguistics are still suffering from

this today. What can be expected from this struggle? All these have truth on their side to such an extent that each of them has seen a distinction of a function and maintained it. In fact movement is not to be subsumed under space and the organic under movement. The emotional is really something different from the organic and equally so the analytical is distinct from the emotional. Creation is a book written by God and all these things are equally individual chapters of this book. But these attempts are also all in error in as far as each of them want to force fit the total rich diversity into the frame of one specific distinction which has just been rediscovered, after it had gone into oblivion in bygone days and now is underestimated totally unjustifiably. Therefore we believe, regarding the total history of science up to now, that we can immediately distinguish the following functions: the arithmetic, the spatial, the physical (energetic, including kinetic energy), the organic, the emotional or psychical, the analytical or logical, the historical, the linguistic, the social, the economic, the aesthetic, the juridical, the ethical, and the pistic function. In this ordering they are as functions of the things very narrowly bound together and subject to the laws of God which are valid for them.

6. Not less important are the “coherences” in the cosmos. There are coherences both in one and the same thing (intra-individual) and between different things (inter-individual). Firstly something about the intra-individual coherence. Here we must distinguish two matters: a coherence between consecutive states of one and the same circumstance \*\*\*\*\* The latter becomes immediately insightful when we think, for example, about the coherence between an organic inflammation and the pain connected with this on the emotional level, or the other way round, about the psychic tension which accompanies economic worries. Unclarities will only come to the fore when one follows the tendency of current philosophy to take something as the result of two pseudo-things. With this I do not want to criticise the technical analysis which succeeds in dividing combined things again into their original components. The materials which the chemist extract in this way carry the name “thing” with full justification - they are materials which belong to the same kingdom, just as they have the same functions, i.e. an arithmetical, a spatial, and a physical. But the matter is totally different when we talk about the so-called things, which the philosopher retains when he divides one thing into two groups. Thus Democritus divided the physical thing into a spatial thing plus movement, and others have viewed a plant as a stone plus life, an animal as an organism plus something physical, and a human being as an animal plus something more. Who joins in this denies the coherence among the



different functions. For exactly through this connection the less complicated functions in a human being is developed much richer than in animal or a plant. The lower functions are in the first place directed at their appearance in coherence with the higher - the lower ones “anticipate” the higher ones. On the other hand the more complicated functions are not only founded in the less complicated ones but they also refer back to the lower ones: they “retrocipate”. Anticipations and retrocipations exist therefore only by virtue of the vertical coherence of a variety of functions in the same thing. This coherence must be clearly distinguished from the horizontal coherence between equal functions of different things. The functions are always “thing-functions but one may never present a group of these functions as a thing. There exists a second intra-individual coherence: a thing goes through different states in all its functions. It exists in time; it has a past, a present, and a future. These states do not exist without connection to one another. The later is encompassed in the former, although neither the present can be predicted from the past, neither the future can be prophesied from the present. This indicates a very particular coherence between the earlier and the later: the first encloses clearly a number of possibilities in it which also covers the later, although the latter in its turn still includes many possibilities of which the still later is deficient.

The two intra-individual coherences are in their nature not identical. It is not so that the one function stands in relation to the other as a potentiality to a reality, although this relationship occurs in all functions.

Both in life and in the Holy Scriptures not the just discussed is in the foreground, but the inter-individual coherences. Both have an open eye for the important place which the coherence between individual things occupies in the cosmos - an insight which many have these days almost lost under the influence individualism. Among the richness which the work of the Creator shows here, only a brief word about the coherence between subjects and subjects and then that between subjects and objects. Individually different things which belong to the same “kingdom”, for example two plants or two human beings, are similar in this respect that they have subject functions in the same law sphere. These functions do not stand without connection next to one another, but are in coherence with one another - a coherence which of course shows the character of the relevant law sphere. Thus two lines cross one another, thus in the physical one form of energy is transformed into another, thus my friend suggests to me a suspicion in the analytical area. Where language plays a role these

coherences take the character of co-operation. Through this inter-human things such as a society, enterprise, state, family, cultic community. These coherences are different from one another since the particular aim of each does not lie in the same law sphere. About the necessity to distinguish these coherences clearly, and the struggle which the Calvinists conducted about this, I do not need to talk further. I can thus now proceed to the coherences between subject and object.

Very often this coherence is only discussed in epistemology. This is wrong. Even if one does not fall into the error of Positivism, to make the existence of objects dependent upon the investigation into them, then there exists, even where in epistemology an independent place is provided for the object, yet some dangers. That something becomes object does not depend on the question whether it is investigated. For objects are - independent from whether the attention is directed to them or not - everywhere present where a lower function repeats itself in a higher. Thus the point is in the spatial the repetition of the discontinuity of the number; thus there is - "objectively" - in the physical immutable paths which are described by mutable things; thus the biotic stimuli of light repeats itself in the psychical as colour; and thus we are faced with the independent coming-to-be of an object when space, which is in itself not Euclidean, becomes Euclidean in the psychical, while it acts as space of perception.

Finally yet something about the transition of a thing from the inter- to the intra-individual coherence and vice versa. The first transition one finds both inside one and the same kingdom, for example in the chemical fusion of different materials, and between things from different kingdoms, for example in the absorption of a certain nourishment by plants, animals, and human beings. Transitions in the opposite directions appear for example in the genetic coherence. By this we understand the development of a thing from one or more things within the same kingdom. This development transpires totally differently from what the adherents of the functionalist theory of evolution teach: according to them things with higher functions could develop from things with lower functions. The study of real development avoids these speculations and studies only that which it finds in the cosmos, and that is, as has already been said, the origination of one thing from another within the same kingdom. Let us take an easy example: an electron, which has earlier stood in an intra-individual coherence with the remaining elements of that atom, is now connected with the same elements in an inter-individual coherence. A bit more complicated the matter becomes when - like in sexual

procreation - the ejected thing enters into an intra-individual coherence with another, with which it formerly was only inter-individually connected.

Only if one, as these days happily happens again, really studies the development itself, it will be possible to construct a decent concept of “kind”. What is these days presented as such, is not much more than a perceived similarity in the “form” of things; and then there is still some dispute whether there is a general form which one can use as a criterion, or, whether such a general form is only the product of the abstracting action of our thinking. With regard to the human race they then elevate in the first case their own ideal into a norm for others and look down upon those who do not fulfil the ideal. In the other case one ends with cosmopolitanism. How different is the conception of the Holy Scripture! It does not know any ideas and yet it does not point in the direction of cosmopolitanism, but teaches that all human beings are “from one blood” (Acts 17:26); it takes - when it talks about the souls of the descendants, which were “in the loins” or “in the hips” of the ancestors - the development totally concretely (e.g. gen. 35:11; Ex. 1:5; Judges 8:30; 1 Kings 8:19; 2 Chron. 6:9; Acts 2:30; Hebr. 7:5). For this reason it also attaches great value to the genealogies which end with Adam, who - apart from Jesus - was the only human being who did not come into being from a marriage. The first human being namely originated from creation and then through a particular creative act of God, in which God breathes into man the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), so that it was possible for him, when the light of the preached word of God came to him, to test his own actions and the behaviour of others against the law of God (Prov. 20:27), and in the execution of his humanly office to rule over the work of God’s hands: to be the “image” (Gen. 1:26-28) and the “Son of God” (Luke 3:38).

## II

The Philosophy Measured against Scripture views religion as a covenant, an “*unio foederalis*”, which was known to the human race by Word revelation, even before the fall into sin.

1. With this statement the Calvinist philosophy directs itself for once against every attempt to interpret religion as a substantial of functional submerging of the human being into God. For this reason even here religion is treated as a separate topic, for which there would have been no ground if one could associate yourself with the current conceptions, according to which religion can be subsumed under that which has already been discussed. But exactly this we cannot do. If one does equate life in the divine covenant with one or other function, then one ends - whether

one wants or not - in universalism: faith, spiritual life, conscience or whatever one wants to name it, becomes rays of the divine being, crystallisations of the logos, or something of the kind. Faith and unbelief can then no more be understood as strict oppositions; speculation is immediately present to relativise the oppositions. If one does not want to proceed along the latter way, then the statement that religion is a human function leads to the consequence that one does not attribute this function of everybody: faith becomes a "*donum superadditum*" which stands totally without connection next to the other functions. The fateful denial of the coherence between thinking and faith is then the inevitable result.

Rome took another way. While they reject both the separation between faith and reason and universalism, they here try to base the alternative, faith versus unbelief, on the relationship in which a human being stands to the officials in the church institute. This is an error, for although this relationship is in itself no function, it still lies in the functional area: it is the connection between the devotional and the powerful in the pistic area, which is also known to us in the non-Christian religions.

The identification of religion with a function does not lead anywhere and is also not according to the measure of Scripture. Does Scripture then show a way which makes it possible to understand religion? The same Scripture, which with its intimation about the eternal punishment denounces universalism, but on the other hand neither separates religion from life neither - in Roman Catholic fashion - identifies it with the relationship between "lays" and officials, shows us the way in as far as it very simply speaks about the "heart" from which the "springs of life" are (Prov. 3:24).

With this the coherence of the "heart" with the functions is also indicated: the latter is the frame in which en through which the heart of the human being expresses itself. And what goes for all functions is also valid for the pistic: even what one believes finally depends on what kind of a "heart" he possesses. That this distinction between "heart" and "faith" can be based throughout on the Holy Scriptures, everybody who is acquainted with it knows (e.g. Acts 16:14). The same conception is further more basic for the distinction between rebirth and conversion.

Faith as a function is present in all people, but while this function in Christians takes the Word of God into account, it directs itself in the non-Christian to a substitute of it. In this case the human being creates his own supposed knowledge, from that which some time came as supposed

revelation from the heart of man, about that which the Christian comes to know through the word of God. Thus the unbeliever finally lives and dies with a product of his own culture.

If the spirit of God redirects the basic direction of human life and brings it to obedience to the Word of God, then also in the further development of life this Word obtains always more meaning. This Word then deprives one of the determination of that which is actually religion. The Holy Scriptures indicate it as a “walk with God” (Gen. 5:22-24), a “keeping and conserving of the covenant” (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 33:9; Psalm 25:10; 103:18; 132:12; Isaiah 56:4-6; Dan. 9:4), etceteras. This covenant is not a bond which one has to find within the boundaries of the cosmos. It is a relationship between God, who in no way, and the human being, who in every way, belongs to the cosmos.

2. Only - and with this I am coming to the second thought which is included in my statement - the coherences which exist inside the cosmos is included in the covenant. Therefore the Word of God did not “happen” only here and there, now with regard to this and then in relation to that “individual”. No, it has been preached to the whole human race, firstly to Adam, then to both our ancestors before and after the fall into sin, then to Noah, finally to the patriarchs and the whole of Israel. One has to take note here of the habits and duties of parents to proclaim this Word to their children (Ps. 78:3,4; Deut. 4:9 and 6:7). For this reason the later preached Word not always repeats the earlier-preached one, but rather links up with it. Even the fall into sin does not imply a breach here. Truly the Word obtained only after the fall the character of word of grace. But the saviour whose arrival it now proclaims, was himself fellow Creator of the world, and he saves his work, through this that he pours out his spirit over all flesh - just as he created it. Sanctified by precisely this spirit, the faith in the Word of God increases again in the life of man - also the faith in his promises for the believers and their descendants. Therefore life is nowhere as powerful as there where one beliefs God directly upon his Word.

### III

With regard to the circumstances after the fall into sin, Philosophy measured against Scripture accepts (1) the total depravity of the human being; (2) death as punishment for sin; (3) the revelation of the grace of the sovereign God in the Mediator.

1. Whoever has followed what precedes this, understands that Philosophy measured against Scripture accepts the Word of God also there where it expresses hard truths. In the final instance there is more to be gained by this than when one does not want to face reality. It is not the task of philosophy to change something in reality; it must only try to understand the cosmos in the light of God's Word.

We are faced in the first place with the communication of the Holy Scripture that the human race is depraved by sin. Thus death does not only affect Adam, but at the same time all who is included in him (\*\*\*\*Cor. 15:21). Nobody can say this in full consciousness, without this statement of his becoming, like in Paul, a complaint: "They are all sinners and is deficient in the praise which they should have before God" (Romans 3:22); exactly from his heart comes "bad thoughts" and all kinds of horrors which defiles him (Matt. 15:18-19). If Gods grace comes in between, then in the heart of man the struggle between the old hatred and the new love, between "flesh" and 'spirit" ignites - an opposition which, as we see, has nothing to do with the opposition between "spirit" and "life" which does not occur only in Christian life and is also not antithetic at all.

2. Now it can become clear how thought measured against Scripture ought to understand death. Holy Scripture here distinguishes a duality (Revelations 20:14; 21:8; cf. also Rev. 2:11; 20:6): the first and the second death. It appears as if Ancient philosophy had the same idea, but on closer investigation it is shown that it is about two totally different conceptions. Ancient philosophy, for which the human being was both starting point and goal, viewed death as a desirable separation on the functional level. Thus here the first death was conceived of as separation between the lower "soma" and the higher "psyche", and it was further taught that at the second death the supreme part of the "psyche", which has been freed from the prison of the "soma", leaves the lower part of the "psyche" on the moon, in order to return to the sun. The basic thought of the Holy Scripture is totally different. Point of departure and destination does precisely not rest with the human being, but with God. The supreme destination of the human being is living in the covenant with the Heavenly Father as his child. Dying is everything but desirable; it has been imposed onto humankind as punishment for all his transgressions (Gen. 2:17). This goes for both the first and the second death. The distinction between the two consists in this: that the first death touches everyone in Adam, while the second coincides with the eternal punishment which touches those who have not been saved in Christ (1 Cor. 15:21; Rev. 21:8). It is clear that this

characterising of death and this distinction between the first and the second death - since it is really religiously conceived - has nothing to do with the pseudo-religious speculations of a Plutarch. Also with regard to the closer description of death Holy Scripture does not think in a functionalist way, in contradistinction to the philosophers. For sure: death is separation. But up front is the discontinuation of the coherence in which the human being as a “living soul” stood with its environment (Job 14:10 ff.; Eccl. 9:5,6). All the rest is secondary - this is already clear from the fact that it only occurs with the first death; at the second the heart or the soul is already again united with the body. Furthermore here the body is not the animal life of man - something not known at all to Scripture - but the totality of the functions, which Paul compares with a cloak.

3. What is grace? In which relationship does it stand to “nature” and to “sin”? Is it valid to link the word “grace” with the representation of an area and thus to talk of the “area of grace”? Here also the positive exposition can go up front. “Grace” means in the first place “showing favour”: in the relationship of God with the sinner thus “forfeited favouring”. Grace in this relationship always proceeds from God. It opposite is neither “nature” nor “sin”, but the “wrath of God”. The answer to the question of the relationship between nature and grace depends on the meaning in which one uses the term “nature”. Sometimes it means the “mode” (for example the divine and human “nature” of Christ); in other cases it means “the original”. Thus it often means that which the human being is in Adam: “human nature” became a “depraved nature” and thus it remains in as far as God’s Spirit does not intervene savingly. Thus we have to understand the Paulinian word: “the natural human being does not perceive anything of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14). But the people of God, who are reborn through the spirit of Christ, perceives that which comes from the Spirit of God very clearly, and to this people Paul speaks about the relationship which he has on the one hand in Adam and on the other in Christ: “the spiritual body is not the first, but the natural one is; after that comes the spiritual” (1 Cor. 15:16). In this sense nature is opposite to grace! How great the danger is which yet threatens here, one can see from the Roman use of the words “nature” and “grace”: just think of how “grace” is equated with “the means of grace”. One should also in this context refer to wordplay in Leibniz, which identifies grace with those functions of the human being, which are lacking in animals. Simpler is according to Scripture the meaning of “sin”. Originally it means the “deprivation” or “shortfall” in the destination of the human being through transgression of

the commandment, while the human being nevertheless remains under the law. Grace with regard to sin is therefore “forgiveness” or “pardoning”. The opposition, grace versus wrath on the side of God has as correlate on the human side: forgiven versus sustained/retained sin.

In itself there is no objection against talking about the “areas of grace”. But one should resist very strictly to delineate this area stringently, as well as remember clearly that it is identical with the created, since and in as far as God views this with - forfeited after the fall into sin - agreeableness. This area is much wider than the church as the body of Christ: even to the deeply sunken tribes God still gives to certain persons rich grace to ordain family and the life of a people. This the Calvinists have always seen and therefore they spoke of “common grace” after the fall into sin. The distinction between the area of common grace and the area of particular grace is problematic only then, when one allows it to coincide with a dualism in the life of one and the same person. For then one truly lands in the Gnostic or Roman conception of nature and grace, with which the Calvinist one has nothing in common - it is therefore possibly better to talk in the line of Scripture of “vessels” rather than “areas” of grace. (Cf. Romans 9:23).

More important than these terminological questions is of course the question how grace comes to the human being. We answer “through the Word”. But how should we understand this? If one equates this with the preached word, then one ends up with the identification of the life-giving grace with the magic of office or witchcraft. One must distinguish therefore between the creative divine Word, who did himself preach, sent his prophets and finally appeared in Person and is also now having his Word preached on the one hand, and the preached Word of the Gospel which - since it is intended for human beings - spoke about him in human language and still speaks, on the other. In other words: behind the Word as communicated knowledge stands the Word who fused itself in a unique way with him who (received from the Holy Spirit and born from the virgin Mary, was not the first Adam but) is himself the second Adam, and who (in spite of his bond with the fallen human race) by his indissoluble coherence with God and by the anointing with the Holy Spirit, carries all of Adam’s lost lineage who belong to him, through every resistance to its eternal destination.

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