

# Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and the Quest for an Ecumenical Orthodoxy

by

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## Summary

### I. Dooyeweerd and Ecumenism in General

He regretted the use of the term ‘Calvinistic’ for his philosophy (*New Critique* I, 524).

He said that the term ‘Calvinism’ is “dangerous in itself” and can lead to a label for a definite group or sect. See Marcel Verburg: *Herman Dooyeweerd. Leven en werk van een Nederlands christen-wijsgeer* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1989), 344 and 381.

Vollenhoven disagreed with Dooyeweerd regarding ecumenism, just as he disagreed on every key issue, whether in ontology, epistemology, theology or the use of Scripture. See my forthcoming article “Dooyeweerd versus Vollenhoven: The religious dialectic within reformational philosophy,” *Philosophia Reformata*, 70 (2005), 102-132 [*Dialectic*].

### II. Ecumenism and Franz von Baader

A Roman Catholic, Baader was more attracted to Orthodoxy, and he tried to unite Catholics, Protestants and the Orthodox Church. He also influenced Kuyper and Dooyeweerd. See my article, “Dooyeweerd and Baader: A Response to D.F.M, Strauss,” [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Strauss.html>].

Baader has been important in the rejection of a two-storey nature/grace dualism by several Roman Catholic theologians such as Przywara, de Lubac, and von Balthasar. See Erich Przywara: “Die Problematik der Neuscholastik,” *Kantstudien* (1928), 73-98.

And see the following books by (Cardinal) Hans Urs von Balthasar:

- *The von Balthasar Reader*, ed. Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, tr. Robert J. Daly and Fred Lawrence (New York: Crossroad, 1982), intro by Menard Kehl at 5, 7
- *Does Jesus Know Us? Do We Know Him?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 54-56.
- *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003).

### III. The Religious Antithesis

Antithesis is not a line of personal classification, but rather runs through the heart of every Christian (*NC* I, 524). (*contra* Kuyper and Vollenhoven).

### IV. The Use of Scripture

Unlike Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd does not derive philosophy from Scripture. (See *Dialectic*).

Dooyeweerd rejects Groen van Prinsterer’s use of Scripture to find “eternal principles,” and disagrees with Julius Stahl’s use of the Ten Commandments (*Vernieuwing en Bezinning*, 242).

Dooyeweerd interprets Scripture in accordance with “the key of knowledge”—this key is that our supratemporal heart is the religious root of temporal reality (*Twilight of Western Thought*, 124, 125, 145).

### **V. Confessions of Faith**

Dooyeweerd says he is bound only by Dutch Confessions (not the Westminster Confession), and that he would not be bound by philosophical expressions even in the Dutch Confessions. See his Responses to Curators of the Vrije Universiteit. Translated at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Curators.html>] [‘*Curators*’]

### **VI. Worldviews and Ecumenism**

Dooyeweerd does not regard worldviews as theoretical. A worldview is not a system; nor can it be “elaborated” philosophically (*NC I*, 157-58).

Dooyeweerd is not a presuppositionalist. His religious *a priori* is to be understood not in the sense of Biblical proof-texts or theological/philosophical propositions, but as *ontic conditions* that make possible our experience, both pre-theoretical and theoretical. Our theoretical transcendental Ideas “give an account” [*rekenschap geven*] of reality as it is given to us. An Idea, as *hypothesis*, points towards “its own *a priori* conditions in and above cosmic time” (*WdW I*, 5 and 51; *NC I*, 86). And this *a priori* structure can be known only from experience, although not experience as conceived of by immanence philosophy (*NC II*, 7, fn 2).

### **VII. Dooyeweerd and Calvin**

Dooyeweerd criticizes scholastic elements in Calvin, and distinguishes neo-Calvinism from Calvinism. (See *Curators* and Verburg 230).

And see my notes [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Calvinistic.html>].

The Calvin scholar Josef Bohatec said that Dooyeweerd’s idea of the supratemporal heart is not found in Calvin (Verburg 191).

Dooyeweerd understands predestination and the sovereignty of God not as causation, but in the sense of the coherence of meaning, and the unfolding of anticipatory spheres. (*WdW I*, 70, and “Het juridisch causaliteitsprobleem in ‘t licht der wetsidee,” *Anti-revolutionaire Staatkunde 2* (1928) 21-124, at 61). And he says that conversion occurs in the supratemporal heart, which is then revealed in our temporal expressions of life. See his article “The Problem of Time in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea,” translated at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Tijdsprobleem.html>], 174.

See also Michael Morbey’s distinction between the original “catholic” and “orthodox” Calvin and later Covenant theology. [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/Morbey.html>] [‘*Morbey*’].

### **VIII. Dooyeweerd and Kuyper**

Dooyeweerd criticizes some scholastic dualisms in Kuyper. See his article, “Kuyper’s Wetenschapsleer,” *Philosophia Reformata 4* (1939), 193-232 [‘*Kuyper’s Wetenschapsleer*’].

But Dooyeweerd appreciated these works by Kuyper: (1) Kuyper's *Stone Lectures*, (2) Kuyper's address on sphere sovereignty, and (3) Kuyper's works of a meditative nature. See Dooyeweerd: "Na vijf en dertig jaren," *Philosophia Reformata* 36 (1971), 6.

Dooyeweerd appreciated Kuyper's emphasis on the supratemporal heart. He refers to Kuyper's 1898 *Stone Lectures*, where Kuyper refers to "that point in our consciousness in which our life is still undivided and lies comprehended in its unity, not in the spreading vines but in the root from which the vines spring." (*Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer*, 211).

Unlike Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd appreciated Kuyper's emphasis on our immediate experience with God, and on the divine seed implanted within us. Vollenhoven explicitly rejected Dooyeweerd's view of the supratemporal regeneration of the heart, and Kuyper's idea of regeneration as a "seed" [*kiem*] that is coupled with a witness of the Spirit. (See *Dialectic*).

### **IX. Experience as the basis of Dooyeweerd's philosophy**

Our insight remains rooted in a final foundation of experience [*beleving*]. "Only in experience does the knowledge of reality become *our own*, and the sense of it *being our own* is the first condition for real knowledge." [*Tijdsprobleem* 161].

My notes at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Experience.html>]

This emphasis on experience need not involve the dualistic idea of "natural theology." But see Terence Penelhum: "Reflections on Reformed Epistemology," [<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/papers/other/penel.html>]. Although his reference to natural theology is questionable, I believe that Penelhum correctly points out that religious belief is based on religious experience (or what William Alston calls Christian Mystical Practice). And that also seems to be Dooyeweerd's view.

Vollenhoven's emphasis on Scripture over testimony of the Spirit seems to oppose any experiential or mystical view of regeneration in favour of a more mediated view of knowledge. (See *Dialectic*).

### **X. Sacramental Experience of Temporal Reality**

For Dooyeweerd, temporal reality exists only as meaning (*NC I*, 4, 10), pointing beyond itself for its supratemporal fulfillment (*NC I*, 106); meaning is the convergence of all temporal aspects into the supratemporal religious root, the fullness of meaning (*NC II*, 30). See my notes at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Meaning.html>]

Vollenhoven rejected the idea of temporal reality pointing beyond itself. (See *Dialectic*)

Dooyeweerd says that sometimes eternity radiates through temporal reality. But without the sense of transcendence, we cannot see reality as it really is. We cannot have true knowledge of God, self or cosmos. (*NC III*, 29-30).

There are sparks of God's original Glory and goodness in the world, powers enclosed in creation, which man must unfold. (*Vernieuwing* 36, 38 and 58). See [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Spark.html>].

The temporal existence of the other realms becomes fulfilled in man. (*Vernieuwing*, 30).

David Naugle's example of food in *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Eerdmans, 2002, 6-48). Baader already made many of the same points in his 1815 article "Sur l'Eucharistie" (*Werke* 7, 3-14). Dooyeweerd: We must make temporal reality "our own." (NC II, 478) And [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Own.html>]

### **XI. The Experience of *Enstasis***

Naïve experience is *enstatic*, resting, but not a static rest. It is the relation of our supratemporal selfhood to our temporal mantle of functions. See notes [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Enstasy.html>].

*New Critique* II, 479 (*WdW* II, 414): refers to the "immediate enstatic experience of temporal reality as *my own*" and of entering enstatically by intuition "into the cosmic temporal coherence of experience."

Some orthodox writers compare ecstasy to the idea of *hesychia* or inner stillness. See also "Ecstasy-Ecstasy" in Olivier L. Clément: "The Glory of God Hidden in His Creatures," from *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*; first published in English 1993 by New City. Online at [<http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/clement.html>].

### **XII. Aspects**

Cosmic time splits up both the central law and subject. Aspects are a side of temporal reality, the "law-side." There is a difference between the aspects, which are structures of cosmic time, and the functioning of individuality structures in the aspects. Contrary to Vollenhoven's view (and most reformational philosophy), aspects are not abstracted properties of things. (See *Gegenstandsrelatie* and *Dialectic*).

The irreducibility of the aspects cannot be understood apart from the supratemporal selfhood and religious root (Dooyeweerd's last article 'Gegenstandsrelatie' at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Mainheadings/Kentheoretische.html>]).

The unity of the laws is in God's world plan, which cannot be conceptually understood. "Leugen en Waarheid over het Calvinisme" [Lies and Truth about Calvinism], 6 *Nederland en Oranje*, (1925) 81-90, at 87-88. But the modal aspects are refractions of this world plan:

The "full reality" as cosmic unity of subjectivity constructs itself in the organic coherence of the subject functions, just as all law-spheres are individually only refractions of God's world plan. (*Anti-revolutionaire Staatskunde* 2 (1928) 21-124 at 113, my translation).

Unfolding is an active inspiration [*doorgeestelijking*] of the spheres:

The "unfolding of the anticipatory spheres," as an active "in-spiration" [lit. "spiritualizing-through"] of the law-spheres, is a religious theme in the Calvinistic life and worldview, a theme that reaches its highest tension through the immeasurable power of the all-ruling idea of predestination, taken in its universal meaning. Religious meaning must penetrate everywhere, in all law-spheres, and it must "complete" the meaning of the law-idea, although in this sinful dispensation this ideal is never fulfilled, except through Christ! (*Ibid.* at 61, my translation).

Michael Morbey has compared the modal aspects to the Orthodox idea of the Energies of God. [See *Morbey*]. Morbey points out that for Calvin, the creation order also served as a ladder of contemplation in his *meditatio coelestis* (or *futurae vitae*, described in Ronald S. Wallace: *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Eerdmans, 1961).

### XIII. Mysticism

Dooyeweerd's mysticism is not one of world-flight, nor of identity with God, but of nondualism or panentheism. We are "from, through and to" God as Origin (*NC I*, 9). God is the *Arché* of the cosmos, "through whom and to whom it has been created" (*NC I*, 102). Cf. Calvin: our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone, in whom one "lives and moves." (Calvin: *Institutes* Chapter I.1.1).

For Dooyeweerd, when we speak of law as "boundary" between God and creation, this refers to the *dependency* of creation on God (see *Tijdsprobleem*).

Kallistos Ware: "God Immanent yet Transcendent: the Divine Energies according to Saint Gregory Palamas" in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 157-168.

Vollenhoven's dichotomy of monism and dualism cannot comprehend this type of mysticism, and Vollenhoven rejects immediate religious experience (See *Dialectic*).

Dooyeweerd says that we participate [*wordt deel te hebben*] in Christ (*NC I*, 8, 99; II, 560; *WdW I*, 11, 64; II, 491). He also emphasizes the importance of religious self-reflection (*NC I*, 15, 165). (And see *Dialectic*).

And Dooyeweerd refers to our Sonship. The dynamis of the Holy Spirit brings us into the relationship of sonship to the Father. (*NC I*, 61). We may compare this with the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*, or divinization. See "Hesychasm: A Christian Path of Transcendence," [<http://www.omhros.gr/Kat/History/Txt/Rl/Hesychasm.htm>].

Morbey emphasizes that the Orthodox view is that we are united with the energies, but not the essence of God [See *Morbey*].

Kuyper relates the ideas of Christ's Sonship and our creation in the image of God:

Moreover, you must understand that all this rests upon sober reality. It is not semblance, but actual fact, because God created you after His Image, so that with all the wide difference between God and man, divine reality is expressed in human form. And that, when the Word became Flesh, this Incarnation of the Son of God was immediately connected with your creation after God's Image. (*To be Near Unto God*)

### XIV. Image of God

God expresses Himself in man as His image, and man in turn expresses (or reveals, *openbaart*) himself in the temporal world (*NC I*, 4; also *Curators*)

Man's original purpose was to help redeem creation. Creation fell with man. Need for Christ as the New Root.

Vollenhoven denied that man was created in the image of God (See *Dialectic*).

## XV Apokatastasis

Means, “the restoration of all things.” Used by Origen, Maximum and Gregory of Nyssa: [<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01599a.htm>]

Kuyper says,

God alone is here the goal, the point of departure and the point of arrival, the fountain, from which the waters flow, and at the same time, the ocean into which they finally return. (“Calvinism and Religion,” *Stone Lectures* 53). [<http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/calv/akstone2.html>].

Dooyeweerd says “. . . mankind embraced in Christ still shares in fallen human nature until the fulfillment of all things.” At that time, God’s righteousness will radiate even in Satan and the reprobate, as a confirmation of the absolute sovereignty of the Creator. (*Vernieuwing* 38; *Roots of Western Culture*, 38).

Dooyeweerd says that nothing of God’s creation can be lost (*NC* III, 524-525). There is a sense in which redemption has already occurred in the religious root and is only being worked out in time (*NC* II, 33). “Sin is not dialectically reconciled, but is really propitiated in Christ as the new root of the human race; the whole temporal cosmos, which was religiously concentrated in man, is in principle again directed toward God and thereby wrested free from the power of Satan.” (*NC* I, 175). Nothing in our apostate world can get lost in Christ (*NC* II, 34; I, 101).

See Morbey’s review of the term at [<http://geneva.rutgers.edu/src/faq/restoration.txt>].

## XVI Epektasis

Epektasis is a term used by Gregory of Nyssa to refer to the drawing of the soul ever onwards (Phil. 3:13). Dooyeweerd does not use this word, but he does refer to the supratemporal as dynamic, and to the idea of supratemporal fulfillment. See notes at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Epektasis.html>].

## XVII Other Reading:

Kallistos Ware:

- *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimirs Press, 1985)
- *The Orthodox Church*, new edition (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1993).

See also “The UnReformed Way: A Response to the Credenda Agenda,” which has some interesting discussion explaining Orthodoxy for Reformed readers:

[[http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/credenda\\_response.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/credenda_response.aspx)]

Father Symeon (Ottawa) has recently published a book to show how the “holistic” Orthodox perspective can be put into practice. It is called *The Five Pillars of Life: Reclaiming Ownership of Your Mind, Body and Future*. Another subtitle is *How Ancient Traditions Can Give you Back Tranquility, Control, Health, Love and Security*. It sounds interesting, and I have ordered a copy. [frysmeonrodger@rogers.com].

Blessings,

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