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Everything Matters: Gordon Spykman – A Neo-Calvinist Theologian



by Steve Bishop

Introduction

Neo-Calvinism has recently been re-discovering its theological roots. Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*¹ is a major theological outworking of his neo-Calvinism, and it should not be forgotten that Abraham Kuyper was also a theologian. His *Principles of Sacred Theology*,² *The Work of the Holy Spirit*,³ *God's Angels*,⁴ *Particular Grace*,⁵ and *The Revelation of St John*,⁶ are considered astute theological works.

Another theologian of the neo-Calvinist tradition is Gordon John Spykman (1926-1993).

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Spykman has demonstrated the ability to evade the scholastic approach associated with certain elements of Kuyper's and Bavinck's writings.⁷ Spykman's seminal work, *Reformational Theology*,⁸ is widely regarded as one of the most significant theological treatises of the twentieth century, and arguably the finest within the neo-Calvinist tradition. However, despite its importance, Brock and Sutanto, in their textbook *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction*,⁹ make no mention of Spykman. This essay aims to provide an overview of Spykman's work and to examine the reception of *Reformational Theology*.¹⁰

A brief biography

Spykman was born on 25 March 1926, in Holland, Michigan, the son of Albert and Dena (née Klompmaker), who had emigrated to Michigan in 1924. Spykman's young life did not begin well; sadly, his mother passed away when he was three years old, and he developed polio at age five.

He enrolled at Calvin College to pursue an A.B. and later graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with a Th.B. in 1952. During that year, he married Eleanor Hendriksen (1927–2014), received his CRC ministerial ordination, and traveled to Amsterdam to pursue his doctorate in theology at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. His Ph.D. dissertation, *Attrition and Contrition at the Council of Trent*,¹¹ was published in 1955 under the supervision of G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996).

After returning from the Netherlands, Spykman

served as the pastor of the Christian Reformed Church congregation in Blenheim, Ontario, from 1955 to 1959. He then dedicated over thirty years of his life to serving as a professor of theology at Calvin College, a position he held until his retirement in 1991.

Spykman served on several boards, including the Association for Public Justice (1972-1977), and he acted as the US secretary and correspondent for the International Association for Reformed Action (IARFA).¹² He also participated in the early stages of the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto. He lectured many times at the ICS¹³ and often brought Calvin College students with him to engage in co-sponsored symposia.¹⁴ He held the position of curator from 1980 to 1986 and was involved with the ICS as a member of the senate. On his involvement he had this to say: he hoped ICS will “keep the vision of reformational scholarship alive.” In a brief article in the ICS magazine *Perspective*, he explained that “Reformational scholarship is one way to give concrete expression to our biblical worldview. ... That is to say, it sweeps the whole front of life; it is not just creedal or ecclesiastical. It is reformational. Transformational. It touches life at all its points.”¹⁵

He also served on numerous educational, ecclesiastical, and political CRC study committees while at Calvin. One committee he chaired produced the contemporary confession *Our World Belongs to God*.¹⁶ Another was *The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority*.¹⁷

In 1973 he had the opportunity to visit and lecture in Australia,¹⁸ and in 1983 in South Africa. True to his bridge-building sensibilities, he suggested ways in which the ICS in Toronto and others might help those in Australia.

In his later years, he served as an associate pastor and as an elder at Plymouth Heights CRC, in Grand Rapids, until his death in 1996.

Key writings

His *Christian Faith in Focus* (1967) shows Spykman as the educator. He desired to communicate the gospel briefly and plainly.¹⁹ This book’s thirty-two brief chapters address a significant portion of the Christian gospel’s breadth in laypersons’ terms. It serves as a manual for studying the

Christian faith. Likewise, his *Never on Your Own*²⁰ and his earlier *Teach Me Thy Way*²¹ were aimed at a younger audience. In 112 short one- or two-page chapters, he expounds the Heidelberg Catechism in a friendly and accessible way, complete with cartoons. Since he believed that the catechism is biblical, confessional, and practical, these three terms also characterize Spykman’s approach.

Spykman’s *Pioneer Preacher*²² examines the sermons of A. C. van Raalte. It was published to coincide with the centenary of Van Raalte’s death and the centennial of Calvin College. In it, Spykman describes van Raalte as a “Modern Moses” and one of the leaders of the nineteenth-century Dutch immigration to Holland, Michigan (Spykman’s birthplace). Spykman recognizes the importance of van Raalte but is critical of his “two-storey theology,” that is, his nature/grace dualism.

In his *Society, State, & Schools*,²³ Spykman develops a case for structural and confessional pluralism (see below). Spykman revisits this theme several times.²⁴ This book was produced as part of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship (CCCS). Spykman was the coordinator.²⁵

Another CCCS project involving Spykman looked at Central America. This project resulted in his book *Let My People Live*.²⁶ Spykman was once again the project coordinator. Another theme Spykman addressed is the issue of human rights.²⁷ His main work is *Reformational Theology*, which will be considered subsequently.

Key themes

The lectures he gave as guest at Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education, South Africa, in 1983, were published as *Spectacles*.²⁸ In this book, he examines five historic and four contemporary views of Christianity before examining several key themes, or “biblical sightings.” These “sightings” are the Word of God, the creation order, anthropology, and hermeneutics.

The themes covered in *Spectacles* recur time and again in Spykman’s writings. These themes were to the fore in his magnum opus, *Reformational Theology* (1992). Topics including the Word of God, redemptive-historical hermeneutics, the creation order, sphere sovereignty, principled pluralism, and anthropology are central to his work. One

of the main innovations of Spykman's Reformed dogmatics is that it is centered on the biblical storyline of creation, fall, and redemption rather than the traditional approach—of God, humanity, Christ, Salvation, and so on.

Commenting on his *Reformational Theology*, Spykman wrote,

The title, *Reformational Theology*, is the outcome of a very self-conscious and deliberate set of decisions. It is intended to signal the tradition out of which this renewal project in Reformed

The Word of God, Spykman argues, has a three-fold form: the creational Word (creational), the written Word (inscripturated), and the incarnate Word (personified).

dogmatics is born and which helps give it shape and form. Nothing is ever gained, I believe, in theology or anywhere else, by trying to disguise one's religio-philosophical tradition. Tradition, like roots, belongs to the very lifeblood of theology. Detached from its tradition, theology, like a cut flower severed from its roots and sub-soil, soon withers in one's hand. No theology ever arises *de novo*.²⁹

Spykman stresses the point that theology functions from a particular philosophy. Unusual in theology books is a statement of prolegomena. Spykman is clear: "Show me your prolegomena, and I will predict the rest of your theology" (40); to that end, his prolegomena is 136 pages. The prolegomena section covers several important topics, including the relationship between theology and philosophy, the relationship between God and creation, theological language, the role of Scripture, the nature and method of theology, and the necessity and nature of a Christian philosophy.

It is this book that established Spykman as one of the foremost Reformed scholars. Significantly, the scholars Spykman mentions most are Bavinck, Berkhof (both Louis and Hendrick), Berkouwer, Calvin, Hoekema, Kuyper (58 times), and Ridderbos. Also mentioned, unusual in a theological tome, are Dooyeweerd (16 times) and Vollenhoven (six times). Spykman is heavily influ-

enced by Dutch Calvinists—he is unashamedly a neo-Calvinist theologian. In what follows, I examine some of the previously mentioned themes that shape Spykman's work.

The Word of God

The Word of God, Spykman argues, has a three-fold form: the creational Word (creational), the written Word (inscripturated), and the incarnate Word (personified). They are interrelated and mutually interpretative. He writes,

Taking Scripture seriously as the Word of God leads us to recognize that Scripture itself points to realities identified as Word of God—namely, God's Word beyond itself which is also for creation and his Word incarnate in Jesus Christ. Thus we come to see that the one Word of God comes to us in three forms or modes—creationally, inscripturated, and personified in the Messiah.³⁰

The term "creational Word" refers to the revelation of himself in the created order. Jesus Christ, who is the fullest and most complete revelation of God, is referred to as the "incarnate Word." The Scriptures, which are the infallible and final written account of God's self-revelation, are referred to as the "Word written." For him, the authoritative and infallible standard for understanding the creational Word and the incarnate Word is Scripture.³¹

Spykman illustrates the threefold nature of the Word with an example borrowed from Klaas Schilder.³² Schilder discusses the wise men in Matthew 2.³³ They were initially "attracted by God's Word in nature," symbolized by the light of the star. They were subsequently "redirected by God's Word in Scripture" (i.e. Micah 5:2), eventually arriving to worship "the Word made flesh." This progression led Spykman "to an increasingly fuller recognition of the tri-unitary character of the Word of God."³⁴

The creation order

It is no accident that Spykman discusses some key facets of creation in his *Reformational Theology*, under the heading “Hallmarks of a Christian Philosophy.” These hallmarks include an insistence on a firm and clear distinction between the Creator and his creation. He stresses the role that God’s Word plays in creation. In his “What makes Education Christian?” he states, “The norm for ... Christian education is the Word of God, manifest in creation, incarnate in Jesus Christ, and inscribed in the Bible.”³⁵

God’s creation is one of order, “not a chaos but a cosmos.”³⁶ It is an “integrally coherent, harmoniously interrelated world-order.”³⁷ And yet, despite sin God continues to sustain that order through his conserving or preserving grace. Spykman utilizes the notion of structure and direction, a distinction made popular by Al Wolters³⁸ but derived initially from D. H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978).³⁹ For Spykman, the distinction between structure and direction is crucial. As he explains,

[dualisms confuse] the structures of reality with the conflicting spiritual directions present in the world. They therefore trouble us needlessly with false antinomies so that, looking out on the world as it were with bifocal glasses, we always see things in bipolar tension (body and soul, realm of nature and realm of grace, daily bread and spiritual bread).⁴⁰

... At bottom, therefore, dualism may be defined as a confusion of structure and direction. It is a view of reality in which two earthly magnitudes are conceived of as standing in opposition to each other, and this opposition (antithesis) is read back ontologically into the very structures of creation.⁴¹

The structure of creation remains unchanged and intact despite the fall into sin—the creation ordinances, norms, and laws are still present in reality; what has changed though is the direction in which they are taken. The direction can be a positive one, in obedience to God (redemption), or a negative one, in disobedience to God. Thus, on the goodness of creation, he writes, “... it is of utmost importance to reaffirm the biblical teaching on the essential goodness of the original

creation.”⁴² Structure is unchanged; creation is still good.

For Spykman the creation order is “the permanent and normative setting” for human life in the world.⁴³ God created a cosmos, not a chaos—a fully cohesive, beautifully interconnected “world order.”⁴⁴ It is because of this that the sciences, for Christians and non-Christians, are feasible: all study is firmly grounded in the ontic order of creation, with all its varied topics of inquiry. Despite the fall, God’s original Word for creation still holds. He astutely observes,

Scripture redirects us to sense its constant holding power and calls us to an obedient response to it. By the light of Scripture, therefore, we are summoned to discern its abiding norms.⁴⁵

In *Spectacles*, he develops the theme of the creation order by examining the “opening-up of the seminal potentials given originally with the creation order.”⁴⁶ By opening-up, Spykman means an “unfolding process” by which the original tasks given in the cultural mandate (Gen 1: 26-30) gradually come into sharper focus. One example he gives of this unfolding, or opening up, is the development of distinct offices. In the Old Testament, we see the differentiation of prophets, priests, and kings, compared with the undifferentiated role of Samuel, who is prophet, priest, and king. It can also be seen in the church government: “apostolic office gradually became differentiated into the familiar threefold office of deacon, elder, and minister.”⁴⁷ And Paul, in 1 Corinthians, appeals to Christians to settle their disputes among themselves. He does not say that civil disputes can be settled in the church courts; thus, “Paul is appealing to the differentiated character of ecclesiastical and civil jurisdictions going back to the creation order.”⁴⁸

God mandates mankind, as his “junior partners,” to join him as coworkers in carrying on the work of the world. The original creation was good, but not yet perfect. It stood poised at the threshold of its historical development.⁴⁹ This coworking with God is possible because humanity is the image-bearer of God.

The structure of creation remains unchanged and intact despite the fall into sin—the creation ordinances, norms, and laws are still present in reality; what has changed though is the direction in which they are taken.

Anthropology: a view of humanity

Spykman maintains that the Bible is not a handbook on anthropology. The Scriptures provide us with a *view* rather than a *theory* of humanity.⁵⁰ In *Spectacles*, he begins by considering several reductionistic views of what it means to be human. He—consciously or otherwise—mentions reductions characterized by Dooyeweerd’s fifteen modal aspects; each one of the reductions absolutizes one (or more) of the modal aspects.⁵¹ These are summarized in Table 1. He then proceeds to propose an anthropology that is based on the “anthropological givens of creation.”⁵² It is an anthropology that recognizes the unity and diversity of human life-relationships and is developed through a biblically directed critical process of research. It is a holistic and integrated model of humanity. He rejects a two-component view, which he sees as a pagan intrusion into biblical thought.⁵³ Biblical concepts such as body, soul, inner man, outer man, flesh, heart, mind, and spirit all point “to the whole man looked at from different points of view.”⁵⁴

Spykman sees humanity as the image of God (*imago Dei*): “The Christian confession concerning the image of God captures the very heartbeat of the biblical view of man.”⁵⁵ He argues that the full sweep of history can be recapitulated as our moving from our original state as imagers of God, to de-imagers of God as a result of sin, to re-imagers of God as a result of being restored in Christ: “we moved from *conformitas* through *deformitas* to *reformitas*.”⁵⁶ He then makes an astute observation: “Imaging is not a choice but a given. We *are* imagers of God. Imaging God represents our very makeup, our constitution, our glory, and at the same time our high and holy calling in God’s world.”⁵⁷ The image of God is not some ontic quality within humanity; rather, he argues that it is “a relational, referential concept. ...It has rather a dynamic, active, functional meaning.”⁵⁸

Spykman’s anthropological reductions from *Spectacles*. (The ones in italics were not mentioned by Spykman.)

Modal aspects	Anthropological reduction
Pistic	Man is the measure of all things – almost a divine status
Ethical	A rational-moral being
Juridical	A pawn of the state
Aesthetic	<i>An animal that appreciates beauty and can engage in creativity</i>
Economic	A producer and a consumer
Social	A force in the class struggle
Linguistic	<i>A talking animal</i>
Historical	Force in the class struggle (also in the social aspect)
Analytical	An analogy with a computer (input, data processing, etc.)
Sensitive	A bunch of sub-conscious drives and appetites (Freud)
Biotic	A bio-chemical organism – a stimulus-response model (Skinner) Clue to humanity is sought in the diet – we are what we eat
Physical	A bit of cosmic garbage left behind aeons ago

Hermeneutics

Spykman rightly stresses that it is only in its context that the meaning of the Bible can be understood. The context must include the immediate context, the wider context, and ultimately the context of God’s Word as a whole. The narrative flow in the history of redemption is harmed by piecemeal, fragmented, fractured, proof-text-like interpretations of loosely connected parts of scriptural material. This point is so important for Spykman that he

asserts, “Those who choose to engage in such malpractice forfeit all claim to biblical support in their hermeneutic undertakings. For the authority of any given passage of Scripture is bound up intimately with its creationally based, covenantally focused, kingdom-oriented, Christ-centered thrust.”⁵⁹

On the creation-evolution controversy, he wisely comments, “If only we could break the deadlock in that unending round of conflicts between creationism and evolutionism. This raging controversy has consumed far too much valuable energy.”⁶⁰

Spykman sees the importance of dealing with the hermeneutical issue in how the book of Genesis is interpreted. To this end, he makes an interesting suggestion: he distinguishes between our present time (creational time – time as it is now) and primeval time (creating time – how time got to be the way it is).⁶¹ The transition he sees as occurring at the end of the sixth day.

Spykman believes that the true meaning of Scripture can only be disclosed contextually. The basic rule for biblical interpretation is, therefore, this: first, last, and always one must consider the context – the immediate context, the extended context, and ultimately the context of God’s Word in its fullness. A piecemeal, fragmentary, proof-textish exegesis of loosely dangling bits of biblical information does violence to the narrative flow in the history of redemption. Those who choose to engage in such malpractice forfeit all claim to biblical support in their hermeneutic undertakings. Woven into the fabric of Scripture’s many stories is its single story. And that biblical message must define our biblical method.

Principled pluralism

Another important theme that Spykman develops is *principled pluralism*,⁶² which is derived from Abraham Kuyper’s “sphere sovereignty.”⁶³ Although it receives little attention in *Reformational Theology*, it does shape Spykman’s approach to politics and education. Principled pluralism for Spykman offers a more nuanced view of society than the two extremes of individualism and collectivism. He sees it as being biblically grounded and a way of promoting diversity and social justice while respecting the sovereignty of God and the autonomy of different spheres of life.

He distinguishes between *structural pluralism* and *confessional pluralism*. He argues that the different spheres of life—such as family, church, school, business, government, and civil society—have their own norms, values, and purposes that are not reducible to the interests of the state or the individual. These spheres are seen as part of a larger social order that is grounded in a sovereignly established divine order for society.

These principles are worked out for education in his co-edited volume *Society, State, & Schools*. There the distinction between *structural pluralism* and *confessional pluralism* is worked out more thoroughly. *Structural pluralism* acknowledges that in God’s good creation, there are normative structures for societal life, including family, work, art, government. *Confessional pluralism* recognizes that we live in a religiously diverse creation, and consequently, *confessional pluralism* “seeks to foster the free exercise of religion, both privately and publicly.”⁶⁴

Pluralism therefore affirms the importance of a clear distinction between the state and the rest of society. The state too must be respected in its office as the co-existing and pro-existing agent to mete out public justice even-handedly among the ordered structures of a free society. It must, moreover, treat all religious groups in society impartially.⁶⁵

Spykman traces several aspects of *principled pluralism* to Calvin⁶⁶ and Althusius,⁶⁷ but it is Kuyper who fully developed the idea in his “sphere sovereignty.”⁶⁸ According to Kuyper’s *sphere sovereignty*, each sphere of life has its own sovereignty within its own sphere and should be free from interference from other spheres. It acknowledges the authority of God over all the spheres and promotes a diverse and decentralized social order, in which different associations and institutions can flourish and contribute to the common good.

The reception of Reformational Theology

As previously mentioned, Spykman’s book *Reformational Theology* was his magnum opus. How then was it received? To examine its reception, I will look at social media and book reviews. When *Reformational Theology* was first published in 1992, social media was in its infancy. So, while social media may not be a useful measure of its reception, it does give several pointers. On Amazon.com, it has

received both 5-star and 4-star reviews. Goodreads.com gave eleven ratings and two reviews, with an average of 4 stars. I have been unable to access the number of sales (quantitative aspect). However, it has been produced as a hardback, paperback, and an eBook, through the Logos software.⁶⁹ It is still available, which suggests that sales have been sufficient for its continued publication.

I have been able to track down nine reviews:⁷⁰ Field,⁷¹ Garrett,⁷² Jenson,⁷³ Wells,⁷⁴ Gaffin,⁷⁵ Williams,⁷⁶ Wolters,⁷⁷ Haas,⁷⁸ and Badock.⁷⁹ The

dominant influence of scholasticism in conservative Reformed dogmatics.” He observes, however, that Spykman’s “exposition of this concept is characterized by a lack of clarity as to the ontological status of the Word. He defines the Word as a third ontological factor, alongside God and creation, but he also describes it as being ‘fully and truly divine’ (p 75) and as ‘concreational’ and that it is ‘unthinkable apart from creation.’” Field also laments the lack of a detailed treatment of the doctrine of God in *Reformational Theology*.

The basic rule for biblical interpretation is, therefore, this: first, last, and always one must consider the context – the immediate context, the extended context, and ultimately the context of God’s Word in its fullness.

fact that there were just nine reviews rather than more is only an indicator of how little attention it initially received rather than its value. Most of the reviews were positive and were appreciative of the fresh approach—although one reviewer thought there was nothing new.

Three endorsements appear on the cover of the book: those of James Packer, John Bolt, and John Hesselink. James Packer (1926-2020), a former elder statesman of evangelicalism, is highly appreciative: “This rigorous neo-Kuyperian rethink of how theology should be done is a milestone in Reformed exposition. It is the most stimulating systematic that I have read for a long time.” Calvin Theological Seminary’s John Bolt is highly appreciative as well, calling it “A significant achievement.” Bolt writes, “Spykman provides a helpful overview of major discussions within twentieth-century continental Reformed theology.” John Hesselink is slightly more reserved when he writes, “One need not agree with all of the presuppositions of this approach in order to appreciate the fresh and rich results of this solid study.” Of course, these are edited by the publisher to illustrate the worth of the book. Nevertheless, they show that these Reformed theologians appreciate Spykman’s tome.

David Field, then of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, notes that *Reformational Theology* “provides a refreshing alternative to the

In a similar vein, James Garrett notes the lack of an “in-depth treatment of the doctrine of God and especially the Trinity.” As Spykman dialogues with primarily Reformed theologians, Garrett also suggests that this tendency “limits the usefulness of this insightful book outside the Reformed tradition.”

At the time of his review, Bishop Peter Jensen was the Principal of Moore Theological College, Australia. He remarks,

Spykman’s method has many advantages and is to be applauded as a step forward. It allows, for example, a more fruitful treatment of revelation and scripture. It makes the task of hermeneutics far easier and more natural—one of the chief difficulties experienced in any systematic work. For myself I believe that Spykman is not radical enough and would have benefited from giving further thought to the role of eschatology in scripture and in dogmatics.

Jensen too wonders “whether the Resurrection of Jesus is given its proper place.”

Gary D. Badcock, of the University of Edinburgh, is rather critical in his view of the book. He sees little that is new in it and notes its limitations:

The problem with his approach in this respect is that, despite claims to the contrary, the fruits of

modern biblical and theological scholarship are almost entirely ignored, while the doctrines of God and Christ remain relatively undeveloped. On the other hand, the need to relate real dogmatic theology to real life is clearly perceived and articulated, while Spykman's view of the relation between creation and redemption attempts a healthy corrective to the tendency in modern theology to fragmentation and subjectivism.

He concludes that "ecumenism" and "even real dialogue with the wider Reformed tradition, are foreign themes in Spykman's theology."

Wells,⁸⁰ of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is circumspect in his approval of *Reformational Philosophy*; he sees it as an "insider's book" and expresses criticism similar to that of Badcock:

This book is really written for those who have already given their consent to the Belgic Confession. For that reason, there are many assumptions made, comparatively little persuasive argument is offered, and modern thought is largely ignored.

He also notes several omissions:

On all of the important matters, they are conventionally Reformed, but the reader encounters them within a framework that has some surprises. For example, there is no sustained discussion of God, though a traditional view of God's trinity, character, and attributes is everywhere assumed; the Bible is likewise assumed to be the "revelational norm," but there is no discussion of biblical inspiration; the usual distinction between revelation that is natural and that which is special is discarded; the section on the person and work of Christ, though completely orthodox, is remarkably short; and the discussion on the Christian life—regeneration, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and election—comes toward the end of the book as a sub-topic under the church.

As well as his review⁸¹ of the book, Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., sees the book as important enough to be discussed in "a Festschrift for Wayne Spear."⁸² According to Gaffin, there is a certain dissonance between the stance Spykman adopts in the first

part of his work and what he sets out to do in the remainder. Gaffin argues that this tension is present primarily because of Spykman's concept of theology and, consequently, the relationship between theology and Scripture. This criticism results from Gaffin and Spykman's divergent views of theology. Gaffin suggests that Spykman's stress on the difference between pre-theoretical and theoretical thinking may be a particular basis for Spykman's rejection of theology in the Bible. Gaffin is also skeptical of Spykman's view of election and his rejection of "double predestination." He even suggests that Spykman's approach comes close to Arminianism!⁸³

One of the most positive reviews is by Redeemer University College's Gene Haas, though he does identify several "shortcomings." He notes a "complete lack of interest in the British Reformed tradition," notes that the "mission of the church is merely two pages," and states that "Spykman's reaction to the traditional discussions of the *ordo salutis* leads to very brief discussion of the various aspects of the process of salvation."

By contrast, Michael Williams, at the time an assistant professor at Dordt College, is effusive in his review: "...it represents a true milestone in Reformed dogmatics. Quite simply, this is a work that no one who has an interest in Reformed theology can afford not to read."⁸⁴ However, he seems to have reservations about Spykman's three-factor approach to Word as a mediator between Creator and creation. He suggests that it opens Spykman up to a Christological subordinationism, whereby Christ is the Word. Williams wonders, "But is Christ then to be understood as neither divine nor human?" Spykman's discussion of the image of God, he thinks, is "rather thin." Williams has identified a weakness in Spykman's approach and suggests that "Spykman needs to further develop and more clearly articulate the connection, and the distinction, between Christ the Word and God's Word as it is found in creation and published in Scripture."⁸⁵

Al Wolters is also very positive about the work. He rightly and astutely contends that "Spykman attacks what he calls the scholasticism and dualism of much of Reformed theology. He emphasizes that biblical religion is instead *historical* and *comprehensive*."

Overview of the reviews

The reviews provide key criticisms of the book. It may be churlish to note that several of the reviews could be paraphrased as “Spykman is not discussing my favorite subject in depth,” or “is not writing the book I expected to read...but has included elements of truth.” Likewise, we find true the old adage “reviews tell far more about the author than about the book under review.” Al Wolters in his review makes a pertinent point, which explains several criticisms of Spykman’s work: “The believer

3. Missing elements, many assumptions, and comparatively few persuasive arguments: Those missing elements the reviewers identify include a lack of doctrine of God and the Trinity, no discussion of biblical inspiration, a somewhat short section on Christology, and the fact that the place of the resurrection is not given its proper place. Of course, in a single-volume dogmatics, not all topics will be covered to the satisfaction of all. Spykman is writing a Reformed dogmatics, so he will

As regards the Trinity, he does stress the role of the Trinity in creation: God the Father is the initiator, God the Son is the mediator, and the Holy Spirit is the enabler of all things.

who has not got beyond the classic, scholastic view of theology will be either discomfited by the challenge or will experience liberation with Spykman’s paradigm.” The following is a summary of these critiques with a few interspersed comments:

1. A limited audience—those who hold to the Belgic confession: It is no accident that the most appreciative reviews (those of Williams, Wolters, and Haas) share most of Spykman’s presuppositions. This seems to bear out this criticism. However, all theologians write from their own perspective, and Spykman was a theologian from the Christian Reformed Church, a denomination that accepts the Belgic confession.⁸⁶ It is not surprising, then, that he writes from and for that perspective.
2. No interaction with non-Western theologians: This is a good point. However, most Reformed systematic theologies written in the 1990s and before don’t interact with non-Western theologians. If Spykman had been writing today, he might well have included mentioning Asian scholars such as Inagaki Hisakazu, John Choi, Surya Harefa, and Jonathan Chao, as there has been a recent resurgence of interest in Kuyper in Asia recently.⁸⁷

be assuming some givens, for example, the inspiration of Scripture, and the Trinity. As Gaffin observes, “Writing a one-volume dogmatics is a daunting undertaking. Inevitably, the author is faced with deciding what issues to include and how much attention to devote to each.” Spykman is writing a different dogmatics from those in the past, such as Louis Berkhof’s 1947 *Systematic Theology*. Spykman treats the topics in the context of the sweep of biblical history, not under the loci of topics. As regards the Trinity, he does stress the role of the Trinity in creation: God the Father is the initiator, God the Son is the mediator, and the Holy Spirit is the enabler of all things. He emphasizes the “comprehensive and balanced trinitarian approach first in the doctrine of creation, but then also through the fall and on into the doctrines of redemption and consummation.”⁸⁸ What he doesn’t do is discuss, for example, the social, economic, or immanent Trinity. He does not defend or justify the Trinity; rather, he assumes it. This is partly because he is a biblical rather than systematic theologian.

4. The place of the innovative but controversial three-factor alternative—an important point, in which Wolters summarizes the three-factor alternative: Spykman proposes giving

the Word of God as creation ordinance full weight, alongside God and creation in theological reflection. This idea of creational law is the flip side of the traditional Calvinist emphasis on God's sovereignty and becomes the cornerstone of Spykman's new paradigm. Through this new mode of thinking, he seeks to reorient all theological reflection. This three-factor approach is not new in Spykman. The Dutch Christian philosopher Vollenhoven advocated it. In many ways it poses several problems, perhaps more than it solves. There is need for further discussion and research on this topic, particularly as regards the ontic status of the Word: is it part of creation (as in the inscripturated Word) or creator (as in the incarnate Word)? Spykman attempts to explain it thus:

The Word is the Word *of* God. It is therefore distinguishable from God himself. At the same time it stands transcendentally above and holds for all creation. Perhaps we can capture this biblical emphasis best by saying that God's Word, that is, the Will of God *for* creation, is revealed *in* creation.⁸⁹

He goes on to explain that the Word of God is a single Word.

Ph.D.s on Spykman

A measure of a theologian's importance is whether he or she has become the topic of a Ph.D. dissertation. At least two doctoral dissertations deal with Spykman; in one he is the whole topic of consideration.

Syd Hielema deals with Spykman in his doctoral thesis on Bavinck,⁹⁰ where he briefly compares Spykman and Al Wolters with Bavinck—in particular, the relationship between God as creator and the goal of redemption. He rightly argues that for both Wolters and Spykman, their theology is rooted in the doctrine of creation, in the sense of a law order, and in the account of redemption as “creation-fall-redemption.”⁹¹

Spykman was the subject of Leonard's 2021 Theological University, Kampen, doctoral thesis.⁹² The focus of Leonard's dissertation was as follows:

Spykman's ... threefold doctrine of the Word of God centered within a three-factor theological method. The two-part research question takes the following form: How does Spykman's new paradigm reconstruct the insights of Reformed thinkers into a model that addresses contemporary questions regarding theological methodology, the nature of divine revelation, and critical points of doctrine? Does the model contribute to ongoing development of methodology and revelation from a Reformed perspective?⁹³

Leonard is muted in her view of Spykman. She concludes her thesis thus: His work does not completely achieve the “significant gain” he worked for, of relief from “dubious constructs of both scholastic ‘objectivism’ and existential ‘subjectivism.’” Rather, it serves as a signpost, marking methodological pitfalls for the benefit of future Reformed theologians while offering needed correctives on problems created by traditional methodologies.

Along the way, Leonard identifies what she suggests as weaknesses in Spykman's position. First, she asserts, “Though theology may have a more modest position than when it was hailed as queen of the sciences, Spykman's capitulation to theology as pistology feels somewhat foreign to his insistence on Scripture as norm.” The relationship between Reformational philosophy and theology has been thwart with difficulties. Wells even goes so far as to say, “Dooyeweerdians have been relentlessly hostile to theology.”⁹⁴ Leonard seems to be confusing accepting Scripture as norm with a rejection of pistology.

The term pistology is a term originally coined by John Vander Stelt, from the Greek *pistis*.⁹⁵ The primary concern of Vander Stelt (and Spykman) was the traditional definition of theology as the notion that God could be the object of theological investigation. As pistology is used as “an attempt to rid ourselves of the traditional, neoscholastic notion of theology and the implied dualisms in reality, life, encyclopedia and curriculum, we do well to pause, to redirect our focus, and to redefine the field of investigation of theology.”⁹⁶ Vander Stelt goes on:

I suggest that theology be understood in the sense of pistology, that is, as a theoretic analysis of the nature, norms, role and scope of the subjective and objective pistical dimension of creaturely existence. The object of theological inves-

tigation is no longer God, revelation or religion, but it is faith as a unique feature of creaturely existence.⁹⁷

This is the approach Spykman takes. It is difficult to see how this negates taking Scripture as a norm.

Second, Leonard contends, “[Spykman’s] approach has its place, but it also risks encouraging a transformationalist perspective that grants too much significance to the ‘already’ of redemption and cultivates too little personal Christian discipline in consideration of the ‘not yet.’” This is another critique that has often been levelled at the Reformational movement. It is not without foundation. This may be a reaction against pietism on the part of Reformational adherents.⁹⁸ However, Williams writes, “The emphasis on Christian piety and holiness that pervades the work, especially in the section on salvation, is a most welcome aspect of the book.”⁹⁹

Third, Leonard argues, “RT [*Reformational Theology*] is as much—if not more—a polemic against traditional theological methods as it is a dogmatic work.” There is some truth regarding this observation. Spykman’s approach is iconoclastic: he attacks syncretism, scholasticism, and dualism among other traditional methods. However, since he justifies his position, his approach is more than mere polemic.

And fourth, Leonard states, “Though Spykman’s orthodox understanding of the Holy Spirit and the personal facets of redemption are not at stake, these are underdeveloped themes in RT.” This critique raises valid points about the limited attention given to the Holy Spirit and his work within the Reformational movement.¹⁰⁰ It aligns with some concerns of Wolters within the broader context of neo-Calvinism.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

In his 1988 commencement address to Dordt College, Spykman closed with these words: “And as my parting word, this final reminder that nothing matters but the Kingdom of God, but because of the Kingdom, everything, literally everything, matters.” *Everything matters* is a fitting epitaph for Spykman. This neo-Calvinist approach motivated

his involvement in various study committees related to ecclesiastical, educational, political, and socio-economic issues. He advocated for an integrated approach to faith and reason, for a holistic approach to Christian scholarship. He emphasized the importance of a Christian worldview that encompasses all of life and is rooted in the sovereignty of God. As such, Spykman’s theological contributions to the development of neo-Calvinism warrant further examination.

Endnotes

1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 1-4, John Bolt (ed.); translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008).
2. Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1894); it was originally translated as *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, translation by J. Hendrik De Vries (New York: Scribner, 1898); it was later republished as *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954, 1968), translating only parts of volume 1, and all of volume 2 of the *Encyclopaedie*. Volume 3 remains untranslated.
3. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, translation by Henri De Vries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941). The original English edition was published in 1900 by Funk & Wagnalls. It was a translation of the three-volume *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest*, (Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1888 and 1889).
4. *God’s Angels His Ministering Spirits*, translation by R. Stiensma (Altona, Manitoba: Friesen Press, 2015).
5. Abraham Kuyper, *Particular Grace: A Defense of God’s Sovereignty in Salvation*, translation by Marvin Kamps (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2001).
6. This was the fourth volume of Kuyper’s series “Van de Voleinding” [Of the Consummation]. The first three volumes have yet to be translated. They were published posthumously. The articles were a series in *De Heraut* from 1911-1918. The published volumes (1929, 1930) were edited by Kuyper’s son H.H. Kuyper. Other theological works of Kuyper yet to be translated include his student notes *Dictaten dogmatiek van Dr. A. Kuyper*, and his commentary on the Heidelberg catechism, *E Voto*, on which J.C.

Rullman [1876–1936] comments, it “is indeed a massive edifice of monumental significance. It is the culmination of his entire theological system, in connection with the most precious elements that our confessions have offered us.” J. C. Rullman, *Abraham Kuyper een Levensschets* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1928), 245. The original reads, “Toelichting van den Heidelbergschen Catechismus, maar dat inderdaad een massief bouwwerk is van monumentale beteekenis. Het is de saamvatting van heel zijn theologisch stelsel in aansluiting aan het kostelijkste dat onze belijdenisschriften ons hebben geboden.”

7. See for example, Klaas Schilder, “I Believe a Holy, Catholic, Christian Church, the Communion of Saints: Lecture on the Creed (1935),” in *Schilder Reader*, George Harinck, Marinus de Jong, and Richard Mouw (ed.) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022); Cornelius van Til, “Bavinck the Theologian, A Review Article,” *Westminster Theological Journal* XXIV (1) (1961): 1-17; and Herman Dooyeweerd, “Kuyper’s Wetenschapsleer,” *Philosophia Reformata* 4 (4) (1939): 193—an English translation by Danie Strauss is in Steve Bishop and John H. Kok (ed.) *On Kuyper* (Dordt College Press, 2013). I will leave aside the issue of whether this claim is valid or not. Part of the problem is the definition of scholasticism. A response to Van Til can be found in Brian G. Mattson, “Van Til on Bavinck: An Assessment,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 111-127.
8. Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Philosophy: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).
9. Cory C. Brock and N. Gray Sutanto, *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2023).
10. John Vander Stelt described Spykman as “A man who has too often been marginalized,” John C. Vander Stelt, *Faith Life and Theology: A Reorientation* (Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 2020), v.
11. Gordon Spykman, *Attrition and Contrition at the Council of Trent* (Kok: Kampen, 1955).
12. He took over this position in 1973 from Jacob Tunis Hoogstra (1883-1984).
13. “The Bridging Task of Christian Higher Education,” May 1987—annual ICS membership meeting. In it he stressed the need to build bridges between institutions of Christian higher education. *Perspective* 21.3 (1987): 1-3.
14. See, for example, Peter van Geest, “Institute Hosts Calvin Interim,” *Perspective* 11 (2) (1977): 20-21.
15. “Meet a Senator: Gordon Spykman,” *Perspective* 21.6 (1987): 11.
16. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1987). The first edition was approved by the CRC Synod in 1986. Other members of the original committee included A. Kuyvenhoven, M. Greidanus, T. Hofman, R. Mouw, and C. Tuyl. See, Morris N. Greidanus, “The Making and Shaping of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony.” Online: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/contemporary-testimony/our-world-belongs-god/inside-story> [Date of access 27 July 2023].
17. Report 44 *The Nature And Extent Of Biblical Authority* (Arts. 51, 52) (1972), 493-546. Others involved in the writing of the report were A. Bandstra, D. Holwerda, F. Klooster, J. Vos, and M. Woudstra; Spykman was the reporter. As part of the report, seven points of pastoral advice were provided with elaborations of each point. The Report is available in full here: https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/response_biblical_authority_1972.pdf [Date of access 1 October 2023].
18. Gordon Spykman, “Much is Happening in Australia,” *Perspective* 6.2 (Jan/Feb 1973): 17-18.
19. *Christian Faith in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967). (Also, Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 1992).
20. *Never on Your Own* (Grand Rapids, MI: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1969).
21. *Teach me Thy Way*, with J. M. Snapper (Grand Rapids, MI: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1965).
22. Gordon J. Spykman, *Pioneer Preacher, Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte: A Study of His Sermon Notes* (Grand Rapids: Heritage Hall, 1976).
23. Gordon J. Spykman (ed.), *Society, State, & Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: CCCS/ Eerdmans, 1981).

24. See, for example, Gordon J. Spykman, "A Case for Pluralism in Education," *Christian Educators Journal* 18 (April/May 1979): 4-6, 26. His chapter "The principled pluralist position," in *God And Politics: Four Views On The Reformation Of Civil Government: Theonomy, Principled Pluralism, Christian America, National Confessionalism*, Gary Scott Smith (ed.) (Phillipsburg, N.J. : Presbyterian and Reformed, 1989), 78-99; and "Pluralism: our last hope?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 10.2 (1981): 99-115.
25. Others involved included Rockne McCarthy, Donald Oppewal, and Walfred Peterson.
26. Gordon J. Spykman, *Let My People Live: Faith and Struggle in Central America*. (co-editor with Guillermo Cook, *et al*) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).
27. *RES Testimony on Human Rights* (Grand Rapids: RES, 1983); *Human Rights: A Biblical Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1990); "Human Rights: A Selective Bibliography," *Transformation* 1.3 (1984): 16-18.
28. Gordon J. Spykman, *Spectacles: Biblical Perspectives on Christian Scholarship* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Studies in Christian Scholarship, 1985).
29. Gordon J. Spykman, "A New Paradigm for Doing Reformed Dogmatics," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 26 (2) a1415. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v26i2.1415>.
30. Spykman, *Spectacles*, 11-12.
31. He published several articles on the nature of the Scriptures, including: "Biblical authority and the scientific enterprise," *Pro Rege* 5 (December 1976): 11-17; "Biblical Studies," and "The Place and Role of the Bible in the School," in *Shaping School Curriculum: A Biblical View*, edited by Geraldine J. Steensma and Harro W. Van Brummelen (Terre Haute, Ind.: Signal Pub./Consulting Corp., 1977).
32. I am grateful to Mark Roques for drawing my attention to this.
33. Klaas Schilder, *Licht in de Rook* (Delft: W. D. Meinema, 1951). I have been unable to trace the reference to the wise men in this book. It is available in *Om woord en kerk. Preeken, lezingen, studiën en kerkbode-artikelen*. Deel 1 (ed. C. Veenhof) (Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, Goes 1948): it was a sermon delivered in Gorinchem, 1920. A translation by Arjan de Visser is available here: canadianreformedseminary.ca/img/site/PDFs/Would%20Schilder%20Pass%20Classis%20OUTLINE.pdf Date of access 11 October 2023. There he has explained:
 1. They are lured by the Word of God in creation.
 2. They are guided by the Word of God in Scripture.
 3. They kneel before the Word of God in the flesh.
34. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 91.
35. Gordon J. Spykman, "What Makes Education Christian?" Convention Address at the 1971 NUCS Convention, National Union of Christian Schools Directory, 1971-72 (Grand Rapids: NUCS, 1971), 229. Cited in Harry L. Downs, *Power-Word and Text-Word in Recent Reformed Thought* (New Jersey: The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 10.
36. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 180.
37. Spykman, *Spectacles*, 20.
38. Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 59.
39. See, for example, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven "Faith: Its Nature and Structure, and its Significance for Science." English translation of *Geloof en Wetenschap: Levensbeschouwing en levenshouding van de academicus* (Utrecht-Nijmegen: N. V. Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1950).
40. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 15.
41. *Ibid.*, 67.
42. *Ibid.*, 144.
43. Spykman, *Spectacles*, 20.
44. *Ibid.*, 20.
45. *Ibid.*, 21.
46. *Ibid.*, 24-25.
47. *Ibid.*, 28.
48. *Ibid.*, 28.
49. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 256.
50. *Ibid.*, 205.
51. See, for example, *Herman Dooyeweerd, A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Volume II. The

- General Theory of the Modal Spheres (Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 1975).
52. Spykman, *Spectacles*, 91.
 53. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 233.
 54. *Ibid.*, 236.
 55. *Ibid.*, 223.
 56. Spykman, *Spectacles*, 38. In this he concurs with George Eldon Ladd who wrote “Recent scholarship has recognized that such terms as body, soul, and spirit are not different, separable faculties of each individual but different ways of viewing the whole man.” *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 457.
 57. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 224.
 58. *Ibid.*, 228.
 59. *Ibid.*, 167.
 60. *Ibid.*, 151
 61. *Ibid.*, 154.
 62. See, for example, Spykman, “A Case for Pluralism in Education”; Spykman, “The Principled Pluralist Position”; and Spykman, “Pluralism: Our Last Hope?”
 63. Gordon J. Spykman, “Sphere-Sovereignty in Calvin and the Calvinist Tradition,” in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, David Holwerda and John H. Bratt, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 163- 208.
 64. Spykman, “Pluralism: Our Last Hope?” 112.
 65. *Ibid.*, 114-115.
 66. *Ibid.*, 101-104.
 67. *Ibid.*, 104-107.
 68. Spykman et al. (ed.) *Society, State, & Schools*, 162.
 69. Details:<https://www.logos.com/product/168965/reformational-theology-a-new-paradigm-for-doing-dogmatics> [Date of access 26 September 2023].
 70. My thanks to Dr Max H. Stoak of Regis University, Denver, for help in tracking down these reviews.
 71. David N. Field, Review of “*Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*,” *Journal of Theology For Southern Africa* (1992): 71-72.
 72. James Leo Garrett, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* (1992): 139-141.
 73. Peter F. Jenson, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *The Reformed Theological Review* 52 (1993): 89-90.
 74. David F. Wells, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *Theology Today* 50.1 (1993): 136-138.
 75. Richard Gaffin Jr, “A New Paradigm in Theology?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 379–390
 76. Michael Williams, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *Pro Rege*, 20.4 (1992): 30-32. Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol20/iss4/7
 77. Al Wolters, “Spykman Work Overturns Old Models,” *The Banner* (August 9, 1993).
 78. Gene Haas, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 501-506.
 79. G. D. Badcock, Review of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997): 113-114. doi:10.1017/S003693060003619X.
 80. Wells, Review of *Reformational Theology*.
 81. Gaffin, “A New Paradigm in Theology?”
 82. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “The Vitality of Reformed Systematic Theology,” in *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Dr. Wayne R. Spear*, Anthony T. Selvaggio (ed.) (Philadelphia: P&R Publishing, 2007). Gaffin also notes “This chapter was first delivered as a paper, entitled ‘The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics,’ at the International Theological Congress in Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands, in June 1994 and subsequently published in the proceedings of that Congress (now out of print), J. M. Batteau, J. W. Maris, and K. Veilig, eds., *The Vitality of Reformed Theology* (Kampen: Kok, 1994), 16–50.
 83. On Spykman’s approach to election, see Gordon J. Spykman, “A New Look at Election and Reprobation,” in *Life is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner*, Henry Vander Goot (ed.) (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1981), 171-191.

84. Williams, Review, 31.
85. *Ibid.*, 31.
86. “Belgic Confession”: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession>. [Date of access 31 September 2023].
87. One such example is the Asia Kuyper Institute, founded by Surta Harefa, Junggi Kim, and David Kristanto. <https://www.asiakuyper.org/> [Date of access: 27 September 2023].
88. Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 142.
89. *Ibid.*, 79.
90. Syd Hielema “Herman Bavinck’s Eschatological Understanding of Redemption,” *ThD Thesis* (Wycliffe College, Toronto, 1998).
91. *Ibid.*, 305.
92. Carol Grace McMahan Leonard, “Gordon J. Spykman’s New Paradigm: *A Proposal For Renewed Theological Method In The Reformed Tradition*,” PhD thesis (Kampen University, 2021).
93. As Leonard focuses on Spykman’s three-factor approach, it will be mentioned here only in passing.
94. Wells, Review, 138.
95. John C. Vander Stelt, “Theology or Pistology?” in *Building the House: Essays on Christian Education* James A. De Jong and Louis Y. Van Dyke, eds. (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 1981), 115-35. See also, Vander Stelt’s “Theology as Study of Faith-Life,” *Pro Rege* 18.1, (1989), 15–23; and his *Faith Life and Theology*.
96. Vander Stelt, “Theology or Pistology,” 125. See also, Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, 104-105.
97. Vander Stelt, “Theology or Pistology,” 126-127. Spykman affirms this position and cites part of this in *Reformational Theology*, 105.
98. A similar accusation against the Reformational movement is that it downplays evangelism, though for a Dooyeweerdian approach to evangelism see Mark Yeadon and Mark Roques, “Dooyeweerd, Modal Aspects and Dynamic Evangelism,” *Koers—Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 88(1) (2023). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.88.1.2528> as they state in their introduction: “A Dooyeweerdian approach to scholarship is sometimes accused of being too academic and of little application to the lives of ordinary people. This paper aims to refute this prejudice. We will show the striking fruitfulness of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy to street outreach and evangelism.”
99. Williams, Review, 32.
100. A critique that could not be leveled at Kuyper, who devoted a whole book on *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. As Brock and Sutanto note “In Kuyper’s corpus especially, there is immense attention given to the work of the Spirit.” *Neo-Calvinism*, 144. See also Vincent E. Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005) and “Called Back to Stewardship: Recovering and Developing Abraham Kuyper’s Cosmic Pneumatology,” in Steve Bishop and John Kok, eds., *On Kuyper*, 107-114.
101. Al Wolters, “What is to be Done...Toward a Neocalvinist Agenda? *Comment* (December 2005) online: <https://comment.org/what-is-to-be-done-toward-a-neocalvinist-agenda/>