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Christian Higher Education in Global Perspective: A Call to Ongoing Reformaton*

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The title is somewhat misleading. It holds out promises too large to keep. Covering the contemporary waterfront of Christian higher education within the Reformed tradition is beyond anyone's reach. Yet in our mind's eye we must try to keep the big picture before us. I shall therefore focus on the following two aspects of the topic at hand:

- (1) The challenge to think about Christian scholarship in global dimensions.
- (2) In doing so, to capitalize on the riches of our Reformed tradition.

At the outset, then, it is a matter of high priority in developing Kingdom strategy to

open our minds as widely as possible to the need for a global perspective on Christian higher education within the Reformed tradition. This is important for at least four reasons.

The first reason is rooted in *creation*. In our various academies we deal constantly with all kinds of creatures great and small within the wide expanse of God's creation. As a covenantal enterprise, the parameters of Christian scholarship are as universal as that all-embracing covenant given in and with and for the creation. Scholarship is accordingly one way of responding in covenant obedience to the cultural mandate,

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both as benediction and as command. It is indeed limited in its methods. It is unlimited, however, in its scope. There are no alien territories. Christian academic freedom means that through the liberating, life-renewing work of our Redeemer-King all of created reality has been re-opened for systematic discovery, disciplined analysis, and fruitful exploration. God's Word for creation, his general revelation, lays its delightfully heavy claim upon us in every field of scientific investigation. Biblically-directed education, therefore, involves theoretical reflection (potentially at least) on all the richly diversified aspects of our practical experience. Then at last we can make headway in shedding the false image of ivory-tower speculation. For theory and practice are actually not adversaries at all. They go hand-in-hand.

In our theorizing, at its best, what we try to do is to account for and gain meaningful and serviceable insight into the fundamental realities of our everyday life together on this planet. Though practical knowledge is primary, and theoretical inquiry a secondary way of knowing things, both open wide the windows of our mind to the unfolding drama of history as God's way with his world and our place and task in it.

The creation order is therefore a first ground for this global perspective. Christian scholarship must accordingly be anchored securely in the very structures of creation, in God's general revelation, in the call to covenant obedience, in the cultural mandate. This cluster of Biblical teachings, taken synoptically, reflects the normative claim of God's Word upon our entire academic enterprise.

A second reason for opening up a global perspective falls more squarely on the response side of the God/man relationship—namely the Biblical idea of *office*. This too is crucial to a clear understanding of our calling in Christian higher education. The idea of office is woven deeply into the fabric of Biblical revelation. In both the Old and New Testament we meet mankind-in-office

clothed in the concept of "stewardship." Believers are appointed as stewards, caretakers, trustees of the manifold riches of God's creation. All God's people are viewed in Scripture as belonging to a royal priesthood, a prophetic order.

Gradually, however, as the early Christian community moved along historically across the unfolding centuries and evolved into the Roman Catholic Church of the medieval era, a radical shift took place. The Biblical idea of the office of all believers became politicized and ecclesiasticized. Thus its scope was seriously reduced. It became identified rather exclusively with the prince in the realm of nature and the priest in the realm of grace. Office-in-the-state and office-in-the-church became enmeshed in that typically medieval Greco-Christian dualistic tension between the supernatural and natural orders, seeking in vain to reach a synthesis. Common people, however, and even scholars like Galileo, were left largely disenfranchised.

It stands as an abiding hallmark of the Reformation, therefore, that reformers like Luther and Calvin set out to recover and rearticulate the global dimensions of the Biblical idea of office. They proclaimed anew the universal office of all believers as prophets, priests, and kings. And this holds, they affirmed, not only for clergy and civil magistrates, but also for cobblers and housewives, for scholars and teachers and students.

Now, during the past couple of centuries, the spirit of modernity, unleashed by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, has posed new threats to the Biblical idea of office. It has been undermined on the one hand by a strange assortment of egalitarian and democratizing movements, and on the other hand by various forms of totalitarian ideology. Among both right-wingers and left-wingers, therefore, the fundamental unity as well as the rich diversity of the Biblical idea of human office has been eclipsed. This is true of those holding academic office too—think of Solzhenitsyn in the East and numerous Christian scholars in secular

universities in the West.

Faced with this situation, if we are serious about honoring a global perspective in Christian higher education, we must seek to rehabilitate the Biblical idea of office as understood within the reformational tradition.

In doing so, one good starting-point is the thinking of Calvin. In his *Institutes*, dealing with the threefold mediatorial office of Christ, he applies this teaching directly to the life of the Christian community. Of Christ's prophetic office Calvin says: "Outside Christ there is nothing worth knowing, and all who by faith perceive what He is like have grasped the whole immensity of His heavenly benefits." Of His kingly office he says: "Such is the nature of His rule, that He shares with us all that He has received from the Father." Of His priestly office he says: "Christ plays the priestly role, not only to render the Father favorable to us by an eternal law of reconciliation, but also to receive us as His companions in this great office" (II, 15, 2-6).

What Calvin said on office was not, of course, the last word. But it was a good first word, re-articulated against the background of centuries of neglect by the medieval church. Calvin sowed seeds which continue to bear fruit. He opened doors through which later reformational thinkers could enter more fully into the meaning of the Biblical idea of office.

One such thinker, coming three centuries later, was Kuyper. In his Stone Lectures on Calvinism in 1898, he elaborates the idea of office as man's position-in-relationship. Man stands in a threefold relationship: he is servant of God, guardian of his fellowmen, and steward of the resources of the cosmos. We are thus three-dimensional creatures. This stance within creation also serves to define our scientific callings. Accordingly Kuyper made the bold claim that in Calvinism "a unity of world-view is manifest, which impressed a scientific stamp upon our whole existence," so that it "fostered love for science" and "restored science to its proper domain" (p. 117).

With Kuyper as a renewed point-of-departure, many others, standing in the Neo-Kuyperian tradition, took these ideas a step or two further. In exercising his office, man always occupies a position in-between. He stands both under and over: under God who is sovereign, and over the rest of creation for which he is responsible. He both serves God and rules in His world. He is both answerable to God and accountable for his fellow creatures. This definition of office as an in-between relationship creates both the possibilities for Christian scholarship and delineates its limitations.

Every office in life, including academic office, lays a threefold claim upon us. We are obliged to recognize, first, that whatever academic authority and freedom we exercise rests upon a divinely *delegated* authority. Supreme and absolute sovereignty belongs to God alone. But He has bestowed a subservient sovereignty upon those who play leadership roles in Christian higher education. The resurrected Christ rightly lays His unlimited claim upon us all when He says, "All authority is mine in heaven and on earth." But He is pleased to concretize his rule over Christian scholarship by distributing his royal gifts of culturally formative power, of prophetic utterance, of priestly care to us, his academic servants. What King Jesus said politically to Pilate also holds academically: "You would have no authority at all if it were not given to you from above." We are accordingly called to be God's vicars, his representatives in our various centers of learning.

The Biblical idea of office involves, secondly, a profound sense of *responsibility* for the way we exercise that office. As stewards of academic insight we must, sooner or later, give an account of our stewardship to the Giver of "every good and perfect gift." Our primary accountability is, therefore, not to our constituencies, not to our administrators, not to reputable people in the academic community, not even to our students, much less to ourselves, but to Christ the Lord of all life and learning. We

must, therefore, ourselves, learn, and also teach our students to learn what it means to "lead every thought captive in obedience to Christ the Lord." His Word is the ultimate reference-point for all we undertake educationally.

This leads then to a third dimension of the Biblical idea of office as it functions in academics. Such responsible authority finds its end in *service*. We may not turn it into a self-serving means to some ulterior end, such as personal prestige, pride, or promotion. Office is for self-sacrificing, self-expending service. Academic office is not for serving ourselves, but for serving our students, for serving the Christian community, ultimately for serving the coming of the Kingdom. Only so can we conduct our research, our scholarship, our teaching, all our academic activities, that one day we may hear the Lord's "Well done, you good and faithful servants!"

A third, more strictly contemporary reason for this global perspective is this: in countless ways it is becoming increasingly evident that we all live and move and have our being in a *shrinking world*. Trans-cultural issues, therefore, lie inescapably at the very doorstep of our colleges, universities, and seminaries, and other institutions of advanced study. Increasingly, therefore, like-minded students and teachers from around the world should be brought together to share their richly diversified insights in our various Christian centers of learning. The treasures of the nations, as well as our global problems, must find their way into our various programs of study. Reformational learning must seek to shake off its lingering provincialisms, and as much as possible go ecumenical, not in its confessional stance, but in the scope of its embrace.

This poses real opportunities, of course. But it also confronts us with real problems. Authentic ecumenicity among Christian churches, even among Reformed churches with the same confessions, has proved to be a very illusive goal. Real unity in a badly

broken world—is it simply a mirage? Yet perhaps what seems impossible ecclesiastically is more attainable academically. But here, too, we face great problems. For during the past decade we have witnessed concerted efforts aimed at bringing about closer cooperation among Christian institutions for higher education within the Reformed tradition. Again, however, along with certain modest gains, insurmountable obstacles emerged, blocking the way toward closer cooperation. Yet hope springs eternal in the heart of our Christian communities. For now, fortunately, there are new signs of progress, born with the formation of an international council of Christian scholars working within the Reformed tradition.

What Calvin said on office was not, of course, the last word. But it was a good first word. . .

These reflections prompt a fourth and final point in support of this global perspective. Most fundamentally, we must learn to think globally because Biblically-directed education is education in the service of the *coming Kingdom* of Jesus Christ. That Kingdom is cosmic in scope. In the beginning God created his Kingdom. Rebellion then set in among its citizens. But the great Usurper could not dethrone the Lord of heaven and earth. In the protevangelium of Genesis 3:15, God promised a coming victory. Through a series of mighty acts in the unfolding drama of redemption, God intervened to restore his Kingdom, beginning with the calling of Abraham, and centering his saving work on the prophets, priests, and kings who labored among his chosen people Israel. Then in the fullness of the times, at the

crossroads of history, God's covenant-keeping promises reached their crowded climax in life, death, and resurrection of King Jesus. In Him the Kingdom has been ushered in as a present reality as well as a future hope on the way to its final consummation. We now live in Biblical tension between the Kingdom "already" at hand in principle, but "not yet" fully realized in perfection. Standing between the Kingdom-come and the Kingdom-to-come we hear the insistent call to erect educational signposts pointing the way of the Kingdom-coming. This is one way of giving substance to our daily prayer, "Thy Kingdom come!"

With Herman Ridderbos, therefore, "I am conscious of drawing the circles here very large indeed, but surely not larger than Scripture itself, when it speaks repeatedly of Christ (the King) as Head of all things and of the fullness in which He makes the church to share precisely because He is Lord of all." From this Ridderbos draws the conclusion that

. . . the principle which functions in a Christian organization is, therefore, by no means only, or even in the first place, that of "*Christian antithesis*." Before all else it is the principle of Christian *thesis*, namely, that of the cohesion of the body of Christ. . . . Therefore, with respect to a Christian organization for political or social or scientific activity, one must not only ask whether it is Christian, but also whether it is political, whether it is social, whether it is scientific. The adjective "Christian" may not engulf the substantive before which it is placed. . . . For any Christian organization, Christian presuppositions must be present in the first place in a prophetic consciousness of having been called to a definite task. But the political or social or scientific presuppositions must also be present (*The Kingdom of God and Our Life in the World*, p. 11).

By way of summary, then, those involved in Christian higher education within a reformational perspective must learn increasingly to think globally in view of these four considerations: (1) the wide horizons of the creation order, (2) the Biblical idea of universal office, (3) our shrinking world situation, and (4) the cosmic dimensions of the coming Kingdom.

With this let us turn now to the second major point—how to capitalize on the riches of our Reformed heritage.

To think globally, in a distinctively Biblical-Reformed-Christian way, is to think wholistically. It means to recognize the religious wholeness of our life in God's world. It calls us to affirm the integral unity which God has built into the richly diversified fabric of creation. It involves a self-conscious and deliberate effort to develop what Francis Schaeffer calls "a unified field of knowledge." In his little book, *Escape from Reason*, he sketches with rapid strokes the "upstairs/downstairs" problem that has plagued Western thought over roughly the past half-millennium, since the grand nature/grace design of Thomas Aquinas became a dominant paradigm in Western Christian thinking and living. Schaeffer is right in his analysis of the problem. The answer he offers is, however, only a half-way house solution. We must work out a more consistent totality-picture.

This requires a great deal of ongoing careful and prayerful analysis directed and illumined by the Word of God. Central to such critical reflection is our commitment to honor a number of *classic Christian distinctions*. For, as has been said, "he who distinguishes well, teaches well."

Foremost among the distinctions we must keep clearly in mind is that between God and the world—the *Creator-creature* distinction. This idea is basic in Biblical revelation. It is also fundamental to any truly Christian world-view. At the very heart of the Reformed tradition lies the confession of the absolute transcendence of God. Reformational thinking, therefore, strongly resists every in-

clination toward blurring the boundary between the Creator and his creation (cf. Kuyper's *Verflauwing der grenzen*). In doing so it differs sharply with the traditional Roman Catholic idea of a "hierarchy of being" (*analogia entis*) which spans the distance between God and his creatures; with the pantheizing tendencies of modern Liberalism; and with the prevailing monist theologies of our day which collapse God into an open-ended historical process. Rather it takes its stand with Luther, stating boldly, "Let God be God."

This "otherness" of God is qualitative, not merely quantitative. It is a difference in kind, not merely in degree. There are no common denominators between God and man—neither in terms of being, nor time, nor reason, nor language. There are no bridges we can build—whether mystical, or theoretical, or of any other kind—to close the gap between the Creator and his creatures. For God has established once and for all time his own uniquely exclusive "Bridge," namely, his Word, "through whom all things were made," in whom "He upholds all things by the Word of his power," which Word "became flesh and dwelt among us," so that there is now and forever but "one Mediator between God and man, even the man Jesus Christ." There are, therefore, no attributes, "communicable" or "incommunicable," which may be used to legitimize the notion of shared reality between the divine and the human—whether construed as shared being, or shared time, or shared rationality, or shared language.

Yet, contact is possible, and real, and even inescapable, and response as well, whether obedient or disobedient. Such communion and communication is rooted in the reality of revelation. That then opens up a second crucial distinction—that between *revelation* and *response*. On the one hand, there is the Word of God which comes to us from "the Other Side," God's "side," a Word which addresses us, impinges itself upon us, and claims us. It is ultimately a single Word, the one comprehensive Word of the Lord, which

embraces "the full counsel of God." But, as a single shaft of light, passing through a prism, gets refracted into a profusely diversified spectrum of variously colored rays of light, so God's single-minded Word gets differentiated into a rich cluster of inter-related words by which the Will of the Lord for our lives is made concretely relevant in our many life-relationships, in the several spheres of our cultural endeavors, and in the various branches of scholarship.

Given the Creator/creature distinction, and given furthermore the broken covenantal fellowship resulting from sin, divine revelation always involves condescension on God's part. He stoops to conquer us. As Calvin puts it: "Who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, so God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us? Thus, such forms of speaking (i.e., revelation) do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of Him to our slight capacity. To do this He must descend far beneath his loftiness" (*Institutes*, I, 13, 1).

On our part, Calvin goes on to say, the only proper response is humility. Learning, without a true knowledge of God, leads to that ultimate vice, pride; with a true knowledge of God, it leads to that prime virtue, humility. In thus responding to revelation, we should not, according to Calvin, seek to know God "in himself" (*ad intra*). For this is vain and idle high-flown speculation. Rather true piety is a religious response born of God's revelation mediated to us in creation, in Scripture, and in Christ. He takes the initiative in coming out to us in his works and in his words (*ad extra*). We are thus but responding creatures.

Applying these insights to people involved in art and science, Calvin says that all such learning is "an unstable and transitory thing in God's sight, when a solid foundation of truth does not underlie it." Yet, we may not forget that God "distributes to whomever he wills for the common good of mankind" such "most excellent gifts" of understanding.

So "if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance," for "if we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God" (*Institutes*, II, 2, 14-16). Thus, for Calvin, the bottom-line is not the *gloria humanitatis*, but the *admiratio Dei*. For divine revelation has a way of breaking through even the most apostate systems of thought as they respond to it.

Pausing a moment to summarize these latest comments, we can begin to sense the importance of distinguishing (1) between God and creation, (2) between God and his revelation, and (3) between divine revelation and human response. These perspectives suggest strongly a three-factor view of all reality. Kuyper points clearly in this Calvinian direction in holding that the three fundamental truths undergirding all Christian scholarship are (1) the revealing God, (2) the responding man, and (3) revelation as the spiritual link binding these covenant partners together. These insights were reaffirmed more recently by Vollenhoven in his affirmation: "My life-long concern can be summarized in three words: God, Law, and Cosmos."

A third and final major distinction, basic to Christian higher education, is that formulated by Dooyeweerd—namely, the distinction between *structure* and *direction*. This view of things was not, of course, invented by Dooyeweerd. Substantially we find it deeply embedded already in the long history of the Augustinian-Calvinian-Kuyperian tradition. Recall Augustine's eschatological vision of the conflict between the "City of God" and the "City of the World," Calvin's distinction between "the order of creation" and "the order of sin and redemption," and Kuyper's discussion of "common grace" and the "antithesis." These long-standing, deeply-ingrained, venerable thought-patterns also function as a very

decisive operative principle not only in Bavinck's seasoned theology, but also in his initial attempts at a Christian philosophy. There, however, this distinction is couched in such concepts as "nature" and "grace," "matter" and "form," "quantitative" and "qualitative"—all highly reminiscent of a classic Neo-Thomist tradition. It is beyond doubt that Bavinck was indeed seeking to pour new reformational wine into those old wine-skins. Yet it is also clear that his work stood in need of further reformation.

That is precisely the point of Dooyeweerd's rearticulation of this classic distinction in terms of structure and direction. Structure refers to the cosmos as created, as it was meant to be, and as God still maintains it by his life-preserving grace. Direction refers to life in the world, misdirected by sin, and redirected by Christ's redeeming work. The directional struggle between the kingdom-of-light and the kingdom-of-darkness, between "sin" and "grace" continues to cut across all the structures of created reality, including the realm of scholarship. This is what Kuyper meant in speaking of a "two-fold humanity" (believing and unbelieving) and a "two-fold science" (normalism and abnormalism). In Dooyeweerd, too, both categories, direction as well as structure, are cosmic in scope. Thus the Calvinist tradition seeks to do justice to the Biblical teaching concerning our involvement in the full range of our creational potentialities, but also the double reality of the radical and comprehensive effects of the fall and the radical and comprehensive benefits of Christ's redemption. Structure reflects the ordered continuity of God's dealings with his world. Direction reflects the religious/spiritual discontinuity, occasioned by man's sin, overcome by God's grace.

This directional conflict, this spiritual antithesis, lays heavy demands upon Christian scholars and teachers. As Henry Zylstra puts it:

You see, though, that this makes of Christian education a much harder

thing than that other method of conducting curricular affairs secularly and neutrally and then bringing in the distinctively religious by way of chapel exercises and the devotional element. It is hard work to prove the spirits whether they be of God. It is hard work to be in the world, really in it, I mean, fully aware, that is, of the religious and prophetic tensions and pressures of it, the ultimate loyalties and allegiances of the various cultures in it, the religio-moral choices of men in the past that make the cultural challenge of the present what it is; I say, it is hard work to be in the world that way, and then not to be of it. And yet this proving or testing or trying of the spirits whether they be of God, this being in the world and yet not of it, this, precisely this, is almost the whole business of Christian education in our schools. That is really what we are always busy with in the classroom. That makes our schools distinctive (*Testament of Vision*, p. 98).

Recapping once again: these three distinctions—Creator and creature, revelation and response, structure and direction—are foundational for all right thinking in Reformed Christian scholarship. Taken together they highlight the global perspective and the Reformed distinctiveness of our calling in Christian higher education.

No matter how fervently we pray with the psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy Name," yet in fact, in the very process of seeking to work out a wholist world-view, we find ourselves all the while haunted by a very persistent, pernicious threat. That besetting sin is the seductive force of dualist thinking and living. Over the 2000-year history of the Christian community in our western world, dichotomist models of man's life in God's world have succeeded again and again in undercutting even the most serious efforts at a unified perspective. At bottom, dualisms

involve a confusion of the distinction between structure and direction. The Biblical idea of religious antithesis, the spiritual struggle between two opposing life-directions gets turned regularly into a structural antinomy. Certain orders of created reality, certain parts, areas, realms, or spheres of life are regarded as sacred, others as profane.

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Dichotomist thinkers, accordingly, draw a line of demarcation through the arena of scholarship, declaring one sector higher and better, another lower and inferior. The configurations of such distorted reconstructions of the creation order may vary, as well as the dualist tools of analysis, and also the categories used to label one terrain in distinction from another. Still the net effect is pretty much the same. Such dichotomist outlooks result in dividing the field of higher education into polarized areas of study, polarized curricula, polarized methodologies, polarized teachers and students. This is one implication clearly evident in H. Richard Niebuhr's well-known book, *Christ and Culture*. The author there canonizes "two poles of authority" as the "perennial problem." Out of it comes the time-worn, now largely discredited idea of theology as "the queen of the sciences."

To very large extent the dubious honor for creating our contemporary dualist paradigms rests upon the shoulders of Immanuel Kant, in many ways "the maker of the modern mind." All of us, by nature and

by virtue of our upbringing, walk so completely in the shadow of the "pure reason"/"practical reason" wedge which he drove into our life-patterns, that true liberation comes only at the cost of Herculean spiritual and mental effort. All the major cultural influences which shape our lives are calculated almost irresistibly to outfit us with bi-focal glasses. With bifurcated spectacles we then look out upon the world, both within us and around us. Consequently, it seems utterly natural for us to believe that life actually does fall apart into two sharply identifiable and definable realms—the sacred and the secular. This outlook serves then as the basis of appeal in pitting presumably "religious" education against allegedly "religiously neutral" education. All this overlooks, of course, the possibility that such dualist conceptions of life and of scholarship may in fact rest only in the eye of the beholder, and that therefore they do not really comport at all with the actual state of affairs in the world.

One twentieth-century Christian scholar who struggled valiantly to extricate himself from these bi-polar tensions, and who eventually paid the price for such costly discipleship with a martyr's death, was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his book *Ethics* he discusses the enduring problem of "thinking in terms of two spheres," describing it as the "colossal obstacle" standing in the way of a unified (for Bonhoeffer perhaps a "monist") view of reality. In this context he says:

Since the beginnings of Christian ethics* after the times of the New Testament the main underlying conception in ethical thought, and the one which consciously or unconsciously has determined its whole course, has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural and un-

Christian. This view becomes dominant for the first time in the Middle Ages, and for the second time in the pseudo-Protestant thought of the period after the Reformation. Reality as a whole now falls into two parts, and the concern of ethics is with the proper relation of these two parts to each other. In the scholastic scheme of things the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in the pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ; and in the scheme of the Enthusiasts the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile world for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. In all these schemes the cause of Christ becomes a partial and provincial matter within the limits of reality.

Is there a way out? Bonhoeffer admits quite openly that

. . . it may be difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres, but it is nevertheless quite certain that it is in profound contradiction to the thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation, and that consequently it aims wide of reality.

Once again, Bonhoeffer concedes that

. . . it is hard to abandon a picture which one has grown accustomed to using for the ordering of one's ideas and concepts. And yet we must leave behind us the picture of the two spheres, and the question now is whether we can replace it with another picture which is equally simple and obvious.

*A problematic, probably reductionist usage of the concept "ethics."

Where shall we turn for a solution? "Here one must go to the Bible itself for advice," says Bonhoeffer, "and the Bible has its answer ready." The answer lies in what he calls "the four mandates"—labor, marriage, government, and church. Here we see Bonhoeffer, the evangelical Christian, moving away from the typically Lutheran two-realm theory he had inherited, and moving toward the beginnings, at least, of a Calvinist view of sphere-sovereignty—a final point, to which we shall turn shortly.

We must confess that often, though perhaps unwittingly, dualist trends have also made deep inroads into Reformed scholarship. This susceptibility is traceable in large part to the abiding influences of Roman Catholic and Protestant scholasticism. Dichotomist tendencies are reflected in the way we often think, speak, and write about such issues as body and soul, law and gospel, church and world, common grace and special grace, general revelation and special revelation, creation and redemption, facts and values, cognitive and affective learning, the cultural mandate and the great commission. Here we face the vexing question of interpreting in each case the meaning of what Barth calls "the demonic little *and*." Accepting such "upstairs/downstairs" dualisms, one either decides to live in the "upper room" where the so-called "spiritual" concerns prevail with their strong tendencies toward pietism; or one decides to live on the "lower level" where scholars fall victim to the dominant secular spirit of our age; or one decides to seek a synthesis and become, as Bonhoeffer puts it, "the man of eternal conflict." This challenge constitutes another good starting-point for on-going reflection on our reformational mandate: *academia reformata semper reformanda est*.

Dualism-seeking-synthesis paradigms are deeply embedded in the scholastic traditions of Western Christianity. As Berkouwer argues in discussing the body/soul question in his book, *Man—The Image of God*, granted its bi-polar starting-point, a dichotomous view never succeeds in yielding

more than a "fictitious unity." Yet across the centuries it has claimed its countless loyal victims among both Catholic and Protestant thinkers. Among them is Calvin himself, with his Platonic view of the body as "the prison-house" of the soul, thus leaving us with an anthropology not adequately reformed. The chief architect of this scholarly view of reality was the "angelic doctor," Thomas Aquinas.

Against this backdrop, Jaroslav Pelikan, in his book, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism*, addresses a very forthright challenge to all who count themselves heirs of the reformation. Closing out his discussion of Thomism, Pelikan concludes that "the Thomist world-view has managed to be both comprehensive and Christian . . . (For) by relating nature to grace," he says, "Thomism maintains a balance between faith and reason that gives each its due without doing violence to the other." This judgment, I think, is too charitable, is certainly debatable, and very likely only adds to the problem. Yet Pelikan is right in recognizing that the Thomist position does not leave us untouched. Accordingly he drives home his challenge in these words:

This balance between faith and reason addresses a basic challenge to Protestant thought. The history of Protestant thought demonstrates how difficult it has been for thinkers in the evangelical tradition to achieve the comprehensiveness which a world view demands, and how difficult it has been for the philosophical thinkers of non-Roman traditions to keep the Christian faith central in their world views. During the conflict between liberalism and fundamentalism this was one of the issues at stake; and now that the conflict has died down, it may be appropriate to point out that the issue has not been settled. Current discussions of Christian higher education have made clear that Protestant thought is

still looking for a way of thinking about science and the humanities that will do justice to them without surrendering the gospel. The literature coming out of these discussions also manifests a greater difference of opinion among Protestants than there is between some Protestants and some Roman Catholics on this entire question. Meanwhile, the Protestant churches continue to maintain hundreds of colleges, all of them involved (whether they like it or not) in this very issue. The answers offered by these colleges range from the claim that religion offers certain moral values, and nothing more, all the way to the claim that the doctrinal system of the denomination supporting the college is the final truth, to which the sciences and the humanities must conform or perish. Between these two extremes are various other answers, but it is difficult to formulate the Protestant alternative to Thomism. . . .

Responding to that challenge is very centrally what, for 500 years, and still today, Christian higher education within the Reformed tradition is all about.

Taking a cue from Bonhoeffer's shift in the direction of "the four mandates" and from Pelikan's reference to the problematic relationship between the church and the academy, we turn now to the final point in this presentation, namely the complementary principle of *sphere-sovereignty* and *sphere-universality*. The question we now face is this: How are we to understand the place and task of the Christian academy in relationship to other institutions within the Christian community, as well as its relationship to secular institutions in society at large?

Definitionally, the focal point of our present concern with the principle of sphere-sovereignty/sphere-universality can be succinctly formulated in two concepts, namely:

structural pluralism and confessional integrity. The former—the idea of structural pluralism—refers to honoring the institutional identity of the Christian academy as it interacts in a co-existing and pre-existing way with the church, the state, its supporting community of homes, and other contextual agencies. The latter concept—the idea of confessional identity—refers to maintaining the religious/philosophical integrity of a Reformed Christian academy (or any other) in the exercise of its educating office. How can a Christian academy, so conceived, make its unique scholarly contributions to the covenant life and kingdom program of the Reformed community? And how can it benefit the society and nation and world within which it is called to be a blessing?

To concretize this issue let us take a look at the tradition of two distinguished universities located in The Netherlands—Leyden University and the Free Reformed University in Amsterdam. As background to both, however, we must recall briefly the development of the university in general within the Christian traditions of our Western world.

The origins of modern university life go back to the revival of learning in the early medieval era (the 11th and 12th centuries) and the high scholastic period (the 13th and 14th centuries). For centuries, following the closure of the Greek academies in the 6th century, the spirit of learning lay nearly extinguished. The monasteries served as almost the sole perservers of the treasures of antiquity, keeping them alive, adding little to them, but handing them down faithfully to succeeding generations. This heritage, plus the work of Boethius in transmitting the heritage of Aristotelian logic down into the medieval era, together with new impulses which were then arising out of the world of Mohammedan scholarship, lies behind the origins of the university in the Western world. The best-known early universities were founded in Salerno, Salamanca, Paris, Bologna, Montpellier, Prague, Vienna, Heidelberg, Oxford, and Cambridge. In

these centers of learning, teachers and students together, in loose associations, ignited a renaissance of intellectual activity. Their curricula centered largely on the trivium and quadrivium. They followed largely a scholastic method of instruction. Out of these movements come the initial stirrings of the modern scientific enterprise.

What is most important for our present purpose is this: these universities emerged as free associations of scholars and students. In a basic sense, they were "free universities." They were sponsored, supported, and governed by neither the church nor the state. They were independent of both priest and prince, pope and emperor. They were organized largely along the lines of the medieval guilds—as associations in con-sociation, as learning communities within the larger community, as a third kind of institution within society, alongside and sometimes over-against both church and state, the two dominant societal powers of the day. These early universities paid a substantial price for their "academic freedom." Theirs was indeed a "costly discipleship." For, cut off from the grace of churchly benefices and from supporting grants from the state, students and teachers alike were often compelled to beg for a living. But, however precarious, these fledgling universities were "free." They therefore represent, in the field of Christian scholarship, a first institutional embodiment of the principle of sphere-sovereignty and sphere-universality.

Somehow these early universities managed to survive their early growing pains. Despite great adversities, their influence expanded. In time, however, it became evident that they needed outside assistance, such as tax-exempt status, the official right to teach and to confer degrees, as well as civil recognition of the right of university graduates to enter upon public office. The conferral of these rights depended upon the church and the state. Thus the university soon became the victim of political pressures by the pope and the hierarchy on the one hand, and by the em-

peror and regional rulers on the other. Both church and state exploited the weakness of the university in their on-going struggle for ascendancy in society. Thus during the medieval era, university life became largely ecclesiasticized. In the wake of the Renaissance, however, and on into the modern period with the rise of the modern secular state, the university became increasingly politicized. As a result of this two-pronged intervention, the principle of sphere-sovereignty was radically undercut and the university lost its freedom in scholarship and teaching.

At bottom, religiously, philosophically, and structurally, the university was unable to resist the strong magnetic drawing power of the bi-polar tension between the realm of nature, on the one hand, where presumably autonomous human reason prevailed, governed by the state; and the realm of grace, on the other hand, where men were to live by faith under the tutelage of the church. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, the university underwent a process of double secularization: secularized first by drifting away from the church (thus rightfully winning its own sphere of academic sovereignty), and secularized secondly (and wrongly) by declaring its emancipation from the Christian religion. In the process the university became increasingly a pawn in the hands of a secularized state.

The question now forces itself upon us: what role did the Reformation play in these developments? For one thing, it led to the establishment of new universities and to the renewal of some existing ones. Recall, for instance, Heidelberg, Jena, Basel, Leipzig, Strassbourg, Geneva, and in The Netherlands, Leyden, Utrecht, and Franeker. Yet, while the 16th century reformers introduced a partial break-away from the medieval dualist view of Christian higher education, and an initial break-through toward a more holistic perspective, they fell short of a clearcut follow-through leading to the inner reformation of scholarship. By the 17th century it became apparent how very difficult it was

for even Reformed academies to liberate themselves from the prevailing medieval/Renaissance trends in scholarship. Often reformation was limited to theology, leaving philosophy largely untouched, and therefore also the arts and sciences. Often also they wavered between the scholasticism of the medieval schools and the humanism of their Renaissance counterparts, aligning themselves sometimes with the one, other times with the other, without developing a distinctively reformational alternative.

In the midst of these spiritual upheavals Leyden University was born in the year 1574. Its midwives, acting jointly, were the church and the state. The newly emergent Reformed churches were concerned mostly about training ministers in theology. The state, represented by the prince, envisioned education for civil service as well. The stated purpose of this new university, granted to the citizens of Leyden for their courageous resistance to Spanish oppression, was that it should be a truly Reformed center of learning.

From the very beginning of Leyden University, however, this noble objective was frustrated by several counter-acting factors. For one, its reforming vision was limited largely to theology. Consequently the other sciences were left largely unreformed. Leyden failed, moreover, to work out an over-arching Christian philosophy which could integrate its entire curriculum into a unified and coherent whole. Its ambivalent stance is reflected further in the rather pretentious claim that, in keeping with the national mood, it could be both uniquely Reformed and generally humanist at the same time. Understandably, therefore, the progress of Reformed scholarship in Leyden was seriously impeded, falling victim to the competing control of both church and state. The interlocking problems of both landed squarely on the university, imposing upon it unbearable burdens. For the principle of sphere-sovereignty and sphere-universality cannot be violated with impunity.

Moving on, we see that, in the aftermath

of the 18th century Enlightenment movement, by the 19th century the major Western universities, Leyden included, had become almost completely the academic arms of powerful secular states. Higher education was becoming increasingly a monopoly of civil government. With few exceptions, liberal states dictated the financial policies, the appointments to teaching positions, and the controlling ideology of most universities. The prevailing ideology was dedicated to the so-called self-evident truths (which were in fact self-serving) of human freedom, of the autonomy of human reason, and of the neutrality of the scientific enterprise.

That, then, in brief was the radically deformed situation in The Netherlands, in 1880, when Abraham Kuyper took the lead in founding the Free Reformed University in Amsterdam. He sounded the key-note for renewed reformation in his famous inaugural oration at the festive opening of "the Free," addressing a distinguished audience on the theme *Sovereiniteit in eigen kring*. That principle of sphere-sovereignty, he affirmed, is the foundation on which a truly Reformed university must rest. An authentically Christian academy is to be governed by trustees representing the Reformed community, not by the church or the state. While such a university is related confessionally to the church and jurally to the state, it must cherish and exercise faithfully its own God-given freedom and sovereignty to carry on Christian scholarship in obedience to the Word of God. That is its high and holy calling, its unique avenue of service within the Christian community, its distinctive channel of blessing to the nations, its joy, and its reward.

And what is the deeply religious root upon which these academic fruits of the Spirit are to grow? Kuyper expressed it in those memorable words: "There is not a single square inch of the entire universe of which Christ, the sovereign Lord of all, does not say, 'This is Mine!'" That remains the very heartbeat of all Reformed scholarship in every center of Christian higher education.