

Finding certainty in an age of uncertainty

*The early eighteenth-century Cocceian turn
towards natural theology*

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Preface

Trying to obtain a master's degree in Medieval Studies by writing a thesis on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century developments in theology and philosophy – this turn of events will probably amaze many readers. Still, it is not as curious as it, at first glance, might seem. To me, writing this thesis was the final conclusion of an intellectual journey of which Medieval Studies was an integral part. This journey began in the first year of my bachelor in theology; during which I followed a course on the intellectual history of Christianity. As the main theme of this course, namely the interaction between theology and philosophy, captivated me to a high degree, I decided to make it into the main theme of my studies. Since it was during the Middle Ages that this interaction reached great heights, it was to this historical era I first turned my attention, leading me to Medieval Studies. During my years as a student in this field of study, I followed courses on theology and philosophy, ranging from intellectual developments in Late Antiquity to the Renaissance, and everything in between.

Gradually I extended my scope of interest to also include the early modern era. This was due to the realisation that in theology and philosophy there was more continuity between the medieval and early modern eras than I previously thought – perhaps one can even speak of a *longue durée* in intellectual history. This eventually brought me to the early modern Dutch Republic. It was here that during the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries there took place a number of developments that highly problematized the relationship between theology and philosophy, making it a watershed in western intellectual history. In particular, the second half of the seventeenth century was a period in which many long held assumptions concerning theology and philosophy came to be upset, leading to a severe crisis. The underlying purpose of this thesis is to clarify some aspects of this crisis, and, particularly, one of the attempts to overcome this crisis. Special attention is paid to the period between the 1680s and the 1720s. This study is not meant to be exhaustive, nor can it ever be so. I do hope, however, that it can help in clarifying what has, thus far, been a rather obscure period in Dutch history. It is a quite interesting period that has, sadly enough, not received enough attention.

During my intellectual journey through the ages, and through unknown disciplines, I've met many people who have been of great help to me; pointing me into the right direction, providing me with new insights, and, more generally, with pleasant conversations. Although it would be too much to name them all, some I do wish to mention some explicitly. The first of these is Prof. dr. Mostert, who, as head of medieval studies, allowed me to make a *grand tour* through the early modern Dutch Republic, and who, as the first reader, was so kind to supervise this thesis. Special thanks goes to Prof.dr. Mijnhardt, who, as second reader, provided me with many valuable insights, enjoyable conversations, and whose patience is truly remarkable. The last person I would like to mention is Rudie Heling (1962-2013), with whom I've literally walked many miles, and with whom I've discussed almost every subject to heaven and earth. As life, in the end, brought him more than he could bear, he will not be able to read this thesis. Hence it is dedicated to his memory.

Introduction

The history of the Dutch Republic is riddled with a substantial number of paradoxical and seemingly inexplicable phenomena, which have long troubled the scholars trying to account for them. Surely, one of the oldest, and most strongly contested of these mysterious phenomena is the nature of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism; two movements which originated from the insights of, respectively, the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), and the Dutch theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669). Although both movements, at first glance, seemed to have little in common, with Cartesianism primarily being a novel way of doing philosophy, and Cocceianism consisting of the new theological insights of Cocceius, they have nevertheless been mentioned so often together, that people, ever since both emerged around the middle of the seventeenth century, have wondered whether they shared any intrinsic characteristics, that brought both movements together, or whether the relationship between both merely was the outcome of external factors.¹ This question indeed becomes all the more intriguing if one considers the fact that whereas Descartes generally tried to avoid theological subjects, thus hoping to avoid conflicts with the theologians, Cocceius himself admittedly had no particular interest in the new philosophy.²

Over time, scholars have, of course, tried to account for the mysterious relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism. Amongst the scholars attributing the relationship to external factors, the most popular explanation has been to argue that it was the outcome of the strong resistance both movements experienced from the side of the Utrecht theologian Gisbertus Voetius (1598-1676) and his followers. As these theologians considered Cartesianism to be a danger to the intellectual foundations of Reformed theology, and held the Cocceians responsible for introducing dangerous novelties into the Reformed fold, the Voetians, as they are called, indeed became the strongest opponents of both movements. According to the French minister Jacques Basnage (1653-1723) it was the vehement opposition by the Voetians that forced the Cartesians and Cocceians to cooperate, a conclusion that was shared by the German historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693-1755).³ The renowned nineteenth-century historian Christiaan Sepp (1820-1890) likewise attributed the relationship to these external factors, whilst Jan Anthony Cramer (1864-1952), denied altogether that Cartesianism and Cocceianism had any substantial influence upon each other's systems of thought.⁴

Not all scholars have sought to explain the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism by resorting solely to external factors. A more moderate position has been taken by the nineteenth-century historian Annaeus Ypey (1760-1837). Although Ypey also considered the opposition by the Voetians to have been a stimulating factor in bringing the Cartesians and Cocceians together, he nevertheless argued that the relationship between both gradually evolved into a more intimate

¹ The first to offer a comprehensive survey on this age-old scholarly debate has been Ernestine van de Wall. For the following exposition of the different scholarly explanations of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism I am indebted to her; See: E.G.E van der Wall, 'Cartesianism and Cocceianism: a natural alliance?', in: M. Magdelaine (ed.), *De l'Humanisme aux Lumières, Bayle et le protestantisme* (Paris-Oxford, 1996), pp. 445-455.

² For Cocceius' stance on philosophy, see: W.J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius. 1603-1669* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 72-105.

³ Jacques Basnage, *Annales des Provinces-Unies*, vol. 1 (The Hague, 1719), pp. 456-457; Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (trans. by: A. Maclaine), *An Ecclesiastical History, From The Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (London, 1838), p. 375. (Original: *Institutiones Historiae Ecclesiasticae Antiquae et Recentioris*, 1755).

⁴ C. Sepp, *Het godgeleerd onderwijs in Nederland gedurende de 16^e en 17^e eeuw*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1873), pp. 219-220; J.A. Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus en zijn cartesianisme* (Utrecht, 1889), pp. 4-14.

bond, with philosophical ideas from Descartes being integrated in works on theology.⁵ The same position seems to have been taken by the foremost scholar on Cocceianism, William van Asselt.⁶ Besides this moderate position, other scholars have explicitly turned to internal characteristics to account for the relationship. The most daring claim has been made by Thomas McGahagan, who argued that both Cartesians and Cocceians had a common interest in the so-called concept of implicit faith, which served to avoid potential conflicts between theology and philosophy.⁷ This explanation, however, does not seem to have gained much support in the scholarly community. Besides McGahagan, Thijssen-Schoutte also argued that there was more at stake than simply meets the eye, but did not develop this claim into a comprehensive account.⁸

Considering the wide variety of accounts that have been given to explain the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism, it becomes clear that a scholarly consensus has yet to emerge. Due to the tendency of scholars to opt for either one of the aforementioned approaches, such a consensus, in fact, still seems far away. Although both approaches certainly have their benefits, they also have clear deficiencies. Whereas the internalist approach has the benefit of taking seriously the works the Cocceian theologians themselves wrote, it nevertheless makes the mistake of trying to explain the relationship between both movements by referring to one, unique characteristic which these movements must have had in common, and which therefore brought them together. The same kind of ambivalence is also found with the externalist approach. Although scholars opting for this approach generally pay a fair amount of attention to the social, political and even rhetorical context in which Cartesianism and Cocceianism first emerged, they nevertheless tend to overlook the works the theologians themselves wrote. Since both approaches fail to adequately explain the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism, the time has come to consider this phenomenon from another perspective. In particular, a way has to be found that can do justice to both the works the Cocceian theologians themselves wrote, and to context in which these works were written.

If we want to find a way of accounting for the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism, the first thing we have to do is to find a suitable way of describing movements like these. We are confronted with the challenge of finding a description that adequately captures both the shared characteristics and diversity amongst the adherents of such movements. To overcome this challenge we have to turn to the insights provided by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). In his *Philosophical Investigations* (1951) the latter criticised the tendency of scholars to try to retrieve the essence of phenomena.⁹ According to him, instead of trying to discover such essences, by strictly delineating what belongs to a phenomenon and what doesn't, it would be better to consider the aspects belonging to a phenomenon as a 'complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.'¹⁰ According to him, this situation could best be compared to family resemblances. In the case of a family, there are, after all, often traits that are thought to be characteristic of that family - like the kind of nose or ears. Although members of the family might have some of these characteristics in common, they need not

⁵ A. Ypey, *Beknopte Letterkundige Geschiedenis der Systematische Godgeleerdheid*, vol. 2 (Haarlem, 1795), pp. 83-86.

⁶ Van Asselt 2001, pp. 81-86.

⁷ T.A. McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands, 1639-1676: The New Science and the Calvinist Counter-Reformation* (University of Pennsylvania, 1976), pp. 367-368.

⁸ C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme* (Utrecht, 1989), pp. 31-35.

⁹ See: C. Fox, 'Wittgenstein on family resemblance', in: K.D. Jolley (ed.), *Wittgenstein. Key concepts* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), pp. 51-62.

¹⁰ L. Wittgenstein (trans. G.E.M. Anscombe), *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 32.

necessarily have them all. Instead, the son might look like his mother, whilst the daughter looks more like her father. Even though the relationships, or resemblances, amongst the constituents of the family might differ, we nevertheless recognise them to belong together.¹¹

In my view, the family resemblance approach advocated by Wittgenstein can be of help in explaining the nature of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism. Instead of considering both to have been monolithic movements, we can come to consider them as varied movements, or even a kind of families, that consisted of a wide range of adherents, who shared an interest in one or more insights of, respectively, Descartes or Cocceius, but nevertheless appropriated these insights in their own way. This more open approach makes it possible to go beyond a simple essentialist explanation of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism. Instead, we can now take into account the concrete instances of Cocceian theologians who decided to combine an interest in Cocceius' insights, with an outspoken interest in Cartesian philosophy. The question therefore is not what common attribute of Cocceianism or Cartesianism almost automatically predisposed these theologians to combine the insights of Descartes and Cocceius, but what concrete causes or factors motivated them to act as such. Moreover, this approach also implies that one takes seriously the specific way in which they incorporated the Cartesian elements into their theological works.

Since all Cocceians, despite their mutual differences, shared their common interest in at least one or more insights of Cocceius, it will be of help if we first briefly consider what Cocceius' main insights were, before we continue to consider how his later followers appropriated his insights. According to Van Asselt, Cocceius' federal theology can best be characterised as 'a kind of theology, in which the covenants God has made with man are considered to be the foremost hermeneutical key to the interpretation of Scripture.'¹² Cocceius himself distinguished between a covenant of works, in effect whilst man was still in paradise, and a covenant of grace, in effect after the Fall of Man.¹³ In turn, he subdivided the second covenant in the period before and after Christ redeemed man; meaning there was a progression in the soteriological status of man.¹⁴ In the view of Cocceius, Scripture was a harmonious system, meaning not only that the Old Testament foreshadowed the New, but also that it contained many prophecies, relating both to past, present and future events. On the basis of his reading of the book of Revelations, he, finally, also divided history into seven distinct phases.¹⁵

Although this short survey of Cocceius' main theological insights is not meant to be exhaustive, it nevertheless suits our purpose. Taking Cocceius to be the intellectual father – or *pater familias*, so to say – of Cocceianism, we can now consider how his followers appropriated his insights. In general these followers can be divided into three main groups, with each of these groups taking an interest in some aspects of Cocceius' theological insights. The first of these groups were the so-called 'severe' Cocceians, of whom the leading figure was David Flud van Giffen (1653-1701). Characterising them was their use of Cocceius' allegorical approach to Scripture, and the way they used the insights thus gained to admonish people to live a pious life.¹⁶ Besides this group, there were also the 'green' Cocceians, named so after Henricus Groenewegen (1640-1692). This group was primarily characterized by their strong emphasis upon the many prophecies contained in Scripture, which they expli-

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² W.J. Van Asselt 'Verbond, Rijk Gods en Vriendschap. Drie hoofdthema's uit de theologie van Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), in *Kerk en theologie*, vol. 54 (2003), pp. 328-329. The translation is mine.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 327-328.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 326-327.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 330-331.

¹⁶ A. de Groot, 'David Flud van Giffen', in: D. Nauta (ed.), *Biografisch Lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands Protestantisme*, vol. 3 (Kampen: Uitgeverij J.H. Kok, 1988), pp. 138-139.

cated in erudite sermons.¹⁷ The final group has traditionally been called the ‘Cartesio-Cocceians’. As the name indicates, it was this group that consisted of theologians who combined their interest in Cocceius’ theological insights, with an explicit interest in Cartesianism, integrating elements of the new philosophy into their theological works.

Of the different kinds of Cocceian theologians, it has been the so-called ‘Cartesio-Cocceians’ that have most perplexed scholars. As some scholars have indicated, and which becomes clear from a reading of the works by the theologians generally assigned to this group, there were indeed Cocceian theologians that not only had a clear interest in Cartesianism, but also decided to integrate elements of this philosophy into their works of theology. The first to adopt such a course of action were the renowned theologians Abraham Heidanus (1597-1678) and Christoph Wittich (1625-1687), later to be followed by others, like Petrus Allinga (?-1692), Salomon van Til (1643-1713), Ruardus Andala (1665-1727), and Friedrich Arnold Lampe (1683-1729). As has been noted by Ernestine van der Wall, it was specifically in their works on natural theology that most of the aforementioned theologians integrated elements of Cartesian philosophy.¹⁸ What has, however, thus far remained unclear, has been the question why these theologians have adopted such a course of action. To point out *that* something has happened, after all, does not equal explaining *why* and *how* it happened. Hence, this thesis has been written to find out on the basis of what factors the Cocceian theologians, at the beginning of the eighteenth-century, turned to natural theology, and in what manner they integrated elements from Cartesian philosophy into their works on this subject.

In this thesis I will argue that the driving force behind the early-eighteenth-century Cocceian turn to natural theology was the widespread desire to find a solution to what I have dubbed ‘The crisis of the Reformed mind’. This crisis, which began around the middle of the seventeenth century and lasted until the first decades of the eighteenth century, consisting both of the widespread sense that the foundations of Reformed theology were being undermined, by the emergence of the new philosophy and science around the middle of the seventeenth century, and the fact that no single solution could be found to the question in what manner the Reformed theological system could best be upheld. Whereas the first generation of Cocceian theologians that had an interest in Cartesian philosophy tried to overcome the challenge the new philosophy and science posed to Reformed theology by arguing in favor of strictly separating the disciplines of theology and philosophy, this strategy was cut short by the emergence of philosophical radicalism, espoused by thinkers like Lodewijk Meyer (1628-1681) and Benedictus de Spinoza, (1632/ 1633-1677), who used the new philosophy to subject Scripture to the test of reason. As the works by these radical thinkers showed resemblances to the strategies and concepts used by the Cocceian theologians, the position of these theologians became severely compromised; meaning that a new solution had to be found to overcome the severe challenges confronting Reformed theology.

As we shall come to see in this thesis, it was the double challenge of, on the one hand, having to find a new and solid intellectual foundation for Reformed theology, whilst, on the other hand, having to avoid the pit of theological rationalism, which makes reason the ultimate arbiter in matters of faith, that was responsible for the marked rise of interest in natural theology amongst Cocceian theologians. To illustrate this development, I have chosen to investigate the works of three Reformed theologians who played a leading role in this development, namely Herman Alexander Röell, Salomon van Til, and Ruardus Andala. The decision to also include Röell, who was familiar with the in-

¹⁷ C. Graafland, ‘Henricus Groenewegen’, in: D. Nauta (ed.), *Biografisch Lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands Protestantisme*, vol. 3 (Kampen: Uitgeverij J.H. Kok, 1988), pp. 151-154.

¹⁸ Van der Wall 1996, pp. 453-455.

sights of Cocceius, but himself was more of an independent thinker, rather than a straight-forward Cocceian, has been made due to the fact that he played a pioneering role in the turn to natural theology, influencing Van Til and Andala, who were known for their strong zeal of the insights of Cocceius. To illustrate what it was like to live during the crisis of the Reformed mind, I have decided to highlight the life of Andala. A major benefit of this decision is that he was acquainted with both Röell and Van Til, developing a personal contact with Röell and having followed courses with Van Til. Moreover, he also explicitly mentioned these theologians as having influenced his own thoughts on the subject of natural theology.

Concretely, this thesis will have the following build-up. In the first chapter we will investigate the crisis of the Reformed mind. This chapter serves to show in what manner the foundations of Reformed theology were being challenged, the initial responses to this challenge, and how the subsequent debates led to the emergence of philosophical radicalism. The second chapter will deal with the life of Ruardus Andala. As we shall see, Andala was involved in many of the late seventeenth-century debates on the compatibility of the new philosophy with Reformed theology. In the final chapter we shall deal with the early eighteenth-century turn to natural theology itself. In this chapter it will become clear that Röell, Van Til and Andala considered natural theology to be an excellent means of both rationally upholding the basic elements of the Reformed faith, whilst also showing that man was in need of supernatural revelation.

Chapter I

The crisis of the Reformed mind:

Theology, philosophy and the rise of philosophical radicalism

In more than one way, the second half of the seventeenth century was a troubling period for Reformed theology. If the latter can be considered as resting upon a combination of Scripture, as authoritatively interpreted by the Reformed confessions, and a systematic exposition of the Reformed articles of faith with the help of Aristotelian philosophy, both pillars of Reformed theology came under increasing strain as the seventeenth century progressed. In the first place, the rise of the new philosophy and science, around the middle of the seventeenth century, problematized the status of Aristotelian philosophy as the intellectual cornerstone of Reformed theology, making it seem increasingly outdated. No less troubling was the subsequent rise of philosophical radicalism, which posed a direct challenge to the other foundation of Reformed theology, namely Scripture, subjecting it to the test of reason. Accordingly, these highly troubling developments led to a vehement debate amongst the Reformed theologians on the questions to what extent the new insights could be incorporated within the Reformed fold, and in what manner the Reformed theological system could best be upheld. As the responses to these questions varied, this led to a highly agitated atmosphere, in which even the most basic certainties seemed to be at stake.

In this chapter, we will investigate this crisis of the Reformed mind. In my view, the crisis first revealed itself around the middle of the seventeenth century, increased in intensity as this century progressed, and lasted until the first decades of the eighteenth century. The crisis consisted both of the widespread sense that the foundations of Reformed theology were being undermined, and the fact that no single solution could be found to the question in what manner the Reformed theological system could best be upheld. Since the crisis of the Reformed mind was, above all, a crisis that concerned the foundations of Reformed theology, we must begin by briefly considering the role these foundations played in the Reformed theological system. Subsequently, we will continue to consider the challenge Cartesianism, which most forcefully represented the new intellectual developments, posed to this system. Then, we will consider the different responses this challenge prompted. Finally, we will conclude by taking into account the emergence of philosophical radicalism, which added to the strain that had already been put upon Reformed theology.

The Reformed theological system

The construction of a Reformed theological system was a gradual process, that commenced in the second half of the sixteenth century, and reached its height in the first decades of the century that followed. Amongst scholars it has become common to refer to this process as the gradual construction of a 'Reformed orthodoxy'. With this term, they generally mean to signify the period in Post-Reformation protestant history, spanning roughly from the latter half of the sixteenth century until the late eighteenth century, during which the system that was thus constructed remained in force.¹⁹ The fact that the term 'orthodoxy' can also be used to refer to the set of normative articles of faith, as contained within the Reformed confessions, can, however, lead to confusion.²⁰ Due to the double

¹⁹ R.A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, 2nd ed.), pp. 30-34; W.J. Van Asselt & P.L. Rouwendal (eds.), *Inleiding in de Gereformeerde Scholastiek* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 1998), p. 13.

²⁰ W.J. Van Asselt & P.L. Rouwendal 1998, pp. 13-14.

meaning of the term 'orthodoxy' it can become unclear whether this term is used to designate a historical period, or a set of normative articles of faith. I myself therefore prefer to refer to the Reformed theological system by simply using the term 'Reformed theology'. This being said, we will now concern ourselves with two of its foremost elements, namely Scripture, as interpreted by the Reformed confessions, and Aristotelian philosophy.

Scripture and the Reformed articles of faith

It is well-known that one of the foremost characteristics of the Reformation was the strong emphasis the first generation of Reformers had laid upon Scripture being the sole foundation of theology.²¹ This strong emphasis upon the primacy of Scripture, as being the foremost source of knowledge on God, and therefore having to lie at the foundation of theology, was to remain characteristic of Reformed theology throughout its existence.²² Although, according to the Reformed theologians, the Reformed articles of faith had to be drawn solely from Scripture, at an early stage, a tendency of codifying them into binding confessions of faith also set in.²³ As the articles of faith contained in these confessions were to make up the body of Reformed theology, it will serve our investigation if we briefly take into account this process of codification. The first thing we have to realise, is that the process of codification was intimately linked to the position the Reformed church had within the Dutch Republic. In comparison to the other protestant movements, like Lutheranism and Anabaptism, the Reformed church was one of the last movements to make its impact felt in the Low Countries.²⁴ Prior to the onset of the Dutch Revolt against the Habsburg Rulers, which commenced in the 1560s, its influence was even largely confined to the southern provinces. Whatever adherents of the Reformed faith there were in the Northern provinces remained largely hidden, quietly building up an underground network.²⁵

As the introduction of the Reformed faith in the Low Countries was not a straightforward process, the Reformed church initially encompassed a wide variety of theological persuasions.²⁶ This pluralism was enhanced by the fact that the first Dutch ministers generally received their training abroad, at one of the international centres of the Reformed faith; like Zurich and Geneva, or the refugee-centres at London and Emden.²⁷ Hence the first adherents of the Reformed faith drew their insights from a wide variety of sources. Of the different centres of the Reformed faith, London and Emden were of particular importance, because it was at these locations that the first steps were taken towards a codification of the Reformed articles of faith, with the catechisms written by Johannes a Lasco (1499-1560) and Maarten Micronius (c. 1522-1559).²⁸ As the purpose of these documents was the instruction of the faithful, rather than to offer definitive statements on the Reformed faith,

²¹ E. Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 136-144.

²² Muller 2003, pp. 434-437.

²³ One of the most interesting articles on this subject is: J. Borsius, 'Overzicht van het trapsgewijze toegenomen en bekrachtigde gezag der Geloofsbelijdenis en van den Catechismus, als Formulieren van eenigheid in de Nederl. Herv. Kerk, van den aanvang der Hervorming, tot op de Synode van Dordrecht, in 1618 en 1619', in: *Archief voor kerkelijke geschiedenis*, vol. 9 (Leiden, 1838), pp. 287-345.

²⁴ For information on the religious situation prior to the emergence of the Reformed church, see: H.J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2006), pp. 231-254.

²⁵ Selderhuis 2006, pp. 284-292, 312.

²⁶ This situation has adequately been described by Alistair Duke, see: A. Duke, 'The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1561-1618' in: M. Prestwich, *International Calvinism. 1541-1715* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1985), pp. 110-133; J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness, And Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pp. 101-103.

²⁷ Selderhuis 2006, pp. 279-283.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 312-314.

the situation of theological diversity continued unabated. Since the primary emphasis during this phase lay on the immediate survival and further establishment of the Reformed church, this nevertheless did not cause any major difficulties, being considered to be of minor importance compared to the spreading of the faith.

The major change came around the middle of the sixteenth century. Once the opposition against the Habsburg rulers turned into an armed Revolt, which eventually led to the emergence of the Dutch Republic as an independent state, the adherents of the Reformed faith finally gained the opportunity to show themselves in public.²⁹ As some of the revolting provinces subsequently came to recognise the Reformed church as the sole public church, the need for a more definitive statement of the Reformed articles of faith grew.³⁰ Therefore a number of national and provincial synods began to establish more unity in matters of doctrine, meaning that those adhering to the Reformed faith were increasingly asked to subscribe to the confessional documents approved by these synods.³¹ Out of the confessional documents circulating at the time, it was the Belgic Confession (1559/1563) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) that gradually came to be considered as offering authoritative statements on the Reformed faith.³² Whereas the original purpose of these documents was to provide a clear outline of the Reformed faith, they increasingly came to be considered as binding statements, demarcating the boundaries within which all the faithful had to stay. As this process diminished the amount of room left for deviation from these boundaries, tensions began to rise, laying the foundation for controversies to emerge.³³

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the tensions mounting in the Reformed church were to lead to an open conflict. It was at the theological faculty of Leiden University that these tensions first erupted. This was due to the difference of opinion between two of its professors in theology, namely Jacobus Arminius (1599-1609) and Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641). These theologians clashed about the Reformed doctrine of predestination and its relation to human free will. According to Arminius, man had a personal responsibility in attaining his own salvation; Gomarus, however, strongly emphasised that this ultimately depended upon God's sovereign decisions. Whereas this subject had previously already divided opinions, but had not caused a major conflict, the diminishing room for deviation, due to the codification of the Reformed articles of faith, nevertheless forced the issue.³⁴ Although the dispute between both theologians began at the university, it soon spread throughout the Reformed church, dividing the church between those who supported Arminius, and those who supported Gomarus. The crisis was aggravated, moreover, because it intertwined with the political tensions that were likewise mounting in the Dutch Republic, due to differences of opinion on the question whether the Republic had to continue fighting the Spanish Empire or not.³⁵

As the crisis had a profoundly disruptive effect upon Dutch society, undermining the precarious unity upon which the Republic was built, it was widely agreed upon that a synod was needed to proclaim an authoritative verdict on the matter. Due to political intricacies it nevertheless took until after the coup against the Advocate Van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619) that the Synod could finally be summoned. As a result, between 1618 and 1619, representatives from all over the Republic, and

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 288-292, 303-307.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 315-318.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 312-313, 335-338.

³² Ibid., pp. 293-295.

³³ Ibid., pp. 319-322.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 415-420; See also: A.T. van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen. Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt*. (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 1998) pp. 227-240.

³⁵ Selderhuis 2006., pp. 421-428.

even from other Reformed nations, gathered at the city of Dordrecht to deliberate on the severe crisis within the church, with the outcome being a condemnation of Arminianism.³⁶ With the Synod of Dordt, the process of codification came to an end. The Synod was to exercise a profound influence upon the further development of Reformed theology, as it marked a decisive step towards more doctrinal cohesiveness. Although differences of opinion continued to exist, the drive towards a stricter formulation of the Reformed faith nevertheless culminated in the ratification of the set of confessional documents that came to be known as the 'Formularies of Unity'; meaning the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. Taken together, these confessional documents came to demarcate the boundaries within which all Reformed theologians had to stay.³⁷

The intellectual foundations of Reformed theology

Besides the process of codifying the Reformed articles of faith, the other major development that we have to concern ourselves with is the transformation of these articles into an intellectually more coherent system. The first steps into this direction were taken in the final decades of the sixteenth century, with the foundation of two Dutch universities, namely that of Leiden (1575) and that of Franeker (1585).³⁸ As these universities became important centres for training Reformed ministers, it was widely felt that theology had to live up to its new academic status, meaning that the Reformed articles of faith needed to be transformed into an intellectually consistent system. The need for such a system was also enhanced by the continued polemics with critics belonging to the other churches.³⁹ Although the Reformation had begun with a rejection of the theological content of late medieval scholasticism, this drive towards systematisation brought the Reformed theologians to acknowledge that the scholastic method itself still had much to offer. Hence it was embraced as providing the surest means of transforming Reformed theology into a coherent system. As this method essentially rested upon a combination of metaphysics and logics, a philosophy still had to be found that was congenial to Reformed theology.⁴⁰ Accompanying the renewed interest in the scholastic method, therefore was a re-appreciation of Aristotelian philosophy, which, in the first half of the seventeenth century, was still considered as offering the best account of reality.⁴¹

The renewed interest in Aristotelian philosophy also confronted the theologians with the important question how exactly the discipline of philosophy related to theology, and in particular what status reason was to have in matters of faith.⁴² As they wished to prevent philosophy from dominating theology, the theologians came to adopt a strict demarcation between the competences of both disciplines. This demarcation was justified by the assumption that both disciplines had their own guiding principles. Whereas the guiding principles of theology were said to be Scripture and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that of philosophy was considered to be reason. Since Scripture rested upon infallible divine revelation, whilst human reason was thought to have been weakened by the Fall, it was assumed that theology held a position superior to philosophy, giving it the right to dictate

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 428-430.

³⁷ This would continue to create tensions throughout the later history of the Reformed church, see: M. Wielema, *The March of the Libertines. Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660-1750)* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004), pp. 9-17.

³⁸ W.J. Van Asselt & P.L. Rouwendal 1998, pp. 102-104.

³⁹ Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 61-66.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 67-71, 367-376; W. van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza, An essay on philosophy in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 28.

⁴² Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 68-70.

the limits of all rational inquiries.⁴³ Although philosophy, as a discipline, was to remain strictly separated from theology, the theologians nevertheless acknowledged that it could still play a useful, instrumental role within the theological system, meaning that it could provide theology with the appropriate method, and that reason could be used for the processing of the information provided by Scripture.⁴⁴ Still, it was strongly emphasised that reason had to acknowledge the boundaries of human knowledge, and that it could never have a normative role in matters of faith.⁴⁵

Reformed theology and the challenge of Cartesianism

Due to the early seventeenth-century endeavour to transform the Reformed articles of faith into an intellectually consistent system, Aristotelian philosophy came to function as the intellectual cornerstone of Reformed theology. One of the side-effects of this endeavour was, however, that developments in philosophy could also have important implications for theology. As long as Aristotelian philosophy remained the dominant intellectual framework at the universities, this intertwining caused no significant problems. With the rise of the new philosophy and science, around the middle of the seventeenth century, the situation nevertheless changed drastically. According to the Reformed theologians, God could be known through two sources, namely the knowledge He had decided to reveal through Scripture, and the knowledge He had revealed through nature. As they had traditionally asserted the fundamental unity of truth, the theologians had always emphasised that both sources could not come into conflict.⁴⁶ Due to the new philosophical and scientific insights it nevertheless became apparent that conflicts were possible. As a result it became a matter of concern whether these new insights could be accommodated to Reformed theology, or whether they were to be rejected. This concern confronted the theologians with a grave dilemma. If they were to admit the veracity of the new insights, and attempt to accommodate them to Reformed theology, they ran the risk of undermining the status of Scripture. An outright rejection of the new insights was equally problematic; as this would mean that the intellectual foundations of theology could become increasingly outdated, thus undermining the status of Reformed theology.

The challenge posed by the new philosophical and scientific insights soon coalesced around Cartesian philosophy, which had an exceptionally early and deeply-felt impact in the Republic.⁴⁷ As Descartes not only aimed at a comprehensive renewal of philosophy, thereby undermining the Aristotelian foundations of Reformed theology, but also ascribed to reason a prominence the theologians had previously not been willing to grant, his new insights soon caught the attention of the latter. This led to a heated debate on the compatibility of the new philosophy with Reformed theology, with attention being particularly directed at the proper relationship between the disciplines of theology and that of philosophy. The first to respond were Gisbertus Voetius and his followers. As these theologians considered Aristotelian philosophy indispensable for upholding Reformed theology, they came to strongly oppose Cartesianism; which, in turn, forced Descartes and likeminded philosophers to respond. Still, not all theologians shared in the Voetian rejection of the new philosophy. It is, in fact, particularly interesting to see that the Cartesians eventually came to be supported by a number of prominent Cocceian theologians. As this development is of great importance to our investigation, in

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 388-390, 398-402.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 398-402.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 394-396,

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 384-390.

⁴⁷ For more information of the early impact and reception of Cartesianism in the Dutch Republic, see: T. Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637-1650* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992).

what follows we will concern ourselves with explicating the challenge Cartesianism posed to Reformed theology, and the different responses it prompted.

The challenge of Cartesian philosophy

It has been said that the Dutch Republic never experienced a sceptical crisis comparable to that of early modern France. In so far as such a crisis never arose from indigenous sources, this claim seems to be true.⁴⁸ In the second half of the seventeenth century scepticism nevertheless came to dominate the Dutch agenda.⁴⁹ This was due to the introduction of Cartesianism. According to its founder, Descartes, who himself was preoccupied with overcoming the sceptical crisis he had experienced in his native France, the traditional philosophies had all failed in providing an appropriate answer to the fundamental challenge posed by the rise of scepticism. As the conventional foundations of knowledge had, in his view, all fallen short, he considered it his obligation to establish a new philosophy that was to be immune to doubt, and that could come to serve as the intellectual foundation of a comprehensive scientific account of reality.⁵⁰ Descartes, however, argued that this could only be achieved by first taking scepticism to its ultimate conclusion. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), he therefore presented his “method of doubt”, by which he, paradoxically, transformed scepticism into an essential means of arriving at certainty.

As the title of the work indicates, Descartes explicated his method through a series of meditations. In the first place, he began by rejecting all knowledge based upon the senses, as these often turned out to be misleading. Subsequently, Descartes came to doubt whether there was any external world at all, since his experience of this world might have actually been a dream. Consequently, he realised that, for all of his life, an ‘evil deity’ might have been misleading him in believing that his faculties were reliable. As a result, Descartes arrived at the ultimate conclusion of scepticism, which is the realisation that certainty seems to be beyond human reach. At this precise moment, he apprehended, there was, at least, one thing he could not doubt, namely that all of his doubting presupposed his own existence as a thinking subject. Once Descartes had gained this insight, he consequently wondered what more he could ascertain, leading him to postulate that for ideas to be true they must be perceived clearly and distinctly. Since he had such a clear and distinct idea of God as a perfect being, he concluded God must necessarily exist. As God is no impostor, and has made humans with a natural inclination to believe that they have a body, Descartes came to the conclusion that his body must also exist.⁵¹ Although he experienced difficulty in subsequently explaining how mind and body could actually interact in man, he was nevertheless convinced that God had disposed humans in such a way that this was possible.⁵²

It becomes clear that the “method of doubt” essentially served two purposes. On the one hand, Descartes used it critically to expose the flawed nature of epistemologies based upon sensory knowledge and preconceived opinions; whilst, on the other hand, he used it constructively to estab-

⁴⁸ Van Bunge 2001, p. 93.

⁴⁹ See for example: T. Verbeek, ‘From “learned ignorance” to scepticism: Descartes and Calvinist orthodoxy’ in: R.H Popkin & A. Vanderjagt (eds), *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Brill: Leiden, 1993), pp. 31-45.

⁵⁰ J. Cottingham ‘Descartes: Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind.’ in G.H.R. Parkinson (ed), *Routledge History of Philosophy. The Renaissance and 17th Century Rationalism*, Vol. 4, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 188; For information on Descartes and scepticism, see: R.H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism : From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 3rd ed.), pp. 143-157.

⁵¹ M. Della Rocca, ‘Descartes’ in: S. Nadler (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 73-76.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

lish a reliable criterion of certainty, namely ideas that are clearly and distinctly perceived.⁵³ Descartes was convinced that, through the application of this method, he had also discovered a select number of indisputable principles, which could come to serve as the foundation of a comprehensive scientific account of reality.⁵⁴ Thus, he argued that reality consisted of two substances, namely mind and matter. Like his scholastic contemporaries, he assumed that these substances had their own particular essences, claiming that the essence of mind was thought, whilst that of matter was extension. Descartes, however, strongly differed from his contemporaries in arguing that reality could be reduced to the modifications of mind and matter.⁵⁵ This was particularly striking in the case of corporeal reality; which, according to him, entirely consisted of the modifications of extension. As Descartes subsequently argued that this reality could be studied by mathematics, his philosophy gave a significant impetus to the rise of a mechanised worldview.⁵⁶

Descartes was convinced that he had been able to construct a philosophical system that was immune to scepticism. This he did at the cost of Aristotelian philosophy. In the first place, his firm rejection of the knowledge gained by the senses directly undermined Aristotelian epistemology. Moreover, by subjecting ideas to the criterion that they were clearly and distinctly perceived, Descartes called for a degree of certainty Aristotelian philosophers considered beyond human reach.⁵⁷ No less troubling was that Descartes also deprived Aristotelian philosophy of some of the fundamental notions, like 'substantial forms' and 'active forces', it had always used to account for natural changes.⁵⁸ By undermining these notions, Descartes added to the severe strain that had already been upon the Aristotelian worldview by the rise of heliocentrism, making it increasingly difficult to consider Aristotelian philosophy as offering a reliable account of reality.⁵⁹ Finally, from an institutional point of view, Descartes' approach to philosophy also meant a significant departure from past practises. Whereas Aristotelian philosophy primarily served a propaedeutic role, providing the higher faculties with the proper philosophical apparatus, Descartes redirected philosophy towards the study of nature, detaching it from its subservient position.⁶⁰

The Voetian response to the new philosophy

In the dedicatory letter attached to the *Meditations*, Descartes had written to the theologians of the Parisian theological faculty that his new philosophy could do a great service to theology. As he had not only shown that God existed, but also that there was a separation between mind and body, implying that man lived on after death, Descartes thought that he had done the theologians a great favour, safeguarding two of Christianity's essential teachings.⁶¹ Despite his initial optimism, it did not take long for Descartes to experience that theologians were not the easiest persons to persuade. The

⁵³ Ibid., p. 62.

⁵⁴ J. Cottingham 2003, p. 188.

⁵⁵ M. Della Rocca 2002, pp. 63-70.

⁵⁶ See: S. Gaukroger, 'Descartes: Methodology' in: G.H.R. Parkinson (ed), *Routledge History of Philosophy. The Renaissance and 17th Century Rationalism*, Vol. 4, (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 156-183.

⁵⁷ T. Verbeek, 'Dutch Cartesian Philosophy' in: S. Nadler (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), p. 173.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 169-170.

⁵⁹ H. van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality: Voetius and Descartes on God, Nature and Change*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 9-35.

⁶⁰ T. Verbeek, 'Tradition and Novelty: Descartes and Some Cartesians' in: T. Sorell (ed.), *The Rise of modern Philosophy: the new and traditional philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 168.

⁶¹ R. Descartes (trans. by: J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 3-6.

first criticism, however, came not from the Parisian theologians, but from the influential Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius. As Voetius was strongly committed to the theological system that had been built upon the foundation of Aristotelian philosophy, he was highly critical of Descartes' attempt to subvert and replace the established philosophy. According to him, without Aristotelianism, it would become difficult, if not impossible, to explicate the Reformed faith consistently, leaving it defenceless against its opponents.⁶² Besides his strong commitment to Aristotelianism, there was an even more profound motive for his hostility towards the new philosophy, namely the unprecedented prominence it gave to reason.⁶³

Voetius' own attitude towards reason had been shaped significantly by his earlier polemics against the rationalism of the Socinians, who were notorious for their rejection of the Trinity, and the fideism espoused by some Catholics.⁶⁴ According to Voetius, who wished to keep the middle ground between these two extremes, reason was a rational faculty that had been bestowed upon man to understand and offer judgements. In line with previous Reformed theologians, he emphasised that, at the beginning of time, this faculty had been severely weakened by man's Fall. Although it had later been restored by divine grace, this restoration had only been partial, meaning that it could never play the normative role in matters of faith the Socinians ascribed to it. Contrary to the fideists, Voetius emphasised that reason still had a legitimate place within theology. In his view, theology was still in need of an appropriate logical apparatus. What mattered most was that reason would recognise the limits of human understanding, and therefore acknowledge its own subordinate position.⁶⁵

Whereas Voetius emphasised the limits to man's understanding, Descartes was strongly pre-occupied with establishing the indubitable grounds of certainty. As Descartes claimed that ideas were only true if they were clearly and distinctly perceived, this meant that philosophy would no longer be judged on its compatibility with theology. Instead reason would become an autonomous entity, which, in turn, would lead to the emancipation of philosophy from its subordinate position.⁶⁶ Since an autonomous reason could come into conflict with theology, Voetius was profoundly alarmed by this development. No less disturbing to him was Descartes's promise that man, on his own account, could establish indubitable certainty. As Voetius considered the degree of certainty promised by Descartes to be beyond human reach, he warned that this promise would inevitably result in scepticism, and, even worse, atheism.⁶⁷ Since the new philosophy not only destroyed the foundations of the traditional philosophy, but also led to scepticism, it was to be considered a dire threat to both philosophy and theology; making it necessary to oppose it with all means possible. Hence Voetius admonished likeminded theologians to do their utmost best to prevent it from spreading.⁶⁸

The Cartesian philosophers

As the Voetians turned out to be formidable opponents of the new philosophy, Descartes was forced to respond to their criticism. In particular, he had to make clear that his philosophy posed no challenge to theology. This he did in his most extensively in his so-called *Comments on a Certain Broad-*

⁶² A. Goudriaan, *Reformed orthodoxy and philosophy, 1625-1750. Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 32-33.

⁶³ Verbeek 2002, p. 173.

⁶⁴ Goudriaan 2006, p. 37.

⁶⁵ W.J van Asselt, 'Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?' in: W.J van Asselt & E. Dekker (eds), *Reformation and Scholasticism. An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), pp. 238-239.

⁶⁶ Goudriaan 2006, pp. 37-53.

⁶⁷ Verbeek 2002, pp. 170-174.

⁶⁸ For details on the conflict between Voetius and Descartes, see: Verbeek 1992, pp. 13-33.

sheet. According to Descartes, in matters of faith and reason, it was important to distinguish between three sorts of questions. In the first place, some things had to be believed through faith alone. To this category belonged those aspects of revealed religion that could not be comprehended by reason, like the Trinity and the Incarnation; which therefore should be accepted on the basis of authority.⁶⁹ Secondly, there were questions that, 'while having to do with faith, can also be investigated by natural reason'.⁷⁰ The examples Descartes gave of this category were the existence of God and the distinction between the body and the soul; which were, of course, the subjects he had dealt with in his *Meditations*. The third sort of questions were those that have 'nothing whatever to do with faith, and which are the concern solely of human reasoning.'⁷¹ Whereas the first kind of questions had to be accepted on the basis of faith, only those of the third kind were required to live up to the strict demands of the Cartesian method, meaning that they had to be clearly and distinctly perceived to be true.⁷² Descartes thus hoped to avoid the accusation that he subjected revealed religion to the judgement of philosophy by separating the competences of theology and philosophy.⁷³

Despite the Voetian attempts to curtail the influence of Cartesianism, the influence of the new philosophy nevertheless kept on spreading. Descartes even came to be supported by several likeminded philosophers, who, like him, were confronted with overcoming the apparent conflict between theology and philosophy. The first philosopher we will deal with is Adrianus Heerebord (1614-1661). Although the latter was not a straightforward Cartesian, he nevertheless played an important role in spreading the new philosophy. Heerebord's interest in Cartesianism was part of his desire to develop a *philosophia novantiqua*, which consisted of a combination of elements of the old and new philosophy.⁷⁴ According to him, there were two kinds of philosophers. On the one hand, there were philosophers who pursued an independent investigation of nature, relying only upon their own wits; whilst, on the other hand, there were philosophers who merely followed the opinions of others, creating a bookish knowledge. Whereas Aristotle himself had belonged to the first kind of philosophers, Heerebord thought that his later followers had nevertheless belonged to the second kind, leading to a degeneration of philosophy. Just like the renaissance had recovered the knowledge of antiquity, and the Reformation had led to a restoration of theology, Heerebord argued that philosophy needed to be restored, by granting it the freedom to investigate nature apart from prejudices and authorities.⁷⁵ Since the new philosophy of Descartes seemed to offer precisely such a programme, Heerebord considered it worthwhile to introduce elements from it into his teachings.⁷⁶

The decision to introduce Cartesianism into his teachings, however, also confronted Heerebord with the challenge of finding a solution to the perceived conflict between theology and philosophy. Due to his eclectic stance, he lacked the systematic vigor of later Cartesians. Nevertheless, he did speak out on this subject. According to Heerebord, the disciplines of theology and philosophy were partly interrelated due to the fact that the former used elements from philosophy in formulating propositions, and in interpreting Scripture. Moreover, the fact that the entire world had been created by God implied that it was inevitable that, at times, theology and philosophy were to deal with the same subject matter. Since truth was one, there necessarily was some overlap between

⁶⁹ R. Descartes (trans. by: J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch) vol. 1, p 300.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁷³ Verbeek 2002, p. 173.

⁷⁴ F. Sassen, *Geschiedenis van de Wijsbegeerte in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1959), pp. 151-152.

⁷⁵ Verbeek 1993, pp. 183-185.

⁷⁶ F. Sassen 1959, p. 152.

both disciplines, which after all, were concerned with discerning truth.⁷⁷ Still, Heereboord also emphasized that there nevertheless was an important difference. Whereas both disciplines were thus concerned with truth, it only was theology that was able to account for supernatural phenomena, which were beyond rational comprehension. This meant that there were aspects of theology that lay beyond the competence of philosophy.⁷⁸ Heereboord, however, was not particularly clear on what these aspects were. To find a more lucid account it is therefore to Johannes de Raey that we have to turn our attention.

Although De Raey, like Heereboord, presented the new philosophy under the guise of a *philosophia novantiqua*, he nevertheless offered a far more consistent and systematic presentation of Cartesianism.⁷⁹ This also became noticeable in how he dealt with the relationship between theology and philosophy. Reflecting upon Descartes' distinction between theoretical knowledge, which dealt with clearly and distinctly perceived ideas, and practical knowledge, which dealt with sense information, De Raey came to argue for a strict separation of philosophy from the higher faculties; these faculties being theology, law, and medicine.⁸⁰ As philosophy dealt with ideas in their purest forms, there was a gap between this discipline and the higher faculties, which made use of common sense and experience. Moreover, as there was an equal gap between the language used to express philosophical ideas, and Scripture, which was written in everyday language, philosophy could not be asked to provide theology with a philosophical apparatus. Philosophy, which dealt with clearly and distinctly perceived ideas, and theology, which dealt with the interpretation of Scripture, therefore had their own specific competences.⁸¹ De Raey thus offered the intellectual justification for an emancipation of philosophy from the subservient position it had previously occupied. This not only meant that theologians were no longer authorised to meddle in philosophical affairs, but also that reason could not become the ultimate arbiter in matters of faith.

The Cocceian theologians

The conflict on the compatibility between the new philosophy and Reformed theology was, at first, primarily fought out by the Voetian theologians on the one hand, and the Cartesian philosophers on the other. As this conflict gradually turned into a nationwide crisis it nevertheless became clear that not all Reformed theologians shared in the Voetian rejection of the new philosophy. Instead, two prominent Cocceian theologians, namely Abraham Heidanus and Christoph Wittich, eventually came to speak out in favour of Cartesianism. Interestingly enough they found a common ground with the Cartesian philosophers in their shared emphasis upon separating the disciplines of theology and philosophy.⁸² As these theologians also had a clear interest in Cocceius' theological insights, we will begin by considering what Cocceius himself thought about the new philosophy. This will help in discovering why Wittich and Heidanus came to argue in favour of separating theology and philosophy.

Cocceius has long been depicted as a theologian that was strongly averse to scholastic theology, rejecting the use of philosophy in favour of constructing a theology that was grounded solely in Scripture. In recent times it has become clear that his stance on the use of philosophy was more nuanced, with his criticism being primarily directed at some of his colleagues, who subjected Scrip-

⁷⁷ Verbeek 1993, pp. 185-186.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ F. Sassen 1959, pp. 152-154.

⁸⁰ Verbeek 1992, p. 190.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 190-192.

⁸² See also: W. Frijhoff & M. Spies, *1650. Bevochten eendracht* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2000), pp. 308-314.

ture to their own dogmatic interpretations.⁸³ Instead, Cocceius clearly recognised the benefits philosophy might offer theology. Interestingly, his thoughts on the matter seem to have evolved. Whereas Cocceius first emphasised that Scripture was self-sufficient in providing man with the knowledge God had decided to reveal, he later came to recognise that by making use of reason philosophers could also discover some of the insights that could be deduced from Scripture. This development seems to have been accompanied by a growing recognition of the usefulness of Cartesian philosophy.⁸⁴ What matters most, however, is that Cocceius never transformed his insights on the relationship between theology and philosophy into a systematic account.⁸⁵

From the preceding exposition, it becomes clear that there were no specific elements in Cocceius' theology that necessarily predisposed his later followers to take an interest in Cartesianism. Instead, it seems to have been precisely his preference to occupy himself with biblical exegesis, that may have prompted his followers to speak out on the new philosophy. Although Cocceius himself did not reject the use of philosophy, he did not deal with the relationship between theology and philosophy in a systematic manner. When his followers began to occupy themselves with transforming his theological insights into a more coherent system, they were thus confronted with the need to speak out on this subject. Since this occurred at the time when Dutch intellectual life was thrown into turmoil by the rise of the new philosophy, they had to define their stance towards Cartesianism.⁸⁶

As was said, it were Christoph Wittich and Abraham Heidanus that were the first Cocceian theologians to deal extensively the challenge the new philosophy posed to Reformed theology. Of these two theologians, it was Wittich that was the first to speak out. According to him, in a work he published in 1653 whilst he was still a professor at the University of Duisburg, the primary problem was the difficulty of reconciling the new heliocentric worldview with that of Scripture.⁸⁷ To overcome this problem, he argued that the primary task of philosophy was an independent investigation of nature, by means of the light of reason. The task of theology, on the other hand, was to interpret Scripture, whose purpose was not to provide a scientific account of nature, but to conduct man towards eternal salvation. As the primary purpose of Scripture was salvation, it would be wrong to treat it as an authoritative source in matters of physics. Instead, God had accommodated his revelation to the understanding of the ancient Israelites, to enhance the ability of these people to comprehend its salvific content.⁸⁸ Wittich thus offered a theological justification for the separation between theology and philosophy the Cartesians had already embraced.

It comes as no surprise that Wittich's solution was met with severe criticism by the Voetians, causing them to oppose Wittich through a substantial number of tracts. Wittich, however, stood not alone, but soon got support from the Leiden professor Abraham Heidanus. According to Heidanus, who was involved in a pamphlet struggle with Voetius, Cartesianism posed no significant threat to Reformed theology. The primary threat, instead, came from theologians who made the severe mistake of wedding theology to a particular kind of philosophy, causing them to defend this philosophy as if it were an equivalent of religion itself. Instead of criticizing Descartes, he was to be praised; for he was the first philosopher to have clearly demarcated the competences of theology and philoso-

⁸³ See Van Asselt, 'Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?'

⁸⁴ Van Asselt 2001, pp. 76-81.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸⁶ C. Graafland, 'Structuurverschillen tussen voetiaanse en coccejaanse geloofsleer' in: F. Broeyer & E. van der Wall (eds.), *Een richtingenstrijd in de Gereformeerde kerk* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1994), p. 31.

⁸⁷ Verbeek 2002, p. 176.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

phy.⁸⁹ According to Heidanus, the primary task of philosophy was to conduct an investigation of nature, independent from any authorities and prejudices. As Descartes had, in his view, offered a philosophical system that lived up to this demand, Heidanus full-heartedly supported his plea for the freedom of philosophising.⁹⁰ As a result Heidanus found a common ground with the Cartesians in their shared emphasis upon the need of separating theology from philosophy.

Despite Heidanus' emphasis on the need to strictly separate between the competences of theology and philosophy, he nevertheless argued that both could still cooperate. According to him this was due to the fact that they both, in the ultimate sense, dealt with truth. Although their manner of discerning truth differed significantly, the one by means of natural reason and the other by means of Scripture, philosophy and theology nevertheless shared the same object.⁹¹ Hence, Heidanus argued that 'a good friendship between both could be established, if the truth, that the one obtained from nature, would be found to be the same as that, which the other obtained from Scripture, and, conversely, if the Scriptural truth would be in accordance with that of nature.'⁹² If the knowledge God had revealed of Himself through nature, and which was discerned by natural reason, was hal- lowed by revealed truth, it could therefore be put into the service of Reformed theology.⁹³ In parti- cular, this meant that the new philosophy could be integrated within natural theology, which, after all, served to show what man, by means of natural reason, could discern of God. Despite having pointed out this possibility, Heidanus did not develop his insights on this subject into a more compre- hensive account, leaving that task up to a later generation of Cocceian theologians.

The rise of philosophical radicalism

The intellectual crisis caused by the rise of Cartesianism had a profoundly disruptive impact upon the Dutch universities. Due to the strong connection between the universities, Dutch politics and the Reformed church, the crisis did not remain confined to the former, but subsequently pervaded the entire Republic, dividing it between different theologico-political camps. This social and political di- mension to the Cartesian crisis is of pivotal importance in understanding the development that occurred in the latter half of the seventeenth century, namely the rise of a generation of radical philosophers. Having come of age during the Cartesian crisis, thinkers like Lodewijk Meyer and Bene- dictus Spinoza were to turn the new philosophy to a different direction, using it as a means to find drastic solutions to the social and political problems Dutch society was facing.⁹⁴ As this also included subjecting religion, and in particular Scripture, to the test of reason, their works caused a huge shock in the Republic; confirming the Voetians in their suspicion of the new philosophy, and also posing a particular challenge to the Cartesians and Cocceians. As the challenge posed by philosophical radical- ism was one of the two major factors contributing to the crisis of the Reformed mind, we will con- clude this chapter with an analysis of two of its foremost representatives.

Lodewijk Meyer, who was long known primarily as a playwright, received his education at the University of Leiden at the time this university was thoroughly affected by the Cartesian crisis. Having begun his education in 1654, only a year after the publication of Wittich's works had put the herme-

⁸⁹ G. van Itterzon, 'Heidanus', in P. Nauta (ed.) et al, *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme* (Kampen: Kok, 1983), pp. 241-242.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ A. Heidanus, *Consideratien over Eenige saecken onlanghs voorgevallen in de Universiyt binnen Leyden* (Leiden, 1676), p. 18.

⁹² Ibid.; The translation is mine.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ W. Mijnhardt, 'The construction of silence: religious and political radicalism in Dutch history' in: W. van Bunge, *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650-1750* (Brill: Leiden, 2003), pp. 246-258.

neutical implications of the new philosophy at the centre of attention, Meyer seems to have become thoroughly acquainted with the new philosophy, and the attempts by the Cartesians and Cocceians to solve the challenges it presented to theology.⁹⁵ Only a few years after he had finished his education, obtaining a doctorate in philosophy and medicine in 1660, he himself contributed to the debate on the new philosophy, turning it into an entirely different direction. This Meyer did in 1666 by anonymously publishing his *Philosophia Sacra Scriptura interpretres*. Developing an elaborate linguistic theory, he argued that it was often difficult to discern the true meaning of words and sentences. According to him, this applied not only to everyday language, but also to written documents. In fact, these documents were particularly difficult to comprehend, as the absence of the author meant that in the case of difficulties no explanation was forthcoming. As language tends to evolve over time, Meyer also emphasised that, in the case of old documents, it was difficult to retrieve what words and sentences originally meant.⁹⁶

Having ascertained the difficulty of retrieving the original meaning of texts, Meyer continued to argue that the same applied to Scripture. As Scripture had been composed many centuries before any of its present-day interpreters was born, it was, in fact, even more difficult to comprehend than the average text.⁹⁷ According to Meyer, this meant that Scripture contained many obscure and incomprehensible passages; thus undermining the Reformed dogma that difficult passages of Scripture could be understood by more lucid passages.⁹⁸ In fact, many of the religious conflicts had been caused by this obscurity, as the theologians waged war over what was the proper interpretation. In the absence of Scriptural criteria, another criterion therefore had to be found. According to Meyer, this was to be provided by philosophy, which by means of reason could leave behind prejudices, and ascertain truth. Reason therefore was to become the interpreter of Scripture.⁹⁹ In particular, the Cartesian method, which only accepted ideas that were clearly and distinctly perceived, could come to serve such a function.¹⁰⁰ If reason were to be applied to Scripture, its true meaning could be retrieved. Consequently, the debates, caused by conflicting interpretations of obscure passages, would subside, thus doing society the benefit of ending the religious disputes caused by theological obscurantism.

The publication of Meyer's *Philosophia* caused a widespread outcry in the Republic, showing the possibility of applying the new philosophical and scientific insights to fields theologians and philosophers had previously avoided, and leading to conclusions none had dared or willed to utter. No less controversial, however, was Spinoza's *Theological-political Treatise*, first published in 1670.¹⁰¹ Reflecting upon the dire social and political situation in the Dutch Republic, Spinoza argued that the difficulties the Republic faced were due to the skilful exploitation of the superstitions of the common people by the clergy, who intended to usurp the power that rightfully belonged to the government.¹⁰² As the clergy supported their claim to power by their dubious interpretations of Scripture, Spinoza considered it necessary to study Scripture afresh, using only the means provided by Scripture itself.¹⁰³ Moreover, he also considered it necessary to safeguard the liberty of philosophising, as this liberty

⁹⁵ W. Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza, 1650-1700* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), pp. 61-63.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰¹ J.I Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 275-284.

¹⁰² B. de Spinoza (trans. By: F. Akkerman), *Theologisch-Politiek Traktaat* (Amsterdam: 1997), pp. 82-89.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

was indispensable for preserving social peace and a piety that was truly pleasing to God.¹⁰⁴ Like Meyer, Spinoza hoped to overcome the conflicts caused by theological obscurantism.¹⁰⁵ He, however, went further than Meyer, as his endeavour also contained an explicit social and political programme.

Of central importance was that Spinoza's claim that scriptural exegesis should proceed in the same manner as an investigation of nature. According to him, the interpreter of Scripture should first offer a description of the content of Scripture, and subsequently deduce from it the proper information concerning the original intention of the author of the works. There is, however, a major difference between biblical exegesis and the investigation of nature. Whereas reason allows men to ascertain a great number of facts about nature, Scripture, as a historical document, is often obscure. At first sight, it reveals more about the imaginative capacities of its authors, rather than the underlying meaning. Still, Spinoza considers it possible to deduce a message from Scripture.¹⁰⁶ According to him, at the heart of it lies the message that man has to be obedient to God. The primary task of theology is therefore to teach obedience.¹⁰⁷ This insight serves to justify a separation between theology and philosophy. Whereas the primary task of theology is the interpretation of Scripture, used to teach man obedience to God, that of philosophy is to teach truth, and conduct an independent investigation of nature.¹⁰⁸ Spinoza thus cleverly subverted the authority of the theologians, by curtailing their authority; for the latter would no longer be allowed to speak out on philosophy, nor on politics.

The rise of philosophical radicalism added a new, and complicating factor to the already vehement conflict on the compatibility between the new philosophy and Reformed theology. As we just saw, both Cartesian philosophers and a substantial number of Cocceian theologians had tried to overcome the perceived conflict between theology and philosophy by emphasising the need to strictly separate both disciplines. As the works by radical thinkers like Meyer and Spinoza showed resemblances to the strategies and concepts used by the Cartesians and Cocceians, the position of the latter nevertheless became severely compromised, with the Voetians accusing them of being directly responsible for the rise of philosophical radicalism. Thus, according to the Voetian theologian Jacobus Koelman (1632-1695), the monstrous thoughts proposed by the radical philosophers were, in fact, merely the logical outcome of the disastrous novelties first introduced by the Cartesians and Cocceians.¹⁰⁹ His Utrecht colleague Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) went even further, showing meticulously that their concepts and strategies employed could also be found in the works by the radical philosophers, making them guilty by association.¹¹⁰ The Cartesians and Cocceians were thus confronted with the double challenge of fending off the Voetian criticism, whilst also having to find a proper answer to the challenge of philosophical radicalism.

The Cartesians responded by emphasising that the radical philosophers had failed to respect the separation between theology and philosophy, which they themselves, after the example of Des-

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

¹⁰⁵ In his introduction, Spinoza explicitly stated that one of the foremost reasons for conducting his investigation of Scripture was the fact that the Dutch Republic was so divided on the theological and philosophical controversies, that these controversies even entered the churches and politics; see: Ibid, p. 90.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 212-217.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 314-322.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 340-346.

¹⁰⁹ J. Koelman, *Het vergift van de cartesiaansche filosofie grondig ontdekt* (Amsterdam, 1692).

¹¹⁰ P. van Mastricht, *Novitatum Cartesianarum Gangraena* (Amsterdam, 1677). See also: A. Goudriaan, *Reformed orthodoxy and philosophy, 1625-1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 54-65.

cartes, had always tried to uphold; hereby hoping to clear themselves from any guilt.¹¹¹ The Cocceians, however, were in a more complicated situation. To leading Cocceian theologians it seemed clear that the demise of Aristotelian philosophy had weakened the intellectual foundations of Reformed theology, thereby leaving it vulnerable to criticism. Although they considered Cartesianism to be an interesting alternative, this philosophy nevertheless became severely compromised, due to its association with philosophical radicalism. According to the popular account, the major problem with Meyer and Spinoza, after all, was that they had applied the Cartesian method to theology, thereby effectively subjecting revelation to the criterion of reason. This meant that a way had to be found in which Cartesian philosophy could be made useful to Reformed theology, without falling into the pit of theological rationalism. This endeavour, which called for both prudence and ingenuity, was to come to full fruition around the turn of the eighteenth century, leading to a marked rise of interest in natural theology amongst Cocceian theologians.

¹¹¹ Theo Verbeek has described this development extensively in his inaugural address, see: T. Verbeek, *De Vrijheid van de Filosofie. Reflecties over een Cartesiaans thema*. (Utrecht 1994).

Chapter II

Living during the crisis of the Reformed mind: The life of Ruardus Andala (1665-1727)

The Cocceian turn towards natural theology is one of the most interesting, but also most peculiar developments in the history of Reformed theology. It occurred at a moment when the traditional manner of doing theology had been put into doubt, whilst the way of doing theology that was to characterise the later eighteenth century still had to emerge. In the final two chapters of this thesis, we will therefore devote our attention to investigating this remarkable development amongst the Cocceian theologians. This we will do by first taking into account the life of Ruardus Andala (1665-1727).¹¹² Although Andala is nowadays largely forgotten, in his own time he was nevertheless a well-known figure, receiving particular renown for his staunch devotion to Cartesianism, and his strong zeal for the theological insights of Cocceius. Since Andala not only participated in the Cocceian turn towards natural theology, but also became involved in many of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century debates on the compatibility of Reformed theology with Cartesianism, his life gives a vivid impression of what it was like to live at the turn of the eighteenth century. This will help in better understanding the Cocceian turn towards natural theology, which will be dealt with in the final chapter of this thesis.

A child prodigy

In the early modern era, one's heritage generally also determined one's future; meaning that it was particularly difficult for people to transcend the situation into which they were originally born. Ruardus Andala, however, was a noticeable exception to this rule. According to the eighteenth-century Franeker professor Vriemoet (1699-1760), who wrote an historical survey of all Franeker professors, he was, in fact, an excellent example of a man who, despite his humble origins, by his own outstanding abilities and with the help of patrons, had been able to change his fortune to the better.¹¹³ When Andala was born in 1665 to Gerlof Ruurds and Truike Wiggles, two humble but honest farmers, his parents, indeed could not have predicted that their son would one day become a professor, let alone a renowned defender of Cartesianism. Instead, at that moment, it had been far more likely that he would have succeeded them as a farmer at Andlahuizen, a small hamlet near the Frisian town of Burgwerd.¹¹⁴ Because Andala, from a young age, showed a particular aptitude for learning, his parents, however, decided to send him to school. It was this decision that was to take his life into an entirely different direction from what one previously could have predicted.¹¹⁵

By itself, it was not a remarkable decision by Andala's parents to send their son to school at the age of six. In fact, in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic it was quite common for children, even those of needy parents, to receive some elementary education. Generally this meant that they

¹¹² The foremost of information on Andala's life is, ironically, the funeral oration by Venema; see: H. Venema, *Oratio funebris in memoriam Ruardi Andala* (Franeker, 1727); Vriemoet has also included Andala in his survey of the Franeker professors, see: E.L. Vriemoet *Athenarum Frisicarum libri duo*, (Leeuwarden, 1758), pp. 728-737; A Dutch account is provided by Boeles; see: W.B.S. Boeles, *Frieslands Hoogeschool en het Rijks Athenaeum te Franeker*, vol. 2 (Leeuwarden, 1889), pp. 356-353; A survey of Andala's foremost philosophical insights is provided by Galama, see: S.H.M. Galama, *Het Wijsgerig Onderwijs aan de Hogeschool te Franeker. 1585-1811* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1954), pp. 138-150.

¹¹³ Vriemoet 1758, p. 728.

¹¹⁴ Venema 1727, pp. 7-9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

would be taught the rudimentary skills of reading and writing, and receive some instruction in the basics of the Reformed faith.¹¹⁶ As it seems, Andala's education at the elementary school of Burgwerd did not profoundly differ from this general course, except that he also received some instruction in mathematics. Because Andala turned out to be an exceptionally gifted pupil, who is said to have had more zeal for learning than for childish games, he soon caught the attention of Burgwerd's Reformed minister, Gerardus Moda (1640-1677).¹¹⁷ Moda, who was impressed with his aptitude for learning, not only decided to give him private lessons, but also recommended him to Tjaard van Aylva (c.1645-1705), an influential local nobleman.¹¹⁸ It was with the help of Van Aylva, who was to remain an important supporter, that Andala was able to go to the Latin school of Bolsward.¹¹⁹

It was at this school that Andala would spend the next four years of his life. As he lost both of his parents shortly after his arrival at Bolsward, the situation initially seemed dire for him. Van Aylva, however, seems to have felt a special responsibility for the orphaned boy, deciding to support him whenever he could. The confidence Van Aylva put in Andala did not remain unrewarded, as Andala turned out to make such rapid progress in learning, that he quickly proceeded through the different stages of education.¹²⁰ Andala was first taught Latin, thereby becoming familiar with the works of Salust, Virgil and Terence. Subsequently, he continued to learn Greek, reading the New Testament in this language, and also the works of Herodotus and Hesiod. Besides these general courses, Andala also received private instructions by the Latin school's rector Tiberius and its corrector Petrejus.¹²¹ Due to the relative ease with which he progressed through the different stages of the Latin school Andala, at the age of only fourteen, was already able to enter the next stage in his scholarly career, namely to get accepted at one of the Dutch universities.¹²²

The University of Franeker

Although students in the early modern era were accustomed to traversing great distances in order to obtain an academic education, Andala did not have to travel very far to attend a university. In fact, he did not have to leave his native province at all; for in the seventeenth century the small Frisian town of Franeker could pride itself with harbouring one of the foremost universities of the Dutch Republic. Originally founded with the purpose of providing Frisia with its own body of academically trained lawyers, physicians and ministers, this university had eventually obtained an international renown, attracting not only several distinguished professors, but also a remarkable number of foreign students.¹²³ For Andala, the decision to become a student at Franeker therefore meant that he was to enter a life that was markedly different from the rural environment in which he had grown up, having to live amidst students that were known for their rowdy behaviour. It seems that he had little difficulty adjusting himself to the new circumstances. With the help of Van Aylva, he even managed to obtain a position at a boarding house for students of needy parents.¹²⁴ When Andala, in Septem-

¹¹⁶ See: P.T.F.M. Boekholt & E.P. De Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland: Vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), pp. 27-41.

¹¹⁷ Venema 1727, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

¹²³ For more on the history of Franeker, see: G.T. Jensma & F.R.H. Smit & F. Westra (eds.), *Universiteit te Franeker: 1585-1811* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1985).

¹²⁴ For more on this scholarship, see: J.J. Kalma, 's Lands voedsterlingen en de Friese kerk. Het alumnaat in Friestland, studiebeurzen voor predikanten in spe.' in: G.T. Jensma & F.R.H. Smit & F. Westra (eds.), *Universiteit te Franeker: 1585-1811* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1985), pp. 147-160.

ber 1679, inscribed his name in Franeker's students' register, he thus was about to enter one of the most formative periods of his life.¹²⁵

Before we can continue to investigate Andala's scholarly career, we must first take into account a number of significant developments that had occurred at the University of Franeker in the decade and a half prior to his arrival. For it had been during these years that both Franeker's philosophical and theological faculties had been troubled by a number of conflicts related to the introduction of both Cartesianism and Cocceianism. The first of these conflicts had arisen in 1667 due to the announcement by Johannes Wubben (?-1681), one of Franeker's professors of philosophy, that he would hold a disputation on Cartesian philosophy. Although elements of Cartesianism had been introduced before at Franeker, namely by Johannes Greidanus (1632-1698), Wubben's announcement implied that Cartesianism would thenceforth be taught openly.¹²⁶ This had angered Nicolaus Arnoldus (1618-1680), one of Franeker's professors of theology, who had subsequently complained to the academic senate, convincing it to suspend the disputation. This, in turn, had angered Wubben, who had struck back by turning to Frisia's Provincial Executives, hereby overruling the decision by the senate. Consequently, Arnoldus had turned to the Frisian provincial synod, hoping that it would put pressure upon the Frisian states to condemn Cartesianism.¹²⁷

Since Lodewijk Meyer's *Philosophia* had been published only a year before the conflict took place, Arnoldus had timed his accusations rightly, making it likely that the synod would agree with him.¹²⁸ It had only been due to an intervention by Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698), at that moment a minister at Franeker, that things had not turned out as Arnoldus had wished; for in response to the accusations by Arnoldus, Bekker had written his *De philosophia Cartesiana adinitio* (1668), in which he had pleaded that Cartesianism was no threat to the Reformed faith at all.¹²⁹ As the general opinion had subsequently begun to shift in favour of Cartesianism, the states had refused to give in to Arnoldus' demands, instead allowing Cartesianism to be taught openly at Franeker. This new direction had become even more clear with the appointment of two other Cartesians, namely Abraham de Grau (1632-1683) and Johannes Schotanus a Sterringa (1643-1699), making Cartesianism the dominant philosophy at Franeker.¹³⁰ Whereas the fate of Cartesianism had thus taken a positive turn at Franeker, that of Balthasar Bekker had been less fortunate. Having remembered the role Bekker had played in propagating Cartesianism, Arnoldus had used the opportunity in 1670, when Bekker had published a commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, to accuse him of heterodoxy, getting the Frisian synod to condemn the work, and prohibiting Bekker from teaching youngsters.¹³¹

No less disruptive than the introduction of Cartesianism had been the introduction of Cocceian theology at Franeker. Although Johannes Cocceius himself had been a professor at Franeker between 1636 and 1650, the influence of his federal theology had nevertheless been limited, with Franeker being dominated by a host of irenic and Voetian theologians. The unrest caused by Cocceianism in the other Dutch provinces had, however, not left Franeker unaffected. Instead, the introduction of Cocceianism at Franeker had been directly related to the crackdown on Cocceianism in the provinces in Holland and Zeeland in 1676. Thus when the Cocceian minister Johannes van der

¹²⁵ Venema 1727, p. 14.

¹²⁶ F. Sassen 1959, pp. 167-168.

¹²⁷ F. Sassen 1959, pp. 167-168; A. Ypey, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche hervormde kerk*, vol. 2 (Breda: 1822), pp. 487-488.

¹²⁸ Galama 1954, p. 106.

¹²⁹ F. Sassen 1959, p. 168.

¹³⁰ F. Sassen 1959, pp. 168-169; Ypey 1822, pp. 487-488.

¹³¹ Ypey 1822, pp. 491-494.

Waeyen (1639-1701), in the same year, had been banished from the province of Zeeland in relation to a conflict over the appointment of the likeminded minister William Momma, he had shortly afterwards been invited to become professor in Hebrew at Franeker. As was the case with Cartesianism, the appointment of the Cocceian Van der Waeyen had been met with resistance. Due to the direct support Van der Waeyen received from the stadholder Hendrik Casimir II (1657-1696), the protests, had subsided more quickly, continuing for some time outside the confines of the university.¹³²

Education at the University of Franeker

From the preceding paragraph it becomes clear that both Cartesianism and Cocceianism were in the ascendancy when Andala arrived at the University of Franeker. It should therefore come as no surprise that both movements were to leave a lasting impact upon his subsequent intellectual development. Prior to turning his interest to philosophy or theology, Andala, however, began with following the courses belonging to the propaedeutic arts faculty. Thus, he commenced his scholarly career with following the courses on Greek and Hebrew offered by Nicolaus Blancardus (1625-1703). Afterwards, Andala was introduced to the subject of history by the renowned historian Jacobus Perizonius (1651-1715). Shortly after, he continued his education with Campegius Vitringa sr. (1659-1722), who, at that moment, still held the chair of Oriental languages. Vitringa not only taught him Hebrew, but also Syriac and Chaldean. Andala's strong interest in philology becomes clear from his dispute *De Urim et Thummim*, which he held in 1681. Once Vitringa was replaced by Jacobus Rhenferd (1654-1712), Andala not only continued to study Hebrew, but even became acquainted with the Rabbinical tradition. Conclusively, he also followed the course on church history offered by Johannes a Marck (1643-1699).¹³³

Once Andala had sufficiently developed his philological skills, he continued to explore philosophy. At an early stage during his education, he had already briefly followed a course in philosophy with the Cartesian Abraham Gulichius (1642-1679). As Gulichius had died within a year after accepting his post at the University of Franeker, it was Johannus Schotanus and Tobias Andreae (1633-1685), both avowed Cartesians, who were primarily responsible for introducing Andala to the new philosophy.¹³⁴ Due to the remarkable progress he made, Andala was even advised by Andreae to obtain a doctorate in this subject. Although this advice must have been tempting, Andala nevertheless refused the offer, wishing to first expand his knowledge on other subjects, before thinking of such a course of action. Hence he followed a course on mathematics with Abraham de Grau (1632-1683), being one of the few students to do so. Moreover, Andala also followed a course on astronomy with Bernardus Fullenius (1640-1707) and one on anatomy with Philip Matthaeus (1641-1690).¹³⁵ Due to his desire to follow almost every course there was, it took until 1684 for Andala to finally obtain a doctorate in philosophy. This he did by means of a disputation on physics, which was presided by both Schotanus and Andreae.¹³⁶

As a doctor in philosophy Andala's future was looking increasingly bright; for this title not only gave him the attractive prospect of eventually obtaining a position as a teacher at one of the Dutch illustrious schools but even a chair in philosophy at one of the universities. Andala's ambition, however, was to become a Reformed minister; perhaps inspired by Gerhardus Moda, to whom he than-

¹³² For a survey of this controversy, see: Ypey 1822, pp. 509-520.

¹³³ Venema 1727, pp. 14-16; Boeles 1889, p. 357.

¹³⁴ Boeles 1889, p. 357.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Venema 1727, pp 16-19.

ked so much.¹³⁷ Hence he decided to follow the courses offered by the theological faculty. As we have seen, in the years prior to his arrival, Cocceianism had been introduced at this faculty due to the appointment of Van der Waeyen. As, in the meantime, Arnoldus had died, and the more irenic Herman Witsius (1636-1708) and Johannes a Marck had left for other universities, to be replaced by Vitringa, Cocceianism had become firmly entrenched at Franeker the moment Andala began to study theology. Since Cocceius himself had strongly emphasised the need for a profound exegesis of Scripture, his theology must have had a special appeal to Andala, who, after all, had a particular interest in philology. As a result, Andala developed an especially close friendship with Van der Waeyen, often visiting him at home, and helping him with his duties as a professor.¹³⁸ Vitringa, with whom Andala had already been acquainted, subsequently taught him to pay special attention to the historical circumstances in which Scripture came into existence.¹³⁹ Both theologians must have provided Andala with an excellent introduction in Cocceian theology, for in his later life he was to become known for his great devotion to the theological insights of Cocceius.

The status of reason and the divinity of Scripture

Besides Van der Waeyen and Vitringa, it was Herman Alexander Röell (1653-1718) who also played a pivotal role in shaping Andala's intellectual development. Röell was appointed professor of both philosophy and theology at Franeker in 1685, having previously held a chair in theology at the Deventer athenaeum.¹⁴⁰ Much has been said about his theological opinions, with some aligning him with the Cocceian theologians. Although Röell was indeed familiar with the federal theology of Cocceius, and had, in fact, studied with a number of prominent Cocceian theologians, it would nevertheless be better to consider him an independent mind, who followed his own theological insights, rather than those of one or another prominent theologian.¹⁴¹ Still, Röell took a keen interest in the new philosophy, integrating Cartesian elements into his theological works. In comparison with Descartes, Röell put even more emphasis upon man's conscience, considering it as the foundation of all knowledge. According to him, the innate ideas that resided within man's conscience derived from God. In order to avoid errors, all knowledge, however, still had to live up to the criterion of being perceived clearly and distinctly.¹⁴² What was truly novel, but also daring, to his approach, was that he also argued that theology was not exempted from this criterion. According to him, contrary to being a threat to revelation, reason even was a prerequisite for proving the divinity of Scripture.¹⁴³

The implications of Röell's line of reasoning became clear when, on October 8th 1686, his nephew Gisbertus Duker hoped to obtain a doctorate in philosophy with his *Disputatio de recta ratiocinatione*. Although Röell did not officially supervise this disputation, which task was ascribed to Schotanus, it is nevertheless very likely that he personally contributed to the theses his nephew wished to defend. According to Duker, the strict demands Cartesian epistemology put upon the attainment of truth had an universal validity. As truth cannot contradict itself, Duker consequently argued that theology could not be exempted from the demand of being perceived clearly and distinct-

¹³⁷ Venema 1727, p. 21.

¹³⁸ Boeles 1889, p. 357.

¹³⁹ J.C. de Bruïne, 'De theologische faculteit van de Franeker academie in de achttiende eeuw' in: G.T. Jensma & F.R.H. Smit & F. Westra 1985, pp. 278-280.

¹⁴⁰ The best account on Röell is provided by J. van Sluis, see: J. van Sluis, *Herman Alexander Röell* (Groningen, Fryske Akademie, 1988).

¹⁴¹ Van Sluis 1988., pp. 141-142.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 16-17, 48-51.

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 56-58.

ly. This, in turn, had led him to state that, in order to be of a divine origin, Scripture must be in accordance with reason.¹⁴⁴ It was this statement that caused a great controversy. Although, during the disputation, Andala had been ascribed the official task of opposing Duker, he nevertheless was rudely interrupted by Ulricus Huber (1636-1694), Franeker's renowned professor of law. According to Huber, it was an outrage that such a thesis was enunciated at Franeker. Citing Calvin's *Institutes*, Huber argued that Duker contradicted the Reformed doctrine that the veracity of Scripture was safeguarded by the Holy Spirit. As Huber's continuing interventions led to commotion, the disputation was suspended, with the academic senate withdrawing itself to deliberate on the matter.¹⁴⁵

Although the senate subsequently decided to grant Duker his doctorate, Huber was nevertheless unwilling to relinquish his opposition. Instead, he himself wished to organize a dispute at his own home, about a number of theses, contained in the *Positiones Juridico-Theologicae*, which he had written in response to those of Duker. As Andala himself sided with Duker, and thereby Röell, in the controversy, he decided to attend the disputation held at Huber's home. During this disputation, Andala claimed that reason was indispensable in defending Scripture's veracity against scepticism and atheism. By diminishing the role of reason, one would only leave Scripture defenceless against the forces of incredulity. When Huber, during the heat of the debate, claimed that reason was to be abandoned altogether, in favour of the Holy Spirit, Andala even accused him of promoting enthusiasm.¹⁴⁶ As the debate, unsurprisingly, ended without either side willing to give in, the controversy continued in written form, extending even beyond the confines of Franeker. Andala therefore wrote a short tract on the subject, which was dealt with during a disputation he held under the supervision of Van der Waeyen, and a public letter to Duker, which served as a vindication of their position.¹⁴⁷

Even though the controversy simmered on for some time, it was eventually ended by the provincial synod of Frisia, which decided to impose silence upon the warring parties. Such a theological disturbance at Franeker was, after all, quite damaging for the image of this university, scaring away potential students. Andala's personal involvement in the controversy is nevertheless highly significant; for it was during this conflict on the authority of reason, that a number of insights were proposed that would be elaborated upon in the decades to come. In particular, Röell's claim that reason played a pivotal role in proving the divinity of Scripture was to remain influential, also returning in Andala's later work on natural theology. In 1685 this, however, all still belonged to the future. In the meantime, Andala, who had almost reached the end of his studies, decided to make a small academic tour, visiting some of the other Dutch universities. Thus, in 1687 he left for Utrecht, where he attended the courses offered by Herman Witsius (1636-1708), Melchior Leydekker (1642-1721) and Gerardus de Vries (1648-1705). Subsequently, Andala went to Leiden and listened to Burchard de Volder (1643-1709), Fredericus Spanheim (1632-1701), Jacobus Trigland (1652-1705) and Etienne Le Moyne (1624-1689). After a short stay at Zeeland, he finally concluded his journey in Dordrecht, where he listened to Salomon van Til (1643-1713).¹⁴⁸

Minister of the Divine Word

In the eight years Andala spent as a student at Franeker his strong zeal for learning had earned him the admiration and friendship of his teachers. To them it was beyond any doubt that he possessed

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁴⁸ Venema 1727, pp. 23-24.

the scholarly abilities required to one day obtain a chair himself. As we have seen, Andala's ambition nevertheless was to become a Reformed minister. Since the ministry, with its pastoral and homiletic duties, was a world apart from the lecture room, this meant he first had to convince the classis of Sneek that he was a suitable candidate, before he could enter the ministry. When Andala, on September 28th 1688, therefore was subjected to the formal examination by the classis, his ability to translate Greek and Hebrew on sight made such an impression, that he once more received the highest honours.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, with the help of Van Aylva, Andala was, on the very same day, assigned to the town of Arum. Here, he served for two years, before moving on to Makkum. After a period of five years, Andala subsequently moved to Burgwerd, where he also got married to Catharina Wijbes Hegenhuis, a widow who had been married before to a merchant.¹⁵⁰

Since the status of a Reformed minister often depended on the size of the towns in which he served, Andala's vocations did not provide him any particular renown. Instead, during the years of his ministry, Andala became primarily known because of the polemical works he wrote against Balthasar Bekker.¹⁵¹ In the final decade of the seventeenth century, Bekker, who was an old acquaintance to many of the Franeker professors, became a highly controversial public figure, due to the publication of his four-volume work *De Betoverde Wereld* (1691-1693). In this work, he argued that Christianity needed to be purified from the last remnants of the old pagan superstitions. Although many Reformed ministers would full-heartedly agree to this claim, Bekker's explication that this also included the belief that occult powers, like the devil and demons, could affect human lives or the course of nature nevertheless proved to be far more controversial. Making use of the Cartesian dichotomy between the spiritual and the bodily world, Bekker argued that occult powers, like the devil and demons, belonging to the spiritual realm, could not affect the bodily world at all. Scriptural passages on occult powers therefore had to be read allegorically, referring to the bad inclinations in men.¹⁵²

Despite Bekker's assurance that this did not entail a denial of the actual existence of the devil or demons, his work nevertheless caused a general outcry in the Republic.¹⁵³ Thus, in response to it a substantial number of refutations were written, including one by Van der Waeyen. When Van der Waeyen was himself attacked by Bekker, Andala rose to the defence of his old friend.¹⁵⁴ In his tracts against Bekker, he strongly criticised Bekker's use of Cartesian dualism and his exegesis of the Scriptural passages concerning the devil. That Andala decided to pinpoint these subjects, should come as no surprise; for the fact that Bekker used elements from Cartesian philosophy to substantiate his claims was damaging to those theologians, like Van der Waeyen and Andala, who argued that Cartesianism could be beneficial to Reformed theology. Moreover, even though Bekker did not consider himself to be a Cocceian theologian, in the public debates he was nevertheless often associated with Cocceianism, thereby compromising the position of those theologians who valued the insights of Cocceius.¹⁵⁵ Although Andala, in the end, failed to convince Bekker of his faults, which seems to have been an impossible task, his polemics against this notorious opponent nevertheless had the effect of establishing his name as a formidable defender of Cartesianism.

¹⁴⁹ Venema 1727, p. 26; Vriemoet 1758, p. 731.

¹⁵⁰ Venema 1727, pp. 27-30; Boeles 1889, pp. 357-358.

¹⁵¹ Venema 1727, pp. 28-31.

¹⁵² J.I. Israel 2001, pp. 378-382; J.W. Buisman & J. de Vet, 'Rede, Openbaring en de strijd tegen bijgeloof: de vroege Verlichting in de Republic' in: E.G.E. van der Wall & L. Wessels (eds.), *Een veelzijdige verstandhouding. Religie en Verlichting in Nederland 1650-1850* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2007), pp. 80-86.

¹⁵³ J.I. Israel 2001, pp. 382-392.

¹⁵⁴ Venema 1727, pp. 28-31; Boeles 1889, p. 358.

¹⁵⁵ J.I. Israel 2001, p. 382.

Professor at the University of Franeker

In 1699 Andala's former teacher Schotanus passed away. As Schotanus' demise left a vacancy in one of Franeker's chairs in philosophy, the curators began looking for a replacement.¹⁵⁶ This, however, was a complex process. In the first place, all professors were allowed to suggest the names of one or more suitable candidates. Subsequently, the curators would select three of these names and present them to the Frisian deputies. The latter would then, in consultancy with the Frisian stadholder, finally decide which candidate was to be appointed.¹⁵⁷ When Andala in 1701 was thus nominated to replace Schotanus, the other candidates were his old friend Gisbertus Duker, who had become the rector at a school in Zwolle, and Goedhard Borgesius, a professor in philosophy at Steinfurt. Although both Duker and Andala were former graduates from Franeker, seemingly giving them an equal opportunity of being elected, it was Andala who was eventually chosen. This might have been due to the fact that he was less of a controversial figure than Duker, who, after all, had given rise to a huge conflict whilst he was a student at Franeker. In response to his election, Andala laid down his ministry and moved to Franeker, where he held his inaugural address on June 23th 1701.¹⁵⁸

Since it was customary for professors to divide their educational tasks, Andala deliberated with Röell on a proper division of the labour that was to be done. Consequently, it was decided that Andala would teach both logics and physics, whilst Röell continued to teach about Descartes's *Meditations*, ethics and natural theology.¹⁵⁹ When Röell, in 1704, left for Utrecht, Andala, however, was unable to make a similar arrangement with his other colleague, Johannes Regius (1655-1738). Regius, who had been appointed in 1685, had not only sided with Huber in the controversy on the authority of reason, but also had a great aversion to Cartesian philosophy. Due to this disagreement, and the lack of a replacement for Röell, Andala became responsible for teaching students about all aspects of Cartesian philosophy.¹⁶⁰ To a Cartesian like Andala, this, however, seems to have been more of a joy, rather than a burden. In 1709, Andala, who would turn out to be a prolific author, published his first work, the *Exercitationes*, which offered a clear introduction to Cartesianism. In the dedication of this work he also promised to publish a book about natural theology; a promise which he kept with the publication of his *Syntagma Theologico-Physico-Metaphysicum* in 1711.¹⁶¹

Besides giving courses in philosophy, Andala also desired to become a professor in theology. Despite the opportunity offered by Röell's departure in 1704, it took until 1712 for Andala to obtain a chair in this field. When Andala finally became professor in theology, and was even awarded a doctorate *honoris causa*, he was filled with great joy, giving his inaugural address on November 12th 1713.¹⁶² Hereby Andala came to hold a chair in both philosophy and theology. Whereas his courses in philosophy primarily consisted of an explication of Cartesian philosophy, Andala's courses in theology were strongly influenced by Cocceianism.¹⁶³ Despite the heavy burden of giving courses in both disciplines, Andala still found time to publish new works. As a result, in 1716, he published his *Summa Theologiae Supernaturalis*, which was a supplement to his earlier work on natural theology, and which was strongly influenced by Cocceianism. During his later career, Andala continued to publish a

¹⁵⁶ Venema 1727, p. 31.

¹⁵⁷ F.H.R. Smit, 'Over honderdzevenenzeventig Franeker professoren', in: G.T. Jensma & F.R.H. Smit & F. Westra (eds.), *Universiteit te Franeker: 1585-1811* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1985), pp. 107-111.

¹⁵⁸ Boeles, p. 358.

¹⁵⁹ Vriemoet 1758, pp. 731-732.

¹⁶⁰ Boeles 1889, pp. 358-359.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361.

¹⁶² Vriemoet, p. 732.

¹⁶³ Venema 1727, p. 34; Vriemoet 1758, p. 732.

substantial number of works, which generally consisted of disputations that had been held under his supervision, and some biblical commentaries.¹⁶⁴ In a truly Cocceian fashion, Andala, in 1720 also published a commentary on the book of Revelations.¹⁶⁵

The last of the Cartesians

As an author Andala became primarily known because of the substantial number of polemical works he wrote in defence of Cartesianism. Whereas this philosophy had still been in the ascendancy during his youth, after the turn of the eighteenth century, it nevertheless came under increasing strain. Both longstanding internal problems, such as the difficulty accounting for the interaction between the substances of body and mind, and the rise of alternative philosophical systems, such as Newtonianism and the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy, began to subvert Cartesianism's position as the dominant philosophy at the universities.¹⁶⁶ To an avowed Cartesian like Andala, this development was highly worrying, prompting him to rise to the defence of Cartesian philosophy.¹⁶⁷ From a theological point of view, the gravest challenge to Cartesianism, however, came not from the emergence of alternative philosophical systems, but from the continued accusations that it had been responsible for the rise of philosophical radicalism, and, in particular, Spinozism. In the final decades of his life, Andala therefore became preoccupied with defending Cartesianism, both against the threat posed by the emergence of alternative philosophies, and the need to clear it from its association with Spinozism.¹⁶⁸

The accusation that Cartesianism had been responsible for the rise of philosophical radicalism had troubled this philosophy ever since Meyer and Spinoza had published their main works. Although the initial shock caused by the publication of these works seems to have subsided after the turn of the eighteenth century, the relationship between Cartesianism and Spinozism nevertheless remained a matter of debate, once more flaring up when Andala clashed on this subject with his Franeker colleague Regius.¹⁶⁹ Regius, who had cherished a lifelong aversion against Cartesianism, decided to make it known publicly in 1714, when he published a number of vernacular works in which he claimed that Cartesian philosophy had not only been responsible for the rise of Spinozism, but even that this philosophy only became comprehensible when read from the light of Spinoza. As such, the only difference between Descartes and Spinoza had been that the Spinoza had dared to voice his thoughts openly, whilst Descartes had not dared to do so.¹⁷⁰

Despite the severity of Regius' accusations against Cartesianism, it took four years before Andala decided to respond. According to the Andala, Regius had failed to understand Cartesianism, which was a shame, as this philosophy provided the only means to refute Spinozism. To abandon Cartesianism therefore was to strengthen, instead of weaken, the position of Spinoza. It did not take long for Regius to respond. In his response, the latter ridiculed Descartes for having expounded speculative theories and having made fictitious claims. Instead of remaining faithful to such a dubious philosophy, Regius admonished philosophers to embrace the new empirical philosophy, which was becoming popular at the time.¹⁷¹ This argument struck a sore chord with Andala, as he been conducting experiments ever since 1704, when he himself had opened Franeker's first *collegium experi-*

¹⁶⁴ A list of his publications is provided by Vriemoet, see: Vriemoet 1758, pp. 735-737.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ F. Sassen 1959, pp. 217-219.

¹⁶⁷ Venema 1727, pp. 34..

¹⁶⁸ Venema 1727, pp. 41-42.

¹⁶⁹ J.I. Israel 2001, pp. 482-483.

¹⁷⁰ Galama, pp. 72-75.

¹⁷¹ J.I. Israel 2001, pp. 482-483.

mentalem.¹⁷² Therefore Andala published a comprehensive response in which he argued that it had been Descartes, who should be considered the true architect of physics and experimental philosophy. Although Regius and Andala continued to strike at each other through a number of smaller works, the controversy finally subsided in 1719; without either side willing to give in.¹⁷³

Besides the conflict with Regius, Andala also became involved in two conflicts with representatives of the new philosophical systems that were trying to replace Cartesianism as the dominant philosophy at the universities. The first of these conflicts arose due to Andala's accusation that Boerhave, who was a representative of the new empirical philosophy, had expounded heterodox thoughts in an academic sermon on physics. Although Boerhave himself decided not to respond to this accusation, Franeker's academic senate nevertheless considered Andala's accusation to be too severe, therefore demanding him to offer satisfaction to Boerhave. Boerhave responded sarcastically, saying that he would be entirely satisfied if such an eminent theologian as Andala would thenceforth not worry so much about a humble person like himself.¹⁷⁴ The other controversy Andala became involved in was with the Groningen professor Nicolaas Engelhard (1696-1765), who was the first to expound the new Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy in the Dutch Republic.¹⁷⁵ Near the end of his life, Andala, however, became too ill to continue to defend Cartesianism. When he, on September 17th 1727 finally died, the Dutch Republic, according to professor Vriemoet, lost a man who, during his life, had been beneficial both to the University of Franeker and to the Reformed church.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Venema 1727, p. 38.

¹⁷³ Galama 1954, pp. 72-75.

¹⁷⁴ G.A. Lindeboom, *Herman Boerhaave: the man and his work* (Londen: Methuen, 1968), p. 102.

¹⁷⁵ Venema 1727, pp. 41-42.

¹⁷⁶ Vriemoet 1758, p. 728.

Chapter III

Vindicating the divinity of Scripture:

The early eighteenth-century turn towards natural theology

Ruardus Andala lived during a critical period in the history of Reformed theology. As we have seen, he received his education at a time when Dutch intellectual life had been thrown into turmoil by the rise of the new philosophy and science. The fact that new scientific phenomena were being discovered every day, and that the leading intellectuals of Europe were likewise continually coming up with daring new philosophical ideas, gave an excited, somewhat feverish intellectual flavour to the age in which Andala lived – always leaving one to wonder what new things the next day would bring. Besides optimism, there also was a more troubling side to the rapid intellectual developments, namely the fact that these insights also challenged long-held assumptions about life, the world, and even God.¹⁷⁷ This troubling side became particularly noticeable in the field of theology, where it caused a vehement debate on the question whether the new insights were compatible with Reformed theology or not. Besides the challenge these insights posed to the intellectual foundations of Reformed theology, the other major challenge consisted of the rise of philosophical radicalism, which seemed to put supernatural revelation itself under duress, subjecting Scripture to the test of reason.

Andala thus became intellectually mature in a time when Reformed theology was experiencing a profound and unprecedented crisis. This crisis, however, also opened up new possibilities, as it forced theologians to take drastic measures to overcome the challenges confronting Reformed theology. In particular, the theologians were confronted with the double challenge of providing their theological system with a new and solid intellectual foundation, that could live up to the challenges of the day, without, falling into the pit of theological rationalism, by making reason the ultimate arbiter in matters of faith. It was this challenge that prompted theologians like Herman Röell, Salomon van Til and Ruardus Andala to turn their attention to natural theology, considering it an excellent means of showing not only that it was perfectly rational to believe in God, and to serve the latter by means of religion, but also that man, despite his cognitive abilities, was still in need of supernatural revelation, in the form of Scripture, to obtain the final end of his life, namely eternal blessedness. Such daring innovations, however, had important implications for both the status and content of natural theology, making it an important means of fighting incredulity.

The time has therefore come to turn out attention to this remarkable early eighteenth-century rise of interest in natural theology. To get a clear insight into how this rise of interest related to earlier developments concerning this subject, we will begin by first considering the position natural theology traditionally occupied within the Reformed theological system. Subsequently, we will continue by explicating the works by Röell and Van Til, after which will consider what Andala wrote on this subject. Finally, we will conclude with a short reflection upon the historical significance of the turn towards natural theology, paying particular attention to the question whether these theologians, despite their best intentions, themselves nevertheless fell into the pit of theological rationalism.

¹⁷⁷ In my view, the most enjoyable account, albeit on a European scale, on the drastic intellectual developments taking place in the period between 1680-1715 is provided by Paul Hazard. See: P. Hazard *La crise de la conscience européenne* 1680-1715. (Paris: Boivin, 1935); A more recent account on the Dutch situation is provided found in the already mentioned article by J. Buisman & J. de Vet, see: J. Buisman & J. de Vet 2007.

The Reformed view on natural theology

Although the early eighteenth-century rise of interest in natural theology is indeed remarkable, it is important to remember that it was not the first time theologians turned their attention to this subject. In fact, ever since the earliest days in the history of Christianity, theologians have reflected upon the question whether the knowledge man could obtain of God was provided solely by Scripture, or whether He could also be known from other sources. Prompting this reflection were the resemblances there seemed to be between elements from Christianity and those from other religions, the fact that Scripture itself seemed to acknowledge the existence of some naturally available knowledge of God, and the fact that the ancient philosophers had said a remarkable number of sane things about God.¹⁷⁸ This reflection gradually led to the recognition that besides from Scripture, God could also be partially known through nature; which, in turn, gave rise to a more pronounced distinction between natural and supernatural revelation. Consequently, this distinction became an integral part of the medieval theological heritage, with theologians ascribing an increasingly prominent role to reason in constructing the doctrine of God.¹⁷⁹

As the Middle Ages drew towards a conclusion, the elevated position of reason and, related to it, natural theology nevertheless drew ever more criticism, eventually causing a backlash in the form of the Reformation.¹⁸⁰ One of the primary characteristics of the early Reformers was, after all, their highly critical stance towards many aspects of medieval scholasticism. According to them, scholasticism had become tainted by the dominant position the scholastic theologians had come to ascribe to reason in matters of faith; thereby, in their view, not only subjecting the discipline of theology to that of philosophy, but also reducing the doctrine of God to a matter of mere philosophical speculation. Instead of relying extensively on philosophy, the early Reformers argued that theology was to be based solidly upon Scripture; for it was only through Scripture that God could be properly known.¹⁸¹ As the German Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) said, it was from Scripture, and not from Aristotle, that theology had to take its cue.¹⁸² Aside from their desire to give Scripture a central position within theology, the early Reformers also strongly came to emphasise the detrimental effect sin had upon man's cognitive faculties. Due to the distorting effect of sin, reason and philosophy, on themselves, were unable to provide a trustworthy account of God.¹⁸³

Luther's foremost disciple, Philip Melancton (1497-1560), initially agreed with the former, arguing that theology was to be based solely upon Scripture. In his later works, he, however, seems to have taken a more appreciative stance towards the naturally available knowledge of God.¹⁸⁴ The tendency to deal more extensively with this subject also becomes noticeable in the works of Calvin (1509-1564), who famously began his *Institutes* with a reflection upon the two kinds of knowledge of God, namely God as Creator and God as Redeemer. According to Calvin, the fact that religion can be found among all the nations of men, meant that a sense of divinity was inscribed into the hearts of

¹⁷⁸ H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* vol.1 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1928), pp. 273-274.

¹⁷⁹ Bavinck 1928, p. 274; An interesting, but almost forgotten survey on natural theology was written by J.I. Doedes, see: J. I. Doedes, *Inleiding tot de leer van God* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1870), pp. 120-187.

¹⁸⁰ A very interesting article on the intellectual context of the Reformation has been written by Peter Harrison, see: P. Harrison, 'Philosophy and the crisis of religion', in: J. Hankins, *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁸¹ Muller 2003, vol.1, p. 96-99.

¹⁸² In fact, Luther used even stronger language in his *Disputation against scholastic theology* (1517). According to him 'no one can become a theologian without becoming one with Aristotle.', in: M. Luther (ed. by T.F. Lull & W.R. Russell), *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012, 3rd ed), p. 8.

¹⁸³ Muller 2003, vol.1, p.278-281.

¹⁸⁴ Muller 2003, vol.2, p. 86; See also: J. Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology 1575-1650* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp. 10-33.

men, leading him to acknowledge that nature allowed men to acquire at least some knowledge of God. Still, he emphasised that due to sin, this knowledge was only partial and also full of errors. Hence, it needed to be corrected by Scripture. Moreover, it was only through Scripture that God could be known as Redeemer, thus providing man with the knowledge needed for his ultimate salvation. In the unregenerate context, the naturally available knowledge therefore primarily served to leave man without an excuse for denying God's existence. In the regenerate context it could also serve a more positive end, namely leading Christians to praise God for the goodness of His creation.¹⁸⁵

Of all the early Reformed theologians, it was Peter Vermigli (1499-1562) that offered the most extensive and systematic account of the naturally available knowledge of God. According to him, the existence and legitimacy of this knowledge was warranted by Paul's letter to the Romans, in which Paul wrote that God's power and divinity could be known through nature. As the naturally available knowledge of God was thus legitimised by Scripture itself, Vermigli argued that it was to be considered a legitimate part of Reformed theology; being, in fact, the first Reformed theologian to speak about natural theology as a distinct part of the theological system. Still, like his predecessors, he nevertheless emphasised that, in an unregenerate context, the primary purpose of the naturally available knowledge was to render men inexcusable for denying God's existence. Moreover, due to the detrimental effect sin had upon man's cognitive faculties, this knowledge was insufficient to lead men to salvation. Instead, it only was through faith, and guided by Scripture, that man could truly come to know God.¹⁸⁶ Conclusively, at the end of the Reformation era, the fact that there was some naturally available knowledge also came to be acknowledged in the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), thereby becoming an integral part of the Reformed theological heritage.¹⁸⁷

The characteristics of natural theology

Although the first generation of Reformed theologians generally acknowledged the existence of some naturally available knowledge of God, natural theology, as a distinct part of the Reformed theological system, nevertheless remained largely absent from their works. Its appearance, at the onset of the seventeenth century therefore has to be seen in the context of the gradual codification and systematisation of Reformed theology at the protestant universities. This development not only widened the scope of theological interest, but also led to the endeavour to transform theology into a discipline that could live up to the strict demands of the academic context. Of particular importance was the attempt to construct theology along the lines of the Aristotelian concept of science, meaning that it was to become a clearly demarcated field of knowledge, with its own guiding principles.¹⁸⁸ As this definition shows, the Reformed theologians were burdened with the task of clarifying both the foundations and guiding principles of theology. As this led to a greater ramification between the natural and supernatural kinds of theology, we shall now take this development into consideration.

In the first place, the Reformed theologians had to clarify the foundations of their theological system. Since they believed that God, the Creator, utterly transcended His creation, they argued that He could only be known through the information He had decided to communicate through revelation. This meant that all theology was based upon supernatural revelation.¹⁸⁹ In line with the first generation of Reformers, the theologians subsequently emphasised that Scripture was the foremost source of revelation, as it not only offered the most comprehensive account of God, but also was the

¹⁸⁵ Muller 2003, vol.1 , pp. 273-276; Muller 2003, vol. 2, pp. 87-91.

¹⁸⁶ Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 276-278.

¹⁸⁷ See article 2 in: G. de Brès, *Confession de foy* (Geneve: 1562), pp. 11-12.

¹⁸⁸ Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 278-284.

¹⁸⁹ Muller 2003, vol. 2., pp. 164-166.

only source through which salvific knowledge could be obtained. Hence supernatural theology had to be based solely upon Scripture.¹⁹⁰ Still, the theologians were also willing to acknowledge the possibility of obtaining some knowledge of God through nature. The proofs for the availability of such knowledge were taken to be the fact that Scripture itself acknowledged it, the presence of religion among all the nations of man, man's conscience, and the fact that a careful study of the created order by means of philosophy brought men to acknowledge God's existence. As these sources provided some knowledge of God, the theologians considered it to be a kind of revelation, meaning that it could come to serve as the foundation of natural theology.¹⁹¹

Since both natural and supernatural theology were recognised to be disciplined bodies of knowledge concerning God, the Reformed theologians also had to clarify what principles of knowledge these disciplines had. In line with the first Reformers, the theologians strongly emphasised that in supernatural theology, only Scripture and the illumination by the Holy Spirit were to be considered the guiding principles. Concerning natural theology, they, however, generally argued that its guiding principle was the light of nature, also known as reason. As reason was the guiding principle of natural theology, this meant that the insights of philosophy could also be appropriated within theology.¹⁹² Still, the theologians took care to strictly demarcate the limits of this rational knowledge. Due to the detrimental effect sin had upon man's cognitive faculties, the insights provided by reason were not only partial, but also full of errors. Its scope therefore was severely restricted, and the knowledge gained by this means had to be corrected by Scripture. Over time, the restriction seems to have somewhat lessened, with the Reformed theologians acknowledging that reason could help in ascertaining both God's existence, and discerning some of His attributes. Still, they remained critical, rejecting a purely philosophical approach to the doctrine of God.¹⁹³

Finally, the Reformed theologians also considered it necessary to remark upon the ultimate purpose of theology. Since they believed that only Scripture provided man with the salvific knowledge he needed to be reconciled with God, they argued that whilst the immediate purpose of supernatural theology was to bring man to praise God, its subordinated purpose was to help man obtain his final salvation. Since natural theology did not have the same status as supernatural theology, its purpose was defined in more humble terms. Thus, it primarily served to leave man without any excuse for denying God's existence. Besides, it could also serve a more apologetic purpose, namely proving God's existence against all those who denied it. Interestingly, some theologians seem to have went even further, by also ascribing to natural theology a more positive role.¹⁹⁴ The German theologian Johan Alsted (1588-1638) argued that it prepared Christians to accept the salvific message. Like his colleagues, he nevertheless stayed clear from considering natural theology as the intellectual foundation of supernatural theology.¹⁹⁵ In the end, all theologians agreed that natural theology was to remain subjected to supernatural theology; for it was only Scripture that provided man with the knowledge he needed to obtain his ultimate salvation.

The new approach to natural theology

As we just saw, the emergence of natural theology as a distinct part of the Reformed theological system was directly related to the wider effort to adapt Reformed theology to the context of the univer-

¹⁹⁰ Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 281-284.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 285-286

¹⁹² Ibid., pp. 440-442.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 281-284.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 303.

sity. Since the position and status of natural theology were strongly related to developments pertaining to the wider academic context, it would be logical to expect that natural theology was directly affected by the impact of Cartesianism. In fact, since it rested upon a number of normative assumptions concerning the status of reason, the relationship between natural and supernatural revelation, and the relationship between the disciplines of theology and philosophy, natural theology even seemed bound to be affected by the new philosophy. The first generation of theologians that had shown interest in Cartesianism, had nonetheless remained reserved towards using elements from the new philosophy in their theological works, instead emphasising the need of separating the disciplines of theology and philosophy; which, in the conflict-ridden context in which they operated, had, perhaps, been the wisest thing to do.

It thus took the generation of Röell, Van Til and Andala to see what benefits Cartesianism might offer to Reformed theology. As we shall see, these theologians turned to Cartesian philosophy as a part of their strategy to use natural theology as a means of upholding the basic elements of their faith, and fighting of the forces of incredulity. In what follows, we shall try to unravel this new approach to natural theology. This we shall do by first taking into account the work by Röell, namely his *Oratio de theologia, et theologiae supernaturalis præ naturali præstantia* (1704)¹⁹⁶, and that by Van Til, who is particularly known for his *Theologiae utriusque compendium cum naturalis tum revelatae* (1704).¹⁹⁷ Although there are some differences between these works, primarily caused by the fact that both theologians used different methods to expose their views, the one by means of orations, the other by means of the scholastic method, they nevertheless show the same general build-up. As we shall see, this is no coincidence, but reveals their common strategy.

Prolegomena

Among early modern Reformed theologians, it was common to begin works on systematic theology with an overview of its basic outlines. In these overviews, better known as prolegomena, one would not only find a rationale for its structure, but also an explication of the normative assumptions and definitions substantiating it. The basic purpose of the prolegomena, moreover, also was to show that theology was a scientific discipline in its own right, standing apart from the other academic disciplines.¹⁹⁸ As the assumptions and definitions explicated in the prolegomena generally played a pivotal role in shaping the subsequent structure of theological works, any serious investigation of Reformed theology must begin with investigating this section. Although Röell doesn't use the word prolegomena as such, which can be explained by the aforementioned fact that his works on natural theology were originally delivered in the form of an oration, he nevertheless begins with some general remarks that do belong to this category. In the case of Van Til, who offered a scholastic exposition of natural theology, one does find a section on the prolegomena. It thus becomes possible to compare what both theologians have to say in their prolegomena.

As is to be expected, both Röell and Van Til begin with offering a definition of theology. According to both, this word was of Greek origin, and referred not only to the knowledge and teachings

¹⁹⁶ H.A. Röell, *Oratio de theologia, et theologiae supernaturalis præ naturali præstantia* (Utrecht, 1704). I have made use of the Dutch translation. Idem, *Rede over de Godgeleertheid: en de Voortreffelijkheid der Overnatuurlijke Godgeleertheid, boven de Natuurlijke* (Utrecht, 1704).

¹⁹⁷ S. van Til, *Theologiae utriusque compendium cum naturalis tum revelatae* (Leiden, 1704). I have made use of the Dutch translation: S. van Til, *Kortbondig betoog der beyder godgeleerdheid, soo der aangeborene als der geopenbaarde* (Dordrecht, 1712).

¹⁹⁸ See: Muller 2003, vol. 1, pp. 85-87.

concerning God, but also the way in which He had to be served.¹⁹⁹ Natural theology thus consists of two parts, namely the theoretical knowledge of God and the practical implications this knowledge has, which serves as a template for religion.²⁰⁰ The connection between both parts is of pivotal importance, because the proper service that is to be rendered unto God presupposes the proper knowledge of God. Without knowing Whom to serve, and how to serve Him religion would, after all, fall into superstition.²⁰¹ The question therefore emerges how one can obtain the proper knowledge of God, and discern what actions are to be rendered unto Him.²⁰² According to Röell, this knowledge can be obtained either by natural reason or from Scripture. Since he deals with natural theology, he, however, wishes to focus upon the former, which he considers to be the guiding principle of this discipline.²⁰³ The same is the case with Van Til, who emphasises that natural theology is based upon the knowledge that can be obtained from nature, by means of using natural reason.²⁰⁴ Both theologians agree, moreover, that God is the ultimate source of all knowledge concerning Him.²⁰⁵

The question nevertheless remains how it is possible to determine whether the knowledge that is obtained from nature is true or false. It is in response to this question that both Röell and Van Til introduce the Cartesian criterion of clearly and distinctly perceived knowledge into their works. According to Röell, falsity and error can only be avoided if the knowledge that is obtained lives up to this criterion.²⁰⁶ Van Til likewise emphasises that all certainty is based upon the fact that knowledge is perceived clearly and distinctly.²⁰⁷ Röell and Van Til hereby depart from the older tradition of considering reason merely as an instrumental tool, and instead give it a central, normative function within natural theology. This implies a significant change in the so-called anthropology, the word used to designate the theological view on man's condition. Whereas Reformed theologians had traditionally emphasised the severe epistemological consequences sin had upon man's cognitive faculties, Van Til downplays this pessimism. He takes a stance against those who argue that 'human reason is corrupt, and therefore incapable of making a valid and sound judgement'²⁰⁸. In fact, one should not extent the corruption so far, as if the mind is not able to make a clear and distinct judgement. By means of a careful and prudent investigation, man is still able to obtain a significant amount of information.²⁰⁹

Besides the concept of theology, both theologians also consider it necessary to define the concept of religion. While both point towards the Latin origins of this word, and the fact that it refers to the praise that is to be given unto God, Van Til also points out that it can refer to the fact that God binds people to Himself.²¹⁰ Still, the foremost aspect of religion is that it means that man has to fully devote Himself to God, in whom He finds both his ultimate salvation and happiness.²¹¹ Whereas theology refers to the theoretical knowledge concerning God and the way in which He is to be served, religion concerns the practical application of knowledge. According to Van Til religion consists of three steps. First man has to obtain knowledge of God; secondly, he has to love God and hope to

¹⁹⁹ Röell 1704, p. 8; Van Til 1704, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Röell 1704, pp. 19-20; Van Til 1704, p. 12.

²⁰¹ Röell 1704, pp. 11, 15.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp., 10-11.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 24.

²⁰⁴ Van Til 1704, p. 13.

²⁰⁵ Röell 1704, p. 9.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 15, 27.

²⁰⁷ Van Til 1704, p. 15.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²¹⁰ Röell 1704, p. 9; Van Til 1704, p. 4.

²¹¹ Röell 1704, p. 19; Van Til 1704, p. 6.

obtain his favour; and finally, he has to serve God, Who is the object of religion.²¹² A same kind of description can be found with Röell, who likewise emphasises that the proper service towards God presupposes the proper knowledge. True religion, in his view, consists of the true, reasonable, and pure service of God, which aims at glorifying God, and in the case of man, obtaining ultimate blessedness in the enjoyment of God.²¹³

The doctrine of God

In our short historical overview it became clear that one of the traditional purposes of natural theology was to provide an answer to the question to what extent man, using his own cognitive faculties, could obtain knowledge of God through nature. Confronted with the fact that the existence of some naturally available knowledge was warranted by Scripture itself, and with the fact that the ancient philosophers had seemingly said a substantial number of sane things about God, the Reformed theologians thus acknowledged that both the existence and essence of God could partially be discerned through nature. Nevertheless, they had remained sceptical towards a purely speculative account of God, emphasising instead that it was only through Scripture that God could be properly known. Although Röell and Van Til likewise emphasise the primacy of scriptural revelation, their works nevertheless reveal a significant shift towards a more positive appreciation of the role of reason in construction the doctrine of God. Since, in their view, the scope and status of reason is extended, they are convinced that it is not only possible to prove that God exists, but also to offer a sound account of His attributes. As religion is taken to rest upon a proper doctrine of God, it even becomes of pivotal importance to see what man, by means of reason, can learn about God.

In line with tradition, both Röell and Van Til distinguish between the question whether God exists and how God exists. Before one can deal with Gods attributes, it is, after all, necessary to prove that God exists at all.²¹⁴ It is at this point that the influence of Cartesianism once again becomes clear. As is well known, Descartes himself highly valued the ontological argument for the existence for God; being convinced that it was not only indisputable, but also offered a counterweight against all sceptical and atheistic arguments. Likewise, Röell and Van Till consider the ontological argument to be the foremost means to prove Gods existence. As they are so convinced of its validity, they even offer a rather short version of it.²¹⁵ Besides the ontological argument, both theologians also make use of the Cartesian dichotomy between body and mind to prove the existence of God. Since man could not have created his own mind, it must have another, superior origin. In fact, man must have been created by a mind that was itself not created, which can only be God. As man therefore thanks his very existence to God, he has absolutely no excuse for denying the existence of this divine being.²¹⁶

Once it is ascertained that God exists, the next step is to show how He exists. This means that Röell and Van Til have to show what attributes of God can be discerned by reason. According to both, all attributes can be derived from the idea that God is an absolutely perfect being.²¹⁷ Despite the novelty of this approach, the divine attributes Röell and Van Til subsequently mention are fairly traditional. Thus, God is not only taken to be an eternal being, but also to be unchangeable, simple, omnipresent and omniscient.²¹⁸ Of particular importance are, moreover, the virtues that are ascribed to

²¹² Van Til 1704, p. 5.

²¹³ Röell 1704, p. 9

²¹⁴ Röell 1704, p. 15; Van Til 1704, p. 22.

²¹⁵ Röell 1704, pp. 27-28; Van Til 1704, pp. 7-13.

²¹⁶ Röell 1704, pp. 29-30; Van Til 1704, pp. 10-12.

²¹⁷ Röell 1704, p.31; Van Til 1704, pp. 12, 14.

²¹⁸ See: Van Til 1704, pp. 26-95.

God, namely His veracity, goodness, holiness and justness.²¹⁹ According to Van Til, these virtues show that God maintains everything in the best possible order.²²⁰ Whereas Röell considers this list of attributes sufficient, Van Til also points towards God's so-called operations, namely the fact that God has created the world, and that he continues to sustain it by means of divine providence.²²¹ That Van Til explicitly mentions these operations is not surprising, as the denial of creation and providence had long been taken as important arguments for denying the existence, or at least interference, of God.

Natural religion

Once it has been established that God exists, and man has acquired a proper view on the kind of being He is, the next task is to clarify His relationship to man.²²² Since God the Creator is a loving and caring being, it follows that he desires to have a relationship with his foremost creation, namely mankind. According to Van Til, this mutual bond between God and man is the foundation of natural religion.²²³ Since man owes his existence to God, and would not prosper without His caring love, it suits him to have a grateful attitude towards his Creator. As we have seen, both Röell and Van Til, consider religion to consist of the praise and service man has to render unto God. According to both theologians, both aspects come with specific duties.²²⁴ These duties are prescribed by natural law, which has been implanted into man by God, and which man can discern by means of reason.²²⁵ These duties can be divided into three kinds. The foremost of man's duties are those he owes towards God. Secondly, it behoves man to take care of his own life. Finally, man also has the responsibility of taking care of his fellow beings, which like him, have been created by God.²²⁶ Accordingly, the final purpose of religion is the praise of God and the obtainment, by man, of eternal blessedness.²²⁷

The object of natural religion is, of course God. Since man thanks his existence to God, it comes as no surprise that it is towards God that he has specific duties. Van Til discerns five kinds of duties, which he argues can be derived from natural law. The first of these is that man has to praise God with all his might. Secondly, man has to acknowledge that to God, the ultimate Lawgiver, he owes all of his obedience. Thirdly, man both has to fear and love God. In the fourth place, man owes to God both his love and devotion. Finally, man owes to God patience in times of distress and thankfulness in times of prosperity.²²⁸ Whereas Van Til elaborates man's obligations by expounding a number of principles, Röell considers man's obligations to be a kind of mirror of God's own attributes. The fact that God is man's creator therefore means that man owes obedience towards God. God's love and mercy oblige man to take a loving and grateful stance towards God. God's holiness obliges man to live a pious life, and his wisdom and justness means that man has to acknowledge God's caring providence and remain faithful to God's laws. The obligations man has towards God therefore basically come down to praising God and subjecting oneself to His will.²²⁹

The duties that are part of natural religion, however, pertain not only to God, but also to man himself. Since God, as Creator, did his utmost in creating man, it behoves that man that he lives a

²¹⁹ Röell 1704, p. 31; See: Van Til 1704, pp. 98-114.

²²⁰ Van Til 1704, p. 97.

²²¹ See: Van Til 1704, pp. 126-159.

²²² Röell 1704, p. 31.

²²³ Van Til 1704, p. 160.

²²⁴ Röell 1704, p. 10;

²²⁵ Van Til 1704, pp. 160-169.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

²²⁷ Röell 1704, pp. 15-19

²²⁸ Van Til 1704, pp. 170-175.

²²⁹ Röell 1704, p. 31.

considerate life, looking after his bodily and mental well-being. According to Van Til, who, once again, gives the most elaborate account, living a good life basically comes down to living a life of moderation, avoiding all kinds of excess. Moreover, man has to keep in mind that things are not to be enjoyed themselves, but with their final purpose kept in mind, which is of course God.²³⁰ Because all men share in being God's creation, they are not only equal under God, but also have specific obligations towards each other. Both Röell and Van Til emphasise that reciprocity and equity lie at the foundation of these obligations. Hence they explicitly mention the Golden rule, according to which man has to treat his neighbour the same way he himself wishes to be treated.²³¹ According to Röell, it would be possible to derive all kinds of virtues from this basic rule; which he would have done, had he written a book, and not delivered an oration.²³² In the end, all men also have to work together in praising God, who is their common Creator.

It becomes clear that natural religion, in the view of Röell and Van Til, shows clear resemblances to an ethical system, prescribing man how he has to live. The major difference, of course, is that the ultimate Good, towards which man must strive, is God himself.²³³ Natural religion, based upon natural law, provides man the criteria to distinguish between good and evil, and its foremost purpose of is to bring man to praise God. Taking Cartesian dualism to mean that man's mind, contrary to his body, is imperishable, both theologians argue that man will live on after death. Since God is a caring, but also a just being, there will not only be a final judgement of man's actions, but also a reward for those that have done good, and a punishment for those that have done wrong.²³⁴ To obtain the ultimate blessedness, man must therefore live in accordance with God's law, which both theologians call piety. Piety therefore basically consists of living as God has commanded, which, in the case of natural law can be discerned by reason.²³⁵

The necessity and divinity of supernatural revelation

Considering the rather substantial amount of knowledge man, by means of a rational investigation of natural revelation, is able to obtain of God, the question comes to mind whether Röell and Van Til, despite their best intentions, themselves nevertheless fall into the pit of theological rationalism. If man, on his own account, is able to obtain such a significant amount of information, doesn't supernatural revelation, after all, become superfluous? According to both theologians this certainly is not the case. Although natural revelation indeed offers valuable insights, both Röell and Van Till emphasize that the knowledge it provides nevertheless is restricted compared to that offered by supernatural revelation. Still, the question remains how they can substantiate this claim. Moreover, how can man come to know whether any source claiming to be supernatural revelation is truly of divine origin? It is at this point that the works by Röell and Van Til take an interesting turn. According to them it is not only possible to show that man is in need of supernatural revelation, but also that this revelation can be found in Scripture, which therefore is of a divine origin. In what follows, we will be concerned with unravelling how both theologians substantiate these daring claims. Since they differ somewhat in their approaches, we shall deal with them separately, beginning with Van Til.

In our overview, it became clear that man, by means of a rational investigation of natural revelation, is able to discern the fact that he has several duties towards God, himself and his neighbours.

²³⁰ Van Til 1704, pp. 175-187.

²³¹ Ibid., pp. 187-193.

²³² Röell 1704, p. 32.

²³³ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

²³⁴ Röell 1704, p. 32; Van Til 1704, pp. 206-218.

²³⁵ Röell 1704, p. 17; Van Til 1704, p. 170.

According to Van Til, the seemingly positive fact that man is able to discern these duties doesn't mean he is able to live up to them. Sadly enough, both common experience and man's guilty conscience painfully point out that man, in spite of his best efforts, never lives up to the demands God has put upon him. As God has bestowed man with a free will, the blame for the failure to live up to these demands is entirely on man himself. This means that man, in the end, stands condemned before God and deserves punishment.²³⁶ Van Til, however, assures his readers that God is a loving and caring being, and that He would not have created man, if there would not have been a way out of this dire situation. God is willing to reconcile Himself with man, if man is able to repay the debt he owes to God for failing to live up to His demands. The major problem is that as man continues to sin, he not only fails to repay his debt, but, instead, only keeps increasing it. Since man cannot save himself out of this downward spiral, he is in need of a bailout.²³⁷

As natural revelation offers no information on where man can find such a bailout, it is to supernatural revelation that he must turn. Since many religions claim to possess such revelation, it is to be seen which one lives up to the criterion of providing man with the kind of bailout he needs to become reconciled with God. According to Van Til, paganism falls short, because it not only has an improper view of God, confusing creation with the Creator, but also makes the mistake of thinking that animal sacrifices will please God. Since the bailout must equal the debt, animal sacrifices will not suffice to reconcile man with God.²³⁸ Compared to paganism, Judaism is a better religion, as it has the benefit of being a monotheistic religion. Still, Judaism also falls short, because it fails to acknowledge that man is in need of a bailout at all.²³⁹ The same goes for Islam, which, according to Van Til, actually makes things worse, by messing up the histories of the Old and New Testament.²⁴⁰ In the end, it is only the New Testament, which lies at the foundation of Christianity, that both acknowledges the need for a bailout, and accounts of a divine mediator who has sacrificed Himself in order to ensure that man is saved out of his dire situation. According to Van Til, of all the religions, it therefore is only Christianity that offers man the salvific knowledge he needs to reconcile himself with God, meaning that only this religion is truly based upon supernatural revelation.²⁴¹

Whereas Van Til thus uses a comparative approach to discover which religion lives up to the soteriological criterion of providing man with the salvific knowledge natural theology has shown he is in need of, Röell takes a different approach. According to the Röell, although natural theology can be considered useful for leading man to acknowledge not only that God exists, but also that he has to praise and serve this supreme being through religion, the knowledge it provides nevertheless remains partial; meaning that man has to turn towards supernatural revelation, which will provide him with a clearer, more certain grasp of the truths he has already discovered by means of reason.²⁴² Hence Röell prefers to explicate the relationship between natural and supernatural revelation by means of a comparison, showing both their similarities, but also the points at which supernatural revelation supersedes natural revelation.²⁴³ In this way, Röell considers it possible to show that Christianity, based upon the supernatural revelation provided by Scripture, is at many points in accordance with reason, but also offers knowledge that extends beyond man's rational abilities. According

²³⁶ Van Til 1704, pp. 219-229.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-230.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-249.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 249-256.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-258.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-260.

²⁴² Röell 1704, p. 36.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

to Röll, such an approach is even necessary, because it is inappropriate to either simply accept any source claiming to be supernatural revelation, or, on the other hand, to outright reject it.²⁴⁴

The first subject Röll turns his attention to are the religious doctrines which man can come to know through both kinds of revelation. According to him, both natural and supernatural revelation readily acknowledge God to be a supreme spiritual being, that has created the entire world and has made man after His own image. Moreover, both not only acknowledge that man will live on after death, but that he can also expect either a reward or a punishment, depending on the kind of life he has lived. Even the fact that man has sinned in the eyes of God, and continues to do so, is acknowledged by both kinds of revelation.²⁴⁵ Despite these comparisons, Röll nevertheless emphasises that the knowledge provided by natural revelation is partial. Thus, without supernatural revelation, man would not know that God is a triune being, nor that God has created the world out of nothing. The resurrection of the body would also remain unknown to man. Far more problematic is that even though natural theology acknowledges that man has sinned in the eyes of God, it remains silent on how man can be reconciled with Him. Without supernatural revelation, man would not know that God has sent his own Son to save man out of his dire situation; meaning that natural revelation is unable to provide man with the salvific knowledge he needs for his ultimate salvation.²⁴⁶

Besides turning his attention to religious doctrines, Röll also wishes to compare what both kinds of revelation tell man about his duties. According to him, even though natural revelation does inform man that he has to serve God, it remains silent on the true purpose of man's life, which is to obtain eternal blessedness in communion with God. Moreover, reason cannot inform man that besides serving God, he also has to love Him through Christ. Confronted with the partiality of natural revelation, man, therefore, is once again admonished to turn to supernatural revelation, as provided by Scripture.²⁴⁷ That the latter is of divine origin can, according to Röll, be proven by comparing the knowledge it provides on man's early history with the information provided by profane sources. Such an investigation of biblical history will reveal that God's providence has been active throughout human history.²⁴⁸ Whereas history concerns the things that have happened in the past, prophecy concerns those that are still about to happen. According to Röll, Scripture not only contains accounts of countless prophecies that have already come true, but also contains many prophecies about things that are still about to happen.²⁴⁹ Finally, the fact that Scripture must be of divine origin is also confirmed by the many miracles it describes.²⁵⁰

Ruardus Andala on natural theology

In our chapter on the life of Ruardus Andala, we have seen that Andala, during his years as a student, became acquainted with both Röll and Van Til, developing a personal contact with the former and following courses with the latter. Hence it is of particular interest to see that when Andala turned his interest to natural theology, he explicitly acknowledged the pioneering role these theologians had played in developing a new approach to the subject of natural theology; making clear that he

²⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 40-48.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 49-56.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 57-59.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 59-60

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 61-63.

wished to identify himself with this new approach.²⁵¹ When Andala published his own work on this subject, namely his *Compendium theologiae naturalis*, he bundled it together with two other works on Cartesian physics and metaphysics.²⁵² That he decided to combine these works into one bundle was no matter of coincidence, but prompted by his desire to show the interrelatedness between subjects. This compilation, known as the *Syntagma theologico-physico-metaphysicum (1711)*, served to offer a comprehensive account of what man, by means of reason, could come to know.²⁵³ Since Andala considered natural theology to be the most important of these subjects, we will now turn our attention to what he wrote on this matter.

Prolegomena

Once again we begin our investigation with taking into account what Andala has to say in his prolegomena. The first thing that strikes the observer about this section is the strict distinction he makes between natural and supernatural theology. Although Andala acknowledges that both kinds of theology, ultimately, rest upon the same source, namely revelation, he nevertheless emphasises that they have to be dealt with separately. Whereas supernatural theology is thus said to rest upon supernatural revelation, as it can be found in Scripture, natural theology is subsequently said to rest upon natural revelation, as it can be discerned by means of reason.²⁵⁴ Since atheists and Socinians deny the existence of natural revelation, Andala considers it necessary to offer a number of proofs to refute their claims. The first of these proofs is the fact that the natural law, which has been inscribed into man's conscience, points towards the existence of God, who must therefore be knowable. Secondly, the fact that man can show God's existence by means of rational arguments and an investigation of nature implies that there is some prior available knowledge upon which these arguments can be based. Thirdly, the fact that man can come to discern some of the divine attributes means that there is a source from which these can be known. Finally, the fact that man's conscience dictates him to pay service, honour and devotion towards God, likewise implies that God is knowable.²⁵⁵

According to Andala, natural theology is divided into two different parts, namely a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part consists of theology proper, which offers an exposition of the knowledge man, by means of reason, is able to obtain of God. Whereas natural theology is therefore said to be the theoretical side of the coin, natural religion is considered to be its practical side.²⁵⁶ In the view of Andala, this side deals with the devotion man has to pay to God.²⁵⁷ He therefore considers religion to be the 'study of how to know, love, honour and enjoy God.'²⁵⁸ According to Andala, religion can, in fact, be compared to a path, that man must take in order to arrive at the final destination of his life, which is to obtain God's favour, and thereby come to have eternal blessedness.²⁵⁹ To avoid going astray man nonetheless needs to have the proper directions.²⁶⁰ Already in his

²⁵¹ See the Praefatio in: R. Andala, *Syntagma Theologico-Physico-Metaphysicum* (Franeker, 1711). In particular, Andala considered Röell as having shown a new approach to this subject, whilst he emphasised that Van Til had been the first whom\ combined both natural and supernatural theology into one work, but dealt with them in separate sections –showing that they were complementary, albeit different ways of approaching truth.

²⁵² The work on natural theology itself was presented as a compendium, because Andala, who at the moment of its publication still was a professor of philosophy, wished to provide his student with an accessible account of natural theology.

²⁵³ A fact that is also emphasised by the title, with "Syntagma" being Greek for "constitution".

²⁵⁴ Andala 1711, p. 3.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

prolegomena, Andala therefore emphasises that although natural theology can point to the direction in which man has to stride, it can never offer a full account. As the knowledge it provides of God is only partial, the greatest service it can offer to man therefore is to show that he is in need of a more superior source of knowledge, which is supernatural revelation.²⁶¹ Hence Andala wishes to proceed by first taking into account what man, by means of reason, can come to know of God and subsequently consider to what extent this knowledge needs to be supplemented by means of supernatural revelation.

The doctrine of God

At the heart of both theology and religion lies the basic, but nevertheless fundamental assumption that God exists. Whereas in the case of supernatural theology it suffices to take this assumption for granted, since the former assumes that its foundation, namely Scripture, is of a divine origin, the same does not count for natural theology, which has, instead, the purpose of proving that the assumption that God exists is not unwarranted. According to Andala, the foremost insight that natural theology therefore provides is that God exists beyond any doubt.²⁶² To be able to prove that God exists, however, presumes that there is some naturally available knowledge of God, upon which the proofs can be based. Without such knowledge, any investigation into the existence of God would be useless from the onset. Since Andala, in his prolegomena, has already shown that natural revelation exists, he continues to subdivide this knowledge into two kinds. According to him, the first kind of knowledge is innate, having been placed in man by God, and this is readily available to every adult with a sane intellect. The second kind of knowledge is acquired by means of a rational investigation of nature, which is considered to be the handiwork of God. It is upon this double foundation that all proofs for Gods existence have to be based.²⁶³

The proofs themselves are also divided into different kinds. In line with tradition Andala makes a distinction between the *a priori* proofs, which are based upon the intrinsic rationality of any given thing or definition, and the *a posteriori* proofs, which are based upon knowledge of God's effects in nature. Since Andala highly values Cartesian philosophy, it should come as no surprise that he considers the ontological argument to be the foremost proof for God's existence. God is thus shown to be an absolutely perfect being, that must necessarily exist.²⁶⁴ Besides the ontological argument, Andala also takes a keen interest in the *a posteriori* proofs. Thus, he argues that the idea man has of God cannot have been conceived by man himself, but must have had a cause that goes beyond man, which can only have been God Himself. Moreover, taking Cartesian dualism for granted, Andala argues that the human mind can have had no other origin than having been created by God. Likewise the union, in man, between mind and body can only have been caused by God. Finally, according to Andala, the beauty and ingenuity of man's body, the plants, animals, the world and even the universe all point towards a divine creator.²⁶⁵ If man takes all these proofs into account, he cannot but come to acknowledge that God exists. That there are some who still deny the existence of God,

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 6, 11-12.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 13.

²⁶³ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 16-19.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 19-48.

therefore cannot be due to the plausibility of the arguments these atheists use, but due to their corrupted human nature.²⁶⁶

Once it has been established that God exists, the next step is to discern what kind of being He is. According to Andala, this is of great importance, because without a proper account of God, man would easily fall into idolatry. Andala emphasises that even though he deals with the divine attributes separately, this does not mean that these attributes exist separately in God; to claim such a thing would, after all, imply that God is a composite being, thereby undermining His unity and simplicity. Instead, he deals with the attributes separately, because they offer different ways of how man, by means of reason, can look at God.²⁶⁷ In fact, according to Andala, there is more than one manner in which these attributes can be ordered. What matters most, is that they can all be derived logically from the conception of God as an absolutely perfect being. Since some kind of ordering is nevertheless necessary, at least in a work on theology, Andala wishes to make a distinction between the attributes related to God's existence, and those related to His essence. Moreover, the last-mentioned category is subdivided into the attributes relating to God's life, his will and His virtues. That God allows man to discern these attributes not only serves to enhance God's glory, but also provides man with the possibility of coming to know God.²⁶⁸

Besides establishing God's existence, and obtaining a proper account of the kind of being He is, Andala also considers it necessary to see what knowledge reason can provide of God's so-called operations, which refers to those attributes that reveal God to be an active being. According to Andala, these operations can be divided into two kinds, namely His internal operations and His external operations. The former are also known as decrees, and consist of the eternal and immutable free will of God. Of no less importance are God's external works, namely creation and providence. Although, according to Andala, it has been a longstanding matter of debate whether, and in what manner, God created the world, he is nevertheless convinced that it is possible to show that the world has a Creator. Besides creation, there also is another external operation of God, namely providence. According to Andala, providence shows that God not only created the world, but also continues to take care of it. In fact, it follows from God's nature as a loving and caring being that he continues to take interest in his creation. Just like Van Til, Andala thus wishes to offer a counterweight against two traditional strongpoints of atheism, namely the denial of divine providence, and the creation of the world by God.²⁶⁹

Natural religion

By establishing beyond any doubt that God exists, and also offering an account of the kind of being He is, natural theology offers a great service to man. This fact cannot leave man untouched. Since natural theology also shows that God has created man, and continues to take care of his creation, it becomes clear that there is an intimate bond between God and man. Since this common bond cannot be one-sided, man has to take into account what God desires of him. Luckily God has created man in such a way that he cannot only come to know God, but also develop an intimate relationship with Him.²⁷⁰ This is possible by means of natural religion, which has God as its object and man as its

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 47. It is important to realise that in the early modern era atheism was not only considered an intellectual position, but also a moral deficiency.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 56-58.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 162-163.

subject.²⁷¹ As was the case with the doctrine of God, it is of grave importance for man to obtain a proper account of how to serve God. Without such an account, man would, after all, easily fall into idolatry. Hence it is the task of reason to establish in what manner man has to live if he wants to live up to the duties God has bestowed upon him.²⁷²

As was just said, Andala considers natural religion to consist of living in such a manner that is pleasing unto God. According to him, it can therefore be compared to an ethical system, which offers man knowledge on how he has to act, and for what he has to strive. Since most ethical systems, ultimately, are aimed at obtaining an ultimate good, Andala argues that it is necessary to first establish what this ultimate good is.²⁷³ According to him ancient philosophers have differed in opinion on this subject, with many different answers given to the aforementioned question. Andala himself, however, holds that it is God Himself, who is the ultimate good for which man has to strive.²⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, man has even been created in such a manner, that he has an innate desire to strive for this good. The purpose of natural religion is to help man in achieving this goal.

Like any ethical system, natural theology comes with a number of duties. According to Andala these duties are of three kinds.²⁷⁵ The first of the duties are said to consist of those relating to God, aiming particularly at obtaining a proper affection towards God. Since man has both a mind and a will, he must use both to come closer towards God, developing a fellowship and friendship with this being.²⁷⁶ The second kind of duties concern man himself. Since God has created man, man owes it to God to take good care of himself. Moreover, he also has to strive to obtain a number of virtues, which Andala considers to be diligence, obedience, justice and humility.²⁷⁷ Besides himself, man also has the obligation to take good care of his neighbour. Hence, the third kind of duties concern the way in which man has to deal with neighbour. Towards his neighbour man must, above all, develop an equitable stance, giving him his due. If man succeeds in living up to all three kinds of duties, he can, according to Andala, be considered to live a pious life.²⁷⁸ Since God is a just being, there will be a reward for those who have lived such a pious life, and a punishment for those who have failed to live in accordance with God's will. It thus seems that by living up to the duties that are part of natural religion, eternal blessedness comes within man's reach. Andala, however, warns that on his own account, man will not be able to achieve this goal. Hence, it is to supernatural revelation that we must turn our attention.²⁷⁹

The necessity and divinity of supernatural revelation

Since natural theology proves the existence of God, offers an account of the kind of being He is, and makes clear what kind of duties man has towards God, it rationally safeguards the basic elements of religion. According to Andala, it can therefore be considered to be a potent weapon in the struggle against atheism. In fact, as natural theology gives reason a pivotal role, being its foremost source of knowledge, it can use the atheists' own primary weapon against them.²⁸⁰ Still, it remains important to avoid the pit of theological rationalism. To stay clear of this pit, Andala, throughout his work, em-

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 167-170.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 181.

²⁷³ Ibid., pp. 171-172.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 172-1733.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 200.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 199-202.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 204- 212.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 217-219.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 6, 12.

phasizes that natural theology, ultimately, remains incapable of offering man salvation. Salvation can only be obtained by means of the knowledge provided by supernatural revelation. The question is, however, how Andala can substantiate this claim. According to him, this can be done by comparing the knowledge provided by both natural and supernatural revelation. In this way, it becomes clear in what aspects both kinds of revelation agree, and in what aspects natural revelation is deficient and needs to be complemented by supernatural revelation.²⁸¹

Concerning the doctrine of God, Andala argues that although natural revelation can be used to prove that God exists, the account it offers of His attributes nevertheless remains only partial, even being susceptible to distortion. It is only through Scripture that man can get a proper grasp of the kind of being God is. According to Andala, Scripture works like a microscope, revealing things that are present, but that were previously unseen by man. Since the pagans lacked Scripture, they did not have a proper grasp of God.²⁸² Without Scripture, they, after all, did not know that God was a triune being. Although reason can tell man about divine providence, it tells him nothing about divine predestination. By far the most problematic aspect is that, although natural revelation clearly shows that man sins, as all men fail to live up to the duties that have been bestowed upon them, it cannot show man how he can be saved from sin. Without Scripture, man would know nothing about salvation history. It is only by turning to Scripture that man can come to know that to save mankind from this dire situation, God himself has become man, in Christ.²⁸³ In the end, the greatest service natural revelation can offer to man, is to point towards Scripture.²⁸⁴

Still, there is one question that remains. How can man come to know that Scripture truly is of divine origin? There are, after all, many religions claiming to be based upon supernatural revelation. So what makes Christianity, based upon Scripture, different? According to Andala, the divinity of any source claiming to be supernatural revelation can be judged by means of a number of criteria. The first of these criteria is that the knowledge provided by such a source has to be in accordance with that provided by natural theology. Due to the unity of truth it is, after all, impossible that natural and supernatural revelation are at odds. Andala argues that a comparison of all the different sources claiming to be supernatural revelation shows that only Scripture is fully in line with what natural theology reveals to man.²⁸⁵ That Scripture is truly of divine origin, becomes clear if one also takes the other criteria into account. Doing so, one will see that Scripture contains both trustworthy historical accounts and prophecies. Moreover, it informs man about elevated doctrines, and is written in a beautiful style. Finally, it also has a positive effect upon man's conscience, bringing about a change in the way man lives. Taking all these things into consideration, Andala concludes that it therefore is to Scripture that man has to turn if he wishes to truly come to know God.²⁸⁶

A turn towards rationalism?

Developments within Reformed theology often alternated between continuity and innovation. Whereas important innovations were often presented in a traditional guise, perhaps to enhance their acceptability, or due to the genuine desire to emphasise continuity with the past, more traditional aspects of Reformed theology might suddenly re-appear in an entirely novel form. Likewise the early eighteenth-century turn towards natural theology consisted of an interesting combination of conti-

²⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 12, 220-224.

²⁸² Ibid., pp. 110-111.

²⁸³ Ibid., pp. 111-114.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 223-224.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 222.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 223-224.

nunity and innovation. As we have seen, prior to this turn, natural theology had already long been accepted as a legitimate part of the Reformed theological system; with natural revelation being considered a genuine, albeit inferior, source of knowledge of God besides Scripture. When Röell, Van Til, and Andala turned their attention to this subject, they could make use of the building-blocks that were already present; this accounts for the presence of many traditional aspects in their works, which will be familiar to those who have read works on Reformed theology before. What these theologians did was to give an entirely new twist to natural theology, making it into an important means for both rationally upholding the basic elements of religion, and showing that man, despite his rational abilities, was still in need of supernatural revelation.

What is particularly revealing, is that these theologians decided to integrate elements from Cartesian philosophy into their works of natural theology. Besides the Cartesian proofs for the existence of God, which one would expect, one thus also finds the criterion of clearly and distinctly perceived knowledge. This criterion, in fact, even came to play a pivotal role in the works of Röell, Van Til and Andala. According to them, both natural theology and religion presupposed a proper account of God. To construct such a proper account, and thereby avoid falling into idolatry, the knowledge provided by nature had to live up to being perceived clearly and distinctly. In this manner, the basic elements of religion could be upheld rationally, showing beyond any doubt that God exists and that man is obliged to serve Him. Still, the question comes to mind, whether the decision to uphold these elements by means of reason, and more specifically, by means of Cartesian philosophy, despite their best intentions, nevertheless seduced Röell, Van Til and Andala to fall into the pit of theological rationalism, giving reason a too prominent position in matters of faith. Said differently, were these three theologians responsible for carrying rationalism into the Reformed church?²⁸⁷

At first glance, it might seem that this question needs to be answered in the affirmative. As part of their struggle against the forces of incredulity, Röell, Van Til and Andala had, after all, all argued that it was not only possible, but even necessary to uphold the divinity of Scripture by means of reason; a position that looked dangerously familiar to the radical claim that reason was to be the arbiter in matters of faith. A closer look at their works, however, reveals that a more considerate answer is needed. As we have seen, although these theologians were convinced that reason could be used to rationally uphold the basic elements of religion, they nevertheless, time and again, emphasized that it remained insufficient to provide man with the means of obtaining eternal salvation. Instead, its foremost purpose was to make clear that man is in need of supernatural revelation. In their view, the scope of reason only extended so far, that it could discern whether any source claiming to be supernatural revelation was truly of a divine origin. It therefore had nothing to say about the content of such revelation. What mattered most was that, in the end, the knowledge needed to obtain eternal salvation was not provided by reason, but by Scripture alone.

²⁸⁷ As was claimed by Bavinck, see: Bavinck 1928, p. 160.

Conclusion

Scholars have long been divided on the nature of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism. Although the debate on this subject, in all likelihood, will continue, this thesis has been written to turn it into another direction. As was said in the introduction, the time has come to go beyond the age-old conflict between the internalist and externalist explanations of the mysterious relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism. Instead of arguing that this relationship either was the result of some essential characteristic both movements shared, and which therefore necessarily brought them together, or that it merely was the result of external factors, and therefore did not have a significant influence upon Reformed theology, an approach is needed that can do justice both to the works the Cocceian theologians themselves wrote, and to the context in which these were written. As we have seen, the family resemblance approach advocated by Wittgenstein can do just that. Instead of considering Cartesianism and Cocceianism to have been monolithic movements, this approach allows us to consider both as varied movements, with the adherents of these movements appropriating the insights of Descartes and Cocceius in their own way. This, in turn, makes it possible to take into account the specific instances in which theologians decided to combine their interest in the theological insights of Cocceius with an interest in the philosophical insights of Descartes.

Since, in this thesis, we have used this new approach to discover why a substantial number of Cocceian theologians, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, turned to natural theology, and in what manner they integrated elements from Cartesian philosophy into their works on this subject, we will now shortly recount the result of our investigation. The first thing that we learned was that the period between the second half of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the century that followed was a troubling time for Reformed theology. It was during this period that the foundations of Reformed theology, namely Scripture, as interpreted by the Reformed confessions, and Aristotelian philosophy, which served as its intellectual cornerstone, came under increasing strain. In the first place, the rise of the new philosophy and science undermined Aristotelian philosophy, thereby undermining the intellectual foundations of Reformed theology. Accordingly, this led to a vehement debate on the question to what extent the new insights could be incorporated into the Reformed fold, and how the disciplines of theology and philosophy were to be related – a debate that soon coalesced around Cartesianism. We have also seen that the responses to this challenge varied. Whereas the Voetians strongly rejected the new philosophy, the Cartesians tried to overcome the challenge by arguing in favour of strictly separating the disciplines of theology and philosophy, soon to be joined by two prominent Cocceian theologians, who came to argue the same.

Besides Aristotelian philosophy, the other foundation of Reformed theology also came under increasing strain, due to the rise of philosophical radicalism. As we have seen, this movement of radical thinkers, of whom Lodewijk Meyer and Benedictus de Spinoza were two of the foremost members, emerged due to the disruptive effect the conflict on theology, philosophy and the relationship between both had upon Dutch society. Confronted with the problems Dutch society faced due to this conflict, the radical thinkers came to argue that the only way to overcome theological obscurantism, was to subject Scripture to the test of reason. As their works shared resemblances to the strategies and concepts used by the Cartesians and Cocceians, the position of the latter consequently became severely compromised. Combined, the emergence of the new philosophy and science, and that of philosophical radicalism contributed to a profound and unprecedented crisis of the Reformed mind, which consisted both of the widespread sense that the traditional foundations of Reformed theology had been undermined by the new philosophy and science, and the fact that no single solution could

be found to the question in what manner the Reformed theological system could be upheld. That the crisis of the Reformed mind had a profoundly disruptive effect upon Dutch intellectual life subsequently became clear from taking into account the life of Ruardus Andala.

Reflecting upon the aforementioned crisis, we discovered that it was the double challenge of, on the one hand rationally upholding basic elements of the Reformed faith, whilst on the other hand having to find an appropriate counterweight against the challenge of philosophical radicalism, that was responsible for the early eighteenth-century turn towards natural theology. Accordingly, we investigated this turn by taking into account the works by Herman Alexander Röell, Salomon van Til and Ruardus Andala. This investigation revealed that these theologians shared a common strategy. In the first place, they turned to natural theology because it provided them with the appropriate means of showing that it was not only rational to believe in the existence of God, but also to argue that man had to serve God by means of religion. As we saw, they tried to substantiate these claims by making use of elements of Cartesian philosophy, and in particular its criterion of clearly and distinctly perceived knowledge. The decision to use this criterion was prompted by their conviction that if the basic elements of natural theology could live up to it, these would be established beyond all doubt. To overcome the challenge philosophical radicalism posed to Scripture, these theologians came to argue that even though natural revelation could not provide man with the salvific knowledge he needed to obtain eternal blessedness, it could still help him in showing where he could find such knowledge. Ultimately, natural revelation thus served to point out both the necessity and divinity of the supernatural revelation provided by Scripture.

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