SCHOLASTICISM, THE DILEMMA FOR A RADICAL REFORMATION OF OUR EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICE.

1. INTRODUCTION

Those who have acquainted themselves with the work of Prof J A L Taljaard will undoubtedly agree as regards the following two issues. First of all, Taljaard, theoretically and practically, reveals a special interest in education in general as well as in the furtherance of Christian educational thought and practice[1]). On the other hand, Taljaard has set himself the aim in his philosophical work of attaining a *radical biblical* approach and a *radical biblical* philosophy. This implies not only a profound 'No' to Humanism, but also an effort to get 'reformed' philosophy disentangled from the shackles of Scholasticism which still persists as an active power that must never be underestimated. This leads him, naturally, more than once, to a confrontation with authors of reformed philosophy and theology, who, aware of it or not, did not succeed in freeing themselves from old Scholastic influences[2]). To fight Scholasticism, in our 'reformed' Christian society, demands moral courage as well as a firm belief in one's calling. It also includes the risk of becoming alienated by those who, usually or naturally, (should) stand very close to you. This, however, is sad when viewed in terms of the confession which Taljaard never gets tired to accentuate, namely, that *life is* to be a *religious worship of our Lord,* the Creator and Redeemer in Jesus Christ.

Against this background I wish to offer a few thoughts on Scholasticism and the dilemma it causes, especially in our society, with respect to a radical reformation of our educational thought and practice. This reflection becomes the more urgent when one considers the unique fact that South Africa is required *by law* to maintain a system with a *Christian* character, and that our teacher training has to provide for this need[3]).

2. HUMAN LIFE IS RELIGION[4])

Man is a religious being; therefore, human life in its entirety *is* religion! This acknowledgement, which to my mind is a basic Scriptural view, happens to be the only

true starting-point for a *radical* reformation of life and of society. What do we understand by the concept 'religion'?

We can only be very brief on this question. In the first place, God has revealed Himself as the Creator of heaven and earth which, therefore, stand in a definite relationship to Him, ie that of dependence. But God has manifested this relationship by His Covenant. In its most comprehensive sense, this Covenant is seen as God's coming to us and our responding to God. Furthermore, God has created man in relation to the rest of mankind as well as to the sub-human creation. Our responding to God, therefore, implies our responding to the rest of the earthly creation, and vice versa. Both of these relationships are determined by the Law of Love towards God our Lord, and towards our fellow-man.

This means that we are *never* free from responding to God. We are inescapably man in response to God: in our worship, in our conversations, in our daily routine, in our theoretical analysis, as well as in our intentional education and learning. Nowhere and at no time are we free from existing as persons before God. Man is man *coram Deo,* ie existing before the countenance of God, both as educator as well as educand. The whole process of education as well as our educational reflection is fundamentally religious. Even when man's heart is turned away from the Lord as a result of sin, he stil *remains* man in response to God.

God's coming to man in His Covenant is an appeal to man's *heart* as the very root of his temporal existence. From the human heart spring all the issues of life; all our human activities are activities of the heart as the central root of our personality. Belief and unbelief, love and hatred, lawful and unlawful deeds, social and unsocial behaviour, culture and mal-culture, logical and illogical arguments; they are *all* human activities of the heart and, therefore, *religious* in character.

The interesting fact is that all these heart activities of man, which are unmistakably of *modal* qualification, have at the same time an educational or a mal-educational value. Nurture, therefore, can never be reduced to *one* modal activity only, but should be viewed as the process of the opening up of the totality of human personal-

ity by these very modally qualified activities of man. Of course, these activities can be of an intentional or conscious character, or not. Nurture resides in *all* the modal activities of man of which the heart, that is, the pre-modal concentration-point, is also the religious root. Thus, nurture is *religious* in character.

When the human heart has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and therefore liberated by Christ from sin, then it should be a matter of consequence that man should serve the Lord in every respect, that is, in his entire life. This is an expression of the *integral unity* of the human being. Although this integral service is so often crippled by sin, the human personality, in the light of the Scriptural view, *remains* such an inseparable unity. Thus it can never be viewed as a dichotomistic or trichotomistic composition of 'body' plus 'soul' or of 'body' plus 'soul' plus 'spirit'. These are views which 'reformed' educational thought has inherited from ancient Greek-pagan anthropology *via* Scholasticism. The Bible says that man is created by God as a "living soul", which is an illustration of his integral unity that ought to be manifested in his entire life.

From the above it must be clear that a radical biblical concept of nurture can only be built on a radical concept of man. The latter, in its turn, is dependent on a radical biblical concept of *religion* as the service of God with man's whole heart and his entire modal life in all relationships on earth.

3. RELIGION RESTRICTED TO THE SPHERE OF 'GRACE'

The truth that human life in its entirety is religion and that every activity of the human being is a religious response to God, our Lord[1]), is usually obscured by Scholasticism in all its versions.

Scholasticism has restricted and limited religion illegitimately to the so-called sphere of '*grace*', ie man's faith-life. This happened as a result of an historical dilemma of the Christian Church when it was confronted by pagan Greek philosophy and learning. Without penetrating to the pagan roots of this learning, Christians were keen to accommodate it to the truth of the biblical revelation.

Because of this continuous effort, biblical 'faith' and philosophical 'reason' were eventually reconciled officially by the Roman Catholic Church[6]). *Reason* became the guiding light in th sphere of *'nature'*, which embraced the state, the family, the school, the university with science and philosophy, etc. The Church and all the activities of the Church are of a *religious* nature and, therefore, belong to the sphere of 'grace'. The Church had the monopoly over the Holy Scriptures, which appeal to the faith-life of man.

What is the relation between 'reason' and 'faith' or 'nature' and 'grace' in Medieval Scholasticism? The former is viewed as the *autonomous preamble* of the latter. Faith happens to be the fulfilment or completion of what has been achieved by natural reason; faith is the super-natural gift of grace which was lost as a result of sin, but which can be restored by the Church with its sacraments.

It is obvious that Roman Scholasticism had to introduce a non-biblical anthropology which was orientated towards the Greek-pagan concept of man, in order to realize this accommodation and reconciliation of Paganism and Christianity. But this very unhappy course of the history of the Christian Church has borne its bitter fruit for generations of Christians up till today. It is the origin of the dialectical, *Barthian*, theology which long ago also entered the faculties of theology in this country. For Barth, there is *no* positive relationship between the spheres of nature and of grace[7]). As a consequence, it is considered ridiculous to endeavour a 'Christian' culture, a 'Christian' school or a 'Christian' science and philosophy, etc, because the cross of Christ is the stumbling block for the (natural) 'world'.

Scholasticism in its modern garb, has also made its appearance in 'reformed' philosophy, theology and education, especially by way of the contribution made by the well-known *A Kuyper* and his introduction of the concepts "special grace" and "common grace". The basic difference between 'reformed' Neo-Scholasticism and the Barthian line, which actually stems from *Luther* and Occam[8]), is that the first indeed proclaims a positive relationship between the two spheres of nature and grace. Although the spere of "common grace" is guided by reason

whose logical capacity has *not* been affected by sin), the latter is unable to guide nature to its highest goal, namely, the religious spere of grace. The positive relationship should be realized by continuously binding the sphere of nature to the sphere of grace. As such, there exists only an *external bond* between the two spheres. According to an illuminating example of Kuyper himself, the lamp of the Christian religion, which shines only within the Christian Church, should spread its light through the windows of the Church to enlighten the 'natural' world outside.

'Reformed' Scholasticism became the barricade for many Christians of Protestant origin to arrive at a *radical biblical* reformation of science and of practical life and nurture. For this version of Scholasticism, natural man should be bound to the Church and its activities in order to be a real Christian. To be in the service of the Lord means to be a minister, an elder or a deacon, a Sunday-school teacher or a member of the Church missionary society, etc. It does *not* imply that the Christian has a mandate to extend the Kingdom of God in *every* spere of life, also the so-called 'natural' life. Thus, religion is restricted *illegitimately* to the sphere of grace, namely, to the service of God in the Church only. Of course, Bible instruction at home and at school is the qualification for a 'Christian' family and a 'Christian' school within the context of 'reformed' Scholasticism. The Church is the supreme guardian against any possible derailment of the 'secular' world from its indicated 'Christian' road. Such 'moral' derailment can and does turn up in the home when the marital bond is, for example, threatened by divorce; and in the case of morally undermining literature, films, friends, habits, etc. Even science can, in some respects, go astray, ie in the case of teaching the theory of evolution. Thus, 'nature' has to be corrected and adapted to the Church doctrine, which binds the sphere of reason to the sphere of faith, and in this way, paves the way for a 'Christian' society.

To open a door to the religious compromise which, as a matter of course, results in an inner dialectical struggle in philosophy, in theology, in the theory and practice of education, is *fatal* for Protestant Christianity. The Christian Church is already reaping the bitter fruit of this false treaty. Sooner or later, the 'outside world' (nature) which

has experienced no *radical biblical reformation* at all, will become fundamentally uninterested in being under the guardianship of the Church and the minister. Then the 'outside word' will gradually become emancipated from the Church, and with the aid of modern science and technology which proclaim man's supremacy will pretend not to need the Church any more. We learn that in Europe many Christian churches are little more than reminders of a bygone culture and stand shockingly empty and deserted on Sundays. Official statistics indicates the same tendency in the Protestant churches of the mainline denominations in North America; and South Africa is no exception.

Neo-Scholasticism has manifested itself as a religious obstacle for a radical reformation of the Christian Church, the society as a whole and its educational task in South Africa and elsewhere. The answer to the waning vitality and influence of Christianity should not be to launch an evangelization campaign by the Church for the Church, thus remaining firmly within the dialectical religious scope of Scholasticism, but to declare life in its entirety to be the Kingdom of God, and to make a positive contribution by showing people both in and outside the Church what it means to recognize and realize a Christian mandate in all speres of human life. This will mean an all-inclusive campaign of reformation and evangelization of the 'natural world' to live up to the healing ordinances of God which actually express His redemptive Will for every domain of life.

Naturally this must lead to a radical revision of some trends of 'Reformed' theology and the Church-ministry as well. However difficult such self-criticism for the latter may be, it remains the only way out of an inherited, but illegitimate and fatal *religious* dilemma at the very *root* of the problem of secularization.

4. SCHOLASTICISM AND THE SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

The Scholastic tendency of Protestant Christianity has deeply affected the scientific scene in South Africa, especially the science of education. Because science has become one of the most powerful forces of modern society[9]), the view of the man of science has a remarkable

impact on ordinary life and on nurture. If this science — in its foundations — is of a radical *humanistic* nature, then one could expect that the process towards the radical secularization of a Christian society simply remains a matter of time. If, on the other hand, the scientist who claims to be a Christian opens the door to a sphere where the *autonomy* of reason is proclaimed as well as the *neutrality* of science, then Humanism has found an unexpected ally in Christianity. Christian men of science in this way, then, become a co-operating force towards the escalation of secularization in a Christian society.

Scholasticism has manifested itself in the science of education at South African universities in a two-fold way. Firstly, by declaring the autonomy of reason and the neutrality of science, ie the science of education an indisputable *fact*. The starting-point of this approach, to my mind, is man's supremacy and autonomy. *Even the acceptance of a Christian scale of values for life and education, which happens to be a matter of 'faith', remains man's autonomous choice.* Secondly, there are the pioneers of 'reformed' Scholasticism who do not view the truth of Christian faith as an optional scale of values, but as *the* Truth. In spite of this, however, a 'secular' world as acknowledged within the boundaries of which man's autonomy is never totally denied, but only becomes relative. Consequently, the field of science does not need a radical reformation but merely a kind of adaptation of the humanistic and even pagan heritage to Christian faith. This, of course, happens with the best intentions in respect of Christianity as such.

The first pedagogic approach mentioned above philosophically divides life into a *'practical'* and a *'theoretical'* sphere. Within the first sphere man exists and lives as a free and autonomous 'moral' being, while freedom and autonomy allow him to choose the one or the other 'faith' as a *specific* scale of values. If *Christian* faith has been chosen to guide man in his practical life and education, then the Scholastic pattern of nature and grace has returned again. However, this never means that the autonomous freedom of man to choose another scale of values has now been surrendered. In the theoretical sphere, on the other hand, the autonomy of *scientific* reason is honoured. These two spheres and their correlate ways of knowing by 'faith' and by 'reason' must conse-

quently be respected. They cannot be taken as two modal functions of man's heart, which is *always* committed to God or an apostate god by *faith* — in view of which the scientific method and result are finally determined by religion. That would be nothing less than an impermissible *metabasis eis allos genos* (change from one thing — religion — into something else — science). It actually boils down to a non-scientific interference of 'faith' in the realm of scientific 'reason', which is, with respect to the pre-accepted cosmological, anthropological and gnoseological division, *logically* ridiculous.

It is not difficult to recognize behind this approach the shadow of Humanism, especially that of *Immanuel Kant.* Through the phenomenology of *Edmund Husserl* which postulates the autonomy of scientific reason, it has made its entry into the South African faculties of education *via* students of the well-known Netherlands professor, *Dr M J Langeveld.* Within the field of phenomenological pedagogics in our country it is possible to distinguish between a neo-idealistic approach (of Prof C K Oberholzer) and an existentialistic approach (of Prof C F G Gunter), and their respective followers. From the phenomenological wing in the educational science the possibility of a biblical science of education has been strongly opposed and even condemned as *no* science at all. This, to their minds, is nothing less than the above mentioned *metabasis.* The biblical truth has only 'particular', that is, *limited,* validity, while the phenomenological (scientific) truth has *universal* validity.

A real dilemma occurred among phenomenologists when we were told *by law* in 1967 that South African school education must have a Christian character, and that the training of our teachers should serve this end. The Law further demands that all training of teachers at the teachers' training colleges should eventually be transferred from these to the various faculties of education at our universities[10]). This change in the situation has forced neutral pedagogues to *add* a so-called 'post-scientific' knowledge of Christian faith with respect to nurture to the basic knowledge gained by phenomenological reason. As the qualification, 'post-scientific' already indicates, this knowledge can never qualify as *scientific* knowledge. Such a concession will refute the basic dogma of the two spheres and the two cognitive approaches.

The religious dialectics of nature and grace, therefore, has not only become a most welcome escape from a *real* dilemma, but has secured itself as the firm basis of our pedagogical training of teachers for Christian schools. What makes the matter even worse in the above case, is that the scholastic dilemma is eventually rooted in *Humanism* itself, namely, in the supremacy and autonomy of man in both the 'practical' and the 'theoretical' speres of life.

The second pedagogic approach has its starting-point in the modern modification of Medieval Scholasticism, which we described as 'reformed' Scholasticism. Although these pedagogues must be credited with a serious intention to further the cause of *Christian* pedagogics they, up to now, have not succeeded in rendering fertile perspectives for a radical biblical science and practice of education.

Dr J Waterink, Professor of Pedagogy at the Free University of Amsterdam until the early sixties, has exercised significant influence on Christian educational thought and practice in South Africa. But he never succeeded to rid himself of the scholastic pattern of nature and grace in his scientific thinking. This happened in spite of the fact that Waterink declared the Bible to be of normative value for science, especially the science of education. His ambiguous use of the term 'religion' bears witness to Waterink's adherence to Scholasticism. Although at the end of his career he emphatically claimed that man *is* a religious being[11]), he neither elaborated on this with respect to his anthropology and his concept. of nurture, nor did he rectify any of his previous views of education. Notwithstanding the hopeful *new* ray of light, Waterink's anthropology, therefore, remained to be firmly rooted in the scholastic tradition.

Waterink based his concept of nurture upon a dichotomistic and creatianistic view of man. The psycho-somatic body which is, according to him, of genetic origin, has the 'I' or 'spirit' incarnated as the immortal soul. This happens at a certain unknown stage before birth[12]). The spirit or I has a two-fold task for which it should be moulded by education. Firstly, it must rule over the psychic life of the individual personality. Secondly, since it finally is of religious nature, nurture does also imply a guid-

ing of the child to submit himself willingly to the world of values as determined by the Holy Scriptures. The moulding of the child's faith-life and religious education is obviously one and the same thing for Waterink. This scholastic view of religion, of course, excludes the possibility of getting a true perspective on the *central* and *integral* meaning of religion for man and for nurture. For this reason, Waterink's effort to develop a *Christian* science of education was not very promising from the start. This however, should never be sufficient ground not to recognize and appreciate the many genuinely scriptural perspectives which are so richly spread all through Waterink's pedagogical work. To my mind, his work deserves more attention among Christian pedagogues than it has received hereto.

Our own, well-known, *Prof J C Coetzee,* professor at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education till 1963, whom I would describe as the nestor of Christian pedagogics in South Africa, also did not entirely escape the prevailing trend of 'reformed' Scholasticism of the twentieth centruy. Coetzee, like Waterink, declared the Holy Scriptures normative for the science and practice of education. But in the elaboration of his pedagogical thoughts he had unfortunately been captured by the scholastic pattern of his time. The same confusing ambiguity about the concept 'religion', as in the case of Waterink, led him astray. Because of this he had to borrow from non-Christian anthropology. According to Coetzee, two autonomous principles, ie the principle of the bio-physical body and the principle of the psycho-pneumatical soul, unite into an 'independent unity' known as man[13]). The child has to be educated into a number of 'secular' aims and, finally, to the *religious* aim. At school, this has to be achieved by means of 'secular' and 'religious' subjects. For Coetzee, the Church resides on a higher level than the school because it deals with 'religion' which is the "highest' in a community[14]).

It is obvious that Coetzee identifies religion and faith and consequently barred the road to a true perspective on the radical and integral character of religion. For him the Church has to guard over the spiritual well-being of the child at school, which actually opposes the biblical principle of sphere sovereignity *and* the exercise of our Christian mandate which God imposes on *every* office-bearer in *all* spheres of the life of a society.

My appreciation for Waterink's contribution to Christian pedagogics also applies to Coetzee. He has, surely, inspired many a student to become a devoted Christian teacher or educator. For this we are very grateful. But it should not be overlooked that a *religious* dilemma resides at the root of his pedagogical thought. The scholastic dogma of 'nature' and 'grace', although in a modified sense, has prevented him form developing a radically biblical view of nurture. In fact, it has provided many a scholar with an opportunity to go astray into apparently more fascinating pastures of *humanistic* educational thought.

5. CONCLUSION

Christian education belongs to our Christian mandate. We cannot escape from this mandate without serious consequences for Christianity. We have pointed out that the scholastic two-realm religion illegitimately limits the scope of the Christian religion and consequently, of our Christian mandate. As Christians, have we not paid sufficient homage to this false dogma, which has, throughout several centuries, hollowed out Christianity as a whole, the Church included? Today, with Humanism's radical onslaught through the marxist New Left, on the Establishment and on Christianity, the walls of the Christian fortress are crumbling away. This process can be quickened because of the inner religious split within the bosom of Christianity itself.

The cure for this state of affairs can never be found only in an effort to bring those disenchanted and alienated from Christianity back to the Church. The only cure lies in the new advent of a biblical *reveil*. This implies that we must break with the two-realm religion because it is *false, unbiblical* and therefore, dangerous and fatal for Christianity. We must get a new perspective on the *radical* and *integral* character of the biblical concept of religion, which should determine our Christian mandate. This should be the combined effort of *all* provinces of life, the university and the science of pedagogics included. We must serve our Lord, Jesus Christ, with our *entire life*, because He is the only Foundation of our Christian life. No part of life should be built upon the *autonomy of man*. This amounts to a house which is divided against itself and which, therefore, is destined to ruin.

Shall we as Christians depend on man's theoretical and pre-theoretical *logical* ability to bring about such a religious change as has been suggested above? I think not. Such an approach disregards the religious nature of the issue at stake and actually builds on the dogma of the *self-sufficiency of man*. This is a *religious* error which has no perspectives for Christianity. Shall we indulge in despair? Certainly not. Simply because we believe that all our activities, including our logical activity, are ultimately religious, the only biblical religion is to be in the service of our Lord with our entire life. Also in the field of education and science we can only be obedient co-workers of God, proclaiming His Kingdom to be all-encompassing. We shall never doubt His power to change the hearts of people; for even the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water: He turneth it withersoever He will.[15])

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NOTES

1. See the bibliography of J A L Taljaard at the end of this book.
2. Here, I especially have in mind a new manuscript of Prof Taljaard which will be published soon. The anticipated title of the book is *Polished Lenses*.
3. Cf Article IB, Subarticle (1) (b) of Law No. 39 of 1967, known as "Law on National Educational Policy".
4. Cf the brochure of P G Schrotenboer, *Motives of Christian Higher Education*, 1965. By the same author, *The Nature of Religion*, 1964.
5. This, of course, applies for every human being, whether he is a Christian, a humanist or a heathen.
6. I refer to the papal declaration that the philosophy of Thomas Aquino is the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church in the Encyclic Letter *Aeterni patri*, of 4th August, 1879.
7. Cf J A Heyns, *Die teologiese antropologie van Karl Barth vanuit wysgering-antropologiese oriëntering*, 1964, p 239 *et seq*.
8. Cf H Dooyeweerd, *Vernieuwing en Bezinning om het reformatorisch grondmotief*, 2nd ed, 1963 p 136 *et seq*. See also S U Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper" *Communication and Confrontation*, 1972, pp 52-105.
9. Cf H van Riessen, *De Maatschappij der toekomst*, 4th ed, 1957, Chapter V.
10. At this stage, only the training of high school teachers has been transferred to the universities.
11. Cf J Waterink, "De mens als religieus wezen en de hedendaagse psychologie", in *Keur uit de verspreide geschriften van Prof dr J Waterink*, 1961, p 47.
12. J Waterink, *De paedagogiek als wetenschap*. Vol I, p 433.
13. J C Coetzee, *Inleiding tot die algemene teoretiese opvoedkunde*, 4th ed, p 90.
14. J C Coetzee, *op cit*, p 286.
15. *Proverbs* 21 verse 1.