

PARADIGMS IN THEOLOGY

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1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RELIGIOUS GROUND-MOTIVES

My present starting-point, not worked out here (*cf.* extensively Ouweneel 1993), is that all scientific activity, even all human action is founded in a *central-religious ground-motive* (fundamental driving-force of a religious-spiritual nature). It is my view that scientific, including theological activity necessarily demands such a ground-motive, and that every ground-motive roots in the human heart. That is, all theological work, carried out within a certain paradigm, is entirely determined by the central-religious *ground-attitude* assumed *a priori* with respect to the bible by the theological community working within that paradigm. Dooyeweerd² distinguishes four such religious ground-motives in the history of Western thinking:

- a. the antique ground-motive, with its dualism of matter and form;
- b. the scholastic ground-motive, with its dualism of nature and grace;
- c. the humanistic ground-motive, with its dualism of nature and freedom;
- d. the Biblical ground-motive, which Dooyeweerd (human-defectively) tries to express in the key-words creation, fall and redemption.

In a sense we have only to do with two ground-motives here: The Scriptural ground-motive and the apostate ground-motive. Klapwijk (1972:29) therefore prefers to distinguish Dooyeweerd's four ground-motives from what he calls these two *ground-factors* (*cf.* Troost 1958:381f). Bible-faithful (or, as I call it, bibliotropic³) theologians are those whose heart

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2 See extensively Dooyeweerd (1949) for the antique ground-motive, Idem (1948-45) for the scholastic and Idem (1984:169-495) for the humanistic ground-motive (*cf.* Ouweneel 1986:43-50 for further references).

is in the grip of the Scriptural ground-motive. Conversely, theologians whose heart is in the grip of the scholastic or humanistic ground-motive cannot be called bibliotropic.

In practice, we see of course all kinds of interminglings between the Scriptural and the apostate ground-motive. The scholastic ground-motive is even itself a mixture of the antique and the Scriptural ground-motive. Moreover, one can often easily point out various unchristian influences in the work of otherwise bibliotropic, such as early Protestant and present-day fundamentalist, theologians. Such influences are e.g. scholasticism, rationalism, irrationalism, scientism, positivism. In the strict sense there *is* of course no *absolutely* biblio theology. Even the most bibliotropic theologian is always a child of his time, embedded in his own culture, and is therefore (often unconsciously) exposed to all kinds of detrimental thought-influences. The only thing one can try to do is to search out those influences relentlessly, expose them, and remove them from his theology.

To this very general introduction of the concept of ground-motive some important further clarifications have to be added (cf. Troost 1977:162-172, 1983:30-35):

a. A (bibliotropic or apostatic) ground-motive is not a kind of mini-confession in which the contents of Scripture is "summarized". A ground-motive is the suprarational-supratemporal driving-force of the heart, worked by the Holy Spirit or by the spirit of darkness. A confession is a rational-temporal (though pre-theoretical) formulation of beliefs, necessarily defective. Moreover, any (mini- or maxi-) confession does not say the least about the real state of the heart, and that is precisely what the ground-motive is all about. A really "ecumenical" communion of Christians is built upon such a common ground-motive, not necessarily upon a common (mini- or maxi-) confession. As Troost (1983:33f) puts it:

"... the Christian ground-motive is 'the heart' of Scripture. Apart

- 3 From βιβλία, "Bible" and πρὸς, "turn, directedness" (cf. e.g. heliotropic, "turned to the sun"). Bibliotropic is that which is whole-heartedly "turned" to the Bible's self-testimony, in full believing commitment to it as God's Word (which is not to belittle the many theoretical problems involved in this "as"!); See the further explanation in par. 2.

from this 'heart', one cannot really understand the words, even the smallest, in the 66 Bible books, at most parrot them. Even if one could irrefutably 'prove' with 10 fingers at 10 texts from the New Testament that Scripture teaches clearly and emphatically that Jesus is the Lord, yet Scripture itself says: 'No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). He who repeats it in an outwardly correct way, and even means it, but not out of the power of the Holy Spirit, does not say the full Truth! Time and again, therefore, it turns out that one cannot build upon this or a similar Scripture an 'ecumenical' organization or brotherhood. Nor on the most extensive and detailed confession for that matter if there is no spiritual fellowship through the Holy Spirit.⁴

b. A (bibliotropic or apostatic) ground-motive is even less a kind of mini-theology, from which a full-fledged theology could be "developed" or "derived". First, theological theories are not "derived" from any belief at all but "*designed*" to account for our beliefs (see Ouweneel 1993: § 1.6.2.2, 3). Secondly, a ground-motive is no theology at all, it is not even theoretical knowledge in general, it is not even a pre-theoretical, rational belief, it is not even a pre-theoretical, pre-rational belief. It is a person's last indubitable evidence or certainty that cannot be "verified" from anything else and that underlies, governs, leads and directs all our beliefs as well as all our theoretical work.

c. If we yet try to give a formulation for some "content" of a ground-motive

4 "het christelijk grondmotief is 'het hart' van de Schrift. Los van dit 'hart' kan men ook de woorden en woordjes in die 66 bijbelboeken niet werkelijk verstaan, hoogstens napraten. Zelfs al zou men met 10 vingers bij 10 teksten uit het NT onomstotelijk 'bewijzen' dat de Schrift klaar en duidelijk leert dat Jezus de Heer is, dan nog zegt de Schrift zelf: 'Niemand kan zeggen: Jezus is Heer, dan door de Heilige Geest' (1 Kor 12:3). Wie het uiterlijk correct naspreekt en het ook nog meent, maar zulks niet uit kracht van de H. Geest, zegt niet de volle Waarheid! Het lijkt dan ook altijd weer dat men niet op dit of een dergelijk schriftwoord een 'oecumenische' organisatie of broederschap kan funderen. Trouwens ook niet op de meest uitgebreide en gedetailleerde confessie, wanneer er geen *geestelijke* gemeenschap is door de Heilige Geest."

it is an attempt to make explicit the various governing moments in such a ground-motive, to refract a ground-motive into some constitutive "motives" such as matter, form, nature, grace, freedom, creation, fall, redemption. We should carefully distinguish between a ground-motive as power of God or apostatic power, and our human (defective) formulation of it. We cannot get it in our (pre-theological or theological) "grip" but conversely, it has all our beliefs and theologies in its "grip". Our bibliotropic ground-motive is infallible, for basically it is nothing but God's revelation granted to our soul in the power of the Holy Spirit. But our beliefs concerning, or thought to follow from, our ground-motive are fallible. The bibliotropic ground-motive is not a matter of certain "orthodox views" concerning the three moments of creation, fall and redemption. On the contrary, our ground-motive is that which governs our orthodox (or not so orthodox) views.⁵

d. Therefore, a ground-motives is not amenable to discussion because any discussion is only possible through this ground-motive. It is that which (pre-rationally) precedes and underlies all (rational) discussion. Discussion cannot judge our ground-motive but our ground-motive judges all our discussions. In a sense, a ground-motive cannot even be "tested" for its bibliotropic character but, conversely, our ground-motive tests our beliefs and theologies for their bibliotropic character. Dooyeweerd (1960:146f) speaks of

... the central basic motive of the Holy Scriptures as it is operative in the religious center of our consciousness and existence. This spiritual basic motive is elevated above all theological controversies and is not in need of theological exegesis, since its radical meaning is exclusively explained by the Holy Spirit operating in our opened hearts, in the communion of this Spirit. This is the only really ecumenical basis of the Church of Christ, which in its institutional temporal appearance is hopelessly divided, and it

5 Dooyeweerd (1960:146) therefore relates the bibliotropic ground-motive to what Jesus calls the *κλειδα της γνωσεως* (Luke 11:52), which the scribes and lawyers of his time being the most advanced theologians, did not possess, even if they were "orthodox" with regard to creation, fall and redemption.

is the ultimate divine judge both of all dogmatic theology and of all philosophy.

e. We distinguish not only between the ground-motives and their formulations but also between these two and the philosophical reflection upon them, leading to a *theory* of religious ground-motives. Similarly, moments within the bibliotropic ground-motive such as creation, fall and redemption are not theological themes as such (see 3.2) but, of course, can (and should) be made into subjects of theological reflection. This distinction has the practical implication that even our philosophical theory of ground-motives as well as our theological theories of creation, fall and redemption are a priori governed and directed by our (bibliotropic or apostatic) ground-motive (cf. Troost 1983: § 46-49).

Because we have correlated the bibliotropic ground-motive with the divine Word-revelation this theory of religious ground-motives has to be correlated with a theory of the ontic status of Scriptures. This cannot be dealt with here either (see Ouweneel 1993:2.3, 4).

2. THREE GENERAL PARADIGMS

In the light of the doctrine of the religious ground-motives we may distinguish in Christian tradition various systematic-theological paradigms.⁶ I use the word "tradition" on purpose; the views of Th.S. Kuhn and others imply that "tradition" is in fact the main source for the origin of paradigms, not only in theology but in all sciences. If we therefore point to Christian tradition here this does not necessary imply that the paradigms themselves

6 The idea of "paradigms" in theology can be compared with Wentsel's (1982:31-35) "theological apriori's", especially his "stratified (*gestapelde*) apriori's", such as the "neo-Protestant", the "liberal" and the "neo-liberal" ones, running like "cross-layers" right through the church denominations. The idea of subsequent paradigms in theology has been investigated especially by Küng (1984b). Visagie (1991) follows a different approach of the problem of paradigms in theology by discussing the process and factors playing a role in the formation of new paradigms in theology. Such factors are, according to him, (a) conceptual basic formulas or ground-ideas, (b) basic frames of references (value systems), and (c) foundational analogies (metaphorical constructs).

are not scientific. Every scientific thought-model finds its origin in some thought-tradition, and it is not different in the case of systematic-theological paradigms.

Küng (1984b) has through a careful analysis, shown that the concept of paradigm, primarily developed for the natural sciences, is fully applicable to theology:

- a. Just like in natural science, we find in theology a "normal science", characterized by a cumulative growth of knowledge, a solving of remaining "riddles" and a resistance against everything threatening the ruling paradigm (47).
- b. Just like in natural science, the consciousness of a growing crisis is the starting point in theology for a change in the ruling axioms and ultimately for the development of a new paradigm (52).
- c. Just like in natural science, a former paradigm is only replaced in theology when a new one has become available (54).
- d. Just like in natural science, we find in theology that in the replacement of a paradigm not only rational-scientific but also extra-scientific factors play a role, so that it has the character of a *conversio* (58).
- e. Just like in natural science, it is very difficult in theology to predict whether a new paradigm is going to be absorbed by the old one, or will replace the latter or will be stored in the "archives" for a while. If it is going to be accepted the "innovation" will stabilize into a "tradition" (59).

Coming back to the religious ground-motives, we realize that the antique and the humanistic ground-motives in their pure form could never give rise to paradigms for theology because they would be necessarily mingled with the Christian ground-motive. Paradigms of systematic theology that are not (purely) bibliotropic are necessarily always mixtures of the biblical ground-motive with one of the purely secular ground-motives.⁷ In the light of this fact we may now distinguish the following paradigms.⁸

- 7 Even this is not entirely correct: Humanists are not pagans in the strict sense of the word, for pagans do not know God's special revelation, but humanists are, historically speaking, apostate Christians or (physical and spiritual) descendents of apostate Christians.
- 8 That is, in so far as they still play a role in present-day theology: I leave therefore the Augustinian paradigm, playing the most prominent role in theology up till the twelfth century, aside.

I. The *scholastic* paradigm, based in the dualistic combination of the Christian and the antique ground-motive. This is the systematic-theological paradigm of conservative Roman-Catholic theology, as dominated by Thomism. It differs from the subsequent paradigms particularly in the following two points:

- It reads Scripture through the "glasses" of Aristotelian, i.e. antique-pagan thought, as a consequence of which both pagan concepts and pagan thought-contents have leavened this theology.
- This paradigm is not primarily based on the authority of Scripture but on that of the "authorities", i.e. besides Aristotle, the fathers, particularly Augustine, and further especially the conciliarly dogmas and the papal doctrinal verdicts.

II. The *scientistic* paradigm, based in the dualistic combination of the Christian and the humanistic ground-motive. This is the systematic-theological paradigm of liberal or modernistic theology, especially characterized by the humanistic results of so-called "higher" or "historical criticism". The products of a science thought to be neutral and objective, but in reality rationalistic-positivistic, dominate the view of Scripture. The Christian ground-motive's notions of creation, fall and redemption are retained but have been transformed according to the scientistic demands of the humanistic ground-motive's ideals of autonomous man and a controllable reality. *A priori*, this ground-motive does not allow for the ground-idea of Scripture as the infallible and inspired Word of God. Therefore, this ground-idea can never "turn out" to be "corroborated" by scientific research. On the contrary, on the basis of the mistake of a "neutral, objective" science, this paradigm presents the view that Scripture is not the infallible, inspired Word of God as the incontestable result of its "modern-scientific" investigation.

III. The *bibliotropic* paradigm. This is the systematic-theological paradigm of Protestant theology in so far as it has not been too badly influenced by the scholastic and scientistic paradigm (as is rather generally the case in current Protestant theology). I apologize for the fact that the term "bibliotropic" sounds quite pretentious; scholastic and scientistic theologians, too, will definitely call themselves "faithful to the Bible". That is, they claim as far as it is given to humans, to faithfully represent the true spirit, meaning,

and sense of the Bible. Yet I maintain the term without hesitation for two reasons:

- Bibliotropic theologians are those theologians who are fundamentally faithful to the Bible's *Selbstverständnis*, i.e. who believe of Scripture what it witnesses about itself, viz. to be Word of God, and not only word of men. Consequently, they do not start from "modern" (autonomous, humanistic, anthropocentric) man but from a strictly theonomous, theo- and Christocentric starting-point.
- Bibliotropic theologians are those theologians who, in studying Scripture, want to be led basically by the contents of Scripture itself, not by extra-Biblical, such as scholastic and humanistic, thought-contents. These theologians do not examine Scripture, or the Christian faith, from perspectives which are external and foreign to it but try to understand it *from its own centre*, without forcing it into conformity with a "scientific" system imposed upon it from outside (cf. Aulén 1960:7f, cf. 9, 18). Scientistic theology's understanding of science is founded in the long rationalistic tradition of Western culture. Because of this wrong understanding, scientistic theology consciously imposes a secular view of reality and knowledge upon the Christian faith which is foreign to it, and in this way scientism misinterprets the Christian faith. Theologians who basically want to be bibliotropic, however, often do the same, but because they consciously apply improper presuppositions not because they usually are insufficiently aware of their presuppositions at all. The consequence is that they often assume either a scholastic or a biblicistic or one of the current "secular" worldviews, or, in an eclectic way, start from a mixture of scholastic, biblicistic and "secular" worldview elements.

I therefore repeat my definition of bibliotropic theology. It is a theology which not only is faithful to the Bible's own *Selbstverständnis* but which also can critically account for this faithfulness on the basis of philosophical presuppositions which themselves are bibliotropic. Spiritual apostasy may manifest itself not only in scientistic but also in bibliotropic theology because the latter is an open fortress, without much theoretical resistance to philosophy. For philosophy is *structurally*, as a transcendental condition, inherent to any theoretical including theological, activity (Troost 1977:186).

Therefore, bibliotropic systematic theology can only be designed or maintained on the basis of a thorough, coherent theoretical-philosophical view of reality and knowledge which is founded in the same ground-motive as theology itself. That is, it has to be founded in Scripture as accepted according to its own *Selbstverständnis* as the divinely authoritative Word of God.

3. SCIENTISTIC (SUB)PARADIGMS

We have seen that the scientistic paradigm is based in the dualistic combination of the Christian and the humanistic ground-motive, and that it is the paradigm of modernistic or liberal theology. Rationalistic-positivistic science governs its view of Scripture, even if the emphasis may be laid, e.g. on religious feeling (Schleiermacher), on revelation and christology (Barth), on human existence (Bultmann), on revelation and history (Pannenberg), or on hope (Moltmann), etc. These various emphases already indicate various schools within the scientistic paradigm. Just as bibliotropic theology (which we will not further deal with), scientistic theology knows its various subparadigms. Several authors have discussed this matter, and have distinguished various sequences of paradigms. In a recent South African conference on this subject (see Mouton *et al.* 1988) e.g. a pre-critical, a (historico)-critical and a post-critical paradigm were distinguished by Vorster (1988; cf. Martin 1987) in New Testament theology. Van Aarde (1988) and De Jongh van Arkel (1988) see a holistic, post-Newtonian paradigm emerging. Edwards (1988) speaks of a shift within theology from the "domination" to the "communion" paradigm of social relations; she even suggests that this shift "may well be the next stage in the evolution of humanity" (249).⁹

Perhaps the word (sub)paradigm is a little too strong in some of these cases. Yet, the various phases in scientistic theology are separated in such a clear-cut way that the transitions definitely remind us of scientific revolu-

9 Long before Kuhn, Albert Schweitzer (1966:254) distinguished in the *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* certain phases, each with their inherent alternatives: DF Strauss (the purely historical vs. the purely supranatural approach of the life of Jesus), the Tübingen theologians and Holtzmann (the synoptic vs. the johanneic approach), and Schweitzer's own epoch (the eschatological vs. the non-eschatological approach) (cf. Heron 1980:52-55, Lategan 1988:65f).

tions in the sense of Kuhn. We will see that these phases are mainly a German story.

3.1 EARLY REFORMATIONAL ORTHODOXY

The first phase in Lutheran and Calvinist theology (from the Reformation to the Enlightenment) was an intermingling of bibliotropic and scholastic thinking. It is of interest to view this phase in the light of Buri's (1956:49) distinctions.¹⁰ He sees three possibilities for the relationship between reason and revelation in theology: a theology of reason (*Vernunfttheologie*), a theology of revelation (*Theologie der Offenbarung*), and a theology of a synthesis of reason and revelation. He rightly sees the latter represented in Roman-Catholic and in early Protestant (*altProtestantische*) theology (54-56, 63-65). See for the other two types under 3,3 and 3,4. Scholasticism itself had already clearly rationalistic overtones but in the eighteenth century an entirely new, liberal approach arose characterized by the rationalism of eighteenth-century Enlightenment, to be discussed next. If many people see a strong contrast between early Protestant orthodoxy and Enlightenment rationalism, Buri (1956:51) rightly sees a certain continuation between the two because of this underlying rationalism.¹¹ The "lower storey" of natural reason in scholastic dualism is maintained and simply isolated and absolutized in eighteenth-century rationalist theology. Yet, Pannenberg (1988:55f) is right of course to speak of a real "paradigm change" here.

10 I do this without necessarily taking over Buri's assessment of the various types of theology he distinguishes, e.g. his judgment concerning the "dogmatic" or "pseudoscientific" character of some of those types, the "belittling" of science by some of these types, and their "scientific dilettantism" (92-100; cf. 118-120, 130-132).

11 Rationalism did not start in Enlightenment theology, but dominated both Roman-Catholic and early Protestant theology. The Enlightenment thus did not essentially change the rationalist methodology of theology; on the contrary its theology was provoked by orthodoxy itself, be it against the latter's will (cf. e.g. Kreck 1970:248; Beker & Hasselaar 1978:44ff; Heron 1980:7).

3.2 ENLIGHTENMENT RATIONALISM

This is sometimes called *bourgeois* theology. This subparadigm is characterized by a blunt anti-supranaturalism, which made the belief in miracles, inspiration, resurrection, etc. impossible and outdated. It did take the Bible's moral value seriously but not its historical value. Only reason was considered to be "infinite". This rationalism was especially characterized by a naive, uncritical optimism. Only with Kant, German thought became critical again.

HS Reimarus must be particularly mentioned. He rejected miracles, called Jesus an idealizing Jew without aspirations and called the disciples immoral because they had stolen Jesus' body and began to preach the resurrection in their own interests. Equally radical and influential was JS Semler, who did want to maintain the essential parts of the Christian religion but, to that end, made a separation between the divine contents ("Word of God") and the human form ("Scripture"). In this way, parts of the canon could be declared "unauthentic". The third leading theologian under this paradigm was JPh Gabler who introduced the concept of "myth", especially with respect to Genesis 1-3. GL Bauer worked this out for the New Testament. The first theologian who tried to find sources (*Quellen*) behind the canon was HB Witter, again with respect to Genesis 1-3, followed by J Astruc and JG Eichhorn. GE Lessing tried the same with respect to the Gospels (see further Ouweneel 1993: § 2.6).

Theology as it developed from the Enlightenment rationalism in the nineteenth century is called liberal theology. Sometimes, all non-bibliotropical theologies are lumped as "liberal". In a sense, this is a correct qualification for, as a matter of principle, these theologies take great liberty with respect to God's Word-revelation. But usually, the term "liberal theology" is restricted to just one type of non-bibliotropical theology; the one originated from the Enlightenment.

Nineteenth century liberalism carried on the biblical criticism of the Enlightenment, and was firmly based on Kant's and Hegel's idealism. Grass (1986:351f) distinguished three periods in this liberalism, which may be thought to represent three paradigmatic breakthroughs. The first period is characterized by the historical criticism of DF Strauss, FC Baur and W Vatke. The second period is characterized by A Ritschl, who tried in his way to overcome the antithesis between orthodox and liberal theology (see 3.3). Other important names here are those of the Ritschlians W Herrmann

and A von Harnack. Besides this, proponents of historical criticism such as J Wellhausen must be mentioned, who pushed the meaning of systematic theology somewhat to the background. The third period is characterized by the religion-historical (*Religionsgeschichtliche*) school (see extensively Ouweneel 1993: § 2.6). Also in the twentieth century, liberalism has some important representatives, such as R Bultmann and P Tillich (taken together with Barth (see 3.4) as a common group by Küng, 1984a:23, though, as belonging to one post-Enlightenment, post-modern paradigm). Of course, in every age this liberalism has to face the challenge of other, contemporaneous theological paradigms, such as orthodoxism in its subsequent phases, nineteenth century mediation theology (*Vermittlungstheologie*; see 3.3) and twentieth century dialectic theology (see 3.4).

3.3 SCHLEIERMACHER

After Kant, an entirely new phase in theology was begun with what I would call the subjective-Romantic *sensitivism* of Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century (cf. recently Spykman 1992:30f, 43ff). Starting from the Kantian dualism of religion and science, this subparadigm is characterized by a tendency to reduce the religious experience to sensitivity, feeling. Religion is defined as the "feeling (or consciousness of absolute dependence", the immediate awareness of something "unconditional" (1980:3.4). It lays great emphasis on the personal religious-sensitive experience, on feeling, intuition, tradition, and mysticism over against reason and thinking. The immediate touch with the Infinite, rooted in feeling is of far greater importance than all dogmas, than Holy Scripture, and even than faith in personal immortality. Personal religious life is understood by Schleiermacher to be broader than the *Herrnhut* pious feeling in which he was raised, because it comprises the whole of societal-cultural life, and deeper than the common esthetic-intellectual sensitivity of Romantics, because of the religious dimension. His doctrine of faith (*Glaubenslehre*) differs from traditional dogmatics in emphasizing personal experience, the person of Christ, the church community, sin and redemption, understood in terms of negative and positive God-consciousness (cf. Heron 1980:30, 32).

The significance of Schleiermacher is described by Avis (1986:1) in the following way:

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is the undisputed founder of modern theology. In the abrasive intellectual climate of the post-Enlightenment world, he undertook a complete reconstruction of Christian theology (...) Schleiermacher thus determined the direction that Protestant theology would follow to the present day - either in continuity as with Ritschl, Herrmann and Bultmann, or by reaction as with Barth and Brunner, or by dialogue as with Pannenberg.

This sounds precisely like a scientific revolution in the sense of Kuhn. Karl Barth (quoted by Brown 1971:108; Spykman 1992:43) has applied to Schleiermacher some words which the latter himself had applied to Frederick the Great: He did not found a school, but an era". Schleiermacher can therefore pre-eminently be called the founder of a new theological paradigm, along the lines of which, according to Avis, great theologians worked like Ritschl (see 3.2), Herrmann and Bultman.¹² Avis correctly recognizes in Karl Barth Schleiermacher's "relentless critic and theological antithesis" (1986:1).

Indeed, with Barth a new theological paradigm can be said to have started without replacing the Schleiermacherian paradigm, though.

Avis (1986:2) describes Schleiermacher's new methodology in the following way:

- 12 We see here at the same time how difficult it is to distinguish accurately between contemporaneous paradigms. Grass (1986:351f) claims that nineteenth century liberalism had strong roots in Schleiermacher's theology, reckons Ritschl to liberalism (but as one who tried to overcome the antithesis between orthodox and liberal theology), calls some Ritschlians such as Herrmann liberal, but calls Schleiermacher rather a *Vermittlungs* theologian, from which liberalism had to distinguish itself. Avis, on the contrary, sees Ritschl, Herrmann and Bultmann in the wake of Schleiermacher. There is truth in both views of course, as explained by Schott (1986a:1117; 1986b:1363). But generally, *Vermittlungs* theology is closely correlated with the theology of Schleiermacher and viewed in contrast with nineteenth-century liberal theology.

[Theology] required a radical reconstruction, an entirely new method, that would: (a) eliminate arid scholasticism by giving full weight to the subjective element in religion; (b) set theology on a sound scientific footing on a par with developments in physical and historical science; (c) guard against fruitless speculation by confining theological statements to the empirically knowable realm of religious experience; and (d) counter the prevailing deistic emphasis with a theology that stressed the immanent presence of God in the world and human experience. Schleiermacher believed that these aims could all be achieved by a radically empirical method that took religious experience as the datum of theological science.

Of course, many would not call Schleiermacher "scientistic" and would point out that he was the greatest combatter of liberal Enlightenment bourgeois theology. But as I have emphasized, for my description of the "scientistic" general paradigm, the attitude towards the Bible, shaped by modern science, is decisive. As Brown (1971:110f) puts it:

Schleiermacher felt that he could no longer treat the Bible as a narrative of divine interventions and a collection of divine utterances. But it was a record of religious experiences ... he no longer needed to take the Bible seriously in every detail. It seemed to open a new door to apologetics by leading both the believer and the unbeliever on to the common ground of their common experiences.

And Spier (1959:152) quotes Schleiermacher's statement that not he has religion who believes in a holy Scripture, but he who does not need one and could make one himself. Barth (1932:63) points out that, according to Schleiermacher, the "divine Word" is nothing else than "the Spirit in all", i.e. in those united in the church. We are quite left in the dark as to whether what Schleiermacher says is in any sense ("objectively") true about God, or only about our ("subjective") *understanding* of God (Heron 1980:31).

Associated with Schleiermacher's name and theology is the so-called

Vermittlungs ("mediation") theology, especially represented by KR Hagenbach (see Schott 1986b), but best known for Ritschl. This school wanted to mediate (*vermitteln*) between religion and science; between traditional Christianity and modern culture, especially German idealism; between confessional and critical-liberal theology. It neither wanted to dissolve religion into philosophy (*contra* Hegel and the Tübingen school), nor separate them as Kant had done, nor reject modern science, as conservative orthodoxy (Hengstenberg e.g. *contra* DF Strauss) did. In the German world of the nineteenth century, three competitive paradigms can therefore be distinguished: the traditional confessional-orthodox paradigm, the critical-liberal paradigm, and the Schleiermacherian *Vermittlungs* paradigm, which tried to find an equilibrium between the former two. It is understandable that many have sought the future for systematic theology in such an equilibrium and have hailed Schleiermacher as its principal pioneer.

Bavinck (1928:54f) takes our 3.2 and 3.3 together as two forms of just one type of theology: The subjectivistic theology of the "Christian consciousness", no matter whether this is understood as conscience, feeling, or reason (54-57). He distinguishes this theology from a theology which finds its (objective) standpoint in church tradition (Roman-Catholic theology) (57f, cf Barth 1932:65-73, 271-276, 280-291), and from a theology which finds its (objective) standpoint in the Bible as its only principium (Reformational theology; 58-60). Bavinck overlooks the rationalist and scholastic tendencies in early Protestant theology, though. He feels a good method of dogmatics should take all three "data", Scripture church and Christian consciousness into account (60-71).

Barth (1932:62-65, 264-271) also takes our 3,2 and 3,3 together as two forms of just one type of theology, which he calls *modernistic* dogmatics. Buri (1956:51-54, 61-63) does the same under the qualification: "The neo-protestant type of religion of reason (*Vernunftreligion*) in the widest sense" (51). To him, Schleiermacher's approach is just another, although quite different, form of rationalism. His transposition of reason into religious consciousness is new, but at the same time the world of the religious is entirely enclosed in human consciousness, or at any rate cannot be separated from it anymore (52). These two forms of *Vernunfttheologie* are continued in the two main streams of nineteenth century theology; the dogmatics of speculative-liberal theology, and the doctrines of faith (*Glaubenslehren*) of Ritschl's school. Küng (1984a:20) too, sees men like Semler, Reimarus, Schleiermacher, Baur, Ritschl, Von Harnack and Troeltsch united in their

common rejection of Protestant orthodoxy.

3.4 BARTH

The *kerygmaticism* or *dialectic* of Barth in the twentieth century, is aptly described by Spykman (1992:31-36, 43-50). It is related to bibliotropic theology

in so far as it emphasises the unchangeable truth of the message (kerygma) over against the changing demands of the situation. ...This message is contained in the Bible, but it is not identical with the Bible. It is expressed in the classical tradition of Christian theology but it is not identical with any special form of that tradition (Tillich 1968:4f).

Tillich calls both "Reformation theology", i.e. traditional-conservative orthodoxy, and "the neo-Reformation theology of Barth and his school" "outstanding examples of kerygmatic theology", claiming that "both made a serious attempt to rediscover the eternal message *within* the Bible and tradition" (5).

For our purpose, the best way to assess the new paradigm Barth presented is to describe his attitude toward the Bible. His thinking was an emphatic step back to the Bible and the divine revelation, away from rationalistic and sensitivistic thinking. God is the Wholly Other (*der ganz Andere*), utterly transcendent, "not to be identified directly with anything in the world, not even the words of Scripture" (Brown 1971:251; cf. extensively 1967). Because revelation is contact with the Wholly Other we cannot describe it. "All we can do (and all that the biblical writers can do) is to describe what they felt like after it" (252). God cannot be taken for granted as simply "there", be it solidified in the words of Scripture (classical orthodoxy), or in our religious awareness (Schleiermacher) or wherever. He can only be found in a real encounter, in which the infinite and eternal God confronts us, finite and temporal creatures. Such an encounter is, from our side, neither predictable nor controllable. The Word from beyond overwhelms us and displays the "Wholly Other" to us in the "eternal moment". As Heron (1980:77) renders Barth's thought:

In that moment, the Word which touched time and history in Jesus Christ touches them again, and so the original Word itself is heard, leaping across the distances of time which are no barrier or hindrance to the running of the communication from eternity.

It is obvious how this confronts Schleiermacher and also Ritschl. Barth blames them for having replaced God by man, theology by anthropology, and thus for having ruled out the need for revelation, the authority of Scripture as the vehicle of God's Word, and of faith, which is seen as some general God-awareness instead of as man's obedient response to the "eternal moment" of God's Word (cf. Heron 1980:76-79). At the same time, however, one of the essential differences from classical orthodoxy is immediately evident: It lies in the emphatic distinction Barth makes between the Bible and the Word of God. Barth uses the following famous words with respect to their relationship:

The Bible is God's Word in so far as God lets it be his Word, in so far as God speaks through it ... The Bible therefore *becomes* God's Word in this event, and it is to its being in this becoming that the tiny word "is" relates, in the statement that the Bible is God's Word (1932:112f).

Thus God reveals himself in propositions by means of language and human language at that, to the effect that from time to time such and such a word, spoken by the prophets and apostles and proclaimed in the Church, becomes *his* Word¹³ (1932:142).

13 "Die Bibel ist Gottes Wort, sofern Gott sie sein Wort sein lässt, sofern Gott durch sie redet ... Die Bibel *wird* also Gottes Wort in diesem Ereignis und auf ihr *Sein* in diesem *Werden* bezieht sich das Wörtlein 'ist' in dem Satz, dass die Bibel Gottes Wort *ist*." Also Gott offenbart sich in Sätzen, durch das Mittel der Sprache und zwar der menschlichen Sprache: Es wird je und je dies und dies von den Propheten und Aposteln gesprochen, in der Kirche verkündigte Wort *Sein* Wort."

It is obvious that, from a bibliotropic viewpoint, one feels more at home here than in rationalistic, or even sensitivistic theology (cf. Barth's [1932:261-291] own way of contrasting his theology with both Roman-Catholic and "modernistic" theology). Yet it is far from the bibliotropic position (see e.g. Barth 1966). The problem with Barth is the, truly impossible, intermediate position he tries to take: Between the traditional bibliotropic position on the one hand, and the (alleged) results of higher Biblical criticism on the other, between the well-meant confession that the whole of Scripture is inspired, and the lenient admission that the Biblical writers were at times mistaken; between the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the Bible as the fallible, defective word of men. One cannot have a revelation of God which at the same time would be irrelevant to any historical events. In others words, Barth's paradigm is ultimately just as scientific as the previous ones. As Brown (1971:257f) puts it:

This indifference to history and the physical world is the Achilles' heel of Barthianism. The early Barth stressed the supernatural character of revelation to the point of denying any factual content. And the later Barth is more interested in theological interpretation than in the historicity of the events he interprets. But Christianity is no mere esoteric, other-worldly religion. It claims to be grounded in history and experience ... In short, Barthianism is no short cut which enables us to side-step historical questions. We cannot have revelation and biblical theology without being prepared to defend their historical basis. Barth himself appears indifferent to this, and consequently his teaching seems to be left hanging in mid air.

We saw that Buri (1956) distinguishes between a theology of reason and revelation (see 3.1), a theology of reason (see 3.2 and 3.3) and a theology of revelation. The latter he sees represented in Barth's neo-orthodoxy (56-58, 65-68). If scholasticism's "lower storey" of natural reason is isolated and absolutized in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rationalist theology, scholasticism's "upper storey" of grace (including revelation) is isolated and absolutized in neo-orthodoxy. The latter therefore joins battle with all rationalist theology, varying from early Protestant scholasticism to speculative-liberal theology. But, as I have said, this does not necessarily make

Barthianism the ally of bibliotropic theology (see the excellent analysis by Nicole 1984). It is at least understandable that Van Til (1973) in the title of his study on Barth and Brunner, speaks of "the new modernism".

3.5 TODAY'S SITUATION

It is difficult to find in the second half of the twentieth century the emergence of any new paradigm of the stature of Barth's kerygmaticism. Tillich (1968:6-9) likes to present his own "apologetic theology" as an alternative to Barth's. This is an "answering theology", which intends to answer "the questions implied in the 'situation' in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answers" (6). But does it have the same grandeur and originality as Barth's theology? Sperna Weiland (1989) calls Tillich's influence "immeasurably large" (13), but he wonders whether the "gain" of the apologetic theology is great with respect to e.g. Barth's theology (10). He does call Tillich one of the founders of the new theology, which struck such a responsive chord in the sixties (13). But Heron (1980:143) claims, not without reason:

In spite of the enthusiasm of those who, twenty years ago [ca. 1960], were hailing him as the relevant and modern theologian, his highly personal work already has a curiously dated quality as the anachronistic survival into the twentieth century of what is really a form of nineteenth-century Idealism.

Avis (1986:70-89) calls Wolfhart Pannenberg, who is one of today's leading theologians, the "third force in modern theology", after Schleiermacher and Barth. There is certainly significance in his attempt to create a synthesis between Schleiermacher's assertion that theology must take the form of a scientific study of religion and Barth's seriousness about revelation, using the phenomenon of religion as a springboard for objective assertions about the reality of God (70). Pannenberg follows Barth in his serious critique of Schleiermacher, and has himself become Barth's "most formidable critic" (72). But whether his theology can compete with Schleiermacher's and Barth's is yet to be seen; of his systematic theology, only the first volume

has appeared so far (1988). At least Hartin (1988:135-140) sees possibilities in Pannenberg's as well as Schillebeeckx's work for the emerging of a new theological paradigm avoiding the poles of authoritarianism and relativism. Others have looked elsewhere for a possible "third way" after or between Schleiermacher and Barth. Kuitert (1988:210) discusses the question in how far Hendrikus Berkhof has managed to take "middle ground" and Spykman (1992:56) asks the same question with respect to Kuitert himself.

Küng (1984a:23, 25) endeavours to present one single "post-Enlightenment, post-modern contemporaneous paradigm" to which he reckons dialectical theology, existential theology, hermeneutical theology, political theology and liberation theology (feminist, black and third-world theology). The theology governed by this paradigm must be truthful, free, critical, and ecumenical; but also: both "catholic" and "evangelical", both "traditional" and "contemporaneous", both "Christocentric" and "ecumenical", both "theoretical-scientific" and "practical-pastoral" (1984b:68, 75). Moltmann (1984:27-29) too, speaks of a new theology (in the sense of a new paradigm) which is (a) ecumenical, (b) encompassing the whole of humanity (*menschheitlich*), and (c) stamped by the era of the ecological world community, over against the old paradigm, which was (a) confessional, (b) Europe-centred, and (c) stamped by the era of the mechanistic worldview. (Also see various contributions in Küng & Tracy 1986).

At any rate, I trust that my very succinct descriptions of the rationalistic, the sensitivistic and the kerygmatic paradigms have given some very broad impression of paradigm formation in scientific theology. The three main scientific subparadigms are very different, yet have one point in common that, in my view, marks them as clearly non-bibliotropic: In all three cases, the traditional bibliotropic faith and confession of the Bible as the inspired, infallible, authoritative and (also historically) reliable Word of God has been sacrificed on the altar of the humanistic ideals of autonomous man and all-powerful science. This I have worked out elsewhere (Ouweneel 1993).

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