

## **The Antithesis , Developments in Holland**

Since the beginning of the modern era, Christianity has taken the path of accommodation. The certainties are gone. Everything has become shakable. The Western world doesn't have the ability to believe in something any longer. The secularization of religious thinking and action has left the church weakened. Theological doubt is behind much of the political activities of church leaders. Many of them are committed to secular struggles for what is understood as secular justice. Some find it easier to man the barricades or join a picket-line than to spend time in prayer. Over against the secular mindset, the Bible declares the Kingship of Christ over all of life. Instead of accommodation, the antithesis principle should be a dynamic spiritual force.

What has happened to the antithesis in our Reformed circles? In this article, I will highlight some Dutch thinkers whose witness also influenced Christians in North America.

### **Abraham Kuyper (1837-1940)**

Since Abraham Kuyper is a key figure, our discussion must begin with him. All later Reformed scholars, who worked with the antithesis, build on his principles. For Kuyper, regeneration (rebirth) is the point of departure. Kuyper saw the radical antithesis between believers and unbelievers, between a Scriptural and an unscriptural standpoint. Kuyper declared that, "the actual struggle against satan does not take place in the visible church, not by a long way... that struggle occurs in the hearts, in families, in discussions, public opinion, trade and commerce, in occupation and vocation, science and art, at cradle and grave-in short, the battle is fought throughout the broad scope of life."

### **The Philosophy of the Cosmonic Idea (PCI)**

Abraham Kuyper didn't develop the fundamental principle of his worldview into a systematic Christian philosophy. This task was taken up by Professor Dr. H. Dooyeweerd in close cooperation with Professor Dr. D.H.T. Vollenhoven. They began the gigantic task of expounding the antithesis character of a Christian philosophy over against all other systems.

The spiritual antithesis is both fundamental and-universal. It cuts through the soul of the individual, the family, theology and also philosophy.

Dooyeweerd said that there is a battle between the spirit of the Christian religion and the spirit of idolatry. The antithesis doesn't rest on personal experience, but on God's blessing through which He keeps His fallen creatures from destruction. PCI doesn't work from philosophy to the Bible but from the Bible to philosophy. Everything, including science, must serve God. Unlike Kuyper, the PCI took the heart as a starting point. The inner stirring of the heart prompts the thinking of every philosopher. His religious basis is decisive for everything he thinks and does. As Dooyeweerd said, "I came to understand

the critical significance of the 'heart,' repeatedly proclaimed by Holy Scripture to be the religious root of human existence."

### **K. Schilder (1890-1952)**

Professor Dr. K. Schilder was a brilliant and gifted theologian, author of many books and articles. He was an early and outspoken opponent of Nazism. He uncovered the pagan roots of this political movement. Not Nazism but God must be obeyed. His writing in the Reformatie led to his imprisonment for some time during the German occupation. Later on he went underground. Schilder differed from both Kuyper and the PCI. Since Christianity is a revealed religion, it automatically draws resistance (I Cor 2:9, 14). And the nearer we come to the end times, the sharper the lines will be drawn (Rev. 22:11). The basis for the antithesis is neither regeneration nor the heart. It is the covenant God made with man. God split the communion of blood, place and time with the antithesis of the covenant. All who keep the covenant become obedient to the cultural mandate, but covenant breakers become disobedient to it since they do not serve God but self.

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