

Cartesianism and Cocceianism: a natural alliance?

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In the satirical Dutch novel 'The life of Philopater', which was published in two parts in 1691 and 1697, a doctor is busy curing his Cocceian patients: they have fallen ill having swallowed too large a daily portion of the Cartesian 'Prima Elementa', and thus have to stay in bed for most of the year.¹

The subject of the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism is almost as old as the time when both phenomena came into existence. In the second half of the seventeenth century it became fashionable in the Dutch Republic to mention in one breath Cocceian theology – a branch of reformed theology with liberal overtones, named after Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) – and Cartesian philosophy as if they were close members of the same family. The alliance between Cartesianism and Cocceianism also found expression in the terminology people used: it was – and still is – not unusual to speak of 'Cartesio-Cocceianism' or 'Cocceio-Cartesianism'.

Already in the seventeenth century the specific nature of the relationship between the novel philosophy and this liberal reformed branch of theology was widely discussed. Since then the topic has always been part of the debate about Cartesian theology. Apparently some questions have not yet been answered, or have been answered unsatisfactorily. One of the main ones is: has the alliance between Cocceianism and Cartesianism come about through factors of an internal character, or is it to be explained purely on the basis of external motives? In other words: is there a certain affinity between the two phenomena or have they been mentioned together solely for polemical purposes?

In the first part of his *Annales des Provinces-Unies*, which was published in 1726, Jacques Basnage contended that only external factors had been at play:

1. Johannes Duykerius, *Het leven van Philopater en Vervolg van 't leven van Philopater. Een spinozistische sleutelroman uit 1691/1697 opnieuw uitgegeven en van een inleiding en noten voorzien door Gerardine Marechal* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, 1991), p.54.

Ce parti [the Cocceians], foible dans sa naissance, s'apua des Cartésiens, malgré l'incompatibilité de leurs principes, puisque l'un adopte sans peine un sens mystique, qui dépend de la vivacité de l'esprit, et du feu de l'imagination des interprètes, et que l'autre a bâti son système sur cette maxime, qu'on ne doit croire que les choses, dont on a des idées évidentes, claires et distinctes.²

At the end of the eighteenth century Annaeus Ypey, a well-known Dutch church historian, wrote in a similar vein. To his mind the choice of those who followed Cocceius in theological matters and Descartes in philosophical matters was not caused by a natural alliance between the theology of the former and the philosophy of the latter. Rather it was the fact that those people who were opposed to Cartesianism also happened to be the main enemies of Cocceianism. Through the attack on the systems of both Descartes and Cocceius the respective disciples were driven together as a matter of course, obliged to join forces in order to defend themselves against a common enemy. Gradually, however, this friendship between Cartesians and Cocceians – which had come about casually – occasioned a more intimate alliance which also concerned their ideas. Thus the Leiden professors of theology Abraham Heidanus and Christophorus Wittichius had begun to incorporate Cartesian tenets in their theological courses. Other Cocceian theologians, following in the footsteps of Heidanus and Wittichius, also started to make use of the fundamental doctrines of Descartes in order to clarify divine truths.³

This is Ypey's view. In his historical sketch we meet with a combination of the two elements: he regards the alliance as a process in which gradually the polemical situation, created mainly by the Voetian party, led to a genuine ideological bond between Cocceianism and Cartesianism.

Later authors are more inclined to stress either the one or the other element. The Dutch historians Chr. Sepp and J. A. Cramer contended that the relationship between Cocceian theology and Cartesian philosophy was a purely external one.⁴ Maybe this is true in the specific case of Abraham Heidanus, but one might ask whether it can be maintained in general. The 'grande dame' of Dutch Cartesianism, Louise Thijssen-Schoute, did not agree with these scholars: she was of the opinion that Cartesian and Cocceian themes were so intimately interwoven that their alliance could not be a purely external matter.⁵

Her view is shared by Thomas McGahagan, who points to the concept of 'fides

2. Jacques Basnage, *Annales des Provinces-Unies*, I (La Haye, 1726), 456.

3. Annaeus Ypey, *Beknopte geschiedenis der systematische godgeleerdheid*, I (1793), 83-85.

4. Chr. Sepp, *Godgeleerd Onderwijs*, II (Leiden, 1874), 219-20; J. A. Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus en zijn cartesianisme* (Utrecht, 1889), pp.4-13, 156.

5. C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*. Avec sommaire et table des matières en français (Amsterdam, 1954; repr. with additional bibliography, Utrecht, 1989), pp.34-35.

implicita' as the binding factor of what he terms 'the otherwise mysterious association of Cartesianism and Cocceianism'.⁶ At any rate, it may be concluded that the association between Cocceian theology and Cartesian philosophy has not been regarded as natural. The alliance between Cartesianism and Cocceianism seemed – and still seems – to require an explanation.

It is clear that not much more can be said on this subject until the history of Cocceianism has been written. A study of Cocceian theologians in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – let alone of their relationship with Cartesianism – is still lacking. So the words uttered by Gottlob Schrenk in 1923 in his well-known study of Cocceius are still true: we first need to know much more about Cocceianism before we can give any proper answer to the question of its relationship with Cartesianism.⁷ Indeed, a more thoroughgoing analysis is needed of those Cocceians who showed an openmindedness towards Cartesian tenets. In what way did they incorporate Cartesianism into their theology? What elements did they choose from Cartesian philosophy, since they were – in typical Dutch fashion – eclectic theologians? Such questions need to be studied in order to say anything more positive about the relationship between Cocceianism and Cartesianism.

It should be noted that not all Cocceians were openminded towards Descartes. Several Cocceians rejected the novel philosophy. To name just one example: Samuel van Diest (1631-1694), professor of theology in Harderwijk, was a fervent Cocceian who, however, detested Cartesianism. He was one of those who were opposed to introducing Cartesianism into theology, seeing Descartes's doctrines as dangerous for the Christian faith – just like the opponents of Cocceianism, the disciples of Gisbertus Voetius. Van Diest was not alone in thinking along these lines. We find the same kind of anti-Cartesian Cocceians in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe. So, when talking about the relationship between Cartesianism and theology in the Dutch Republic, we have to distinguish between three different groups: 1) those who combined Cocceianism with Cartesianism; 2) those who only adhered to Cocceianism while rejecting Cartesianism; and lastly 3) those who did not favour Cocceianism, but were enthusiastic about combining Cartesianism and theology. 'Cartesian theology' could thus be propagated by different kinds of theologians.

Prominent Cocceians who combined Cocceianism with Cartesianism were found

6. Thomas McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands 1639-1676. The New Science and the Calvinist Counter-Reformation* (1976), p.364sq. W. J. van Asselt, in his recent study of Cocceius, returns, however, to Cramer's view – see *Amicitia Dei. Een onderzoek naar de structuur van de theologie van Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669)*, [1988].

7. Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus* (Gutersloh, 1923; rpt. Giessen, 1985), p.22, n.1.

in academic circles as well as in small towns and villages all over the Dutch Republic. The universities of Franeker and Leiden were the main centres of Cocceianism, but Utrecht ('the Acropolis of Cartesianism') and Groningen were also of importance.⁸ The group of Cocceian-Cartesian theologians included such persons as Salomon van Til (1643-1713), professor of theology in Leiden; Petrus Allinga (?-1692), minister in a small village in the province of North-Holland; Campegius Vitringa the elder (1659-1722), professor of theology in Franeker; Franciscus Burman, professor of theology in Utrecht; and Christoph Wittichius (1625-1687). On the last of these Pierre Bayle remarked: 'Mr. Wittichius est fort suivi à Leyde. Il a plus d'auditeurs lui seul, que tous les autres ensembles, parce qu'il est l'appui et le rempart de Coccéius et des Cartésiens, dont le parti plaît plus aux jeunes gens'.⁹

Cocceianism was the source from which moderate enlightened theology flowed in eighteenth-century Holland. Their opponents called them 'rationalists', 'children of the light', or preferably 'men of the new study'. That students of theology were trained in this modern, Cartesian theology, caused much unrest within the Dutch reformed church. In December 1694 the States of Holland tried to put an end to the troubles – which almost led to a schism within the church – by issuing a resolution that professors of theology should not treat Christian mysteries with the help of philosophical rules and methods, and, furthermore, that only moderate and irenical ministers should be appointed in the future.

Since Cartesianism is far better known than Cocceianism it may be worth sketching the theological profile of Cocceianism. It may help us find an answer to the question of its alliance with Cartesianism. What were the main characteristics of Cocceian theology?¹⁰

1) First of all, its elaboration of federal theology: Johannes Cocceius, who was

8. At the end of the seventeenth century Leiden had become a stronghold of Voetianism, as Pierre Bayle wrote in a sketch of the religious situation of the Dutch Republic: 'Nos Académies sont ici dans une division fort grande sur le *Cocceianisme*, et sur le *Voetianisme*. Ce dernier Parti est le triomphant à *Leyde*, et l'on y a tant de soin d'empêcher qu'il ne perde rien de son avantage, que toute Place vacante est toujours un Morceau réservé pour quelqu'un qui s'est distingué par son Opposition et par son Antipathie pour le *Cocceianisme*. Ce sont là ses *Preuves de Noblesse*, et ses *Lettres de Récomandation*'.

In Franeker it was the opposite: 'A *Franeker*, c'est tout le contraire; le *Voetianisme* y a le dessous, et le *Parti* dominant veille sur les moïens d'empêcher qu'il ne s'y glisse; de sorte que, pendant que cet Esprit durera, on ne verra point de *Vocations* adressées a des Théologiens étrangers: on craindroit qu'ils ne fussent pas assez nourris dans l'Esprit de factions dont on a besoin' (Bayle to Mr. Constant, 29 June 1693, in *Lettres choisies*, II, 43).

9. Pierre Bayle to L'Enfant, 18 January 1685, in *Lettres choisies*, I, 195.

10. For Cocceianism, see Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund*; Van Asselt, *Amicitia Dei*; Grete Möller, 'Föderalismus und Geschichtsbetrachtung im XVII. und XVIII. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 50 (1931), 393-440.

professor of theology and oriental languages in Franeker and then in Leiden, maintained that the history of the relationship between God and man was marked by a sequence of Covenants: a Covenant of Works ('foedus operum') which was followed by a Covenant of Grace ('foedus gratiae'). The two Covenants were divided by the Fall. In this federal theology the Old Testament was seen as a shadow of the New Testament. Such a view had several implications, for example with regard to the different states of justification before and after Christ's coming ('paresis'/'aphesis'). Furthermore, as a consequence of this view the fourth commandment ('to remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy') was said to be only of a ceremonial, not of a moral nature. This ceremonial interpretation of the sabbath observance occasioned a fierce debate in the Dutch Republic which lasted for many years.

2) A second characteristic of Cocceianism is its great interest in the interpretation of scriptural prophecies, creating its own 'theologia prophetica'. Scripture was seen as a harmonious prophetic system ('unum systema totius prophetiae'). The Bible was a prophetic book which provided information about the history of the church – and the world at large. By applying historical events to biblical prophecies, Cocceian theologians attempted to interpret the Bible and history alike. To their minds history was closely connected with Scripture and vice versa. They thus found in each and every scriptural prophecy a specific historical event. Of course there were different interpretations among the Cocceians as to what special event referred to what particular prophecy. But in general they were convinced that prophecy and history were a harmonious entity. Being well versed in biblical exegesis they designed 'prophetic systems', providing rules on how to interpret biblical prophecies. For example, Salomon van Til wrote an 'Introduction to the prophecies', an interesting theoretical exposition on the interpretation of biblical prophecies which was used by Cocceians for a long time. Campegius Vitringa the elder gave ample attention to establishing the right hypotheses for the correct interpretation of the prophecies, steering a middle way between the views of Cocceius and Hugo Grotius.¹¹

Cocceius's interest in the prophecies was inspired by his concern with Scripture in general; his theology was clearly bibliocentric. Among his followers, however, other factors came to be of importance, for example the attack on prophecies and prophets as delivered by Spinoza in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670). This provided these theologians with an extra impetus to work out their prophetic theology in detail. And so the 'theologia prophetica' of the Cocceians became an important instrument in Christian apologetics.

3) A third characteristic is the division of history into seven ages. On the basis of

11. See Ernestine van der Wall, 'Between Grotius and Cocceius: the 'theologia prophetica' of Campegius Vitringa (1659-1722)', in *Hugo Grotius Theologian. Essays in Honour of G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes*, ed. H. J. M. Nellen and E. Rabbie (Leiden, 1994), pp.195-215.

the Book of Revelation Cocceius had divided history into seven periods ('aetates ecclesiae'). Most of his disciples did the same, designing a kind of periodic system, in which the number seven played a conspicuous role. Cocceius believed he was living in the sixth period, expecting the seventh period in the imminent future: soon the time of glory for the church upon earth would begin, after the Jews, the Turks and the gentile nations had been converted. This eschatological-millenarian flavour is palpable in the writings of most Cocceians. Due to their influence millenarianism was introduced into orthodox reformed theology.

Let us now turn to a feature that characterized a good many – though, as has been said, not all – Cocceian theologians: Cartesianism.¹²

The war between the Voetians and the Cocceians, which raged between 1650 and 1730 in the Dutch Republic, shows that according to the Voetians the disciples of Cocceius were not only fond of the 'studium propheticum' and the number seven, but also of Cartesian philosophy. Time and again the Voetians expressed their fear of the horrible 'Cocceian and Cartesian novelties', the 'poison of Cartesian philosophy'. It was said that in order to be a good Cocceian one had to be an adherent of Cartesianism. Samuel Maresius (Desmarets), professor of theology in Groningen, who belonged to neither party but took an independent stance, was, however, no friend of the Cocceians: he called them 'Cartesian goats', 'advocates of the devil'. In his view they were also Pelagians, Socinians, Papists, paving the way for the return of the reformed church to papism, and paganism, their doctrine savouring of that of Mohammed, having battened on a wild enthusiasm. Maresius and all other opponents agreed on one point: Cartesianism opened the gates for atheism.¹³

Because of their openmindedness towards Cartesianism the Cocceians were accused of introducing a novel system within the church and theology. This was a serious accusation, since in the later decades of the seventeenth century it was still adverse propaganda to call something 'new' or 'modern'. Tradition was better than modernity. 'I would rather err with Scripture than be in the right with the moderns', as the Franeker conservative theologian Nicolas Arnoldi observed.

12. On the relationship between reformed theology and Cartesianism, see Ernst Bizer, 'Die reformierte Orthodoxie und der Cartesianismus', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 55 (1958), 306-72; McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands*; Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der historisch-kritischen Theologie* (München, 1966); Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch. Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy 1637-1650* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1992).

13. Samuel Maresius, *De abusu philosophiae cartesianae* (Groningae, 1670), *passim*, and his *Tractatus brevis de afflicto statu studii theologici in Foederato Belgio* (Groningae, 1672), *passim*.

With regard to the relationship between Cartesianism and Cocceianism we should first look at a broader question, that is the manner in which the Cocceians regarded the relationship between theology and philosophy in general.

The attitude of their master Cocceius towards philosophy as a whole was somewhat negative: he wanted to be a biblical theologian 'pur sang', claiming that Scripture provided us with a good terminology for theology. So, to his mind, any philosophy – Aristotelian, Cartesian or whatever philosophy one favoured – was not needed by theologians. Up till late in the eighteenth century Cocceius was praised as an enemy of scholasticism.¹⁴

What about his disciples? The Cocceians advocated a separation between theology and philosophy. They had been confronted with the implications of Cartesian theology in Louis Meyer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (1666), a book which they abhorred. Meyer's concept of Cartesian philosophy as the criterion to test divine revelation, thus making Cartesianism the mistress of theology, was vehemently rejected by them. Their Voetian opponents, however, gladly grasped the opportunity to reinforce their attack on Cocceius and his followers by showing the horrible implications of Cartesian theology.¹⁵ Philosophy, then, should not be mistress of theology, but neither should she be her maid, as the Cocceians emphasized. They rejected the idea of philosophy as 'ancilla theologiae', maintaining that philosophy should not be living together with theology under the same roof. If they, mistress and maid, inhabited the same house, the maid might become ambitious, desiring to be mistress herself. Then the tables would be turned, and theology would be deprived of her dominant position, as had happened in Meyer's book. But it had occurred also at an earlier stage in history, namely in the case of scholasticism. Scholastic theology was a perfect example of the most unhappy alliance of philosophy and theology. So it was better that philosophy and theology should live in separate mansions. Moreover, theology did not even need a maid: she could manage very well on her own.

In connection with this notion it was argued that theology and philosophy should each be built upon their own foundation: the former on the basis of divine revelation, the latter upon the light of natural reason. If the principles of both disciplines were

14. See, for example, J. Heringa, *Oratio de theologiae in scholis institutione [...] accommodanda* (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1794), p.40. On Cocceius's view on philosophy and Cartesianism, see also Ernestine van der Wall, 'Orthodoxy and scepticism in the early Dutch Enlightenment', in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. R. H. Popkin and A. J. Vanderjagt (Leiden, 1993), pp.121-41.

15. Cf. Johann Georg Walch, *Historische und Theologische Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten ausser der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, Bd I, Jena 1733 (rpt. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1972), p.465: 'indem die Voetianer den Cocceianismus und den Cartesianismus in eine Brühe warffen, so schobe man alle in dieser Schiff [*Philosophiae S. Scripturae Interpres*] enthaltene Dinge auf Cocceium und wolte behaupten, dass seine Lehre zum Socinianismo und Atheismo fuhrte'.

so different, then the one could not be subservient to the other. Only if they acknowledged that they were based upon different principles was it to be expected that they would be united in peace. If natural reason went out to meet revealed truth, they would embrace each other, since they were both daughters of the Father of lights (James 5, 1).¹⁶

Now we have examined the view of Cocceian theologians on the relationship between theology and philosophy in general, we may ask what it implied for Cocceianism and Cartesianism in particular. Cocceian theologians were convinced that Cartesianism, instead of being harmful to theology, could be useful for the defence of reformed doctrine. Thus Petrus Allinga argued that the best means to maintain reformed theology – and defend it against Roman Catholicism – was to use Descartes's concepts in philosophy and Cocceius's ideas in theology. Once again we see that theology and philosophy are dealt with as separate fields, Cocceius being the master of the first, Descartes of the second. Since Cartesian philosophy had nothing to do with theology, reformed theologians should not be called 'Cartesians', Allinga stressed. Otherwise others within the church should be called 'Aristotelians' or whatever pagan philosophical sect they followed.¹⁷

We see that in theory the Cocceians insisted on a separation of Cocceian theology and Cartesian philosophy. Did they apply this principle in practice?

Here we must point to an important distinction which became popular in reformed theology in the later seventeenth century and would remain so during the eighteenth century: the distinctive treatment of natural and revealed theology. There was a growing tendency in seventeenth-century reformed orthodoxy to deal with them separately. Such a treatment might lead to a definitive separation, as in the case of deism, when natural theology was replaced by natural religion and revealed theology was thought to be superfluous. Orthodox theologians realized the danger inherent in this distinction, and never tired of stressing the insufficiency of natural reason and the need of a divine revelation.

It is said that Salomon van Til was the first theologian in the Dutch Republic to treat the two kinds of theology separately in his *Compendium utriusque theologiae cum naturalis tum revelatae* (Leiden, 1704). Many would follow him in this, such as

16. Such views were propagated by men such as Abraham Heidanus, Balthasar Bekker, and Petrus Allinga. See for example Heidanus's *Consideratien over eenige saecken onlanghs voorgevallen in de universiteyt binnen Leyden* (Leiden, 1676).

17. See Petrus Allinga, *Illustrium erotematum tam ex theologia quam philosophia decades duodecim* (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1679): 'Theologia et philosophia nituntur diversis principiis, haec natura seu lumine naturae, illa scriptura seu divina revelatione. Ubi disciplinae tam longe differunt, ibi una nequit dici ancilla alterius'.

Campegius Vitringa the elder and the Leiden professor Johan Lulofs.¹⁸ Naturally Van Til advocated a sharp distinction between theology and philosophy. A mixture of both would be detrimental to Christian faith. For example, if in the interpretation of the Bible one made use of philosophy Scripture would be easily held in contempt. Ministers should not talk in the church about philosophical matters: let university professors quarrel about such topics, Van Til said. Within the walls of the church, however, God's Word ought to be interpreted. Why should a church be split over the question of Descartes's honour? One of Van Til's aims in his *Compendium* – as in his other works – was to show to 'atheists', 'Spinozists' and 'libertines' the boundaries of the use of reason.

It is obviously in the domain of natural theology that we come across philosophical concepts. If we look at Van Til's *Compendium* we see how in his first part, on natural theology, he incorporates some Cartesian elements. His notions on God's existence thus seem to have been inspired by Descartes, as for example the notion that the idea of a highest Being necessarily implies its existence; that the idea of God within man as an absolute and perfect Being can only be derived from our Creator; that the idea of God is placed in man by God.

Natural theology, according to Van Til, had to be founded on the light of reason, that is 'objective reason', which is 'a complex of notions, ideas and axioms, that is imprinted on and innate in the mind of mankind'. Campegius Vitringa, Johan Lulofs and others followed Van Til in his definition of natural reason as the source of natural theology. Rejecting the idea of a double truth ('duplex veritas'), Van Til and other Cocceians clung to the notion that there was only one, simple truth: the God whom they could know via reason was the same as the God who could be known from Scripture. Or in Van Til's words: 'I acknowledge that the truth which is manifested by God in nature has the same Creator as revealed truth.' So God is the creator of both human reason and Scripture; He is the author of both lights. It therefore goes without saying that natural theology will always be in full accordance with revealed truth. However, in the case of Van Til the boundaries between natural and revealed theology were not always so clear as he argued. He apparently reached conclusions in natural theology which could only be made on the basis of revealed theology.

The same holds true of Petrus Allinga. Like Van Til, Allinga stressed the fact that the mysteries of the faith cannot be grasped by reason. Naturally Allinga insisted on the distinction between philosophy and theology. However, he could not prevent himself from mixing philosophy and theology. Allinga was closely involved in the

18. F. Sassen, 'Johan Lulofs en de reformatische Verlichting', *Mededeling Kon. Ned. Akademie van Wetenschappen afd. Letteren* (1965); P. Swager, *Ratio en Revelatio* (1967).

debate about Cartesian theology, one of the main topics being the argument from doubt. Other well-known points of debate were the supposition of a deceiving God; the notion that Scripture speaks according to the erroneous prejudices of the people; and the rule that reason, that is Cartesian philosophy, should be the interpreter of Scripture. As to the argument from doubt, the Cocceians were accused of maintaining that in order to acquire true knowledge one had to doubt about everything, even God's existence. In this they were seen as true followers of Descartes: the fact that they allowed people to doubt about God's existence showed them to be atheists indeed.

Cartesian theologians such as Allinga replied that doubt was not to be identified with regarding a thing as untrue, but should be interpreted as suspension of judgement until we see reasons to embrace the truth. Indeed, according to Allinga and other Cocceians, there was no better means of destroying atheism than methodical doubt. Sceptical doubt on the other hand was vehemently rejected by these theologians.¹⁹

As to the rule that all the things which we clearly and distinctly conceive are true, Allinga suggested that this was the best criterion for reaching the truth. Naturally he emphasized that this criterion was only useful with regard to philosophical speculations. Yet it is interesting to note that according to Allinga the Cartesian criterion might also be useful in matters of faith. Thus he observed that we should not accept anything as true in theology before we conceive clearly and distinctly that it has been revealed by God. God's Word ought not to be believed without any good reason. While suspending our judgement we should look very carefully for the arguments for the divine origin of the Bible. So, just as in philosophy a clear and distinct perception was needed in order to accept anything as true, so in theology we should not accept anything as true if we could not see clearly and distinctly that it was a divine revelation. In other words, Revelation was to be measured by a philosophical criterion. Allinga quotes Wittichius's remark that God is the author of the Cartesian criterion and that therefore this criterion must be true. Apparently the boundaries between theology and philosophy were not as clear and distinct as the Cocceians wished them to be.

Were the Cartesians filling the vacuum in Cocceian theology that had occurred after its farewell to Aristotelian scholasticism? If this were so, it must then be asked why this could happen so easily. Dr Thijssen-Schoute once observed: 'Le coccéianisme est incontestablement une forme de rationalisme, qui rejoint celui de Descartes'.²⁰ The

19. See Van der Wall, 'Orthodoxy and scepticism'.

20. C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, 'Le cartésianisme aux Pays-Bas', in *Descartes et le cartésianisme hollandais*, ed. E. J. Dijksterhuis and others (Paris/Amsterdam, 1950).

enthusiasm for Cartesianism might thus be explained by the fact that both systems showed rationalist features of the same character. But what form of rationalism did the Cocceians adhere to? Their Voetian opponents also propagated a rationalistic theological system.

We have seen that the Cocceians strongly defended the existence of two separate realms, theology and philosophy, natural and revealed theology. As for theology their dominant interests concerned federal theology and prophetic theology. In philosophy, or in natural theology, they were inspired by some of Descartes's concepts. May we conclude that here, in the distinction between the two realms of theology, lies the answer to the question about the alliance between Cartesianism and Cocceianism? Further study of Cocceian natural theologies may help us find an answer to solve this problem. Maybe the answer can also help us understand how Cocceian-Cartesian theologians changed the intellectual and religious climate in the Dutch Republic, thus preparing the way for eighteenth-century Dutch moderate enlightened theology.